CONTESTED CONNECTIONS

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION AS DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES
OF TRANSLOCAL LIVELIHOODS IN MUY MUY, NICARAGUA

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To Areini. I hope you’ll be as proud of me as I am of you
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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on migration-development heterogeneity. Taking people’s translocal livelihoods as its starting point, the thesis shows the relevance of integrating a diversity of interconnected yet differentiated (non)migration experiences for understanding global human mobility and its development implications. Migration has been high on the development agenda for decades, and has even been proposed to be included in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the links between migration and development have been subject to continuous debate, oscillating between often rather simplistic positive and negative views. This thesis took shape during a time when migration was predominantly seen as a positive instrument for bottom-up development, especially in terms of remittances. However, the actual heterogeneity of migration-development interactions indicates that both migration and development are multi-dimensional and highly contextual phenomena, and should be approached as such in order to deepen our understanding of their interrelatedness.

What is more, the capability to decide on migrating (i.e., mobility) as well as the actual act of migration can be seen as forms of development in themselves. To advance the debate on migration-development heterogeneity, this thesis seeks to further develop this rather novel notion of mobility and migration as development experiences. To do so, the thesis focuses on migrants and their families in Muy Muy, a Nicaraguan village where livelihoods take shape in an insecure context marked by volatility, inequality, and marginalization, and traditionally involve different migrations. These migrations include destinations in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and other Central American countries, the United States, and increasingly Spain. The thesis employs an actor-oriented approach to explore the ways migrants and their families organize their translocal livelihoods, the diversity of migrations they engage in, and the developmental dimensions they deem important. Empirically, the thesis includes a selection of results from a village-wide survey, but its core and analysis mainly rest on multi-sited ethnographic research that extends, along the livelihood connections of migrant families, to Costa Rica and Spain.

The thesis seeks to further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences in two ways: first by integrating theoretical insights from transnationalism, translocal livelihoods, and mobilities research, and second by focusing on the three translocal livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. These domains were identified and interrogated through empirical research and served as examples of how mobility and migration experiences materialize. These domains also provided the basis for proposing the framework of a mobility spectrum. As an analytical tool, the mobility spectrum framework adds valuable insight to established actor-oriented, contextual and multi-dimensional conceptualizations of migration-development. In particular, it enriches our
understanding of the fundamentally relational and differentiating aspects of mobility-migration experiences by explicitly integrating a diversity of livelihood connections and the ways they are contested. The mobility spectrum framework provides insight into mobility and migration as time- and place-specific development experiences, as contested connections of translocal livelihoods. As a generative proposal, the mobility spectrum framework pulls together the different insights of the thesis but also further substantiates these as heterogeneous migration-development interactions of global relevance.
1. INTRODUCTION

I am writing this introduction amidst what is deemed the biggest migration, asylum or refugee crisis since World War II – at least from a modern-day European perspective. Daily images and stories of mainly Middle-Eastern and sub-Saharan African migrants have dominated the European media for months, triggered by a growing recognition of the immense human suffering involved with their migration, as well as a recurring fear of losing European stability and prosperity. These images and stories feed into heated discussions about failing asylum procedures, the absorption capacity of European nation-states, and national and international prevention and assistance (im)possibilities. Political discourses about migrants ‘deserving’ protection as refugees (as opposed to so-called ‘fortune seekers’) accompany these discussions.

The people who are the focus of these discussions and discourses, arriving by boat, bus, train, truck, car, bike, or on foot, demonstrate how little migrants resemble mere pawns of global forces (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010) or, for that matter, of European policies. They dramatically expose structural global inequalities, but also show their agency as they mobilize their material and non-material resources across time and space in search of a better life. The relatively extreme circumstances of their migration draw attention to people’s resilience and resourcefulness, the extent to which they are willing to cross dangerous borders and further obstacles they need to overcome.

What the dominant images and stories generally do not show, however, are the experiences of the majority of people who migrate in a more local or regional way. They also do not show the connections of migrants to an even greater majority of relatives and friends who stay at home, those who are on the other end of the line when migrants call to let them know they have arrived.

This thesis is concerned with these latter forms of migration and non-migration, which may seem less urgent but are equally important in shaping global migration dynamics. Taking people’s cross-border livelihoods as its starting point (Olwig and Sørensen, 2002), the thesis shows the relevance of integrating a diversity of interconnected (non)migration experiences for understanding the broader picture of human mobility and its development implications. Although ‘official’ migrants still constitute a minority of the global population, the number of people directly and indirectly involved in migration, including the temporal, informal, and short-distance kind, is substantial (IOM, 2015). As a social force to be reckoned with, migration has been high on the public and academic (development) agenda for decades, albeit subject to changing realities and fashions. Currently, it has even been proposed to be
included in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Migration emerges in the targets of multiple SDGs, for example, those related to human trafficking and secure work environments for all labourers, including migrants.\(^1\) Most explicitly, SDG 10, ‘Reduced Inequalities’, Target 7 states: “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.” This (implicit) recognition of migrants’ role in development is a marked change from the Millennium Development Goals fifteen years ago.

2. MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT HETEROGENEITY

However, in both public and academic circles the actual links between migration and development, and corresponding policies, have been subject to ongoing debate, oscillating between often rather simplistic positive and negative views (De Haas, 2010). This thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of this migration-development nexus. It took shape during a time when migration was predominantly seen as a positive instrument for bottom-up development, especially in terms of remittances (Glick Schiller and Faist, 2010). Such an instrumental migration-development discourse also tends to resonate with local ideas on migration and well-being in Latin American countries as diverse as Peru and Nicaragua (Leinaweaver, 2008; Steel et al., 2011). For example, the expression seguir adelante (or salir adelante, Winters, 2009), commonly translated as to get ahead or move forward, reflects the popular belief that moving and migrating are important means for increasing well-being. However, the actual heterogeneity of migration-development interactions (De Haas, 2010) indicates that links between migration and development are not straightforward (Kalir, 2013), not even via the ever-increasing amount of remittances.

In line with this, the thesis considers an (at least symbolic) erasure of the singular in favour of multiple migration-development nexuses or interactions, an important first step for addressing migration-development heterogeneity. Migration and development are multi-dimensional and highly contextual and therefore, the migration-development nexus does not exist. Particular forms of migration interact with particular forms of development throughout particular contexts. Migration ranges from long-term international migration, via more temporal regional migration, to seasonal internal migration. It also includes processes of urbanization,

\(^1\) Information retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics on 6 October 2015.
‘return’ and ‘forced’ migration. Forms of development are as diverse as the diversity of things people have reason to value (Sen, 1999). These include bodily, social, cultural, political, material, natural, and economic resources. What is more, the capability to decide on migrating (i.e., mobility) as well as the actual act of migration can be seen as forms of development in themselves (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010).

3. RESEARCH FOCUS

In order to advance the debate on migration-development heterogeneity, this thesis seeks to further develop the latter, rather novel notion of mobility and migration as development experiences. To do so, following the view that the debate must be fostered by concrete, in-depth empirical studies (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010), the thesis focuses on migrants and their families in Muy Muy, a Nicaraguan village characterized by diverse migrations. Muy Muy livelihoods take shape in an insecure context marked by volatility, inequality, and marginalization. Most people combine livestock and agricultural activities but remain on the margins of stable and/or sufficient earnings and traditionally resort to different migrations, making their livelihoods translocal. These migrations include nearby municipalities, Costa Rica and other Central American countries, the United States, and increasingly Spain. By exploring Muy Muy mobility and migration as development experiences, the thesis contributes to the debate on migration-development heterogeneity.

To enable this contribution, this thesis employs an actor-oriented approach (Long, 2001). It focuses on the ways migrants and their families organize their translocal livelihoods in order to explore the diversity of migrations they engage in and the developmental dimensions they deem important. This focus is built on three premises. First, migration and development are multi-dimensional and contextual, as mentioned above. Second, migrants maintain, to differing degrees, connections with ‘home’, as has been established by the transnationalism literature (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). These connections require active engagement and can be marked by mutual understanding and collaboration as well as disappointment and even disruption. Third, the participation of migrants and their family members in migration-development is highly differentiated. This differentiation has mainly been established by transnational studies on gender (Mahler and Pessar, 2006) and

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1 More stable and/or sufficient earnings are hardly ever the only reasons to migrate. They do not even have to be the main reasons. However, as will become clear throughout this thesis, money (in the form of remittances) provides migrants with an important tool to maintain connections, contributes to a variety of development goals, and makes migration socially acceptable. Therefore, when this thesis refers to money, it is taken not as a neutral, purely monetary given, but as a resource with social, cultural and political dimensions.
mobilities (Massey, 1993). In addition to these premises, this thesis is clearly focused on the individual and family level. This does not mean, however, that it views individuals and families in isolation. Their experiences are shaped by, and also shape, the structures of opportunity, inequality and exclusion of their surroundings, including those of local power relations, national migration policies, and global labour markets.

The thesis research focus and its premises are further elaborated in three guiding research questions:

**What kinds of migration experiences are part of Muy Muy livelihoods?**

This question aims to generate insight into some common characteristics of Muy Muy migration experiences. What destinations are involved? To what extent do these destinations constitute and combine national, regional and international movements? And how are they further distinguished by different timings, durations, and border-crossings, and by specific cross-border obstacles and opportunities to reach specific migration goals?

**How are these migration experiences differentiated within families?**

This question aims to further unravel the common characteristics of the first question by focusing on the different positions that migrants and their family members hold, and how these positions influence their access to (the benefits of) mobility. For example, who is able to participate in particular types of migration, and who is not? What kinds of markers of difference are involved in the decision-making process of migration? How do (potential) migrants negotiate this decision-making, and with what implications?

**What kinds of development values are implied by these migration experiences?**

This question aims to generate insight into meanings associated with different and differentiated migration experiences, as a means to expose the things people have reason to value. How do migrants and their family members perceive that migration has contributed (or not) to their well-being, and to the gain (or loss) of livelihood resources? What does this say about what migrants and their family members value? What does it say about their agency and the nature of the structural inequalities they deal with?
In order to address these research questions, the thesis rests on multi-sited ethnographic research that starts from Muy Muy, Nicaragua, but includes migrant connections to Costa Rica and Spain. Considering that ethnographic research attempts to reflect “the irreducibility of human experience” (Willis and Trondman, 2002: 394), ethnographic research was deemed the most appropriate approach for gaining in-depth knowledge of people’s experiences in a migration context. However, as will be further discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the ethnographic research was complemented by a village-wide survey in order to get a sense of the wider incidence of specific migration-development dynamics that were identified through qualitative fieldwork, thereby providing a descriptive, quantitative background to key insights of the thesis.

4. CONTESTED CONNECTIONS

The premises and contribution of the thesis are reflected in the title ‘Contested Connections’. The thesis is about connections in at least two ways. First, as mentioned above, it is about the connections between migrants and their families that make their livelihoods translocal. These connections represent the efforts of migrant families to secure and improve their livelihoods ‘at home’ via cross-border extensions, taking into account the socioeconomic, cultural and political dynamics that shape their immediate context(s). Second, it is about the connections between local, regional, and global scales, which become incorporated in the livelihoods of Muy Muy migrant families by virtue of a diversity of migrations.

These connections are contested in at least three ways. First, as mentioned above, they are intimately linked to the dynamic and negotiated responsibilities of migrants and their family members, resulting in differentiated migration access. Second, this differentiated access extends to the implications for well-being that mobility and migration entail, in that their costs and benefits may not be equally shared. Third, the border-crossings these connections require are not always approved, either by other family members or by (government) actors in the destination settings. Together, these different, interacting connections and the ways they are contested constitute the red thread of this thesis.

Finally, the title refers to the specific contribution the thesis aims to make to the debate on migration-development heterogeneity. The thesis proposal to study mobility and migration as development experiences follows De Haas and Rodríguez (2010), who see mobility as a capability and migration as its achievement. According to these authors, mobility refers to people’s decision-making power regarding migrating (or not migrating), which is an intrinsic development goal, whereas migration refers to the actual act of migrating, which can be used as an instrument
for achieving other goals. The thesis seeks to further develop this notion of mobility and migration as development experiences in two ways: first by integrating theoretical insights from transnationalism, translocal livelihoods, and mobilities research, and second by focusing on the three empirical translocal livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. These domains were identified and interrogated through fieldwork in Muy Muy but provide lessons that I believe are relevant for the broader migration-development debate.

5. THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis continues with a theoretical chapter that provides a framework for researching migration-development heterogeneity. It goes into the limiting legacy of agency-structure dichotomies for migration and migration-development studies, and emphasizes the merits of an actor-oriented, multi-dimensional and contextually sensitive approach. The chapter then discusses transnational, translocal livelihood, and mobility perspectives on migration and provides a coherent framework for integrating the three livelihood domains that are at the empirical core of the thesis.

Before going into these domains, the subsequent chapter discusses the main methodological considerations of the thesis. Based on a characterization of the fieldwork as establishing, maintaining, and engaging multiple connections, this chapter provides an elaboration of the main decisions regarding field relations, sites, and methods. The fieldwork largely builds on personal relationships between researcher and research participants. It starts from Muy Muy but includes other field sites in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Spain, and while its methods are mostly qualitative they also include a survey. Through a discussion of these fieldwork decisions, the chapter establishes the ethnographic character of the research, and particularly draws attention to the ways in which it is contextually sensitive, reflexive, and based on an iterative and negotiated form of knowledge construction.

The empirical part of the thesis starts with an introduction to Muy Muy’s translocal livelihoods. The context chapter situates these within a national, regional, and global context and uses survey data to highlight some characteristic migration-development dynamics in Muy Muy, providing a quantitative background to the qualitative findings of the thesis. The subsequent three chapters, on carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances, form the empirical core of the thesis. They refer to the specific domains of people’s translocal livelihoods in which differentiated mobility and migration experiences materialize. Finally, the concluding chapter includes a re-visiting of the research questions based on the main empirical findings, but also uses these findings to elaborate a mobility spectrum framework that enables a richer understanding of migration-development heterogeneity. The thesis ends with promising future uses of
such a mobility spectrum, a discussion of some of the thesis’ limitations, and possible policy implications in light of the current attention for global human mobility and migration.
CHAPTER 1

MOBILITY AS/FOR DEVELOPMENT
A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCHING MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT HETEROGENEITY
1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the thesis’ theoretical framework for addressing the ways Muy Muy migrants and their families organize their translocal livelihoods, the diversity of migrations they engage in, and the developmental dimensions they deem important. The thesis employs an actor-oriented approach (Long, 2001) to migration-development, with an emphasis on people’s relational agency that is structurally embedded and negotiated in particular contexts, as manifested in their dynamic livelihoods. The main theoretical building blocks of the thesis include notions of transnationalism, translocal livelihoods, and the power-geometry of mobility. The theoretical framework as presented in this chapter results from an iterative process (Tracy, 2013) of continuous interaction between literature study and fieldwork, in which existing approaches for understanding migration-development were contrasted with empirical results. It incorporates perspectives from geography, anthropology, and development studies. These inputs result in a theoretical framework that helps to organize and interpret the empirical findings elaborated in the subsequent chapters. In turn, these findings are used to address the research questions and further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences.

In order to introduce the theoretical building blocks, this chapter touches upon the development of migration theory, the migration-development debate, and the livelihoods approach. However, the chapter does not intend to give an exhaustive overview of these theoretical concepts and dialogues. One of the reasons for deciding on a selective theoretical framework is the extensive overview of key migration-development concepts that have been provided elsewhere (see for example, De Haan, 1999; De Haas, 2010; Massey et al., 1993). More importantly, however, the subsequent empirical chapters each develop their own theoretical approach, relevant to the specific theme under study. This includes a discussion of stratified carework, transnational caregiving and gendered power-geometries of mobility in chapter 4; ‘illegality’, everyday politics, migrant agency, and spatial and temporal livelihood dynamics in chapter 5; and remittances and transnational habitus in chapter 6. These respective theoretical approaches can be seen as them-specific elaborations of the theoretical framework proposed here.

This theoretical chapter continues with some basic principles and lessons learned regarding migration-development interactions. It goes into the limiting legacy of agency-structure divides for migration and migration-development studies, and emphasizes the merits of an actor-oriented, multi-dimensional and contextually sensitive approach for researching heterogeneous migration-development interactions. The chapter proceeds to discuss transnational, translocal livelihood, and
mobility perspectives on migration, focusing on people’s differentiated positioning in their livelihoods’ multiple, cross-border extensions. Based on the notion of mobility as a stratified and stratifying resource, the chapter considers advancing the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences as a promising next step in migration-development research.

2. ‘THE’ MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The research for this thesis started with an interest in the ways migrants and their families organize their livelihoods as a starting point for investigating how Muy Muy migration works and interacts with local development. However, the research focus has also shifted in accordance with a recent lesson about past decades of migration-development scholarship, which is that migration itself can be considered a development process. The idea of migration as development has been particularly clearly articulated through the notion of mobility as a capability and migration as its achievement, as elaborated by De Haas and Rodríguez (2010). Based on a comprehensive view of development as expanding people’s capabilities (Sen, 1999), these authors propose to focus on both the intrinsic and instrumental value of mobility. People’s ability to decide where to live and work is a valuable intrinsic developmental goal, because it is an expansion of the choices available to them. At the same time, they may be able to achieve other goals through the actual exercise of this capability, that is, through migration (which is the instrumental value of mobility; see also UNDP, 2009). The mobility-migration-development node will be further discussed below, but here it should be noted that the view of mobility as a capability, as proposed by De Haas and Rodríguez should include the awareness that migration can never be an isolated act by an isolated individual. Development processes are always relational (Bastiaensen et al., 2015: 29), and migration is no exception.

2.1. A NOTE ON FAMILY-BASED HOUSEHOLDS

Migrants and non-migrants, those willing and able to migrate and those who are not (yet), do not act in a vacuum. They are embedded in different social groups through which their migration and non-migration become negotiated. The household social group is arguably the most convenient unit for researching livelihoods and migration, as households are primary sites for organizing context-specific livelihood strategies, including the use of migration (Chant and Craske, 2003: 229; Ellis, 2000; Nguyen, 2009).

3 In turn, views and experiences of development often entail migration.
Also of particular interest for migration research (see below), is that a household constitutes a research unit of compromise between individual agency and structural factors (De Haas, 2014: 246; Taylor et al., 1996). A household incorporates interaction between individuals and their immediate environments, including processes of migration decision-making.

Households take shape in line with specific socio-economic, political and cultural settings and are therefore not easily defined (Carr, 2005). For Ellis (2000: 18), households are sites of “intense social and economic interdependencies”. A household “represents a coalition of players committed by choice or custom to act as a unit vis-à-vis the rest of the world” (ibid). This definition particularly fits research on migration because it does not exclude the possibility that a household is spatially dispersed (ibid: 19). In addition, this definition does not exclude the possibility that households are flexible units, under constant construction, perhaps especially so in a migration context (Nguyen, 2014). Not only do households have elastic boundaries, but these boundaries are also porous: a broader network of households, as well as other social configurations, may interfere with a household’s functioning (Stack, 1974). Finally, Ellis’ definition does not assume that households are harmonious units. A household is a site of both conflict and cooperation between its members, in view of the unequally distributed resources and strategies that constitute its livelihood, including migration (Kothari, 2003).

These elements of household flexibility indicate that the shape and functioning of households that are part of research on livelihoods and migration cannot be assumed beforehand but need to be constantly defined. In this thesis, I often use the term family to emphasize that the different household members in the research are usually connected by blood ties and strong emotional connections. However, as families can be extensive and their strategies often diverge, I have employed the term family-based household throughout the research to be able to delineate research units. This delineation is primarily based on the research participants’ own assessment of who depends on and contributes to their household’s livelihood, including household members who migrate (see chapter 2).

Researching migration from a livelihoods and mobility perspective may help to avoid some of the main pitfalls in the migration-development debate that have been identified in the past decades. These pitfalls include a too-narrow preoccupation with either agency or structure, and, relatedly, a lack of contextualization of migration-development interactions and their multi-dimensional character. The following sections address these issues.
2.2. BEYOND THE AGENCY-STRUCTURE DIVIDE

The difficulty of theorizing migration (Arango, 2000), of integrating interdisciplinary perspectives in an effort to do justice to mixed empirical evidence of migration experiences across different contexts, reflects a legacy of starting from either ‘voluntarist’ or ‘structuralist’ notions of society. Historically, two of the most influential positions for explaining migration take-off have been neo-classical rational choice theories, which focus on individuals and households reacting to push and pull factors, and world-systems approaches, which focus on the global organization of capitalism and people’s displacement (for both positions, see Castles and Miller 2003; Massey et al., 1993; Wright, 1995). The agency-structure divide apparent in these positions has also influenced the migration-development debate more specifically. This debate has been dominated by a (‘voluntarist’) model on the one hand, which particularly emphasizes migration’s potential for development, and a (‘structuralist’) dependency model on the other, which emphasizes migration as a force beyond control and migrants as mere puppets of geopolitics and labour markets (Cohen, 2001: 955; De Haan, 1999). Empirical examples of these models include remittances and migration-induced community investment, versus brain drain and migration-induced dependency and inequality. In these models and the studies that adopt them, migration is generally presented as either a solution or an obstacle for development, rather than an ‘integral part’ of it (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010).

A lack of duly integrating human agency and of structural factors prevents a better understanding of the actual heterogeneity of migration-development interactions (De Haas and Rodriguez, 2010: 178-180). More than two decades ago, Massey and his colleagues (1993) already argued against ‘theoretical exclusivity’ and instead sought theoretical complementarity that can take into account actors’ cost-benefit calculations, households’ labour allocations, and structurally shaped contexts of decision-making. These authors hold the view that diverging theoretical positions on migration are compatible because they seek to explain migration at different levels, based on the research agendas of different disciplines. In addition, the authors identified the emergence of a migration systems approach. Migration systems combine micro- and macro-level perspectives by including the networks, institutionalization, and cumulative causation that play a role in migration’s perpetuation. According to Massey and his colleagues, the different theoretical positions on migration, including the ‘intermediary’ migration systems approach, should be combined and empirically evaluated on their own terms in order to integrate their respective insights into a multi-level approach to migration.
Perhaps the stance of Massey and his colleagues served as inspiration for the recent movement towards genuine interdisciplinary and multi-level perspectives (Castles and Miller, 2003). However, a mere combination of insights does not automatically do away with some of the rather simplistic notions that underpin these insights (see also De Haas, 2014), limiting the extent to which they can account for the heterogeneous character of migration-development interactions. To illustrate in line with the observations by Massey et al. mentioned above: even though individuals may assess the costs and benefits of migrating or not migrating, they do not make this assessment as detached, rational ‘fools’ (Kabeer, 2000) because they are embedded in a social environment characterized by power relations, uncertainties and ambiguities. Even though households diversify labour, they do not harmoniously strive after unanimously agreed upon goals. Households are sites of struggle and its members oscillate between conflict and cooperation. Finally, even though structural factors shape the context in which individuals and households operate, they get re-worked and re-produced locally. In sum, integrating insights from different theoretical positions while keeping their respective underpinnings may not be entirely possible.

2.3. AN ACTOR-ORIENTED APPROACH

In an attempt to avoid an unproductive agency-structure divide that has traditionally limited our understanding of heterogeneous migration-development interactions, this thesis adopts an actor-oriented approach as advocated by Long (2001). An actor-oriented approach focuses on people’s co-production of their experiences and contexts, accounting for social heterogeneity. One of the key premises of the actor-oriented approach is an ‘active’ yet ‘embedded’ view on human agency, that is,

“within the limits of information and resources they have and the uncertainties they face, individuals and social groups are ‘knowledgeable’ and ‘capable’, that is, they devise ways of solving, or if possible avoiding, ‘problematic situations’, and thus actively engage in constructing their own social worlds.” (Long, 2001, p. 24)

This view on agency directs our attention to people’s resourcefulness. At the same time, it acknowledges the limitations of the material and non-material resources people have at their disposal for striving after what they value.

An actor-oriented approach recognizes the context of the multiple, multi-directional power relations and structures of inequality in which access to these resources is situated (see also McNay, 2000: 23; Villarreal, 1994). In addition, it recognizes that people’s use of their agency may reproduce the same power relations and structures they draw upon to shape their lives (see also Bourdieu, 1990: 65). To elaborate this a
bit further, Bourdieu sees exercising agency as a mobilization of what has happened in the past and an anticipation of what is likely to happen in the future (McNay, 1999: 104). People ‘know’ what their possibilities and impossibilities (and those of others) are and what they can reasonably expect. They act on what is possible and probable, hence the reproduction of context. However, this common-sense knowledge is not put in practice in deterministic but rather in generative ways (Bourdieu, 1990: 55), accounting for social heterogeneity and possibilities for change (Long, 2001).

Such a contextually sensitive actor-oriented and multi-dimensional approach opens up the traditional agency-structure divide that has characterized much of the migration-development debate. In particular, it serves to nuance the recent general shift from rather negative views that emphasize the (human) losses of migration to more positive views that almost celebrate migration, its remittances in particular, as a way of bottom-up, self-help development (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010; Eversole, 2005; Kunz, 2008). Apart from the question of whether this ‘celebration’ of migration is fair to the migrants and the families involved (Glick Schiller and Faist, 2010), it is doubtful that this is a realistic assessment of migration-development, given the multiple, often institutional factors beyond migrants’ control. In order to account for the multi-dimensionality of migration-development (beyond, for example, monetary income) and for the general heterogeneity of migration-development interactions (De Haas, 2014), the debate must be fostered by concrete empirical case studies that analyse specific interactions in specific historical and local settings (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010). This endeavour is aided by recent developments in transnationalism and translocality, which are discussed in the next sections.

3. TRANSNATIONALISM AND METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM

Current optimism regarding migration-development interactions largely rests on the premise that migrants are social beings who, in addition to shaping a life at their (temporary) destinations, also maintain ties with the people and places that constitute their roots. From the 1990s onwards, the recognition of migrants’ multiple cross-border practices and the increased technological possibilities for conducting them (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999) has contributed to the development of a transnational perspective (Vertovec, 2009). Although transnationalism can refer to a host of sustained globalization phenomena simultaneously involving multiple nation-states (Castles and Miller, 2003), it has been defined in migration studies as “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement”(Glick Schiller et al., 1992: 26-27). Such processes include remittances, transnational entrepreneurship, and Home Town Associations, but also transnational care chains and the circulation of information.
and values. The transnational perspective is an interdisciplinary field for researching these and other cross-border connections throughout socioeconomic, political, and cultural domains (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).

In the course of almost three decades, this transnational perspective has evolved considerably, beyond the arguably overly optimistic and generalizing initial accounts of its early scholars. Criticism regarding its vague definition have been addressed by advances in transnational typologies (see for example Kivisto, 2001; Levitt et al., 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Vertovec, 2009), whereas transnationalism’s relevance, scope and newness are the subject of ongoing debates. Although it can be argued that the transnational perspective has largely been developed based on migration from the ‘global South’ to the United States (Olwig and Sørensen, 2002), accounts of multi-dimensional transnational practices across the globe have increasingly demonstrated its relevance beyond US immigration. Furthermore, although transnationalism scholars now (explicitly) recognize that migrants may be involved with transnational practices to differing degrees, or not at all, they have also developed the view that people who do not migrate can still be involved in transnational social fields of circulation and exchange (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Vertovec, 2004). Finally, to the question of whether transnationalism is really new compared to earlier cross-border practices of migrants, leading scholars Glick Schiller and Levitt (2006) respond that it is a novel, more sophisticated way of looking at such practices and making them visible, as well as an adequate acknowledgement of particular globalization processes that make current cross-border practices unique, including technological advances as well as exclusionary nation-state politics (see also Vertovec, 2009).

The newness of the transnational perspective also lies in its potential to address the post-World War II evolution of social sciences and even migration studies towards methodological nationalism, which Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) define as “naturalizing the nation-state unit” (see also Kalir, 2013). Instead of almost automatically defining research interests, categories and analyses at a ‘natural’ national level, a transnational perspective foregrounds the experiences of migrants who literally and figuratively cross nation-state borders (Amelina and Faist, 2012). By researching cross-border connections and their implications, transnationalism includes two or more nation-states and goes beyond a single nation-state view. However, a transnational perspective may still run the risk of perpetuating methodological nationalism if it essentialises transnational communities or ethnic groups as homogeneous entities (Amelina and Faist, 2012; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). In research, it thus remains important to be aware of a possible national bias.
These reservations do not imply, however, that nation-states and borders do not matter. On the contrary, the ways migrants deal with the everyday implications of in- and exclusion also shape their transnational practices (Glick Schiller and Levitt, 2006). For example, whether migrants can legally cross a national border or not influences their options for family visits. Criticism of methodological nationalism should thus not lead to a currently “fashionable neglect of the nation-state” (Freitag and Von Oppen, 2010: 11) because, as Portes (2011) maintains, nation-states remain key actors even in an age of intense sub- and supra-national linkages. Being aware of possible methodological nationalism is thus not about ignoring the nation-state, but about addressing instead of assuming it.

4. TRANSLOCALITY

Relatedly, it is important to acknowledge contexts in which national borders are considered arbitrary and/or carry little weight, as well as migrant practices that have to do with the numerically bigger phenomenon of internal migration (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013; see also Freitag and Von Oppen, 2010). Recently, and partly in response to this, the notion of translocality has gained popularity in anthropology, geography and development studies (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013), largely alongside but increasingly also further refining the transnational perspective. A translocal perspective can be seen as a way to explicitly re-territorialize a diversity of global migration processes (Brickell and Datta, 2011; Freitag and Von Oppen, 2010) through embodiment and emplacement (Dunn, 2010; Yeoh et al., 2003). Such a translocal perspective is in line with calls from transnationalism scholars to ‘ground’ or ‘anchor’ transnational practices in specific localities, precisely because a specific time and place matters for shaping these practices (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Guarnizo and Smith, 1998; Sinatti, 2006; Smith, 2005). Cross-border practices and implications do not take place in a dis-embedded space out there (Zoomers and Van Westen, 2011), but at specific localities (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007) that may or may not be divided by national borders.

Translocality has been defined as both a specific type of locality and an attribute of social configurations. Regarding the first optic, a translocality is understood as a place of intense local-global interactions (Appadurai, 1996), a place whose ‘architecture’ has been fundamentally reconfigured based on cross-border connections (Conradson and McKay, 2007). Translocalities include, for example, extended villages that incorporate links between the urban and the rural, both within (Lohnert and Steinbrink, 2005) and across (Velayutham and Wise, 2005) national borders.
This thesis does not set out to research such translocalities per se, but primarily uses the second optic, of translocality as an attribute of social configurations. A household, way of life, or entire community can become translocal by incorporating cross-border circulation and exchange in its day-to-day reproduction. These translocal connections between people and places may cross borders between nation-states, but also between municipalities, rural and urban zones, and regional areas. In terms of social reproduction and local viability, such translocal cross-border connections both transform and help sustain social configurations, such as Muy Muy livelihoods, in a ‘globalized world’ (Benz, 2014; Klooster, 2005; Lohnert and Steinbrink, 2005; Nguyen, 2014; Schröder and Stephan-Emmrich, 2014).

For the purposes of this thesis, while acknowledging and building on the legacy of transnational scholarship, there are at least two reasons for using the term translocal instead of transnational. First, following the idea that migration-development needs to be contextualized, the term translocal emphasizes that transnational dynamics are always grounded in specific localities (Freitag and Von Oppen, 2010). In other words, the term translocal signals the link between cross-border connections and locality, indicating ‘situatedness during mobility’ (Brickell and Datta, 2011) and the ways in which these may influence each other (how, for example, migration aids the reproduction of a specific locality, and how locality influences the types of migration taking place). Second, the term translocal draws attention to the possibility that the connections migrants and their families establish do not only or mainly connect nation-states, but also or rather localities across and within national borders (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). These connections may be more about specific places and their characteristics than about nation-states. The thesis thus makes use of the term translocal to emphasize a possible diversity of cross-border connections grounded in concrete local settings.

4.1. TRANSLOCAL LIVELIHOODS

One such setting concerns people’s livelihoods (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003). Interdisciplinary and actor-oriented livelihood studies have been used to show how diversity, adaptability and resilience are important dimensions of people’s strategies for gaining a meaningful living in often challenging contexts (Bebbington, 1999; De Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Scoones, 2009). According to Ellis (ibid: 10), “[a] livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household.” A livelihood is not static but dynamic, mediated through multi-level dynamics including a household’s life cycle, seasonality, and fluctuations in a national economy. A
livelihood also constitutes more than making a living based on available resources: it is about creating a valuable and possibly more just life (Bebbington, 1999: 2022).

Livelihood studies have been subject to ongoing debate. One of the main challenges for future research is a further incorporation of power relations as well as globalization processes at different scales (De Haan, 2012; Scoones, 2009). Although livelihood studies have made various attempts to include power relations (such as gender) in their analysis, power has often remained at the margins because of a largely instrumental and economic agenda (ibid.; Turner, 2012). It remains a challenge to duly understand and integrate the multiple ways in which power shapes livelihoods in order to account for processes of differentiation, marginalization, and opportunity (Scoones, 2009). Furthermore, livelihood studies need to take into account the diverse cross-border connections across scales that play a role in shaping ‘firmly rooted’ livelihoods (ibid: 188). These connections can offer insight into the various ways that “livelihoods both depend on and shape global forces” (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003: 350).

A further incorporation of power and scale may be enabled by a translocal focus on migration and the disparate and dispersed livelihood strategies that migration entails (Kothari, 2003). Taking livelihoods as a starting point helps to anchor migration (Ellis, 2003), further exploring how differently positioned people may use scale as a resource for viable livelihoods (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001), and also helps to contextualize migration and its implications in time and place. It enables an inclusion of the diversity of cross-border connections that people may engage in, not a priori limiting analysis to specific border-crossings (Olwig and Sørensen, 2002). In order to ground migration-development interactions in Muy Muy, to signal the link between multiple cross-border connections and localities, this thesis makes use of translocal livelihoods as vehicles for researching migration-development.

Although the spatial dispersion of livelihood strategies is generally positively regarded as an indication of people’s resourcefulness, ‘translocalization’ of livelihoods is a power-ridden process that does not guarantee positive implications (Etzold, 2015). Researching migration-development through livelihoods therefore requires the explicit inclusion of a power-sensitive notion of mobility, which addresses people’s agency regarding migration (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010). Including such a mobility notion in livelihood studies is different from the ‘mobile livelihoods’ concept that Olwig and Sørensen (2002) propose. The term ‘mobile livelihoods’ might create the impression that the livelihoods in question are characterized by a constant and unproblematic mobility. From this perspective, the concept largely ignores the importance of livelihoods’ social and geographical rootedness (Freeman, 2002; Gilbert, 1998) as well as the disparate access to
mobility, the actual act of migration, and migration-related benefits. Mobility can be seen as a livelihood resource mediated by power relations (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 211) and not available or beneficial to all (Kothari, 2003). Translocal livelihoods constitute concrete local settings (Portes 2011) for a further exploration of mobility as a negotiated resource.

4.2. MOBILITY AS A NEGOTIATED RESOURCE

A relatively static view of looking at migration’s starting points and ends has dominated over investigating migration itself (Cresswell, 2010; Schapendonk, 2011). But addressing migration rather than taking it as a given has recently become the focus of mobilities research, aided by the so-called ‘mobilities turn’ in social sciences (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Willis, 2010). Mobilities research has grown largely in tune with attention to (international) migration and spatially dispersed livelihoods (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003; Ellis, 2000; Sørensen and Olwig, 2002). In particular, mobilities research further develops notions of context-specific differentiations identified by transnational studies. For example: gendered transnational family practices, including the asymmetric positioning of men and women therein (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Mahler and Pessar, 2001; 2006); regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Kalir, 2013; Zontini, 2008); and remittances experiences (Carling, 2014). By further interrogating such contextualized and differentiated migration experiences (Cresswell, 2010; Schapendonk and Steel, 2014; Sheller and Urry, 2006), mobilities research may contribute to understanding migration-development heterogeneity.

In particular, mobilities research emphasizes how migration is embodied and materially and politically situated in specific localities (Blunt, 2007). Mobility thus relates to “the production and distribution of power” (Cresswell, 2010: 21) between social groups marked by gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, and other identifiers. Mobility cannot be about neutral spatial movement because it involves differently positioned people to whom mobility means different things (ibid: 19). Moreover, access to mobility is stratified and can be considered a stratifying factor (ibid: 22; Carling, 2002; Kothari, 2003). The processes and implications of unequally distributed access to mobility are materialized in people’s translocal livelihoods.

A notion of differentiated mobility implies that the spatial dispersion of livelihoods is not a given. Especially in contexts heavily influenced by a ‘culture of migration’, where migration and well-being are considered to be linked (Connell, 2008⁴), people

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⁴ Connell (2008: 1031) described a setting with a ‘culture of migration’ as follows: “where
who are unable or unwilling to migrate are still involved in negotiations over mobility, and actual migration shapes lives far beyond those of migrants themselves.\(^5\)

The choice for specific livelihood strategies can mean reserving migration for some while denying it to others, according to the circumstances of a specific time and place. Some household members may even feel obliged to migrate depending on the context and their role in their household’s livelihood, while they might rather stay at home. Differentiated mobility means that the unequally shared costs and benefits of migration influence well-being not only at household but also at individual level.

This is clearly articulated by Massey (1993) in her concept of ‘power-geometry of time-space compression of contemporary global flows’, including migration. The author asserts:

“For different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn’t, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. ... It is not simply a question of unequal distribution, that some people move more than others, some have more control than others. It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people.” (Massey, 1993: 61-62, emphasis in original)

This ‘power-geometry’ of mobility and migration is particularly useful for contributing to research on migration-development heterogeneity in which not only a diversity of context-specific migration-development interactions are recognized, but also mobility and migration themselves are considered development experiences.

In line with a more general need to advance the fundamental relational and differentiated aspects of capabilities (De Herdt and Bastiaensen, 2008), taking Massey’s power-geometry into account increases understanding of mobility as a pervasive and based on historical precedents, where decisions to migrate were made as part of everyday experiences and generally accepted as appropriate and legitimate means to economic and social well-being, and where migration was neither rupture nor discontinuity in personal and household experiences, but an integral part of ... life.”

\(^5\) This was already recognized in the notion of transnational social fields (Glick Schiller and Levitt, 2006), but largely regarding migration as a given rather than in the sense of access to migration itself.
capability and migration as its achievement. So far, literature on mobility as a capability has recognized a diversity of macro dynamics that intervene in people’s agency regarding migration (De Haas and Rodríguez, 2010; Gasper and Truong, 2010), such as capitalist restructuring and migration policies. However, possible differentiations at the level of social relations, for example those of gender and generation, have not yet been explicitly dealt with. These specific relational and differentiated aspects of mobility will be researched across Muy Muy translocal livelihoods, in order to further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has elaborated the main premises of the thesis. It has developed a theoretical framework that does justice to the contextuality and multi-dimensionality of migration-development by elaborating and integrating insights from transnationalism, translocal livelihoods and mobilities research. Based on this framework, and the empirical data presented in the subsequent chapters, the thesis seeks to further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences in order to advance the debate on migration-development heterogeneity. It uses translocal livelihoods as a vehicle for researching heterogeneous mobility and migration experiences in Muy Muy, the ways these are differentiated within families, and the development values they entail.

The research focus and questions of the thesis have been further specified based on multi-sited ethnographic research. In interaction with public and academic debates, this research allowed for a gradual, organic emergence of three livelihood domains in which differentiated migration-development experiences materialize, namely, carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. The next chapter will elaborate on the methodological aspects of the research that helped to identify and interrogate these domains. It is followed by a contextual chapter about Muy Muy migration and livelihoods in a national, regional and global setting, which further situates these domains. The core of the thesis consists of three empirical chapters, each preceded by a short introduction that clarifies the link of the livelihood domain under study with the research focus.
CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHING, MAINTAINING, AND ENGAGING CONNECTIONS
METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT MULTI-SITED FIELDWORK
“[Ethnography] is a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms the irreducibility of human experience.” (Willis and Trondman, 2002: 394)

“I wonder if it is not a recurrent characteristic of multi-site ethnography that site selections are to an extent made gradually and cumulatively, as new insights develop, as opportunities come into sight, and to some extent by chance. ... [E]thnography is an art of the possible ... [a]nd so we do it now and then, fitting it into our lives when we have a chance.” (Hannerz, 2003: 207, 213)

“Today, the ‘best practice’ of fieldwork is *ethically grounded*, with free and informed consent of research participants. It is *participatory*, shaped with the active *collaboration* of research ‘participants’ rather than ‘subjects’, and conducted with their needs in mind. That is, *reciprocity* – giving something back to the community which they deem to be of use to them – is built into it by design.” (Sluka and Robben, 2012: 29, emphasis in original)

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The quotes above convey a sense of the main methodological decisions that have shaped the empirical research for this thesis. Not unlike the linkages that migrants and their families create, it is characterized by multiple *connections*: among researcher and research participants, among different methods, and among a number of sites. These connections needed to be established, maintained, and engaged in order to explore the topic under study. At the same time, they are not clearly distinguishable or neatly manageable and tend to lead a life of their own, sometimes going through frictions, unfolding in unforeseen directions, or even fading away. The result is a complex, often unstable yet coherent network of fieldwork connections that this chapter tries to give a glimpse of in order to situate the thesis’ empirical findings.

But first, it is important to clarify the type of research employed here. This thesis rests on multi-sited ethnographic research, including a heavy reliance on time- and place-specific fieldwork and a reflexive research attitude. The research closely followed translocal livelihood dynamics and cross-border extensions of families in Muy Muy for more than five years and included, in total, a little over seven months of face-to-face fieldwork. Such a multi-sited ethnographic approach was deemed most appropriate for gaining in-depth knowledge of people’s ‘irreducible’
experiences in a migration context and addressing the thesis’ research questions. The ethnographic research also provided direct input for a village-wide survey that attempted to generate descriptive, quantitative background data about the incidence of relevant migration-development dynamics across Muy Muy. Before going into the specific types of data that were generated, the following section will first provide a general picture of the type of knowledge construction that this thesis is built on. This chapter will then continue with an overview and clarification of methods. The main part of the chapter discusses the specific ways of establishing, maintaining, and engaging connections that characterize the empirical research.

2. KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION: REFLEXIVITY, TRANSPARENCY AND FIELD RELATIONSHIPS

Fieldwork, and participant observation in particular, is central to this thesis’ findings. According to Sluka and Robben (2012: 2), ethnographic fieldwork is characterized by a ‘dynamic and contradictory synthesis’ between insider and outsider: “As an insider, the fieldworker learns what behavior means to the people themselves. As an outsider, the fieldworker observes, experiences, and makes comparisons in ways that insiders can or would not.” Over the past decades, this insider-outside synthesis and fieldwork in general have been subject to much debate, particularly concerning the power relations that are part of the way fieldworker and research participants construct knowledge (Robben, 2012). It is now widely accepted that a reflexive stance that examines these power relations needs to be part of all research stages. In this thesis, I try to concretize reflexivity by being as transparent as possible about the research process, its choices and its limitations (or perhaps rather, peculiarities).

In research with a largely qualitative character, transparency about the ways data have been interpreted increases validity (Mason, 2002). This thesis is built on the assumption that research constitutes an ongoing back-and-forth (‘iterative’) process between theory and data (see also Willis and Trondman, 2002) aimed at convincing theoretical generalization. Instead of trying to generalize through statistical verification within a wider population, the interpretation of empirical material presented here “throws light on processes or issues which are pivotal or central to some wider body of explanation or knowledge” (Mason, 2002: 196) regarding migration-development. To arrive at convincing theoretical generalization, the thesis rests on iteration, which is “a reflexive process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data”, and includes “the active interests, current literature, granted

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6 With one exception: the survey data allows for statistically representative generalization (see below).
priorities, and various theories the researcher brings to the data” (Tracy, 2013: 84). For ‘visiting and revisiting’ the data, and in order to arrive at insights about the way social processes in particular contexts operate (Mason, 2002), I have primarily used manual coding. Depending on the stage of research and the specific course of interviews, and in close alliance with public and academic readings, manual coding allowed for a fine-grained identification of and reflection on recurring themes (ibid) that would become the basis of the arguments and theoretical generalization developed in this thesis.

Transparency also extends to the link between data generation and interpretation, in particular to the circumstances and corresponding bias through which knowledge has been constructed and further analysed. This thesis adheres to the type of qualitative inquiry that sees ongoing interpretation as a practice that “requires the engagement of one’s biases” (Schwandt, 2000: 195), and that interpretation is produced (not reproduced) and negotiated in the dialogue between a positioned (not neutral) researcher and research subjects. It follows that I prefer to call all persons who were part of the fieldwork ‘participants’ (instead of using more passive terms like respondents, informants, and so forth) because their participation has undoubtedly shaped the research.7 The fieldwork is squarely based on interaction between research and research participants, in the sense that “relationships of intimacy and familiarity between researcher and subject are envisioned as a fundamental medium of investigation rather than as an extraneous by-product or even an impediment” (Amit, 2000: 2). Although it is precisely the closeness to research participants that is seen as a valuable asset here, the instrumental nature of this closeness, and the risk of exploitation that it entails, constitutes its flipside (ibid: 3). Throughout the fieldwork I have tried to mitigate the risk of exploitation by being as open as possible with the research participants. This included a sincere representation of who I was and what I was looking for, of what would happen with the information the research participants shared, and of what I could be/do for them (see below for a further elaboration of field relationships).

It is not my intention to romanticize this closeness to research participants. The unequal character of our relationship does not leave the research participants without the power (and right) to pursue their own agenda, look for benefits that our relationship may provide, and hide or twist data (see section 4.2). It is my responsibility, however, to do justice to people’s experiences and to adequately interpret data given any kind of circumstances. In addition, it is my responsibility not to inflict any harm, directly or indirectly, on the research participants, no matter

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7 It goes without saying that I take full responsibility for the end result.
what course our relationship may take. This also means that certain topics, and certain ways of gaining insight in these topics, as well as representing them, may be off limits in specific circumstances. Finally, I also consider it my responsibility to compensate the research participants for their time and effort, generally known as the commitment to ‘give back’. These issues will be further elaborated below.

3.  A CLARIFICATION AND OVERVIEW OF METHODS

To provide a sense of the basic fieldwork structure that the research connections amount to, I have summarized the methods in Table 1 (see page 49), including the number of research participants and interviews as well as the research locations and phases. In order to address the research questions, which are focused on migration characteristics, differentiations and development values that can be found throughout Muy Muy livelihoods, the fieldwork consisted of methods that would allow people room to express their experiences. Although not always neatly distinguishable (see below), participant observation was primarily used for building rapport and getting a sense of the social fabric in order to address relevant topics that would do justice to the multi-dimensionality and contextuality of people’s experiences. Interviews, both face-to-face and from a distance (by telephone), were primarily constructed around these topics, but only in a semi-structured way, in order to leave substantial room for input from the research participants. This process, in interaction with public and academic migration-development debates, resulted in an identification and interrogation of the three livelihood domains that form the empirical core of this thesis: carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. In turn, these domains enabled a discussion of different aspects of the research questions.

The fieldwork also included ‘enabling methods’ for interviewing, not directly analysed in this thesis but nonetheless of indirect importance. Such methods enabled the research participants to express themselves outside a conventional question and answer format, stimulating interaction that built rapport, contextual knowledge, and clues for further research. The fieldwork employed three such methods: couple cards, social mappings, and financial diaries. These will be further detailed below. In terms of their specific contribution to the thesis, couple cards and social mappings were especially useful for highlighting gender differences in the division of labour and daily mobility patterns, whereas financial diaries exposed (cross-border) complexities of livelihoods and debt relations. These clues were then further explored through ‘classic’ interviews, and incorporated in the analysis of the different livelihood domains.
### TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method / tool</th>
<th>Number of research participants</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Research location</th>
<th>Research phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant observations</td>
<td>Not applicable (n/a)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Muy Muy, Costa Rica, Spain</td>
<td>June – July 2009; January – February 2010; September – October 2010; February – March 2011; September – October 2011; August 2012; September – October 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Muy Muy, Managua</td>
<td>June – July 2009; January – February 2010; September – October 2010; February – March 2011; September – October 2011; September – October 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Costa Rica**</td>
<td>February – March 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spain***</td>
<td>August 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>To Muy Muy, Costa Rica, Spain</td>
<td>June 2009 – December 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple cards</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>January – February 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social mappings</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>January – February 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial diaries</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>October 2010 – September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>October – December 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field notes were taken and analysed throughout the research

Source: Author’s own representation. *Research participants in Costa Rica partly overlap with those in Muy Muy (see Annex I). **Costa Rica includes Nicoya, Quepos, Alajuela, San Isidro de Heredia and San José. ***Spain includes Seville and neighboring city San Juan de Aznalfarache.

Finally, the fieldwork included a survey to address some key qualitative findings at village-wide level. A survey was not the primary interest of the research, given its concern with “the irreducibility of human experience” (Willis and Trondman, 2002: 394), but as the research advanced, a survey seemed more and more useful. First, to address possible bias: I found a prevalence and diversity of migrations through qualitative methods, but was this not in part a result of the way I conducted my research, looking for migrant families and migration stories? And second, to address an emerging contrast between these qualitative findings of prevalence and diversity.
on the one hand, and the relatively limited experiences of migration reported in previous surveys conducted in the area on the other (Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009; INIDE, 2008). The survey was thus set up to provide descriptive and quantitative background data to the qualitative findings, primarily regarding migration characteristics, differentiations and implications, and their linkages to the three livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. Further details of this survey will be discussed below.

The fieldwork (except the survey) primarily builds on connections with 26 core families that are identified in Annex I, involving sustained contact, multiple family members and multiple observations. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, for reasons of ‘blood’ and ‘emotional connection’ I will usually talk about migrants and their families, however, the research employed family-based households as the research units. These family-based households were delineated by the research participants themselves. This delineation process started with my main contact, who identified the principal (young to middle-aged) couple of the household, and, following Ellis’ notion of ‘interdependencies’ (2000: 18), further identified every person that regularly depended on and contributed to the household as a member. This flexible definition also allowed for cross-border household membership. As can be seen in Annex I, most of these families were also linked to each other by family and friendship ties.

Although the fieldwork primarily built on the experiences of these 26 core families, it included other research participants as well, resulting in a total of 93 research participants (see Table 1) from mostly within but also outside the 26 core families. The research participants who were not part of the 26 core families constituted a diverse group. They included members of families in Muy Muy I was less close to, but also academics, moneylenders, taxi drivers, shop owners and hotel staff. The interviews with these other research participants allowed for a diversity of local perspectives that usefully complemented the research with the core families.

This chapter continues with a discussion of establishing connections, that is, selecting and managing access to the research site(s) and the research participants. It then turns to maintaining connections by describing strategies to re-visit, call, and follow the research participants. Finally, the chapter goes into engaging connections: the specific methods and analytical strategies used to answer the thesis’ research questions.
4. ESTABLISHING CONNECTIONS

4.1. SOME REFLECTIONS ON MUY MUY AS A FIELD SITE

The principal site of research, the village of Muy Muy in the department of Matagalpa in central Nicaragua (see Figure 1), was not selected based on pre-determined criteria of specific migration-development dynamics. It was (and will again be) one of the focal areas of the Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo Nitlapan of the Universidad Centromericana (Nitlapan-UCA), a long-term institutional partner of IOB. In particular, together with nearby focal area Matiguás, Muy Muy was part of a collaborative project of Nitlapan and IOB called ‘Generación de conocimientos y sinergias para el desarrollo rural en Muy Muy y Matiguás’ (Bastiaensen, Merlet and Flores, 2015: 14). This project was active when I started my fieldwork, and provided an opportunity for exchange of information and logistical support. For practical reasons, I visited Muy Muy before Matiguás, and it was here where I stayed to conduct my fieldwork, at least most of the Nicaraguan part. In order to get an in-depth understanding of migration-development interactions in a specific locality, and considering the limited time available for fieldwork, I considered it more interesting to focus on Muy Muy and aim at an intimate knowledge of its dynamics, instead of rather superficially extending my research to other focal areas of Nitlapan.

The reasoning above does not imply, however, that Muy Muy is not an appropriate locality for researching migration-development. As will be further discussed in chapter 3, it constitutes a node of an important Central Nicaraguan zone characterized by economic dynamism and potential as well as a diversity of migration processes (Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009). Even without knowing the extent of people’s migration experiences beforehand, existing surveys and descriptions already characterized Muy Muy as a village marked by migration. The lack of in-depth understanding of the role of migration processes for people’s livelihoods coupled with the zone’s economic interest for Nicaragua made Muy Muy a fruitful base for this research.

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8 My day-to-day research, however, was not part of this project (and I did not present it as such).
No matter what dynamics led me to base my research in Muy Muy, it was not a pre-existing field but got constructed as such in the course of the research (Amit, 2000; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, see also below). It was selected by starting and staying there, and then, in line with research objectives and opportunities, certain aspects were emphasized and elaborated whereas others were not. An example of this selectivity concerns the fieldwork’s urban bias, which reflects the unfortunate but common practice of excluding hard-to-reach areas. Although I tried to include Muy Muy’s rural areas as much as possible, logistical constraints made it very difficult to do so. However, the financial diaries, and especially the survey (see below), provided an opportunity for further inclusion of Muy Muy’s rural areas. Moreover, without
trivializing the unfortunate urban bias, the rural and urban in Muy Muy are closely connected and based on this connection I could still gain insight into important aspects of its rural life. For instance, many research participants in Muy Muy’s urban centre maintain close relationships with family members in the rural areas. They invited me to visit their rural counterparts and shared rural produce and stories. People from rural areas also regularly ‘come down’ to the urban centre, which allowed for some visits, updates, and sustained contact. This way, the evolving network of fieldwork relationships enabled a partial remediation of the urban bias.

4.2. ACCESS: ENTRY POINTS, NAVIGATING FIELD RELATIONSHIPS, AND ‘GIVING BACK’

Upon my first arrival in Muy Muy, I tried to gain access to ‘the field’ (in the making) by using snowball-sampling through different entry points. This way, I aimed to include a variety of families that would be reflective of local diversity. Entry points included staff of Muy Muy establishments (including the modest hotel where I stayed, the municipal office, Fondo de Desarrollo Local (FDL) and the Organización para el Desarrollo Económico y Social para el Área Urbana y Rural (ODESAR), local participants of an applied research and learning program that was part of the Nitlapan-IOB project mentioned above, and random encounters. At the very start of the fieldwork in Muy Muy, I introduced myself and my research at the establishments mentioned above and asked for information on individuals and households with migration experience. As expected, this open approach led me to families with different compositions, socio-economic backgrounds, and migration histories. Most of these families tended to combine different migration experiences, having (had) different family members at different locations. Even if it had been my intention to compare migrant with non-migrant families (which it was not), this proved to be almost impossible. Those who were not migrating at the time of research, may have done so in the past or planned to do so in the future. In addition, even within migrant families non-migration also takes place (by those who stay). This diversity and volatility provided useful research clues.

At the local learning program, I met María,9 who was to become my confidante, research participant, and local coordinator/researcher. Although Maria did not introduce me to many potential research participants, she was a key contact for

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9 All names used here are pseudonyms. In addition, throughout most empirical sections of this thesis, I make use of age ranges of five years in order to most accurately reflect the ages of the research participants over multiple years of research. I also refer to the location of the research participants by using MM for Muy Muy, CR for Costa Rica, and SP for Spain.
making use of local facilities, understanding local sensitivities, and reflecting on the research process. At the time of the research, María worked for the municipal government, studied sociology in the nearby city of Matagalpa, and had family members in the United States. These experiences, coupled with her inquisitive nature and excellent social standing, made her a very interesting and reliable mediator. It was fortunate, however, that I did not meet her until after the exploratory fieldwork phase. The fact that María worked for the municipal government, which was controlled by the Sandinistas at the time, could have made non-Sandinistas, polarized opponents or a-political villagers suspicious of participating in the research, even though she did not display a radical political profile herself. But by the time I met her, I had already established my own network. My acquaintance with María did not seem to affect these previously established connections, which I see as an indicator that her politically charged job did not have any negative repercussions for the fieldwork.

Finally, I made use of random encounters to further diversify my ‘pool’ of potential research participants. These encounters usually involved young to middle-aged females from the urban centre, characteristics that also reflect some characteristics of my main research participants. This is of course no coincidence, as I could probably relate best to them and their stories, and our contact evolved rather naturally (see below). However, even if my entrance to and sustained contact with the families was biased towards these females, they enabled further contact with other potential research participants, including direct family members and in-laws, both within and beyond the household, in Muy Muy and elsewhere.

One of the first random encounters was with Jacoba, whom I met while visiting the municipal office. She would become one of my main research participants, first regularly meeting at a café and her house in Muy Muy and finally at a restaurant in San José, Costa Rica, during one of her migration endeavours. But of all random encounters, I particularly recall the one with Lisa, a few days after meeting Jacoba. On my way to a family I had recently been introduced to, I rode my bicycle in a ditch. I went to the nearest ventecita\(^{10}\) where the woman who gave me some tissues to clean the mud off my feet was Lisa, who would become a participant in both the couple cards and financial diaries (see below) and whose marido\(^{11}\) I would later visit in Alajuela, Costa Rica. Lisa herself had worked in both Managua and rural Costa Rica. As a final example, I met Alma when she invited me in at a community centre to avoid a sudden downpour. Alma, who herself had migrated to Costa Rica and whose

\(^{10}\) A small house-front grocery store.
\(^{11}\) Formal or common-law husband.
*ex-marido* worked in Managua, introduced me to her sister’s family, of which I would meet members in both Alajuela and Quepos, Costa Rica. Both families also participated in the financial diaries.

The ways in which I tried to gain access to the field have undoubtedly shaped the co-construction of knowledge that this thesis is based on. The research evolved largely based on my closeness to a number of female research participants and the issues we discussed, issues that also reflected my position and personal preoccupations during different research phases. In other words, we shared concerns that provided inputs to the fieldwork, inputs that were specific to the researcher, research participants, and the particular circumstances. Although I presented myself as a researcher from a Belgian university (and I actually had to emphasize quite often that I was really ‘working’, not just ‘travelling’), I discovered and tried to build on commonalities in our daily interactions. Depending on the research participant in question, these could be commonalities of gender, age, relationship status, family positioning, and professional goals. A key example of such ‘matching’ concerns family frictions in migration contexts. As I was also part of a migrant family and struggled with these frictions myself, discussing them provided an opportunity to build rapport and trust and allowed a very intimate view into the research participants’ life-worlds. Still, the role of these issues for Muy Muy livelihoods and migrations (see, for example, chapter 4 on carework) was not taken for granted but elaborated and interpreted through the use of different methods with a range of research participants in various contexts.

Although I have made use of some ‘professional’ contacts (for example, an employee of FDL) for gaining information and redirecting to possible research participants, the main part of the research is built on knowledge from relationships with ‘ordinary’ families. I think the way I introduced and positioned myself contributed to an in-depth view of these experiences. First, the intimate relationships that we created allowed the research participants the space to co-construct research knowledge that challenged some of my own assumptions, e.g. my expected lack of involvement of Muy Muy men in childcare, or the extent to which being ‘illegal’ influences migrants’ daily lives. Second, these intimate relationships helped me understand the research participants’ decisions about the type and timing of information they would share. A key example of this is the delicate information about the extent to which ex-partners are still (financially) involved in childcare (see the case of Alisa in chapter 4).

Research with and to a large extent about families also entails navigating strained relationships and domestic power struggles. Especially in the type of research implied in this thesis, where fieldwork is conducted with multiple family members over extended periods of time and changes are to be expected, family delicacies are
not only a source of information but can also become obstacles to ethical, duly grounded research. In my relationships with family members, I had to nourish the trust built with my main contact persons, but also ‘venture out’ to involve new research participants, interpret their contributions and develop new insights. It was a constant challenge to maintain my ‘alliances’ without upsetting family hierarchies or losing opportunities for fresh perspectives.

Moreover, I had to navigate family relationships in an ethical way. Although it was exactly the combination of insights from different people within one family that enabled a comprehensive view of migration-development experiences, I did not want to get involved in their disputes. Of course, it happened anyway. One of the most telling experiences in this regard was my encounter with Lisa’s marido Eduardo and his other common-law wife, Jessy, in Alajuela, Costa Rica. From Lisa I already knew that Eduardo most likely had another partner in Costa Rica. She was open about this, saying “con tal que me mande [as long as he sends me money]” and “lo que los ojos no ven, el corazón no siente [what the eyes do not see, the heart does not feel]”, interview 4 July 2009 in Muy Muy). I did not expect, however, that Eduardo would take me to the house he shared with Jessy. On the bus ride to this house, Eduardo asked me how things were ‘at home’. Although Lisa had complained about his failure to send money recently, I just responded that things had been difficult, especially when their child got sick. Eduardo explained that he had been without work and money for some time, but he just started working at a carwash again and expected to be able to send money soon. Our conversation grew somewhat awkward when I asked him how he was doing, and he seemed a bit embarrassed to tell me that Jessy was pregnant. It became even more awkward when, while getting off the bus and walking towards their house, he told me how this was his temporary home, while Jessy yelled “para siempre [forever]!” (interview 23 February 2011 in Alajuela). I was fortunate that both of Eduardo’s partners knew of each other’s existence. Also, a close-up of this triangle gave me a glimpse of what family life across borders may entail. However, this example also shows how delicate research relationships can be, and how careful we have to be in navigating them in order not to inflict any damage.

Research based on personal relationships, in which data are often seen as a ‘gift’ from research participants (Falzon, 2009: 1), also requires some thought on how to ‘give back’. Apart from the general goal of doing justice to people’s experiences, it is also important to think about directly giving something back to people whose resources a researcher has made use of. For one of the methods used in this research, the financial diaries, this was relatively straightforward. Financial diaries required families to participate in interviews over the course of a year, and it was clear they had to be compensated for their time, trust, and willingness to share. The
type of compensation was still up for discussion, but at least the inevitability and timing of compensation were quite easily established (see below and Annex II). However, the irregularity of other methods made it much more difficult to specify appropriate ways to give back. In these cases, I hope I have been able to do so, if only a little bit, by sharing some of my own resources as well. These included practical resources (like when I helped Carmen read a letter from the German migration offices that her niece received) but especially, emotional ones. I like to think that the close connections we established were not only beneficial for the research and for me personally (making me feel at home in a strange context), but also for the research participants, at least the closest ones. I hope my interest in their lives and our joint reflections have entertained as well as encouraged them.

5. MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS

The following sections discuss an important methodological strategy in this research, which is maintaining connections across time and space. The research tried to do so by re-visiting, calling, and following the research participants between June 2009 and December 2014, in/from Muy Muy, Managua, Costa Rica, Spain, and my workplace in Antwerp. As a result of both the possibility and the ‘obligation’ of maintaining connections, I felt like I was “never really out of the field” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 35). This way of maintaining connections had a practical reason, as other personal and professional responsibilities did not allow for extended periods of ‘local’ fieldwork. But it was also interesting in a more fundamental sense because it allowed me to track developments over time, which is very relevant in volatile migration contexts (in which non-migrants can become migrants and vice versa). However, in emotional terms, it was not the easiest strategy, as will be further detailed below.

5.1. RE-VISITING

Regarding re-visiting the research participants, I made frequent use of follow-up visits, participant observations and interviews during all fieldwork phases. This was an essential part of building rapport and trust and tracking changes and continuities. After our introduction, I usually asked potential research participants for permission to conduct an interview, either at the same time or during a later appointment. Afterwards, I would regularly visit the family and use information from these visits to further my understanding of the family’s dynamics in general and migration-development interactions more specifically, and to build connections with different family members. In this sense, even short follow-up interviews (or informal talks) could become in-depth, because they built on a connection that was already established. Naturally, these family visits were not divided equally. I had stronger
connections with some families and individual research participants than with others, allowing for a closer view of their family dynamics. However, even in cases where I was doubtful whether my visits were appreciated (especially after a period of absence), I also tried to follow these less close families as much as possible.

5.2. CALLING

In the strategy of re-visiting, but especially in calling the research participants from Antwerp, clarity about my intentions was essential. During my first calls after my first visit to Muy Muy, I would explain to the research participants that I was calling them because I was sincerely interested in how they were doing, but also because I would like to continue the research from a distance. All participants agreed. However, I did not expect these calls to be so emotionally draining. I had to gather the courage to make a call each time, and sometimes I put it off for weeks because I felt not up to it. In retrospect, I think I might have felt insecure: the research revolved around close connections but what if they were not close enough? Calling felt like a test. In Muy Muy, the research participants perhaps thought I was bothering them, but it would be difficult to say that to my face or kick me out of their house. A call, however, was easily ignored or rejected. In addition, calling was also challenging because of lack of coverage, changes in telephone number, and migration. Luckily, the research participants I aimed to maintain contact with never let me down. I like to think they appreciated my attempts to keep in touch, even if they knew it was a research strategy as well. Most of our calls proved to be very rewarding, indeed helping me to keep track of family developments but especially continuing the bond we had established before (see also Nyiri, 2013).

5.3. FOLLOWING: SOME REFLECTIONS ON MULTI-SITED FIELDWORK

The ability to keep in touch was also imperative for my chances of following migrant members of core families to their respective destinations. With each visit to Muy Muy, the contact maintained in-between visits helped ‘re-activate’ connections with the research participants rapidly, and when I decided to visit them or their family members in Costa Rica in 2011 and Spain in 2012, it gave me enough leverage for obtaining contact details and being accepted by those abroad. I did not plan to visit all migrants. My selection was based on the following considerations: a largely harmonious relationship between a migrant and his or her family in Muy Muy; a migrant’s availability; and my own schedule. Of all the migrants I planned on visiting, there was only one, in San José, whom I was unable to track down. Not surprisingly, the contact details I had were for a migrant I had never met and who was part of a family I was least close to.
Although the inclusion of multiple sites in ethnographic fieldwork may be as old as the practice (Amit, 2000; Hannerz, 2003; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997), the foundations for recognition and formalization of multi-sited fieldwork as we know it today were established by Marcus (1995). Multi-sited fieldwork can be seen as an increasingly visible adaptation of the ethnographic practice to ‘mobile study objects’, based on the idea that “the life-worlds of many people are constructed from elements that are not confined to a single geographical setting” (Nyiri, 2013: 369). Multi-sited fieldwork has become fashionable, especially in migration studies. However, it is also ‘testing the limits’ of ethnographic practice (Marcus, 1995), in particular raising concerns about the possibility of achieving ‘depth’ across various locations.

Falzon (2009: 7) writes about depth: “[t]he discussion on multi-sited ethnography revolves around the idea that it may well be a contradiction in terms”, that it concerns ‘more routes than roots’. However, the nature of depth in itself is up for discussion (Gallo, 2009). In multi-sited fieldwork, achieving depth does not need to be problematic, unless ethnographic practice is equated with a fixed geographical location instead of a site that is continuously constructed (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). More than geographic sites themselves, the relationships or connections that people create across multiple sites can be considered to constitute the research field (Robben, 2012). Following these connections and the people and places involved enables an in-depth view of the research participants’ migration experiences (Falzon, 2009). This is not to say that the context of these experiences is not important. They always need to be appropriately situated, given that particular contexts co-shape particular experiences. This way, the inclusion of multiple sites can result in a sort of ‘cross-fertilization’, as they inspire a look at the research process from different angles (Gallo, 2009).

Although migration studies and multi-sited fieldwork seem to sit well with each other for obvious reasons, the choice of sites to be included in migration research should not be taken for granted (ibid.). Following migrants is not self-evident but a result of methodological choices about which relationships to include. Sites need to be selected (ibid; Hannerz, 2003) with research objectives in mind, but also in tune with personal and professional responsibilities (Falzon, 2009; Nyiri, 2013). Any multi-sited project can therefore only be partial, in line with the notion that ethnographic practice does not aim to capture a ‘complete’ picture (Falzon, 2009; Gallo, 2009).

The research for this thesis is firmly rooted in Muy Muy, but follows connections that were important to the main research participants. Perhaps the research can be characterized as ‘centripetal’ (Aguilar, 2013), a term used to characterize fieldwork that takes research participants’ place of origin as its main axis and subsequently explores meaningful connections to other localities. Although I had thought about
following migrants even before setting foot in Muy Muy, it was only during the actual fieldwork that it became clear how much of daily life was shaped by connections beyond Muy Muy, and how important it was to take these into account in order to understand the research participants’ life-worlds. But eventually, as suggested earlier, the final choice of sites to include as well as the timing of visits was based not only on the most important connections of my main research participants, but also on my personal and professional responsibilities.

The sites I managed to include beyond Nicaragua were located in Costa Rica and Spain. It must be clear, however, that the strategy of ‘following’ concerned people-based extensions of livelihoods in Muy Muy, not localities per se. Specific characteristics of the localities in Costa Rica and Spain were of course taken into account in order to situate the research participants’ lives abroad, but the focus was on the migrants, not the places. Following them helped me get a better sense of their daily struggles. At times, it also turned out to be a strategy for seeing another side of the research participants. Being away from their families’ immediate scrutiny may have helped them open up a bit more. I also like to think some of them were pleased with my visit and proud to show me their ability to navigate unfamiliar surroundings.

In Costa Rica, I already knew most of the migrants from Muy Muy, but they often introduced me to other family members that I may have missed ‘at home’. During two weeks in early 2011 I visited and interviewed fourteen male and female members of nine families that were part of previous research in Muy Muy. These interviews mostly took place at their homes but also at their job sites and during leisure activities. The interviews focused on the journeys between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, migration goals, and daily life in Costa Rica (including family dynamics, employment experiences, and relations with Costa Ricans). In addition, I conducted five interviews with male and female members of Costa Rica’s academic and business community. These focused on Costa Ricans’ image of Nicaraguans, implementation of migration laws, and human rights. All visits and interviews took place in five different locations, ranging from the towns of Nicoya and Quepos in coastal tourist areas, to Alajuela, Costa Rica’s third-largest city, the nearby town of San Isidro de Heredia, and the country’s capital San José (see Figure 2). The diversity of these locations results from the different places of residence of the research participants I was able to visit.
In Spain, I did not know the migrants personally, which I am sure contributed to the greater difficulty of getting in touch and meeting with them. In August 2012, I managed to visit nine migrants (eight female and one male) at their sites of work, home and leisure in Seville and the neighbouring city San Juan de Aznalfarache.
(which is part of the metropolitan area of Seville). I conducted in-depth interviews with five of the female migrants. Here, topics also included migration histories and projects, as well as migrants’ monetary and social networks. Coming back to the relative difficulty of following these research participants, life in Spain seemed more restricted, leaving fewer opportunities for encounters (see chapter 6). I also felt less comfortable there than in Costa Rica, aware of most research participants’ lack of correct documentation and wary of increasing their visibility. The stakes are generally much higher in Spain and I expected the research participants to be much more alert than in Costa Rica, where they usually also lacked correct documentation but where risks of deportation (and the associated loss of resources) appear to be lower. However, the research participants who were able to receive me in Spain did so with ease. One of them (who indeed lacked correct documentation) even spent an afternoon showing me some major tourist draws in Seville. These experiences led me to re-consider taken-for-granted differences between Costa Rica and Spain and thus, served to illustrate that following migrants can indeed result in productive cross-fertilization.

6. ENGAGING CONNECTIONS

The last sections of this chapter deal with the diverse methods and analytical strategies employed in this research. To start with the latter, all empirical data (except data from social mapping, and quantitative data from financial diaries and the survey) have been analysed using manual coding (Mason, 2002; Tracy, 2013). Interview transcripts (from face-to-face as well as telephone conversations), field notes, and couple cards were read and re-read, developing codes and themes in order to interpret the data. Social mappings have been used in a more illustrative way. The qualitative data from financial diaries, generated through recurring interviews, were coded manually, but the diaries’ quantitative analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis (see below). Finally, quantitative data from the MDM survey has been analysed using descriptive statistics. The diversity of methods and analytical strategies allowed for complementary insights into different aspects of migration-development that were relevant for addressing the research questions (see also section 3).

6.1. PARTICIPATING, OBSERVING, INTERVIEWING

As indicated above, participant observation has been central to this thesis research. In reality, however, participating, observing, and interviewing were often mixed. Participant observation gave valuable insight into daily practices and helped to steer interviews accordingly. Participant observation was also an indispensable way to build rapport and trust with the research participants. Although I was usually mostly
an observer, I gradually participated within the domestic sphere in basic rituals like cooking, eating, and watching TV soap operas. These moments provided great opportunities for talking about migrant and family life. In addition, I was invited to birthday parties and Sunday strolls in parks. In Muy Muy, I also attended village-level events such as a municipal rally for distributing roofs among poor families, school children’s parades, and a rodeo that was part of the village’s patron saint celebrations. As part of the fieldwork in Costa Rica, I crossed and observed the border at Peñas Blancas and several central parks, including La Merced in San José. In Spain, participant observations included accompanying the research participants across public spheres. Together, these observations were indispensable for getting a sense of the social fabric in which the research participants operate.

Most participant observations included interviews (and vice versa). In Table 1, I did not distinguish between in-depth, follow-up, and informal interviews, because these characteristics were often interwoven. However, my first contact with the research participants usually started with a short, exploratory interview, followed by a number of longer and shorter conversations. During the exploratory interview I introduced my research and asked basic questions about family livelihoods and migration histories. Depending on this information, follow-up interviews focused on specific themes, often reverting to what had been said before, elaborating on issues that had remained unclear (which is of course one of the great advantages of being able to re-visit research participants), and exploring new issues of interest. With each visit to Muy Muy, I always tried to visit all participant families as soon as possible, to avoid the impression that I was already in the village but not interested in seeing and interviewing them. I also made sure to say goodbye every time I left, even if in some cases this meant calling them from the airport.

For interviewing, I kept to the following standards, taken from Sherman Heyl’s (2001: 370) account to “do ethnographic interviewing in a way that incorporates what we have learned about the impact of the interviewer/interviewee relationship on the co-construction of knowledge”:

> “1 listen well and respectfully, developing an ethical engagement with the participants at all stages of the project; 2 acquire a self awareness of our role in the co-construction of meaning during the interview process; 3 be cognizant of ways in which both the ongoing relationship and the broader social context affect the participants, the interview process, and the project outcomes; and 4 recognize that dialogue is discovery and only partial knowledge will ever be attained.”

These standards helped me be aware of and navigate the power relations present in all interviews.
I always made elaborate notes during the interviews that were announced as such. In addition, and in all other cases of participating, observing and interviewing, I would write detailed accounts of what was said and done immediately afterwards. I did not use a tape recorder, as I felt this would formalize our relationship too much. Moreover, I thought it would make the research participants suspicious, given the at times politically charged atmosphere in Muy Muy, and migrants’ possibly precarious position elsewhere. Most importantly, however, the rather casual nature of my visits and our conversations, the mixture of participant observation and interviews, and the incidence of unexpected encounters, did not lend themselves well for recording. In the case of calling the research participants from Antwerp, I always made detailed notes during the call and further elaborated them immediately afterwards. The compilation of field notes became the basis for further empirical research, literature study and data analysis.

6.2. ENABLING METHODS FOR INTERVIEWING: COUPLE CARDS, SOCIAL MAPPING, AND FINANCIAL DIARIES

As indicated above, the fieldwork also included enabling methods for interviewing, including couple cards, which were designed to trigger monitored interaction between couples (see chapter 4 for an example). I asked five couples between the ages of 18-30 different questions about their mutual household responsibilities, while the man and woman wrote down their answers individually. This exercise allowed for discreteness as well as room for further joint reflection.

Another way of letting the research participants express themselves outside a conventional interview format, was by using social mapping, both individual and in group. The research participants were asked to draw their daily activities in the village (individual) or to make a map of their village (in group). We then discussed the maps together. These social mapping exercises were used to get a sense of people's daily mobility practices, and illustrated how these are particularly differentiated by gender (see Annex IV for an example), providing clues for further conversation.

In the context of this thesis, financial diaries can also be considered an enabling method for interviewing. In response to the methodological challenge of socially and contextually embedding remittances (Long, 2008), one of the translocal livelihood domains identified and interrogated in this thesis - taking into account the need for

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12 The latter organized together with my colleagues Griet Steel and Carlos Sosa.
remittances research to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques over an extended period of time (Mazzucato 2008; Rahman & Fee 2012) - the research embarked on a financial diaries project (Collins et al., 2009). Together with a local research team, we tracked the financial practices of selected households by conducting interviews every two weeks over the course of a year (see Annex II and III), allowing for unique insight into their livelihood strategies and the way household members deal with volatility, uncertainty, and shocks. Financial diaries were originally not designed with migration in mind, but I expected them to shine light on households’ management of fluctuating income in a migration context, getting a better grasp of what it means in practice to have migrants at certain times and destinations, and particularly, to receive remittances.

Using financial diaries in this research was a rather ambitious experiment, detailed in Annex II. Unfortunately, their use for this thesis was limited to an enabling role, mainly for exploring the livelihood domains of carework and remittances, as the financial diaries could not yet be thoroughly analysed. Diary data are very complex and require sophisticated analysis that was not considered feasible for this thesis. Nevertheless, the diaries contributed to the thesis in at least three ways. First, they helped to sustain contact with a number of core families, even when I was not in Muy Muy. Second, albeit mostly indirectly, they helped me keep track of family developments, necessary for situating the qualitative findings of the broader research. And third, they provided opportunities for exploring topics of direct relevance for this thesis, as diaries are built on a continuous discussion of money, providing topics of conversation for further scrutiny. A key example constitutes simultaneous quantitative data on (irregular) remittances and expenses for child care, loan repayment, and small-scale investments, enabling conversations about shared cross-border responsibilities as detailed in chapter 4. Thus, although a detailed analysis of financial diaries data falls outside the scope of this thesis, the extensive qualitative information based on regular face-to-face interviews and follow-up calls about the quantitative data, as well as the familiarity these observations and conversations allowed, provided valuable input for further explorations that are at the core of this thesis.

6.3. THE MDM SURVEY

Finally, I decided to conduct a survey in order to obtain (statistically representative) background data on some migration-development dynamics that were identified through the qualitative methods. This survey was expected to situate the qualitative findings further, in quantitative terms at village-wide level, counter-balancing the limited migration experiences that have been captured by official information on the area. Although the limitations of available survey data were clear from the start, the
idea of developing a survey based on emerging insights became more urgent in the course of the research, as the qualitative data were indicating a prevalence and diversity of migration experiences not yet captured in previous surveys. Characteristics of these surveys include a narrow focus on the present, excluding past migrations; a relative neglect of internal and temporary migrations; and a disregard for return- and non-migration. These diverse migrations and their differentiations (particularly gender-based) emerged in the qualitative data. Ideally, a new survey would generate the data to generalize these insights on prevalence and diversity for the entire Muy Muy population, closely capturing the nature of migration-development there (more so than previous surveys), and providing a background to the research participants’ experiences.

In these sections I focus on the Encuesta Migración-Desarrollo Muy Muy 2014 (the MDM survey), which constituted the final part of the fieldwork for this thesis. This survey of 341 households was conducted by two local researchers between October and December 2014. I was present for one month, when the bulk of the surveys was completed. Afterwards, the local researchers completed the remainder of the surveys, a process I followed as closely as possible from Antwerp. I was further responsible for revising, entering, and analysing all data.

The survey aimed to be statistically representative for Muy Muy. In line with previous information about Nicaraguan migration dynamics (Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009; INIDE, 2008; OIM, 2013; Morales Gamboa, 2007; Ton, 2000), the specific migration characteristics between the urban centre and the rural areas (comarcas; see Figure 3) were expected to be different, and the survey sample was stratified accordingly, resulting in 123 and 218 surveys respectively (which is proportional to their respective shares in the total population of Muy Muy). Given a highly divergent population density across rural areas, the sample there was further stratified by community. Participant households were randomly selected based on manual counting starting from a household plot blindly indicated on a map of Muy Muy (from there, for example, each 10th and 11th house in the urban centre). The identification of households, household plots, and the urban centre and rural areas

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13 Unfortunately, the sample eventually excluded one rural community (out of a total of 49, located across 13 rural areas or comarcas), as it was impossible to reach given limited resources (see also below).

14 Although survey data from Nicaragua’s nation-wide household survey of 2005 (INIDE, 2008) shows that international migration is more prevalent in urban than rural Muy Muy, it was not considered appropriate to further stratify the data accordingly, given the general underrepresentation of rural data on migration dynamics in this survey. Further stratification would probably give a skewed image of the prevalence of diverse types of migration.

15 Except in a minority of rural cases, see below.
followed general delineations established and used by the Muy Muy municipal government. Only knowledgeable adults were interviewed. Below, I go further into the survey’s approach, main characteristics and some practicalities.

**FIGURE 3. MAP OF MUY MUY**

Source: AMUPNOR (2011). Muy Muy’s urban centre (in yellow) and rural areas (comarcas), including Aguas Caliente, Cerro el Caballo, Compasagua, El Balsamo, El Corozo, El Esquirín, Guilligua, Las Pávas, Mal Peso, Maizama, Olama, San Marcos, and San Pedro.

As will be further elaborated in chapter 3, recent migration statistics for Muy Muy generally do not reflect the importance of migration for people’s livelihoods. In tune with critical reflections on using surveys for capturing migration dynamics (Rodríguez Vignoli, 2009), I believe the relatively low estimates of internal and international migration and remittances in these statistics ensue from narrow definitions of migration that reveal a lack of context-sensitivity. To be fair, the statistics come from household surveys and not from surveys specifically designed to capture migration. However, in order to arrive at a thorough understanding of the role of migration and specific migration-development characteristics in Muy Muy, it is necessary to reflect
on the concepts used and evaluate their fit with people’s daily experiences. For example, the above-mentioned statistics only consider a permanent change of residence when estimating internal migration, while working in another municipality temporarily is a common strategy that enables households to generate additional income during seasons with particularly low local job availability (Steel et al., 2011). When surveys fail to take strategies like these into account, they are at risk of underestimating the role of migration in Muy Muy.

As qualitative findings identified a volatile translocality of households’ livelihoods, the MDM survey aimed to give a statistically representative image of households’ diverse migration experiences as well as their livelihood activities. It intended to do so by including a) poverty levels; b) perspectives on local development; b) livelihood activities; c) present migration; d) past migration; and e) livelihood changes (see Annex V). Also of particular importance for this thesis (see chapter 3), the MDM survey included questions about daily purchases on short-term credit (fiar), non-migration and, naturally, remittances. All categories and questions were based on previous qualitative fieldwork and were carefully revised and practiced with the local research team.

The premise of the MDM survey was that it had to make a valuable contribution to existing survey data and provide a background to the qualitative data of the thesis research, yet be as non-intrusive as possible (especially considering that interviewees could not be compensated). Both objectives were realized by basing the survey on emerging insights from qualitative data, which enabled a concise focus on locally relevant migration-development dynamics and resulted in a relatively short survey. All surveys were completed within half an hour. This is not to say that they were rushed; on the contrary, the local research team was carefully selected and trained (see below) to make the survey interviews as informative as possible. However, taking into account respondents’ limited attention span, the need for them to be willing to cooperate, and the concise selection of issues to be discussed, survey interviews did not need to be longer.

The survey was also designed to be as non-intrusive as possible by taking into account what may be relevant and possible to ask when trust has not yet been established (Sherman Heyl, 2001: 369). A basic level of trust is always needed to even start the survey, but I believe there are certain questions that will hardly ever (if at all) be responded in a truthful way. This is also the main reason why, for example, no questions on the amount of remittances were asked. Apart from the fact that it is usually difficult for households to estimate the amount of remittances they receive (even if only as an average percentage of their budget) given their often volatile character, households usually do not want to share this information. Money
is a delicate topic. Moreover, the main research interest was not to estimate amounts of remittances, but to get a sense of translocal connections in Muy Muy and the way these are part of local livelihoods. This means that the question of livelihood changes because of migration, for example, was considered much more important, and therefore received specific attention from the local researchers.

The local research team consisted of two female researchers, who both of whom had received higher education and were experienced with different research methods. They had also been part of the financial diaries research team. Because of time constraints, we did not conduct a pilot study, but the researchers received one-on-one training and group practice. I choose to work with only two researchers so I could keep close track of their progress. For the survey to be successful and to ensure data quality, it also had to be conducted by researchers who were capable, whom I could trust completely, and who shared an intrinsic interest in the topic under study. In particular, ethical standards of good manners and confidentiality would have to be respected. I had the opportunity to verify these aspects over the course of more than a year, during the entire financial diaries project. In addition, relatively good pay contributed to the survey’s continuity over the months I was no longer in the field. Partly as a result of these standards, there were only a few cases of non-response, which have been omitted from the final data set.

Together with the local researchers, I made a conscious effort to cover Muy Muy’s rural areas as well, to include even the most outlying households. All too often rural areas are left out of research because of access difficulties and high costs. It indeed proved very challenging, but also very rewarding, to reach these areas. We applied different strategies to include all rural communities within a very limited time frame. First, we elaborated a system of routes in which we followed a logical order of communities along or at least within walking distance of Muy Muy’s paved roads. Survey households were still selected randomly, but interviewed according to the sequence of these routes. Second, when rural households were too dispersed, and the number of households to be surveyed very low, the local researchers gathered at the community’s central church on a Sunday and, together with the community’s residents, made a map of households. Based on this map (and the sample size assigned to the community in question), a random selection of households was made, and one member of these households could then be interviewed on the church premises. Third, in the last phase of the survey, when it became clear that even with the latter strategy it would be impossible to complete the survey, members of some households (selected by community) were surveyed in Muy Muy’s urban centre when they visited on Sundays. Here, random sampling was impossible. To be clear, the latter two strategies were only used in a minority of cases, with the objective to include even faraway households in the survey. The majority of the
survey data (and all data from the urban centre) was generated through random sampling according to the principles described above.

7. **CONCLUSION**

This methodological chapter provided a guide to the main methodological decisions and empirical building blocks of this thesis research. In line with ethnographic norms and practices, I have tried to be as transparent as possible about the iterative and negotiated type of knowledge construction the research is based on, aimed primarily at theoretical generalization. This transparency extends to the ways multiple, multi-sited fieldwork connections have been established, maintained, and engaged.

These connections provide the basis for the empirical core of the thesis, which will be discussed throughout the next chapters. The main, qualitative part of the fieldwork used a diversity of methods and enabling tools to address the research questions, culminating in an identification and interrogation of the three translocal livelihood dynamics of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. The analysis of these dynamics, throughout chapters 4-6, enables a discussion of different aspects of the research questions, providing insight into the variety of connections that are established between migrants and their families, and the ways these are contested. But before going into this empirical core, chapter 3 will first situate these connections in a national, regional, and global context, and present some findings from the MDM survey to showcase a number of relevant migration-development dynamics at the level of Muy Muy.
CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUALIZING MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT
TRANSLOCAL LIVELIHOODS IN MUY MUY
1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter situates the thesis research within a national, regional and global context, and uses MDM survey data (see chapter 2) to highlight some migration-development dynamics in Muy Muy that are relevant for this thesis. Although this chapter does not claim to give an exhaustive overview of these dynamics, it provides a useful enrichment of the local research conducted so far, as well as quantitative background to the qualitative research findings. As these qualitative findings indicate that migration is more prevalent and diverse in Muy Muy than previous surveys suggest, the MDM survey data is used to match local experiences of migration-development and capture these at village-wide level. The experiences described here do not include all the survey’s findings, but highlights those that are most relevant for the thesis, primarily a selection of migration characteristics, differentiations and implications, and their linkages to the three livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. The insight into Muy Muy’s translocal livelihoods that emerges provides a contextual background and initial analysis of issues that will be discussed in chapters 4-6. The findings of the survey in Muy Muy also provide a picture of how the larger contextual processes described below play out in a specific locality.

This chapter continues with a sketch of the context in which Nicaraguan livelihoods take place. It describes a number of historical and contemporary forces that shape livelihoods, including disparate developments in the Nicaraguan rural sector (of which Muy Muy is part), and a deep regional interconnectedness that builds (on) migration. Knowledge of these historical and contemporary forces is necessary to situate the thesis’ attempts to address the research questions, in particular, regarding more general characteristics of different migration processes. The chapter then zooms in on Muy Muy and proceeds to discuss a relevant selection of MDM survey results (see chapter 2). Although this chapter tries to carefully display and interpret this data, it often raises more questions than it can answer. Some of these questions will be considered in detail in the subsequent empirical chapters. Those outside the scope of this thesis will need to be addressed in future research.

2. UNDERPINNINGS OF NICARAGUAN LIVELIHOODS AND MIGRATION IN A CENTRAL AMERICAN CONTEXT

Nicaraguan livelihoods take shape amidst persistent political, social and economic inequalities, reinforced by highly patriarchal (Dore, 2006) and clientelist relationships. While an attempt was made to transform some of the country’s exclusionary structures during the left-wing Sandinista revolutionary project between 1979-1990, this attempt has largely been reversed by Nicaragua’s
subsequent (re-)adoption of elite-centred neoliberal policies (Robinson, 2003). After widespread socioeconomic crises and armed conflicts throughout Central America in the 1980s, the regional post-crisis agenda mainly aimed at increased insertion in the global economy under close United States tutelage. Rather than overturning traditional inequalities, ensuing cycles of aid, debt and adjustment tended to perpetuate them. In Nicaragua, neoliberal restructuring contributed to a re-concentration of property, class polarization and impoverishment (Bickham Mendez, 2005). Cutbacks in social spending further increased the burden on families, especially on their female members working both within and increasingly outside the home (ibid). Despite current political rhetoric, neoliberal policies continue to marginalize the majority of the population that operates on the margins of the globalized Nicaraguan economy.

This marginalization is particularly pressing for small producers in rural sectors which, contrary to Nicaragua’s identity as an agricultural country, have traditionally been neglected (Bastiaensen, 1991; Pérez, 2011). If both the primary sector and agroindustry are taken into account, more than a third of Nicaragua’s jobs and over half of its exports depend on agricultural production (Pérez, 2011). In addition, the working-age rural population remains invariably large. This population depends on the rural sector for jobs, but foreign investments and free trade agreements have generally not provided the employment needed and instead contributed to this population’s vulnerability. The majority that does not have access to the key resources of land, credit and training, remains on the margins of agricultural production. As a result, although the rural sector ensures a major share of Nicaragua’s income, it is also home to Nicaragua’s highest poverty levels (Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009). According to Pérez (2011), Nicaragua’s inability to provide adequately remunerated employment in this sector ensures a continued tradition of migration.

Nicaragua’s rural population has traditionally used migration-related farm and non-farm income to diversify their livelihoods and solve cash needs (Ton, 2000; Van den Berg, 2010). Their cheap mobile labour is conveniently linked to national and international neo-liberal interests, and constitutes a core component of Central America’s insertion in the global economy. Robinson (2003: 82; 204) even deems this rural population, as well as its urban counterparts, an ‘army of the unemployed’ and part of a ‘global labour pool’. In broad terms, and without counting Nicaragua’s internal migration, an estimated 13% of Nicaraguans currently lives and works abroad, mostly in Costa Rica, the United States, Spain, Honduras, and Panamá (OIM, 2013). A considerable share of these migrants sends remittances, mostly from the United States, Costa Rica, and Spain. On a macroeconomic level, these remittances have represented around 12-13% of Nicaragua’s GDP in the last decade and, despite
the most recent economic crisis, have remained relatively stable compared to other income sources. The migrants that make up this so-called reserve army or labour pool are part of a varied group and experience specific conditions based on their personal and family background and migration projects. The next paragraphs further describe some historically and spatially shaped political, social and economic details of their current migrations.

Morales Gamboa (2007) sees the current migrations characterizing Central America as an intensification and diversification of historical trajectories that build on regional inequalities and interdependencies. In tandem with the developments described above, the author identifies three relatively recent historical markings of particular relevance for contextualizing current Nicaraguan migrations (see also Hamilton and Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991). First, the growth of agro-export and industrialization, and consequently, an accelerated development of infrastructure as well as a rise in voluntary migration and forced displacement from the 1850s onwards (Morales Gamboa, 2007). Second, intensified displacement due to socioeconomic crises and conflicts during the 1980s, facilitated by regional labour markets that became further developed after the formation of nation-states. During this stage, Nicaragua became a country of emigration, mainly to the United States and Costa Rica (OIM, 2013). Third, a consolidation of regional labour transnationalization during the 1990s, which further spurred migration to Costa Rica. In addition, linked to an ongoing feminization of labour markets, the first decade of the new millennium was characterized by an intensification of regional migration as well as by new destinations, Spain in particular (OIM, 2013).

Current migrations reflect changing yet persistent inequalities in the region. Old and new markets, fragmentations and exclusions contribute to a diversity of migration processes within, between, and beyond Central American countries. Internal migration (like seasonal rural migration in Nicaragua) remains important, especially considering the fact that the study of internal migration is limited because of its temporality and informality (Morales Gamboa, 2007). In relative terms, along with Central America’s increased insertion in the global economy, international migration has become more important, but generally not at the cost of internal and regional migration (ibid). Regional migration continues to build on the dynamic interdependencies of regional labour markets. These current migrations are part of an interwoven Central American system that provides a link between the global economy and specific localities.

Some of these migrations are shaped by migrants from Muy Muy and their families. In what follows I briefly describe some characteristics of migration processes that stood out during the qualitative fieldwork in Muy Muy and also reflect general
Nicaraguan tendencies in quantitative terms. Starting with Costa Rica, migration to that country has been characterized by migrants of productive age with relatively low levels of schooling, an increasing proportion of whom are female. These migrants mostly work in agriculture, construction, and the (personal) services sector. Because of the predominantly temporal and informal nature of this migration, their numbers are sure to be substantially higher than shown by the official records (almost 287,800 migrants in 2011, according to Costa Rican’s Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos).\(^{16}\) Many migrants opt to avoid the bureaucratic procedures of applying for visa, working permits and residencies (Rocha, 2014). Even Costa Rica’s 2010 immigration law and its (theoretically) harsh implications for migrants lacking the required documentation (Fouratt, 2014) did not change this practice; limited application of this law, and a low chance of actual deportation, means that not having the required documentation does not need to strongly influence migrants’ daily life (see chapter 5). This limited influence may also have to do with Nicaraguans’ relatively easy entrance to Costa Rica and their somewhat similar cultural roots (Baumeister, 2006).\(^{17}\)

Nicaraguans’ possibilities for access and adaptation in Costa Rica stand in contrast to their situation in the United States (Baumeister, 2006). Current migration to the United States and options for circulating have become increasingly limited and reinforced Nicaraguans’ tradition of staying more permanently. US-bound migrants also tend to have more financial resources and higher levels of schooling than those in Costa Rica. Because of geopolitical interests, more specifically, the inheritance of Cold War ideological filters, Nicaraguan migrants in the US have long benefited from a relatively protected status compared to other Central American migrants (Rocha, 2014). For example, they have been granted more asylum and residencies, have been less easily deported, and have enjoyed relatively higher incomes and social security rates. Although Nicaraguans continue to benefit from options for family reunification, United States policy and practice became much stricter after the attacks in September 2001, making migration more difficult even for Nicaraguans.

Simultaneously, the stricter US regulations have become an important catalyst for Nicaraguan migration to Spain, which since the 2000s emerged as a new destination country. Rapidly multiplying networks facilitated a tenfold growth of Nicaraguans in Spain between 2005 and 2010 (González Miranda, 2011). The Spanish labour market is especially attractive for female Nicaraguan migrants, who continue to find

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17 However, the experience of strained relations between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans should not be underestimated (see chapter 5).
employment in the domestic sector despite the 2009 crisis and subsequent immigration restrictions implemented by the Spanish government. These migrants share the characteristics of higher financial resources and higher levels of schooling with those in the United States, but their documentation process is rather different. Most migrants appear to arrive on a tourist visa, which is valid for three months, and live and work without the required documents for at least three years (although they are usually registered in a Spanish municipality). Based on a condition called *arraigo social*18, which typically requires an employment contract, they can obtain temporary residence, which may eventually be used for nationalization (El Nuevo Diario, 2013).

All these current migrations are characterized by specific vulnerabilities, obstacles and exclusions, as well as opportunities for Muy Muy-based livelihoods. An assessment of the links between these migrations and local development largely depends on the type of lens used and the aspects examined. From a macro perspective, a continuous supply of flexible labour plus its remittances ensures the adjustment of labour markets and reproduction of the labour force, and contributes to macroeconomic stability. At the same time, flexible labour and remittances may also reinforce societal inequalities and thereby, instability. This is exacerbated by policies that are more concerned with border security and macroeconomic gain than with the well-being of migrants and their families. From an individual and family point of view, migration can result in livelihood gains while often also entailing significant losses in terms of closeness to family, material resources, and personal health and safety. These gains and losses result in a trade-off that may or may not challenge traditional inequalities. The next section intends to provide a background to this trade-off in Muy Muy.

### 3. LIVELIHOODS AND MIGRATION IN URBAN AND RURAL MUY MUY

The dynamics of neoliberal restructuring described above also prevail in Muy Muy, part of a cattle-raising territory increasingly integrated into lucrative global value chains (Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009). In theory, the area has much potential, boasting an abundance of land and labour supply and a favourable climate. Located in Central Nicaragua about 150 kilometres from Managua, the capital, its population is divided over an urban centre (of about 4,000 inhabitants) and thirteen surrounding *comarcas* or rural areas (of about 11,000 inhabitants), a surface totalling

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18 “Es una autorización de residencia temporal por circunstancias excepcionales que se podrá conceder a ciudadanos extranjeros que se hallen en España y, o bien tengan vínculos familiares en España o estén integrados socialmente.” Retrieved 21 August 2015 from http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/informacioninteres/informacionprocedimientos/Ciudadanosnosnocomunitarios/hoja036/index.html
approximately 375 km² (see Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009). Muy Muy is part of an important milk and meat cluster (called the Vía Lactéa or Milky Way) and has a relatively well-developed infrastructure of roads and collection centres for both domestic consumption and export. In addition, both large farms and individual households grow maize, beans and other crops (though mainly for family food security). This combination of agricultural and livestock activities can be found throughout the village, complemented with a modest level of non-agricultural employment predominantly based in the urban centre.

However, the ongoing reorganization of the rural sector to fit a neoliberal agenda of further insertion in the global economy also contributes to reinforcing or creating concentrations of wealth, exclusion, and marginalization in Muy Muy. Only a minority of people can mobilize the necessary resources to overcome the entry barriers of the milk and meat value chains (ibid). The majority depends on agriculture and livestock activities into which they are only marginally integrated. They mainly produce for family subsistence and work for low wages (Steel et al, 2011). Faced with persistent poverty and limited access to resources (especially land and credit) to change their conditions, this majority depends on a combination of small-scale activities, daily debt, and migration to survive (Steel and Sosa, 2011).

To my best knowledge, there are two recent sources for quantitative data on migration in Muy Muy. First, a 2008 survey of five comarcas representative of rural Muy Muy (Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009), which estimates permanent migration at 6% while 26% of households makes use of temporal migration to tie over dry periods (and possibly, finance the productive season in agriculture). In addition, according to this survey, permanent migration involves mostly women, of whom nearly half migrates to international destinations, while temporal migration is less international and involves more men. Migration is reported to contribute to 10% of household income.

Second, in Nicaragua’s nation-wide household survey of 2005, the household emigration rate (defined as households with members residing abroad at the time of the survey) for urban and rural Muy Muy is estimated at 13.6% and 4.6%, respectively, while 7.8% of urban and 2.7% of rural households received international remittances in the previous year (INIDE 2008). Because these two surveys look at different aspects of migration, it is difficult to compare their results.

19 This specific dynamic plays a lesser role in the urban centre of Muy Muy, although urban households also engage in temporal migration. In addition, it is common for urban households to maintain linkages with family, resources and activities in the comarcas.
In broad terms, the INIDE survey lacks information about migration that is not international, whereas the rural survey cannot account for Muy Muy’s urban centre. However, I do not believe that even their combined accounts of migration reflect the prevalence and diversity of migration in Muy Muy.

3.1. MDM SURVEY CONSIDERATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The next sections describe findings of the MDM survey conducted for the thesis, which includes internal, regional, and international migration, as well as both rural and urban households. Amongst other things, these survey data indicate higher migration levels than either of the above-mentioned surveys. These levels probably reflect in part the fact that the previous two surveys were conducted six and nine years before the MDM survey, and migration may have increased since then. More importantly, however, they surely result from the MDM survey’s use of more inclusive and flexible migration definitions (see Figure 4), which seek to closely match people’s experiences based on the qualitative research conducted prior to the survey, enabling a better overview and understanding of local migration-development dynamics. Building on qualitative insights, the MDM survey aimed to reflect the ‘lived’ incidence of migration in Muy Muy.

With the MDM survey the research team tried to approach the extent to which specific qualitative findings could be found at village-wide level. Would key qualitative insights also hold for a random, representative sample of households across Muy Muy? The specific aim of the survey was to offer descriptive, quantitative background data for the following key insights: a higher prevalence of migration than other surveys show, and a higher level of migration diversity than other surveys indicate, in particular the possibility that households mix various types of migrations. The survey was also designed to offer background data for the livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances.

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20 Thanks to Germán Calfat for drawing my attention to a section of the nation-wide 2005 Encuesta de Medición del Nivel de Vida en Nicaragua, which in fact includes questions about temporal and internal migration. Unfortunately, and again to my best knowledge, there are no public reports of these data.

21 See chapter 2 for more details on the survey’s design and implementation. The total number of households covered by the survey is 341: 123 of them urban and 218 rural.
In turn, these background data on key qualitative insights and livelihood domains would also provide insight into the thesis’ research questions. In particular they would shed light on migration experiences and characteristics (including goals, opportunities and obstacles); migration differentiations (including those between urban and rural households and between male and female migrants); and development dimensions deemed valuable (including positive and negative migration implications and livelihood activities and investments). The next sections describe a selection of survey findings that are relevant for offering such insights. I will first go into the prevalence and diversity of current migrations. Then I will describe the survey’s findings on migration motivations and achievements, as well as livelihood investments. Finally, I will look at return migration and non-migration, and their linkages with the three livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. Together, these findings provide a quantitative background to the qualitative research findings and a reflection of migration-development experiences across Muy Muy.

### 3.2. PRESENT PREVALENCE OF MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY OF DESTINATIONS

According to the survey data, 48.8% of urban and 46.8% of rural households have some kind of experience with migration: past, present or both (see Table 2). The finding that almost half of Muy Muy households have experience with migration highlights the prevalence of migration at village-wide level. Continuing with present-
day migration, 39.8% of urban and 32.6% of rural households have at least one migrant, and 35.8% of urban and 27.5% of rural households receive remittances. Of the migrant households, 32.7% of urban and 38.0% of rural households have more than one migrant.

**TABLE 2. PREVALENCE OF MIGRATION IN MUY MUY HOUSEHOLDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Past or present migration (or both)</th>
<th>Present migration</th>
<th>Receive remittances</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data for present migration can be further refined in terms of diversity of (temporary) destinations of urban and rural, male and female migrants. As reflected in Table 3, the MDM survey data confirm the combined findings of other surveys that urban migration is predominantly female and international, and rural migration is predominantly male and internal and regional, even though those other surveys may have found lower migration levels overall. In line with those expectations, the share of female migration in urban Muy Muy (52.5%) is higher than in rural Muy Muy (42.0%).

**TABLE 3. PRESENT URBAN AND RURAL MIGRATION BY DESTINATION AND BY SEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban migrants</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural migrants</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Refining further per country, Costa Rica is reported as the most important destination country for both male and female migrants. However, the share of male migrants in Costa Rica is much higher than for other destinations, whereas the share of female migrants in Costa Rica is close to their share in Spain. According to these survey data, the recent female Spanish migration trend thus seems to have set foot in Muy Muy.23

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22 These characteristics also justify the stratification of the sample by urban and rural areas.

23 If we compare past and present migration, the share of international migration indeed appears to have increased, although internal and regional migration remain important, as indicated by Morales Gamboa, 2007.
In line with qualitative findings, the survey data indicate a diversity of destinations not only among households, but also within households. More specifically, 51.0% of urban and 56.3% of rural migrant households reportedly mixed and/or mix migration destinations. A household was considered to mix migration destinations if one or more of its members, in the past, the present or both, migrated to different destinations.\(^{24}\) The incidence of mixing migration destinations is also apparent in the characteristics of the core families of the qualitative research (see Annex I), of which 15 out of 26 families mix destinations. The prevalence of mixing migration destinations indicates why it would be inappropriate to characterize households based on either internal, regional or international migration. This prevalence also testifies to the diversity of households’ translocal livelihood connections.

3.3. MIGRATION MOTIVATIONS

Having established the prevalence and diversity of migration, this section looks into motivations for both past and present migration. However, it is difficult to establish (the main) motives for migrating on at least three grounds.\(^{25}\) First, motivation is complex and multi-dimensional. Second, not all migrants want to (fully) share their reasoning. Third, and specific to the set-up of the survey, the question about migration motivations was often answered by someone other than the (former) migrant, so he or she could only give ‘second-hand’ information.

This being said, the survey data for both urban and rural migrants indicate lack of income and employment as the main reasons for migrating (see Table 4). In the urban area, motivations of income or employment are reported for 26.8% and 32.9% of migrants, respectively. In rural areas, these shares are 38.9% for lack of income and 19.8% for lack of employment. These categories of income and employment,

\(^{24}\) Here, different destinations within rural Nicaragua and those within urban Nicaragua were taken as one destination because of their similarity (rural Nicaragua and urban Nicaragua, respectively). Different countries within the Central American region, and different countries outside this region, were considered separately. For example, if a household has/had a migrant in a small city in Nicaragua and one in Managua, this was not considered as a household mixing migrations. But if a household has/had a migrant in Costa Rica and one in Spain, or one in the United States and one in Spain, it was.

\(^{25}\) As can be seen in Annex V, the survey did not offer ‘political reasons’ as an answer category for this question. We excluded this category because the qualitative findings did not indicate this as an explicit reason for migrating. However, if respondents answered the survey question ‘qué le motivó irse’ with a political reason, it could be submitted under ‘other’. The survey data reports only two politically related responses for this ‘other’ category, both ‘guerra’ (war), for two long-term migration cases probably initiated during the war in the 1980s. This being said, the lack of explicitly stated political reasons for migrating does not mean that Nicaragua’s political climate does not influence migration decision-making.
although often used interchangeably, do not refer to exactly the same thing: jobs may be available, but not well-paid ones, and therefore are not considered ‘real’ income earning opportunities. This feeling is perhaps stronger in rural areas, which indicate a higher response for ‘lack of income’ than for ‘lack of employment’. In rural areas, there may be informal and temporal agriculture or livestock jobs, but they only offer limited income (see also Grigsby Vado and Pérez, 2009). In any case, both motives identify migration primarily as a translocal livelihood extension.

**TABLE 4. MOTIVATIONS FOR MIGRATING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration motivations</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of income</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of employment</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To buy or build a house</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family visit</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=79 130


Buying or building a house, though ranked as the third motivation to migrate, is not as large a share as expected: 19.5% for urban and 10.7% for rural migrants. Perhaps migrating for income and employment is just the reason that first comes to respondents’ minds, while this income and employment can then be used for housing (or other investments). In order to better interpret this data it may be useful to contrast migration motivations with migration achievements, or positive implications of migration.

**3.4. MIGRATION ACHIEVEMENTS**

This section looks into what migrants and their families have been able to do with their different migrations. Table 5 shows, not surprisingly, that a higher income is the most frequently mentioned positive migration achievement. However, in a majority of cases more than just higher income is mentioned. The secondary most important positive achievements include buying or building a house, saving, and debt repayment, which largely reflect qualitative findings.
Regarding the shares of positive achievements for urban and rural areas, these generally do not differ more than 5 percentage points, except for the achievements of higher income, housing, and education (the latter not shown in the table). The larger share of higher income as a positive migration achievement in rural areas may have to do with the fact that money from almost any migration destination will make a substantial difference for households compared to what can be earned in the rural area of Muy Muy. In addition, a lower share of housing may have to do with the lesser incidence of rural migration to Spain, while migration to Spain is generally linked to buying and building houses in Muy Muy. Finally, a lower rural share of positive education implications may reflect the limited possibilities for secondary education in the rural area (see also Steel, Winters and Sosa, 2011).

The relatively low response for debt repayment is a bit surprising considering the omnipresence of household debt arrangements in qualitative findings, including the financial diaries. According to the survey data, only 1.2% of urban and 3.1% of rural migrants’ motivations were related to debt repayment. In addition, 9.3% of urban and 10.4% of rural positive migration achievements referred to debt repayment. There may be several reasons for this difference in qualitative and quantitative data. First, the delicacy of money issues and debt in particular is not easily discussed in a survey format. Second, regarding the repayment of migration debt specifically, migration largely rests on funding from family and friends, which may not be considered formal debt and may therefore not be mentioned as debt repayment. And third, respondents may consider daily fiar (buying on credit, see Annex II) as a less formal debt, resolved through the ‘higher income’ category of migration. The commonness of fiar was confirmed by survey data, which reports that 77.4% of urban and 75.6% of rural households engage in fiar. These observations indicate that the extent to which different types of debt and different migrations are related needs to be further explored.26

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26 Households did not report more debt as a result of migration.
3.5. LIVELIHOOD INVESTMENTS AND POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Further refining migration implications, this section looks into Muy Muy livelihoods. Of the most frequently mentioned livelihood activities in the urban area, domestic services accounts for 19.6%, agriculture for 12.9%, and office work for 11.5%. In the rural areas, agriculture accounts for 49.3%, and cattle raising and domestic services account for 10.5% each. The activities of running a store, construction work, and public services, account for around 10% each in the urban area and for around 5% in the rural areas. (Other activities across both urban and rural areas account for less than 5% each).

Regarding livelihood diversification, the number of households that reported to depend on only one activity is expectedly low. In the urban area, 93.5% depends on more than one livelihood activity. This number is somewhat lower for rural areas, where 83.9% depends on more than one activity, perhaps explained by the tendency of rural households to have more than one household member working the same livelihood activity (for example, farming). It is further noteworthy that of all households that report depending on only one activity, only three have migrant members. This seems to counter the idea that the presence of migrants makes other household members invest less in other livelihood activities and become largely dependent on remittances (Mazzucato, 2008).

The survey further asked about possible livelihood investments enabled by migration, and compared these responses with survey information about the households’ livelihood activities. Survey data indicate that most migrant households continue the same livelihood activities they were engaged in before migration, and do not make livelihood investments. Still, 29.6% of urban and 33.1% of rural migrant households reported to invest in (mostly pre-existing) livelihood activities after migration.27 Table 6 shows survey data for livelihood investments in existing livelihood activities.

27 The (limited) investments of urban migrant households in (new) livelihood activities are reportedly somewhat more diversified than those of their rural counterparts, possibly due to a larger urban service economy which facilitates investments in, for example, transport, construction and leather processing activities.
## Table 6. Livelihood Investments Enabled by Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livelihood Investments</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th></th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving land</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying land</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying animals</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=14 56

Source: MDM survey (2014). N=number of migration experiences with livelihood investments.

*‘Other’ includes investing in a store and in prestamista (moneylending) activities.

Not surprisingly, the share of investments for improving and buying land is reportedly higher in rural areas. As indicated by the qualitative findings as well, it is common to use migration returns for agricultural inputs and other means to be able to ‘work the land’, for example, by employing farm hands. However, even though urban migrant households are reported to invest less in land and animals, the fact that they do to some degree, illustrates the urban-rural linkages that characterize Muy Muy. Together, these investments in agriculture and livestock testify to the desire of migrants and their families to continue their livelihoods in Muy Muy and to secure them.

The survey also addressed possible negative implications of migration. More than 40% of the responses reported no negative implications of migration, especially those related to internal migration. Those that did report negative migration implications mostly focused on social issues, including the increased distance between family members and couple problems, especially the break-up of a couple, and then especially in international migration. Regarding differences between urban and rural areas, the latter report less negative implications in general, and less negative implications for couple and family life than their urban counterparts. Perhaps the less international character of migration from rural areas makes the distance between migrants and their families (seem) smaller and the separation more temporal.

### 3.6. Returning, Not (Yet) Migrating, and the Three Livelihood Domains

This section further explores these social issues of migration processes by using data on return migration and non-migration28, which provide a sense of common (gender) differentiations. Family, care, and relationship changes figure prominently as reasons for migrants returning to Muy Muy (see Table 7), and are differentiated by gender.

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28 Return migration may or may not be permanent. Likewise, persons who have not (yet) migrated, may migrate in the future.
For example, female migrants tend to return to care for children or sick and elderly household members, the formation or separation of couples, and pregnancy. Male migrants are also reported to come back for family reasons (for example, when their children behave badly), but less so than female migrants.

This finding on gender differentiation is complemented by reasons for not (yet) migrating (see Table 7). Although almost half of all households in Muy Muy reported past or present migration experience or both, more than half have no migration experience, and even within migrant households not all members are migrants. The survey data mainly report responsibilities at work and at home as reasons for household members not to have migrated. A lack of resources was much less mentioned as a reason for not migrating, indicating the relative accessibility (at least in monetary terms) of translocal livelihood extension via migration.

**TABLE 7. REASONS FOR RETURNING AND NOT MIGRATING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for returning</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals achieved</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, care, and relationship changes</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No work and/or income</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of documents and/or deportation</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for not migrating</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local work responsibilities</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local household responsibilities</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not wanting to leave the family</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of documents</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MDM survey (2014). N=number of individuals. *The ‘other’ category scores quite high for both not migrating and returning because of a high response for ‘not liking’ migration (not specified in the table).

In line with expectations, job responsibilities were mainly reported for men whereas domestic responsibilities were reported for women as reasons for not migrating. These findings reflect ways in which migration is a gendered process, which will be further explored through the livelihood domain of carework in chapter 4. These gendered migration differentiations are also reflected in the daily care of migrant
children. The majority of Muy Muy migrants are also parents,\textsuperscript{29} and 65.3\% of urban and 56.3\% of rural migrant households are entrusted with the daily care of migrant children. This being said, in more than a third of present migration experiences, migrants are reported to have taken their children with them, usually to Managua, where child-centred services (such as health care and schooling) are available and accessible. In the case of Spain, for example, children are not (yet) taken along, perhaps because this migration is not yet established enough or migrants may not have access to these services. In addition, the living costs for an entire family in this migration destination may be too high.

Still, the majority of migrants leave their children in Muy Muy, mostly in the hands of grandmothers (24.2\%), mothers (13.6\%), and other female relatives. Also daily caregivers from outside the household are females, making daily care an almost exclusively female domain. These women’s caretaking of migrant children is not self-evident. Grandmothers may experience aging problems, making it difficult for them to take care of (young) children, and mothers’ daily care activities have consequences for their own options to migrate. Issues of care are usually resolved within the family and involve gendered negotiations of migration decision-making that will be further discussed in chapter 4.

Notwithstanding these family-based solutions, migrants need to compensate those who perform daily care, which brings us to the livelihood domain of remittances (see chapter 6). A substantial share of remittances is usually destined (to compensate) for migrant child care. Only in exceptional cases do households report taking care of migrants’ children even when their parents do not send money. However, in these particular cases respondents usually commented that the migration was recent and money was expected soon.

Migrants, both men and women, are also commonly said to send money home even when their household in Muy Muy does not take care of their children. The survey data indicate that 89.8\% of urban and 84.5\% of rural migrant households receive remittances.\textsuperscript{30} According to the qualitative data, besides childcare and other household expenses, these remittances are often used to repay the debt that funded the migration. This may be one of the reasons why remittances are reportedly highest for international migration (see Table 8), which usually requires higher

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{29} The majority of both male and female migrants are parents. However, migrant children are usually taken care of by the mother’s side of their family.
\end{footnotesize}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{30} Considering that most respondents would be very reluctant to specify amounts of remittances, the survey did not attempt to establish any remittances quantities.
\end{footnotesize}
investment. Furthermore, it is likely that internal male migrants remit less because they tend to engage more in seasonal agricultural migration and may bring money home instead of sending it.

**TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF MIGRANTS WHO SEND REMITTANCES, BY DESTINATION AND BY MALE AND FEMALE.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remittances</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Finally, I would like to draw attention to the finding that ‘lack of documents’ figures relatively low in both reasons for returning and reasons for not migrating (see Table 7). These survey data mirror qualitative findings indicating that migrants are usually more interested in earning money and sending remittances than in the required ‘paperwork’ (*papeles*) for their staying and working abroad. Migrants’ lack of *papeles*, their ensuing ‘illegality’ and possible deportation only appear to be an obstacle to migration in a minority of cases. Although the importance of documentation and deportation may change depending on migrants’ migration endeavours as well as migration policies and laws in destination countries (and Nicaragua), the relative absence of these issues in the survey data corresponds to qualitative insights about the situatedness of ‘illegality’, the livelihood domain that will be discussed in chapter 5.

4. CONCLUSION

The selection of relevant survey findings described above complements and increases the relevance of qualitative findings that emphasize the importance of translocal connections for urban and rural households in Muy Muy. The findings presented provide a descriptive background story to local migration-development characteristics, including the prevalence and (simultaneous) diversity of destinations; migration motivations and implications; and the linkages between migrating, returning and not (yet) migrating, and carework, ‘illegality’ and remittances. In addition, these sections touched upon some possibilities and obstacles for translocal livelihood extensions. Although these survey findings necessarily reduce the

31 The shares for ‘lack of documents’ are higher, however, for urban (non)migrants, possibly because of the higher incidence of the more restricted types of international migration in the urban area.
complexity of people’s experiences, I have tried to make sense of them by incorporating qualitative insights into their description. The resulting picture testifies to the ways migrants and their families attempt to use cross-border connections to secure their livelihoods in Muy Muy, and the ways in which these connections may be contested.

This chapter aimed to establish the translocal character of many Muy Muy livelihoods by situating these livelihoods within a national, regional and global setting, and by discussing a relevant selection of the MDM survey data. Muy Muy livelihoods take shape in a distinctively regional migratory context that provides the roots for the prevalence and diversity of migration experiences today. The survey data described here, against the backdrop of the regional migratory context and with the benefit of previous qualitative insights, is considered to closely match people’s experiences and reflect relevant migration-development characteristics across Muy Muy. The chapter has attempted to carefully display and discuss these survey data in order to provide a descriptive, quantitative background to the subsequent core empirical chapters.
CHAPTER 4

RESPONSIBILITY, MOBILITY, AND POWER

TRANSLOCAL CAREWORK NEGOTIATIONS OF NICARAGUAN FAMILIES

Note: This chapter focuses on the translocal livelihood domain of carework. It uses insights from transnational (gender) scholarship on global care chains and mobilities research on migrant and non-migrant differentiation to explore the ways carework shapes migration. By focusing on the often-ignored carework actors of (migrant) fathers and female relatives of migrants, the chapter discusses how locally specific negotiations of cross-border carework responsibilities shape people’s access to mobility. The chapter primarily addresses the thesis’ research question on migration differentiation, thereby providing insight into migrant family connections that are continuously negotiated and result in unequally shared migration costs and benefits.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Carework, the multidimensional labour of relational activities that enables people’s well-being (Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, 2006; see also Lawson, 2010; Yeates, 2012), has recently emerged as a key area for exploring international migration, tracing the gendered connections between migrants and their families ‘home’. Examples include research on global care chains (Hochschild, 2000); possible transformations in the meanings of migrant motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997); and the effects of ‘absent’ migrant parents on children (Parreñas, 2005). These examples provide important insights into the impact of migration on carework. However, several authors note that these insights could be usefully complemented by an analysis of the ways in which carework shapes migration (Anderson, 2001; Baldassar, 2007). In particular, taking carework as a starting point would avoid treating migration as a given, enabling a more embedded view of its dynamics in a specific context. Notably, an analysis of carework could provide more insight into the seminal, ongoing process of migration decision-making within families (Ackers, 2004): Who moves, why, and in what way? In addition, there is a general need for carework analysis that goes beyond motherhood (Zechner, 2008: 32), as carework always involves a ‘multiplicity of actors’ (Lopes Martins, 2011: 102). Thus, to make carework analysis as useful as possible for understanding migration decisions, we should focus on the ways different family members are involved with organizing carework (McKay, 2007; Pribilsky, 2007).

This chapter explores how young families’ unpaid, informal care arrangements (henceforth: carework) shape their migration decision-making by focusing on fathers and female relatives in the context of semi-rural Nicaragua. I specifically focus on these fathers’ and female relatives’ involvement with child care. Taking into account rigid gender norms and practices, precarious yet dynamic livelihoods and a long-standing tradition of migration, I aim to go beyond stereotypes of irresponsible fathers or ‘deficit masculinities’ (Datta et al., 2008) and passive female ‘stay-behinds’ (Baldassar, 2007). To interpret my manually coded fieldwork data, I connect the concepts of transnational caregiving (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding, 2007) and power-geometry of mobility (Massey, 1993). The translocal connections that emerge, between a diversity of carework actors both within and across national borders, are particularly useful for gaining insight into the context-specific decision-making dynamics of international migration. In conclusion, I highlight how translocal

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32 As warranted by the context, I use the term translocal instead of transnational (see Freitag and von Oppen, 2010; Yeates, 2012), except when explicitly referring to other researchers’ concepts.
carework shapes family members’ access to mobility through ongoing negotiations of a wide range of family responsibilities.

Initially, the fieldwork that is at the core of this chapter started with a focus on families’ migration experiences, more specifically the restrictions and opportunities regarding who moves, why, and in what ways. As child care soon proved to be central in the research participants’ perceptions, I came to consider carework as an important factor for migration decision-making. This steered the research toward a more explicit focus on hitherto largely unconsidered actors and activities that are part of this carework.

Before I go into the empirical part of this chapter, I briefly sketch a theoretical background, highlighting the growing attention for gender in migration studies, the usefulness of a focus on carework across distance, and the perspectives that are often still missing in current research.

2. GENDERING MIGRATION AND CAREWORK

The long overdue struggle to include gender dynamics in migration research started with more attention for women from the 1980s onwards (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford, 1999). The recognition that migrants are not only male but also female, and that the migration experiences of these male and female migrants differ significantly, enabled a useful consideration of women as active migration participants (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). However, just focusing on women has often missed the point of analysing gender as an organizing principle of migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

In part, this lack of ‘gender sensitivity’ (Grieco and Boyd, 1998) in migration research has been addressed by current studies on translocal families (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997) and their carework in particular. Carework, also referred to as reproductive, domestic or kin work, includes both practical and emotional aspects (Gerstel and Gallagher, 2001; Baldassar, 2007; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Carework is highly stratified in terms of workload and appreciation, in accordance with the socioeconomic position of the person doing the carework (Colen, 1995).

The importance of carework as “the glue that holds societies together” (Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, 2006: 369) can be found in, for example, the notion that carework is central to the development of people’s capabilities (Folbre and Nelson, 2000; England, 2005). More generally, there is growing recognition that carework is closely connected to wider social, political, and economic processes, including paid work (Danby, 2004). Of these connections, the notion of inseparability between ‘intimate’
carework and a supposedly ‘detached’ economy is perhaps the most provocative; however, it is not new. It builds on discussions in a variety of disciplines on the social character of things and transactions (Appadurai, 1986; Bloch and Parry, 1989), the close links between reproduction and production (Yeates, 2012), and specifically, the way people’s relationships organize economic activity while at the same time economic activity sustains relationships (Zelizer, 2005).

Recently, the carework–economy link has been widely discussed through the notion of ‘care marketization’ (Duffy, 2011), which refers to the contemporary transformation of carework in terms of substance, actors, and places. This transformation takes place in a highly unequal context of family relationships, gender norms and practices, cultural obligations, ethnic preferences, (inter)national labour markets, and migration and social welfare policies (Parreñas, 2005; Kofman and Raghuram, 2012; Yeates, 2012), enabling a proliferation of global care chains. Hochschild (2000: 131) defines these care chains as “a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring.” Although a focus on care chains has served to highlight both the carework–economy link and females’ (growing) involvement in migration, especially by focusing on migrant domestic workers, care chain research also tends to victimize migrants and their ‘dependents’ at home (McKay, 2007). This victimization could be nuanced by taking the carework context into account, in particular, a worldwide diversity of family arrangements. After all, the stretching of carework over various persons and distances is nothing new but historically widely practiced throughout all social classes (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997).

Against the backdrop of these larger processes, the focus in this chapter is on the ‘intimate transactions’ (Zelizer, 2005) of less-researched carework actors and activities within families. These include economic dynamics as well (Engle and Breaux, 1998; Gerstel and Gallagher, 2001; Aranda, 2003; Schmalzbauer, 2004; McKay, 2007; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). However, in migration research, it seems as if these intra-family economic dynamics are only considered as far as women are concerned. For example, migrant mothers are widely recognized for their efforts to care by sending money and gifts and using technology to remain in touch with home (e.g., Parreñas, 2005). While these activities form an intrinsic part of carework, as money directly contributes to daily survival and maintaining family relationships, they are also instrumental as they enable other types of carework. For instance, migrant families count on financial support for higher education expenses, paying off debt, and the construction of their houses. Many migrant men perform the same economic activities as migrant women; however, what they provide is generally not considered as carework. In part, this can be explained by the fact that systematic research on men’s relational experiences as migrants and fathers is still scarce
(Viveros Vigoya, 2001; Dreby, 2006; Pribilsky, 2007; Datta et al., 2008; Laurie, 2008; Waters, 2010; Kilkey, Plomien, and Perrons, 2014). Thus, while scholars increasingly include economic activities in order to illustrate migrant mothers’ expanding role as family breadwinners, they do not take these as a starting point for analysing father involvement. This reflects a neglect of men’s share in carework (Pearson, 2000), despite its importance for the well-being of many families (Engle, 1997).  This neglect may be reinforced by researchers who, by a focus on economic activities, fear to inadvertently reinforce the negative image of the distant, ‘traditional father’ only concerned with providing for the family (Christiansen and Palkovitz, 2001).

In Nicaragua, the stereotypical image of the father who does not provide for his children (Avellán, 2003) seems consistent with the image of Nicaraguan men as irresponsible machos (Lancaster, 1992). However, Gutmann (2007: 26) criticizes conventional notions of macho and machismo, which “have become shorthand terms for labelling a host of negative male characteristics” such as womanizing, drinking, and bullying. He argues that expectations of men also focus on their duty to provide and “being a dependable and engaged father” (ibid.: 79). Indeed, next to motives of adventure and self-improvement, men migrate to provide for their families (Datta et al., 2008), showing their dedication through remittances (Bustamante and Alemán, 2007). This indicates the importance of analysing male migrants’ experiences as family members instead of detached individuals (Donaldson et al., 2009).

Perhaps the bias toward migrant mothers has been useful to make their share in carework and migration visible. However, to increase our knowledge of carework as a multidimensional process involving multiple people and places, other relevant actors have to be taken into account. Next to focusing on the way fathers’ involvement in carework shapes families’ migration decision-making, this chapter also highlights the role of female relatives. As exemplified in research on care chains, women who migrate (whether single or married) often mobilize female caregivers like grandmothers and aunts to provide daily care at home (e.g., Parreñas, 2008). This well-established ‘shared motherhood’ seems largely unproblematic (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). Although different scholars acknowledge that problems concerning ‘other mothering’ may arise, for instance because of authority issues, fear of (or actual) abandonment, and lack of appreciation (ibid., 258; Schmalzbauer, 2004), the availability of ‘other mothers’ is hardly ever questioned.

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33 This is not to say that carework can only be “successful” if performed by both a mother and a father (see Walker and McGraw, 2000, for a discussion on the “need” for an involved father). However, when men are involved in carework, they should be considered in its analysis as well.
(see Akesson, Carling, and Drotbohm, 2012 for an exception to this). However, in fact, we know very little about the availability and mobilization of potential female caregivers (Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, 2006), let alone their influence on migration decisions.

I thus focus on two groups that are often overlooked, taken for granted, or victimized: fathers and female relatives (Ackers, 2004). Especially fatherhood issues will receive attention in a modest effort to nuance the misleading picture of carework as women’s domain. What follows is thus not intended to be a balanced, exhaustive account of all possible carework actors and activities, but focuses on a selection of those crucial for understanding carework–migration dynamics in this particular Nicaraguan context.

3. FAMILY LIFE IN MUY MUY: MIGRATION, COORDINATION, AND STRATIFIED CAREWORK

Despite their diverse background in terms of family composition, livelihood strategies, and income levels, the 26 core families of this research all share migration experiences that make their existence and perspectives translocal. These migration experiences predominantly have a regional and temporary character. More than two-thirds of the families have experienced the migration of the husband of the principal couple, while almost half experienced that of the wife and siblings. Only in a few cases, the (grand) father or (grand)mother has migrated recently. Men and women migrate individually as well as with partners. However, individual male migrants can be both single or in a relationship, whereas individual female migrants are virtually always single. Almost always these migrants have children and often elderly relatives, who require daily care.

Migration reinforces the common Nicaraguan practice of circulating family members, resulting in flexible household arrangements (Cuppes, 2005; Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2011). Even when husband, wife, and children would be permanently present, extended family members are often intimately involved in a household’s

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34 When I refer to a family, I take as my starting point the principal (young to middle-aged) couple of a household and define family members that are regularly involved in its carework accordingly. In my research, half of the families include members of three generations and half include two generations. About a quarter of these families are primarily based in the comarcas [rural areas] and the other families are spread throughout the urban center, although many maintain family- and work-related linkages with both.

35 I use the words “husband” and “wife” for both formal and common-law unions.

36 In the village, there appear to be females who migrate to Spain while leaving a male partner (and children) behind, but at the time of writing I had not yet come across such a case myself.
livelihood strategies (see also Fonseca, 1991; on urban Brasil and Leinaweaver, 2008 on the Andes). Despite this complexity, young parents in Muy Muy also consider the nuclear unit, consisting of a couple with children, an ideal to strive after in their quest for improved well-being (see also Steel, Winters, and Sosa, 2011), making it a meaningful reference point for the research participants.

In a context where state support is limited and poverty levels are high, it is perhaps not surprising how much couples emphasize mutual understanding and cooperation to increase their family’s well-being. In their words, both men and women wish to have a stable relationship, to comprehend each other, and to be united to confront problems together. For example, Guillermo (20–25) expects from his wife Cristina “that all the time we understand each other and get ahead together” (couple card, February 1, 2010, MM, see Figure 5). This statement could be just an idealized representation of married life. However, it can also be interpreted as indicative of livelihood strategies based on coordination (Zelizer, 2005: 214), that is, the continuous balancing of needs and responsibilities. The fact that the research participants are not necessarily able to live up to this ideal does not mean that coordination does not play a meaningful role in their daily lives.

**FIGURE 5. PARTIAL EXAMPLE OF A COUPLE CARD**

Couple card made by Guillermo (20–25), 1 February 2010. Guillermo’s answers to the questions read as follows: (1) What does ‘getting ahead’ mean to you? “Working and that my family does not lack anything.” (2) What do you wish for your future? “That my family does not lack its daily bread and it would be better if I could prosper more.” (3) What do you expect from your spouse? “That all the time we understand each other and get ahead together.” (4) What do you share with your spouse? What is it that makes you a couple? “We share time with our son, we talk about what would be best for the child.” (5) What are your responsibilities in the home? “Bring the daily bread, spend time with them.”

This coordination is largely based on households’ gendered division of labour. Traditionally, men are responsible for earning an income that enables them to provide for all household necessities, while women are responsible for domestic housework, including the daily care of children. It is not my intention to draw a sharp distinction here: Many women in Muy Muy have experience with income generating
activities, both home based and increasingly outside the home and even abroad. After all, their culturally prescribed ultimate responsibility for their children means they have to assume the ‘male’ obligation of earning an income when the need arises. At the same time, men not only participate in the external job sphere but work from home as well, for example, in small in-house grocery stores called *pulperias*. They also perform ‘male’ domestic housework such as home repairs. However, consistent with gender norms and practices, none of the men mention ‘female’ chores such as cooking and cleaning as their responsibility. Only in exceptional circumstances, like sickness, men may assume these types of chores. For example, when I called Felicia (20–25) during and right after her pregnancy, she told me how her husband León helped her by cooking, sweeping the floor, and making the bed, even though female family members were present (telephone conversations, March 23 and May 26, 2010, MM).

Especially in the *comarcas*, the gendered division of labour is rigid. For example, Diego (20–25) told me that his wife Maricela usually spends her day working inside the house, where she takes care of their baby, prepares food, and looks after the animals. When I asked him whether she would rather not work for pay, he said “No, she can’t, because she has to dedicate herself to the *quehaceres* [things-to-do] at home, and the work *ajeno* [elsewhere, for someone else] is very hard, it’s for men” (interview, February 4, 2010, MM). Cristina (15–20), who joined her husband in the *comarca* after marriage, lists as her responsibilities: “Attend to my spouse, prepare his food on time, look after the children” (couple card, February 1, 2010, MM). This particular understanding of coordination extends beyond the couples themselves. Nieves, a grandmother in her fifties living in the urban centre, worries about her son and his wife in Costa Rica. “My daughter-in-law is *malcriada* [bad mannered], she doesn’t wash or cook for my son, she doesn’t attend to him. And her duty is to look after him. El *pobrecito* [the poor thing] has to make his own food, dress their girl...” (interview, September 22, 2011, MM). These comments illustrate that much carework at home belongs to the women’s domain (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2011). However, men’s lack of participation in this kind of carework does not mean that they are not dedicated to “helping with the work of making a family” (Hirsch, 1999: 1339). A closer look at their role as fathers who should provide for their families may reveal more about their share in carework.

### 3.1. CONSIDERING FATHERS AND THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Although little is known about Latino fathers, especially migrant fathers (Taylor and Behnke, 2005), and we should not assume their homogeneity (Donaldson et al., 2009), the importance of being a father in Latin America cannot be underestimated. Viveros Vigoya (2001: 245) points out that “[i]n many studies of masculinity,
fatherhood has emerged as the highest form of male responsibility.” Among the men in my research, children figure prominently in their testimonies. They emphasize that being a father is a beautiful gift, a life-changing event, which activates their responsibility to take care of family – specifically, by providing for them (Donaldson et al., 2009). For example, Diego (20-25) wrote about his father role: “My responsibilities are working for maintaining the household, taking care of my daughter” (couple card, February 14, 2010, MM).

What fathers say and write is reflected and confirmed in their daily practices and the accounts of their family members. My research includes three cases in which a father is considered desobligado [‘irresponsible’] because he does not provide for his children, making this an exception rather than the norm (see also Viveros Vigoya, 2001: 321). In addition, although I do not wish to deny the hardship of those families who suffer from the lack of paternal support, the research participants sometimes use the accusation of a father’s irresponsibility as a way to express more general feelings of discontent with their uncertain (financial) situation. Alisa (30–35) gave an example of this when we talked about her struggle to make ends meet. She told me that her husband went to Costa Rica, started a new family, and abandoned her and their two sons of thirteen and eight years old. However, when her eldest son walked me home after the interview, he told me that his father had visited him about 6 months ago, and calls every 2 weeks. In a subsequent interview, Alisa clarified that her ex-husband only fails to provide financial support if he is unemployed. When he has a job, he sends money (interviews, July 1, 2009 and February 18, 2010, MM). This example indicates that it is unproductive to leave the stereotypical image of irresponsible males unquestioned and pass over those families in which both parents are still involved with the care for their children (Pribilsky, 2004).

Thus, for the large majority that is not considered desobligado, I have identified three groups of fathers who show different types of involvement with their children. The first, smallest group of fathers could be considered ‘just’ providers. They separated from the mother, often many years ago, but still send money for the maintenance of their children. Possibly, there is no further contact. The money sending might – more than for other fathers – be primarily based on the concern to be left alone in their old age or even just on compliance with the Nicaraguan Ley de Alimentos (Alimony Law). Half of the fathers in my research belong to a second, ‘more involved’ group: They provide financial support, and when they migrate, they keep in touch through phone calls and sometimes letters or photos. For example, Cedro (25–30), father of a young daughter and son raised by his parents and in-laws with money he and his wife earn in Costa Rica, sent his picture with the message: “for Yesenia, your daddy loves you a lot”. He included the wish that the family enlarge the photo; he would send the money to do so (interview with his sister
Ofelia, September 24, 2010, MM). Through this gesture, Cedro shows his desire to maintain a relationship that goes beyond providing.

Finally, one-third of the fathers not only provide and communicate but also take part in other forms of daily care such as looking after the children, playing with them, and helping with their homework. Evidence of this third, ‘close’ type of involvement can mostly be found in what Pribilsky (2012: 325) calls ‘quotidian micro-practices’ that are only revealed by spending considerable time with the families. Examples are numerous: a young father proudly watching and showing off his baby girl while his wife goes out to sell cosmetics, a boy who anxiously expects his fathers’ return from Costa Rica to play baseball again, a small girl who cannot wait to tell her father about her day at school when he finally gets home from work. Or consider the response of Cristina (15–20) when I visited her and asked about her husband. She pointed to the house of her mother-in-law, who often watches their baby, and said “He’s in there. After work it’s baby-time” (interview, February 1 2010, MM).

The above examples constitute a mix of migrant and non-migrant father involvement. This resembles the families’ daily reality in a migration context, which makes fathers shift their involvement according to the possibilities and restrictions of a specific time and place.37 As Hernán (25–30) explained about his responsibility as a father: “That [my son] does not lack anything, economically, health-wise, food, clothes... And to always be with him. Well, at least when I’m here. When I’m in Costa Rica, I call him, that’s my way of being with him” (interview, February 16, 2010, MM). A common scenario involves a close father who becomes ‘just’ a provider when leaving for Costa Rica. His limited earnings only allow for sending a little money to cover basic needs and a few short phone calls or text messages. In time, he may establish himself socially and economically, allowing higher levels of financial support and communication.

The above snapshots of fathering also include men’s often-overlooked carework tasks of communication and guidance. However, I focus specifically on financial support, because according to the research participants and consistent with the literature, it is where fathers’ greatest contribution usually lies. This holds especially true in a migration context where distance makes other types of support more

37 This is especially true in the case of relatively short distance, low cost, accessible migration (often but not always ‘south-south’). See also Leifsen and Tymczuk (2012), who describe how geographical distance structures carework by comparing Ukrainian and Ecuadorian migration to Spain.
challenging. In addition, adequate financial support is particularly important in this Nicaraguan setting, where few young wives carry out (well-)paid work.

Adequate financial support refers to agreement on the timing, amount, and spending of money. Reaching this agreement requires mutual understanding. For example, Myrna (25–30) is aware of her husband’s limited earnings in Costa Rica. But she shared her relief when his visit during the Christmas holidays helped him to finally understand her financial situation as well. “He could see how expensive things are and that I cannot manage on the 100 [US] dollars a month that he sends me, and it’s not because I am gastona [a big spender]” (interview, February 4, 2011, MM). After the visit, her husband agreed to send her more money.

But agreement does not necessarily take away the fact that women’s dependence on someone else’s unstable earnings can cause stress and anxiety. For example, Carmen (25–30) expressed her wish to “not wait on anybody for money. [My husband] sends me money between the third and fifth of every month and when the date is approaching, I suffer from high blood pressure. There’s always insecurity” (interview, September 22, 2011, MM). The ‘insecurity’ Carmen and other women feel is understandable considering that none of the families in this research have substantial (if any) savings. No financial support often means lowering consumption and assuming greater debt, both of which can be detrimental to family well-being.

My focus on financial support serves to highlight an important aspect of paternal carework that makes sense in this particular Nicaraguan setting. However, it is not my intention to isolate fathers’ financial support, as it is always embedded in the wider range of relevant carework activities and actors (Christiansen and Palkovitz, 2001). In line with this, I now turn to the carework involvement of female relatives.

3.2. ‘OTHER MOTHERING’: AVAILABILITY, COMPROMISE, AND PAID CARE

Although not yet as often as men, women in Muy Muy also migrate. Still, the migration experiences of the female research participants are linked to carework differently than those of men, drawing attention to the role of their female relatives. As mentioned earlier, providing is not a woman’s main responsibility. However, if she wishes to migrate in order to contribute to the family income and her husband agrees (see next section), her duty to give daily care at home also makes her responsible for finding her replacement. This is where the carework of female relatives turns out to be indispensable. More than half of the 15 women that have a strong desire to migrate put their plans on hold because of a lack of caregivers; at the time of writing, one-third of them have not yet been able to migrate. Health issues play an important role in this (temporal) care gap. When a woman migrates,
she usually prefers her own mom (the children’s grandmother) to take care of the children. However, even if these grandmothers are still able to take care of themselves, they are not necessarily still able and willing to look after their grandchildren.

Sickness and old age are not the only factors that put the availability of care in danger, as disagreements about raising children can also make women hesitant to leave their children with others. However, the importance attached to these disagreements seems subject to change, especially in a migration context. As Svašek (2008: 224) argues, “transnational kin- work is a constant process of evaluation and arbitration.” In light of migration opportunities, these disagreements may temporarily become less decisive. For example, when I met Carola (20–25) for the first time in Muy Muy, she was not only reluctant to leave her three children with her mother Catarina because of her ill health, but also because she is very strict and hits her grandchildren (interview, July 15, 2009, MM). About 6 months later, I met Carola for the second time in the capital Managua, where she held a job as a live-in domestic worker while Catarina took care of her children. Carola told me she had no choice but to leave the village to work elsewhere. She could not find a suitable job in Muy Muy, and it had been months since their relatives had sent them anything from Costa Rica. When I asked how Catarina was treating her children, Carola responded: “I’ll find out when I get back!” (interview, February 24, 2010, Managua). She tried to find another job which would enable her to go home every 2 weeks and see her children. In the meantime, she hoped her younger sister (of school age) would look after them.

This ‘care compromise’ is also visible in the case of Estefani (25–30), who migrates back and forth to Costa Rica while dividing the daily care for her three children between the households of her parents and in-laws. Her parents, an elderly couple, take care of two boys; her middle-aged in-laws look after the daughter. Estefani fears that the care for the boys is too heavy for her parents and worries about the difference in care that her children receive. Repeated visits to the two households made me understand Estefani’s concern. While her sons often run around dirty in no more than a torn t-shirt, her daughter always looks neat. The daughter also appears to be better nourished and healthier. Contrary to Carola, Estefani does not expect her sisters to check on the children from time to time. Although these sisters live at home and have no paid work or children of their own to look after, “They don’t pay any attention to [my] children” (interview, February 14, 2011, MM). Estefani’s concern finally led her to take two of her children with her to Costa Rica. Unfortunately, this made daily life too expensive and decreased her earning capacity. By returning the children to Muy Muy, she (temporarily) compromises to
differentiated daily care, providing an example of the ‘difficult trade-offs’ between income and proximity (Carling, Menjivar, and Schmalzbauer, 2012: 192).

When care is not readily available within families, women sometimes turn to more distant or non-family for paid carework. This is only a last resort as the research participants generally find it difficult to trust ‘outsiders’ with their children. In addition, potential caregivers bear their own constraints as well. Although many young women in Muy Muy are formally unemployed, their work at home often restrains paid work elsewhere. When these women are considered available, the aspiring migrants feel much pressure to quickly secure a well-paid job to both earn sufficient for themselves and to pay the caregivers enough. After all, for the sake of their children’s well-being, they cannot risk to pay them a mere pittance (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997).

These availability constraints become clear in the story of Carmen (25–30), who is married and has two sons. Her husband has been working in Spain for a couple of years, while Carmen lives with her mother Teresa and takes care of the children. Carmen also worked in Spain, but when she got pregnant with her second son, she decided to return to Nicaragua. She wants to migrate to Spain again but has not yet been able to find a reliable caregiver for her children. She cannot count on her mother because Teresa already has a job at the local primary school; besides, she suffers from arthritis. Carmen also considered leaving the children with a niece but eventually she rejected this idea. Her niece has a rather good job, and Carmen would not be able to match her salary. After many months of deliberating, a close friend with two children told Carmen she could take care of her sons as well. However, the friend’s mother got sick, and she had to assume this new care responsibility. At the time of writing, more than 3 years after I first met Carmen, she had still not been able to migrate (interviews July 12 and 16, 2009; January 27, September 24 and October 7, 2010; last telephone conversation with Carmen’s mother Teresa took place on July 25, 2013, MM). Although the cost of migration and volatile job opportunities in Spain also play a role in Carmen’s accounts, she always identified a lack of care for her children as the decisive factor.

4. TRANSLOCAL CAREWORK: INTER-DEPENDENCIES, POWER DYNAMICS, AND ACCESS TO MOBILITY

The findings discussed above already indicate that carework requires at least a basic level of coordination between (potential) caregivers, both couples and wider family, although this coordination does not necessarily equal perfect harmony (Pribilsky, 2004) or even agreement on adequate care. By including often-overlooked actors that are part of this coordination, the findings also hint at some important links
between carework and migration decision-making. Notably, they reflect how for some carework seems to enable migration, while for others care-work seems an obstacle.

The concept of transnational caregiving, elaborated by Baldassar, Ballock, and Wilding (2007: 203–217), provides a fruitful starting point to further explore these links. According to these authors, any exchange of care takes place in a particular context characterized by prevalent gender, culture and class relations, and other more tangible multilevel factors (including state care services, community involvement, and family life cycles). Migration complicates this context, as individual and family migration trajectories, geographical accessibility, and dynamic kin relations all enable specific types of ‘transnational caregiving’ while disabling others. Concretely,

“[t]hese care exchanges are mediated by a dialectic encompassing the capacity of individual members and their culturally informed sense of obligation to provide care, as well as the particularistic kin relationships and negotiated family commitments that people with specific family networks share.” (ibid.: 204, my emphasis)

With capacity, the authors refer to an individual’s opportunity and ability for transnational caregiving, including his or her resources and skills. The obligation dimension centres on the cultural norms and practices that inform specific perceptions of duties and needs, subject to change through life and migration experiences. Finally, negotiated family commitments are the dynamic family relationships that develop in a specific migration context, including reasons for leaving, family and wider support for individual migration decisions (‘license to leave’), and the family life cycle.

The authors primarily developed their concept of ‘transnational caregiving’ by taking migration as a given. However, by introducing the concept of ‘power-geometry’ of mobility, Massey (1993) suggests that access to, control over, and benefits of mobility are not equally divided among people (see also Landolt and Da, 2005; Steel, Winters, and Sosa, 2011). To use carework analysis for gaining insight into migration decision-making itself, it is thus necessary to focus more explicitly on the intra-family power dynamics that play an important role in translocal carework (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). What kind of power relations, expressed through the research participants’ translocal carework capacities, obligations, and negotiated commitments, can be identified? And what implications do these have for families’ migration decision-making and people’s individual mobility options?
Starting with young Nicaraguan couples, they appreciate and often try to cultivate a basic level of coordination based on mutual understanding of each other’s roles as a prerequisite for improving the well-being of their family. To the research participants, these roles are clear (though not static), as they have been groomed accordingly since early childhood. Men have the obligation to provide for their families. If they feel they do not have the capacity to do so at home, if they cannot find a job that pays well enough nearby, they can count on the approving (and often encouraging) support of their family members to migrate. In a sense, despite the distance and difficulties this might entail for the relationship between fathers and children, these men’s migration enables providing and therefore a type of fatherhood considered ‘right’ in locally defined terms. Moreover, as resembled by geographer McKay’s (2007) work on Filipino migration, these exchanges ensure a basic level of material security that is often indispensable for further intimacy. This way, meeting economic obligations through migration may also enable other types of carework, for example, emotional guidance.

Among the research participants, men seem to enjoy more migration access because of their (perceived) position of breadwinners, but this does not liberate them from the social scrutiny and burden also associated with migration (as suggested by, for example, Abrego, 2009). Migrants often feel high pressure to send money, especially when they left the family with migration and other debts. This pressure can convert access in obligation and anxiety. Moreover, failure to provide generally strains family relationships, as the love, care, and commitment of husbands, fathers, and sons are often measured in material terms. Providing can be an important prerequisite for other types of father involvement, and wives/mothers staying with their children emerge as important regulators of the father–child relationship. For example, Victor’s (30–35) ex-wife only lets him see their daughter when he brings along money (interview, 2 July 2009, MM). This restraining practice is also referred to as ‘maternal gatekeeping’ (Fagan and Barnett, 2003; see Dreby, 2006, for a Mexican example).

At the same time, mothers feel that this kind of ‘relational coordination’ is a prerequisite for their own access to financial support. During one of our phone calls, Carmen (25–30) argued that the indispensable money her estranged husband sends for their sons would only continue to come if she maintains a good relationship with him: “Complaining won’t get me anywhere. I’d just hurt myself, I’d

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38 Theoretically, the Nicaraguan Ley de Alimentos sees to fathers’ fulfilment of their financial duties toward their children. However, according to newspaper La Prensa, applying this law is a slow and troublesome process in which more than half of the “thousands” of claims for support are withdrawn before reaching an agreement (Martínez, 2001).
be losing” (telephone conversation, April 2010 9, MM). For women, financial support can be a good reason to continue a relationship. When I asked Anabel (20–25) why she stays with her husband despite her frequent complaints about his lack of affection, she responded: “Nunca hemos pasado hambre [we have never gone hungry]” (interview, 4 February 2011, MM). Women’s (perceived) dependency on male financial support cannot be viewed separately from men’s dependency on female carework at home. On the one hand, their obligation of housework and child care usually leaves them with less leverage in migration decision-making than their male counterparts. On the other hand, while they do not feel as much social and economic pressure to leave their family and village for an uncertain existence elsewhere, they can still share in the financial benefits of their partner’s migration.

Next to the continuing importance of ‘traditional’ gender roles, often reinforced by men’s final say in family matters, women’s mobility options also depend on a mutual, evolving understanding of a family’s needs. The families of Pedro and León, two brothers, provide an example of this. I first met them in 2009 and kept in touch with these brothers, their wives Martina and Felicia, and their young children through visits in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica and phone calls. All family members have migration experiences in both countries, but for Felicia (20–25) it has been much more complicated to go to Costa Rica. In part, this is a result of her own reluctance to temporarily leave her children with female relatives, as she finds it very difficult to be without them. But Felicia mostly emphasized León’s unwillingness to ‘let her’ work in Costa Rica. She feared he would get jealous. More importantly, also not unlike other men, he takes pride in being able to provide for her and their children. According to him, letting Felicia work in Costa Rica would show his inability to do so. Felicia imitated his reaction after her plea to take her with him to Costa Rica to face increasing house-hold costs: “But I buy everything for you! What do you want? I’ll send you [money] so you can buy it!” (interview, October 13, 2010, MM). His brother Pedro (30–35), on the other hand, thinks he and his wife Martina should work together: “That’s what we went to do, to work. We work to help each other mutually... You have to work as a couple and think as a family” (interview, January 31, 2010, MM). When I visited Pedro and Martina in Costa Rica and I asked him about this difference between him and León, he responded, “Se va a tener que acostumbrar [he will have to get used to it]!” (interview, February 20, 2011, CR). Early 2012, it seems both León and Felicia got used to new arrangements. León accepted Felicia’s migration to Costa Rica, and she accepted the sadness of temporary distance from her children. When I called her in Costa Rica, she said she had finally convinced León by pointing out she would be working side by side with Martina, which tempered his jealousy. She had also argued that they could achieve more together, referring to a specific, long-standing need: “Quiero mi cocina [I want my kitchen]!” (telephone conversation, March 15, 2012, CR). With the last argument,
she knowingly tapped into León’s responsibilities as a husband and father to provide for his family’s material needs, as he had promised her this much-needed kitchen a long time ago.

Although this example explicitly points to the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation as a couple, it also hints at the significant role of extended family support, both directly and indirectly. By giving an example of a Nicaraguan man who ‘lets’ his wife work, and by offering a ‘safe’ working place, Pedro and Martina provided an enabling environment. Vice versa, extended family can also limit young mothers possibilities to migrate alongside their partners. This becomes clear in the case of Myrna (25–30) and her two sons, who live in a house that is owned by and located next to her in-laws. On various occasions, Myrna spoke about joining her husband Ernesto in Costa Rica, but she was always hesitant to do so. Her major concern was a familiar one: who would take care of her two sons? The person she turns to in case of emergency, her mother-in-law Virginia, is not in good health and both agreed that having two more boys in the house would be too much of a burden (interview, July 2, 2009, MM). However, about one and a half year after we first met, Myrna left for Costa Rica. About 6 months later, I had the chance to ask grandmother Virginia what kind of care arrangement they had made. She pointed out that she took care of the children, but added that Myrna would already be coming home from Costa Rica. “I told her to come back because I can’t take care of her sons anymore. It’s not my responsibility anymore. And I cannot regañar lo ajeno [reprimand what’s not mine]. They don’t pay me any attention” (interview, 23 September 2011, MM).

Although Myrna made arrangements to leave the boys with two muchachas prior to her departure, according to Virginia they only lasted 2 weeks, saddling her with the boys’ daily care. Virginia also claimed that under her watchful eye, Myrna’s sons had gained weight during their mother’s absence. By making Myrna feel guilty for leaving and burdening Virginia and by questioning Myrna’s capacity as a mother, Virginia indirectly challenges the legitimacy of Myrna’s migration. The allegations and fear of losing crucial occasional carework support urge Myrna to come home, thereby limiting her individual mobility.

Although these kind of interpersonal power dynamics between a daughter- and mother-in-law are not uncommon, another example shows these dynamics can even divide the nuclear family. Ofelia (25–30) is the youngest of seven siblings and lives with her mother in the urban centre while her father lives in one of the comarcas. Ofelia’s older siblings have been migrating to Costa Rica for years, and she would like to go herself. But when her sister Carlota, the last sibling still at home, also left, Ofelia saw her chance of going to Costa Rica slip through her fingers. She cannot leave because somebody has to stay at home to watch her own son, the migrant siblings’ children, and their aging grandmother (interview, February 11, 2010, MM).
Seen through the lens of translocal carework, the specific position Ofelia occupies in her family makes her less eligible to migrate. This position is likely heavily influenced by issues of gender and generation (Tacoli and Mabala, 2010). Being a female makes Ofelia the ‘right’ candidate for daily care at home and being young probably gives her less leverage in family decision-making. In addition, as in other cases, less easily identifiable factors may also play a role, such as personal ambition and initiative (Pessar and Mahler, 2003).

Carework negotiations can thus discourage migration even when all other requirements are met (e.g., money, personal willingness, reliable job prospects), thereby highlighting a differentiated access to mobility. These negotiations also show how a general tendency toward a so-called ‘feminization of migration’ is far from all-inclusive. Someone’s (perceived) capacity to care, his or her sense of family obligation, and position in care negotiations influence the type, amount, and location of carework, leaving some persons with more scope to seize and shape mobility opportunities than others.

As described in the ‘cooperative conflicts’ literature, the necessity to coordinate carework does not alter the fact that the outcome of this coordination (in terms of experiences, valuation and rewards) is highly uneven (Sen, 1989; Woolley, 2000), often reinforcing the inequalities on which it is based (Colen, 1995). This chapter takes migration as an outcome example: the research participants’ carework undeniably influences the mobility options of themselves and other family members. Their accounts show that primarily due to their breadwinning role, men are better positioned to migrate than (married) women. In addition, as a result of factors like age, some women are better positioned than other women. However, there is a danger of viewing the apparently least mobile persons like Ofelia as the “less and less privileged women in a global terrain” (Parreñas, 2005: 113), the ‘ultimate victims’ of family obligations. To avoid this kind of victimization, it is important to emphasize the agency component of translocal carework. The links between carework and migration do not constitute a one-way process but are made up of multidimensional negotiations between different actors in specific circumstances. These negotiations may enable a shift in the carework–migration link, as exemplified by Felicia, who with some support from her extended family managed to go to Costa Rica after many years of couple negotiation. At the same time, illustrated by Carola, these shifts are not necessarily positive, as the chance to migrate can also mean a temporary acceptance of lesser quality daily care. However, at the very least, analysing translocal carework challenges stereotypes of absent fathers and stay-behinds, enabling a context-specific insight into family migration decision-making even beyond these actors.
5. CONCLUSION

Our understanding of the complexities of international migration processes benefits from analysing translocal carework as a joint yet contested effort of highly dynamic arrangements, shaped by continuous negotiations between differently positioned family members. To improve the well-being of their families, these members feel the need to coordinate care. Exploring this coordination directs our attention to issues of agency and families’ adaptability to changing challenges and opportunities. It also deepens our understanding of carework in particular contexts. In the case of Muy Muy, carework analysis should at least include father’s financial support and take into account the un/availability of female relatives. At the same time, for future research here and elsewhere, it should not be limited to these aspects. By using an open carework concept that can accommodate a diversity of carework actors and activities, it becomes possible to unravel how carework shapes specific migration processes. However, to avoid a ‘black box’ without analytical value, it remains important to emphasize the power dynamics that play a role in carework. They are a reminder of the fact that different types of care and caregivers are valued differently. Carework is shared, but not equally.

This chapter has highlighted one of the implications of unequally shared carework: a differentiated access to mobility. This insight inspires numerous other important questions. For example, when acknowledging the strength of ‘traditional’ gender norms and practices, how to avoid lapsing into stereotypes? How to duly integrate the crucial life cycles of migrant families? And how to research the links between different carework negotiations and the things people are able to achieve with migration (i.e., ‘success’)? It is hoped that this chapter provides valuable inspiration for researching these and other pertinent questions.
Note: This chapter focuses on the translocal livelihood domain of ‘illegality’. It challenges dominant public and academic discourses on migrant ‘illegality’ that primarily reflect nation-states’ concerns, often resulting in a contradictory, largely ineffective simplification of migrant lives and limiting our understanding of migration. This chapter argues that identifying migrants’ everyday politics allows for an inclusion of the spatial and temporal livelihood dimensions needed to accommodate migrants’ experiences. The resulting analysis highlights migrants’ dynamic use of mobility for their livelihoods ‘at home’ and reconciles seemingly contradictory practices and perspectives into a single migration endeavour. This primarily responds to the thesis research questions on the characteristics of migration experiences and the development values they imply, providing insight into the connections between local and regional scales incorporated in Muy Muy livelihoods, as well as the formally contested border-crossings these connections require.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On a bright Sunday morning, Pedro and Martina (30-35) and their two children took me for a walk in the busy central park of Nicoya. Several years before, they made this small Costa Rican city their temporary home when like many of their compatriots, they left Nicaragua in search of better opportunities. We ate ice-cream and strolled past the city’s migration office. As migrant workers without residency or work permit, Pedro and Martina are supposed to pay a monthly fee here, but they never do. I wondered about their ease and freedom of movement despite their lack of required documentation, but they reassured me. “Aquí no molestan [here, they don’t bother you].” (Author’s field notes, 20 February 2011)

Pedro and Martina’s rather carefree experience does not fit the currently prevailing ‘illegal’\textsuperscript{39} category on the international migration agenda, which emphasizes the dangers and costs of ‘illegality’ for both migrants and the social order. The top-down label of ‘illegality’, which is used for migrants like Pedro and Martina in policy, advocacy and academic circles, primarily reflects nation-states’ concerns and often results in an unproductive simplification of migrant lives that is largely unable to accommodate their experiences. These migrants can be “legally absent but physically and socially present, clandestine yet ‘there’, foreign yet incorporated, prohibited yet perhaps increasingly acknowledged” (Coutin, 2007: 102). Recently, the social sciences have established a more nuanced understanding of migration processes, which would theoretically allow for an incorporation of these apparent contradictions. First, by focusing on people’s agency and power relations, mobilities research has emphasized the contextual, differentiated and dynamic experience of migration (Cresswell, 2010; Schapendonk and Steel, 2014; Sheller and Urry, 2006). Second, as specific types of international movement become increasingly restricted (Shamir, 2005), mobilities research has coincided with a proliferation of critical approaches to borders (Johnson and Jones, 2011; Newman, 2006) and the social construction of inclusion and exclusion (Paasi, 2011; Van Houtum, 2005). Despite this progress, migration studies still tend to derive their focus from a national perspective (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Kalir, 2013). This ‘methodological nationalism’ has contributed to the current dominance of the ‘illegality’ framework and prevented migrant experiences beyond ‘illegality’ to become fully incorporated in the migration agenda.

\textsuperscript{39} Following, amongst others, De Genova (2002), I use quotes whenever I make use of ‘illegality’ and related terms, at least when directly referring to human beings, “to signify that I wish [the] reader to interrogate, rather than accept, their taken-for-granted character.” (Sharma, 2003: 63)
Research on international migration that echoes nation-states’ agenda on territorial sovereignty ‘illegalizes’ human actors who challenge this sovereignty, reducing them to either criminals or passive victims of poverty and exploitation (Agustín, 2003; Anderson and Ruhs, 2010; Kyle and Siracusa, 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 2008). The public and academic criminalization and victimization of migrants reflects a ‘here and now’ perspective on migration and tends to obscure the diverse ways migrants seek to make use of mobility as a resource for improving their families’ lives ‘at home’ and in the future, as established by the livelihood approach (De Haan, 1999; De Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Ellis, 2000). This ‘here and now’ perspective or snapshot is only concerned with a single location and situation (‘illegality’) at a specific moment in a migrant’s life. It does not take into account migrants’ broader livelihood considerations and leaves little room for interpretations that move beyond criminalization and victimization. As an alternative, starting from migrants’ livelihoods may provide the necessary space for migrants’ own view on their experiences (Kalir, 2013; Sharma, 2003). Such a livelihood perspective instantly discards the use of a national lens for processes that are inherently transnational.

This chapter aims to contribute to the interdisciplinary field of migration studies by incorporating a livelihood perspective. To this end, it makes use of the concept of everyday politics (Kerkvliet, 2009) and argues that identifying migrants’ everyday politics allows for an inclusion of spatial and temporal livelihood dimensions that are better able to accommodate migrants’ experiences than the dominant ‘illegality’ framework. Specifically, the chapter identifies the everyday politics of three ways Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica deal with their migration process, which I refer to as mobility practices. These practices concern the way migrants cross the border legally, overstay their thirty-day visa and perform paid work, and negotiate their Otherness. The analysis that results from interpreting these mobility practices through the lens of everyday politics establishes migrants’ dynamic use of mobility for their livelihoods, that is, beyond the immediate present and beyond their Costa Rican locality. This analysis challenges the top-down, ‘here and now’ binaries of the ‘illegality’ framework and its contradictions, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of migration.

Regarding fieldwork specifics, I contacted migrants in Costa Rica based on my familiarity with their families in Muy Muy, with whom they share an enduring connection and commitment. The migrants’ experiences presented here are thus illustrative of a global group of migrants whose lives have become translocal (Brickell and Datta, 2011). At the same time, this group of Nicaraguan migrants shares particular characteristics. Their household composition is diverse and changes over time, but most live with siblings. None of the research participants has residency,
except for one who obtained hers through a round of amnesty in the 1990s. All research participants have a job. Men are mostly employed in construction and infrastructure maintenance, although some of them also have experience in agriculture, and women predominantly work in small restaurants, hotels and domestic service. These occupations generally reflect employment tendencies among Nicaraguans in Costa Rica (Sandoval-García, 2013). Also, the research participants are mainly urban-based, not directly active in civil movements, and mostly interested in staying in Costa Rica temporarily in order to earn money for their families ‘at home’ (see below).

The Costa Rican observations and interview excerpts in this chapter should be seen in light of the larger ethnographic project of this thesis. In both Muy Muy and Costa Rica, it was the lack of the ‘illegality’ issue among migrants and their families – quite contrary to my expectations – that sparked my interest and eventually led to the analysis presented here. The chapter continues with a theoretical introduction to the ways ‘illegality’ gets produced and challenged, and the need for embedding migrants’ experiences in the broader context of their livelihoods. After briefly introducing Muy Muy – Costa Rica migration dynamics, I describe the three above-mentioned mobility practices. I then analyse these practices in terms of everyday politics and show how spatial and temporal livelihood dimensions enable a better understanding of migrants’ decisions regarding cross-border migration.

2. PRODUCING, CHALLENGING, AND EMBEDDING ‘ILLEGALITY’

Migration scholarship currently reflects a heightened concern with migrants who are not authorized to cross certain borders and/or stay and work in a particular country.40 The ‘illegality’ of these migrants’ experiences is interpreted through oversimplified discourses of criminalization and victimization (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005; Kron, 2011; Newman, 2006). Agustín (2003: 30) notes how common reductionist rhetoric about these migrants describes them “as past victims of poverty or conflict in their home states and present victims of criminal bands, or as criminals who take advantage of such victims”, and, I would add, as criminals who take advantage of the host society by migrating, living and working there though they are not allowed to do so. Especially in the case of anti-trafficking campaigns, discourses of criminalization and victimization have actually become closely linked: identifying

40 Although this is beside the issue at stake in this chapter, the share of these migrants is said to have been growing since the 1990s (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010), but remains difficult to estimate due to the obvious lack of (quality) data, resulting in ‘guesstimates’ of for example 15–20% of migrants in 2005 (Papademetriou, 2005). This amount would probably be higher for ‘non-rich’ countries (see Ghosh, 1998, who refers to estimates of between 12.5 and 25%).
victims requires criminalizing others (Sharma, 2003), for example, those that are not trafficked but still migrate. The reverse is also true: identifying criminals requires victimization of specific groups. Concerned with the welfare of either migrants or nation-states, both processes of differentiation based on notions of ‘illegality’ are constructed from a national view of transnational migration.

Although ‘illegality’ is socially constructed by a broad range of social actors in a diversity of contexts (Chavez, 2007), nation states’ use of ‘illegality’ directly relates to their border management. Scholars like De Genova (2002) have argued that border management can be seen as an instrumental and often even profitable nation-state product (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005; Anderson and Ruhs, 2010; Ford and Lyons, 2012). Through ‘ordering’ and ‘optimizing’ cross-border mobility (Kron, 2011: 2), nation-states seek to serve their socio-economic and political interests (Anderson, 2008; Chavez, 2007; Sharma, 2003). Research has shown how the principles and practices of border management “work to make those who do cross the line incredibly vulnerable within the spaces defined as ‘belonging’ to members of the ‘nation’ and protected by ‘their state’” (Sharma, 2003: 56-57, emphasis in original, see also Anderson, 2008; Nevins, 2003; O’Connell Davidson, 2013). For instance, it is easier to exploit workers who do not have legal rights, making ‘illegality’ beneficial to employers, and possibly even an attractive alternative to legal labour migration (Vasta, 2011). Understanding migrants’ experiences therefore requires recognition of nation-states’ role in producing ‘illegality’ through border management.

However, nation-states’ production of ‘illegality’ does not go unchallenged (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010). In order to avoid a neglect of the context and human agency that are part of ‘illegality’ (ibid; Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005), scholars have taken a closer look at specific migrant practices and perspectives in spite of the nationalistic discourses. While these discourses may present the borders that establish ‘illegality’ as given omnipotent limits, ‘illegality’ is constructed and contradicted daily by a range of state and non-state actors, including migrants (Kron, 2011). The ambiguous political product of ‘illegality’ objectifies and obscures these migrants’ heterogeneity (De Genova, 2002). Migrants can move in and out of the ‘illegal’ category, have links with both sides of the il/legal continuum (for example, by combining legal entry with overstaying a visa), and even regard the distinction between legal and illegal as irrelevant for a broad range of social interactions (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010; Broeders and Engbersen, 2007; Cvajner and Sciortino, 2013).

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41 See also Bakewell (2008), who identifies potential problems of academic depth and relevant guidelines when using policy-based concerns and categories for researching forced migration.
Migrants’ agency thus complicates common notions of ‘illegality’ and related discourses of criminalization and victimization.

Through a focus on migrant agency it should be possible to narrow “the gap between our reliance on analytic categories that presuppose social fixity and the mobile practices and phenomena we are observing” (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005: 5). Migrant practices challenge state-defined concepts of belonging and vulnerability and focus attention on the relevance of crossing borders for the migrants themselves. This focus entails, amongst others, a reflection on labels such as illegal, irregular, unauthorized, undocumented and clandestine (see for example Bommes and Sciortino, 2011: 18). It also includes identifying migrants’ counter-strategies (Broeders and Engbersen, 2007), migratory careers (Cvajner and Sciortino, 2009), compliance continuums, and spaces of il/legal (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010). Additionally, it extends to migrants’ different perceptions of ‘illegality’. For example, Abraham and Van Schendel (2005) propose to distinguish between what is legal in the eyes of the state and what is considered licit, acceptable, by people involved in cross-border mobility. Kyle and Siracusa (2005) reach similar conclusions and point out that migrants do not necessarily attach importance to what is il/legal, benefitting from the mixed messages and even hypocrisy of governmental bodies and employer practices.42

Considering the above, it seems paradoxical that migration studies inadvertently continue to naturalize the top-down, national perspective (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005; Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013). By drawing on national perspectives for essentially transnational research interests, questions and methods, this methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003) leads migration studies to start from a concern formulated by nation-states, i.e., migrants’ ‘illegality’ (see Koser, 2010). This focus tends to result in a snapshot view of migrants’ experiences that excludes the broader spatial and temporal dimensions that are part of migrants’ trajectories. It not only limits our understanding of migration processes but also contributes to reproducing the simplification and possible marginalization of migrants, “doing the work of the state” (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005: 13, see for example Ghosh, 1998). As Kalir (2013: 315) illustrates, it is like looking through a state-run speed camera that aims to enhance control of drivers (or migrants) by setting and maintaining speed limits, while researchers can also

“step into the car and sit next to the driver, accompanying her/him not only when passing through or avoiding speed cameras, but documenting the full course of the journey, which begins long before and ends much after the speed cameras’ location.”

A bottom-up sensitivity to the role of space and time in migrants’ practices and perspectives should contribute to countering the methodological nationalism that maintains and reinforces the il/legality binary.

Borrowing Kalir’s terminology, this chapter is concerned with an effort to document a fuller course of migrants’ journey. It joins other research that takes into account the spatiality (Zontini, 2008) and temporality (Bailey et al., 2002; Bastia and McGrath, 2011; Mountz, 2011) of what I call migrants’ mobility practices: the ways migrants negotiate mobility when they migrate. In this chapter it concerns the following practices: how migrants cross a border, find a job to make that border crossing worthwhile, and carry themselves in ways that enhance their control over mobility. The spatial and temporal dimensions of these mobility practices indicate that they are part of a larger, integrated whole, that is, a migration endeavour for the benefit of the migrants’ livelihoods. Through migration and the sustained connections between migrants and their families, livelihoods become translocal, connecting Muy Muy in Nicaragua to different locations in Costa Rica and possibly elsewhere. In addition, migration is closely related to livelihoods’ trajectories in time, as people use it to improve their families’ well-being both immediately and in the near future. Using the broader context of migrants’ present and future translocal livelihoods as a starting point, the chapter challenges the limiting ‘illegality’ framework and enables a deeper understanding of the way Nicaraguan migrants employ their agency as they engage in migration (O’Connell Davidson, 2013).

3. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MUY MUY – COSTA RICA MIGRATION DYNAMICS

Temporary migration to Costa Rica is one of Muy Muy’s most prevalent and perpetual migration processes. Historically situated in the broader Central American context, migration to Costa Rica has been linked to regional interdependencies in the labour market, political turmoil, armed conflict, natural disasters, neoliberal economic restructuring, and shifts in gender and class relations (Fouratt, 2014; Morales, 2011; Sandoval-García, 2013). By 2011, according to Costa Rica’s Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, almost 288,000 Nicaraguans were living in Costa Rica, which equals about 6.6% of the total population.43 Most of them are of

43 Information retrieved from www.inec.go.cr on 12 March 2014. Similar to migration estimates
working age and live in urban areas. The men-to-women ratio is shifting and reflects an ongoing process of ‘feminization’ of this particular migration flow (Castro, 2011). This being said, temporary migration to Costa Rica is a diverse phenomenon, involving a variety of migrants and migration endeavours.

Looking at ‘illegality’ in the Nicaragua-Costa Rica context seems pertinent because of the current increase in ‘non-documentation’ of migrants in Costa Rica (Sandoval-García, 2013). This increase is closely linked to the most recent immigration law, of 2010. This law has raised institutional barriers and made migrants responsible for a regularization that has become increasingly complicated and expensive (Fouratt, 2014). Another implication of this law is the externalization of the border well beyond Costa Rica’s territorial limits. More authorities now have more power to establish ‘comprehensive migration management’ in the face of the ‘security threat’ that ‘illegal’ migrants pose.

The perceived threat of Nicaraguan migrants is intimately connected to persistent differentiation and stigmatization processes. Throughout various segments of Costa Rican society, notably those of media and politics, Costa Rica’s ‘unique character’ has historically been constructed by contrasting it with a negative image of Nicaragua and Nicaraguans (Sandoval-García, 2004). The latter are generally perceived to be violent due to their history of political turbulence, while Costa Rica’s longstanding democracy makes its citizens peaceful. Nicaraguans are also portrayed as poor and dark skinned, and Costa Ricans as middle class and white. Despite their contribution to the Costa Rican economy, Nicaraguan migrants have come to represent an undesirable, threatening Otherness that is reinforced by notions of ‘illegality’ and serves to hold them responsible for much (costly) insecurity, crime and disease in Costa Rica. As a consequence, they inevitably have to deal with stereotypes, discrimination and exploitation. These challenges have been closely examined through invaluable, often ‘locally produced’ research that examines the interactions between a diversity of Nicaraguan migrants and an ambiguous Costa Rican society (see for example Sandoval-García, 2011). This chapter complements rather than contests this previous local research. The accounts of the research participants went far beyond the ‘familiar’ plight of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica and justify a closer look at their mobility practices.

elsewhere I expect this number to be an underestimation due to measurement difficulties related to the ‘illegality’ and temporality that characterize this particular migration process.
4. MOBILITY PRACTICES OF NICARAGUAN MIGRANTS IN COSTA RICA

4.1. LEGALLY CROSSING THE NICARAGUA-COSTA RICA BORDER

In order to work in Costa Rica, Nicaraguan migrants first need to cross the territorial border between the two countries. Despite Nicaraguans’ image as ‘illegal’ migrants (Sandoval-García, 2004), most of the participants in my research cross this border with the required documents at an official border crossing point. They arrange their birth certificate, passport and consular visa in Nicaragua and obtain a 30-day visa upon entering Costa Rica (see Kron, 2011). I travelled from Managua to the Costa Rican border the same way the research participants usually travel, by bus. To me, the border crossing point of Peñas Blancas seemed to be poorly set up, with few signs and personnel indicating how to proceed. However, judging from my observations of fellow travellers and subsequent interviews with the research participants, the administrative procedures and actual crossing from the Nicaraguan to the Costa Rican side are feasible. They are at least not considered obstacles for legal border crossing.

This feasibility does not preclude border crossings through el monte [the more remote, less populated areas], intended to avoid border control at an official checkpoint. A Costa Rican friend who picked me up from the border could easily indicate a number of paths used to this end, but the research participants only consider this option in case of lack of papeles44 [the required documents], as it typically involves a coyote45 and higher costs. Eduardo (25-30), who has been working on and off in Costa Rica for more than eight years, provided an example of this type of crossing. He normally enters Costa Rica through Peñas Blancas, but once he crossed the border illegally to accompany some friends without papeles. In Ciudad Quesada, north from San José, the Costa Rican police caught them. They were held for one night and let go the following day, “only to try again” (interview 23 February 2011). Not taking into account the costs of repeated tries, Eduardo estimated that an illegal border crossing can cost up to US$ 300, while you pay about US$ 60 for a legal crossing (see also Kron, 2011). As legal entry seems cheaper and clear-cut, it is the norm among my research participants as long as all their papeles are in order.

The monetary argument also prevails in the research participants’ discussion of the risks of illegal border crossings. Perhaps the threat of abuse by coyotes, law

44 Although individual reasons for lacking the required documentation may vary, the time-consuming bureaucratic hassle of obtaining the required documents suggests that institutional deficiencies in Nicaragua may limit legal border crossing options (Rocha, 2010).
45 Coyote is a term commonly used for a person who smuggles migrants.
enforcers or others is generally a non-issue for the research participants because the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border crossing is relatively accessible. In terms of physical danger, it seems almost incomparable to, for example, border crossings in the desert between Mexico and the US, or at the Mediterranean Sea en route to Europe. A relatively carefree attitude towards coyotes, who may be considered facilitators rather than possible abusers, illustrates this point. For instance, the sisters Adriana (20-25) and Clara (15-20) trust their coyote. During their last trip to Costa Rica, they crossed the border illegally because Clara could not arrange her documents in time. Their coyote not only pays bribes to the local police but also transports migrants’ newly acquired goods to their families in Nicaragua. According to the sisters, “His services are expensive but secure” (interview 22 February 2011). This being said, the research participants do acknowledge the risk of getting caught and being sent back by authorities, especially in and around border towns. However, this risk is predominantly expressed in terms of monetary expenses, those of possible fines, bribes, and future trips, and thus reinforces the preference for a legal border crossing.

4.2. OVERSTAYING ENTRY VISAS AND PERFORMING PAID WORK

Once in Costa Rica, the research participants know they are supposed to go back to Nicaragua within a month or pay for monthly stamps in their passport, and they know they are not allowed to work. However, they usually choose to stay longer without paying the monthly fees and work as much as possible, thereby becoming ‘illegal’ in the Costa Rican perspective. Overstaying, a well-known practice in the global migration literature (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005; Broeders and Engbersen, 2007; Willen, 2007), and working without the appropriate documents may be a strategic consideration or else just something that happens, but it is often a direct consequence of administrative obstacles (see also Lee, 2010; Koser, 2010). For most of my research participants, the process of obtaining stamps, work permits or residency is too expensive and complicated.

Furthermore, few of the research participants actively look for ways to become ‘legal’ again. This suggests they attach little importance to il/legal categories (see also Barahona, 2002) as their daily lives remain relatively undisturbed despite being regarded as ‘illegal’ residents and employees. This attitude is reflected, for example, in the case of Pedro and Martina from the introduction. The research participants commonly use the phrase ‘aquí no molestan’ [here, they don’t bother you] to indicate that generally, they do not fear to be profiled, stopped and interrogated.
After overstaying, at the moment they exit Costa Rica and go back to Nicaragua, the migration authorities ‘no dicen nada’ [they don’t say anything]. This experience enables and even encourages the practice of overstaying and working without required documentation.

The research participants connect their minimal experience with law enforcement to being as non-intrusive as possible. A common phrase to denote this is ‘no andar vagando’. Vagar refers to a range of negative public behaviour, from hanging around, making noise and being drunk to committing petty crime. Avoiding this type of conspicuous behaviour serves to limit experiences of scrutiny. In Quepos, Rosario (45-50) explicitly linked the ability to not attract attention with less risk of getting caught by migration authorities: “If you aren’t vagando, la migra doesn’t bother you” (interview 2 March 2011). This also goes for harassment by people other than migration authorities. As Miguel (20-25), who has been coming to work in Costa Rica for several years, explained: “I’ve never suffered discrimination because I don’t hang around” (interview 24 February 2011). The research participants thus feel they can overstay and work relatively peacefully as long as they do not attract attention.

Still, being regarded ‘illegal’ coupled with the generally negative image of Nicaraguans has consequences for migrants’ daily lives. Neither their own attitude nor the possibilities for overstaying and working guarantee the research participants their ‘peace’, first, because of their negative image as (‘illegal’) Nicaraguans. Despite the research participants’ view of Costa Ricans as ‘bien educados’ [well-mannered], most of them have experienced racist and derogatory jokes and comments on the street and in the media (Masís and Paniagua, 2011; see Figure 6). Regardless of their geographical, ethnic and linguistic proximity to Costa Ricans, the historically shaped ambiguous position of Nicaraguan migrants still makes them a target for discrimination. Second, although migration authorities may not ‘bother’ the research participants directly, and thus contribute to a normalization of migrants’ presence, these authorities remain present and may become active in specific situations (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005). This ambiguity can be related to what Kron (2011: 30) calls ‘tolerance levels’, according to which “certain actors, movements and practices of irregular cross-border mobility are tolerated while others are criminalized.” The research participants indicated a few tricky places and times with

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46 According to Abraham and Van Schendel (2005: 18), the way people talk about those ‘illegal’ practices they themselves consider licit is meaningful because “[d]ecriminalizing such practices involves linguistic innovation.” The expression ‘no molestan’ actually shifts responsibility from the ‘illegal’ Nicaraguan to the harassing migration authorities. And although the expression ‘no dicen nada’ recognizes the fact that something could have been said, it also downplays the importance of overstaying.
much less tolerance, where there is more control and risk of getting caught. These include the occasional redadas [raids], (mobile) checkpoints along northern roads and highways, beaches where much (migrant-dependent) construction takes place, and sites that are known for Nicaraguans congregating, such as La Merced Park in San José. In this sense, besides a general concern with no vagar, the way the research participants carry themselves in different contexts becomes a matter of interest.

**FIGURES 6 AND 7. PUBLIC TELEPHONE AND REMITTANCES CENTRE**

*Figure 6: This text, written next to a public telephone in the bus station of Nicoya, Costa Rica can be translated as ‘get out Nicaraguans, sons of bitches’. Figure 7: Waiting in line to send remittances in a side street of La Merced Park, San José, Costa Rica. Photographs by author.*

**4.3. NEGOTIATING NICARAGUAN OTHERNESS**

By living and working in Costa Rica, Nicaraguan research participants become ‘Others’ (Masís and Paniagua, 2011; Sandoval-García, 2004). One aspect of Nicaraguan Otherness concerns the supposedly distinctive appearance of Nicaraguans. Although not intending to essentialise ‘Nicaraguan characteristics’, my own observations show I expected to recognize Nicaraguans based on their darker complexion and cheaper-looking clothing (even though a wide range of complexions and styles exists among both Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans). The research participants are not oblivious to the issue of appearance, as illustrated by the behaviour of the Nicaraguan sisters Adriana (20-25) and Clara (15-20) during our interview in Alajuela’s central park. Throughout the interview they pointed out fashionable bags, shoes and hairstyles of passing Costa Ricans, at the same time looking down on Nicaraguan passers-by as chólitos [‘indians’] because of their outdated style. They also commented on their darker skin colour, saying “you have to protect your skin in order not to get tanned like that” (interview 22 February 2011). As Nicaraguan Others are possible targets of discrimination and scrutiny, this
issue of appearance directs attention to the ways migrants may deal with their Otherness.

The research participants are familiar with adapting ways of dressing and speaking in an effort to avoid association with Nicaraguan Otherness. They may go to great lengths to fit in. When I visited Eduardo (25-30) in Alajuela he looked so different than he had in Nicaragua only one year before, that I did not even recognize him at first. On the bus ride to his house I also noticed how his accent had changed and how he used tico [Costa Rican] expressions for certain things. Although this possibly benefits him in daily (work) life, it is also a practice that may be ridiculed by fellow Nicaraguans. As Martín (25-30), who in Quepos seemed to blend in almost seamlessly himself, explained, “There are also Nicaraguans who arrive in Costa Rica today and talk like ticos tomorrow. In Nicaragua people will mock them - te enfermaste [did you get sick/crazy]?!” (interview 3 March 2011). These examples point to migrants’ efforts to fit in and possible ways to ameliorate the image of a threatening Other, but also indicate that fitting in is an ambiguous process of negotiation.

In fact, some research participants see room for capitalizing on the Nicaraguan image in the job market. In addition to limiting negative associations with Nicaraguan Otherness, there is a possibility of displaying aspects that are positively regarded, at least by Costa Rican employers, such as Nicaraguans’ perceived docility and capacity for heavy labour.47 For example, Cedro (25-30), who works in the construction sector of the Quepos tourist area, commented that in order to get and keep a job it is important not to be respondón (cheeky) like Costa Rican workers, who tend to ‘talk back’ (interview 4 March 2011). In the same vein, the owner of a hotel in Heredia told me about the ‘good’ Nicaraguan workers, who ‘trabajan como caballos’ [work like horses] from early in the morning until late in the afternoon (interview 25 February 2011). By either fitting in or standing out in a ‘positive’ way, the research participants can thus negotiate their Otherness depending on the immediate context.

5. MIGRANTS’ EVERYDAY POLITICS

From an ‘illegality’ perspective, the mobility practices of legal entry, overstaying, working and negotiating Otherness seem contradictory, as they do not fit the image of migrants as either criminals or passive victims. These practices make more sense

47 Perhaps this can be related to the notion of ‘strategic visibility’, elaborated by Bailey et al. (2002) in the context of Salvadoran migrants in the United States.
when placed in a context of translocal livelihood diversification. For both the male and female research participants, earning money by working elsewhere is a way to try to improve livelihoods, complementing existing activities (possibly seasonal) in Muy Muy. Although earning money abroad is usually entangled with other reasons to migrate, like experiencing adventure and escaping stressful relationships, most of my research participants are entrusted with family responsibilities that make money a key goal of migration. This money is used for a range of purposes such as daily expenses, debt repayment, and domestic appliances, as well as for larger investments such as building or improving their house in Nicaragua (see also Steel et al., 2011). During one of our earlier interviews in Muy Muy, Myrna (25-30) referred to this when she told me her husband Ernesto went to Costa Rica when he lost his job at a farm. With his future migration earnings, they intend to buy land and construct a house for their children (interview 2 July 2009). Almost two years later, in Quepos, Ernesto confirmed their plan to save money, buy land, and build a house (interview 3 March 2011). These objectives are commonly accepted and sustain (temporary) migration as a livelihood strategy.

At the same time, the research participants – including Ernesto – may find it difficult to realize these objectives, especially the bigger aim of housing. As Mosse et al. (2002) indicate, despite migrants’ intentions there is no straightforward positive link between migration and livelihood improvement given the variety of contextual factors that play a role in migration’s outcome, including personal characteristics, social commitments, and power relationships. In this case, some research participants acknowledge they did not start to save their migration earnings immediately. Others think their achievements have been limited because of unremitting daily expenses in Nicaragua coupled with the high cost of living in Costa Rica. For Martina (30-35), this even makes it necessary to migrate further, possibly to Spain, in order to obtain the two-story house of her dreams. “Because here [in Costa Rica] we haven’t done anything, just cositas [small things, like buying appliances]. This took us four years!” (Interview 20 February 2011). Even when downplaying their achievements, the research participants maintain they would not have been able to accomplish them ‘at home’. Because of the lack of viable opportunities in Nicaragua, their earnings in Costa Rica remain indispensable for their livelihoods.

48 Although this focus on accumulating financial capital seems to suggest otherwise, this chapter does not intend to adopt a simplistic perspective on livelihoods. The research participants use money as an entry point for (achieving) a broader ideal of well-being (which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Steel et al., 2011). Earning money in different locations testifies to the research participants’ desire to diversify, secure and hopefully improve their livelihoods, benefitting from the human and social capital of their families and making use of financial capital for covering mobility costs, other household expenses and, if possible, investments in household assets.
So, how can this background knowledge of the research participants’ translocal livelihoods be meaningfully incorporated into their migration experiences, in order to challenge the ‘illegality’ framework and make better sense of migrants’ practices and perspectives? Using the lens of ‘everyday politics’ (Kerkvliet, 2009) may further specify relevant livelihood dimensions and reconcile the apparent contradictions of the research participants’ mobility practices. According to Kerkvliet,

“Everyday politics involves people embracing, complying with, adjusting, and contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources and doing so in quiet, mundane, and subtle expressions and acts that are rarely organized or direct. ... It involves little or no organization, is usually low profile and private behavior, and is done by people who probably do not regard their actions as political. ... Often it is entwined with individuals and small groups’ activities while making a living [and] raising their families.” (Kerkvliet, 2009 232)

In this case, mobility is the resource that becomes negotiated as migrants intend to make the most of their migration endeavour.

This negotiation manifests itself in mobility practices like those described above. These practices embody different possible forms of everyday politics49, which range from well-researched forms of everyday resistance (see also Scott, 1990), to modifications and evasions of rules, to (apparent) compliance with and even support for the status quo (Kerkvliet, 2009). First, the research participants’ legal border crossing is in compliance with Costa Rican regulations. However, I have not found evidence that they cross legally because they wish to abide by the rules or support the status quo. They rather emphasize the monetary benefits of legal border crossing. Because of the (economic) disadvantages of entering by illegal means, the research participants prefer to arrange their documents and use these to enter legally. In order to respond to current and future needs of their households, it makes sense to keep their crossing as cheap as possible. What is more, the very existence of a border maintains vast differences in (economic) opportunities between two countries. In this sense, the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica represents not so much an obstruction as a possibility, an ‘engine of connectivity’ (Rumford, 2011: 67) that enables a viable route to translocal livelihood diversification. The mobility practice of legal entry, in compliance with the Costa Rican nation-state, reflects this possibility.

49 Comparable to ‘slantwise actions’ as described by Campbell & Heyman (2007) and ‘quiet encroachment’ as elaborated by Bayat (2000).
Second, overstaying and working without the required documentation are examples of evasive and even resistant everyday politics. Avoiding indefinite administrative procedures can save precious time, spending it instead on the much more urgent activity of earning money, which outcome is more secure even despite the research participants’ insecure status. This also means, as De Regt (2010) asserts in her study on Ethiopian domestic workers in Yemen, that being ‘illegal’ is not automatically disadvantageous. The practice of overstaying and working is further enabled by the lack of government control and the presence of employers who do not care about migratory status, or who prefer migrants without working permits because they are cheaper and easier to fire.

The latter points to the vulnerabilities that ‘illegality’ inevitably creates, reflected in the fact that the research participants often have to do without basic protection in terms of salary, work hours and social security. Still, they focus on the higher earnings in Costa Rica. Rosario (45-50), who has been going back and forth to Costa Rica for a decade, provided an example of this. Although she does not intend to stay permanently in Costa Rica because of her children in Muy Muy, she continues migrating there because it enables her to keep up with the (increasing) demands of her household. During one of our earlier conversations in Muy Muy, she complained about the low salaries in Nicaragua, labelling them as maltrato [abuse, exploitation] (interview 19 July 2009). Low local salaries can even be a reason to disregard jobs in Muy Muy, as they simply do not seem worth the effort (Steel et al., 2011). As a domestic worker, a popular occupation for female migrants in Costa Rica, the research participants can earn between three and ten times more than for the same occupation in Nicaragua. Even when taking into account the higher cost of living in Costa Rica, these earnings seem to make up for, or at least mitigate, possible vulnerabilities and continue to make Costa Rica an attractive (temporary) destination.

Finally, the research participants employ compliant everyday politics as they negotiate the dominant Costa Rican norm of Nicaraguan Otherness according to context. The research participants selectively conceal and use ‘being Nicaraguan’ in an effort to avoid stigmatization as threatening Others that puts in danger their presence and job in Costa Rica. Their practices can be compared to Kalir’s description of Latinos’ behaviour in Israel (2010). According to Kalir, despite their ‘illegal’ status, Latino migrants try to and often succeed in ‘passing as Israelis’ because of their similar appearance. In the same vein, these Nicaraguans try to pass, if not as Costa Ricans, then at least as ‘acceptable’ Nicaraguans: relatively invisible, docile and hardworking. In addition, the research participants may resist negative associations. For example, in San José, La Merced Park and its surroundings are known for
Nicaraguans carving out a space for themselves (Horbaty Mejía, 2004; see also Yeoh and Huang, 1998; Rumford, 2011). As I observed, they gather there to socialize, enjoy Nicaraguan food, and send remittances (see Figure 7). Perhaps such larger numbers provide Nicaraguan migrants with a certain degree of confidence to display their Otherness, whereas this might be missing when they are alone, or face direct scrutiny by Costa Rican authorities. Although particular circumstances thus generate specific ways of negotiating Otherness, even the everyday politics of resistance needs to be non-threatening in order to safeguard migrant earnings.

In the process of translocal livelihood diversification, the research participants’ mobility practices testify to the well-documented mix of il/legal practices migrants employ (De Regt, 2010). Looking at these mobility practices through the lens of everyday politics enables a reconciliation of apparently contradictory practices, integrating them into a single migration endeavour. Everyday politics captures both migrants’ resistance and compliance as well as everything in between, highlighting the ways in which the research participants blur the boundaries between a (victimized) lack of agency and (criminalized) resistance. In order to access and benefit from the resource of human mobility, the research participants embrace the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border as an (economic) opportunity, contest its terms of entrance and belonging, and bend its exclusionary dynamics.

Beyond their commitment to the current and future needs of their households at home, the temporal and spatial dimensions of their mobility practices also reinforce these practices and sustain this type of migration to Costa Rica. First, although the research participants’ livelihoods have in effect become almost permanently translocal, the very idea that their migration is temporary helps them put their difficult circumstances into perspective. Second, they make deliberate use of different locations and their particular characteristics – including job market opportunities and stereotypes. Their practices are thus based on their own and others’ experiences, through which they ‘know’ what their possibilities and impossibilities are and what they can reasonably expect in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica (Bourdieu, 1990). Knowing that they are both needed and criminalized (Fouratt, 2014), these migrants anticipate the earnings they are able to achieve while accepting specific vulnerabilities (Bastia and McGrath, 2011; Zontini, 2008). “If … we extend our view to include the actualities of their past experience and their future life-plans, and crucially, the limited alternative options open for living out those

50 In this sense it is also important to remember that an increasing number of households in Costa Rica has members of both Nicaraguan and Costa Rican nationality, which complicates the Otherness process (Castro, 2011).
plans” (O’Connell Davidson, 2013: 10), migrants’ decisions become more understandable.

The research participants’ everyday politics may represent a modest effort to ‘reposition the inequalities’ of their daily lives (Turner, 2012: 408), but are not necessarily directed at social change. Although these everyday politics could evolve unnoticed and accumulate to change in the long run (Scott, 1990), the research participants’ limited immediate aspirations in this severely restricted context of ‘permanent temporariness’ (Bailey et al., 2002) do not directly inspire overt or collective resistance. Since the research participants’ everyday politics are primarily about making a living, I tend to agree with Kron (2011) that such migrants are not necessarily dissidents or part of an insurgent movement directed against capitalism and state regulation, as proposed by advocates of the ‘autonomy of migration’ concept (see Papadopoulos et al., 2008). On the contrary, their moral claim (Kyle and Siracusa, 2005) to livelihood means these migrants strive to be included in the economic opportunities that Costa Rica’s labour system provides, albeit only through ‘adverse incorporation’ (Mosse, 2010: 1161). Their focus on earning money to fulfil family responsibilities may inadvertently even fuel the reproduction of their adverse incorporation and its related vulnerabilities. It therefore is crucial to identify the structural processes that contribute to this type of ‘structural violence’ (Nevins, 2003) of people’s displacement. These include the exclusionary capitalist dynamics, social categorization, and formal and informal power relations that produce persistent inequality (Mosse, 2010). These structural processes contribute to severely limited types of migration (Sharma, 2003), denying people not only their ‘right to non-mobility’ (Ballinger, 2012: 392) but also leaving the foundations of ‘illegality’ unaddressed.

6. CONCLUSION: ‘EL DERECHO A (NO) MIGRAR’

According to Costa Rican academic Carlos Sandoval-García, persistent inequalities in Central America mean that “the right not to migrate does not exist” (interview 1 March 2011). At the same time, Nicaraguan academic José Luis Rocha (2010) claims that the right to migrate is not fully acknowledged by the authorities involved. This paradox encourages mobility practices like those of Pedro, Martina and the other migrants described in this chapter, which seem contradictory if interpreted from the dominant ‘illegality’ framework. The research participants prefer to cross the border with the required documentation at an official border crossing point, yet do not present themselves monthly at a migration office to pay for the compulsory stamp in their passports. They work although they know they are not allowed to do so, but otherwise avoid attracting risky attention. They follow the need to migrate for their livelihoods whereas the possibilities to do so are limited.
This chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of migration processes by looking at migrants’ mobility practices from a translocal livelihood perspective. It uses the concept of everyday politics to incorporate temporal and spatial livelihood dimensions, capturing migrants’ compliance, evasion and resistance, thereby reconciling apparently contradictory practices. This approach clarifies the relativity of ‘illegality’ for these migrants’ daily lives, in the sense that although being ‘illegal’ contributes to a context of discrimination, exploitation and deportation, ‘illegality’ does not define them. The approach also nuances migrants’ image as either victims or criminals. Seeing them as victims ignores the agency they have, as evidenced by their mobility practices. Seeing them as criminals ignores their struggle to fulfil family responsibilities against a background of unequal opportunities, as well as the ambivalence of Costa Rican society. The latter would not let migrants enter, live and work relatively peacefully if they were not useful to the Costa Rican nation-state. By integrating migrants’ diverse mobility practices into a single migration endeavour directed at their livelihoods, this chapter tackles these apparent contradictions and contributes to research that neither glamourizes nor demonizes mobility (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013).

The chapter interprets migrants’ use of mobility as a longstanding tradition of improving life ‘at home’ by making use of other locations. Knowledge of the variety of practices they employ during their journey (Kalir, 2013) is valuable for policy and advocacy as well as for migration scholarship. Initiatives concerned with migrants’ well-being may find it a useful starting point for supporting them in negotiating their mobility. A further step would be to take a closer look at dynamics that differentiate migrants and embody the everyday politics they employ, such as their age and gender, the translocal connections they maintain and the types of borders they cross. Perhaps even more challenging, the persistent public and academic use of ‘illegality’ should not be taken for granted and, depending on the specific context, may even need to be addressed as a factor potentially contributing to creating Otherness and alienating migrants. ‘Illegality’ obscures the pressing local, regional and global inequalities that urge people to move yet also limit what migrants are able to achieve with their mobility. The processes that generate these inequalities provide interesting avenues for future research.
CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS REMITTANCES AS A PROCESS
A TRANSLOCAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL VIEW ON MOBILIZING MIGRANT MONEY IN NICARAGUA, COSTA RICA AND SPAIN

Note: This chapter focuses on the livelihood domain of remittances. Addressing the tension between the dominant belief in monetary remittances as a bottom-up instrument for development and remittances’ heterogeneous implications, the chapter suggests the use of a translocal, socio-cultural lens for studying remittances as a process involving a diversity of connections and contexts. The chapter uses the notions of translocal habitus and migration-specific cultural capital to identify migrants’ tacit and basic professional skills as key intervening factors for the mobilizing phase of their remittances process. A translocal, socio-cultural lens is deemed necessary to understand how these personal skills are shaped and applied in interaction with the multiple social and cultural environments ‘at home’ and ‘away’ that are part of migrants’ migration and that carry their own possibilities and limitations. This way, the chapter expands and refines social and contextual approaches to remittances and offers in-depth insight into remittances’ differentiation and heterogeneity. Like the previous chapter, it thereby primarily responds to the thesis’ research questions on the characteristics of migration experiences and the development values these imply, but extends the incorporation of scales to Spain, and puts explicit emphasis on the cross-border socio-cultural aspects of livelihood diversification and migrant well-being.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a tension between a strong public and academic belief in remittances as a bottom-up instrument for development on the one hand, and remittances’ highly heterogeneous implications on the other (De Haas, 2010). In order to address this tension, scholars have called for paying attention to the social character of remittances (Dannecker, 2009; Trager, 2005; see also Zelizer, 2005), and how they are situated within the possibilities, structural limitations, and development views that are relevant in a specific locality (De Haas, 2010; Piper, 2009; Raghuram, 2007). Such a social and contextual approach draws attention to the differentiated ways remittances shape and are shaped by relationships among migrants, their families, and their immediate surroundings. In effect, even when remittances are singled out as the topic of interest within a categorically much more extensive migration-development research field, they need to be embedded in a broader empirical setting in order to unravel their heterogeneity.

What is still largely missing, however, is an application of this social and contextual approach to other dimensions that are part of the remittances process. Scholars have mainly advanced this approach for remittance transactions, i.e. the phases of sending and receiving, but the money around which these transactions are constructed is still largely seen as a given. However, the idea that remittances are socially and contextually sensitive can be extended to their mobilization, that is, to the ways they are generated and multiplied. Indeed, remittances are never a neutral and detached monetary given, either in the way they are sent and received, or in the way they are mobilized by migrants. Given that without migrants’ money, there would not even be remittances to begin with, an inclusion of ‘mobilizing migrant money’ as a constitutive phase of the remittances process may further our understanding of migrants’ differentiated experiences and achievements and consequently, the heterogeneity of remittances.

In this chapter my aim is to expand and refine a social and contextual approach to monetary remittances by viewing them as a process and interrogating the ways migrants mobilize money as part of this process. I suggest the use of a translocal, socio-cultural lens for studying remittances, enabling an identification and integration of the different phases that remittances go through, and the diversity of

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51 In this chapter, I take a broad view of monetary remittances, considering migration money that is both sent and saved (these monies are often intermingled). Remittances thus include money that migrants send home and is spent, money that migrants send home and is saved for future purposes, and money that migrants save up to bring home with them. At the same time, however, the chapter’s focus on monetary remittances excludes social and in-kind remittances.
connections and contexts that is involved. The remittance process includes the different values, meanings, and expectations that shape the phases of sending and receiving remittances, as has been elaborated, for example, in the notion of remittance scripts (Carling, 2014). This chapter focuses on the phase of mobilizing remittances, based on the assumption that the money that enters remittance transactions is also socially and contextually shaped. Moreover, the different phases of the remittance process need to be integrated. The ways remittances are sent and received throughout certain localities cannot be seen separately from migrants’ practices to mobilize these remittances. What happens ‘at home’, ‘away’, and ‘back home’ again is interlinked, hence the need for a translocal lens.

The translocal, socio-cultural lens used in this chapter is based on the concepts of transnational habitus and capitals elaborated by Kelly and Lusis (2006). Drawing on fieldwork in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Spain, the chapter uses the notion of mobile embodied cultural capital (ibid) or migration-specific cultural capital (Erel, 2010) for interpreting how Nicaraguan migrants mobilize remittances. More specifically, the chapter identifies migrants’ tacit and basic professional skills as key intervening factors for the mobilizing phase of their remittance process. The chapter describes how migrants employ tacit skills of pleasing employers, enduring and improving difficult working and living conditions, and (translocal) networking for generating remittances. In addition, the chapter describes how migrants may apply newly acquired basic professional skills for multiplying remittances ‘at home’. A translocal, socio-cultural lens is deemed necessary to understand how these personal skills are shaped and applied in interaction with the multiple social and cultural environments that are part of migrants’ migration and that carry their own possibilities and limitations. This way, a translocal, socio-cultural lens contributes to deeper insight into remittances’ differentiation and heterogeneity.

The chapter focuses on (tacit) skills and remittances of men and women who migrate to Costa Rica and Spain from the Nicaraguan village of Muy Muy. By including Costa Rica and Spain, both a traditional and a more recent destination country, the chapter follows two important migration dynamics in the Muy Muy area, where many families try to diversify and improve their livelihoods through migration (Winters, 2014). It is not, however, my intention in this chapter to compare two destination countries. Rather, I use similarities and differences of migrants’ experiences in multiple contexts to bring the role of (tacit) skills in the mobilizing

52 The term ‘destination country’ is used in an open-ended way, in the sense that such countries are usually part of larger migration processes that involve multiple travels and homes.
phase of the remittance process into sharper focus. Before I go into these skills in the empirical sections of this chapter, I briefly discuss the concepts of remittances, habitus and cultural capital, and provide some context for Muy Muy’s remittances from Costa Rica and Spain.

2. **EMBEDDING REMITTANCES: ACTORS, HABITUS AND SKILLS**

Largely based on scholars’ diverging worldviews, a pendular movement between positive and negative observations of the migration-development nexus precedes the recent wave of optimism about migration, and remittances in particular, as a tool for development (De Haas, 2010). At the same time, however, this optimism has been nuanced by scholars’ explorations of the diversity of actors and settings involved in remittances, a diversity that contributes to remittances’ heterogeneity. These explorations involve questions like: how do families in particular localities value remittances? What are their ideas about accessing and using them? What options and obstacles do they face? What kinds of investments are needed to reach remittances’ potential? And when are they considered to have failed? Instead of relying on attractive macro figures and merely assuming remittances (Glick Schiller and Faist, 2010; Eversole, 2005; Raghuram, 2007), questions like these may further open up the fundamentally social character of migrant money (Smith and Mazzucato, 2009).

Explorations of the ways migrants scrape up the money for remittances tend to focus on migrants’ sacrifices and difficult conditions, such as family separation and degrading work environments. This chapter follows an actor-oriented approach (Long, 2001) in order to explore how migrants manage to mobilize remittances despite these conditions. It is well established that large groups of migrants, especially those who lack correct residence and/or job documents, often find themselves on the margins of society in terms of social, economic, and political status and protection. Migrants in Costa Rica (Sandoval-García, 2004) and Spain (Domínguez-Mujica et al., 2012) are no exception. However, this does not mean these migrants passively undergo these marginal conditions. These conditions are part of migrants’ struggle for their migration goals, goals that often include remittances. Without trivializing their sacrifices, the idea of this chapter is to explore how migrants manage to mobilize remittances, taking into account the opportunities and limitations of the contexts that are part of their migration (Trager, 2005).

In their struggle to reach migration goals, migrants make use of different capitals, including material assets and social connections, as well as cultural resources (Kelly and Lusis, 2006). Kelly and Lusis (2006) elaborated the transnational habitus concept, which integrates migrants’ different forms of cross-border capital and provides the
context in which they are given meaning, valued and evaluated. Habitus, as put forward by Bourdieu (1990), is a set of durable principles, or common-sense knowledge, based on past experiences that outline what is possible and probable and generate people’s actions. By virtue of their migration, the habitus in which migrants operate becomes extended and enriched. This also implies a change in the characteristics and value of their capital. This capital may then offer a window into exploring migrants’ differentiated experiences.

In order to gain more insight into the differentiated experience of mobilizing remittances, this chapter focuses on cultural capital. It identifies a number of migrant skills as mobile embodied (Kelly and Lusis, 2006) or migration-specific cultural capital (Erel, 2010), which captures migrants’ learned familiarity with and employment of social and professional norms prevalent in the foreign environment of their destination country context. These norms include mastering a foreign language (or accent) and work ethics. This type of cultural capital activated through migration also includes awareness of ‘being’ a certain ethnicity and the ability to take advantage of ethnic stereotyping.

The relevance of any kind of skill is contextually defined (Black et al., 2003; Erel, 2010; Robinson and Carey, 2000). However, the migration-development literature tends to ignore the importance of these kinds of tacit skills, which can be defined as ‘elusive’ and “difficult to separate out from everyday practices, social relationships, and belief systems” (Iskander et al., 2010: 1598). The latter also means that a change in social environment (as is the case with migration) can enable tacit and informal skill development (Raghuram, 2007; Williams and Baláž, 2005). Moreover, under the ‘right’ circumstances, skills that have been acquired and developed during the migration process can be employed ‘at home’ (Cassarino, 2004). These observations already indicate that skills may be personal, but they are not developed individually or isolated from people’s other capital, much less so in a migration setting. As mobile embodied or migration-specific cultural capital, skills are shaped by a diversity of connections and contexts. The next sections draw on the experiences of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica and Spain to take a closer look at this type of cultural capital and its link with remittances.

3. REMITTANCES FOR MUY MUY: CONTEXTS OF COSTA RICA AND SPAIN

In Muy Muy, remittances are traditionally used to counter local job instability (Winters, 2014). These remittances originate in a diversity of localities, ranging from nearby municipalities to the wider Central American region and countries overseas. The most recent nation-wide surveys show that about 4% of households in Muy Muy
receive international remittances (INIDE, 2008), but considering the informality and volatility of migration, and the high incidence of migration within national borders, the total level of remittances is probably much higher (OIM, 2013). Moreover, little is known about the ways migrants manage to mobilize remittances from these different localities. This chapter looks into such mobilizing of remittances by taking a closer look at well-established, recurring migration to Costa Rica and more recent migration to Spain. These two migrations are internally diversified (thus not homogeneous), but they are also uniquely characterized by certain distinguishing features, which I briefly describe below.

Temporary migration to Costa Rica is one of Muy Muy’s most prevalent and perpetual migration processes. Historically situated in the broader Central American context, migration to Costa Rica has been linked to regional interdependencies in the labour market, political turmoil, armed conflict, natural disasters, neoliberal economic restructuring, and shifts in gender and class relations (Fouratt, 2014; Morales, 2011; Sandoval-García, 2013). The participants of my research find migration to Costa Rica relatively accessible in terms of distance, entrance, and costs. They generally find work in the agriculture, construction, and service sector. Although historically more males migrated to Costa Rica, fieldwork in Muy Muy suggests it is now common for both men and women to migrate to Costa Rica, in tune with the ongoing ‘feminization’ of this particular migration process (Castro, 2011).

In contrast, Spain is a more recent and female-dominated destination country. Since the 1990s, a number of dynamics converged to create a Spanish labour market attractive for migrants, particularly women: the country’s expanding economy, relatively porous borders, large informal economy, growing female labour market participation, population ageing, substantial domestic employment sector, and lack of state intervention (León, 2010). Male migrants found ample employment in the booming construction sector. Immigrant labour in Spain was further marked by a growing ‘Latin-Americanization’ and, despite a number of regularizations, ‘irregular’ forms of employment.

Since 2008, the global economic crisis has severely yet unevenly affected the Spanish labour market (Domínguez-Mujica et al., 2012). In general, formal employment (particularly in the construction sector) sharply decreased whereas informal work increased. Both dynamics disproportionally affected (male) migrants. Although the crisis urged the Spanish government to tighten immigration permits and encourage voluntary return, and the level of immigration and remittances did indeed drop, Spain still has a positive immigration rate. In the case of Muy Muy women who migrate to Spain, they are usually part of families with substantial financial and
material assets. Since this intercontinental journey requires significant investments, they need their families’ savings or asset-based loan opportunities for reaching and entering Spain.

Despite differences in migration to Costa Rica and Spain, the research participants’ goals for both countries are quite similar in practice. They mostly aim to find a job and earn money in order to attain debt repayment and/or savings, ensure quality housing and schooling for their children, and set-up entrepreneurial activities. These achievements reflect local migration expectations but do not preclude other personal goals (like travelling). Debt repayment includes both large loans and daily expenses for food, facilities and appliances, health and education. Improving and building houses are highly desired, tangible proofs of remittances, and starting a (successful) business is a dream of many migrants and migrant families. Although the need for remittances tends to fluctuate, migrants often search for the jobs and earnings that enable them to mobilize remittances and may someday provide for these investments.

These tangible goals and investments are part of the social fabric that migrants operate in. Not only are these goals and investments shaped by local values, but they also serve to make migrants’ migration socially acceptable in the eyes of their family members. Often, migrants feel obliged to mobilize remittances as a form of repayment to those they feel indebted to, for example, their parents, the family member taking care of their children while they are away, and the person who provided the loan to migrate (see Carling, 2014 for an elaboration). In addition, if their migration was not accepted wholeheartedly by their family, mobilizing remittances can ameliorate bitter feelings and steer migration towards a more productive, joint effort. Even if migrants have other motivations than those described here, remittances often provide the glue for their cross-border social fabric.

This being said, mobilizing migrant money is not self-evident. Common comments on remittances, for example, that they are ‘solo para la comida’ [just for the food] or ‘nada grande’ [nothing big], and that eventually, they depend on the ‘voluntad’ [goodwill] of the migrants, suggest that migrants' ability to mobilize remittances is limited. So, what are the dynamics that intervene? In particular Costa Rican and

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53 Both migrants and their surroundings expect more (monetary) rewards from migrating to Spain, considering the possibility of higher earnings compared to Costa Rica. However, migration costs for Spain are also much higher and tend to be paid for by assuming considerable debt, which has to be re-paid before putting money towards local migration expectations. Afterwards migrants can achieve more than what is possible in Costa Rica, but this also requires more sacrifices, for example, lengthier family separation.
Spanish contexts, what enables Nicaraguan migrants to mobilize remittances for fulfilling local migration expectations?

4. MIGRANTS’ (TACIT) SKILLS

4.1. GANARSE EL PATRÓN.54 PLEASING EMPLOYERS AND SECURING JOBS

The research participants’ observations of the limitation of remittances generally reveal structural insecurities about the increased cost of living and unstable investment opportunities in the Muy Muy context. But the research participants also indicate that a migrant’s ability to mobilize remittances depends on his or her personal skills, in particular the skill to please an employer. Take the case of Cedro (25-30) and his common-law wife Estefani, who both have ample working experience in Costa Rica. When I visited Cedro in Quepos, a tourist town where he worked in the construction sector, he told me that Estefani has had ‘bad luck’ in her migration endeavours. According to him, this is because “ella no dura en los trabajos [she doesn’t last in her jobs]” (interview 4 March 2011, CR). He continued to describe her ‘bad luck’ by linking it to her inability to adapt to a job and please her employers: “Maybe she is very direct, or gets bored easily, or is very talkative and maybe not everyone can deal with that.” This has contributed to a pattern in which both Estefani and her employers grow dissatisfied. Estefani quits or loses her job and consequently, her income. Her lack of skills to please an employer has become a limiting factor in her migration’s potential for mobilizing remittances.

The skill to please your employer requires a sustained effort on the part of migrants. In both Costa Rica and Spain, where so-called low-skilled migrants in volatile sectors seem easily replaceable, the research participants have to stand out positively among many migrants competing for the better jobs. It is essential to make a good impression, as can be seen in the case of León (25-30). When I first met León in Muy Muy in 2009, he had just come home to his common-law wife and son after working several months in the Costa Rican construction sector. He told me that his and other construction projects had been put on hold because of the economic crisis. But he was confident that he had pleased his employer and would be offered a new job shortly: “I expect a call as soon as the work is resumed” (interview 2 July 2009, MM). Pleasing your employer also increases job security beyond construction, as the experience of Miguel (20-25) shows. I interviewed Miguel in San Isidro de Heredia, where he got a job maintaining the property of a wealthy Costa Rican because he “left a good image” at a previous job in horticulture (interview 24 February 2011,

54 To ‘win over’ your employer.
CR). Despite his new fulltime maintenance job, Miguel said his ex-employer still “comes looking for him”. During our interview he showed me a text message in which his ex-employer confirmed a job agreement for the next Sunday. Migrants who are able to please their employers can hope to be offered a job again, even if they already left the employer or went back to Nicaragua.

What, then, does it mean to please your employer? As a tacit skill, it is not easily articulated. But Martín (25-30), who has been working in Costa Rica for years, gave some clues when explaining how he tried to stand out positively in order to obtain his current job. Martín initially worked with 40 construction workers, mainly Nicaraguans, building houses for wealthy foreigners in the tourist zone of Quepos. After the job was finished, the employer kept Martín on as the maintenance worker of one of the houses. Martín explained his promotion by saying, “You have to win their affection, their trust. People already live in these houses [during construction] and there are many things that could get lost... So if you’re a good worker, you can benefit later” (interview 3 March 2011, CR). Summarizing the accounts of Cedro, Martín and other research participants, pleasing your employer means being trustworthy, hard-working, and not overly assertive.

The skill to please your employer is not only important for young male migrants like those described above. The skill extends to other types of migrants and settings, including the personal and familial circumstances of migrants themselves. This becomes clear in the case of Rosario (45-50), who has been working off and on in Costa Rica for many years, following in the footsteps of her eldest children. In Costa Rica, Rosario is a domestic worker for an employer with whom she left a good image and thus can always return. Rosario explained: “She’s like a sister to me. When I’m here [in Muy Muy] she calls me and she waits for me [to do the job]” (interview 23 February 2010, MM). Rosario may decide to go when her household has specific needs, like when her children are about to graduate. But whenever she is tired or misses her younger children too much, and when her job permits it, she goes back to Nicaragua. When her mother-in-law suddenly passed away, Rosario was able to leave immediately to attend the funeral in Muy Muy without jeopardizing her job (interview 2 March 2011, CR). Not only destination country labour markets, but also migrants’ own lives are volatile. Rosario’s case illustrates that the ability to build up some level of employment guarantee helps with mobilizing remittances when they are needed the most.

55 See also Tamagno (2002), on Peruvians in Italy and their ability to win employers’ affection.
4.2. *Tengo que aguantar*. Enduring, Improving, and Networking

Female research participants in Spain, all *domésticas*, also stressed the skill of pleasing employers, but put more emphasis on the ability to *aguantar* that it involves, specifically, the ability to endure difficult working and living conditions. They deal with heavy, underpaid and insecure labour and cramped, over-priced apartments – conditions that worsened during the economic crisis – while biding their time until they find a better job. The account of Blanca (20-25), who came to Spain in 2009 and is the sister of Martín mentioned earlier, is illustrative of this type of endurance. Blanca said that she suffered at first, when she had just arrived. With no previous experience in paid carework, she had to take care of an elderly woman who lived in an isolated village and who she found rude and weepy. In time, however, Blanca got used to employers’ diverse demands. At the time of our interview, she even worked as a live-in domestic, a type of job arrangement generally considered very demanding. However, Blanca said, “*Tengo que aguantar* [I have to endure]” (interview 8 August 2012, SP). Between her first and current job, Blanca has learned to endure difficult working and living conditions in order to secure the job and remittances that make her migration worthwhile.

Enduring difficult working and living conditions is part of a learning process that also involves efforts to make the most of these conditions, at least in monetary terms. In order to survive in a relatively expensive destination country as well as repay migration expenses and send or bring something home, the research participants learn to cope both individually and through their networks. Blanca’s sister Angela (25-30), who travelled to Spain after her, quickly acquired the prowess that employers expected from her and explained about her recently improved job situation: “*Fui aprendiendo y el sueldo subiendo* [as I learned, my wage increased]” (interview 4 August 2012, SP). To further increase her income, Angela can also make use of the common migrant strategy to inform each other about jobs and recommend each other. In addition, the research participants take holidays that enable other migrants to fill their shifts while they look or apply for more convenient (usually better-paid) jobs. This is how Blanca secured her current position. Furthermore, based on her gradually increased knowledge of the informal Spanish labour market, Blanca managed to negotiate a better salary than her employer offered initially. The research participants thus go through a learning process in which they link skills of pleasing, enduring and networking to improved jobs and housing.

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56 I have to endure.
The research participants’ negotiations of their working and living conditions include networks in Spain but also extend to future migrants in Nicaragua. It is common to invite or accept friends and family members to join established migrants in Spain to share jobs and housing and lend money for migration. These interrelated dynamics can again be found in Blanca’s account, who herself was invited by a friend. Blanca financed her trip to Spain with her mother’s savings, then, when she got pregnant, she lent her mother-in-law money to travel to Spain, hoping to receive steady income from repayment of that loan when her pregnancy inhibited her from working. After her baby girl was born, Blanca also invited her older sister Angela to help take care of the baby. In addition, Blanca introduced Angela to the night shift of her then-domestic work. At the time of the interview, Blanca was thinking about ‘bringing’ another sister to take over her day shift because she found a new job. Conveniently, both sisters would share in the cost of Blanca’s apartment as well. By activating such cross-border networks, the research participants are gradually able to increase migration returns.

Like pleasing and enduring, networking is a skill that some migrants are better at than others. Also, migrants can find themselves in circumstances that make it difficult to develop or benefit from networks. Although social network problems were not the focus of my fieldwork, the research participants’ accounts hinted at dynamics that impeded fruitful networking. For example, working as a live-in domestic reduces opportunities for socializing, creating a condition that Elda (20-25) refers to as feeling like “un pájaro en jaula [a bird in a cage]” (interview 13 August 2012). During her two-and-a-half years in Spain, Elda also experienced problems within her network, when a co-worker started gossiping about another co-worker in order to get her fired. Elda did not want to participate in the slander and ended up being fired herself. Experiences like these limit remittances, whereas developing fruitful networks can stimulate them.

4.3. NO TRABAJARLE A Nadie. Towards Applying Skills ‘At Home’

This section moves ‘home’, to address the possibilities for applying skills acquired during migration to mobilize remittances in Muy Muy. Next to the tacit skills described above, the research participants also acquired basic professional skills that contribute directly or indirectly to achieving their migration goals. Martina (30-35), who lives with her husband and two children in Nicoya, Costa Rica, is one of the

57 At the time of writing, this sister was indeed working in Spain.
58 When working as a live-in domestic, migrants still need a place to go during days off, a place that can also serve as a (temporary) back-up when they lose or leave their job.
59 To not work for anybody (or, to be your own boss).
research participants who benefitted from such skills (interview 20 February 2011, CR). Martina comes from a very humble, largely self-sufficient rural family and did not finish primary school. But the work experience she accumulated as an internal migrant in Nicaragua taught her basic mathematics skills. These skills not only gave Martina the ability and confidence to take on a well-paid job in a soda, a small Costa Rican restaurant, but they will also be indispensable if she further mobilizes the money earned at this soda for her goal: setting up a store or eatery in Muy Muy.

Another example of basic professional skills concerns those related to construction, which are considered particularly useful because they help migrants build and improve their families’ houses back in Muy Muy. Miguel (20-25), who claims that before coming to Costa Rica “no sabía nada [I didn’t know anything]” (interview 24 February 2011, CR), has benefitted in this sense. Originally a farmer, Miguel has worked in a number of construction and maintenance occupations in Costa Rica. At the time of the interview, he was taking a course to get qualified as an electrician. In October 2014 I visited his mother in Muy Muy and she proudly showed me the renovations he had completed. This illustrates how basic professional skills that the research participants acquire during their migration process can increase the chance of successfully mobilizing their remittances ‘at home’.

Tacit and basic professional skills are both useful for mobilizing remittances. 60 However, they need a favourable environment in order to allow for further mobilization in the form of starting a business, which is a common Muy Muy dream and a classic example of a ‘productive’ migration investment. Henry (25-30) was one of the few research participants who, based on his migration experience and earnings in Costa Rica, managed to open an apparently successful business during my fieldwork. 61 His small restaurant caught my attention because his dishes were original and he never seemed to be without customers. Henry told me that at the age of twenty, he decided to go to Costa Rica to ‘probar el ambiente’, get a taste of what it is like there. In a hotel in northern Costa Rica, a brother got him a job as a cook. Working with colleagues from Mexico and Cuba and serving an international clientele, Henry learned to prepare many different dishes. After six years in Costa Rica, he got tired of his demanding employers and being away from home. Back in Muy Muy he applied to rent an empty booth in the park and turned it into a small restaurant with the money he was able to save in Costa Rica. In the future, Henry

60 It is worth mentioning that tacit and explicit skills are often interconnected (Iskander et al., 2010). For example, this section discusses the case of a migrant’s restaurant, which success depends on identifiable technical expertise but also on cultural sensitivity (to taste).
61 At the time of my last research stay in Muy Muy, during October 2014, his booth was still up and running in a context where many small businesses come and go.
would like to extend his business, opening another restaurant and some cabins on the green outskirts of Muy Muy (interview 12 October 2010, MM).

His work in a Costa Rican restaurant enabled Henry to mobilize remittances abroad as well as further mobilize them ‘at home’. The restaurant skills gained in Costa Rica allow him to offer something different in Muy Muy. He not only serves the traditional rice and beans, but also the more exotic *ceviche* (a seafood dish typical of coastal regions) and fresh milkshakes. However, other factors also contribute to Henry’s apparent success in mobilizing remittances. First, he made clear that he is not easily satisfied. He always aims to *seguir adelante*, get ahead, and be his own boss. Second, he has been surrounded by a demanding and entrepreneurial family. From a young age Henry’s mother taught him how to cook and he had to help with household chores. One of his brothers has a bakery, a sister runs a business in soft drinks and his mother trades in spices. Third, Henry seems to enjoy a favourable position in Muy Muy. When Henry applied with the municipal government to rent the park booth, the mayor gave him preference. In sum, Henry’s migration achievements rest in part on a favourable environment constituted by a personal drive, an entrepreneurial family, and friendly relations with the village’s institutional powers. Still, his newly acquired restaurant skills were a key intervening factor while mobilizing remittances ‘away’ and ‘at home’.

5. CONSIDERING TRANSLOCAL HABITUS AND CAPITAL

Mobilizing remittances requires active and diverse engagements at different stages of the migration process. Particularly during the initial stages in Costa Rica and Spain, the research participants try to please and endure in order to keep their job, increase their chances of promotion, and negotiate working hours and salaries. They also look for flexibility. In Costa Rica, the research participants highly appreciate the kind of jobs and sympathetic employers that allow them to travel to Nicaragua for major holidays or family commitments and emergencies. In Spain, they appreciate the possibility of introducing others to their work and taking time off for paperwork or job hunts. Pleasing and enduring contribute to job stability, quality and flexibility, eventually enabling and increasing remittances.

The research participants’ ability to use translocal networks and newly acquired basic professional skills further enhances their migration returns. In Spain, the research participants learn how to activate translocal networks for sharing jobs, rent, and migration costs. Those in Costa Rica emphasize basic professional skills that, within a conducive environment, can help them mobilize their remittances in Muy Muy. The use of these translocal networks and basic professional skills is not exclusive to one destination country. For example, migrants in Costa Rica also make use of cross-
border networks and migrants in Spain also perform jobs that foster skills like cooking and painting. However, higher migration costs in Spain and greater occupational diversity in Costa Rica may contribute to a stronger articulation of activating translocal networks in Spain and developing basic professional skills in Costa Rica. Such considerations highlight the importance of taking multiple contexts into account.

Contextual differentiation is also important because the skills described in this chapter, particularly those of pleasing and enduring, may put the immediate individual well-being of the research participants at risk (Tamagno, 2002). During the remittance process, migrants may face insecure and exploitative conditions that undervalue, limit and sometimes even harm specific aspects of their well-being, like their health or social inclusion. In Costa Rica, for example, skills for pleasing and enduring coincide with adverse stereotypes of Nicaraguans, who are said to be docile and work hard. Returning to the account of a hotel owner in Heredia from chapter five: “[Nicaraguans] are good workers. When they have to start at five in the morning they get there at five in the morning, and trabajan como caballos [they work like horses] until seven at night. When they look for work, they arrive with the right clothes and shoes and lunch, so that they can start immediately” (interview 25 February 2011, CR). In the remittance process, migrants’ compliance with this image coupled with their relatively vulnerable position based on ethnic and civil inequalities, may entail a risk of exploitation. This risk is present for both men and women in different occupations and comes in many shapes, ranging from getting paid too little and restricted movement to verbal and physical abuse. The risks that migration poses to migrant well-being reflect the disparate power relations of their immediate surroundings.

This chapter does not intend to downplay migrants’ experiences of these risks, but tries to view them through a broader lens of migrants’ opportunities and limitations in striving after what they value (see also Briones, 2009). This lens needs to be translocal and socio-cultural in order to capture the connections and contexts that are part of migrants’ mobilization of remittances. The mobile embodied or migration-specific skills that migrants use for mobilizing remittances are personal, but they get shaped in particular social environments. For example, the research

63 In a sense, the way migrants in this chapter employ skills may be compared to what Kothari (2008) calls ‘nonelite, strategic cosmopolitanism’, a notion of migrants’ temporally and spatially developed resources and strategies, or migrant expertise, that helps them deal with uncertain circumstances but also leads them to accept adverse conditions. (However, Kothari’s analysis is confined to the boundaries of Barcelona, the ‘current home’ of the migrants, and does not explicitly take migrants’ ‘origin home’ into account.)
participants in Costa Rica try to convince their employers by making the most of their traditional image of hard-working Nicaraguans, while those in Spain, compared to non-Latin American immigrants, may act on their cultural closeness to Spanish families. If these skills contribute to migrants’ differentiated mobilization of remittances, they need to be included in our explorations of the remittance process.

Next to the influence of different connections and contexts, it should also be noted that migrants’ skills are not isolated from their other ‘capital’, as can be seen in Henry’s case. The value of their skills in relation to their social and economic capital differs across contexts, an interdependence that becomes clearer from a translocal perspective. Throughout migration, different social and spatial contexts intervene and affect the value of migrants’ different forms of capital, as well as their respective ‘weight’ in light of migrants’ migration goals (Kelly and Lusis, 2006: 834). This ‘exchange value’ sometimes allows for apparently contradictory experiences, but only when viewed in isolation instead of through a translocal lens. For example, degrading work conditions in a destination country are rationalized against much-needed earnings for a migrant’s family ‘at home’ (ibid: 840). This exchange value also applies within single forms of capital. Skills that are valued highly in certain contexts may have less value elsewhere. For example, basic professional skills like cooking, obtained in a low-paid, low-esteemed migrant job, may be worth much more in Nicaragua, where under the ‘right’ circumstances it can be used for starting up a restaurant. By employing certain skills, the research participants may either sacrifice or enhance other capital, resulting in a trade-off between immediate well-being and (future) investments elsewhere.64

By virtue of their migration, the habitus in which the research participants operate becomes translocalized (ibid). The extent to which they (learn to) master relevant skills within such a translocalized habitus influences their ability to mobilize remittances. Cedro (25-30), for example, indicated that his common-law wife Estefani is not able to please her employers, which makes her lose income. Anabel (20-25), whose husband has ample internal and regional migration experience (see Figure 8), suggested that her friend and neighbour Carola (20-25) also lacks certain migration skills. When I asked her why she thought Carola’s family has not been able to substantially mobilize remittances, despite their multiple internal and regional migration endeavours, Anabel answered: “Because they don’t think about getting ahead. [Carola] doesn’t last in her jobs. And when one is working, the other one is at

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64 The term ‘trade-off’ is also used by Carling, Menjivar and Schmalzbauer (2012), to describe the difficult choices that migrant parents make between providing material care that requires migration, and providing care that requires proximity.
home. And just one son working in Costa Rica... That’s never enough for an entire family!” (Interview 9 February 2011, MM). Carola has difficulty in pleasing and enduring her employers, and her family has not been able to activate their translocal networks (for example, for help with future migrations). This makes Carola’s family unsuccessful in terms of local migration expectations. Interpreting migrants’ experiences and endeavours as skills conveys that pleasing, enduring, improving, networking, and professionalizing are part of a learning process that not everybody is able to tackle.

**FIGURE 8. A MIGRANT HOUSE UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

At the time of research, Anabel’s husband was building them a new house, in part financed by migration money and facilitated by the skills he learned during migration. Photograph by author.

Migrants’ skills are thus not only differentiated, but also differentiate migrants in terms of what they are able to achieve (Erel, 2010). A translocal, socio-cultural lens contributes to a more holistic interpretation of these differentiated experiences and thereby furthers our understanding of remittances’ heterogeneity. The research participants move through different social and spatial contexts and need to adapt to these contexts’ values, opportunities and limitations in order to mobilize remittances. Migrants need to learn and employ locally relevant skills in order to thrive in their migration process ‘away’ and ‘at home’ again. Henry’s case illustrates how a migrant’s ‘mastering’ of contextually specific socio-cultural skills extends the practice of mobilizing migrant money to include both ‘away’ and ‘at home’. This mobilizing phase of remittances complements the sending and receiving phase,
providing deeper insight into remittances as a fundamentally social process that integrates different connections and contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter contributes to a social and contextual approach to remittances by viewing them as a process, and by integrating the phase of mobilizing them into this process. It uses a translocal, socio-cultural lens for doing so, identifying skills of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica and Spain as mobile embodied or migration-specific cultural capital that builds on the multiple, interconnected social environments involved in their migration. Migrants’ awareness and application of relevant skills contribute to their goals of (better) jobs, money, and family investments, but in highly differentiated ways. In addition, throughout the remittance process, migrants face challenges that can only be countered from a translocal point of view, by weighing immediate migrant well-being against future returns ‘at home’. The resulting translocal trade-offs provide a useful contribution to research focused on remittances' heterogeneity and other migration-development topics.

An exploration of remittances as a process confirms that they do not flourish out of thin air. Their often impressive macro figures are built on migrants’ changing connections and contexts that can be both enabling and limiting. This also implies that as migrants develop skills ‘against all odds’, the extent to which they are able to do so and benefit is fundamentally shaped by their socio-institutional environment. Apart from possibly adverse implications for their well-being, both during migration (Iskander et al., 2010) and ‘at home’ (Bebbington, 1999), the value of skills in a particular locality will be largely erased if no supportive structures and dynamics are in place.

The skills described in this chapter are not exhaustive, nor are they only (instrumentally) important for mobilizing migrant money. They are, however, part of what makes migrants successful in local terms. Considering further research, the list of skills described here could be refined and extended, and further connected to migrants’ social surroundings. For example, what is the role of networks (family and otherwise) in skill development? What does migrant differentiation in terms of gender, occupation and documentation mean for trade-offs in well-being? How to avoid an emphasis on migrants’ self-help that ignores society’s responsibility for their structurally disadvantaged position? These questions may provide further input to social and contextual explorations of the remittance process.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

PROPOSING A MOBILITY SPECTRUM FRAMEWORK FOR MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH, IN MUY MUY AND ELSEWHERE
1. INTRODUCTION

Of all possible migration scenarios, the ones that the migrants and families of this thesis tend to engage in are generally not the most visible. The borders they cross are not deemed the most dangerous, nor their achievements the most extraordinary. In light of the current so-called migration crisis, their daily struggles perhaps seem mundane. However, taking their translocal livelihoods as a starting point, these migration experiences can be considered and analysed as ‘contested connections’ that provide insight into the functioning of mobility and migration as development experiences of global relevance. In the course of this conclusion it will become clear why it is probable that our understanding of even relatively extreme migration scenarios, like those from the introduction, benefits from such a notion of mobility and migration as development.

This thesis has looked at the ways Muy Muy migrants and their families organize their translocal livelihoods in order to explore the diversity of migrations they engage in and the developmental dimensions they deem important. The thesis sought to further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences in order to contribute to the debate on migration-development heterogeneity. To do so, it employed multi-sited ethnographic research of migrants and their families rooted in Muy Muy. This research was premised on migration-development multi-dimensionality and contextuality, the asymmetric cross-border connections that migrants maintain with ‘home’, and the differentiated participation of migrants and their family members in migration-development. The thesis developed a theoretical framework based on insights from transnationalism, translocal livelihoods, and mobilities research, which was used to organize and interpret empirical findings in the livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. These empirical findings provide lessons about mobility and migration as development experiences, lessons that are considered relevant not only for an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Muy Muy migrants and their families, but also for the broader debate on migration-development heterogeneity.

This concluding chapter will highlight and elaborate these lessons. The chapter summarizes the main findings of the empirical chapters, and uses them for revisiting the research questions posed at the start. In an effort to further integrate the findings and increase their (theoretical) relevance, the chapter then proposes a ‘mobility spectrum’ framework to aid in further developing the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences. The chapter then discusses a number of possible future uses of such a mobility spectrum, simultaneously addressing some of this thesis’ limitations. The chapter ends with an attempt to formulate what policy
implications the view of mobility and migration as development experiences may have.

2. THE EMPIRICAL CORE

This thesis tried to further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences based on an identification and interrogation of three translocal livelihood domains of relevance in Muy Muy. These domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances each contribute to a better understanding of migration-development in different, complementary ways. First, the carework chapter established how a diversity of carework actors and activities play a role in shaping internal, regional, and international migration processes. Family members yield different levels of support for migration and are differently positioned in the migration decision-making process based on their socially defined (but not static) responsibilities, the way they are able to defend and/or challenge these, and the need to cooperate. The various intra-household (un)freedoms to move or stay result in a joint yet asymmetrical effort of carework and migration arrangements, and differentiated access to mobility. The chapter argues that these disparate experiences can only be understood by taking into account the diversity of carework actors and activities throughout specific contexts.

Second, the chapter on ‘illegality’ and the everyday politics of migrant mobility practices in Costa Rica exposes the contradiction between the felt need of migrants and their families to engage in migration on the one hand, and the fundamentally limited possibilities to do so on the other, resulting in the necessary, yet formally ‘illegal’, translocal character of their livelihoods. Migrants’ relatively modest goals and the particular ways they challenge formal and informal barriers for achieving them, result in everyday politics of compliance, evasion and resistance that shape their migration experience. These everyday politics may eventually contribute to reproducing their unjust, adverse global incorporation, requiring individual sacrifices in the hope of future family well-being ‘at home’. At the same time, however, the chapter establishes this particular experience of migration and its counterpart of non-migration as a translocal strategy. Such translocal strategies need to be fully acknowledged in order to be able to set up appropriate migration policies as well as migrant support systems.

Third and finally, the remittances chapter elaborated a translocal, socio-cultural lens for interpreting remittances as a fundamentally social process and integrating the phase of mobilizing remittances from Costa Rica and Spain into this process. In particular, the chapter reflects how personal yet socially and contextually shaped skills enable remittances that help meet expectations and fulfil obligations. These
remittances make migration socially acceptable in the eyes of other family members, increase (potential) migrants’ bargaining position, and provide a vehicle for family investments like debt repayment, health and housing. The connections and contexts that are part of this remittances process can be both enabling and limiting, again resulting in a trade-off in well-being that requires a comprehensive view of migrants’ experiences both ‘at home’ and ‘away’, in the present and the future. Moreover, such a comprehensive view of the remittance process helps to unravel the differentiation of migrants and their achievements, contributing to our understanding of migration-development heterogeneity.

3. REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this section is not to provide a literal answer to the guiding research questions posed at the start of this thesis, but to strengthen the richness and interconnectedness of the empirical material by positing two observations. These include the diversity of cross-border livelihood extensions that migrants and their families combine in order to make their life in Muy Muy viable and, simultaneously, the differentiated development experience of mobility and migration. In turn, these observations support the proposal for a mobility spectrum as discussed next.

Although the different migrations Muy Muy migrants engage in have their own specific characteristics, they can be combined within family-based households in order to secure and improve their Muy Muy livelihoods. The research presented here indicates various combinations of internal, regional and international cross-border livelihood extensions. Migration to Costa Rica may provide the experience and funding for further migration to Spain, of either the same migrants or other household members. Rural seasonal migration within Nicaragua may be combined with temporal migration to Costa Rica and long-term migration to the United States. Although these different destinations add up to different migration experiences, together they constitute extensions that help Muy Muy families make their livelihoods viable.

Starting from translocal livelihoods helps avoid putting Muy Muy migrants and their families in academic and policy boxes that are not a fit. Limiting analysis to neatly defined linkages between specific livelihood types and resources, migrations, and experiences is bound to result in contradictions that do not aid our understanding of migration-development. For example, the relatively limited resources of a majority of poor rural households in Muy Muy do not necessarily confine these households to easily accessible but poorly rewarding internal migration. As another example, Muy Muy migrants in Spain do not have to be the only ones their family in Muy Muy depends on, as their remittances may be complemented by earnings in both
Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Migrants’ efforts in Spain are intimately linked to what is happening in Muy Muy, including complementary migrations and other livelihood strategies taking place. Taking translocal livelihoods as a starting point thus complicates assumptions about migrants in specific destinations and their families.

This being said, it is important to reiterate that these specific destinations still have very different characteristics. Migrating, under varying circumstances, to a rural community in Nicaragua, a small city in Costa Rica, or Seville in Spain, entails different obstacles and opportunities. This means that these migrations are not equally accessible or even useful to all, making migration a highly differentiated experience in terms of both household and individual well-being, even if it is generally expected to generate livelihood benefits. This differentiation supports the notion that mobility and migration constitute development experiences in their own right. The three livelihood domains of carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances as discussed above served as examples of how these experiences materialize, and together with these observations provide the basis for proposing the framework of a mobility spectrum.

4. PROPOSAL FOR A MOBILITY SPECTRUM FRAMEWORK

This section introduces the framework of a mobility spectrum65 for exploring mobility and migration as development experiences. It is proposed as an analytical tool for identifying the people, places and practices involved in the mobility and migration experiences of family-based households and household members. Employing such a framework results in an identification of time- and place-specific household and individual mobility spectra, which can then be used as instruments to assess other development implications of migration. Household members’ unique yet intimately connected mobility spectra contribute to understanding why and how certain people migrate (to certain places) whereas others do not, how these migrations are related, and what they mean for individual and household well-being. These mobility spectra are not static but subject to change, and represent time- and place-specific migration-development experiences.

By proposing the framework of a mobility spectrum, this section further integrates the three livelihood domains specific to this thesis: carework, ‘illegality’, and remittances. However, the mobility spectrum framework is intended as a

65 The mobility spectrum was first suggested in Steel, Winters and Sosa (2011). The elaborated mobility spectrum framework presented here further develops the initial idea of a mobility spectrum in tune with this thesis’ research focus and findings.
‘generative’ proposal, an analytical tool open to further refinement in the particular context of Muy Muy as well as, it is hoped, an inspiration for exploring mobility and migration as development experiences elsewhere. The following sections will go into the mobility spectrum framework as a tool, discussing its different components based on this thesis research, as well as the potential use of mobility spectra for understanding other migration-development implications.

The three main envisioned components of a mobility spectrum are a) migrating or not migrating; b) migrating and not migrating; c) migrants with non-migrants. These components should be seen as important factors for interpreting household members’ migration and non-migration experiences. They do not predict whether someone will migrate or not. Nor do they identify ‘the’ causes and consequences of migration. They rather explore the ways differently positioned household members deal with different livelihood opportunities and limitations, which over time may change in substance and importance. This way, the use of a mobility spectrum is intended to do justice to the heterogeneity of migration-development.

4.1. MIGRATING OR NOT (YET) MIGRATING

The first component of the mobility spectrum, focusing on the question of migrating or not migrating, refers to a number of key aspects that influence whether an individual is or is not able and willing to migrate. It is important to remember, however, that such ability and willingness are not static. Observations of migrating and not migrating are snapshots taken at a specific time and place. Depending on the key aspects of this component (see below), and indeed, on the other components of the mobility spectrum, a person may never migrate, may not migrate at the moment, or may migrate in certain directions and not others. Based on the thesis research, I have identified five key aspects for establishing ability and willingness to migrate. These are: household responsibility, network support, personal ambition, administrative and market context, and material resources. I now turn to each of these.

Household responsibility

Household responsibility is the aspect that establishes each household member’s socially defined and sanctioned duties, in tune with local gender norms and practices, generational differences, and livelihood characteristics. Each household member has specific responsibilities that contribute to the household’s functioning as a social group (Sen, 1989). Although there is a wide variety of responsibilities, including, for example, those of children going to school, and elderly household members representing the household in the community, I focus on two
responsibilities that are particularly relevant for this thesis: income-generating activities and at-home domestic care. To put it bluntly, some household members ‘should’ primarily work to generate income or other means of subsistence, while others ‘should’ mainly tend to domestic chores, together creating a system of mutual dependency. In Muy Muy, these responsibilities tend to be reserved for men and women, respectively. With regard to migration, these gendered responsibilities and their implications can either facilitate or limit access to (specific types of) mobility. In addition, these responsibilities shape the experience and expectations of migration itself.

As discussed for the livelihood domain of carework, although these responsibilities are derived from persistent traditional notions about appropriate gender divisions of labour, they are also subject to interpretation and change. Both within and outside the household, and especially in a migration context, responsibilities are subject to negotiation processes that shift what is acceptable and practical. Depending on the strength of particular norms within a specific household, on the cycles and needs it passes through, and on changing contextual circumstances, men may assume domestic tasks and, more commonly, women may provide income from outside the home. These dynamics change the face of migration. However, household members’ response to both ‘older’ and ‘newer’ duties needs to be accounted for. In order to get both moral and practical support for migrating or not migrating, they need to legitimize what their duties entail and what it means to fulfil them (possibly entailing the need to forego other duties).

Network support

Depending on the assignment of specific household responsibilities, other household members tend to support or not support migrating or not migrating. Although attention to the role of social networks in migration is not new, it is important to emphasize that network support depends on the social positioning of (potential) migrants, and consequently, their ability to ‘enrol’ (Long, 2001) a diversity of others in their migration endeavour. Support extends to family members outside the

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66 These gendered responsibilities are not only subject to interpretation and change, but may also differ according to other identity markers, such as social class, ethnicity, and age. The thesis did not set out to compare different groups. In future research, however, it would be interesting to contrast experiences of, for example, poor women from the rural areas and relatively better-off women from the urban centre, who may both tend to work more outside the home but with different motivations. Their differences and similarities may provide more insight into the dynamics of gendered responsibilities and their link with mobility and migration. This being said, a sense of the ‘traditional’ gendered responsibilities described here was strong throughout the diversity of families and family members that were part of the research, cutting across social class, ethnicity and age.
household, neighbours, and friends; at home, during the journey, and at migrants’ destinations. It includes moral, practical and material assistance. The diversity of actors within support networks may increase (potential) migrants’ room for manoeuvre, but may also increase scrutiny.

The discussion of the livelihood domain of carework includes reflections about the ways in which this network support is linked to household responsibilities and the extent to which expectations of both migrant and non-migrant household members are met. The discussion of the livelihood domain of remittances further explored one of these expectations, i.e. remittances. Migrants’ reasons for migrating are multiple and extend beyond the economic, but the prospect of remittances goes a long way toward making migration socially acceptable within their families. The (expected) ability to provide remittances increases (potential) migrants’ scope for negotiating their migration experience. Migrants also need their networks to make remittances possible, if only for receiving the money they send (see below). In turn, a lack of remittances decreases support for the migration endeavour in question, at least from those within the network that count on these remittances.

*Personal ambition*

Even if a potential migrant is well-positioned for migration, in terms of responsibilities and support, he or she may not necessarily wish to migrate: there should also be a personal ambition to do so. Ambitions are personal but socially constructed. They constitute normative principles that take shape growing up in a particular family, community, and part of the world (see also Appadurai, 2004). Moreover, in a migration context, ambitions also take shape through the (cross-border) circulation of ideas, images and goods (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). People’s exposure to and experience with these ideas, images and goods may either limit or amplify their ambitions. For example, nearby models of ‘successful’ migrants may inspire likewise aspirational strategies, whereas ‘failed’ migrants may lessen expectations and increase resignation (or alternatively, provide incentives not to make the same ‘mistakes’). This already indicates that ambitions are not simply transferred from one locality to the next; they are part of a translocal process of interpretation, adaptation, and implementation.

This translocal process is mainly addressed in the discussion of the livelihood domains of ‘illegality’ and remittances. Both chapters take the translocal character of the strategies of migrants and their families into account, but they do so at different levels. The ‘illegality’ discussion focused on the translocal nature of Muy Muy livelihoods as a rationale for certain relatively modest goals and corresponding mobility practices in response to specific institutionalized barriers, whereas the
discussion on remittances used a translocal, socio-cultural lens for looking into the process of remittances and the possible well-being trade-offs, achievements and differentiations that are involved. Both chapters thereby highlight how personal (yet social) ambition shapes migration experiences by activating what makes sense throughout specific, interconnected localities.

Administrative and market context

With the ‘corresponding’ responsibilities, support mechanisms, and personal ambition in place, the act of migrating still depends on the wider administrative and market context. In this thesis, the contextual dimensions of particular importance include local availability of migration loans, the Nicaraguan bureaucracy for obtaining identification documents, and globally segregated labour markets. These contextual dimensions also extend to migration policies in destination countries (at least, in case of cross-border migration). However, these policies should not be seen as merely deterministic factors. They get negotiated by law enforcers, migrants and other actors ‘on the ground’, resulting in locally specific patchworks of openings and closings. This is particularly the case in much regional (‘South-South’) migration, which often has a temporal and informal character, and is usually less consistently monitored.

Furthermore, current public and academic preoccupation with migrant ‘illegality’ (DeGenova, 2002) already indicates that a substantial group of international migrants finds its way around nation-state limitations to their migration, residence, and work. As discussed for the livelihood domain of ‘illegality’, the adverse consequences of these limitations, particularly labour conditions and access to social safety and health care, indicate a possible trade-off between immediate and individual well-being ‘away’ and future family well-being ‘at home’. These limitations may also differentiate migrants because they constitute risks that not all are able or willing to assume. However, migrants are not passively subjected to these limitations. They challenge them in diverse ways and justify their actions based on the notion that their livelihoods are translocal out of necessity. In addition, they get ‘space to challenge’ because of their much-needed labour power. This being said, the current administrative and market context still tends to limit access to just forms of mobility, that is, secure and rewarding ones.

Material resources

Migrating needs to be secure and rewarding because it requires the investment of material resources. These resources include gifts, money from savings and loans, and collateral to back up these loans. Different migration endeavours tend to require
different types and amounts of material resources. In this sense, low-key internal migration is hardly comparable to migration to the United States, which may necessitate an expensive *coyote*, or migration to Spain, which entails additional funding to pass as a tourist. In addition, the type and amount of material resources required also tend to influence other characteristics of migrating. Migration that requires more funding is generally loaded with heavier expectations for returns on investment. Migration enabled by putting up a house for collateral carries significant risks. Depleted savings are generally expected to be built up again, and migration based on monetary gifts may fuel subtle but real social obligations.

The latter already indicates that material resources constitute social relationships (Zelizer, 2005) and require careful navigation. Although the migrant families in this thesis are generally not among the poorest, they face serious assets constraints and often rely on informal channels to make ends meet. The availability of these informal channels, both within and beyond the household, depends on migrants’ (and their households’) social positioning as well as positive or negative past experiences of migration. When previous migration has been successful, the chances for material resources increase. As discussed for the livelihood domain of remittances, migrants feel obliged to at least strike a balance between the investment of specific resources and the returns on this investment and, ideally, aim to increase the stock of a household’s assets. This is especially the case if the limitations of a household’s assets allow only for migration of specific members, but not all. The sense of obligation that surrounds migrating imbues the migration experience with meaning (and burden) beyond the economic, extending it to ‘being’ a responsible father, dutiful daughter, and so forth.

4.2. **MIGRATING AND NOT MIGRATING**

The second component of the mobility spectrum, migrating *and* not migrating, refers to the idea that both migrating and staying can be seen as assets to households and to individual household members. On the one hand, migrating can increase both a household member’s freedom and a household’s assets (if successful), whereas it can also mean an exposure to vulnerabilities and an increased burden. On the other hand, (involuntary) staying may entail a real limitation of opportunities for personal and livelihood development, but it can also allow for maintaining strong local roots, and reaping migration benefits without the risks of migrating. Examples are receiving remittances and using new, migration-induced facilities.

It is important to identify the potentially positive and negative implications of both migrating and not migrating in specific contexts, in order to avoid either a celebratory notion of mobility or a sedentary view, intended to “keep people in their
place” (Bakewell, 2007). This is not to defend a lack of access to mobility. As argued by De Haas and Rodríguez (2010), mobility as a capability implies that people should have the freedom to move when and where they want to, but they should also have the freedom to stay ‘at home’. As specified by the empirical chapters, this freedom is necessary for migrants and non-migrants to capitalize on positive and limit negative implications of migrating and not migrating. These chapters also indicated that the experience and perception of these positive and negative implications are time- and place-specific and subject to negotiation and change.

4.3. MIGRANTS WITH NON-MIGRANTS

Further building on the idea that both migrating and not migrating can be considered assets, it is the combination of both by different household members that shapes translocal livelihoods. The final mobility spectrum component therefore refers to the complementary roles of migrants and non-migrants. Household members may enter into competition over access to mobility, but from a translocal livelihood perspective, mobility needs immobility and vice versa (see also De Haas, 2014). Apart from questions of identity and belonging, those who migrate need others to stay in order to manage the benefits of migration for the livelihood ‘at home’. In the same vein, those who do not migrate need migrants in order to keep receiving these benefits, enabling them to stay and work towards a viable future ‘at home’.

This final component testifies to the need for cooperation in order to ensure the viability of livelihoods in a specific locality. This need for cross-border cooperation, establishing the link between Muy Muy and migrants’ diverse migration endeavours elsewhere, was a recurring theme throughout the empirical chapters. However, cooperation does not equal harmony. The negotiation process surrounding migration, from decisions on destination to expectations of remittances and return, is usually marked by friction. Household members have disparate room to manoeuvre, circumstances are volatile, and resources are limited. The key issue, at least in the context of this research, is that most households do not disintegrate because of these frictions, but struggle amidst a scenario in which they benefit from migration while also preparing for a future in Muy Muy. The way this struggle plays out in terms of mobility and migration constitutes people’s differentiated, interdependent and meaningful development experiences, and the translocal character of their livelihoods.

4.4. MOBILITY SPECTRA AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The three above-described components result in mobility spectra that integrate the people, places and practices involved in mobility and migration as development
experiences. These spectra can then be used to understand the other development implications of migration. The components described already hint at some of these implications, including changes in attitudes, loss and gain of material resources, and deteriorating migrant health (whereas the health of other household members may improve). This thesis suggests that these development implications, their specific characteristics for different people across multiple contexts, cannot be fully understood without taking mobility spectra into account. These are composed of a holistic view on the aspects that influence whether a person is willing and able to move (resulting in migrating or not migrating), the way both migrating and not migrating can be assets (if chosen freely), and the way migrants and non-migrants are intimately connected. Ultimately, the shape of interconnected mobility spectra and their development implications at individual and household level reveal what people consider to be feasible, just, and meaningful livelihoods, worth striving after.

4.5. SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE MOBILITY SPECTRUM

The mobility spectrum helps to further develop the notion of mobility and migration as development experiences and, as such, adds valuable insight to established actor-oriented, contextual and multi-dimensional conceptualizations of migration-development. In particular, the mobility spectrum offers insight into the fundamentally relational and differentiating aspects of mobility-migration by explicitly integrating livelihood connections that are usually analysed separately. These connections include those between people and between places, and the ways they are contested. It is by virtue of integrating these connections, instead of analysing them separately according to pre-defined categories that may not reflect people’s experiences, that the dynamics that play a role in the disparate access to mobility, and in the disparate sharing of migration costs and benefits, can be further identified and understood.

Importantly, the integration of connections that a mobility spectrum enables gives equal weight to the context of ‘home’ and to the active role of migrant family members ‘at home’, foregrounding relations of interdependency. However, this interdependency is based on multi-level, context-specific differentiations. Again, by virtue of integrating a diversity of connections, a mobility spectrum clarifies who migrates; why, how, and to where; the power relations that are part of this decision-making; the link between this specific migration and others’ (non) migration; and its meaning for household and individual well-being. Spatial livelihood extensions are not neutral or even straightforward, and a mobility spectrum helps ‘ground’ these contested cross-border connections. This benefits our understanding of translocal livelihoods and the diversity of (non) migration experiences that are part of it, as well as the dynamics of migration-development heterogeneity more generally.
5. **POSSIBLE AVENUES FOR COMPLEMENTARY RESEARCH**

This thesis has engaged with a selection of migration-development experiences at migrant and migrant family level in the village of Muy Muy, Nicaragua. However, as previously stated, it is hoped that the framework of a mobility spectrum that grew out of these particular experiences serves as an inspiration for exploring mobility and migration as development experiences elsewhere. This section attempts to concretize this aspiration by looking at three promising avenues for complementary research: comparable destinations, the community level, and possible other contexts. While discussing these avenues, some of the thesis’ limitations will also emerge.

First, the extent to which destinations have been dealt with is specific to the type of migrants and migrant families that were part of the thesis research. Although the qualitative sampling strategies used allowed for a reflection of local diversity (in terms of livelihood strategies, income levels, and migration histories), they were not expected to allow for a complete picture. For example, the survey results show the United States to be as important as Spain as an international destination country, but this is not reflected in my qualitative data. Only a minority of my research participants had experience with migration to the United States and even then it was indirect. Apart from the qualitative sampling strategies, there may be two reasons for this. First, judging from the MDM survey data, migration to the United States has a slightly more rural character. The urban bias of a substantial part of my research may thus account for less empirical data on the United States. Second, migration to the United States is older than migration to Spain, and may have involved more family reunification (see chapter 3), perhaps weakening or disrupting connections to Muy Muy. Regardless of the reasons, it would be interesting to see how the mobility spectrum plays out in this older, more established type of migration. Have similar dynamics of access to mobility played a role? How has the role of this type of migration and its development implications evolved over the years, for example, regarding return perspectives? To what extent does the translocality of livelihoods continue to hold?

Second, the focus of the thesis has been on the migrants and their families that organize translocal livelihoods. It would be interesting to see whether the mobility spectrum proposed here, in adapted form, could also provide insight into mobility and migration experiences at community level, specifically regarding inequalities of social class and ethnicity. Possible questions include: which are the so-called unsuccessful and non-migrant households, and how are they involved with the common move ‘away’ for a future ‘at home’ (De Haan, 2006)? How does the
circulation of specific community members and families reinforce or challenge local power structures? In rural communities like Muy Muy, what is the relationship between (interest in) agricultural development and (a culture of) migration (Jokisch, 2002; Morales and Castro, 2002)? If migrant organizations are active (which is not the case in Muy Muy), how do their activities shape migration-development interactions? It would be interesting to see the mobility spectrum play out at community level, within groups of livelihoods and among these groups.

Third, it may be useful to explore the value of the mobility spectrum in other contexts. Any context where mobility and its fruits are not equally accessed could provide fertile ground for further elaboration and possible refinement of the different components and aspects of the mobility spectrum. For example, this could be a context where migration is less diverse than in Muy Muy, like in more urban settings where migration is distinctively international. Or a context where migration is more elite-like, with increased financial resources, higher levels of schooling, and more institutional leverage. Or a context where migration is more directly related to political repression and violence. In these cases, to what extent would similar dynamics of differentiation and interdependency apply? How would the meaning of mobility and migration change?

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

In the introduction to this thesis, I mentioned the recognition of migration as a force in development in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Apart from targets on preventing human trafficking and promoting secure work environments for migrants, these goals include: “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.” Coming towards the end of the thesis, these targets and goals seem to reflect a rather limited view of development. If instead, we adopt the view that development is about expanding people’s capabilities based on the things they have reason to value (Sen, 1999), these targets and goals should not only be about improving the circumstances of migrants (so they can fulfil ‘their instrumental role’ as agents of development), but also about people’s access to mobility (as an intrinsic development value). According to Clemens (2015), the architects of the SDGs do not actually spell out possibilities for facilitating migration. In this sense, the SDGs’ lack of commitment to improve access to mobility reflects a limited view of development.

Moreover, these SDGs may not correspond to the experiences of migrants and their families, which complicates the subsequent design and implementation of appropriate policies. As can be seen in the current ‘migration crisis’, migrants who
challenge ‘comfortable’ and ‘secure’ national boundaries also evoke fear, xenophobia and short-sighted (electoral) interests that prevent an in-depth discussion of freer movement of people. Even when more ‘welcoming’ ideas prevail, such as in the plans to ‘disperse’ migrants over European member-states according to specific quotas, these plans may not reflect, let alone strengthen, the connections for betterment that people already establish themselves. Migrants are not pawns that can be moved; they have agency and ambition. As this thesis has demonstrated, (potential) migrants already negotiate all kinds of obstacles in order to improve their own lives and that of their families, if necessary and/or desired, across borders. Would the experience of migration not be more positive, and its positive implications not greater, if these obstacles could be reduced?

A decade ago, De Haas (2005) already wrote that the scope for migration-development policies is fundamentally limited. Although this thesis endorses the welcoming of any policy directed at improving migrants’ circumstances and increasing migration’s potential, the thesis also illustrates how these policies cannot do away with the structural inequalities at the root of many migrations and people’s resourcefulness in dealing with them. In line with this, it is unrealistic to think that migration can be neatly managed as long as a disparate global system persists. Not only may the SDG target of ‘planned migration policies’ be narrowly geared towards and/or used for ‘Northern’ interests and thereby overlook that migration is an integral part of development, but ‘planned migration policies’ also seem to ignore structural and ethical givens. For example, it appears they fail to take into account that differentiated demands for labour are unlikely to diminish, that migration networks tend to feed themselves, that increasing migration control (even more) would substantially curtail human rights, and that restrictive migration policies tend to have perverse effects of criminalization and exploitation, social exclusion, and decreased development potential (De Haas, 2005). Such ‘perverse effects’ are not in the interest of nation-states looking to responsibly manage migration and are certainly not in the interest of migrants and their families.

Several scholars have detected a renewed (European) interest in the alternative policy approach of temporary or circulatory migrant worker programs (Castles, 2006; De Haas, 2005; Vertovec, 2009). Proponents of such programs expect these to meet destination countries’ need for labour, decrease illegal migration and its excesses, and enlarge the development potential of migration. Given the ‘inevitability’ of migration, the idea is that if people are free(er) to circulate, their contributions (to themselves, their families, and their communities) will be greater (De Haas, 2005: 1282). This idea fits the general approach in this thesis in the sense that it supports what migrants and their families themselves already do to improve their lives in meaningful ways. However, at least three remarks can be made here. First, inviting
specific migrants for temporary migration under restricted conditions (i.e., migrant worker programs) is not the same as allowing the type of truly circular migration (ibid) that matches how migrants and their families are already shaping their livelihoods. Second, a commitment to circular migration would require significant state involvement, which goes against much contemporary neoliberal thinking and policy (Castles, 2006). And third, an excessively instrumental view on migration for development would be unrealistic and unethical: migrants and their families cannot shoulder the responsibility for realizing ‘development’ that is built on, and even perpetuates, a global system of exploitation (Glick Schiller and Faist, 2010). A call for freer circulation should thus not imply an acceptance of structural inequalities, but should rather be seen as a small step in addressing them.

In conclusion, it is an advantage that migration is considered more and more an integral part of development. However, at both practical and ethical level, no migration recipes for development exist, and migration cannot be simply used to ‘promote development’ (Skeldon, 2008: 14). Skeldon’s proposal for more reactive than proactive policies, for responding to likely migration-development scenarios instead of trying to ‘channel’ or plan migration (ibid: 15), is in line with this thesis and seems a promising way forward. Reactive policies would at least acknowledge migrants’ agency and involve a humane response to migrants’ needs, as well as the needs of their families and the communities they are part of (‘at home’ and ‘away’). This would also open up space to address the hypocrisy of nation-states, including Europe, the United States, and Costa Rica, that continue to build their wealth on migrants and claim them as agents of development while at the same time severely curtailing their rights (Glick Schiller and Faist, 2010).

Bringing together the different actors and diverging interests involved in specific migrations is not an easy task. Reactive policies therefore still require in-depth research into context-specific migration-development interactions and the fundamental interdependencies and inequalities involved. This thesis demonstrates the merit of approaching mobility and migration as development experiences, as contested connections, for conducting such research. The thesis has focused on these connections based on Muy Muy livelihoods, but such an approach also benefits a destination-country view. In my understanding, virtually every migrant, asylum seeker, or refugee can be part of a translocal livelihood. Acknowledging this is a first step in exploring the contested connections they are engaged in and that shape first, their particular experience of migration-development, and second, the other development implications of their migration. It is hoped that this thesis, and the mobility spectrum it proposes, illuminates the functioning and meaning of such contested connections.


**Rural. Reporte de Segunda Fase**, Managua, Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo Nitlapán-UCA.


## ANNEXES

### ANNEX I. THE 26 CORE FAMILIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Main contact/person/participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Family members interviewed</th>
<th>Main family livelihood activities</th>
<th>Family migration experiences</th>
<th>Financial diaries</th>
<th>Links with other research participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Public services</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rosario (sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anabel</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>Husband (Victor); two sisters-in-law; brother-in-law</td>
<td>Construction; agriculture</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Esmeralda (sister-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Mother (Teresa); niece**</td>
<td>Public services; agriculture</td>
<td>Regional; international</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ofelia (neighbor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Carola</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>Mother (Catarina)</td>
<td>Domestic services</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Anabel (neighbor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Domestic services</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Anabel (sister-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Estefani</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Husband (Cedro)*</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Internal; regional; international</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Fabio (father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fabio</td>
<td>70s</td>
<td>Wife, daughter</td>
<td>Receives pension; small shop</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pedro (brother-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>Husband (León); mother-in-law</td>
<td>Construction; agriculture</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pedro (brother-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Restaurant (owner)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jacoba*</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Domestic services</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sells homemade tortillas</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>Husband (Eduardo)*; mother-in-law</td>
<td>Agriculture; restaurant; domestic services</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Magda</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Construction; door-to-door sale of cosmetics</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Felipe (father); María and Yoli (sisters-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>María</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Public services</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Magda (sister-in-law); Yoli (sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mynia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Husband (Ernesto)*</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Virginia (mother-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nieves</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Husband; son (Miguel)*</td>
<td>Small shop; agriculture; maintenance</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>María and Yoli (friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pedro*</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Wife (Martina)*</td>
<td>Construction; restaurant</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Felicia (sister-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ofelia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Mother; sister*</td>
<td>Domestic services; agriculture; restaurant</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Estefani (sister-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Regina</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>Two daughters</td>
<td>Sells homemade food; domestic services; agriculture</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rosario*</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>Husband*; three daughters* (including Adriana and Clara)</td>
<td>Domestic services; bakery; restaurant</td>
<td>Internal; regional</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Alma (sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td>Three daughters (Angela**, Alisa, Blanca**); son (Martin)*</td>
<td>Construction; domestic services; factory</td>
<td>Internal; regional; international</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Myrna (daughter-in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Yoli</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Husband; mother</td>
<td>Public services; construction</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Magda (sister-in-law); María (sister)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rural

| 23    | Andrea                          | 20-25 | Husband                     | Construction; agriculture       | Regional                    | Yes              | María and Yoli (sisters-in-law)     |
| 24    | Cristina                        | 15-20 | Husband (Guillermo)        | Livestock; agriculture          | Internal                    | Yes              |                                    |
| 25    | Diego                           | 20-25 | Wife (Maricela); mother     | Agriculture                    | Regional                    | Yes              |                                    |
| 26    | Felipe                          | 50s   | Daughter                   | Agriculture; construction       | Regional                    | Yes              | Magda (daughter)                   |

**Note:** María was also the local research coordinator. *=interviewed in Costa Rica (as well); **=interviewed in Spain.
ANNEX II.

EMBEDDING REMITTANCES: A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE ON FINANCIAL DIARIES IN NICARAGUA

This Annex contains a methodological paper that details the theoretical and practical considerations behind using financial diaries in the research for this thesis. Although financial diaries were not designed for migration-development research, I saw them as an opportunity to socially and contextually embed remittances, one of the translocal livelihood domains identified and interrogated in this thesis. The main premise of financial diaries is a longitudinal combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques to get a systematic and intimate account of households’ financial practices. I expected such an account to give more insight into the role of particular migrations and remittances in households’ livelihood strategies, and in the ways household members deal with volatility, uncertainty, and shocks. Together with a local research team, we tracked the financial practices of selected households by conducting interviews every two weeks over the course of a year, allowing for a better grasp of the (cross-border) complexities of livelihoods.

As indicated in chapter 2, the specific use of financial diaries for this thesis was unfortunately limited to an enabling role for interviews. Given the complexity of diary data it was not considered feasible to thoroughly analyse these diaries within the frame of the thesis. Nevertheless, the diaries helped maintain contact with a number of core families, keep track of family developments, and explore topics of direct relevance for this thesis, in particular, the livelihood domains of carework and remittances. The methodological paper presented here details how financial diaries were used in Muy Muy, allowing an appreciation of their role in the research for this thesis as well as their potential for research specifically on remittances.

This paper has been accepted with minor revisions for Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie.

It has also been presented (in various forms) at the final conference of the TCRA-Ghana project, Amsterdam, in 2014; at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) 111th Annual Meeting ‘Borders and Crossings’, San Francisco, in 2012; and at an IOB and CeMIS lunch seminar, Antwerp, in 2011.
1. INTRODUCTION

The private money that migrants send to their families continues to be the subject of public scrutiny and debate. Dominant policy and scholarly discourses that display an optimistic belief in remittances as relatively straightforward monetary vehicles for development tend to ignore their actual heterogeneity (De Haas 2010; Kunz 2008) and are increasingly challenged by translocal and ethnographic approaches that highlight remittances' social and contextual dimensions (Carling 2014) or 'embeddedness' (Granovetter 1985, p. 487). Such approaches go beyond remittances as neutral, detached, and largely instrumental transfers. They look into the heterogeneous character of remittances by exploring how they shape and are shaped by social relationships, and how they are mediated through local structures and dynamics.

Remittances' social and contextual dimensions include asymmetrical relations of support and obligation, for example those based on gender norms and practices (Åkesson 2011; Lawson 2000; Wong 2006). Social and contextual dimensions also include other asymmetrical relations (like ethnicity or class), as well as livelihood strategies and available infrastructures that ‘anchor’ migration and remittances locally (Conway & Cohen 2003). These dimensions influence and differentiate migrants’ options and obstacles for generating remittances, the considerations that are part of their transfer, and their use and implications across settings. In order to dissect remittances’ attractive numbers and unravel their heterogeneous character, meticulous empirical knowledge of these dimensions is crucial (Lo 2008).

This paper responds to recent calls for reflection on the methodological challenges of generating empirical knowledge for socially and contextually embedding remittances (Long 2008; Rahman & Fee 2012) by using the innovative financial diaries method (Collins et al. 2009). Given the need for remittance research to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques over an extended period of time (Mazzucato 2008; Rahman & Fee 2012), the paper considers the ways in which household financial diaries may be an appropriate method for addressing this need. As I will explain in further detail below, financial diaries systematically and longitudinally track household practices regarding income, expenditure, loans and savings, as well as the perspectives, opportunities and challenges surrounding these practices. This

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67 This paper focuses on monetary remittances only, thus does not discuss in-kind and social remittances. This being said, in-kind transactions can be usefully included in financial diaries studies, and financial diaries allow for a tracking of changes in practices (and the considerations behind these) that may be related to social remittances.

68 See, for example, research on translocal livelihoods (Long 2008).
incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative techniques facilitates tracking changes in practices, for example, those regarding remittances, as well as tracking the considerations behind these changes. Moreover, financial diaries record these changes and considerations as part of households’ locally anchored, broader constellation of practices. Monetary details offer topics of conversation for a further exploration of the integrated character and larger social fabric of these practices.

Guided by information from other financial diaries studies, the paper analyses financial diaries created with 16 migrant households\textsuperscript{69} in the central Nicaraguan village of Muy Muy between October 2010 and September 2011. The aim of the paper is twofold: first, to provide a detailed reflection on the financial diaries method as a tool for exploring social and contextual dimensions of remittances, and second, to use this reflection to further substantiate how these dimensions shape remittances’ heterogeneity. The Nicaraguan case for supporting these aims provides an appropriate setting for creating financial diaries. Muy Muy is characterized by highly unequal and unstable livelihood opportunities as well as limited access to basic financial, health and education services. These dynamics contribute to flexible, informal, and cross-border household practices for survival and well-being, which were the focus of intermittent multi-sited ethnographic research on migration and local development between 2009 and 2014 (Steel et al. 2011; Winters 2014). Financial diaries were created to facilitate tracking these dynamic household practices, including remittances.

By analysing financial diaries in Muy Muy, the paper intends to contribute to remittances research in methodological as well as theoretical terms. Methodologically, it does so by detailing the pitfalls and potential of the financial diaries method, thereby addressing the need for longitudinal and mixed quantitative/qualitative remittances research, and providing useful input for future remittances and diary studies. In particular, the paper shows that the ability of financial diaries to track practices only makes sense as part of broader qualitative research that builds on local knowledge, trust relationships, and continuous reflection. Theoretically, the paper contributes to remittances research by identifying and discussing the role of translocal interdependency, irregularity, and local debt in the financial practices of migrant households. Financial diaries are found useful for uncovering and further interrogating these dimensions, fostering a better understanding of remittances’ heterogeneity. These methodological and theoretical contributions may be of value to scholars interested in advancing remittances

\textsuperscript{69} Migrant households are defined here as households with one or more members who were migrants either before or during (part of) the financial diaries study.
research beyond the monetary and the instrumental. In addition, these contributions may be valuable for those working with financial diaries and similar money-oriented methods in settings that require a longitudinal and integrated tracking of people’s practices.

The next section highlights some theoretical considerations for remittances research and provides background information on financial diaries. After describing the setting up of financial diaries in Muy Muy and the inevitable partiality each diary displays, the paper goes into the process of creating financial diaries and, particularly, the long-term commitment this entails. The paper then explores the merits of the method by drawing on illustrative participant examples that expose the translocal interdependency and irregularity of household practices. It considers gaps in diary information, highlighting the specific case of household debt in Muy Muy and its link with migration and remittances. The paper concludes by discussing the extent to which financial diaries are in need of a qualitative framework and their use in future research.

2. EMBEDDING REMITTANCES WITH FINANCIAL DIARIES

Remittances provide a classic example of ties between migrants and their place of origin. The currently popular ‘global remittance trend’ (Kunz 2008) has co-opted remittances as a tool for development for these places of origin, based on their scale and their image as tangible and quantifiable, as well as their fit with neoliberal logics (De Haas 2010; Glick Schiller & Faist 2010) and ideas of bottom-up ‘grassroots development’ (Eversole 2005). Remittances seem ‘democratic’ (Raghuram 2007); apparently any migrant can generate them, make them flow directly to their intended beneficiaries ‘at home’, and further invest them. What is more, remitting is seen as ‘natural’ and ‘virtuous’: “Transnational communities, corporate marketing strategies, and the dominant policy discourse ... underwrite the same message: Good migrants remit” (Carling 2014, p. 250-251). Although the international community acknowledges the challenges of generating, transferring and using remittances across a diversity of settings, these challenges are subordinated to remittances’ positive implications (such as increased income). Remittances continue to be considered an interesting source of development funding.

For Nicaragua, where remittances play a substantial role in the national economy (OIM 2013), Jennings & Clarke (2005, p. 689) mention that “[t]his money comes with no strings attached.” This type of claim stands in stark contrast to translocal and ethnographic approaches that consider the role of remittances in maintaining social relationships (Trager 2005), and the way gender relations in particular organize
remittances (Pessar & Mahler 2003). Remittances are influenced by people’s social positioning and agency according to locally specific hierarchies, as well as by household configurations, job markets and investment possibilities. Although remittances are usually intended to improve circumstances ‘at home’, they depend as much on the locally specific development views, opportunities, and constraints as any other type of money, contributing to heterogeneous implications and indicating that migrants and their families cannot be expected just to make remittances-based development happen (Glick Schiller & Faist 2010; Geiger & Pécout 2013). Moreover, an emphasis on remittances as a neutral and detached development instrument assigns an untenable responsibility to a relatively small group of migrants while structural obstacles to development remain unaddressed (Skeldon 2008). To date, the dominant remittances discourse tends to downplay these nuancing observations (Lo 2008).

The idea for using financial diaries grew out of a particular concern to embed remittances adequately in the Muy Muy setting. However, financial diaries are not tailor-made for researching remittances. They were developed to capture financial practices of ‘the poor’, the fluctuations in their income and assets and their strategies for dealing with these fluctuations, in order to facilitate their inclusion in mainstream financial services (Collins et al. 2009). While it is often assumed that low incomes allow for little management beyond mere survival, financial diaries can reveal how households deal with irregular money, including remittances, in resourceful, locally anchored ways.

The financial diaries’ premise of long-term quantitative and qualitative tracking and integrating of practices is rather ambitious. However, apart from a number of practical considerations there has been little methodological reflection on creating financial diaries and their role in knowledge production. Throughout this paper, I use other studies of financial diaries as a guide for reflecting on the creation of Nicaraguan diaries. These studies have been conducted since the early 2000s in both urban and rural contexts in Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and the Philippines. The majority of these studies is concerned with microfinance services and financial literacy, but some take migration into account, either by focusing on microfinance services related to remittances (the mobile phone-based

70 In addition, although this question is outside the scope of this paper, we can ask whether it is ethical to expect development from migrants when their rights are often trampled upon and migration often endangers their personal well-being (Glick Schiller & Faist 2010).
service M-PESA in Kenya, Morawczynski 2011; Stuart & Cohen 2011) or by targeting respondents with a background of migration (a group of formerly trafficked women in the Philippines, Tsai 2014). To the best of my knowledge, this paper is the first to primarily use financial diaries for embedding remittances, and the first to analyse diaries in a Latin American context.

3. SETTING UP FINANCIAL DIARIES IN MUY MUY

During previous research in Muy Muy, I established contact with families that also provided a target group for creating financial diaries (Winters 2014). These families differ in composition, income levels and migration histories, but all have experience with remittances. Such remittances are not uncommon in the village. Despite Muy Muy’s privileged location in a lucrative cattle-dairy chain, the majority of its inhabitants only have access to small-scale agricultural activities or otherwise unstable and informal jobs. The lack of local employment opportunities has historically contributed to temporary and regional migration to other municipalities and to Costa Rica, as well as long-distance migration to the United States and, more recently, to Spain (Grigsby & Pérez 2009; Steel et al. 2011). Predominantly based on nation-wide household surveys, recent public statistics estimate that about 7% of Muy Muy households has international migrants, and about 4% receives international remittances (INIDE 2008). However, taking into account the prevalence of internal, irregular and temporal migration, these numbers probably underestimate the weight of multiple migrations for households (OIM 2013).72

Against this dynamic backdrop, the tracking of household practices through financial diaries was expected to generate further insight into remittances. This section gives a first overview then further explains the main characteristics of the financial diaries study in Muy Muy. A total of 16 participant households were selected from both the village urban centre and its rural areas, based on purposive snowball sampling through different gateways and household members’ willingness to participate. Over the course of a year, a local research team of eight interviewers prepared financial diaries together with these 16 households. For each household, two interviewers sat together every two weeks with a committed adult household member who was considered knowledgeable.73 They talked about the financial practices of the past

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72 For example, a representative survey conducted as part of the broader ethnographic research in Muy Muy indicates that between 47-49% of households has experience with internal, regional, and/or international migration, either past or present. Between 85-89% of the migrants involved with present migrations remit.

73 Given the nature and course of the broader ethnographic research these financial diaries were part of, for a large part based on personal relationships between a (female) researcher and (female) participants, the financial diary participant was usually a woman.
weeks and filled in a locally appropriate diary format. Because of the volatility of migration in Muy Muy, any households’ number of migrant members, their destinations and remittances changed throughout the year. A local research coordinator closely followed up on these developments as well as on the team’s progress, training and logistics.

My previous research in Muy Muy facilitated the purposive snowball sampling also applied by most other financial diaries studies elsewhere. Although this type of sampling generally allows for familiarity, accessibility, and variety, it does not guarantee households’ willingness. Among those who immediately and enthusiastically agreed, a few offered to take notes in between interviews in order to make creating diaries easier and faster. However, other potential participants excluded themselves based on the risk and burden of commitment. Some fear the amount of time and energy the interviews may take, especially when they are already older. In addition, some find it embarrassing that other people should know about their difficulty in making ends meet and the lengths to which they must go to achieve this (e.g., by assuming debt). These commitment issues were generally resolved by providing additional information. More challenging, however, was that some potential participants were afraid their financial practices would upset other family members. For example, the young mother Anabel (20-25)74 told me, “Our stories wouldn’t add up! [My husband] will find out that I spend much more than he gives me, that I have all kinds of loans!” (Interview, 24 September 2010). The willingness considerations of Anabel and others are important to take into account, not only because they touch upon the ethics of financial diaries research, but also because they are indicative of intra-household (gendered) power relations and locally specific (debt) infrastructures (see below).

Anabel’s worry also points to the limits on information that all financial diaries studies struggle with. I followed the strategy of the majority of such studies to interview the ‘most knowledgeable’ person as a proxy for the entire (self-defined) household. In practice, this person was a household member with whom a certain level of trust had already been established and who typically keeps track of the financial practices of all persons he/she considered part of the household. However, their information could never be complete. For practical reasons, participants were interviewed every two weeks, a frequency that reflects the local rhythm of salaries and other payments but also increases the chance that not all transactions are remembered. Although information became more accurate over time, completely

74 All names in this paper are pseudonyms. I make use of age ranges of five years to most accurately reflect diary participants’ ages over multiple years of research.
recording all financial practices is perhaps an unrealistic goal. Like in any interview, participants forget or make mistakes, are not all-knowing, and sometimes choose to not tell the truth. Their perspectives, and their resulting diaries, form a partial and biased representation of households’ complicated constellations of financial practices. The matter of limited information is further complicated by the research emphasis on migration and remittances. Although some practices of household members living and working elsewhere were highlighted through financial diaries, for example when tracking their remittances, other personal practices were beyond the diaries’ range and the picture of household practices can thus only be partial.\textsuperscript{75}

Though accepting a certain level of partiality, the quality of diary information, the insight they could provide in household practices, remained the study’s main concern. It depended entirely on the adequacy of the financial diaries format and on the extent to which the local research team was trained and able to track changes and considerations. The formats were loosely based on the financial diaries used by Collins et al. (2009) and adapted to the context of Muy Muy in close, continuous cooperation with the local research team. Notably, the formats were revised to include household members’ migration by adding the location where money was earned and the possibility of recording data in US dollars next to córdobas, the Nicaraguan currency, as remittances are usually sent in dollars. The first part of the format concerned a household’s income from salary (see Table 9), self-employment and benefits (including non-monetary). The second part included expenditure for both household and self-employment. The third part detailed loans and the fourth part savings. Each part had a comments section for recording important events, reasons for any change in practices, and other remarks. Throughout the four parts, the aim was to strike a balance between maintaining the richness of the data while keeping formats as short and simple as possible, in order to prevent research fatigue and limit chances of confusion. The final interview length depended on the number and complexity of a household’s financial practices, but once a rhythm had been established an interview usually took about half an hour.

\textsuperscript{75} For an example of simultaneous transnational research, see Mazzucato (2008) on the SMS methodology.
### TABLE 9. SIMPLIFIED FINANCIAL DIARIES FORMAT ON INCOME, 1ST SECTION: SALARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transactions</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Currency (córdobas or US dollars)</th>
<th>Received daily, weekly, every two weeks, or monthly Frequency (number of transactions per two weeks)</th>
<th>Who earns the money?</th>
<th>With what kind of activity?</th>
<th>Where is the money earned?</th>
<th>Who manages the money?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. husband*</td>
<td>1. agriculture</td>
<td>1. same community</td>
<td>1. husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. wife</td>
<td>2. livestock</td>
<td>2. other community</td>
<td>2. wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. ex-husband</td>
<td>3. construction</td>
<td>3. community in Muy Muy</td>
<td>3. son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. son</td>
<td>4. transport</td>
<td>4. urban centre</td>
<td>4. daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. daughter</td>
<td>5. security</td>
<td>5. other community in Matagalpa municipality</td>
<td>5. son-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. daughter-in-law</td>
<td>7. restaurant</td>
<td>6. somewhere else in Nicaragua (specify)</td>
<td>7. grandson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. grandson</td>
<td>8. domestic services</td>
<td>7. Costa Rica (urban)</td>
<td>8. granddaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10. father</td>
<td>10. hotel</td>
<td>9. Central America</td>
<td>10. mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. mother</td>
<td>11. social services</td>
<td>10. Spain</td>
<td>11. brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12. brother</td>
<td>12. private office</td>
<td>11. USA</td>
<td>12. sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. sister</td>
<td>13. public office</td>
<td>12. other (specify)</td>
<td>13. brother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15. other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(multiple answers possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's own representation (translated from Spanish). The other financial diaries sections are: income (self-employment, benefits); expenditures (for household, for self-employment); loans; savings. Each section includes space for comments. *The ‘principal couple’ of the household is the starting point for identifying other members.

As compensation for the lack of pilot interviews, we thoroughly practiced and improved the formats among the local research team. In this process, the insider knowledge and managing capacities of the local coordinator proved indispensable. Her familiarity with the village, experience with different research methods and trustworthy, responsible attitude were crucial for the research training and for

76 ‘We’ refers to the author/principal researcher and the local research team. ‘I’ refers to the author only.
managing the financial diaries data as well as the interviewers. The interviewers were eight students from Matiguás, a town neighbouring Muy Muy, who were selected based on their previous research performance. It was a deliberate choice to select interviewers from nearby. Although most financial diaries studies stress the importance of a research team’s familiarity with the context, they generally do not question issues of confidentiality between interviewers and diary participants. In this study, employing interviewers from a nearby town ensured familiarity yet safeguarded discretion for participant households. Logistically, the proximity of the interviewers also helped ensure continuity. Their availability for the entire duration of the study was further encouraged by the prospect of receiving a financial bonus, a diploma of participation and a letter of recommendation upon completing the year.

Regarding the research team’s training, this included the components of interview content, interview approach and techniques, and ethics. The content portion emphasized the research intention to gain insight into households’ diverse financial practices over an extended period of time, with specific attention to migration and remittances. The diaries’ ambitious premise was expected to be demanding and made it even more urgent to build familiarity and trust in order to obtain the highest quality data possible. The research team was encouraged to employ an open interview style to gain in-depth understanding while interviewing. Instead of merely reading questions and filling out boxes, interviewers let participants elaborate on their financial practices to get a better grasp of the rhythms and irregularities of a household. They used probing and asked follow-up questions to address gaps that were identified by increased knowledge of the households and awareness of the research goals. Finally, the ethics component of the training emphasized the importance of discretion and confidentiality, especially considering the sensitivity of the information shared, as well as decent appearance and courtesy throughout the research. It stressed the ability to inform participant households about the study but to refrain from advising them on personal matters. In addition, in order to safeguard the (feelings of) security of all participants, interviewers always worked in pairs of one man and one woman. As indicated below, this duo strategy also proved to be important for maintaining both interviewers’ and households’ participation.

4. CREATING DIARIES AND ESTABLISHING LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

Before the diary interviews started, some introductory exchanges took place. These included a short memo with basic household information, an informed consent form, and a household resources sheet. The latter was divided into non-monetary (members, type of housing, electrical appliances, land, livestock, and large equipment including vehicles) and monetary (pocket money, savings and loans)
resources. Although we expected most resources to remain undisclosed, at least at the beginning, filling in the sheet together allowed for further acquaintance between the interviewers and the households. Afterwards, I provided the interviewers feedback on their interviewing style and visited the households to make sure they felt comfortable with the interviewers. These introductory exchanges were indispensable in laying the groundwork for building familiarity and trust.

There were two final evaluations in addition to continuous evaluation of the diaries’ progress through my regular contact with the local coordinator and participant households. One concerned an anonymous, written evaluation of the interviewers on the adequacy of the training, the relationship with participant households, and the value of information obtained. Although some interviewers thought the quality of information varied due to households’ availability and possible ‘research fatigue’, the majority believed high quality data to have been obtained based on the trust established after spending considerable time together. As one of the interviewers wrote, “it was talking and interviewing at the same time” (anonymous evaluation, 25 September 2011). This rather informal, conversation-like style can be considered an ideal to pursue in order to improve data quality, i.e. the extent to which diaries do justice to household practices (see also Rutherford’s paper on ‘conversations with poor households’, 2002).

The other final evaluation concerned an interview with participant households at the end of the year. During this interview, I not only tried to clarify some details of the households’ last diaries but also asked about the participants’ research experience. It is perhaps not surprising that the households that completed the year (see below) were positive about their participation. Apparently some felt they were doing me a favour, but still, this ‘favour’ entailed considerable commitment and required a positive experience. Almost all participants stressed how ‘nice’ it was to ‘realize’ how they managed their money. They used the financial diaries as a kind of mnemonic device.

Of the 16 households, 13 completed the research year.\textsuperscript{77} When establishing the financial diaries method, Collins and her colleagues opted for the word “‘diary’, a term that appropriately conveys the sense that we are tracking \textit{intimate} details of financial management \textit{over time}” (Collins et al. 2009, p. 188, \textit{my emphasis}).\textsuperscript{78} This

\textsuperscript{77} Although half of these remaining 13 households missed one or a few interviews in the course of the year, we do not think this affected our overall insight into the dynamics of their practices.

\textsuperscript{78} The word ‘diary’ also evokes images of research participants writing their own financial diaries, instead of being interviewed about their practices. However, this seemed impossible in the Muy Muy setting, where the literacy of most of the ‘most knowledgeable’ adults of
long-term commitment may in fact be the biggest stumbling block for continued participation. Of the three dropout households, two showed signs of ‘research fatigue’, in one case abandoning the study for two months, in another dropping out from time to time. Although their information is still valuable, it is not possible to give a consistent account of their practices. Finally, in the third case, a participant decided to join her husband in Costa Rica after 12 interviews. I always contacted households when they showed signs of dropping out, not so much to convince them (possibly against their will) to continue the study, but to see if there were (practical) issues that could be resolved in order to ensure data quality and, hopefully, continued participation.

Closely related to dropping out, some interviewers suggested in the written evaluation ‘motivating’ participant households by giving ‘something’. Other financial diaries studies usually see it fit to compensate households with gifts (although some pay per interview) for the considerable commitment that participating in a financial diaries study entails. In this study, we had no resources to pay per interview and instinctively found gifts less ‘perverse’ than payments, so we opted for small presents. These presents were selected in tune with local customs of showing appreciation and in consideration of what households may need and value. The presents79 seemed greatly appreciated and therefore also contributed to research viability.

Long-term commitment proved to be more an issue for the research team itself, resurfacings from time to time. Despite the clear need for research continuity, this issue remains undiscussed in financial diaries studies. In this study, the local coordinator was crucial in encouraging the interviewers to dutifully complete the year. Additionally, in the specific context of Muy Muy and surroundings where there is low local availability of quality researchers, the strategy of interviewing in pairs was decisive. Because no interviewer wanted to put his or her pay and recommendation at risk, this peer monitoring stimulated dedication and professionalism that also contributed to a good understanding with participant households was limited. This being said, participant information and reflections constitute the corner stone of Muy Muy diaries. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for directing my attention to financial diaries’ potential for ‘the co-production and co-authored publication of knowledge’ in research settings where participants are confident writers, in the spirit of the work by Richa Nagar (2013).

79 On the consent form, we indicated that participant households could expect a gift half way and towards the end of the year. In practice, in tune with important village events, we provided a Christmas gift, a (re-usable) basket of daily necessities including rice, beans, sugar, cooking oil and soap. We also provided a decorative Mother’s Day gift, and a Dutch souvenir at the end of the year.
households. Equally important, high levels of follow-up and reflection on all financial diary aspects enabled a productive research environment and lasting commitment.

5. ANALYSING FINANCIAL DIARIES

Having discussed some financial diaries considerations and decisions, this section explores the merits of financial diaries as a tracking method for embedding remittances. Mainly based on an illustrative diary example of Carmen, one of the participants, it integrates initial quantitative and qualitative diary findings and links these to the Muy Muy setting in order to make sense of remittances’ role in household financial practices. It discusses the translocal interdependency and irregularity of household practices, and points to unavoidable discrepancies or gaps in diary information as potential sources of knowledge.

Table 10 shows an overview of about two months of income and expenditures of the household of Carmen (25-30), who lives in the urban centre with her mother Teresa and her two young sons. During the year, in addition to Teresa’s income as an employee of a local primary school, the household received regular remittances from Carmen’s husband in Spain and occasional remittances from Carmen’s brother in Costa Rica. Like Carmen’s household, almost all other participant households received remittances from members working in Costa Rica at a certain point, and some from members elsewhere in Nicaragua or in Spain as well. Mixing cross-border income earning strategies lends these households a translocal character and fits with the way people from Muy Muy have traditionally addressed limited local opportunities. Moreover, these households can only become and remain translocal because of their local ‘anchoring’ (Conway & Cohen 2003) in Muy Muy. Although only a minority of ‘at-home’ household members has formal, stable jobs like Teresa, the remainder still tries to generate income through diverse (seasonal) activities such as selling home-made goods, working as a day labourer, or providing domestic services. Patching together incomes from different localities, including Muy Muy, is a recurring theme in all financial diaries.

80 These two months are instructive of the whole year. I have selected a specific period that aptly demonstrates the use of financial diaries for embedding remittances.
TABLE 10. PARTIAL FINANCIAL DIARIES OF CARMEN’S HOUSEHOLD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Source of income (in córdobas)</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Type of expenditure (in córdobas)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1-2</td>
<td>7,166</td>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>1,827</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td></td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3-4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5-6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,340</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7-8</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>Muy Muy</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debt repayment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s own representation; a simplified overview of two months of income and expenditures.

Financial diaries expose the translocal interdependency of household members and practices and provide clues for an interrogation of this interdependency beyond income. In particular, diary information counters ideas of non-migrant dependency on remittances (Mazzucato 2008) and points to the multi-faceted two-way process of remittances (Long 2008) in tune with shared cross-border household responsibilities (Winters 2014). It inspires questions about, for example, the ways in which those ‘at home’ use remittances to take care of migrant children, deal with migrant debt, and oversee migrant investment. Financial diaries provide topics of conversation to explore how these social and contextual dimensions intervene in the ways remittances take shape.

Such findings on translocal interdependency would probably not have emerged if we had only taken a snapshot of Carmen’s household. A one-off interview would most likely have lacked the necessary trust to share details about remittances and other income, as well as the familiarity with the ways different household practices are integrated. In this regard, the interviewers’ clarifications in the diaries’ comments sections were of vital importance. This is illustrated, for example, by the case of Ofelia (25-30) and her mother, who share a household in the urban centre. This household deals with very limited, irregular income while entrusted with the care of several migrants’ children. The interviewers’ comments on this household’s practices
included: “[Ofelia] bought a bicycle in order to save the money invested [in the bicycle, i.e., to not spend it]”; “the savings were used for food because they did not receive remittances”, and “given that [migrant family members] will be visiting during Easter, they haven’t sent any remittances”. Enabled by long-term tracking, these comments illustrate the ways household practices, including remittances, are related, and inspire an exploration of the ways social and contextual dimensions such as informal saving mechanisms and local celebrations may play a role in the particular ways they are integrated.

Returning to Carmen’s diaries, two more aspects that are important for the social and contextual embedding of remittances can be discerned. First, the irregularity in the frequency and amount of income, especially remittances. Although Carmen’s household started these two months with over 7000 córdobas (about US$ 320 at the time of the research), it went without income for one month yet had to cover unexpected health expenditures. This irregularity was underlined by Carmen’s comment that she feels insecure because she never knows what amount to expect from her husband in Spain (interview 28 September 2011). Irregularity not only requires inventive money management, especially in a context where (formal) social safety nets are limited, but also inspires questions about the power dynamics that are part of translocal interdependency. For example, how is Carmen’s concern about remittances from her husband, who is responsible for providing for the family, related to her own responsibility of daily care for their children, and her own opportunities for decision-making, migrating and remitting? Irregularity, especially regarding the when and why of certain remittances, thus provides clues for interrogating gender-based migration differentiation (Winters 2014) and other local stratifications.

A second aspect of importance for embedding remittances that appears in Carmen’s diaries is the discrepancy between income and expenditure. Most households initially report more expenditures than income because trust still has to be built, but in Carmen's case it was the other way around. Throughout the year, we worked towards a convergence between income and expenditures (see also Collins et al. 2009), but not until the final evaluative interview was a major discrepancy resolved, when Carmen reported a number of monthly debt repayments for a television and a closet bought on credit. She had become so used to these that she had forgotten to mention them. As these debt repayments did not concern daily necessities, she was also not reminded of them in a ‘natural’ way. Given the trust between Carmen and the interviewers, and many conversations about all kinds of delicate financial practices including health expenses and savings, this diary gap seems to result not from distrust or chariness, but from the very common, mundane nature of the practice concerned, that is, buying on credit. In the next section I will briefly discuss
how financial diaries facilitate an exploration of the ways this particular local loan practice intersects with remittances.

6. SEEING THE GOOD IN GAPS: DEBT, MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES

“Ya descubrió que debo en tres partes.”81
“No doy crédito pero damos.”82

Throughout the year, several discrepancies in diary information were resolved, but particularly the final evaluative interview facilitated an identification of specific loans as the cause of structural gaps. Based on the cornerstone of financial diaries, repeated interviewing, and the trust, familiarity, and understanding generated over a year, the final interview provided a fruitful setting for unravelling loan contracts. As revealed by the diaries, all participant households take out loans from family or friends, microfinance institutions and banks in order to finance expenditures like household appliances, agricultural inputs, and home construction materials. At least as common is to fiar (literally, to trust), which refers to the day-to-day practice of buying daily necessities or appliances from local vendors on credit. Households make frequent use of fiar to deal with the volatility of their income. Carmen, for example, viewed it as a habit that makes sure you always have something (interview 28 September 2011). As illustrated by participant comments like those at the beginning of this section, fiar and other forms of debt are considered accessible and acceptable ways to make ends meet, a common response to unstable incomes and a lack of (formal) social safety nets (see also Guérin et al. 2014).

Although the above seems to legitimize and normalize the practice of fiar, it also raises questions about its risks. In an earlier section, Anabel (20-25) already alluded to the possibility of intra-household friction that loan practices may evoke. Beyond household level, risks of fiar were further explored in complementary interviews with six local vendors (of whom one was also the mother of a diary participant) employed in a cooperative, three pulperías (small in-house grocery stores) and two bigger stores. These vendors discussed negative side-effects of fiar, in particular, the exclusion of people not deemed trustworthy, potential conflicts concerning repayment, and even business failure. For households that make use of it, the

81 “You already discovered that I owe [money] in three places.” Interview with diary participant Nieves (50-55), 6 October 2011.
82 “I don’t sell on credit but we do.” Interview with shop owner Gricelda (age unknown), 11 February 2011.
practice of fiar may generate a cycle of seemingly never-ending and possibly unrealistic debt repayments, and even a loss of resources.

As a locally specific, socio-economic practice, fiar is part of the embedding of remittances that financial diaries can help uncover and interrogate. By virtue of their longitudinal and integrated character, the diaries offer clues for linking a certain amount, source and timing of remittances with practices of assuming and paying debt. They also suggest how debt may enable as well as encourage migration. Participants contract loans to be able to migrate, but they also use remittances for loan circulation and re-payment. For example, when I asked Diego (25-30), who would later become a diary participant, what he did with the money he brought home from Costa Rica, he responded “you go away because you owe money, you try to find your way out of debt” (interview 4 February 2010). Debt, migration and remittances are key elements of the precarious, translocal household economy in places like Muy Muy (see also Guérin et al. 2014; Morvant-Roux 2014; Villarreal 2008). However, they have not received due attention (Stoll 2010; Toruño 2010). In particular, the extent to which debt, migration and remittances increase households’ opportunities and resilience or else lead to further reproduction of vulnerabilities and exclusion by eroding their material and non-material assets (Mosse et al. 2002) needs to be explored further, taking concrete social and contextual dimensions into account (see also Villarreal 2008). The specific changes and considerations of household practices that financial diaries are able to track provide fruitful entry points for these explorations into remittances’ heterogeneity.

7. CONCLUSION

In response to the methodological challenge of exploring social and contextual dimensions of remittances, this paper discussed the considerations and decisions that were part of creating financial diaries and showed how these diaries can contribute to embedding remittances. Using quantitative and qualitative tracking of household practices over time, financial diaries expose the translocal interdependency and irregularity of these practices, providing clues for integrating instead of isolating remittances. Monetary details of financial diaries provide topics of conversation that help explore remittances’ role in locally anchored household practices like debt in Muy Muy, contributing to a better understanding of the heterogeneous character of remittances.

Next to these substantive findings, the detailed methodological discussion offered here also advances the financial diaries method itself. The paper demonstrates that creating financial diaries needs to be part of a larger, reflexive study in which trust and first-hand knowledge of the research setting are primary concerns for ensuring
research quality and viability. Although other financial diaries studies commonly suggest strengthening diary findings through triangulation with other quantitative and/or qualitative research methods, based on our Muy Muy experience we believe the diaries need a decisively qualitative framework. A qualitative framework facilitates essential reflections on the contributions financial diaries can make. In particular, these reflections include an acknowledgement of diaries’ partiality, as well as of the way this partiality may allow for a discussion of household experiences and perspectives. The latter also helps address a shortcoming of the financial diaries method as elaborated by Collins et al. (2009), i.e. its emphasis on narrow and technical aspects of money to the detriment of its social dimensions (Guérin et al. 2014; Schwittay 2014). The paper demonstrates that the premise of financial diaries lends itself to including non-monetary dimensions instead of side-lining them. The name 'financial diaries' then becomes too limited, and would need to be substituted by something along the lines of 'socio-economic household diaries'.

The reflection on financial diaries offered here points to the strength of repeated interviewing over time. Financial diaries may therefore be particularly useful in dynamic contexts like Muy Muy, where household practices are volatile and interview formats need to be able to capture the changes and considerations involved with these practices. Although a lack of research resources in Muy Muy has so far prevented this, future remittances research may be enriched by creating multi-sited diaries, by comparing diaries from dissimilar participants and households, and by opening up spaces for increased participant reflection, for example, in group discussions. These strategies would allow for a further exploration of local differentiations. Future research avenues may also include how financial diaries reflect local priorities and views regarding development, by capturing households’ specific use of remittances in tune with other practices. At the very least, creating financial diaries contributes to a re-thinking of remittances as (merely) neutral and detached monetary vehicles for development, as echoed in the dominant remittances discourse. Financial diaries expose remittances as part of the interdependency among migrants, their household members, and their locally anchored financial practices. Financial diaries can thereby provide the type of social and contextual embedding that advances remittances research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has benefited from a wide range of individuals and institutions, for which I am grateful. The Flemish Interuniversity Council VLIR-UOS and the IOB Research Fund provided funding. Mike Ferguson of Microfinance Opportunities and Isabelle Guérin of the Institute of Research Development / Paris I Sorbonne University generously shared their questionnaires and training guides. Gert Van Hecken shared his research guidelines and kindly assisted with selecting and
managing the researchers in Nicaragua. Participants of the final conference of the TCRA-Ghana Project gave inspiring feedback on my financial diaries presentation. Johan Bastiaensen, Griet Steel, and three anonymous reviewers provided useful comments on an earlier draft. Finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all the families who participated in the financial diaries study, and to the indispensable local research team.

REFERENCES


Tsai, L. C. (2014) “I will help as much as I can, but I can’t give them everything:” The financial lives of women who were formerly trafficked into sex work in the Philippines. (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, New York: Graduate School of Arts and Sciences).


Annex III. Financial Diaries Format

**DIARIOS FINANCIEROS – FORMATO DE ENTREVISTA**

I  Número y nombre del hogar: .........................................................................................

II  Nombre de la persona entrevistada: .............................................................................

III  Nombres de los entrevistadores: ...................................................................................

IV  Número de semana, fecha y tiempo: ...............................................................................

1 Ingresos del hogar

1A  Ingresos por salario (incluye remesas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Valor (por transacción)</th>
<th>b) Cantidad</th>
<th>c) Moneda</th>
<th>d) Unidad</th>
<th>e) Frecuencia (cuantías transacciones / 15 días)</th>
<th>f) Persona (quién gana el salario?)</th>
<th>g) Tipo (a qué se dedica?)</th>
<th>h) Lugar (dónde se realiza la actividad?)</th>
<th>i) Destino (quién maneja los ingresos?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = CS</td>
<td>2 = US$</td>
<td>1 = día</td>
<td>2 = semana/ 3 = cuatrimestral/ 4 = mensual</td>
<td>1 = esposo</td>
<td>1 = agricultura</td>
<td>1 = misma comuna</td>
<td>1 = esposo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = hija</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = esposa</td>
<td>2 = ganado</td>
<td>2 = otra comarca de Muy Muy</td>
<td>2 = esposa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = hija</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = hijo</td>
<td>3 = construcción</td>
<td>3 = otra comarca de Muy Muy</td>
<td>3 = esposo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4 = hijo</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = hija</td>
<td>4 = transporte</td>
<td>4 = casco urbano de Muy Muy</td>
<td>4 = esposo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 = yerno</td>
<td>5 = cuidar propiedad</td>
<td>5 = otro municipio del departamento de Matagalpa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 = nuera</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 = nuera</td>
<td>6 = tienda/pulpería</td>
<td>6 = Managua</td>
<td>6 = otro lugar en Nicaragua (especificar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>7 = cuñado</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 = cuñado</td>
<td>7 = restaurante/comedor</td>
<td>7 = Costa Rica (ciudad)</td>
<td>7 = Costa Rica (rural) (especificar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 = cuñada</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 = cuñada</td>
<td>8 = domestica/cuidar niños</td>
<td>8 = Costa Rica (rural)</td>
<td>8 = Centro America (especificar)</td>
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<td>9 = España</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 = abuela</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 = abuela</td>
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<td>10 = USA</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 = nieto</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 = nieto</td>
<td>11 = servicios sociales (incluye salud, educación)</td>
<td>11 = USA</td>
<td>11 = USA</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>12 = nieta</td>
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<td>12 = oficina</td>
<td>12 = oficina</td>
<td>12 = otros (especificar)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>13 = otro</td>
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<td>13 = otro</td>
<td>13 = otro</td>
<td>13 = otro (especificar)</td>
<td>13 = otro (especificar)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Comentarios:
## 1B Ingresos por auto-empleo (incluye remesas)

<table>
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<th>a) Valor (por transacción)</th>
<th>b) Cantidad</th>
<th>c) Moneda</th>
<th>d) Unidad</th>
<th>e) Frecuencia (cuentas transacciones / 15 días)</th>
<th>f) Persona (quién gana el salario?)</th>
<th>g) Tipo (a qué se dedica?)</th>
<th>h) Lugar (dónde se realiza la actividad?)</th>
<th>i) Destino (quién maneja los ingresos?)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2=US$</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1=venta de mercancías</td>
<td>1=la misma comunidad</td>
<td>1=esposo</td>
</tr>
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<td>2=venta de ganado mayor</td>
<td>2=otra comarca de Muy Muy</td>
<td>2=esposa</td>
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<td>3=hijo</td>
<td>3=venta de ganado menor</td>
<td>3=casco urbano de Muy Muy</td>
<td>3=hijo</td>
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<td>4=hija</td>
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<td>4=otro municipio del departamento de</td>
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<td>sastrería, lavar, planchar, cocinar)</td>
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### Comentarios:
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<th>a) Cantidad por transacción en C$</th>
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<th>c) Tipo de seguro (a través de qué sistema se recibe?)</th>
<th>d) Destino (quién maneja el beneficio?)</th>
<th>e) Ayuda en especie (por transacción)</th>
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Comentarios:
2. Egresos del hogar

2A Egresos para el hogar

<table>
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<tr>
<th>a) Valor (quincenal)</th>
<th>d) Persona (quién realiza el gasto)</th>
<th>e) Destino (para qué se utiliza)</th>
<th>f) Intercambio (con quién se realiza el gasto?)</th>
<th>g) Lugar (dónde se realiza el gasto?)</th>
<th>h) Destino (para quién se utiliza, si aplica)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1=esposo</td>
<td>1=alimentos</td>
<td>1=familiar</td>
<td>1=esposo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>2=agua</td>
<td>2=amigo/vecino</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=hijo</td>
<td>3=léa</td>
<td>3=jefe</td>
<td>3=hijo</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4=hija</td>
<td>4=cable</td>
<td>4=vendedor ambulante</td>
<td>4=hija</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>6=nieta</td>
<td>6=productos domésticos</td>
<td>6=vendedor de tienda/pulpería</td>
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<td>7=salud</td>
<td>7=vendedor de bodega</td>
<td>7=abuela</td>
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<td>8=actividades sociales</td>
<td>8=intermediario privado</td>
<td>8=nieto</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>9=hogar (renta)</td>
<td>9=ONG</td>
<td>9=otro (especificar)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10=hogar (construcción)</td>
<td>10=cooperativa</td>
<td>10=costa Rica (ciudad)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11=transporte</td>
<td>11=MFI</td>
<td>11=costa Rica (rural)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>13=gobierno</td>
<td>13=especial (especificar)</td>
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Comentarios:
2B  Egresos para el auto-empleo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Valor (quincenal)</th>
<th>d) Persona (quién se ocupa del gasto)</th>
<th>e) Destino (para qué se utiliza)</th>
<th>f) Intercambio (con quién se realiza el gasto?)</th>
<th>g) Lugar (dónde se realiza el gasto?)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1=C$</td>
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<td>1=pago de servicios básicos</td>
<td>1=familiar</td>
<td>1=misma comunidad</td>
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<td>2=compra de insumos</td>
<td>2=amigo/vecino</td>
<td>2=otra comarca de Muy Muy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=hijo</td>
<td>3=compra de equipos (especificar)</td>
<td>3=jefe</td>
<td>3=cajero urbano de Muy Muy</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4=hija</td>
<td>4=compra de terreno (agricultura)</td>
<td>4=vendedor ambulante</td>
<td>4=otro municipio del departamento de Matagalpa</td>
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<td>5=yerno</td>
<td>5=compra de ganado mayor</td>
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<td>5=Managua</td>
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<td>6=compra de ganado menor</td>
<td>6=vendedor de tienda/pulperia</td>
<td>6=otro lugar en Nicaragua (especificar)</td>
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<td>7=compra de terreno (ganadería)</td>
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<td>11=nieta</td>
<td>11=compra de alimentos</td>
<td>11=MFI</td>
<td>11=USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12=nieta</td>
<td>12=compra de materiales para servicios domésticos</td>
<td>12=intermediario privado</td>
<td>12=otro (especificar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>13=compra de gasolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>multiples respuestas posible</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Cantidad c) Moneda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-C$</th>
<th>2-US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comentarios:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Valor (por transacción)</th>
<th>b) Cantidad</th>
<th>c) Moneda</th>
<th>d) Persona (quién presta el dinero?)</th>
<th>e) Tipo (dónde presta el dinero?)</th>
<th>f) Fianza (cuál es la garantía del préstamo?)</th>
<th>g) Lugar (dónde se realiza el préstamo?)</th>
<th>h) Destino (intención de uso)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=€</td>
<td>2=US$</td>
<td>1=familiar</td>
<td>1=palabra de otra persona</td>
<td>1=emergencia</td>
<td>1=emergencia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2=amigo/vecino</td>
<td>2=palabra de otra persona</td>
<td>2=emergencia</td>
<td>2=casa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3=jefe (adelanto de salario)</td>
<td>3=joyas</td>
<td>3=electrodomésticos</td>
<td>3=electrodomésticos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4=jefe (préstamo)</td>
<td>4=electricistas</td>
<td>4=electrodomésticos</td>
<td>4=capital humano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5=fiar en tienda/pulpería</td>
<td>5=food</td>
<td>5=electrodomésticos</td>
<td>5=capital humano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6=casa de empeño</td>
<td>6=imprenta</td>
<td>6=electrodomésticos</td>
<td>6=banco</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7=banquito</td>
<td>7=prestamista</td>
<td>7=aparato</td>
<td>7=otro</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>8=prestamista</td>
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<td>9=ONG</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10=cooperativa</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11=MFI</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>12=otro</td>
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<td>(especificar)</td>
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<td>(especificar)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comentarios: SI EXISTEN ACUERDOS EXPLICITOS (PLAZOS, INTERÉS), ANOTAR AQUÍ!
### Ahorros del hogar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Valor (por transacción)</th>
<th>d) Persona (quién ahorrará el dinero?)</th>
<th>e) Tipo (dónde ahorrará el dinero?)</th>
<th>f) Lugar (dónde se realiza el ahorro?)</th>
<th>g) Destino (intención de uso)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=esposo</td>
<td>1=familiar (vía préstamo)</td>
<td>1=misma comunidad</td>
<td>1=emergencia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=esposa</td>
<td>2=familiar (vía guardar)</td>
<td>2=otra comarca de Muy Muy</td>
<td>2=casa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=hijo</td>
<td>3=amigo/vecino (préstamo)</td>
<td>3=casco urbano de Muy Muy</td>
<td>3=electrodomicóstos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4=hija</td>
<td>4=amigo/vecino (guardar)</td>
<td>4=otro municipio del departamento de</td>
<td>4=capital humano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5=erno</td>
<td>5=jefe</td>
<td>Matagalpa</td>
<td>5=inversión</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6=nuera</td>
<td>6=banquito</td>
<td></td>
<td>6=España</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7=cuñado</td>
<td>7=ONG</td>
<td></td>
<td>7=USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8=cuñada</td>
<td>8=cooperativa</td>
<td></td>
<td>8=otro (especificar)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9=abuelo</td>
<td>9=MFI</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10=abuela</td>
<td>10=banco</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>11=nieto</td>
<td>11=inversión (especificar)</td>
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<td>12=nieta</td>
<td>12=otro (especificar)</td>
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<td>13=otro (especificar)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b) Cantidad</th>
<th>c) Moneda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>4A1</td>
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<td>4A2</td>
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<td>4A3</td>
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<td>4A4</td>
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<td>4A9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4A10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comentarios:
Annex IV. Social Mappings

Map drawn by female participants

Map drawn by male participants

## ANNEX V. ENCUESTA MIGRACIÓN-DESARROLLO MUY MUY 2014

### Encuesta Migración-Desarrollo Muy Muy 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Código del hogar</th>
<th>Fecha</th>
<th>Comunidad/Barrio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nombre entrevistadora</td>
<td>Nombre del entrevistado</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Todos los que se consideran parte de este hogar, los que dependen / contribuyen regularmente, no importa donde estén en este momento!**

1.a **Composición del hogar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Código de la persona</th>
<th>b) Persona</th>
<th>c) Edad</th>
<th>d) Nivel educativo</th>
<th>e) De dónde proviene el hogar?</th>
<th>f) Por qué vinieron a Muy Muy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Código de la persona</td>
<td>1=alfabetizado 2=primaria 3=secundaria 4=técnica 5=universitaria 6=ninguno</td>
<td>1=Muy Muy</td>
<td>2=zona rural de Matagalpa 3=zona urbana de Matagalpa 4=otra zona rural 5=otra zona urbana 6=extranjero</td>
<td>(llenar para las opciones 2-6 de la pregunta anterior)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1 | Jefe |  |  |  |
| 2 | Jefa |  |  |  |

- **g) Miembros < 10 años**
  - ... miembros

- **h) Miembros > 10 años**
  - ... miembros
### 1.b Nivel educativo del hogar (para todos los miembros > 10 años)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Código de la persona</th>
<th>b) Miembros &gt; 10 años (relación al jefe, o a la jefa)</th>
<th>c) Edad</th>
<th>d) Nivel educativo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4=hijo / 5=hija</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1=alfabetizado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=yerno / 7=nuera</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2=primaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=nieto / 9=nieta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3=secundaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=papá / 11=mamá</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4=técnica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12=hermano / 13=hermana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5=universitaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14=cuñado / 15=cuñada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6=ninguno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16=suegro / 17=suegra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18=sobrino / 19=sobrina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20=otro (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4  
5  
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10 
11 
12 
13 
14 
15
2.a Nivel de pobreza (llenar en Índice sencillo de pobreza en Nicaragua)

**Preguntas claves**

1. Cuántos miembros tiene el hogar?
2. En el presente año escolar, se matricularon en el sistema de educación formal todos los miembros del hogar de las edades 7 a 18?
3. En su ocupación principal en los últimos siete días, cuantos miembros del hogar trabajaron como empleados/obreros?
4. De cuántos cuartos dispone el hogar (no incluya cocina, baños, pasillos ni garaje)?
5. Qué material predomina en el piso de la vivienda?
6. Qué combustible utilizan usualmente para cocinar?
7. Tiene este hogar una plancha?
8. Tiene este hogar una licuadora?
9. Con cuántos teléfonos celulares cuenta el hogar?
10. Tiene este hogar una bicicleta, bote, caballo, burro, mula, motocicleta, o vehículo?

**2.b Fiar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Usted ha comprado alguna vez al crédito?</th>
<th>b) En caso de sí, con qué frecuencia?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=sí</td>
<td>1=siempre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=no</td>
<td>2=frecuentemente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=de vez en cuando</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

En caso de sí, qué le parece realizar sus compras de esta forma?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leer las opciones!</th>
<th>c) Le parece…</th>
<th>d) Lo ve…</th>
<th>e) Se siente…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=bien / 2=neutral / 3=mal</td>
<td>1=necesario / 2=neutral / 3=no necesario</td>
<td>1=tranquilo / 2=neutral / 3=angustiado</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Perspectivas sobre el desarrollo (ver Anexo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Qué considera lo más importante para el bienestar de su hogar?</th>
<th>b) Cómo haría para garantizarlo?</th>
<th>c) Cuáles serían los obstáculos para garantizarlo?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(clasificar los 3 más importantes)</td>
<td>(indicar la estrategia más importante para cada respuesta de la primera sección)</td>
<td>(indicar el obstáculo más importante para cada respuesta de la primera sección)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1=trabajo</td>
<td>1=trabajar</td>
<td>1=falta de trabajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=casa</td>
<td>2=estudiar</td>
<td>2=falta de dinero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=tierra</td>
<td>3=prestar</td>
<td>3=falta de papeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=animales</td>
<td>4=ahorrar</td>
<td>4=falta de servicios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=salud</td>
<td>5=migrar (dentro del país)</td>
<td>5=influencia política</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=educación</td>
<td>6=migrar (Centroamérica)</td>
<td>6=falta de amistades / conecte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=familia unida</td>
<td>7=migrar (internacional)</td>
<td>7=separación por migración</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=tener acceso a servicios</td>
<td>8=tener amistades / conecte</td>
<td>8=separación familiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=estas juntos (cerca)</td>
<td>9=tener amistades / conecte</td>
<td>9=falta de apoyo familiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=apoyo familiar</td>
<td>11=apoyo familiar</td>
<td>10=falta de motivación personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11=motivación personal</td>
<td>12=motivación personal</td>
<td>11=falta de dedicación / atención</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12=dedicación / atención</td>
<td>13=dedicación / atención</td>
<td>12=vicios personales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13=no sabe</td>
<td>14=no sabe</td>
<td>13=no hay obstáculos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>15=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>14=otro (especificar)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | | |

d) Falta alguna opción? Por favor especificar: …
**4.a Actividades más importantes de subsistencia para todos > 10 años**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Cuál actividad?</th>
<th>b) Quién lo realiza?</th>
<th>c) Dónde?</th>
<th>d) Cuál actividad antes de migrar?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=agricultura (propio)</td>
<td>1=jefe</td>
<td>1=misma comunidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=agricultura (ajeno)</td>
<td>2=jefa</td>
<td>2=zona rural de MM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=ganado (propio)</td>
<td>3=ex-esposo de la jefa</td>
<td>3=casco urbano de MM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=ganado (ajeno)</td>
<td>(utilizar código de la persona de la sección 1)</td>
<td>4=otra zona rural (duerme en la casa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=venta de productos caseros</td>
<td></td>
<td>5=otra zona urbana (duerme en la casa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=comerciante</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=pulpería (propia)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=tienda / venta (propia)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=pulpería / tienda / venta (ajena)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=taller (propio) (incluye carpintería, mecánico)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11=taller (ajeno) (incluye carpintería, mecánico)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12=restaurante / comedor / hotel (propio)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13=comedor / restaurante / hotel (ajeno)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14=transporte</td>
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<tr>
<td>15=construcción / albañil</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16=cuidar propiedad</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17=servicios domésticos (lavar, cocinar etc.)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18=domestica / cuidar niños</td>
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<tr>
<td>19=Servicios públicos (salud, educación, policía etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20=oficina privada</td>
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<td>21=oficina estatal</td>
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<tr>
<td>22=asistencia técnica</td>
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<td>23=fábrica</td>
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<td>24=otro (especificar)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.b Otras actividades de subsistencia para todos > 10 años

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) En este año se realiza alguna otra actividad? Cuál actividad?</th>
<th>b) Realizaba otra actividad antes, que ahora ya no lo hace? Cuál?</th>
<th>c) Porqué ya no se dedica a esta actividad?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=</td>
<td>agricultura (propio)</td>
<td>(múltiples respuestas posible)</td>
<td>1=perdió el trabajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=</td>
<td>agricultura (ajeno)</td>
<td>(múltiples respuestas posible)</td>
<td>2=fracasó la actividad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=</td>
<td>ganado (propio)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3=falta de dinero para invertir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=</td>
<td>ganado (ajeno)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4=no generaba ingresos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=</td>
<td>venta de productos caseros</td>
<td></td>
<td>5=encontrar un mejor trabajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=</td>
<td>comerciante</td>
<td></td>
<td>6=migración</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=</td>
<td>pulperia (propia)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7=razones familiares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=</td>
<td>tienda / venta (propia)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8=enfermedad / discapacidad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=</td>
<td>pulperia / tienda / venta (ajena)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9=ya no le gusta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>= taller (propio) (incluye carpintería, mecánico)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10=no sabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>= taller (ajeno) (incluye carpintería, mecánico)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11=otro (especificar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>= restaurante / comedor / hotel (propio)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>= comedor / restaurante / hotel (ajeno)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>= transporte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>= construcción / albañil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>= cuidar propiedad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>= servicios domésticos (lavar, cocinar etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>= domestica / cuidar niños</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>= servicios públicos (salud, educación, policía etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>= oficina privada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>= oficina estatal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22=asistencia técnica</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23=fábrica</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24=otro (especificar)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.a Migración (en el presente, de todos los que contribuyen al hogar > 10 años)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Quién?</th>
<th>b) Destino</th>
<th>c) Cómo obtuvo los recursos para irse?</th>
<th>d) Qué le motivó irse?</th>
<th>e) Cómo mantiene usted el contacto?</th>
<th>f) Quién le cuida a sus hijos?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=jefe</td>
<td>1=zona rural de Matagalpa</td>
<td>1=ahorro propio</td>
<td>1=falta de trabajo</td>
<td>1=teléfono (regular)</td>
<td>1=jefe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=jefa</td>
<td>2=zona urbana de Matagalpa</td>
<td>2=préstamo de familiar</td>
<td>2=falta de ingresos</td>
<td>2=teléfono (de vez en cuando)</td>
<td>2=jefa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=ex-esposo de la jefa</td>
<td>3=otra zona rural</td>
<td>3=préstamo de amigo</td>
<td>3=pagar deudas</td>
<td>3=internet (regular)</td>
<td>3=ex-esposo de la jefa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(utilizar código de la persona de la sección 1)</td>
<td>4=otra zona urbana</td>
<td>4=préstamo de prestamista</td>
<td>4=comprar terreno / tierra</td>
<td>4=internet (de vez en cuando)</td>
<td>(utilizar código de la persona de la sección 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5=Managua</td>
<td>5=préstamo de cooperativa</td>
<td>5=construcción de casa</td>
<td>5=dinero (regular)</td>
<td>20=otro familiar/amigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6=Costa Rica</td>
<td>6=préstamo de MFI</td>
<td>6=compra de ganado</td>
<td>6=dinero (de vez en cuando)</td>
<td>21=niñera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7=Panamá</td>
<td>7=préstamo de banco</td>
<td>7=para otras inversiones en su</td>
<td></td>
<td>22=llevó a sus hijos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8=Centroamérica</td>
<td>8=vender algo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(especificar)</td>
<td>trabajo</td>
<td>7=regalos (regular)</td>
<td>con el/ella</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=no sabe</td>
<td>8=problemas familiares</td>
<td>8=regalos (de vez en cuando)</td>
<td>23=no tiene hijos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>9=aventurar</td>
<td>9=ninguno</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>10=visitar / estar con la familia</td>
<td>10=otro (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11=estudiar</td>
<td>12=no sabe</td>
<td>13=otro (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23=no tiene hijos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OJO: si hay **nueva** migración a Panamá, intentar hacer una plática sobre el por qué y cómo de repente Panamá (en lugar de Costa Rica).
### 5.b Migración (en el pasado, de todos los que contribuyen al hogar > 10 años)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Quién?</th>
<th>b) Destino</th>
<th>c) Cómo obtuvo los recursos para irse?</th>
<th>d) Con qué frecuencia ha migrado a este destino?</th>
<th>e) Con qué duración? (normalmente)</th>
<th>f) Por qué se fue la última vez? (múltiples respuestas, circular más importante)</th>
<th>g) Por qué regresó la última vez?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=jefe</td>
<td>1=zona rural de Matagalpa</td>
<td>1=ahorro propio</td>
<td>1=una vez</td>
<td>1=&lt;1 año</td>
<td>1=falta de trabajo</td>
<td>1=falta de trabajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=jefa</td>
<td>2=zona urbana de Matagalpa</td>
<td>2=préstamo familiar</td>
<td>2=de vez en cuando</td>
<td>2=&gt;1 año</td>
<td>2=falta de ingresos</td>
<td>2=falta de ingresos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=ex-esposo de la jefa</td>
<td>3=otra zona rural</td>
<td>3=préstamo de amigo</td>
<td>3=con frecuencia</td>
<td></td>
<td>3=pagar deudas</td>
<td>3=pagar deudas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(utilizar código de la persona de la sección 1)</td>
<td>4=otra zona urbana</td>
<td>4=préstamo de prestamista</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4=comprar terreno / tierra</td>
<td>4=comprar terreno / tierra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=Managua</td>
<td>5=Centroamérica</td>
<td>5=préstamo de cooperativa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5=construcción de casa</td>
<td>5=construcción de casa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=Costa Rica</td>
<td>6=España</td>
<td>6=préstamo de MFI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6=compra de ganado</td>
<td>6=compra de ganado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=Panamá</td>
<td>10=USA</td>
<td>7=préstamo de banco</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7=para otras inversiones en su trabajo</td>
<td>7=para otras inversiones en su trabajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=Centroamérica</td>
<td>9=España</td>
<td>8=vender algo (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8=problemas familiares</td>
<td>8=problemas familiares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=España</td>
<td>10=USA</td>
<td>9=no sabe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9=aventurar</td>
<td>9=aventurar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=USA</td>
<td>11=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>10=otro (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10=visitar / estar con la familia</td>
<td>10=visitar / estar con la familia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11=estudiar</td>
<td>11=estudiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12=no sabe</td>
<td>12=no sabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13=otro (especificar)</td>
<td>13=otro (especificar)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

233
### 5.c Migración (miembros >10 años que han permanecido en el hogar)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Quién?</th>
<th>b) Por qué no?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=jefe</td>
<td>1=responsabilidades laborales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=jefa</td>
<td>2=responsabilidades en la casa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=ex-esposo de la jefa</td>
<td>3=todavía está estudiando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(utilizar código de la persona de la sección 1)</td>
<td>4=no quiere dejar a la familia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5=falta de recursos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6=falta de papeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7=falta de red / conecte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8=no le permiten irse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9=no le gustaría irse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10=por temor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11=porque no hay necesidad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12=enfermedad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13=no sabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14=otro (especificar)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 6. Vínculo migración-desarrollo

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Cuáles cambios positivos ha traído la migración al hogar?</strong></td>
<td><strong>b) Cuáles cambios negativos ha traído la migración al hogar?</strong></td>
<td><strong>c) Cuáles consecuencias generó el haberse ido a … para las</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(indicar max. 3 para cada tipo de migración)</td>
<td>(indicar max. 3 para cada tipo de migración)</td>
<td>actividades de subsistencia del hogar en Muy Muy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1=ningún cambio positivo</td>
<td>1=ningún cambio negativo</td>
<td>(se podría revisar con las actividades de la sección 4, pero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=más dinero para sobrevivir</td>
<td>2=dependencia de las remesas</td>
<td>esta pregunta no incluye las actividades que los migrantes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=compra de electrodomésticos / equipo</td>
<td>3=más deudas</td>
<td>realizan en sus destinos migratorios)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=compra o construcción de casa</td>
<td>4=pérdida de recursos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=compra de terreno / tierra</td>
<td>5=pérdida de trabajo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=compra de animales</td>
<td>6=separación por migración</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=compra de vehículos</td>
<td>7=separación familiar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=inversiones en educación</td>
<td>8=problemas de pareja</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=más facilidad de pagar costos de salud</td>
<td>9=mal comportamiento de los hijos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=participar en actividades sociales</td>
<td>10=enfermedad/incapacidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(celebraciones)</td>
<td>11=otro (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11=pagar deudas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12=ahorrar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13=indpendencia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14=nuevos oficios / nuevas habilidades (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15=otro (especificar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interna (país)</th>
<th>Interna (país)</th>
<th>Interna (país)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interna (país)</td>
<td>Interna (país)</td>
<td>Interna (país)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional (CA)</td>
<td>Regional (CA)</td>
<td>Regional (CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internacional</td>
<td>Internacional</td>
<td>Internacional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anexo

Qué considera lo más importante para el bienestar de su hogar?
SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)

Deze thesis heeft als doel bij te dragen aan het debat omtrent de heterogeniteit van migratie-ontwikkeling interacties. Door translokale families als vertrekpunt te nemen, laat de thesis de relevantie zien van het integreren van een diversiteit aan gelinkte, maar gedifferentieerde ervaringen van migratie en non-migratie voor het begrijpen van de zogenoemde migratie-ontwikkeling nexus. Al decennia lang staat migratie hoog op de ontwikkelingsagenda; er zijn zelfs verschillende voorstellen gedaan om het op te nemen in de Duurzame Ontwikkelingsdoelstellingen (SDGs) van 2015. Maar de complexe relatie tussen migratie en ontwikkeling is onderwerp van voortdurend debat, dat laveert tussen vaak nogal simplistische positieve en negatieve perspectieven. Deze thesis kreeg vorm in een tijd waarin migratie vooral werd gezien als een positief instrument voor bottom-up ontwikkeling, in het bijzonder door middel van het geld wat migranten naar hun ‘thuis’ sturen. Echter, de feitelijke heterogeniteit van migratie-ontwikkeling interacties laat zien dat migratie en ontwikkeling multidimensionaal en uiterst contextgevoelig zijn en als zodanig benaderd moeten worden om hun complexe relatie beter te kunnen begrijpen.

Bovendien kunnen zowel het vermogen om over migratie te beslissen (met andere woorden, mobiliteit) als de feitelijke daad van migratie zelf ook gezien worden als vormen van ontwikkeling. Om het debat omtrent de heterogeniteit van migratie-ontwikkeling verder te bevorderen, beoogt de thesis deze relatief nieuwe notie van mobiliteit en migratie als ontwikkeling verder uit te werken. Hiertoe focust de thesis op migranten en hun families in Muy Muy, een Nicaruaans dorp waarvan de bestaansmogelijkheden worden gekenmerkt door instabiliteit, ongelijkheid, en marginalisatie, en waar het voor de inwoners gangbaar is om verschillende soorten migratie aan te wenden. Deze migraties omvatten bestemmingen in Nicaragua zelf, in Costa Rica en andere Centraal-Amerikaanse landen, in de Verenigde Staten en in toenemende mate in Spanje. De thesis maakt gebruik van een actor-georiënteerde benadering om te bestuderen op welke manier migranten en hun families hun translokale bestaan (of livelihoods) organiseren, en zo de diversiteit van migraties waaraan zij deelnemen en de ontwikkelingsdimensies die zij van waarde achten te exploreren. Hoewel de thesis ook de resultaten van een survey in Muy Muy gebruikt, berusten het empirische hart en de belangrijkste analyses op multi-lookaal etnografisch onderzoek dat zich, via de translokale connecties van migrantenfamilies uit Muy Muy, uitstrekt tot Costa Rica en Spanje.

De thesis beoogt de notie van ‘mobiliteit en migratie als ontwikkeling’ zowel theoretisch als empirisch verder uit werken. Het eerste hoofdstuk behandelt en integreert de drie belangrijkste theoretische bouwstenen voor het onderzoek, namelijk transnationalisme, translokale livelihoods, en onderzoek naar mobiliteit met behulp van perspectieven uit de geografie, antropologie, en ontwikkelingsstudies.
Het hoofdstuk begint met een korte inleiding op belangrijke principes van migratie-ontwikkeling onderzoek, en verdedigt een actor-georiënteerde, multidimensionale en contextgevoelige benadering om de heterogeniteit van migratie-ontwikkeling te kunnen onderzoeken. Daarna gaat het hoofdstuk in op de drie belangrijkste theoretische bouwstenen, daarbij inzoomend op de gedifferentieerde posities die mensen innemen binnen de veelvoudige en grensoverschrijdende connecties van hun levenshouding. Gebaseerd op een begrip van mobiliteit als een gestratificeerd en stratificerend bestaansmiddel, concludeert het hoofdstuk dat een verdere uitwerking van ‘mobiliteit en migratie als ontwikkeling’ als een veelbelovende volgende stap in migratie-ontwikkeling onderzoek kan worden gezien.


Het derde hoofdstuk van de thesis beschrijft de context van migratie-ontwikkeling in Muy Muy, gebaseerd op zowel literatuurstudie als op een selectie van resultaten van de survey. Het hoofdstuk situeert het onderzoek in de nationale, regionale, en globale context en verrijkt door middel van de surveyresultaten tot dusver uitgevoerd lokaal onderzoek omtrent migratie-ontwikkeling, daarmee voorziend in een kwantitatieve achtergrond voor de kwalitatieve onderzoeksbevindingen. Het hoofdstuk beschrijft eerst een aantal historische en hedendaagse ontwikkelingen die Nicaraguanse levenshoudingen vormgeven, waaronder bepaalde tendensen van ongelijkheid in de ruurale sector en een Centraal Amerikaanse afhankelijkheid die leunt op migratie en deze ook weer voedt. Het hoofdstuk gaat kort in op verschillende migraties die Nicaragua karakteriseren en die ook in Muy Muy voorkomen, en zoomt dan in op Muy Muy. Het gebruikt een selectie van surveyresultaten om bepaalde migratie-ontwikkeling interacties die relevant zijn.
voor de thesis weer te geven. De survey was ontworpen om dicht aan te sluiten bij lokale ervaringen en deze op dorpsniveau te veralgemenen. Zo voorziet het hoofdstuk in een achtergrond en een initiële analyse van de thema’s die in de volgende hoofdstukken besproken worden.


Hoofdstuk vijf gaat in op het translokale domein van ‘illegaliteit’. Dit hoofdstuk stelt dominante publieke en academische discoursen omtrent de ‘illegaliteit’ van migranten in vraag, daar deze voornamelijk de belangen van natiestaten betreffen en vaak uitmond in tegenstrijdige en veelal ineffectieve simplificaties van het leven van migranten, daarmee ons begrip van migratie beperkend. Dit hoofdstuk beargumenteert dat het identificeren van de ‘aldaagse politiek’ van migranten het mogelijk maakt om de ruimtelijkheid en tijdelijkheid van de levenshoudingen van migranten in onderzoek te incorporeren, wat gezien wordt als een noodzakelijke stap om hun ervaringen te duiden. De analyse benadrukt de verschillende manieren waarop migranten dynamisch gebruik maken van mobiliteit voor hun levenshoudingen in Muy Muy en verzoent daarmee ongewisheidelijk tegenstrijdige praktijken en perspectieven. Hiermee behandelt het hoofdstuk voornamelijk de deelvragen omtrent de kenmerken van migratie-ervaringen en de ontwikkelingswaarden die deze impliceren, en geeft het inzicht in de lokale en regionale connecties die deel uitmaken van het translokale familieleven in Muy Muy, alsook de formeel gecontexteerde grensoversteken die deze connecties vereisen.

Hoofdstuk zes gaat in op het translokale domein van geldverzending door migranten. Dit hoofdstuk zoekt een weg in het spanningsveld tussen het dominante geloof in geldverzending als een bottom-up instrument voor ontwikkeling aan de ene kant en de heterogene implicaties van geldverzending aan de andere kant, door het gebruik van een translokale en sociaal-culturele blik te suggereren. Zo’n blik kan
geldverzending duiden als een proces dat een diversiteit van connecties en contexten omvat. Het hoofdstuk gebruikt noties van translokaal habitus en migratiespecifiek cultureel kapitaal om de verschillende vaardigheden van migranten te identificeren als sleutelfactoren voor de mobiliserende fase van het geldverzendingsproces. Het hoofdstuk beargumenteert dat een translokale, sociaal-culturele blik noodzakelijk is om te begrijpen hoe dit soort persoonlijke vaardigheden vormkrijgen en toegepast worden in interactie met de sociale en culturele omgevingen (‘thuis’ en elders) die onderdeel zijn van migratie en die hun eigen mogelijkheden en beperkingen met zich meebrengen. Op deze manier beoogt het hoofdstuk sociale en contextuele benaderingen van geldverzending te verrijken en diepgaand inzicht te bieden in de differentiatie en heterogeniteit van geldverzending. Net als het voorgaande hoofdstuk beantwoordt dit hoofdstuk vooral aan de deelvragen omtrent de kenmerken van migratie-ervaringen en de ontwikkelingswaarden die deze impliceren, maar breidt het de incorporatie van verschillende contexten en connecties uit naar internationale migratie, en benadrukt het expliciet de grensoverschrijdende sociaal-culturele aspecten van livelihood diversifiëring en het welzijn van migranten.

De conclusie, tenslotte, verduidelijkt hoe ervaringen van migratie gezien kunnen worden als gecontesteerde connecties die inzicht geven in het functioneren van ‘mobiliteit en migratie als ontwikkeling’. De conclusie vat de belangrijkste bevindingen van het empirische hart van de thesis samen, en gebruikt deze voor een terugblik op de deelvragen van het onderzoek. In een poging om deze bevindingen verder te integreren en hun relevantie te vergroten, stelt de conclusie daarna het raamwerk van een mobiliteitsspectrum voor, welke bijdraagt tot het verder uitwerken van de notie van ‘mobiliteit en migratie als ontwikkeling’. De conclusie beschrijft een aantal mogelijke toekomstige toepassingen van zo’n mobiliteitsspectrum, tegelijkertijd aandacht gevend aan een aantal beperkingen van deze thesis. De conclusie eindigt met een poging te formuleren welke implicatie de notie van ‘mobiliteit en migratie als ontwikkeling’ zou kunnen hebben voor beleid.