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## **Negotiating Risk and Uncertainty: Internal Migration and Rural Villagers in Albay Province**

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# **Negotiating Risk and Uncertainty** Internal Migration and Rural Villagers in Albay Province

This article examines the role of local discourses of risk and associated affective practices (embodied emotions) in decisions to migrate from rural to urban/peri-urban areas. Drawing on a study in a rural setting in Albay province, it argues that mobility decisions involve negotiation between public discourses about risk and a private self that considers one's capabilities and experiences. Although the risks associated with mobility are actively managed, these are imbued with uncertainty and are based on incalculable aspects of risk management such as hope and trust, especially among immediate social networks as practices of communal risk management have become increasingly undermined.

**KEYWORDS: INTERNAL MIGRATION · AGRARIAN CHANGE · RISK · AFFECT · PHILIPPINES**

**M**irroring international trends (King et al. 2008), research on migration in the Philippines has been biased toward international and transnational migration, and relatively neglectful of internal (in-country) migration. Despite its numerical, economic, and social importance, internal migration is currently largely invisible to policy makers and scholars. This blind spot has some notable exceptions, for instance, when rural–urban migrants are seen as increasing their exposure to risks in urban settlements located in high-density flood zones (Brillantes 2004). Yet, even from census data that only measure residence in five-year gaps, we can discern that Filipinos are highly mobile inside the Philippines. In the 2010 census, of the 1.4 million people who moved to a different province, half this number had moved either to Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) provinces or the National Capital Region (NCR). Almost the same number of people had moved from within their home province to a different city or municipality (Philippine Statistics Authority 2012). As a comparison, there were 1.5 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), representing a third of documented mobility. The internal migration numbers almost certainly underestimate the magnitude of mobility, given that a significant proportion of internal migrants works in short-term, casual, or contractual employment such as construction and domestic work (Basa et al. 2009; Gultiano and Xenos 2006).

In the 1970s robust research was conducted by members of the University of the Philippines Population Institute, among others (Simkins and Wernstedt 1971; Perez 1978, 1983, 1990). These studies, conducted in the tradition of demography, relied primarily on census data and aimed to understand the characteristics of changing patterns of mobility along the lines of gender, age, and education status. However, there has been a drop in publications on internal migration since the 2000s (Ogena 2011; Cariño 2011) as a result of waning interest from policy makers daunted by the enormity of the policy challenges associated with discouraging rural–urban migration; a policy of dispersing industrialization to Calabarzon, which somewhat eased the pressure on Metro Manila; and researcher frustration with the reliability of census data (Nguigain 1985). In stark contrast, interest and research publications on international migration have blossomed, in part because of funding-body interest in the developmental impact of international remittances (Asis and Baggio 2008). A dearth of empirical

research on internal migration is not exclusive to the Philippines and has also been noted as a methodological blind spot by migration researchers working in Southeast Asia (Kelly 2011; Elmhirst 2012b).

In their review of internal migration studies in the Philippines, Ricardo Abad and Benjamin Cariño (1981) were critical of a historical failure to account for both micro and macro (i.e., synthetic) analysis and social-psychological factors; for instance, neglecting analysis of why migration continues despite the majority of migrants experiencing downward social mobility. In their paper Abad and Cariño foreshadowed the “cultural turn” in migration studies, which emphasizes the relational and emotional dynamics of migration processes (King 2012). With few exceptions (Lee 1985; Quisumbing and McNiven 2005; Hosoda 2008a), Abad and Cariño’s call for synthetic and interdisciplinary accounts of internal migration decision making in the Philippines has yet to be taken up. Nonetheless, there have been ethnographic studies that investigate specific types of internal mobility; for example, development-displaced migration (Go-Zurbano 2000), conflict-related displacement (Canuday 2009), migration linked to resource exploitation such as sugarcane farming (Nagano 2004), and the experiences of internal migrants in destination areas (Gultiano and Xenos 2004; Basa et al. 2009). Although these studies provide important insights into the experiences of these groups, they tend to be less concerned with identifying and exploring the multiscale causal processes behind everyday internal migration experiences of Filipinos than with the experiences and implications of such mobility.<sup>1</sup>

This article seeks to shed light on the contingencies and complexity of migration decisions within the discursive and material dynamics that create the context for the opportunities (or lack thereof) available to migrants in rural Albay. The intricacies of migration decision making are a topic primarily tackled by scholars taking a “cultural turn” from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and geography (King 2012). A major focus within the cultural turn of migration studies has been on questions of power, which was a missing element of previous migration theories. Numerous authors have sought to attend to this gap by focusing on power dynamics within the formation and articulation of subjectivities (or identity) (e.g., Silvey 2004; King 2012; Hoang 2011), as well as seeking to incorporate both material and discursive aspects of migrant agency (e.g., Faier 2012; Elmhirst 2012a). However, one of the risks associated with such conceptual approaches is

a tendency to neglect fine-grained analyses of agency that examine how people respond to changing discursive and material realms. One example of migration research that takes a relational and dynamic approach to agency is the study by Bernadette Resurreccion and Ha Thi Van Khanh (2007) of the effects of rural–urban migration in Vietnam. They argue that men and women actively reproduce masculinities and femininities as an expression of their common interest under particular conditions of economic or social contingency. As such, the authors shed light on the relationship between broader social processes and how actors modify routine practices (whether “strategically” or in less calculative ways) through migration.

The multiscale complexity of migration decision making is examined here through changing perceptions and management of risk in relation to contemporary mobility dynamics in Bicol, a region of net out-migration. The study’s question is: what is the role of risk assessment and management in influencing the motivations of internal migrants from rural Albay? In the article’s first section, I discuss the intersections between migration and risk and argue that the burgeoning work in the sociocultural study of risk offers innovative concepts for explaining aspects of mobility practices at multiple scales of social analysis. The final section is dedicated to the empirical findings of the research, notably, how risk is implicated in migration decisions.

### **Risk, Uncertainty, and Mobility**

Historically risk has been relatively undertheorized in migration studies, but has received renewed attention in recent years (Williams and Baláz 2012). In the past the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) approach drew attention to risk by arguing how migration represents a risk-sharing strategy within households (Stark and Bloom 1985). The NELM approach has provided conceptual inspiration for an important contemporary literature about the impacts of remittances on household wealth and other measures of development. These studies have focused on how livelihood diversification, including migration, can buffer households from a range of environmental and health risks (de Haas 2007). Stark and Bloom’s approach has been valuable for reorienting migration theory to how migration decisions can be negotiated at a household level.

Nevertheless, while NELM remains important for its focus on risk management, it neglects the social, cultural, and political intricacies of how individuals and households understand and manage risk. In large

part the neglect can be explained by conceptual assumptions that see households as relatively harmonious units that make strategic decisions based on maximizing overall household income. The NELM approach has received broad critique in livelihood studies and cognate fields, which have demonstrated that household decision making is more complex than a question of weighing up financial risks and is influenced by multiscale power and institutional dynamics, habits and routines, and negotiation within households and communities that are not necessarily cohesive (de Haan and Zoomers 2005).

The sociology of risk is well placed to frame questions of how risk and uncertainty are implicated in mobility dynamics. While the sociology of risk is a diverse and growing field, an entry point of sociocultural approaches is to view risk as socially and culturally constructed and situated both temporally and spatially (Renn 2008; Tulloch and Lupton 2003). In other words, context is critical for revealing the meaning of risk (Brown 2013; Lockie and Measham 2012). Meaning associated with risk is culturally mediated through individual and collective identities and prevailing discourses and idioms. Similarly familiarity and whether or not the source of the risk is within one’s control are two factors that are highly influential in risk tolerance (Tulloch and Lupton 2003). Empirical work has revealed that the more familiar we are with a risk and the more it is within our control, the more likely we are to tolerate the risk even if it is quite high (Renn 2008). Notions of self and other also have been found to be key in mediating risk perception: the more “like me” potentially risky persons are, the more likely I am to trust them in a risky situation (Tulloch and Lupton 2003). Similarly trust in institutions has emerged as a recurring theme in accounting for risk acceptability (Aven and Renn 2010). Risk research has also revealed insights about risk management that run counter to conventional thinking. One such insight is that people are not just concerned with risk minimization but are willing to expose themselves to risks if doing so feels justified or serves important goals (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). How people prioritize different risks is culturally and socially mediated as well, and may also contrast with technical or expert assessments of risk.

Authors in the field of risk usually distinguish outcome and uncertainty conceptually. Risk is defined as known possible outcomes, whereas uncertainty describes a situation in which the possible outcomes are completely unknown (Renn and Klinke 2012). Migration decisions necessarily bear

some degree of uncertainty; the extent of uncertainty versus risk is variable over space and time and over the course of the migration cycle (Williams and Baláž 2012, 168). The degree of uncertainty is best understood as a continuum with complete knowledge on one end and uncertainty on the other. Individuals move in both directions along the continuum in terms of personal understandings of their limitations of knowledge. This spectrum raises the question: What elements of risk do actors focus on, and how is uncertainty implicated in mobility decisions? Moreover, what is the role of trust and emotions, such as hope,<sup>2</sup> in mediating uncertainty or rendering it more acceptable? Since trusting others involves risk (because of the possibility of being disappointed), trust requires some calculation and management on the part of actors, but it is also inherently affective.<sup>3</sup> As Brown (2013) argues, trust can be more or less interwoven with attributes relating to risk and uncertainty. Indeed risk, trust, and hope are all different facets of how actors respond to uncertainty. Viewing risk, trust, and hope in this way can avoid a priori discussions of risks as external to how they emerge in interactions between social actors (*ibid.*, 626).

Affect, or embodied emotion, has been considered only recently in analyses of risk (Lupton 2013). We know that emotions influence how we perceive and manage risk. Deborah Lupton argues that both emotion and risk are configured by sociocultural processes, occur in interaction with other bodies and objects, and are fluid while also being patterned and shared. Drawing on Lupton (*ibid.*) and Margaret Wetherell (2012), and rather than attempting to find simple lines of causation, I employ the concept of “affective practice” to analyze how emotions interact with risk in dynamic, shifting ways. The approach of affective practices emphasizes both the patterned nature of embodied emotion, embedded in habit and culture, as well as its fluid and flowing nature (*ibid.*). This approach is in line with sociocultural approaches to risk outlined above, which focus on the fluid yet patterned approach to conceptualizing risk and uncertainty. Indeed, recently, emotions have begun to be incorporated in analyses of migration, although Elmhirst (2012b) has pointed out that there is still a dearth of empirical studies on the emotions of internal migrants in Southeast Asia. This article shows how emotions intersect with sociocultural factors, helping to understand how people negotiate risk priorities in mobility decisions. In this way the analysis seeks to move away from viewing risk/uncertainty perception as either rational or nonrational. However, viewing this division

as more fluid requires incorporating both calculation and less-calculative embodied experiences such as hope, trust, and intuition (cf. Zinn 2008).

## Research Methods

The study is based on eight months of fieldwork, from January to October 2011, in three rural villages in Albay province. The qualitative approach I employed is consistent with the integrative conceptual framework just described. I conducted roughly eighty in-depth semistructured interviews with a range of different groups, including respondents for three rural barangays, local government units, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other research entities. The research sites were selected based on exposure to environmental hazards and their experience of some volume of out-migration.

To conserve time, energy, and financial resources, I decided to focus on one province—Albay—which experiences various forms of environmental change and has been a net out-migration area for some decades. Albay was easy to access. Networks in the Philippines were able to put me in touch directly with heads of relevant government agencies in Albay, greatly facilitating fieldwork access.

Three villages were selected across different municipalities to reflect different livelihoods: vegetable farming (Magapo—located in Tabaco municipality), rice and coconut farming (Tandarora—located in Guinobatan municipality), and fishing (Sugod—located in Tiwi municipality). Municipalities and barangays were selected based on a combination of intentional selection criteria as well as opportunities that arose through research connections.

Choosing barangays in different municipalities was intended to explore whether governance at the municipal level played a role in the scope and success of livelihood activities. Tiwi and Tabaco were reputed to be “progressive” municipalities, with both mayors considered to be professional and committed to poverty reduction. Guinobatan, in contrast, was not deemed politically progressive. It was selected for its location around the base of Mayon Volcano and in the pathway of volcanic lahar flows. The Guinobatan village of Tandarora represented a typical inland rural barangay with no major industrial facility or activity. The upland barangay of Magapo in Tabaco was of particular interest because of its location within the 6-kilometer danger zone perimeter on the slopes of the volcano. Tabaco’s municipal

government had offered Magapo's barangay council a relocation site, but the council declined as it considered the risks of staying put manageable and saw the relocation site as greatly reducing the barangay's land size. On the suggestion of a municipal government worker, the village of Sugod in Tiwi was selected as it had experienced significant coastal destruction during Typhoon Reming (international code name Durian) in 2006.

In line with local research practices, the barangay officials who were my contact points largely directed the selection of respondents in the three barangays. Working with my contact person in the barangay, I proceeded to select respondents in an iterative way, following emerging lines of research enquiry. We interacted with a cross section of the community, including households with no land and minimal financial capital, households with access to a small land parcel, as well as the largest landowner in the village. Participants were also selected to represent a range of different livelihood types such as farmer, tricycle driver, teacher, and so on.

Because of my status as an outsider, I made the decision early on to minimize the formality of the interview space in order to help build rapport, by avoiding the use of a formal questionnaire. However, through observation and conversation, I collected basic livelihood and demographic data for each household. The NGO and local government participants were selected based largely on their involvement in agriculture, development, or management of natural hazards. In all three municipalities I conducted interviews with the official in charge of agriculture and social welfare; in the case of Tabaco I also interviewed the official involved in organizing community-based data collection of development indicators. Together with my interpreter, we also ran a number of focus group discussions based on participatory methods to identify vulnerability to environmental change. Even without an expert facilitator the group work was effective in triangulating issues such as seasonal scarcity or abundance and the common departures from and arrivals of people in the barangay. Participants in the focus groups varied by barangay but included, at my request, a cross section of barangay residents.

I engaged in participant observation that included attending village activities and fora organized by local government officials and NGOs on topics related to development. In Metro Manila<sup>4</sup> I spent time with local experts from different sectors working on climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and rural development/agriculture, forming additional and important sources for data interpretation and insights that, together with

broader ethnographic and demographic knowledge, are integrated in the findings below.

I transcribed interviews and analyzed the interview data using a software package for qualitative data analysis. I coded descriptively (for example, "coping strategies postdisaster," "government officials' perceptions," and so on) and often employed participants' own expressions as codes (Cope 2010). I also used analytic codes with which I attempted to understand actor agency and contextual factors underlying participants' actions and reflections. Some analytic codes emerged from the data while others were prompted by concepts from the literature, a technique suggested by Layder (1998) in order to make use of existing theoretical ideas while using the data to challenge or modify them.

### **Deagrarianization, Modernity, and Risk in Albay**

In many countries in Southeast Asia the experience and management of risk and vulnerability are increasingly being delocalized, transformed by a set of processes linked to macroeconomic industrialization (Rigg 2006). Rural communities become increasingly dependent on urban centers for their livelihoods, whether directly through seasonal work or indirectly through remittances. Such changes in rural contexts require new conceptual frameworks for thinking about the nature, location, and management of risk in rural resource-dependent communities (Lockie et al. 2012; Kelly 2011).<sup>5</sup>

While Albay has a history of being a primarily agricultural province (Owen 1999), households today have shifted away from a sole reliance on subsistence farming and are increasingly drawing on diverse sources of income that are nonfarm-based. These trends associated with deagrarianization have been observable in Albay since the dissolution of the abaca industry in the period between the two world wars, when Albay became the net out-migration province that it is today (Cariño and Cariño 1976). In 2006 the estimated unemployment rate was 5.6 percent and the underemployment rate, 38.1 percent (PPDO 2011). Although there were no tabulated census data on out-migration from Albay, conversations with participants revealed seasonal mobility to be common among both educated Albayanos and people without the means to finish secondary school. The most common destination appears to be Calabarzon and Metro Manila, and this fact is reflected in demographic analysis (Go et al. 2001). While some of these changes can be attributed to local government neglect of agriculture, they are also linked to

the regional bias in economic activity around Metro Manila (Kelly 2000), the expansion of migrant social networks, and the growth in local knowledge about working elsewhere. All these factors have continued to sustain the movement of people in and out of Albay. Out-migration continues despite the severe challenges confronting migrants in urban areas, such as finding secure employment, housing, access to social services, and even food security (cf. Basa et al. 2009).

Notwithstanding the trends associated with deagrarianization, the present-day importance of smallholder farming in Albay for both material security and as a connection to rural identity cannot be underestimated. Rural Albayanos still rely heavily on agriculture (rice and sweet potato as staples; coconut, abaca, and vegetables for cash crops) for their food security; for some part they also rely on agriculture for their daily expenses.

### **Mobility Patterns in Albay**

Disruptive as it must inevitably be, mobility has been increasing since the late 1940s and has now become a feature of everyday life in Albay (Cariño and Cariño 1976). In the 1970s Frank Lynch (1973) reported that farmers were already interested in diversifying their livelihoods by undertaking daily-wage jobs when not fully occupied with farming (particularly those with incomplete elementary education). However, only 20 percent of respondents in that study said they would be interested in leaving their villages to make a new start elsewhere, despite economic hardship. When Fenella Cannell (1999) undertook ethnographic work in Bicol in the 1990s, she reported that economic conditions had generally worsened since the 1970s, with average size of land parcels being cultivated in 1988–1989 only half a hectare, significantly smaller than what farmers reported was needed (one and a half to three hectares). Cannell argued that localized population growth was one of the key factors exacerbating land shortages.

In 2011 my respondents found it impossible to think of a single family that did not have some experience of migration. According to them, both young and single people (starting from the age of 15 or 16 for both genders) as well as married individuals worked for periods of time in casual or contract work in domestic service, construction, and transport. The destination areas appeared to be primarily Metro Manila or Calabarzon, where a number of export-oriented industries provide low-skilled jobs for which migrants are eligible, such as construction, transport, and domestic work. Fewer families

had experiences working overseas, due in part to the high costs involved; however, there has been an increase in the number of Albayano overseas migrant workers in recent years (Lim 2011), perhaps due to the rising wealth in urban Albay.<sup>6</sup>

According to respondents, for rural people (rarely college educated) the moves hardly ever become permanent, unless one marries a local or manages to successfully negotiate ongoing work opportunities within the urban economy. While there is little detailed quantitative data on numbers of rural people absorbed by the urban economy in the Philippines, Naomi Hosoda's study (2008b) in nearby Samar reports that roughly half of the people returned to Samar after staying in Metro Manila for one to five years.

### **Risks in Rural Albay**

Albay is emerging out of the worst problems associated with traditional health risks (associated with diseases that are linked, for instance, to poor sanitation and vaccination rates), with signs that maternal mortality and malnutrition are on the decline; yet, illnesses such as diabetes, which are linked to modernity, are on the rise (Salceda 2011; cf. Smith 2001). Overall Albay is considered a middling poor province, ranked 38 out of 79 provinces in 2006 in terms of poverty incidence among families (NSCB 2006). In 2013 families living in poverty constituted 36.1 percent of the population, with the overwhelming proportion of them located in rural areas (NSCB 2013).

Albay is exposed to significant environmental risks that can be characterized as both traditional and modern. A striking physical feature in Albay, Mount Mayon is also the most active volcano in the Philippines. Albay receives an average of twenty typhoons per year, with winds ranging from 60 to 180 kilometers per hour. A range of climatic variability associated with monsoonal cycles and the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) also affects Albay (APPDO 2010). Other than these more noticeable environmental risks and hazards, there are incipient forms of environmental change associated with changing agricultural practices and timber logging, which have generated significant soil erosion and degradation. Finally, in relation to global risks based on climate change modeling, Albay is one of the provinces likely to be most adversely affected by climate change as it has high exposure and vulnerability (measured primarily by poverty) (DENR 2010). Many participants in this study believe that environmental conditions

are getting worse, citing worsening soil quality, disease/pest prevalence, and more variable weather, although only a few cite global climate change as a primary cause of weather changes.

### **Coping with Risk and Uncertainty through Hard Work**

A key discourse associated with responding to the uncertainties and risks that rural Albayanos face in everyday life is self-reliance through hard work. Respondents invoke hard work in ways that place the onus on individuals and their support networks to adapt to risks and uncertainties associated with their circumstances, rather than rely on formal risk dispersal institutions like crop insurance or microcredit schemes. Underlying this discourse is a rationality that sees risks as manageable through proactivity and adaptability rather than resignation to a life of endless difficulty and risk.

When Marissa (2011) was asked how her family managed when business slowed down after a typhoon, she replied: “He’ll [her husband] really work hard even if it’s very difficult. My husband will still buy fish to sell but in smaller quantities.” Similarly, a barangay official reported that it would be possible to recover from a typhoon if one worked “hard enough,” for example, by planting fast-growing vegetables. This discourse is also invoked in mobility decisions. As one participant (Grace [2011], a parent, middle-aged, and occasional migrant) explained: “There are also bad neighbors. I don’t like gossiping. I prefer to stay at home or working in Manila.”

Being hardworking is strongly associated with being a morally upstanding person. As the following conversation with Risa (2011), a young mother who is a regular migrant to Manila, reveals, facing life’s uncertainties by being “lazy” or “sitting around at home” is frowned upon, at least in theory and for some respondents:

**Q: Why do you think that livelihoods are so unstable?**

**A: Sometimes because of the people, if you are lazy, you won't really make anything; sometimes illness, and sometimes natural disasters, like three months ago when it rained so hard here. It's really difficult. If it rains a lot, you won't have a good harvest.**

Villagers who work hard to provide for their family are generally admired and envied, if successful. Analyn (2011) contrasted her husband Jaime’s

hardworking attitude with other women’s husbands, emphasizing how lucky she was to have such a hardworking husband who could learn new skills and engage in different kinds of jobs: “He can plant, do construction, drive, everything. He has to learn everything or else we will be indebted. It’s difficult.” Analyn added, “My friends are always telling me how lucky I am.” Such people are described as being adept at seizing opportunities, wherever they can, including going to Manila to work and sending remittances back to their family.

Despite the association of hard work with success, many respondents also raised their doubts that hard work was indeed an effective way to navigate the various risks they faced. The belief—that, no matter how hard they work, such a strategy is “meaningless”—reflects the ambiguity inherent in the discourse of hard work. Many respondents believed that working hard might not necessarily help overcome the vagaries of everyday life. For some, such uncertainty is manifest in responsibility that is shifted to members of the family not usually tasked to provide financial support (such as one’s children). A landless farm laborer, April (2011) explained, “That’s why they [her teenage children] went to work, because we don’t have enough money and even if my husband is really working hard, it’s still not enough for us. . . . It [remittances from her children] could also help us, even [if] it was just a little.”

The commitment to hard work also reflects the broader sentiment expressed by informants that, although they hoped the government or NGOs would provide services and employment, in reality such entities could not really be trusted to provide for their material aspirations. Self-reliance through hard work in order to provide for one’s family, while not necessarily failsafe, is viewed as a pragmatic and more reliable approach to managing risk and uncertainty compared with relying on government services.

### **Familiarity and Trust in Migration Decisions**

Another discourse that participants invoke stresses the importance of familiarity in managing risk and uncertainty. Working hard is important, but so is the feeling of being “used to” a different form of employment. Some respondents said they would not go to Manila as they were not “used to” the life there. As part of the process-oriented nature of Bikolano identity (cf. Cannell 1999), respondents often described social processes or experiences in terms of mutual accommodation, usually referred to as *natotoodan* (“getting used to it” or “getting used to each other”). Becoming “used to”

refers to a process of accommodation through negotiation with other people, practices, and the material environment. Feeling confident about managing livelihood risks for individual respondents similarly requires a process of becoming “used to” the activity.

Familiarity associated with an employment activity was invoked when a parent who was also a vegetable farmer, Hazel (2011), was asked whether one could farm elsewhere:

**Q: So do you think farming is still a good livelihood here in Magapo, next to Mount Mayon and with the occasional typhoon?**

**A: Yes, if we work hard. But the problem is we have to plant again. We don't want to plant elsewhere because we are used to it here. If it's rainy or sunny, we'll just plant here.**

Living elsewhere is often framed as an unacceptable risk, in part due to the unfamiliarity and associated discomfort inherent in being and doing something different, as well as to known risks associated with living in Manila, such as finding a secure employment where one would not be mistreated; a related risk is securing food and shelter. Other risks mentioned included being a crime victim (e.g., being robbed), the high cost of living, and becoming ill (and therefore unable to work and earn income, there being very little protection for casual employees in the form of sick leave).

One elderly couple, Angelo and Rose (2011), had stayed in Tandarora their entire lives planting rice and other crops, despite being affected by multiple disasters including volcanic eruptions. When asked if they had thought of moving elsewhere, Rose answered, “No, because there’s nowhere we can go, and so we just stay in the house.” She elaborated, “When Mayon volcano stops erupting, the people are already heading back. We did not think to be moving on to another place, because we aren’t used to it.” Other respondents of the same generation did move to Manila to work. This couple, however, believed that they did not have the skills and capacity to navigate an unfamiliar place and work environment. Rose and Angelo’s story illustrates the contingent nature of risk taking on an individual and household level, as individuals identify their capabilities and make decisions based on an assessment of whether they can manage specific risks and uncertainties.

The same differential engagement with public discourses of risk taking emerged in relation to why some spouses originating from other parts of

the Philippines were disinclined to stay in Albay after moving there with their Albayano spouse. After experiencing Typhoon Reming in 2006, many spouses felt they were unable to come to terms with the fear of a reoccurrence of such an event. As one participant, Rommel (2011), a coconut farmer who had once been a migrant, narrated: “During the typhoon, my son and his wife were staying here with us. After the typhoon, they went back to Manila because she [his daughter-in-law] was traumatized by the events of the typhoon.”

While mobility involves risks (and some level of uncertainty) that are relatively familiar to respondents, prioritizing risks is highly contingent on a subjective assessment of one’s capacity to manage these risks, which in turn is influenced by factors such as social obligation, networks, and previous experiences of migration.

### **Formal versus Informal Forms of Risk Mitigation**

The importance of trust and familiarity (or “being used to it”) in risk decisions explains why formal networks, such as microcredit groups, play a limited role in smoothing out the risks for farming livelihoods. The terms of the loans from lending institutions for farmers and fishers are widely perceived by respondents as being increasingly disadvantageous, with lenders charging extremely high interest rates. Consequently, many farmers and fishers are reluctant to borrow either from traders or informal lenders. One fisher, Christian (2011), said, “The ones that get rich here are just the ones who have capital—the lenders. They are not fishers, just lenders.”

Moreover, there is a tendency among both NGO and government microcredit schemes to encourage investment in nonfarming projects, for example, handicrafts, *sari-sari* (convenience) stores, or buy-and-sell businesses. This focus on nonfarming employment appears to reflect wider government policy and a consensus (not publicly acknowledged) among policy makers that smallholder farming is unable to yield positive development dividends. Such narratives of ideal “entrepreneurial” development subjects are also reflected in other localities in Southeast Asia, where actors have responded to such narratives in part through multilocal livelihoods (e.g., Elmhirst 2012a). Similarly, informal lenders appear to target people with regular incomes, such as tricycle drivers and/or *sari-sari* storeowners; in some cases, they collect interest on a daily basis. Many villagers aspire to set up such businesses, which are perceived to provide a

more stable income, but cite the lack of capital as a major barrier. In two of the fieldwork barangays, NGOs had established microcredit schemes, but the percentage of active members was small, principally for fear of being unable to repay the loan in the increments required.

As intimated in risk research in other contexts, familiarity and trust are key elements for interpreting risk prioritization in mobility decisions. In Albay informal risk minimization, including working in Metro Manila, holds preference, at least in part because villagers feel these avenues are familiar and trustworthy. Social relationships rather than formal networks are seen as providing the crucial buffer between villagers and unacceptable risks (cf. Acosta-Michlik and Espaldon 2008; Quisumbing and McNiven 2010). Yet it is important to incorporate an affective dimension to such relationships of reciprocity. Embedded within kinship relationships is an expectation of feeling comfortable and connected to others, an important yet often implicit consideration of any major risky decision.

The importance of social relationships in influencing migration decisions has been noted by other migration research in the Philippines, and not only as a way to reduce material risk but also to maintain a consistent identity (Abad and Cariño 1981; Brillantes 2004). For instance, Abad and Cariño's (1981) research found instances of migrants rationalizing their mobility decision as keeping a relative or close friend company. Similarly, in my respondents' accounts, the uncertainty surrounding the risks of migration could be managed effectively by the presence of family members, not only in a practical sense but also in maintaining a consistent identity and sense of wholeness and wellbeing. The goal of maintaining a consistent identity explains, for instance, why some parents visit their children who are working elsewhere, to make sure that they are settled in and coping with a new environment. It also explains why parents tend to be reluctant to "send" their children off unless they are able to stay with a relative or close friend. Even so, expectations about reciprocity and mobility are not without tension and ambiguity, a theme to which I return later.

### **Overcoming Risk and Uncertainty: Getting "Lucky"**

While villagers deem hard work as important, they also rely on the potential of becoming "lucky" in their decision to risk moving to Metro Manila. The concept of *suwerte* (good luck) is central to risk management for Albayanos. *Suwerte* is used in a broad range of situations and locations across different

parts of the Philippines (Russell and Alexander 1996; Aguilar 1998). In Albayano respondents' narratives of mobility, it is most commonly used in a secular sense, when a person unexpectedly receives a large windfall, such as finding a lucrative source of legal income. This situation is most similar to the idea of a gambler's run of luck and stands in contrast to economic benefits acquired by hard work and over a long period of time (although, in practice, of course the two are not mutually exclusive) (cf. Aguilar 1998). For some, *suwerte* may also be used to explain someone's success more generally, as innate abilities in a family (such as the case mentioned earlier where the couple was envied by their friends for being lucky) or in the individual, or from possession of a magical or spiritual amulet (Russell and Alexander 1996). While *sapalaran* (searching for luck) appears to be a high risk-taking strategy from an outsider perspective, it is most commonly enacted only in arenas of action that are known to Albayanos, such as working in Manila: "Sometimes they just go there [to Manila] for luck, and sometimes they end up having no job so they just return here" (Rodel, father, contractual construction worker [2011]).

Villagers see Manila as a place rich in resources and potential, where one can start up a successful business that would not be possible in the provinces. The great potential of Manila is a prevailing discourse, despite the commonplace occurrence of going there, being unable to find a job, and returning to Albay. Hosoda (2008b, 6) argues that, in people's explanations for mobility in Samar, "searching for luck" (*sapalaran*) is expressed as pursuing luck by taking *some* risk rather than passively accepting the dictates of fate. People take their lives into their own hands and actively try altering their life trajectory by migrating to Manila. Michael Fabinyi (2012), in his work on Palawan, has found that *suwerte* is identified by fishers as one among a number of factors, including skill and knowledge, that are associated with success, rather than a good catch being solely a matter of good luck. Similarly, while villagers in Albay refer to luck in their move to Manila, they also describe other elements discussed already, such as being a hard worker and having adequate social support.

Yet, Hosoda makes a valid point. Even while the risks of moving to Manila are familiar and, to some extent, manageable, making such a move represents a pathway to a different and, it is hoped, more secure future. Hope, for Albayanos, is a key dimension to coping with uncertainties and risks.

It is a prevailing affective practice that is experienced both in the people's decision to "try their luck" by seizing an opportunity to work in Manila and as a general practice linked to a strong sense that a different future is possible.<sup>7</sup>

Rural villagers feel keenly their lack of access to symbolic and material wealth and repeatedly describe their livelihoods as not providing "enough" (*kulang*). The sense that life is hard feeds the hope of becoming lucky and falling into a generous source of income. As Fabinyi (2012) argues, *suwerte* must be understood as a core part of notions of selfhood for those who, in Cannell's (1999, 15) words, "have nothing." The possibility of *suwerte* is part of a broader sense that theirs is a hard and difficult life; indeed those who do have *suwerte* have an obligation to help those less fortunate, a key, if not increasingly contested, obligation in the *barangay*.

This study has revealed that respondents are challenging the notion that they should share their "luck" with villagers in the origin *barangay* (cf. Hosoda 2008a). Rommel and Jocelyn (2011), successful return migrants, expressed resentment that the money they lent to some people was wasted on vices rather than spent on their families in "productive" ways. Previously poor and landless, Rommel and Jocelyn had their own ideas about the rest of the villagers and their own obligations to them. They believed villagers should work harder and be thrifter in their daily lives—partly because they attributed their own success to these values. The villagers, in contrast, expected Rommel and Jocelyn to be more generous in sharing from their success in Manila. The difference in expectations may explain in part Rommel and Jocelyn's complaints over the theft of coconuts from their land and the use of their land by villagers to graze cattle without their permission. From the perspective of villagers who took these actions, Rommel and Jocelyn were likely viewed as failing in their moral obligation to the rest of the village, and thus the villagers were justified in stealing. The situation was made worse by Rommel and Jocelyn's insistence on hiring workers from the *sitio* rather than the *barangay* proper, where their land was located. The couple's argument was that people in the *barangay* were lazy, in contrast to those in the *sitio* who were hard workers.

It is difficult to tell, without further research, the extent to which return migrants are challenging notions of *suwerte*, yet it is noteworthy that respondents did question routine understandings of obligations to fellow villagers. From a risk perspective, changes in historical understandings of mutual obligation raise the question of whether we are witnessing a challenge

to communal risk-sharing arrangements, as some villagers draw on an individualistic discourse that emphasizes hard work, thrift, and self-reliance in lieu of the mutual obligation inherent in understandings of *suwerte*. Such a shift might appear as quite subtle, because the discourse about hard work is one that has prevailed in Albay for multiple generations (Cannell 1999).<sup>8</sup>

### **Changing Aspirations as Novel Filters for Managing Risk**

Hope as a prevailing affective practice is indeed linked to becoming "lucky," but villagers tie success to a nonfarm future. In contrast to previous generations, rural people at present are much more concerned about social mobility through education and nonfarm employment prospects. For parents, hope for a different future, then, is the flipside of a real fear of disappointment in being unable to provide such opportunities to their children.

The fear of a hopeless future was reflected in an affective pattern that emerged during field interviews in which mothers began crying or became withdrawn in conversations around motivations, values, and ideas about current and future employment prospects. Distress expressed about their children's future education prospects reflected a generational change in the way rural people seek to manage the risks associated with material survival. One focus group participant summed up this changing perspective when she said, "Education is now our *pamana* [inheritance] to our children."

For many parents, rather than pursue subsistence living, grave concern and anxiety for their children's future are behind the decision to migrate and work elsewhere, an aspiration found in many other countries in Southeast Asia (Rigg and Salamanca 2009). Limited local employment opportunities mean that, for the majority of villagers who do not have a modicum of productive assets, working elsewhere is the only means to earn the cash income needed for education-related expenses. Yet, it is worth noting that such a response is not inevitable. There are examples in other parts of the Philippines where, for example through organic certification schemes and education, farmers have been able to increase their returns and meet contemporary aspirations in-situ (Lockie et al. 2012).

In experiencing mobility decisions, respondents merged a mosaic of affective practices. Grace (2011), married with seven children and an occasional migrant, expressed a range of emotions throughout our exchanges, not only the crying of a worried mother, but also pride in her elder children's accomplishments; warmth and hospitality to a foreign guest;

gratitude and loyalty to an employer and a sister-in-law who had helped her through financially tough times and in being able to rent a plot of land (“it helps us a lot”); and a determination and confidence in her abilities to work hard and avoid gossiping neighbors. Grace’s crying powerfully articulated the difficulties and anxieties underlying many moments in her family’s everyday life. Her emotional expression provided critical insight into her motivations for mobility (concern for her children’s future) as well as the changing aspirations emerging in rural Albay. Yet her experience of affective patterns of concern and anxiety over the future was also unique. The contrasting experiences of how weeping occurred in field interviews revealed that affective practices, while patterned, were also drawn together in a patchwork of other aspects of identity and subjectivity.<sup>9</sup>

Parents’ aspirations of improving their children’s employment prospects through education become a powerful motivator for parents to endure the risks and emotional suffering associated with being apart from their children while working in Manila. The findings here are striking in their contrast to research on parental emotions and class in other contexts (Reay 2000). In her study in London, Dianne Reay (*ibid.*, 580–81) has noted that class and emotions are related in a broad sense because working-class mothers are less able than middle-class mothers to “marshal” their strong emotions toward long-term potential gains, given that generally they are more concerned about their children’s immediate emotional well-being. In Albay the reverse is true. Parents who move to Manila without their families are willing to tolerate the short- and medium-term emotional suffering associated with separation from their children for the long-term goal of having a college-educated child, that is, in order to experience the benefits of deferred gratification.<sup>10</sup>

### **Emotions and Farming Risks**

As previously mentioned, the risks of staying in rural Albay are linked primarily to a lack of income from farming. While many farmers identify worsening soil quality as a factor in the decreasing returns in farming, very few are highly critical of routine farming practices that cause soil degradation. One exception among respondents, a vegetable farmer, college educated, and active in local politics, Richard (2011) described farmers as being stuck in old ways of thinking, particularly in relation to farming practices and soil conservation. He himself had begun using organic fertilizer after a series

of training workshops and had established a scheme within the village to collect household waste to turn into compost. He believed that farmers in Albay were effectively “mining the soil” by using Green Revolution-style practices, a term he picked up in a training workshop (*ibid.*).

Yet, there were few examples of other farmers becoming openly distraught about land degradation *per se*. Respondents were largely concerned with their lack of capacity to buy synthetic fertilizer in order to produce a fast-growing harvest and thus a more predictable return. In managing the risks associated with farming, very few sought to modify their own practices. Some exceptions were farmers who bought a tricycle to sell their produce directly to market, rather than wait for middlemen to come to their village. While it was clear to respondents that farming provided decreasing returns and that they aspired to leave farming, the location of these jobs appeared unclear. Respondents considered regularity of income as more important than location, providing yet another strong impetus for respondents to manage their lives across multiple locations.

### **Factoring in Uncertainty and Hope in Mobility Decisions**

What is striking about respondents’ engagement with the risk discourses described above is that it is characterized by fluidity and contingency. There is no neat formula for assessing the risks of staying versus leaving. In large part the contingency of decision making can be explained by the contestability of priorities and obligations in the course of everyday life. Assessing the risks of going versus leaving is contingent on previous experience (and associated ideas of self) and the nature of one’s relationships, which are situated within prevailing discourses around livelihoods and what constitutes a successful life. And yet villagers do not view their relationships and obligations as clear-cut or predictable. Relationships require ongoing management and negotiation, which in turn mean that hope, trust, and intimacy are heavily implicated in mobility decisions.

Intergenerational relationships are a key site of struggle and negotiation over the nature of mutual obligation and protection. Cannell’s (1999) analysis of how power and intimacy are experienced in Bikolano culture is relevant here. Firstly, the process-oriented nature of cultural identity in Bicol is reflected in the ambiguity of everyday situations of exchange. As Cannell (*ibid.*, 231) argues, the rules of reciprocity are less than clear-cut even from

an insider perspective. Secondly, Bikolano idioms of power are double-sided: acting out of duty (e.g., marrying in an arranged relationship to fulfill a familial obligation) versus valuing freely and mutually blending wills (e.g., marrying the person with whom you have fallen in love). Cannell (*ibid.*, 250) describes this double-sidedness as emerging from a “double history which produced a hesitance between ways of regarding social relations, persons, objects and time as fluid and viewing them as fixed and arranged in an unequivocal hierarchy.”

In rural Albay double-sidedness arises within intergenerational interactions regarding mutual obligations and financial support in mobility decisions. Parents express ambivalence toward receiving financial support from their children, believing it is their children’s “choice.” A preferred situation is for parents to support their children financially well into adulthood, until they get married (and beyond if possible). In practice a common reality is that, as one respondent said, “some children helped [their parents financially], and some didn’t.” The uncertainty in this statement underlies tension between parents’ roles as providers and the realities of sustaining large families. Parents’ decision to let teenage children leave to work elsewhere is thus portrayed as undesirable, yet often inevitable. The many young people going to Manila to work in order to pay for their own or siblings’ education expenses also contrasts with Benjamin Cariño and Ledevina Cariño’s (1976) findings that young people historically went primarily to Manila for adventure and self-actualization.

In Albay today even if both parents and their children agree about the decision concerning the child’s migration, there can still be tension with members of the extended family who may feel, for instance, that the child is too young to be exposed to the risks of working in Manila. While parents feel ashamed to ask for money once their children are married, many hope their children will delay marriage and thereby support their parents financially for some time. Parents express frustration when children become pregnant and marry in their teens (which can happen in Manila, where they are away from their parents’ supervision), as early marriage is in conflict with their own plans for their children to work and provide for the family for a period of time.

One informant raised the issue of teenage marriage in a story about one of the poorest families in the village, a household with nine children. The father had worked hard so that his eldest daughter could finish high school.

She had just begun working when she decided, rather suddenly, to get married. The father was angry and disappointed because, as the respondent said, “The girl should have helped her family first, but got married too young.” The respondent went on, “Some reasons that [young] women do this is that they cannot get the love and care of their parents, or they don’t place any importance on their parents’ hard work. Some also think that they will just get married rather than helping their parents” (return migrant, Barangay official Marife [2011]).

For migrants, emotional experiences are intimately linked with complicated financial or familial obligations (a theme explored in a burgeoning literature on transnational migrants and emotion). Albayanos, like the Ifugao (McKay 2007), tend to draw on the participation of extended family networks for household reproduction, and distributed child rearing is the norm. Although dispersed household reproduction is common, long-distance parenting and intimacy place a strain on households and require active regulation of emotions and the management of social relationships. For instance, negotiation is required for organizing care arrangements for the elderly, children, and sometimes grandchildren. Unlike in other parts of the Philippines (cf. McKay 2005; Faier 2012), in Albay there does not appear to be, at least among households with children, an overtly gendered dimension to discourse around sacrificing personal aspirations and comfort for one’s family. Among household head migrants, both men and women spend time working in Manila as opportunities arise and as household support from extended family allows.

Respondents who were occasional migrants (in Albay at the time of the interview) described their emotional regulation and sacrifice through high levels of concern and anxiety about one’s family back home in Albay. Resurreccion and Khanh (2007) similarly found such emotional anxiety among rural–urban female migrants in Vietnam. Respondents in Albay described concern about one’s family as painful yet necessary for a better future. Rodel’s wife Lorna (2011) spoke, in answer to a question, about how difficult the decision was for them to send Rodel away to work: “Yes, difficult [Rodel (2011) agrees]. You cannot really control what happens in your life. For example when you get sick, it makes it very difficult, and then he’s not there to look after the family and he will be very worried about us, his family.”

The difficult life in urban areas only exacerbates the concern about one's family in Albay. Speaking of the challenges migrants confront, an informant said:

If you work elsewhere, especially in Manila, you should keep your courage up because there are a lot of bad guys there who will try to steal your money and try to entice you with drugs. Life in Metro Manila is really tough—you have to work and fight [against] those gangsters, especially if you live in a squatters' district. (Rommel, return migrant, coconut farmer [2011])

Text messages and frequent visits usually help maintain the intimacy expected between couples, although these strategies do not always succeed. As one participant cautioned, "It's really difficult when a member of the family is away and the only communication is by cell phone. You'll never know whether or not they're lying" (Hazel 2011). Indeed not all families successfully cope with the separation entailed when one or both parents work elsewhere. Villagers speak of the disintegration of marriages when one spouse (most often the husband) meets a new partner and starts a new family. They disapprove of this act and the shifting of financial responsibility to a new family. This situation shows the hidden risks associated with trust, particularly for women, resulting in emotional devastation and loss of their spouse's remittances.

Dispersed childcare also has repercussions for other members of the family. Some elderly participants, for example, talk about the hardship surrounding the additional responsibility of taking care of their grandchildren (sometimes in addition to their own younger children), while their own children live or work elsewhere. Respondents are concerned that, because of migrant parents' inability to look after their children properly, young people can be exposed to new risks such as skipping school, smoking, drinking, and gambling.

Another key site of tension in respondents' accounts of risk management concerns changes in communal risk-sharing practices. Some villagers have sought to reduce reliance on farming and remain in the barangay by setting up a sari-sari store. Villagers, in their routine understanding of obligation, expect storeowners to extend credit and support. According to some former storeowners, this practice does not only reduce the ability of businesses to

grow, but it also undermines their ability to survive, prompting some of the wealthier villagers to find ways of avoiding their social obligations. Others closed shop and found a different enterprise, perhaps in a nearby locality where such obligations are absent. In another example, participants in a focus group reported that the *bayanihan* system (in which neighbors help someone in the community, for example, build a home), once common, is now generally less prevalent than before and is resorted to only for school-related activities.

The *bayanihan* practice used to be particularly important as a means of rebuilding houses and replacing crops destroyed by typhoons. But there have been clear tensions between routine forms of exchange, which rely on generous patrons, and the growing aspirations to escape the discomforts and humiliations of poverty through saving one's resources for one's immediate family. Such a process is a common feature of late modernity associated with detraditionalization (Beck 1994) and has been described in many other contexts (Scott 1985), including in Albay in the 1990s (Cannell 1999). In Albay the passing of communal risk-sharing practices has implications for how people assess and manage livelihood risk. It adds yet another layer of uncertainty to what is already a complex landscape of conflicting considerations for managing precarious employments.

## Conclusion

Although villagers know well (at least in a general sense) the risks of staying in versus leaving the village, the decision to leave is still strongly imbued with uncertainty without clear-cut rules to guide decision making. As one participant explained in response to a question about rationales for leaving the village, "It's up to them. Everyone is different." Private discourses around personal experience and familiarity intersect with public discourses around risk taking and what constitutes a successful life. This assessment does not always occur in an evidently self-conscious way in migrants' accounts, with a listing of reasons for staying or leaving. Instead, decision making evolves through a series of events and experiences in everyday life. Relational and processual decision making explain the tendency of villagers to refer to "being used to" a particular livelihood or life decision or to their hardworking nature as rationalizations for moving or staying. While confirming the importance of familiarity and trust in risk decisions, these findings are also consistent with the broader conceptual direction in the sociocultural study

of risk, which frames risk management and understanding as contingent on multiple factors.

Many of the risk discourses and management practices in Albay appear to reflect continuity rather than change. Such continuity is seen in the tendency toward risk aversion in key decisions, with respondents adapting to uncertain conditions by working hard in familiar arenas of action, such as farming and contractual nonfarming employment. Moreover, informal ways of reducing risks, through reliance on social networks to provide capital and job opportunities, are still preferable to formal avenues such as microcredit schemes, mainly because the latter present uncertainties and risks that villagers feel unable to manage successfully. Nevertheless there is evidence among the tensions described by villagers that subtle shifts are also occurring in the way people respond to and manage risks. In mobility practices, for instance, reliance on remittances sent by migrant children to support the education of younger siblings is becoming increasingly acceptable. Return migrants who have enjoyed luck are also challenging expectations that they ought to share resources with others in the village. Rather than draw on urban narratives, return migrants marshal local discourses around hard work and morality to justify the nonfulfillment of obligations associated with *suwerte*.

The growing aspirations to move away from farming have created increasing impetus to migrate for periods of time to gain the cash income required for meeting education-related expenses. This aspirational shift requires villagers not only to incorporate the prospect of material survival and success in their decision to leave but also to assess the risks to the integrity of intimate relationships. The forbearance articulated by Albayano respondents separated from loved ones is perhaps unsurprising, given similar research findings among OFWs, yet they are still noteworthy. While Metro Manila is not far, unlike overseas destinations, separation still entails a level of distress and forbearance on the part of Albayanos. Because of the potential tensions separation generates, mobility decisions require negotiation and a degree of hope and trust—which cannot be obviously calculated as risk since they involve a high degree of uncertainty. As respondents made clear, obligations or expectations of intergenerational or spousal relationships cannot be taken for granted; they usually factor in the slippery considerations of trust and hope. Consequently, the material cannot be separated from the affective: a breakdown in trust and relationships does not only evoke an emotional response but may also result in an abrupt end of financial flows.

While internal migration has been neglected in comparison to international migration, there are signs that researchers are beginning to attend to this blindspot. Theories of risk, only some of which have been used here, can provide further conceptual bridges for future analyses of changes and continuities in mobility practices across the linked urban and rural landscapes of contemporary Southeast Asia. Further investigation of risk theories can help refine ways to consider power dynamics and the limitations these dynamics place on actors, while giving equal weight to the nuanced, subtle, and perhaps even unconscious ways that actors challenge or maintain conditions of everyday life. In turn, researchers already working in the field of livelihoods can enrich risk theories by building on ways that disentangle and analyze the different types of risks, including those associated with broader society–nature relations.

## Notes

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- 1 Additionally there are some obvious research gaps that, when filled, could complement synthetic analyses, for example, accurate demographic accounts about the patterns and characteristics of internal migration flows, exploring destination, length of stay, age, gender, education status, average number of moves for different groups, and percentage of rural–urban migrants who move elsewhere (step migration) rather than return home, among others. Particularly pressing are data sets and census that account for short-term mobility (the current census question regarding internal migration only asks residents where they lived five years ago).
- 2 Emotions here are conceptualized not as a discrete feeling such as “anger” or “happiness.” Rather, embodied emotions are seen to intersect with thoughts and discourses in a relational manner and thus can be understood as a social practice (cf. Wetherell 2012). As such, something like hope can be felt in the body but cannot be understood out of the sociocultural context in which it is experienced.
- 3 As with the point above, trust can be understood as an embodied experience intersecting with other social and cultural dynamics at multiple scales. Wetherell (2012) adopts a flexible approach to studying how emotions play out in social analysis, viewing affect as dynamic. Affect is always in the background, yet comes in and out of focus in sometimes unpredictable ways. It is therefore important to understand the chronological patterning of affect, such as feelings of trust and hope. For example, self-pity or anger can flare up and then diminish in intensity, or particular emotions can involve a semicontinuous set of background feelings that are more long-lasting, moving in and out of focus as a shifting accompaniment to one's day. Or it can appear in

cycles, following events such as the start of a New Year and fresh resolutions or following the seasons of agricultural work.

- 4 Respondents normally say “Manila” when they mean Metro Manila, hence throughout this article Manila should be read as referring to Metro Manila.
- 5 Researchers must expand their unit of rural social analysis to incorporate more mobile realities, expanding beyond the village or the household. Indeed, as de Haan and Zoomers (2005) note, the multilocality of households may diminish the coherent decision making by households, a reason to forego the “household” as the only unit of analysis and situate decisions in wider institutional change processes as well as considering the role of the state in regulating these changes (Kelly 2011).
- 6 An increase in relative poverty has been linked to increases in out-migration in countries in the Global South (Czaika and de Haas 2012).
- 7 Although villagers also associate luck with farming and fishing livelihoods, working in Manila is seen as having distinct advantages, irrespective of an individual’s experience of being lucky, namely, that income from working in Manila would be received on a regular basis rather than seasonally. A reliable income stream is seen as critically important because cash is necessary for education expenses all year round.
- 8 Questions to explore for further study include whether this shift is becoming increasingly widespread and whether there are gendered implications in relation to the effects on villagers’ social safety net, as Silvey and Elmhirst (2003) have found in their study of rural–urban return migration in Indonesia. Their study explored changes in gender roles in relation to the employment opportunities presented to women, but found that gender relations and women’s position in their kinship networks have remained relatively unchanged.
- 9 In discussing with my interpreter Rhia the pattern of crying in interviews that we observed, I asked how she interpreted this emotional expression and whether, for instance, she felt embarrassed or I was pursuing a wrong-footed line of conversation. She replied: “I did not feel embarrassed, at first I thought they cried in front of us because maybe in their head they could get help from you because you are a foreigner. But then I realized I was wrong. They cried because it’s still very painful for them and they can’t help but to cry in front of us. What happened to them is very traumatic and very sad. I think you did not ask the wrong questions.”
- 10 Deirdre McKay (2007) similarly shows a high level of forbearance among overseas migrant workers in the practice of sending remittances as an extension of existing notions of care.

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