

Environmental Factors and Transnational Migration
A case study with Filipino newcomers in Ottawa, Canada

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Abstract

A number of international documents, NGOs and scholars have predicted that due to global environmental/climate change, the increased frequency and intensity of phenomena such as natural disasters, flooding, sea-level rise, pollution, and drought will be felt particularly in less developed regions of the world, and may force millions of people to leave their homelands. Given the far-reaching humanitarian and security concerns that have arisen with regard to the issue of environmentally-motivated migration, there have been calls for more empirical work to investigate this phenomenon, and particularly with respect to international movement. This thesis project takes a qualitative approach to investigating how environmental conditions in the Philippines are influencing migration to Ottawa, Canada. Using semi-structured focus group and personal interviews, it contributes some of the first ever empirical research on the links between environment and international migration to Canada. In taking a qualitative approach, it focuses on the perceptions and experiences of migrants themselves, and suggests that an emphasis on personal agency should be privileged to a greater extent in the environmental migration field. Additionally, by conducting research from a “receiving” country in the Global North, this research separates itself from the majority of previous empirical work in its field which has primarily been conducted in environmentally marginal areas in the Global South. In so doing, it provides a novel perspective particular to the experiences of long-distance and more permanent migrants. The results show that environmental factors are not currently perceived as migration influences for Filipino newcomers in Ottawa, although environmental factors do interact with political and economic factors in complex ways to influence migration decisions. This paper utilizes a transnational lens to demonstrate that environmental conditions in the Philippines may not act as direct migration influences, but they do impact migrants and their families through the social fields that are created between the Philippines and Canada. Previous work has primarily

investigated the environment as a “push” factor of migration, making the transnational perspective an important theoretical contribution for addressing links between environmental change and remittances, family separation, and agency and power in relation to (im)mobility.

Résumé

Un certain nombre de documents internationaux, des ONG et des chercheurs ont prédit qu'en raison du changement de l'environnement / climatique mondial, la fréquence et l'intensité accrues des phénomènes tels que les catastrophes naturelles, les inondations, l'élévation du niveau de la mer, la pollution et la sécheresse se feront sentir plus particulièrement dans les régions du monde moins développées et pourraient forcer des millions de personnes à quitter leur pays d'origine. Compte tenu des profondes préoccupations humanitaires et de sécurité qui ont été soulevées à l'égard de la question de la migration motivée par l'environnement, il y a eu des appels pour des travaux empiriques étudiant ce phénomène, notamment par rapport aux mouvements migratoires internationaux. Ce projet de thèse prend ainsi une approche qualitative pour étudier la façon dont les conditions environnementales dans les Philippines influent sur la migration à Ottawa, Canada. Basée sur l'utilisation de groupes de discussion et d'entretiens personnels semi-structurés, cette thèse contribue en partie avec la toute première recherche empirique sur les liens entre l'environnement et les migrations internationales au Canada. En adoptant une approche qualitative, ce projet se concentre sur les perceptions et les expériences des migrants eux-mêmes et avance que l'accent mis sur l'action personnelle doit être privilégié dans une plus grande mesure dans le domaine de la migration environnementale. En outre, en effectuant des recherches à partir d'un pays de « destination » du Nord Global, cette recherche se distingue de la majorité des travaux empiriques antérieurs dans ce domaine qui ont été principalement menés dans des zones environnementales marginales dans les pays du Sud. Ce faisant, cette thèse offre une perspective nouvelle sur les expériences particulières des migrants de longue distance et plus permanents. Les résultats montrent que les facteurs environnementaux ne sont pas actuellement considérés comme des influences de migration pour les nouveaux arrivants philippins à Ottawa,

même si des facteurs environnementaux interagissent avec des facteurs politiques et économiques de façon complexe pour influencer sur les décisions de migration. Ce travail adopte une perspective transnationale pour démontrer que bien que les conditions environnementales dans les Philippines n'agissent pas nécessairement comme une influence directe sur la migration, ils ont une incidence sur les migrants et sur leur famille à travers les champs sociaux qui sont créés entre les Philippines et le Canada. Des travaux antérieurs ont principalement étudié l'environnement comme un facteur de « poussée » de la migration, ce qui rend la perspective transnationale une contribution théorique importante qui traite des liens entre les changements environnementaux et les envois de fonds, la séparation des familles et les enjeux de l'agentivité et du pouvoir par rapport à l'(im)mobilité.

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Preface

This thesis partially adheres to the article-based format and consists of an introductory chapter, a descriptive results chapter, a chapter which takes the form of an article in preparation for submission to the journal *Population, Space and Place*, followed by a concluding chapter. The introductory chapter outlines the research objectives and provides an expanded literature review and explanation of methods, while the concluding chapter summarizes the main findings and contributions of the study, as well as makes policy recommendations and suggests avenues for future research. The interview guides and individual survey can be found in the Appendices.

The article (Chapter 3) will be co-authored by Dr. Luisa Veronis and Dr. Robert McLeman who conceptualized and secured funding for the larger project, developed the initial interview guide, and provided guidance and editorial advice for the article and thesis as a whole. As first author and MA candidate, I took primary responsibility for conducting the other aspects of this research including theoretical conceptualization, empirical fieldwork, data analysis, and leading the writing of each chapter.

This thesis project received approval from the University of Ottawa's ethics board, and all interviews were conducted with the participants' prior informed consent.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Methods

1.1 Introduction and Objectives

A number of international documents, NGOs and scholars have predicted that due to global environmental change, and especially global climate change, the increased frequency and intensity of phenomena such as natural disasters, flooding, sea-level rise, pollution, and drought will be felt particularly in less developed regions of the world, and may force millions of people to leave their homelands (Christian Aid, 2007; Myers, 1993; Rouviere et al., 1990). Popularly conceptualized according to the “environmental refugee” paradigm, the issue of environmentally-motivated migration has been securitized by a number of high profile bodies including the UN Security Council, NATO and Frontex, which are primarily concerned about population movements from the Global South to the Global North (Bettini, 2013; White, 2011). Security anxieties aside, humanitarian concerns have also been expressed about the fate of populations that may be displaced due to sea-level rise, coastal erosion and a loss of agricultural productivity (Adger et al., 2014), raising questions about the nature, timing, and social justice implications of possible migration and displacement.

Given the far-reaching international and regional interests in better understanding the relationship between environment and migration, there have been a number of calls for more empirical work to assess the extent to which environmentally motivated migration is already occurring (Bates, 2002; McLeman, 2014; Piguet, 2010; Warner, 2010). Additionally, given that the majority of global migration (environmental or otherwise) occurs within national boundaries, previous empirical work has primarily focused on the migration histories and trajectories of migrants within the Global South, many of whom undertake short-distance, short-duration

movement (Koser, 2011; McLeman, 2014). Thus, the need to better understand international movement has been called out in particular, especially given the unique security, humanitarian, and governance concerns associated with international mobility (Obokata et al., 2014; Veronis and McLeman, 2014). For these reasons, as part of a larger SSHRC-funded project, my thesis research investigated the following questions:

- 1) In what ways do environmental factors influence international migration to Canada?
- 2) How do environmental factors interact with political, economic and demographic factors to contribute to migration decisions?
- 3) What role do environmental factors play in migrants' transnational experiences and activities (e.g. the role of remittances for disaster risk reduction and relief)?

Using the results of semi-structured focus groups and personal interviews, this thesis contributes some of the first ever empirical research on the links between environment and international migration to Canada. In taking a qualitative approach, it focuses on the perceptions and experiences of migrants themselves, and suggests that an emphasis on personal agency should be privileged to a greater extent in the environmental migration field. Additionally, by conducting research from a “receiving” country in the Global North, this research separates itself from the majority of previous empirical work in its field which has primarily been conducted in environmentally marginal areas in the Global South. In so doing, it provides a novel perspective particular to the experiences of long-distance and more permanent migrants, allowing us to better understand how environmental conditions in sending countries are currently influencing the migration decisions of newcomers to Canada. Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Filipino newcomers to Ottawa, Canada, my research addresses the questions listed above and makes the following contributions:

- 1) **Empirical:** it presents primary data on the links between environmental factors and the transnational migration experiences of Filipino newcomers to Canada, contributing results from a migrant receiving country in the Global North.
- 2) **Theoretical:** it utilizes a transnational lens to interpret the findings, thus expanding the environmental migration literature beyond a focus on causal influences to a focus on transnational social fields and the continuity between immobility and mobility.
- 3) **Methodological:** it takes a qualitative approach that privileges the participants' perceptions and personal agency, with a focus on markers of difference such as gender and social class.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 From 'environmental refugees' to multi-causality: Theoretical developments on environmental migration

Contemporary interest in the links between environment and migration emerged in the 1980s when the term “environmental refugee” was defined by Essam El-Hinnawi (1985) a director at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and a few years later by Jodi Jacobson (1988), a senior researcher at the Worldwatch Institute. Both warned that environmental factors such as natural disasters, hazards and land degradation were inducing millions of people to migrate, a number that would continue to grow with the effects of what was then called “global warming.” A few years later, Norman Myers (1993) published the first of a series of warnings in scholarly journals about the future impacts of environmental change on human mobility, defining environmental refugees as those who have “all but abandoned their homelands on a semi-permanent if not permanent basis, having little hope of foreseeable return” (p. 752). His conservative estimate of their current number was 25 million, a figure that he believed would

multiply with the effects of “global warming.” Over the same period, a related body of work investigated the sometimes circular relationship between environmental scarcity, forced migration, and violent conflict (see for example Homer-Dixon, 1994). These early warnings about ‘environmental refugees’ and their possible links to environmental scarcity and violence incited a plethora of work which has built upon the original ideas, and also critiqued them. The critical work has interrogated definitions, numbers, legal frameworks, and notions of causality, much of it challenging or examining some aspect of the term “environmental refugee.”

First, a legal critique has challenged the use of the term “refugee” to describe this type of mobility due to the fact that the UNHCR’s 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees specifically defines a refugee as someone who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, 1992)

Due to the fact that this definition does not include the environment as a persecuting factor, legally, a refugee cannot be environmentally motivated. Other factors, including the need to cross an international border, could also exclude environmentally-motivated migrants from falling under the legal definition of a refugee. The legal examination as to whether environmental migrants should be understood to be refugees has led others to pursue questions over voluntariness. Some theorists have proposed that we understand environmental migration as a continuum, where on one end “environmental migrants” voluntarily make the decision to move (usually due to slow-onset factors), and on the other, “environmental refugees” are forced to move (usually due to fast-onset factors) (Bates, 2002; Hugo, 1996).

From here, some legal scholars have investigated where ‘environmental refugees’ might fit into current legal frameworks, or have worked to develop new frameworks for protection and assistance (Biermann and Boas, 2010; Kolmannskog, 2012; McAdam, 2012). At the same time, there currently does not exist a comprehensive monitoring system to track global population movements, let alone one to track environmentally-related movements (McLeman, 2013). Thus, there remains a great deal of uncertainty over numbers, and even more importantly, over the governance of international migration (Johnson, 2012). The issue of climate-related migration has also raised a number of questions about culpability: if industrialised countries in the global North are responsible for producing the lion’s share of greenhouse gas emissions, should they then be more responsible for assisting ‘climate migrants?’ From a legal and policy-oriented perspective, it has most frequently been suggested that the UN should be responsible for assisting ‘climate migrants’, whether through a protocol under the UNFCCC (Biermann and Boas, 2010; Gibb and Ford, 2012), through altering the existing UNHCR definition of a refugee (Marshall, 2011), or through existing UN protection mechanisms such as for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (see Johnson, 2012; Martin, 2010 for further discussion).

Other work has responded not to the “refugee” part of the term “environmental refugee,” but to the “environmental” part by pointing to the fact that migration is never caused by one sole factor (Castles, 2002; McGregor, 1994). This critique has also pointed to the tenuous empirics on which the alarmist stance is based (Black, 2001). Reviewers of the field have dubbed the converging points of view on causality the “maximalists” and “minimalists” (Suhrke, 1994), or the “alarmists” and “sceptics” (Brown, 2008), where the maximalists/alarmists tend to present a simplistic idea of migration causality where worsening environmental conditions mechanically lead to mass (forced) migration, particularly from countries in the Global South (e.g. El Hinnawi,

1985; Myers, 1993; Myers, 2002; Westing, 1994). The minimalists/sceptics on the other hand, believe that this depiction overlooks the role of many other factors that may affect mobility, such as social location, economic motivations, political circumstances, and access to different forms of capital (Black, 2001; Castles, 2002; McGregor, 1994; McLeman and Smit, 2006, among others). Furthermore, the minimalists stress that maximalist/alarmist stances often present migration as a tragedy, rather than a proactive adaptation taken by individuals and households (Piguet, 2013).

A third body of critical work tends to come from a political or social justice standpoint, and centres the ‘environmental refugee’ as a subject by deconstructing the effects of victimizing or criminalizing representations (Baldwin, 2012; Bettini, 2013; Farbotko, 2010). Through discourse analysis and other qualitative methods, this work attempts to illuminate the underlying power structures and assumptions embedded in popular and political representations of ‘environmental refugees’.

1.2.2 Empirical research on environmental change and international migration

Empirical literature in this field has used a diverse range of methods including statistical models, quantitative surveys, discourse analysis, and qualitative interviews (for reviews see McLeman, 2013; Piguet, 2010). In this section I focus mainly on reviewing the qualitative work which is more in line with the methodological approach I employed in my own research. For the same reason I also draw primarily from research on international, rather than internal migration.

Most qualitative work tends to overwhelmingly support the “minimalist” stance that environmental factors almost always interact with other factors to contribute to migration decisions. Even in relatively extreme situations—for instance where natural disasters wipe out nearly all of a community’s capital base and leave residents homeless—researchers have found

that migrants, or the families of migrants, will still frame post-disaster migration as economically, rather than environmentally, motivated (Wrathall, 2012; Dun, 2011). In one example, some of the participants in Wrathall's (2012) study in Honduras following Hurricane Mitch explicitly described their migration motivations as being economic in nature despite Mitch being an obvious root cause. One interviewee stated, "my son's migration [to the United States without documents] isn't directly tied to Mitch, but rather because he can't earn anything here. Yes. We lost everything with Mitch, and yes, the economy was destroyed here, but in the end, he left to find a job" (p. 591). This quote highlights not only the blurry distinction between environmental and economic motivations for migration when disasters strike, but also suggests the interviewee's desire to claim full agency over the decision to migrate— rather than have her son cast as a victim, she insists on his active participation in the decision to move.

The blurry distinction is evident in cases of more slow-onset change as well. Slow-onset environmental changes, such as drought, can influence individuals' decisions to migrate because of the economic consequences experienced at the household level (e.g. crop loss), particularly in communities that participate in subsistence activities that are highly dependent on the natural environment. In these cases it is very difficult to disentangle economic from environmental factors as the two are closely intertwined. This process whereby environmental deterioration exacerbates economic instability has been dubbed "environmentally induced economic migration" by Afifi (2011), who observed in Niger that, "[O]n the surface, people leave their villages/regions due to purely economic problems, but these are in turn highly linked to the environmental degradation in the country, regardless of the historical tradition of seasonal migration" (p.116).

Furthermore, in all cases, other factors play a role in determining who will migrate, and where. Specifically, social location (gender, age, class), access to capital in the form of land or other assets, cultural capital in the form of education, or social capital in the form of networks abroad all tend to play a role in whether someone migrates in a time of environmental stress, and how far or to what location they choose to go. However, the importance of these factors is entirely contextual. One example is land ownership. Research in Ecuador suggests it may provide a source of capital for potential international migrants (Gray, 2009), but in rural Nepal land ownership appears to be associated with lower levels of participation in international migration (Massey et al., 2010). The influence of education also appears to be context specific, with research in Burkina Faso suggesting educational attainment is more positively associated with internal migration (Henry et al., 2004), but in Nepal and Ecuador education has a greater positive association with international migration (Massey et al., 2010, Gray, 2009). In the case of the Dominican Republic, international migrants tend to have lower educational attainment (Alscher, 2011). Studies that have focused on community and household-level international migration behaviour have identified a wide range of other potentially influential factors. Social capital (particularly familial connections with other migrants) and previous migration experience facilitate migration from Honduras (Wrathall, 2012), Mali (Findley, 1994), and Nepal (Massey et al., 2010), for example. In Nepal and West Africa, migration can become an embedded component of rural households' wider livelihood diversification strategies, with larger family size making migration more possible (e.g. Afifi, 2011; Mertz et al., 2009; Shrestha and Bhandari, 2007).

Gender also plays a particularly complex role in the process of international environmentally-related migration. Most studies find that long-distance migration is undertaken by younger men

and men who are heads of households, and that high levels of male out-migration can create significant challenges for those who are left behind. This pattern then creates a gendered and aged phenomenon of “environmental immobility” where women, children, and the elderly must cope with the poor environmental conditions on their own (Afifi, 2011; Black et al., 2013; Wrathall, 2012). Even in remittance-receiving households, such as in Haiti, children sometimes must drop out of school to assist with subsistence farming (Alscher, 2011).

However, young males are not the dominant participants in international migration in all cases. For example, in the Dominican Republic, Alscher (2011) describes environmental migration as being a chain event (rural-urban-international) that leads women to seek work in domestic services overseas. In rural Mali during the 1980s, Findley (1994) observed that although the majority of international migration was undertaken by men, during droughts women had increased rates of participation in short distance, short duration migration as a way to reduce food consumption within the household. This movement, however, was always described in culturally appropriate terms, such as for schooling, seeking healthcare, or visiting family.

1.2.3 Environmental (im)mobility

As described above, the existing research makes clear that a person’s multifaceted identity and access to social, cultural and physical capital plays a large role in granting him or her access to mobility and in adapting to environmental stress. The literature demonstrates that those who are left behind when environmental migration occurs are often women, children and/or the elderly, and even with the potential benefit of remittances, it is they who are left to cope with rapidly deteriorating environmental conditions. In other words, environmental migration can pose risks not simply to the migrant, but to other members of the migrant’s social network (Winkels, 2012), and in many cases it is not the environmental *migrants*, but the *immobile*—those affected by

environmental change who are not able to move—who are the most vulnerable. Black et al. (2013) have suggested that:

... the ability to move is broadly correlated with wealth, level of capital (financial, human, social), the availability of places to move to, and fear of what would happen to property and assets left behind, so that broadly speaking, poorer people are generally less able to migrate even if they wish to do so. (p. s36)

The empirical findings from international environmental migration studies suggest that the ability to migrate, whether by choice or as the ‘environmental refugee’ of popular discourse, is not universal, and that power relations at multiple scales help determine access to mobility. Therefore, authors such as Birk and Rasmussen (2014) and Tacoli (2009) have urged that the focus of institutions and policy-makers should be on facilitating people’s right to move out of poor or dangerous environmental conditions.

In this thesis I expand on this argument by contending that the main issue of concern is not simply immobility, but the right to have agency over mobility, whether that means the right to move, or the right to stay. To make this point, I turn not only to the literature on environmental immobility, but also to scholarship about environmental migration on Pacific small island states that are predicted to be the sites of large-scale displacement due to sea-level rise. Most studies conducted on these islands have in fact found that at present, environmental problems are not leading to out-migration and that many community members are actually rejecting the “climate refugee” label that has been imposed on them (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012; McNamara and Gibson, 2009; Mortreux and Barnett, 2009). Instead, many residents are fighting for their *right to stay*, or at least, for their right to “migrate with dignity” (Kwong, 2013; see also McAdam, 2011) rather than as victims of events beyond their control.

I argue that the key issue at stake for advocates of the right to move *and* the right to stay is not whether one is “mobile” or “immobile,” but rather, that people have agency over their own (im)mobility in relation to environmental problems. At the same time, there is also the crucial issue of representation, which is quite well-expressed in the case of the Pacific islanders who do not want to be cast as helpless victims in need of saving, but could be better addressed in popular and scholarly literature on immobility which has the potential to equate immobility with vulnerability and victimhood. Through the transnational lens utilized in the third chapter, I will demonstrate that mobility and immobility should not be viewed as a binary, but rather as a continuum. While immobility is often equated to powerlessness, and mobility to agency, my findings on the shifting power dynamics of transnational families will demonstrate that these categories do not adequately represent the dynamic relationship between agency and mobility in relation to environmental problems.

1.2.4 Structure and agency

In discussing the dynamic nature of the relationship between (im)mobility and agency in relation to environmental change, this thesis situates itself within long-standing structure-agency debates in migration studies (see King, 2012). In a recent publication, my colleagues and I (Obokata et al., 2014) proposed an exploratory framework for future empirical research on international environmental migration which suggested that context plays a key role in determining the differential impacts of environmental factors on international migration. Specifically, we stressed that environmental and non-environmental contexts at multiple scales (e.g. local, state and macro-historical) must be taken into account to adequately understand peoples’ abilities to cope with environmental problems and to choose, or not choose, mobility in times of environmental stress. More importantly, we argued that “more light can be shed on the complex interplay

between individual capacities to make choices on one hand, and the broader environmental, social, economic and political constraints on these decisions on the other” (p. 132). We argued that simplistic structure/agency polarizations do not correspond to the lived realities of many participants of empirical research who speak to a fluid interaction between their own decision-making and the ways in which they are able to adapt to environmental conditions due to broader socio-political constraints in their regions of origin. This insight was important given that many studies of environmental migration have tended to gloss over the decision-making power of the subjects of their research, whether due to methods which do not allow for the voices of research participants to be heard, or because the issues of agency and structure were under-theorized.

This thesis addresses some of these limitations by focusing on the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants, choosing to highlight their agency in the migration process. I stress the importance of acknowledging people’s actual perceptions regarding their reasons for migrating, drawing my own conclusions regarding migration causality and transnational experiences directly from their accounts. The choice to utilize the framework of transnationalism in the third chapter is a direct result of privileging the lived experiences of the participants who actively maintain ties between their places of origin and settlement, and whose levels of agency and power are constantly negotiated in relation to the other members of their transnational social fields when environmental problems occur in the Philippines. At the same time, throughout the following chapters I situate the participants’ accounts within their broader environmental and non-environmental contexts, ensuring that factors such as local ecology, social networks, state policies, economic opportunities (or lack thereof), and historical circumstances frame the experiences described by the research participants.

1.2.5 Transnationalism

It is now well-recognized that migrants actively maintain ties – cultural, social, economic, political – that connect places of origin and destination. This transnational approach “replaces the traditional binary focus on linear movement from pre- to post-migratory location, and replaces it with a model that highlights the recursive nature of movement associated with international human mobility” (Walton-Roberts, 2004, p. 362). While transnationalism emerged in the late 20th century in conjunction with processes of globalization—the increasing flows of goods, capital and ideas—the theory does more than just signal a relationship between migration and globalization. Katharyne Mitchell (2003) uses the term “transnationality” to emphasize that transnational theory leads to a radical re-thinking of concepts such as nation, place, culture and identity that were previously understood as discrete and autonomous categories rather than intrinsically interconnected: “The emphasis on relations between things and on movements across things forces a reconceptualization of core beliefs in migration and geopolitical literatures, which formerly emphasized state-centric narratives and territorially defined national borders” (p. 74). Although borders continue to be concrete mediating forces in the lives of migrants and non-migrants, the condition of transnationality challenges a state-centric and methodologically nationalist view of the world (Amelina and Faist, 2012; Mitchell, 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). In showing the interconnectedness of notions such as nations and identities that were previously viewed as discrete, a transnational perspective has the potential to reconceptualise other binary categories that define migrants and migration (see King, 2012), including binaries that are commonly used in the environmental migration literature with little critical questioning of their relevance or representational effects, such as: internal/international, nature/society, and forced/voluntary among others (for critiques see Baldwin, 2012; Oliver-Smith, 2012; Piguet,

2013). A transnational perspective recognizes the lived experiences that exist between the opposite ends of these dichotomies, thus challenging not only methodological nationalism, but also persistent binaries that categorically oppose migrants and non-migrants, such as mobile/immobile; active/passive; giver/receiver (Carling, 2008; Glick-Schiller and Salazar, 2013).

The concept of “transnational social fields” adds to the reconceptualization of migration by highlighting the multiple connections that migrants create and maintain between their communities of origin and destination (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). In other words, the act of migration involves not only the individual who moves, but also non-migrant members of households (Carling, 2008; Huang et al., 2008; Parrenas, 2005), and the people and landscapes of wider communities in origin and destination (Faist, 2008; Jackson et al., 2004; McKay, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Moran-Taylor and Taylor, 2010). Transnational families are one important component of social fields. A number of authors illuminate how transnational migration affects the everyday practices of families, and document the troubling effects of family separation on children (Huang et al., 2008; Pratt, 2012). By moving the focus away from migrants alone, the concept of transnational social fields points to the complex power dynamics that exist in relationships between migrants and those who stay. Carling (2008) describes the dynamic nature of these roles as the “asymmetries of transnational relationships” where both migrants and non-migrants experience “vulnerability and ascendancy at different times and in different contexts” (p.1453). The notion of asymmetrical transnational relationships is utilized in this thesis for understanding how relationships between migrants and stay-at-homes are altered by the occurrence of environmental problems, where both ends of a transnational relationship may experience both power and vulnerability.

1.3 Case Study: Filipino newcomers in Ottawa, Canada

In 2010, the Philippines became the largest source country of newcomers to Canada with 152,300 Filipinos having arrived since 2006 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Representing 13 percent of all newcomers having arrived in that time, the Philippines sent more migrants than either China or India, which have traditionally been the top sending countries. According to the 2006 census of Canada, 303,195 immigrants and 436,190 people total, reported “Filipino” as their ethnic origin, making up 1.4 percent of the total population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Of those reporting “Filipino,” 7,925 reside in the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA¹, making up 0.7 percent of the city’s population. By the time of the 2011 National Household Survey² the number of Filipinos in Ottawa-Gatineau had risen to 9,355 with almost two-thirds (6,015) being female. Although the Filipino community in Ottawa is small compared to the communities in Toronto and Vancouver, akin to the trend in the rest of Canada, Ottawa’s Filipino population grew rapidly in the 2006-2011 time frame (2,490 arrivals), a greater number than arrived in the entire decade of 1991-2001 (2,325) (National Household Survey, 2011b). As well as being the source country for a rapidly growing population of newcomers to Canada, the Philippines was a country of interest for our project because it has been ranked the third most vulnerable country in the world to weather-related extreme events such as typhoons, tsunamis, earthquakes and sea-level rise (Birkmann et al., 2011; World Bank, 2013). The powerful “super typhoon” Haiyan (locally named Yolanda) that affected the Visayas region in November 2013 was just one devastating example. Furthermore, non-climate-related factors such as

¹ Canada’s capital region includes the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau located on the interprovincial border between Ontario and Quebec.

² The 2011 National Household Survey is a voluntary survey that Statistics Canada introduced to replace the traditional mandatory long-form census. It has been criticized for presenting skewed results due to varying response rates across neighbourhoods, cities, and income-brackets. However, its data are used here because the last long-form census is from 2006 and is quite dated.

deforestation, illegal logging, and resource extraction are affecting environmental security in everyday life, while also exacerbating the effects of extreme events (World Bank, 2013). As in many parts of Asia, the process of rapid urbanization has contributed a number of other urban ecological issues including flooding, improper waste disposal, overcrowding, and pollution (Akers and Akers, 2005).

1.4 Methodology

My empirical data was collected in my role as a Research Assistant on a SSHRC-funded project entitled: Environmental Influences and International Migration to Canada (SSHRC Standard Research Grant #410-2011-1676) led by Drs McLeman (Geography and Environmental Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University), Veronis (Geography, University of Ottawa) and Abu-Zahra (International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa). The methodology developed for the larger project is grounded in social and feminist geography-influenced migration scholarship, and vulnerability research in the human dimensions of climate change field. We adopted a “bottom-up” approach seeking to develop knowledge of the motivations, social connections and structural forces that influence decisions, behaviour, and the well-being of households throughout the migration process. Due to our interest in perceptions and decision-making, as well as our knowledge of the complex nature of migration causality, we decided to undertake qualitative research, which is understood as being most useful for these types of inquiries (Esterberg, 2002; Kitchin and Tate, 2000). We utilized a mix of methods including key informant interviews and semi-structured focus group and personal interviews which we believed best-suited for achieving the objectives of this project.

1.4.1 Justification of methods

Key informants are front-line community leaders who were consulted as to their knowledge of the Filipino community in Ottawa. With their broader knowledge of the experiences of the many people with whom they work, key informant interviews offered important insights into the community's migration experiences, trajectories, and motivations for migrating, including environmental and non-environmental factors. Additionally, these community leaders were knowledgeable about various community fundraising initiatives related to disaster relief for the Philippines. Speaking with key informants prior to conducting focus groups and personal interviews was useful both for allowing me to be better prepared, and also because they assisted in recruiting participants from within their networks.

Focus groups were chosen as a method for this exploratory research project because they are useful for generating key themes and seeing what information is either confirmed or debated among the group members. They also allow participants to recognize or re-think their own narratives through the insights of other participants (Barbour, 2007; Crabtree et al., 1993). The main challenge with focus groups is that it can be difficult to investigate issues with much depth and detail. Additionally, it can be difficult to allow all participants sufficient time to speak about their personal experiences, whether due to certain participants dominating the conversation, or because of the personal nature of some questions. Therefore, as a supplement to focus groups, we arranged additional in-depth and follow-up personal interviews. These interviews allowed me to better draw out the participants' life histories and feelings and ask more detailed and/or personal questions relating to their family context, remittance activities, and migration decisions that may have been less viable in a focus group setting (see also Esterberg, 2002; Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

1.4.2 Data collection

My field work took place in Ottawa, Canada between December 2013 and March 2014. I began by conducting two semi-structured key informant interviews; the first with the pastor of the Filipino congregation of the East Gate Alliance Church in Ottawa (who was himself a recent immigrant from the Philippines) and the second with a community worker from the Ottawa branch of the migrant justice organization Migrante International who works primarily with live-in caregivers. With the help of these key informants, as well as other personal contacts, I then used a 'snowball sampling' approach to recruit for focus groups and personal interviews. Due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research, the main criteria for recruitment were that participants were between the ages of 18-65 and had arrived in Canada within the past ten years. Efforts were also made to recruit both men and women, as well as newcomers who had arrived through different immigration categories (skilled worker/economic; family re-unification; Live-in Caregiver Program).

A total of four focus groups were conducted with numbers ranging from three to six participants per group. Each took between one and two hours. The first focus group (n=6) was conducted at the University of Ottawa, while focus groups two (n=3), three (n=5) and four (n=3) were arranged more informally and conducted at participants' homes (for focus groups 2 and 4) and at a coffee shop (for focus group 3) of the participants' choosing. The first focus group was facilitated by Dr. Veronis, while I assisted in note-taking. The other three were facilitated by me while research assistants took notes. Refreshments were offered at all focus groups to help create a more comfortable atmosphere.

An additional nine personal interviews were conducted; three of which were follow-ups with willing participants from previous focus groups. Interviews were conducted at a time and place of the participants' choosing and took between 30 minutes to one hour each.

All focus groups and interviews were conducted in English using a semi-structured format (see interview guides in the Appendices). All interviews except one were audio-recorded with the participants' prior informed consent and all participants received compensation (\$40).

In addition, all participants were asked to complete a short individual survey (see Appendix D) indicating basic demographic and household information, including under which immigration category they arrived. This information allowed me to better understand the profile of the participants and thus to better interpret their comments. Additionally, it will eventually assist in making specific recommendations to policy and settlement services.

1.4.3 Data analysis

Data gathered from focus groups and personal interviews were transcribed verbatim and entered into the coding software Dedoose, which facilitated the management, tagging, coding and categorization of the interview data according to key themes (Bazeley, 2007). The themes that led my analysis of the data were related to: type and frequency of environmental problems experienced in rural and urban areas, links between environment and (im)mobility, migration strategies, main migration motivations, settlement experiences, and transnational experiences. Interpretation and analysis used techniques often associated with grounded theory and constructivist approaches whereby research is led by participants' views of situations, and the construction of meaning is understood to be subjective and negotiated socially and historically (Creswell, 2007; Olsen, 2012). Creswell (2007) notes that in this approach, the researcher's job is to look for a "complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or

ideas” (p. 20). I remained cognizant of the emergence of new themes throughout the research process and allowed the participants’ views and experiences to “ground” the development of theory. It was for this reason that the “social-nature” framework developed in my thesis proposal is not utilized in depth in this thesis. Instead, Chapter 3 uses the lens of transnationalism to discuss the experiences of the research participants.

1.5 Profile of Participants

A total of 23 Filipino migrants, and an additional 2 key informants, participated in the focus groups and personal interviews. Half of the participants arrived in the 2006-2010 period (see Figure 1.1) which corresponds to the wider trend of increased arrivals at that time in Ottawa. Another six arrived in the period 2011-2014. In total, 18 participants arrived since 2006, indicating that they were relatively recent arrivals.

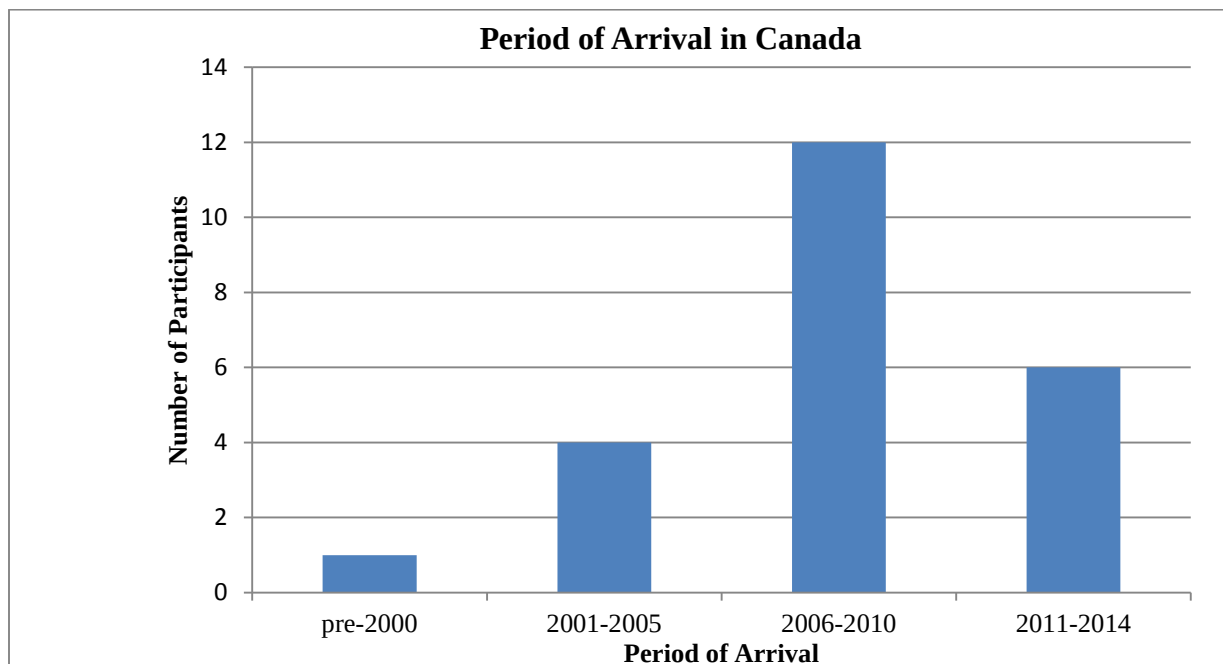


Figure 1.1 Participants’ Period of Arrival in Canada

Fourteen (female) participants arrived in Canada through the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), a contentious labour immigration program that recruits mainly women, who are primarily from the Philippines, to provide child and eldercare in the homes of Canadians (see Barber, 2008; Kelly et al., 2009; Pratt, 2004 for discussion). Twelve of the participants who arrived under the LCP, and two who arrived through the family re-unification and economic categories had previously lived and worked as caregivers, factory workers and teachers in a third and sometimes fourth country prior to coming to Canada, including: Hong Kong (6); Taiwan (4); South Korea (2); Singapore (1); Kuwait (1); Saudi Arabia (1); United Arab Emirates (1); and Bermuda (1). All applied to come to Canada directly from those countries, rather than from the Philippines, citing financial and logistical reasons (e.g. the need to make enough money to pay recruitment agencies; the longer and more corrupt immigration process in the Philippines; the need to gain experience as a caregiver to be eligible for the LCP). However, the majority did not go to other countries with the sole strategy of coming to Canada through those countries, but rather, they heard about the opportunity to come to Canada from radio ads or word-of-mouth while they were outside of the Philippines. Only two caregivers came through the LCP directly from the Philippines to Canada. Both had family members in Canada who acted as employers to sponsor them through the LCP.

Important to note for this thesis is that under the Live-in Caregiver Program, once the requirements of the program are complete—which takes between 24-48 months—the caregivers are able to apply for permanent residency and then sponsor their families to come to Canada through a family re-unification program (Kelly et al., 2011). Of course this possibility provides a major incentive for Filipino women to apply to the LCP (see also Pratt, 2008), especially considering the lack of benefits like this available to them in other receiving countries in the

Middle East and Asia. However, at the time of the interviews, none of the participants who had submitted immigration paperwork for their families had yet been able to successfully sponsor them to come to Canada. This fact is quite astounding given that eight of them had arrived between 2008-2009, meaning that at the time of the interviews they had been living apart from their families for between five and six years. Given these experiences, this thesis thus takes the opportunity to highlight the experiences of Filipina newcomers and contribute to the body of work about the LCP by bringing an environmental focus to their experiences of settlement, transnationality, and family separation.

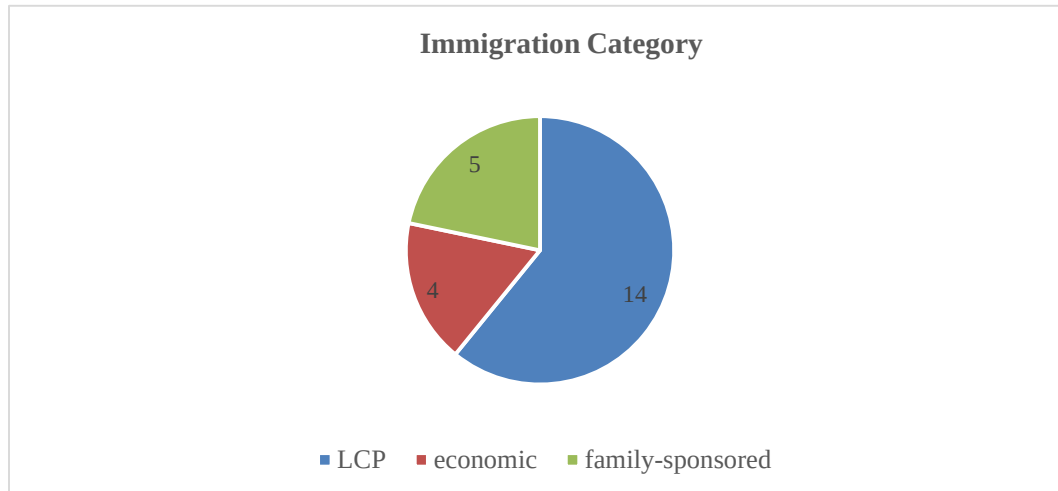


Figure 1.2 Number of Participants by Immigration Category

The rest of the participants arrived as “family-sponsored” or “economic” immigrants (see Figure 1.2) and their stories will also be included here, although it should be understood that their experiences of migration and settlement differ in certain ways, particularly because all nine were able to migrate with at least one family member. On the other hand, even those participants who migrated under the economic or family reunification categories were not necessarily immune to working in similarly low-wage, ‘low-skilled’ occupations (see Figures 1.3 and 1.5) (see also Kelly et al., 2009). Finally, Figure 1.4 shows that all of the participants, regardless of

immigration category, were highly educated, with all having at least some post-secondary education.

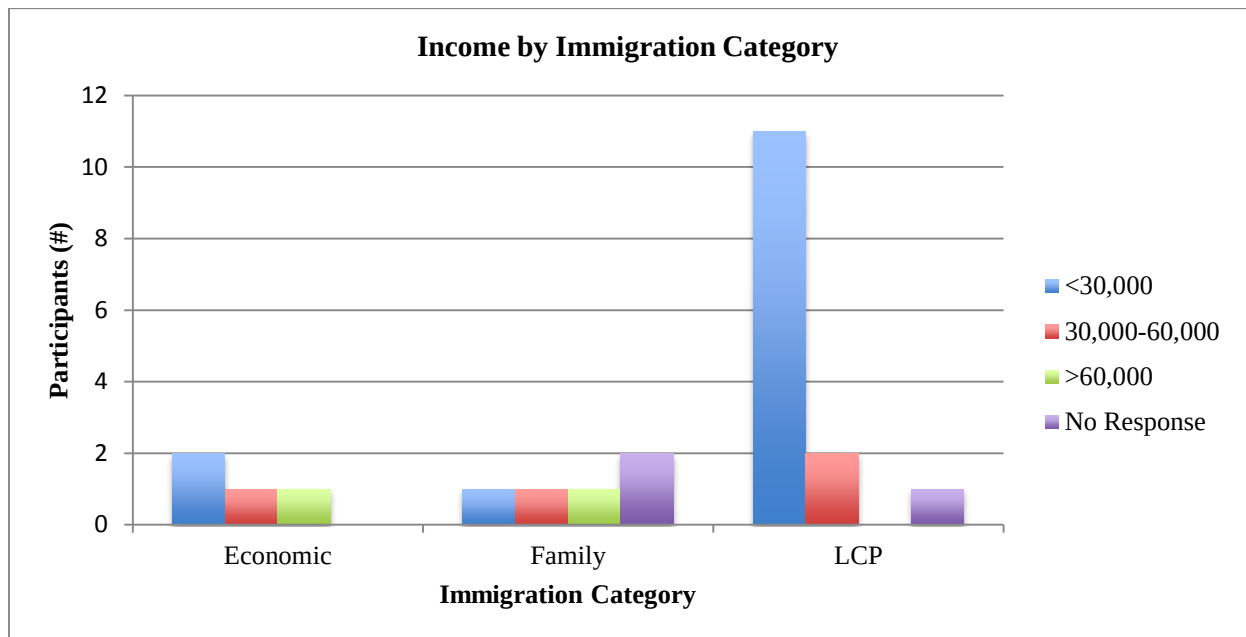


Figure 1.3 Participants' Household Income by Immigration Category

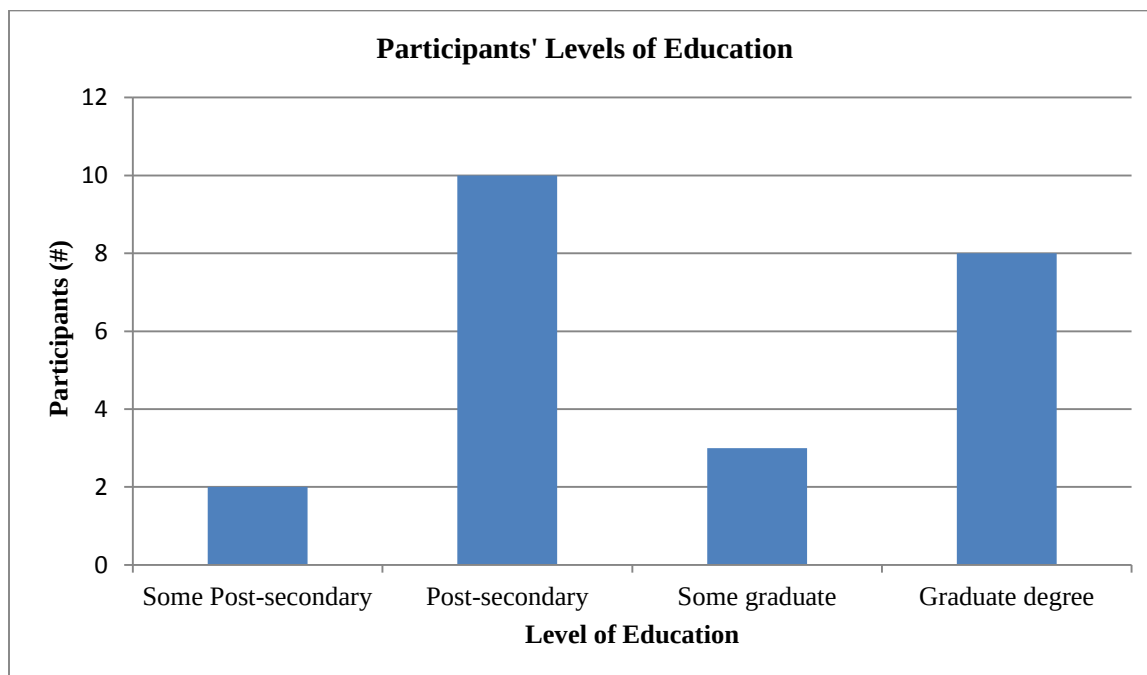


Figure 1.4 Participants' Level of Education

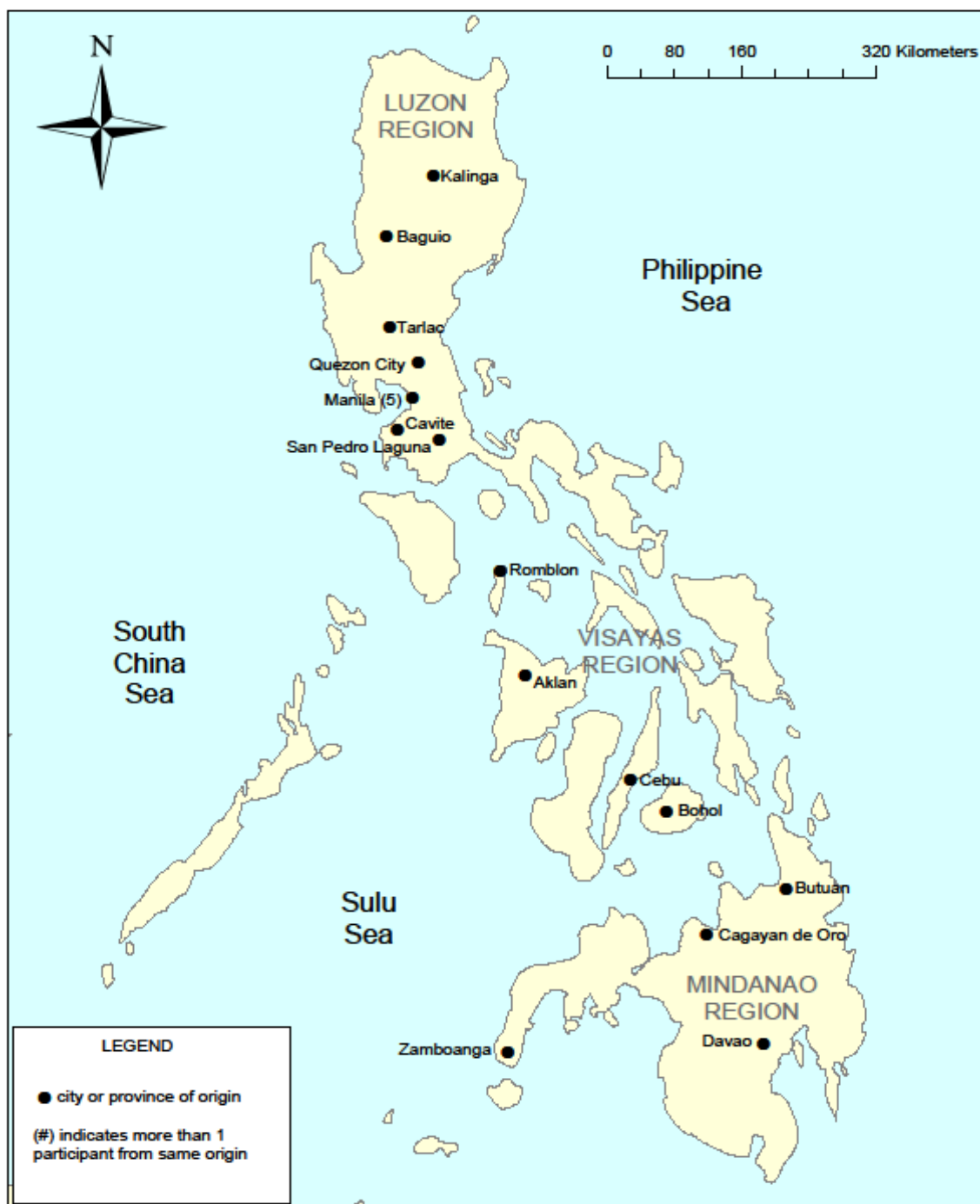
Participants' Occupation by Immigration Category

Category	Occupation								Total
	Caregiver	Domestic/Warehouse Technician	Customer Service	Youth Worker	IT	Semi-Retired	Student	Unemployed	
Economic		1			1	1	1		4
Family		1	1	1				2	5
LCP	10	3	1						14
Total	10	5	2	1	1	1	1	2	23

Figure 1.5. Occupation of Participants by Immigration Category

*Some participants held more than one job, but primary occupation is listed here.

Finally, I should note that the Philippines is a geographically and culturally diverse country in which different regions experience very different environmental, political and social conditions, particularly with respect to the differences between rural and urban communities. Again, I did not specifically target my recruitment to people from specific regions or according to rural/urban categorizations. Nonetheless, as Figure 1.6 shows, while many participants were from Manila and the surrounding areas, there were also a number of participants from the Visayas and Mindanao regions, which gave me the opportunity to hear about a diverse range of experiences, as well as gain a sense of the different environmental and political issues that affect different regions.



* An additional 3 participants are from general region of Luzon. Their information is not included on map.

Figure 1.6 Map of Participants' Places of Origin

1.6 Limitations

The exploratory nature of this project means that there are some limitations with the sample of participants. Most important to mention is that the majority (21/23) of participants were women. Although efforts were made to recruit more men, it was not possible due to time constraints. While certainly over-represented in this sample, the large number of women interviewed does point to the gender imbalance in the make-up of Ottawa's Filipino community and furthermore, provides the opportunity to discuss the gendered nature of the pathways available for Filipinos to migrate to Canada. I believe the shortage of men in my sample also points to the problems that many of the caregivers face in bringing husbands (and children) to join them in Canada. However, even more, this limitation in the sample points to a need for further targeted research on the motivations and settlement experiences of Filipino men in Ottawa and Canada.

In addition to men who arrive for family reunification, future research should target non-caregivers who arrived under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). Fourteen percent of all temporary workers are from the Philippines (Thomas, 2010), and it is a limitation of this study that their voices are not included here. The stories of temporary workers would likely shed light on a different set of experiences with environmental conditions in the Philippines, perhaps being more inclusive of those more directly vulnerable to environmental change. However, due to the location of this research (Ottawa, Canada), in which few temporary workers (besides caregivers) reside, the inclusion of their voices was not feasible.

As I do not speak Tagalog, it may have limited the extent to which the participants were able to express themselves; however, the vast majority of them had excellent English-language skills. The few whose English abilities were more limited were unable to expand on questions as much

as the others, but they were nonetheless able to comprehend and respond to my questions with shorter answers.

Coincidentally, the timing of my research was such that it occurred in the months following typhoon Haiyan (which struck the Philippines in November 2013). Given the scale of the disaster and the international response to it, it is likely that my research was affected. However, although I was initially quite nervous about coming across as predatory, and that it might be too soon to ask questions about the typhoon, I found that none of the participants were uncomfortable speaking about it. As the next chapter illuminates, the participants were very used to major disasters occurring; thus while typhoon Haiyan was addressed as a tragedy, it was not viewed as an unthinkable one. Moreover, once I discovered that the participants were willing to discuss it, the typhoon became a helpful reference to probe them into thinking about different responses to environmental problems, including mobility, immobility, and their own transnational activities.

1.7 Positionality

I am an outsider to the Filipino community and it is likely that my position influenced my ability to understand and interpret certain aspects of the interviews. Moreover, my position may have determined the extent to which people opened up to me about certain issues, although this could mean that they opened up more or less. My outsider status potentially assisted my ability to see connections between things that may not be glaringly obvious to an insider and prompted me to ask questions that someone “in the know” would not think to ask. Additionally, because the majority of my participants ended up being women, as a woman myself, I think it may have made the interviews more comfortable—particularly in those cases where I was invited into the participants’ homes.

I am also aware that I occupy a particular position as a university-level researcher who will likely benefit from the process and product of the interviews more than the participants. This fact is a tricky one to get around and it is a limitation that remains unresolved. What I will say is that I strove to make people feel as comfortable as possible and that I completely acknowledged that the people with whom I spoke are the experts of their own lives and experiences, not me. Furthermore, many of the participants were highly educated themselves and some of them expressed that they were happy to have an opportunity to discuss the issues about which I was asking. Some of them also recalled their own experiences conducting research and were happy to help out a student going through the same thing. Nonetheless, I am well aware that there are specific power dynamics that come with my position, not only as an academic, but as a Canadian citizen, native English speaker, and someone who is afforded much more freedom to find a job in my field and live in the same country as my family. It is these facts that I felt most uneasy about. In acknowledgement of our privileged position as university researchers we plan to produce legal and policy recommendations and provide information to settlement services on the needs of their clients in hopes that these actions will produce benefits at the community level. Hearing firsthand about the participants' experiences in the Live-in Caregiver Program and being separated from their families is something that I will never forget and will continue to inspire me to work on issues related to immigration and social justice. In the end, I also hold out hope that the participants gained something through the process of talking about their experiences and sharing their knowledge. I certainly thank them for it.

1.8 Outline of Thesis

The results of my research are presented in the following two chapters. Chapter 2 presents findings on the influence of environmental factors on the participants' initial decisions to migrate

to Canada. Beginning with a description of the environmental problems directly experienced by the participants in their regions of origin, the results illuminate that while they all had direct experiences with a variety of environmental issues, none of the interviewees perceived these environmental factors to have influenced their decisions to leave. Instead, the results show that (1) environmental problems were so recurrent that they were not seen as disruptive enough to be a cause of migration, (2) structural factors such as political corruption and ineffectiveness, a lack of economic opportunities, and high costs of healthcare and education were the main motivations for migrating, and (3) the social, cultural and economic capital available to the participants likely precluded them from being the most directly vulnerable to environmental change in the Philippines. In addition to presenting these results, Chapter 2 will include a discussion of the interaction between ‘natural’ and ‘societal’ factors, thus differentiating between the participants’ perception of the insignificance of environmental factors as migration influences, and a broader perspective that nature and society are intertwined and likely do combine in complex ways to contribute to out-migration. The findings contribute to broader discussions in the environmental migration field stressing the multi-causal nature of migration, while offering a perspective that privileges the perceptions and agency of the participants.

The third chapter—written in the form of an article to be submitted to *Population, Space and Place*—builds on the results presented in Chapter 2 by moving the focus away from an investigation of the environment as an influence on out-migration, to investigating the influence of environmental factors on migrants as transnational actors. In doing so, Chapter 3 answers calls by reviewers of the environmental migration literature (Obokata et al., 2014; Piguet, 2013) for greater collaboration between migration scholars and scholars of environmental studies. Specifically, Chapter 3 utilizes transnational theory to discuss concerns related to agency and

(im)mobility when environmental problems occur in the Philippines. It argues that the adoption of a transnational approach can provide a deeper understanding of how environmental factors shape migration experiences across borders for both migrants and those who stay behind. By discussing the continued impact of environmental factors on transnational migrants not only before migration, but also after settlement in a new location, the transnational lens offers an alternative approach to the current literature's focus on environmental factors as causal influences – i.e. as factors of importance only as drivers of migration, and not throughout the entire experience of migration in which migrants maintain ties between places of origin and destination.

Moreover, in tracing transnational connections between the Philippines and Canada, Chapter 3 contributes to current discussions around (im)mobility and mobility rights in the environmental migration field. It argues that these discussions can be strengthened with the use of a transnational lens, and particularly one that examines the transnational social fields that migrants create and maintain across borders. Drawing primarily from research participants' experiences during typhoon Haiyan and the Bohol earthquake of 2013, Chapter 3 sheds light on the shifting power dynamics between international migrants (i.e. those who are 'mobile') and those who stay at home (i.e. those who are 'immobile'), thus complicating more traditional binaries that equate mobility with agency, and immobility with powerlessness (see King, 2012; Glick Shiller and Salazar, 2013; Hanson, 2010). I argue that through the lens of transnationalism, the focus of environmental migration scholars can encompass a broader conceptualization of mobility rights, which not only advocates the right to move, but the right to have agency over one's own (im)mobility, including the right to return.

The fourth chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the results, presenting key findings, and making recommendations for future policy and research.

Chapter 2

Migration Motivations of Filipino Newcomers: The role of environmental and non-environmental contexts

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results from a series of questions asked during both focus group and personal interviews regarding the participants' experiences with environmental problems and whether these were related to their migration decisions. Although I spoke to participants from different environmental and political contexts within the Philippines and investigated connections between environmental and non-environmental factors, none of the interviewees considered the environment to be a migration influence. Thus, in this chapter I outline three main reasons why environmental factors were not perceived as migration influences. Namely, the following sections explain that: (1) environmental problems are so recurrent that they are not seen as disruptive enough to induce migration; (2) structural factors in the Philippines are seen as more important than environmental factors in influencing migration; (3) the social class of the participants may have precluded them from being directly vulnerable to environmental change in the Philippines.

However, in this chapter I also take the opportunity to differentiate between the perceptions of the research participants – who did not see environmental factors as migration influences – and a broader perspective that environmental factors and non-environmental factors (i.e. nature and society) are mutually constitutive. Specifically, the results reveal that the participants could easily discuss first-hand experiences with a number of environmental problems, many of which were described as being connected to structural problems in the country, such as poor urban planning and corruption. That is, the interviewees expressed concerns about issues that do

manifest as “environmental” (e.g. flooding), but that were perceived to be caused by human action and inaction. Therefore, in many ways, “environmental problems” were perceived as “political problems” by the participants. At the same time, the frequent occurrence of natural hazards, their enormous economic and social costs, and the government’s frequent inability to deal with them, exacerbate both economic problems in the country and the participants’ lack of trust in their government, therefore perpetuating the belief that structural factors are the main problems. In this way, I suggest that the environment may indeed be a migration influence because of the way that ‘societal’ and ‘natural’ factors are intertwined.

I also take this opportunity to stress that the issues of poverty and government corruption must be viewed within a larger geopolitical and historical context. The Philippines was occupied by three countries (Spain, the United States, and Japan) before their Independence in 1946, and like many postcolonial nations, the Philippines continues to struggle with the legacies of colonialism, both in terms of continuing internal violence in parts of the country due to struggles over land, as well as due to neoliberal economic policies that were adopted with encouragement from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Francia, 2010). In a story that is all too familiar, these free market policies stripped funding to social programs, decreased the country’s food self-sufficiency while increasing dependence on imports, and force the country to spend one-third of its budget servicing its \$60 billion foreign debt (Francia, 2010; World Bank, 2012). While the results will show that the participants frequently blame the Philippine government for the many problems that they faced, this broader context is important to keep in mind.

Throughout this chapter I will explain that we cannot overlook the importance of structural factors in creating not only environmental problems, but also the social, political and economic conditions that are the main causes of migration from the Philippines. As well, my results stress

that international migrants such as those interviewed for my research, are not the most vulnerable to environmental problems, and that a focus on social class and access to mobility must remain an important aspect of any analysis of the environment-migration nexus.

2.2 Experiences and Perceptions of Environmental Conditions in the Philippines

In this section I present the most significant findings regarding the environmental challenges directly experienced by the research participants in the Philippines, differentiating between those experienced in rural and urban areas. I explain that while the participants personally contended with many environmental problems in their regions of origin, they experienced many of them so frequently that the problems were not perceived as major disruptions. I then present results that show how a transnational perspective affected the participants' perceptions of environmental conditions in the Philippines by describing the experiences of those who had gone back to visit. The results highlight that because environmental problems in the Philippines are so recurrent, they are not perceived as factors disruptive enough to have influenced their decision to migrate away. Furthermore, in discussing the participants' experiences as transnational actors, this section highlights the ways in which living abroad may influence perceptions of environmental conditions, quality of life and settlement location.

2.2.1 Description of environmental conditions directly experienced

A portion of each interview and focus group was spent discussing environmental problems that the participants had experienced in the Philippines. Although most interviewees spoke additionally about issues they had only heard about, the results here focus solely on the ones that were personally experienced. Although they came from a number of different regions and the problems they had experienced thus varied somewhat, it was still possible to see general trends in the participants' experiences based on whether they came from urban areas (15 participants) or

rural areas (8 participants). As Figure 2.1 shows, in both rural and urban areas, flooding was described as a regular occurrence by 15 participants (8 urban; 7 rural), typhoons by 11 (7 urban; 4 rural), and earthquakes by 6 of them (3 urban; 3 rural). Issues more unique to urban settings were: air pollution (7 urban; 2 rural), waste disposal (7 urban; 2 rural), and intense heat and humidity (8 urban; 2 rural). A key informant who is currently the pastor of a Filipino church in Ottawa, but had previously been stationed in many different regions of the Philippines, summed up the array of urban environmental problems this way:

I think that the unplanned development of cities has resulted in people living close to each other where we see a squatter problem, and rivers that are clogged because of industrial pollution and squatters living, taking over the shores of the river. And of course in the cities, like Manila for example, where we have many industrial factories, and where we have many, many vehicles on the road, contribute to the air pollution ... it's not a good place to live because of the smog.

Indeed, many of the environmental problems experienced by the participants can be linked to a wider process of rural transformation that has prompted income diversification and rapid urbanization in the Philippines (Lukasiewicz, 2011).

The environmental issues more unique to rural areas were: water contamination from pesticides, fertilizer and animal waste (2 rural; 1 urban), and personal experiences of mining (1 rural; 0 urban) and deforestation (1 rural; 0 urban). Some participants from rural regions felt that the environmental conditions had been worsening over time. For example, one participant from a farming community in a northern region of Luzon discussed how she used to be able to drink straight from the river, but “nowadays because of so much [pesticide] contamination, you cannot do that, it's not safe” (Rosalyn³).

³ All names used are pseudonyms to protect the participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

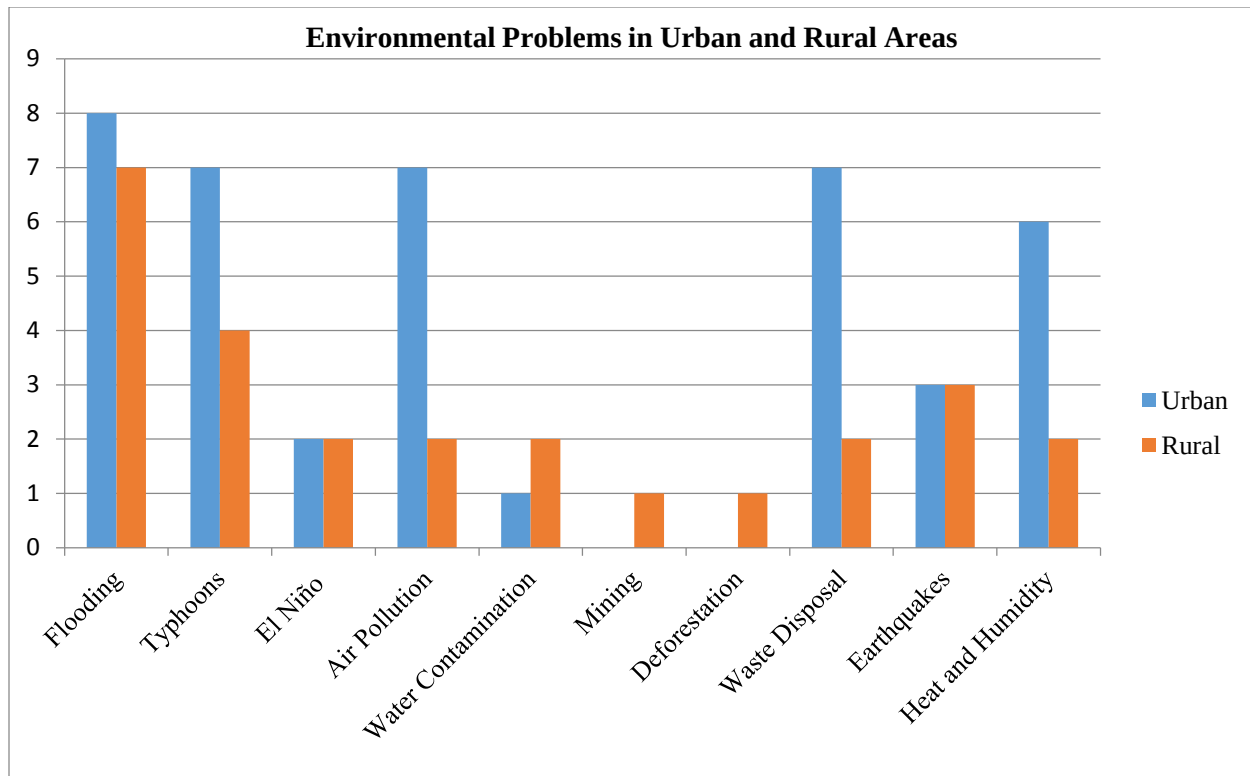


Figure 2.1 Comparison of Environmental Problems Experienced in Urban and Rural areas

2.2.2 Perceptions of environmental problems as normal

Without exception, the participants were able to discuss first-hand experiences with various recurring environmental issues. In turn, the ways environmental problems were discussed could be quite irreverent. For example, in one focus group when we asked the participants to tell us about the environmental problems they had experienced, one participant talked about experiencing flooding in Manila this way:

Well the one that I've really experienced almost on an annual basis— I lived for a long time in Manila as a student and even after when I was working—is the annual typhoon and flood. Classes would get cancelled because of the flood, and that was fun for us because we would go to the mall (laughs). I mean you see it on the news, in the newspaper, the devastation. It's so common that you don't feel bad anymore because it's just so common, the flood. (Tanya)

Rather than see flooding as “devastating,” Tanya viewed it as a potential break from school—similar, maybe, to the way that students in Canada welcome “snow days” in the winter. In more extreme cases, such as where families had been affected by the recent typhoon Haiyan (November 2013), the attitude toward environmental problems was less casual, yet the sentiment remained that the environmental problems were absolutely commonplace and that people were just “used to them” (Charlene). For instance, in a focus group with five caregivers—including one whose family had been affected by Haiyan—I asked whether Haiyan was the worst typhoon they could remember, to which they all simultaneously replied both “yes” and “no.” Trying to clarify, one participant stated: “for now, the *latest* is the Haiyan” (Marilyn), and another added, “way back there’s lots” (Mary Ann), to which the group began to name them all: “Pablo... Ondoy... Milenio.” Even though the devastation of typhoon Haiyan was still fresh in their minds, not all the participants thought that it was even the worst one they could remember. Given the recurring nature of a wide variety of environmental problems in the Philippines it appears that the primary reason why environmental factors were not perceived as influences on migration is because they are simply perceived as normal, everyday facts of life. In other words, environmental problems were not seen as disruptive enough to induce out-migration. This fact was expressed explicitly in a number of interviews and focus groups such as during this exchange with the same group of five caregivers:

Reiko: In any of your experiences, were these environmental factors a reason why you decided to leave?

Marilyn: No...

Mary Ann: Not really.

Marilyn: It’s usually the money.

June: We’re used to that, you know?

Reiko: So you’re just used to it happening every year?

June: Yeah, like typhoons, that's just part of our life yeah.

In another focus group where the majority of participants had arrived as economic and family-sponsored migrants, a similar conclusion was reached:

Tanya: I know that a lot of survivors of typhoon Haiyan are still in that area right now, just rebuilding their homes, because even if there's relocation programs, it's harder for them. I have a friend who survived the storm and she's still in the city where the storm hit ... her home—some parts don't have a roof, they just put a thick plastic ... So, like you mentioned, relocation due to environmental reasons, it's not really embraced or practiced. It's like it's there, it's there.

Flor: They don't even think about it.

Lucas: To be honest it's the first time I've even thought of this reason. Political, social it's common, but environmental?

Tanya: Economic yes! Very right? But environmental...?

Lucas: We just tend to accept what is.

Edwin: (laughs) We get 20 typhoons a year.

In this conversation, the participants express puzzlement over the idea of environmental migration by pointing to the fact that even after a “super typhoon” they know people who stayed. They explain both that relocation is hard for people—likely due to poverty, a lack of social and economic resources, and attachment to community—and even more, that environmental problems are just accepted—after all, they get 20 typhoons a year. In his work on the Philippines Bankoff (2003) argues: “Explanations that account for disasters in terms of a society's vulnerability continue to assume that such a state of affairs is an abnormal one... But for billions of people, in fact for the greater part of humanity, hazard and disaster are simply accepted aspects of daily life” (p.3). Indeed, in Bangladesh—a country that has received much attention for being highly impacted by flooding—a quantitative study found that long-term mobility is only modestly correlated to flooding incidents, and in fact, is more significantly related to drought (Gray and Mueller, 2012). The authors suggest that because floods are a regular

occurrence, successful local adaptive strategies have been developed to deal with floods, making them less significant influences on migration than drought—which occurs less frequently—to which fewer local-level adaptation strategies have been developed. My results suggest that a similar trend may be at play in the Philippines where events like typhoons and flooding are so common that they are not considered disruptive enough to lead to long-term migration. This finding is reinforced by a number of studies that have concluded that mobility related to natural disasters is typically only temporary and short-distance, with people returning to their homes as soon as they are able because they lack the resources, networks, and livelihood options to move elsewhere permanently (Piguet et al., 2011).

2.2.3 Transnational experiences and perceptions of environmental conditions

Another question asked of the participants was whether they had been back to visit the Philippines since moving to Canada. By investigating this avenue I hoped to learn whether their perceptions of the environmental conditions and quality of life in the Philippines had changed after experiencing the cleaner and less polluted environmental conditions in Ottawa. For the thirteen participants who spoke about going back to visit, seven of them described how their experiences of re-visiting the Philippines had been noticeably affected by the worse environmental conditions. One trend was that the interviewees' perceptions of environmental problems were not related to larger, more intangible concepts such as climate change, but rather in terms of corporeal, material experiences with mainly “human-induced” problems. For instance, one participant described the moment she stepped off the plane this way: “you feel the difference ... the heat of the sun is different on your skin” and “I don't know how to explain but you can't inhale deeply” (Rosa). Another described how the pollution made her husband's eyes “really red” (Jemma), while another explained, “When you go out you do like that [pinch] your

nose,” (Ruby) to which another focus group participant added: “your t-shirt is white? It’s gonna be black. It’s really terrible the pollution” (Sarah). In a different focus group, another participant explained how the biggest difference she noticed between Canada and the Philippines was “the environment,” explaining: “It’s very like, very populated in the Philippines. Very smoky, you’re gonna barf in the taxi” (Maricel). Another described returning to the Philippines for a visit and getting “sick three times because of drinking tap water” or getting out of the shower and immediately being “sticky again” because of the humidity (Lucas). Other participants were certain that it had gotten hotter and more polluted over time, although few were inclined to link the changes they had noticed to climate change or ‘global warming.’ As one participant put it: “Well, climate change is very academic. Like growing up I’ve known about this global warming, but as a kid, I mean how can you feel it? How can you care about something that will not affect you – that will affect the future?” (Lucas). For Lucas, ‘global warming’ was an abstract concept that could not be physically felt today and therefore not something that could really be cared about. Even though he and the majority of other participants had physically experienced challenging environmental conditions, these were seen to be just a normal fact of life in the Philippines, and not something especially worrisome, or catastrophic, like ‘global warming’. Importantly, these material experiences of the environment were not simply localized experiences of what it is like to be a tourist visiting Manila, for example. Rather, these experiences were mediated by the fact that the Filipino participants had gone abroad to live in Canada, and sometimes a third or fourth country before that, and then gone back to visit the Philippines. Members of the first (six-person) focus group discussed it this way:

Tanya: That’s interesting. So we sort of agreed that we really accept whatever environment we have, we don’t really think of relocation, but having been here, we see the difference.

Flor: Well, yeah.

Tanya: And we appreciate, like wow, it's so much nicer to have clean streets, no pollution.

Lucas: Drink from the tap.

Tanya: And we notice the difference and we appreciate the difference.

Lucas: Yeah, but I only noticed the difference when I came here and came back. Without that lens...life is.

Flor: That's it!

Environmental issues had not bothered the participants before they migrated, which explains why the environment was not seen as a migration influence; however, after experiencing the different quality of life in Canada, and then going back to the Philippines, they realized the differences. In other words, people's experiences and perceptions of environmental conditions changed only once they were able to compare and contrast their places of origin and destination. Without the transnational perspective, the participants felt that life in the Philippines just was what it was. What is striking, however, is that although the participants expressed appreciating the differences, it had little impact on their desire to remain in Canada permanently. Indeed, 17 of the 23 interviewees were hoping to return to the Philippines eventually. This point will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

2.3 Main Factors Motivating the Participants to Migrate

In this section I discuss the main factors that motivated the research participants to leave the Philippines. The most significant motivation is related to economic conditions in the Philippines, and particularly a lack of suitable professional opportunities. Participants also discussed structural factors such as political corruption and ineffectiveness as underlying factors driving the lack of opportunities and high costs of living (particularly related to healthcare and education). Finally, I highlight the role of migration policies in the Philippines and Canada as important elements for facilitating migration. These findings illuminate that in the context of

recurring, everyday interactions with environmental problems, the participants had much stronger motivations to migrate than the environmental conditions.

2.3.1 Economic motivations

For the majority of the participants, the main motivation to migrate was expressed as economic. In particular, those who arrived through the LCP explained that they were responsible for supporting family members back in the Philippines:

So my main purpose to come here in Canada was ... really to help my family because ... we are poor ... We don't have money. So I think Canada is a lot of opportunity, you know? So I said to myself I want to go to Canada because I want to live a better future. (Jocelyn)

It's a big responsibility for me. Like I'm the only one in the family who finished college and like oh my god, [I felt like] I gotta be the breadwinner for this family. We're nine—imagine we're nine family members—and [that's where I got] my strong determination to go to another place—to earn money to support my family ... I sent my sister, my brother to college too, and I work, work, work hard until they finish college too, and then I think four of them, five they finished college, and then by that time I have to think of myself too. (Justine)

Although Justine's accomplishment of putting five of her siblings through college is astounding, the sacrifices she made for her family were not unique. All 14 of the caregivers were similarly motivated by the desire to send their family members to school or pay for medical care and living expenses for parents and spouses. One extraordinary story belonged to Lily who was preparing to go and work in Taiwan in 2006 when her husband suffered a stroke. She explained that although it was heart-wrenching to leave her husband and two sons (then fifteen and five years old) alone during that difficult time, the stroke made it even more urgent for her to go abroad. As she put it: "I need[ed] to make money, because you know in Philippines if you don't have money you're going to die, because everything you have to pay, especially the hospital. And you have to pay big money." Lily's fifteen-year-old son ended up taking care of things at

home and at the hospital while she was forced to go into debt in order to pay the hospital bills and later, the \$7000 recruitment fee that an agency in Taiwan charged to place her with a family in Canada. Once in Canada, her employers heard her story and loaned her more money which took Lily three years to pay back. Lily has now been in Canada for almost six years, she works seven days a week at three jobs, and she has not seen her husband or sons in eight years, although she has put in the paperwork to have them come to Canada. Stories like Lily's explain that in the context of environmental problems being an everyday fact of life in the Philippines, many people have other, more powerful, motivations for migrating, and these are linked to the high costs of health care and education and the dearth of social support and economic opportunities available.

Even when asked explicitly about whether environmental factors influenced their decisions to migrate, the participants' answers typically returned to their economic motivations and particularly to the fact that they needed to support and provide for their families. In one focus group with three caregivers, the participants were describing the flooding and pollution that they had experienced in Manila; however, when I asked whether they knew, prior to migrating, that the air quality and environmental conditions were better in Canada, they responded:

Maricel: Yeah of course. Yeah. But I don't know, we can't express our feelings like that because our children are there, you know? It's not only really work and money like that?

Justine: Yeah we need to sacrifice for them.

This response is striking in how it places the motive of sacrifice in relation to poor environmental conditions. Yes, they knew the pollution was worse in the Philippines, but to migrate away for an environmental reason would be to migrate away for their own personal gain; instead, they wanted to be clear that they were migrating primarily for work and money for their families.

Furthermore, they know their children are still there and living in those conditions while they are not.

For about two-thirds of the participants, it was not extreme poverty that drove them to migrate, but a lack of suitable professional opportunities or the low salary they were paid for the job they had. The lack of proper compensation combined with high costs of education and healthcare were the deciding factors for many of the participants. It was telling that all of the participants were college or university-educated, but felt that it did not make a difference in the Philippines.

For instance, Jemma explained:

I was working there in a gas station as a book keeper, but because the salary's very low—you know there's poverty in the Philippines—it doesn't matter if you have a good education, your salary is still low. So most of the Filipino people they try to apply outside of the Philippines to improve their lifestyle and to get more money, because it doesn't matter if you are well-educated or not, it's hard to survive in the Philippines. So most of us travel outside to find more jobs and more money to improve our lives. So I went to Kuwait to work there as a nanny, 2 years [before moving the United States and then Canada].

One of the participants who came from a well-off family in the Philippines who migrated as a dependent of a “skilled worker” also bemoaned the fact that there is not enough motivation to stay in the Philippines:

Rosa: I'm also saddened because ... we're being paid to go to university by the Philippines government and I maybe know 10 [classmates] already who've moved out of the Philippines. And I'm one of them and I feel guilty.

Reiko: You do.

Rosa: Yeah because you're supposed to go back ... like the Filipino funded your education and now you leave, so why?

Reiko: But I mean it's hard when there aren't a lot of opportunities I guess.

Rosa: Coming from UP [the University of the Philippines] they say we should have more opportunities, but just the wage differences also, it's incomparable.

Another participant had previously worked for a large humanitarian organization in the Philippines but quit because of corruption in the organization. Although highly experienced, as a middle-aged woman she decided the only option that could provide her family some financial security was to go abroad as a caregiver. While she had what looked like a great job on paper she explained:

It [was] a pretty good job, but the pay is not really, it's not sustaining what you really need. And you have to pay the house mortgage ... and ... whatever you're earning goes out and you don't have any savings at all. And that's what I was looking after too, like I need to save something for my retirement ... and for my kids. And also health-wise, we don't have any insurance. We have to pay for it. And it's very expensive ... the government is not really doing much for the people. Like you pay taxes but you don't really see where the taxes go; there's no provision for the people.

Here, Sophia explains that home ownership, retirement planning, and health care is unaffordable to the majority of the population due to a lack of governmental support. For these reasons, she felt her only option for future financial security was to migrate away from the Philippines.

2.3.2 Political corruption and inaction

Sophia was not the only participant who discussed widespread political and institutional corruption and ineffectiveness in the Philippines as the biggest obstacle to finding a job and earning a decent living. For instance, Rosalyn, who had attended teacher's college, described how it is only through connections that you can get placed in a decent job: "[if] your uncle is the principal, and you know someone working in the government [then] you can just get filled in, but if you are just a common [person], like someone like us, then it is very difficult to enter a job in the Philippines." She then went on to lament: "Crime is so high, and corruption. But that's the truth. That's why you cannot blame people to come to other countries. Because it seems that it's their hope. It's our hope that life will be better."

At the source of the economic motivations of the participants was thus a strong belief that government nepotism, corruption and inaction were the root problems in the Philippines. Transparency International (2014) gives the Philippines a score of 36/100 (0 being very corrupt; 100 being very clean) on its Corruption Perceptions Index and it was very common within the course of my interviews for the participants to mention their own experiences with government corruption, whether through everyday interactions with police or immigration officers, or in relation to disaster relief efforts. Some mentioned in passing that they had “never gotten the chance to vote” (Mary Ann; Marilyn; June) in the Philippines, while others laughed about always having to “go under the table, not over the table” (Marilyn). Others regularly made comments such as: “When there’s money involved, they pocket the money” (Jemma). The need to bribe immigration officials in the Philippines was even named as one of the reasons why many people come to Canada through a third country such as Hong Kong, rather than directly from the Philippines. Stories about corruption in relation to disaster relief for typhoon Haiyan and other previous disasters were numerous, and it was well-accepted that it is better to send relief aid directly to family and friends, rather than through government agencies or even NGOs because there was a good chance the money or supplies would never make it to the right hands. The participants stated almost uniformly that if the government were less corrupt and there were more possibilities to find work, they would not have migrated out of the Philippines.

2.3.3 The role of immigration policy and infrastructure

Finally, it is also important to consider the role of the Philippine and Canadian governments in facilitating out-migration from the Philippines, and thus providing the possibility, or incentive, for Filipinos to choose migration as a viable option to improve their livelihoods.

It has been well-documented that the Philippines has a highly developed immigration infrastructure which facilitates out-migration (Guevarra, 2010; Rodriguez, 2010). Remittances annually make up around 10 percent of the Philippines' GDP (Francia, 2010) and a network of state bodies and private employment agencies have been developed to work together to manage and glorify overseas work, marketing Filipinos as “ideal workers and global commodities” and celebrating migrants as national heroes (Guevarra, 2010). In Canada, immigration pathways such as the Live-in Caregiver Program and the points system that reward the English-language ability, skills and education of Filipinos also have a hand in encouraging migration. Many of the participants were well aware that their skills and language abilities made them desirable applicants for the LCP. For instance, in a focus group with five caregivers, Mary Ann stated: “Usually the Canadians say, ‘oh Filipinos are more talented, they can speak English.’” Others in the same group learned about the various requirements needed to come to Canada under the LCP and strategically took work in another country first. For example, Analyn explained: “Finding a job in the Philippines is not easy, so after my graduation I went to Hong Kong ... they said going to Hong Kong [makes it] easier to go to Canada [where] you can earn a lot of money.” The participants explained a number of different reasons why it was easier to come to Canada through a third country, such as gaining the caregiver experience requirement, earning money, and avoiding the corrupt system in the Philippines:

June: I think the first reason is it's easier to come here if you come from another country because of your experience. (agreement in background)

Marilyn: And it's not that hard to support the financial [requirement] because you have your own money rather than you ask from your parents—you can do it by yourself.

Mary Ann: And then I think another one is [the] process[ing times]. In our country it's really slow. (agreement in background)

June: You will ask something like this (motions a bribe) and they will process your paper.

Other participants were already planning to leave the Philippines to find work, and when they learned of the possibility for family re-unification offered under the LCP they made the decision to come to Canada specifically (see also Pratt, 2008). June explained: “I heard from my friends that ‘oh you can come to Canada, you know spend two years and you can sponsor your family’ and I said ‘oh really?’ So I decided to come here.”

These findings suggest that in the context of a lack of economic opportunities and political problems in the Philippines, the programs and policies in the Philippines and Canada make international migration appear as one of the most viable ways to improve the economic security of one’s family. Moreover, the participants’ stories reveal that many of them were active in seeking out the best pathways and opportunities for themselves and their families by taking advantage of the immigration infrastructure and policies in place.

2.4 The Interaction of Nature and Society

The sections above explained that the participants of my research did not perceive environmental factors as influences on their decisions to migrate, and rather, that structural problems such as political corruption and a lack of economic opportunities were seen as the main motivating factors of migration, while specific immigration policy facilitated the ability to migrate abroad. Nonetheless, the interviews also reveal the existence of linkages between environmental factors and these same structural factors, suggesting that environmental factors do, in fact, contribute to migration decisions in complex ways. These findings are significant in light of debates within the environmental migration literature which have argued that environmental factors are rarely the sole driver of migration, stressing instead that migration decisions are typically multi-causal (Black, 2001; Castles, 2002; Piguet, 2013). Moreover, they contribute to wider interrogations of the nature/society binary within the environmental migration field and beyond, which stress that

nature and society are mutually constitutive (Oliver-Smith, 2012). The findings demonstrate that the line of causality between environmental factors and migration for the Filipino participants is not direct, but that due to the mutual constitution of nature and society, many “environmental” problems are perceived to be “socio-political problems,” and many social, economic and political problems are in fact compounded by natural phenomena (hazards in particular).

One interesting example of the perceived interaction of nature and society occurred when I asked Lily to describe the environmental problems she had experienced in her hometown, but she could not think of any “environmental” problems she had faced:

Lily: Environmental problems? Mmm, we’re in Laguna, in our place it’s a nice place because they have a, you know, a spring? You know spring water come out? ... In my place I don’t think we have any problems.

Reiko: No? No flooding, or..?

Lily: Oh! Flooding! Oh my goodness. In my house! Because [where] we live ... at the back of our house is a river. They said long time ago, like 80s, 70s, the river is deep so no flooding, the water flow very nice because there is no blocking. But now because of the river is not good now? Every rain, we have water in the house.

This exchange struck me as significant because although Lily eventually reveals that flooding regularly affects her household, when initially trying to recall any environmental problems in her hometown she thinks only of the fact that it is a “nice place.” On one hand, this contradiction may be the result of Lily being so used to the flooding that it has become an ordinary disturbance to her social life. On the other hand, by mentioning how the river is “not good now” due to “blocking,” she is pointing to other causes of the flooding that she does not perceive as “environmental” *per se*. Rather, the blocking is due to a range of other chronic problems such as littering and improperly-maintained drainage and sewer systems, which she considered human-induced factors. Moreover, this conversation brought to light that what I (the North American

researcher) might consider an “environmental” problem (i.e. flooding) was perceived by her to be a social or political problem.

In other interviews, and especially focus group interviews, the perception of environmental problems as both “natural” and human-influenced came out through the way that questions about “environmental” problems were answered by discussing a range of social and political problems. In one focus group of five caregivers, the participants were discussing their experiences with typhoons and I asked whether they thought the natural disasters are related to climate change. In addition to directly addressing my question, they started discussing what they believed were the underlying causes of natural disasters in the Philippines, all of which were related to various human actions:

Mary Ann: Climate change? I think so, yeah, like global warming.

Marilyn: It’s because [of] the illegal loggers--that may be part of it.

June: the loggers yeah, they just cut the trees with no permit

Mary Ann: And it’s too hot? Sometimes the water, you know the deep well? Sometimes it’s dried up.

Marilyn: It’s always 40 [degrees Celsius] there, 37 maybe.

Mary Ann: Yeah. And also for example the floods? The garbage, they just throw it like everywhere.

Analyn: You know what’s another factor? The mining.

Marilyn: Ohhh yes the mining!

Mary Ann: in the mountains.

June: I think maybe the drainage too (murmuring agreement).

Although the question was initially about disasters and climate change, the participants start recalling all of the causes of environmental disasters that they have heard about. On one hand, the problems may be linked to global warming—it has been getting hotter—but on the other, they know that the flooding is due partly to littering and drainage. In addition, there are the

problems of mining and deforestation in the mountains—issues which received wide attention in the local media in the wake of typhoon Sendong in 2011 in which these were reported to be the real culprits behind the scale of devastation in Manila (Iqbal, 2011). In other words, the participants were keenly aware that the “environmental” issues they faced were intrinsically connected to a range of other factors that are not necessarily “natural,” but also “human.” Indeed, some participants, such as Lucas, were explicit in putting the blame on humans rather than ‘nature’: “But like the flooding, is it an environmental factor? Maybe, but I’m sure we’re not the only country in the world that experiences these things, so I think it’s urban planning, and environment, and apathy from the people.”

This matter of assigning responsibility to political and individual in/action rather than “nature” is an issue that has been taken up by a number of scholars, including some who have critiqued the concept of the “environmental refugee.” For instance, Oliver-Smith (2012) has explicated:

People will not be displaced by nature but by a set of processes created and driven by human agency, specifically massive production of greenhouse gases that have entrained a series of processes that are transforming global climate and therefore nature. The fact that these processes manifest themselves in and as events that transpire in the environments that we live in or in ways that take the form of natural processes (wind, rain, drought, erosion, etc.) obscures their partial human origins. (p. 1065)

For her part, McGregor (1994) has argued that portraying environmental degradation and natural disasters as external push factors “denies any role for human agency by obscuring both the political nature of many environmental problems and the differential way in which people living in hazardous environments incorporate risk into their livelihoods and in so doing shape the contours of risk itself” (p.120). This sentiment certainly applies to Lily’s experience of living

with floods in which the local climate and landscape, urban planning, littering, and the Philippine government's inability to create proper dumping sites or proper sewage systems all contribute to the flooding in her home. And in response to these issues, Lily told me that her family has taken their own small-scale adaptation of building a second floor on their house so that they have somewhere to go when floods occur, thus shaping the level of risk to their household. As the concepts of vulnerability and adaptive capacity to environmental hazards have illuminated, my research indicates that 'nature' itself is rarely the main problem, but rather, acts as a catalyst that exposes a number of other political and social causes for the scale of the problems faced by those exposed to hazards (see also Blaikie et al., 1994). In this way, the experiences of the Filipino participants also indicate that the social is environmental and the environmental is social. Floods are not externalized 'natural' stressors, but a consequence of the interaction of nature and society.

In fact, in his book *Cultures of Disaster*, Bankoff (2003) further argues that the cumulative effect of hazards in Philippine society is a "significant factor in national politics, deflecting economic policies and programmes ... [while] natural hazard, national disaster, international relief and foreign debt are woven into a complex and symbiotic cycle that maintains the Philippines among the less affluent nations (p.61)." In other words, natural hazards have significant effects on societal functioning. He goes on to enumerate the financial and loss-of-life costs associated with various disasters in recent Philippines history, pointing to billions of dollars in damages caused by the occurrence of frequent natural hazards. Bankoff notes how the country's insufficient resources lead to a dilemma in which providers of disaster relief must grapple with using the resources to either ameliorate the effects of single incidents, or address wider problems, such as poverty, that underlie vulnerability to natural disasters in the first place. To complicate matters,

aside from the sheer amount of money that is needed to cope with hazards, what money is put aside for disaster preparedness and relief efforts is often misappropriated and lost to corruption, as indicated by the stories of the participants of my research. Given this complex web of hazards, poverty, corruption, and lack of resources, it is no wonder that people lose faith in their government's ability to provide for them, even if they acknowledge their own legacy as a postcolonial and 'developing' nation. Even more, this complex situation illuminates that the political and economic problems described by the research participants as the main motivators of their migration are actually intrinsically connected to their country's frequent experiences with natural hazards. Thus, it is incredibly difficult to disentangle 'environmental' problems from structural problems, and even more challenging to determine the root causes of migration. Although the participants may not be directly fleeing a natural disaster, natural hazards do affect the very same societal realms that are described as influencing them to leave the Philippines.

To sum up, on one hand, problems that manifest as environmental, such as floods, are often, at their root, caused by societal problems such as littering and poor infrastructure and planning. On the other hand, the political and economic realms in the Philippines are greatly affected by the frequent recurrence of natural hazards, which deplete economic resources, increase external debt, and further serve to expose the corruption and ineffectiveness of the government. Although the participants may not perceive environmental factors as influences on their decisions to migrate, and do perceive economics and politics as influences, I am suggesting that it is helpful to view the causes of migration as tied to the intrinsically co-constitutive realms that are 'nature' and 'society'.

2.5 The Role of Social Class and Capital in Facilitating International Migration

In this section, I move the focus away from a broad structural analysis and look more closely at the individual characteristics of the participants. In particular, I explain how social class and access to different forms of capital also play a role in determining to what extent environmental factors act as migration influences. This section builds on the work of authors such as McLeman and Smit (2006) who have shown that different capital endowments shape the adaptive capacity of populations exposed to environmental risk, with differential outcomes on whether migration is undertaken as adaptation. It is well-established that people who migrate internationally are not the poorest members of the population, but rather those who have the resources to finance and organize a long-distance move (Stalker, 2008). These resources include not only financial capital, but also access to social and cultural capital in the form of social networks, education, and assets such as language abilities. These other forms of capital not only help people migrate out of their home countries, but also make a migrant more desirable to receiving countries such as Canada whose immigration system values these forms of capital, thus facilitating immigration.

When environmental considerations enter the equation, the factors contributing to who can undertake international migration remain similar. There is some emerging evidence suggesting that those most likely to undertake *long-distance*, environmentally-related international migration are actually the urban elites of a country who may leave due to second or third-order environmental impacts such as an increasing strain on resources due to rural-urban migration, or the desire to provide a better quality of life for their children (McAnaney, 2012; Veronis and McLeman, 2014). More typically, environmentally-motivated migrants undertake short-distance and often circular migration within their own countries or to countries in close physical and cultural proximity to their own (Koser, 2011; Obokata et al., 2014). Importantly, on the other end

of the spectrum, a number of studies have suggested that the people who are most vulnerable to environmental problems are not actually “environmental refugees” (i.e. people who flee poor environmental conditions), but rather those who are unable to migrate away from environmental problems (Black et al., 2013; Gray and Mueller, 2012; Obokata et al., 2014)—a group that may include farmers who fear leaving their only piece of property during a natural disaster; those with no access to transportation; or urban residents who need to meet their immediate needs before they can even consider migrating due to pollution or flooding.

In this section I suggest that as migrants with access to the various forms of capital that enable one to migrate internationally (and not as refugees or temporary workers), the participants of my research were not the most directly vulnerable to environmental problems, thus providing one more reason why environmental factors were not perceived to be migration influences.

Moreover, as primarily lower to middle-income members of Philippine society, the participants may have had enough capital to migrate internationally, but they were doing so with strong economic motivations, not as urban elites who could consider migrating solely for quality of life reasons. The sub-sections below describe how the participants utilized financial, cultural and social capital to assist them in migrating abroad.

2.5.1 Financial capital

For the participants who arrived under the LCP, the majority paid recruitment agencies between \$5000 and \$7000 to place them with a family in Canada, meaning that financial capital was a necessary precondition for migration. This is not to say that everyone I spoke to was wealthy—for 14 of the participants, financing their move was a strategy that involved taking out loans or moving “across country,” meaning they started by undertaking labour migration to other Asian or Middle Eastern countries before applying to come to Canada. Work in second or third

countries such as Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Hong Kong was typically described as exploitative and the circumstances endured are nothing to dismiss. However, some form of financial capital was needed to get to the third country, a fact that was readily acknowledged by many of the participants. When I asked general questions about migration related to environmental problems, a number of people spoke about the financial obstacle that people would face, even if they wanted to migrate. Here is one example from a focus group with three caregivers:

Reiko: If more typhoons of the scale of Yolanda keep happening, do you think that more people will think about moving out of those areas?

Charlene: If they have a choice.

Reiko: If they have a choice?

Charlene: But, it's hard.

Reiko: So people would want to move, but they don't have the money to move? Is that right?

Maricel: You don't have money to, 'cause like for example for the immigrants they need to have big money for 'show' money to come here. And where are you getting that?

Justine: And they need to show the property.

Maricel: Yeah [the] government will ask [about] the property and...

Charlene: If you fly abroad there's a placement fee, and it's a big amount.

Here, the participants explain that even if people want to migrate out of areas that are regularly affected by natural disasters, it is usually not possible due to the financial capital necessary to undertake long-distance migration. Put another way, having access to financial resources makes one less directly vulnerable to environmental problems, and it creates the possibility to migrate away from those problems.

2.5.2 Cultural capital

However, although it is arguably the most important factor, financial capital is not the only factor that enables international migration. High levels of education are also valuable to migrants who want to come to Canada because of the structure of the Canadian immigration system. Thus not surprisingly, every participant had attended at least some college or university in the Philippines. In addition, as elaborated above, many of the participants actively researched and utilized their knowledge of the immigration systems in Canada and the Philippines to strategize the best way to meet the requirements to come to Canada. It is unclear from my interviews, however, what role cultural capital plays in determining who migrates for environmental reasons—it certainly facilitates international migration in general, but whether education plays a role in short-distance, short-term environmentally-related migration, or whether a lack of education inhibits people from migrating away from environmental problems requires further research in the Philippines, and not just with migrants in Canada.

2.5.3 Social capital

Finally, many interviewees spoke of ways that social capital helps facilitate international migration. This was true regardless of the immigration category – i.e., for those who arrived through the LCP, as skilled-workers/economic migrants, or under the family re-unification program. Moreover, the social networks consisted of family, friends and/or acquaintances located in the Philippines, Canada, and/or a third country.

For some, social capital came in the form of acquaintances who pointed them in the right direction to find an employer:

So that's when I decided to communicate with my friend who's based in Bermuda ... She said 'just go to this website and ... check if they have postings of caregivers, housekeepers.

That's the easiest way for you to go.' So I checked [and] that's where I found my employer. (Sophia)

After finding employment through this website, Sophia then had to rely on family to care for her youngest son while she went abroad. She explained:

When I decided to go out of the country I needed someone to look after my youngest son because he's only 13 turning 14. So it's really, really hard for me to decide on that. And I asked my older son, I said, 'would you stop working and look after your brother?' My eldest daughter lives in a different place, it's an hour away from where we live and she's got her own family ... She's not working because her husband is in Italy. So that's mostly how Filipinos live—you have to go out of the country to have better future.

Eleven participants had family members in Canada who sponsored or encouraged them to come, whether through the family re-unification program, or through the Live-in Caregiver Program. For instance, Maricel explained: "My [first] employer was my brother, just to help me, so they sponsored me [through the LCP] and then when I got here I found another employer." Ruby mentioned a slightly different situation in which one family member came first and then triggered a chain of other family members to come after: "My cousin is the first one here and then when she finish her contract to her employer—they are RCMP—all the police officers, they hire nanny [from] my family! (laughs) ... so when they have a party all the employer is there [and] all the nannies, it's like a family reunion." These examples show that there are many ways in which social capital—whether directly or indirectly, in the Philippines, a third country, and/or in Canada—were important factors in facilitating the international migration of the participants. Again, further research would be required to understand to what extent social capital impacts mobility related to environmental conditions.

As with the process of international migration more generally, in the context of experiencing environmental problems, having money, social networks and an education likely helps to reduce

levels of vulnerability, and increase the possibility for long-distance migration. However, possessing these forms of capital by no means implies that one would necessarily choose to migrate abroad. Thus, while we can infer that the different forms of capital available to my participants makes them less directly vulnerable to environmental change, it is important to remember that the links between access to capital, environmental change, and mobility are complex and should be viewed in light of people's personal agency as well. In other words, having access to capital may be an enabling factor of international migration, but is only one factor among many.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I explained that the participants had extensive first-hand experience of many environmental issues; however, they rarely saw any connection between the environmental problems they had experienced on one hand, and the fact that they had migrated, on the other. An important finding of this research is that one of the main reasons why the participants did not perceive themselves to be 'environmental migrants' is because their experiences with environmental issues were so recurrent that the issues were not perceived as disruptive enough to influence international migration. This finding is striking given the popular presumption that areas highly vulnerable to experiencing hazards and events such as flooding would be more prone to experiencing out-migration. My findings suggest that, on the contrary, in experiencing these events so frequently, they are absorbed as normal, everyday facts of life, and not as disruptions that would warrant migration. In the context of recurring environmental problems, smaller-scale adaptations such as building a second floor on one's house are undertaken first. However, I also stressed that it is important to account for the interaction of environmental and non-environmental factors, which together act to influence the decision to migrate. The research

participants explained that economic instability and structural factors, such as political corruption and a lack of social support, are perceived to be the main motivators of migration from the Philippines. However, my research suggests that these human and structural factors shape, and are shaped by, ‘natural’ factors. Many ‘environmental’ problems such as flooding and pollution are indeed influenced by societal problems such as a lack of proper infrastructure and planning, while the political and economic realms are simultaneously shaped by constantly contending with the frequent occurrence of natural hazards.

My findings contribute to current conversations about the need to view migration as multi-causal, where environmental factors combine in complex ways with social, economic, political, and demographic factors. Moreover, I stress that it is important to investigate causality in light of the agency and perceptions of community members themselves, who, in many cases, have motivations for migrating that are not perceived to be linked to environmental factors in any way. As researchers investigating the links between environment and migration, we should strive to listen closely to people’s lived experiences, and address the ways in which underlying motivations for migration such as poverty, government corruption, and a lack of economic opportunities may themselves be linked to environmental conditions, exposure to hazards, and adaptive capacity. Rather than viewing environmental factors as directly displacing populations, the links between environment and migration may need to be viewed in these more indirect ways, and should take seriously the voices of people on the ground.

Finally, my research also contributes to our understanding of the links between environment and international migration more specifically. The findings suggest that due to their social positions and access to forms of financial, cultural and social capital, the participants of my research were likely not the most vulnerable to facing hardship due to environmental stresses in the Philippines.

Future studies may want to focus on mobility and immobility related to environmental factors within the Philippines rather than abroad.

The next chapter builds on the results presented here by demonstrating that although environmental factors were not necessarily influences on out-migration from the Philippines for those I interviewed, they do impact migration as a transnational process. I will show that studying the environment-migration nexus through a transnational lens illuminates myriad connections between environment and migration experiences, even in cases where the environment is not a “push” or “pull” factor.

Chapter 3

A Transnational Approach to the Environment-Migration Nexus: Agency and (im)mobility in the context of global environmental change

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to answer calls for more interdisciplinary dialogue between migration scholars and scholars of environmental studies. Specifically, it utilizes transnational theory to discuss concerns related to agency and (im)mobility within ‘environmental migration’ scholarship by presenting results from a case study with Filipino newcomers in Ottawa, Canada. It argues that the adoption of a transnational approach can provide a deeper understanding of how environmental factors shape migration experiences across borders for both migrants and those who stay behind. By discussing the continued impact of environmental factors on transnational migrants not only before migration, but also after settlement in a new location, the transnational lens offers an alternative approach to the current literature’s focus on environmental factors as causal influences – i.e. as factors of importance only as drivers of migration, and not throughout the entire experience of migration in which migrants maintain ties between places of origin and destination. Moreover, in tracing transnational connections between the Philippines and Canada, this article contributes to current discussions around (im)mobility and mobility rights in the environmental migration field. It argues that these discussions can be strengthened using a transnational lens, and particularly one that examines the transnational social fields that migrants create and maintain across borders. Drawing primarily from research participants’ experiences during typhoon Haiyan and the Bohol earthquake of 2013, it sheds light on the shifting power dynamics between international migrants (i.e. those who are ‘mobile’) and those who stay at home (i.e. those who are ‘immobile’), thus complicating more traditional binaries that equate mobility with agency, and immobility with powerlessness. It argues that through the lens of transnationalism, the focus of environmental migration scholars can

encompass a broader conceptualization of mobility rights, which not only advocates the right to move, but the right to have agency over one's own (im)mobility, including the right to return.

Keywords: Environment; migration; transnationalism; environment-migration nexus; immobility; Filipino

Introduction

Over the past decade, a wealth of research has emerged on the topic of environmental migration, much of it in response to increased concerns regarding the impacts of global environmental change on environmentally vulnerable populations (for overviews see Castles, 2002; Gill, 2010, McLeman, 2014; Piguet et al., 2011). The body of work on the environment-migration nexus is interdisciplinary – involving scholars from the fields of sciences, environmental studies, demography, geography, political science, and law, among others – and covers a range of issues, including, but not limited to: refugee and migration law, policy-making, climate adaptation, and social justice. Nevertheless, there have been calls for more dialogue between disciplines, and particularly between migration scholars and scholars of environmental studies (Conway, 2004; Piguet, 2013; Obokata et al., 2014). The primary aim of this paper is to answer this call by demonstrating how migration scholarship can refine the study and theorization of environmental migration, especially with regard to the roles of agency and structure, markers of difference – including class, gender, ethnicity/race – mobility and immobility, and transnationalism.

Specifically, this paper utilizes the findings of qualitative research conducted with Filipino immigrants in Ottawa, Canada, to discuss concerns related to agency and (im)mobility when environmental problems – particularly disasters – occur in the Philippines. Drawing from the research participants' perspectives and experiences as transnational actors, we argue that the adoption of a transnational approach can provide a deeper understanding of how environmental

factors shape migration experiences across borders for both migrants and those who stay behind. By discussing the continued impact of environmental factors on transnational migrants not only before migration, but also after settlement in a new location, the transnational lens offers an alternative approach to the current literature's focus on environmental factors as causal influences – i.e. as factors of importance only as drivers of migration, and not throughout the entire experience of migration in which migrants maintain ties between places of origin and destination.

Moreover, in tracing transnational connections between the Philippines and Canada, we suggest that current discussions of (im)mobility in the environmental migration field (see Black et al., 2013) can be strengthened using a transnational lens, and particularly one that examines the transnational social fields that migrants create and maintain across borders. Drawing primarily from research participants' experiences during typhoon Haiyan and the Bohol earthquake of 2013, we shed light on the shifting power dynamics between international migrants (i.e. those who are 'mobile') and those who stay at home (i.e. those who are 'immobile'), thus complicating more traditional binaries that equate mobility with agency, and immobility with powerlessness (see King, 2012; Glick Shiller and Salazar, 2013; Hanson, 2010). We argue that the focus of environmental migration scholars must encompass a broader conceptualization of mobility rights, which not only advocates the right to move, but the right to have agency over one's own (im)mobility, including the right to return. In the context of global environmental change, clarifying the scope of mobility rights will be of increasing importance.

In what follows, we first review the relevant literature on environmental migration, mobility rights and transnationalism that will provide the conceptual basis for our analysis. After a description of our case study and methodology, we turn to a detailed discussion of our findings.

Specifically, we focus on the influence of environmental factors on Filipino newcomers' transnational experiences in relation to remittances, environmental risk reduction, family separation and power dynamics, and desire for return.

Environment and migration: from causality to lived experience

Moving beyond initial debates between alarmists and skeptics (for reviews see Castles, 2002; Gill, 2010; Suhrke, 1994), there now is increasing consensus within the field of environmental migration that environmental factors usually interact with other factors (economic, social, political, demographic) to influence migration decisions (Black et al., 2011; Piguet, 2013). This shift is significant because it suggests that scholars of environmental migration no longer see migration causality as a relatively simplistic linear process from environmental hazard directly to displacement or migration. Rather, it is increasingly acknowledged that a range of factors need to be taken into account to understand the environment-migration nexus (McLeman, 2014; Piguet et al., 2011). However, the field is quite young in terms of the breadth of empirical studies available, especially with regard to the role of environmental factors in international (vs. internal) migration, and most of the few case studies available concentrate on regions of the Global South, and less so from the Global South to the Global North (Obokata et al., 2014). Furthermore, most scholarship on environmental migration has a more sustained focus on the environmental aspects of the question than the migration side, and scholars of migration have been slow to contribute to this body of work (Piguet, 2013). As a result, most empirical work in this field still operates within a relatively basic push/pull view of migration where environmental variables such as rainfall or natural disasters are investigated as factors that either “push” people out of one country or region, or “pull” them into another. For instance, the first objective of the European Union's multi-year mixed-methods EACH-FOR (Environmental Change and Forced

Migration Scenarios) project was to explore and describe the *causes* of forced migration in relation to environmental change (Jager et al., 2009), while a majority of quantitative studies also focus primarily on whether various environmental factors induce out-migration – whether due to drought (e.g. Findley, 1994; Henry et al., 2004; Nawrotzki et al., 2013), changing land and agricultural productivity (Gray, 2009; Hunter et al., 2014; Massey et al., 2010), or natural hazards (Hunter, 2005; Reuveny and Moore, 2009).

Although investigating the environment as a causal influence is necessary due to the urgent need to address the impacts of global environmental change, it is equally important to broaden our scope and to examine migration experiences in all their complexity, including their transnational nature. We thus argue that a transnational perspective can illuminate the myriad ways that environmental change is affecting (and will affect) individuals throughout the migration process – from pre-departure to post-settlement – and across the mobility spectrum – not only those who migrate, but also those who do not. Moreover, a transnational lens can provide insights into the role of migrants in mitigating the effects of environmental problems on non-migrants, for example by reducing the environmental risk of their families or assisting with disaster relief through remittances. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that environmental problems occurring in a migrant's place of origin can impact their own experiences of settlement and family separation, often leading to feelings of powerlessness and thus complicating the correlation of mobility and agency. Transnationalism provides a useful avenue for investigating the multiple and complex ways in which migration and environment are intertwined, moving beyond a focus on causal influences to acknowledging the differential ways that environmental factors are experienced and/or mitigated by both migrants and those who stay behind.

Mobility rights and environmental change

The right to mobility – that is, the right to move as well as the right to stay and return – has become central to debates in the environmental migration literature and raises significant issues related to agency and representation (see Black et al., 2013; McNamara and Gibson, 2009).

According to migration scholars (Blomley and Pratt, 2001; Hanson, 2010; Oberman, 2011), the notion of mobility rights illuminates the continuity between mobility and immobility, rather than presenting them as a binary opposition where mobility is infused with freedom and agency, and immobility with vulnerability. As Hanson (2010) explains: “mobility *and* immobility can be empowering for some people in some circumstances, just as each can be seen as oppressive for others in other situations” (p.11, emphasis in original). To further illustrate the complicated linkages between mobility and agency, Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) point to the precarious situations of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, i.e. mobile people who do not necessarily choose to be mobile and/or do not have control over their mobility.

Although the right to (im)mobility has been raised as a key issue in the environmental migration field, instead of utilizing a broad conceptualization of mobility rights, most scholars of environmental migration argue for either people’s right to move *or* their right to stay. Those who argue for the right to move (Birk and Rasmussen, 2014; Black et al., 2013; Gray and Mueller, 2012; Obokata et al., 2014) are often responding to ‘alarmist’ discourse (e.g. Christian Aid, 2010; Myers, 2002) in which migration is viewed as a negative, or unnatural, outcome. These authors advocate that instead, migration should be viewed as a positive adaptation that can be taken by individuals and households (see also Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013 for a review of this argument outside of environmental migration literature). They stress that it is not necessarily environmental ‘refugees’ that should be of concern, but rather the people who are affected by

environmental problems that lack the resources to migrate away from environmental problems in the first place. Authors such as Birk and Rasmussen (2014) thus argue that the focus should be on removing barriers to mobility rather than trying to curb migration, thereby focusing on peoples' *right to move*.

Advocates for the right to stay (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012; McNamara and Gibson, 2009; Mortreux and Barnett, 2009) frequently point to the situation of the residents of Pacific small island states, which are predicted to be the sites of large-scale displacement due to sea-level rise, but in which many community members are actually rejecting the “climate refugee” label that has been imposed on them (McNamara and Gibson, 2009). Instead, they explain that many residents are fighting for their *right to stay*, or at least, for their right to “migrate with dignity” (Kwong, 2013; see also McAdam, 2011) rather than as victims of events beyond their control.

The key issue at stake for advocates of the right to move *and* the right to stay is not whether one is “mobile” or “immobile” *per se*, but that people have agency over their own (im)mobility in relation to environmental problems. At the same time, there is also the crucial issue of representation, which is quite well-expressed in the case of the Pacific islanders who do not want to be cast as helpless victims in need of saving, but could be better addressed in popular and scholarly literature on immobility which has the potential to equate immobility with vulnerability and victimhood. Indeed, following typhoon Haiyan which hit the Philippines in November 2013, the popular media was filled with headlines referring to the “typhoon victims” (e.g. Dempsey, 2014; Subramanian, 2013). It has not been sufficiently theorized that advocates for the right to move and the right to stay within the environmental migration literature are arguing for the same ends. We suggest that through a broader notion of mobility rights, concerns surrounding the right

to move and the right to stay can be brought together by recognizing that the root issues are mostly related to representation, agency, and the right to choose.

One limitation of other studies is that migration still tends to be conceptualized as a relatively linear movement from point A to point B, as if the process of migration severs ties between people and their places of origin and destination – and this in spite of a wealth of migration literature that documents and theorizes the multiple and complex linkages that migrants develop across space (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). It is in this context that we now turn to the field of transnationalism in order to address issues of representation and agency of migrants and non-migrants in relation to processes of environmental change. In recognizing that migrants maintain multiple linkages between origin and destination (e.g. between migrants and non-migrant members of households), the lens of transnationalism demonstrates that in practice, a continuum exists between ‘mobile’ people and ‘immobile’ people, and between mobility and immobility more generally (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013). This lens thus provides an avenue through which to reconceptualise the focus of environmental migration literature (away from a dominant concern with causality) to a focus on connections and power dynamics across transnational social fields; in doing so, our aim is to forward a broader conceptualization of mobility rights that privileges agency and the right to choose in the face of environmental problems.

Transnationalism and environmental influences on migration experiences

It is now well-recognized that migrants actively maintain ties – cultural, social, economic, political – that connect their places of origin and destination. This transnational approach “replaces the traditional binary focus on linear movement from pre- to post-migratory location, and replaces it with a model that highlights the recursive nature of movement associated with international human mobility” (Walton-Roberts, 2004, p. 362). While transnationalism emerged

in the late 20th century in conjunction with processes of globalization—the increasing flows of goods, capital and ideas—the theory does more than just signal a relationship between migration and globalization. Katharyne Mitchell (2003) uses the term “transnationality” to emphasize that transnational theory leads to a radical re-thinking of concepts such as nation, place, culture and identity that were previously understood as discrete and autonomous categories rather than intrinsically interconnected: “The emphasis on relations between things and on movements across things forces a reconceptualization of core beliefs in migration and geopolitical literatures, which formerly emphasized state-centric narratives and territorially defined national borders” (p. 74). Although borders continue to be concrete mediating forces in the lives of migrants and non-migrants, the condition of transnationality challenges a state-centric and methodologically nationalist view of the world (Amelina and Faist, 2012; Mitchell, 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). In showing the interconnectedness of notions such as nations and identities that were previously viewed as discrete, a transnational perspective has the potential to reconceptualise other binary categories that define migrants and migration (see King, 2012), including binaries that are commonly used in the environmental migration literature with little critical questioning of their relevance such as: internal/international, nature/society, and forced/voluntary among others (for critiques see Baldwin, 2012; Oliver-Smith, 2012; Piguet, 2013). A transnational perspective recognizes the lived experiences that exist between the opposite ends of these dichotomies, thus challenging not only methodological nationalism, but also persistent binaries that categorically oppose migrants and non-migrants, such as mobile/immobile, active/passive, and giver/receiver (Carling, 2008; Glick-Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Toyota et al., 2007).

The concept of “transnational social fields” adds to the reconceptualization of migration by stressing the multiple connections that migrants create and maintain between their communities

of origin and destination (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). The act of migration involves not only the individual who moves, but also non-migrant members of households (Carling, 2008; Huang et al., 2008; Parrenas, 2005), and the people and landscapes of wider communities in origin and destination (Faist, 2008; Jackson et al., 2004; McKay, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Moran-Taylor and Taylor, 2010). Transnational families are one important component of social fields. A number of authors show how transnational migration affects the everyday practices of families, and document the troubling effects of family separation on children (Huang et al., 2008; Pratt, 2012). By moving the focus away from migrants alone, the concept of transnational social fields points to the complex power dynamics that exist in relationships between migrants and those who stay. Carling (2008) describes the dynamic nature of these roles as the “asymmetries of transnational relationships” where both migrants and non-migrants experience “vulnerability and ascendancy at different times and in different contexts” (p.1453). As we elaborate below, the notion of asymmetrical transnational relationships is useful for understanding how relationships between migrants and stay-at-homes are altered by the occurrence of environmental problems, where both ends of a transnational relationship may experience both power and vulnerability.

In a recent review of empirical studies on international environmental migration, we (Obokata et al., 2014) identified a number of avenues for further investigation both in terms of empirical scrutiny and theorization, including issues of agency, mobility, and the role of markers of difference such as class, gender, and ethnicity/race, among others. After providing a brief overview of our case study and methodology, we build on these recommendations by using the findings of our qualitative research with migrants in a receiving country of the Global North to reconceptualise issues of agency and mobility in relation to environmental conditions. By turning

to the work of migration scholars and adopting a transnational approach, we provide a more holistic analysis of the environment-migration nexus.

Filipino migration in Canada

In 2010, the Philippines became the largest source country of newcomers to Canada with 152,300 Filipinos having arrived since 2006 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Representing 13 percent of all newcomers at that time, the Philippines sent more migrants than either China or India, which have traditionally been the top sending countries. According to the 2006 Census, 303,195 immigrants and 436,190 people total reported “Filipino” as their ethnic origin, making up 1.4 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Of those reporting “Filipino,” 7,925 reside in the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA,³ making up 0.7 percent of the city’s population. By 2011, the number of Filipinos in Ottawa-Gatineau had risen to 9,355 with almost two-thirds (6,015) being female (National Household Survey, 2011⁴). Although the Filipino community in Ottawa-Gatineau is small compared to the communities in the traditional immigrant receiving cities of Toronto and Vancouver, akin to the immigration trend in the rest of Canada, it grew rapidly in 2006-2011 with 2,490 new arrivals, a greater number than arrived in 1991-2001 (2,325) (National Household Survey, 2011b).

The Philippines was also a country of interest for our project because it has been ranked the third most vulnerable country in the world to weather-related extreme events such as typhoons, tsunamis, earthquakes and sea-level rise (Birkmann et al., 2011; World Bank, 2013). The

³ Canada’s capital region includes the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau located on the interprovincial border between Ontario and Quebec.

⁴ The 2011 National Household Survey is a voluntary survey that Statistics Canada introduced to replace the traditional mandatory long-form census. It has been criticized for presenting skewed results due to varying response rates across neighbourhoods, cities, and income-brackets. However, its data are used here because the last long-form census is from 2006 and is quite dated.

powerful “super typhoon” Haiyan (locally named Yolanda) and the 8.2 magnitude earthquake in Bohol that affected the Visayas region in October and November 2013 are just two recent examples. Furthermore, non-climate-related factors such as deforestation, illegal logging, and resource extraction are affecting environmental security in everyday life, while also exacerbating the effects of extreme events (World Bank, 2013). As in many parts of Asia, the process of urbanization has contributed to a number of other issues including: flooding, improper waste disposal, and pollution (Akers and Akers, 2005). While a large portion of our results focus on the participants’ experiences with natural disasters, given the wide-array of environmental challenges faced, significant findings related to environmental conditions such as air and water quality are also discussed and contribute to the need for more scholarly research on the links between environment, migration and urbanization (Moriniere, 2012; Obokata et al., 2014).

Methodology

The results presented here are part of a larger, collaborative project investigating how environmental conditions in countries of origin influence the migration decisions of newcomers to Canada. As one of the first projects to interview migrants about environmental influences in a receiving country in the Global North, we took a qualitative, exploratory approach (see Veronis and McLeman, 2014). Fieldwork for this study took place in Ottawa, Canada, between December 2013 and March 2014⁵. Recruitment was done with the help of gatekeepers in the community and later through a “snowball-sampling” approach. In total, two key informant interviews, four focus groups (with three to six participants each), and nine personal interviews

⁵ Data collection coincidentally occurred in the months just following the occurrence of the Bohol earthquake (October 2013) and typhoon Haiyan (November 2013) in the Visayas region of the Philippines. The timing was not intentional, but given the nature of our research topic, the occurrence of these disasters was taken into account and influenced both the interview guide and the responses and experiences of the participants.

were conducted with a total of twenty-five participants. Due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research, the primary criterion for recruitment was that participants had arrived in Canada within the past ten years. All interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, conducted in English, and took between 30 minutes – 2 hours. All interviews except one were tape-recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim and then coded with the data analysis software Dedoose.

Most participants (18/23) arrived since 2006 and the majority (21/23) were women in spite of efforts to have a balanced representation of gender. Efforts were also made to include individuals who came to Canada under a variety of migration categories: four participants arrived as “economic” migrants (e.g. skilled workers); five through the family-reunification program; and fourteen (female) participants arrived through the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), a contentious labour immigration program brokered by agencies throughout Asia and the Middle East that recruits mainly women, who are primarily from the Philippines, to provide child and eldercare in the homes of Canadians (see Barber, 2008; Kelly et al., 2009; Pratt, 2004). Importantly, after completing the required 24-48 months of the program, the caregivers are able to apply for permanent residency and then sponsor their families to Canada through a family reunification program (Kelly et al., 2011), providing a major incentive for many applicants (see Pratt, 2008). However, at the time of the interviews none of the participants who had arrived under the LCP had yet been able to successfully sponsor their families. Although all had submitted the immigration paperwork, eight of them had been waiting at least five years for family reunification—a key issue for understanding our findings.

The stories of the nine participants who arrived under the economic and family reunification categories are also included, although it should be noted that their migration and settlement

experiences differ in that they were all able to migrate with at least one family member. While all participants had at least some post-secondary education, most of them nonetheless worked in relatively low-wage, ‘low-skilled’ occupations (see also Kelly et al., 2009).

Lastly, it is important to note that the Philippines is a geographically and culturally diverse country in which different regions experience different environmental, political and social conditions, particularly with respect to differences between rural and urban communities.

Recruitment did not target people from specific regions or according to rural/urban categorizations; however, we achieved a fairly inclusive sample with participants from each of the three main regions of the Philippines: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

A transnational approach to the environment-migration nexus

We now present our findings on the influence of environmental factors on the lives of Filipino migrants and their transnational networks in Canada and the Philippines. We utilize the concept of transnational social fields to problematize binaries related to causality, agency and (im)mobility by discussing the shifting dynamics of power and vulnerability of migrants and non-migrants when environmental problems occur in the Philippines. Drawing primarily from interview conversations related to 2013’s typhoon Haiyan and earthquake in Bohol, we contribute to broader discussions surrounding mobility rights, the role of remittances, the separation of migrant families, and the dream of return shared in a context of global environmental change.

Using a multi-scalar approach we begin by discussing the role of migrants in contributing to disaster relief at national and community scales. We then turn to the ways in which the participants contribute to environmental risk reduction at the scale of their households in the Philippines. In both sections the participants are presented in the more traditional representation

of migrants as active givers and supporters of their families and communities “back home.” This representation is then complicated in the following sections which present results describing the participants’ own feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability in relation to the experiences of other members of their social fields when disasters occur. The last section of the results then uses a transnational lens to discuss the issue of mobility rights in the context of global environmental change by discussing the participants’ desire to return. Throughout, representations of agency and power dynamics in relation to environmental change and mobility are problematized, and the transnational approach to the environment-migration nexus is presented as an avenue through which to reconceptualise notions of environmental risk, agency and mobility rights.

Remittances for disaster relief at national and community scales

As media coverage demonstrated after typhoon Haiyan in November 2013, Filipino communities globally came together to contribute to disaster relief efforts through Filipino churches, organizing fundraisers, or sending money and care packages (CBC News, 2013; Chu and Jordan, 2013; Esmaguél II, 2014). In Canada alone, an estimated \$40 million was raised by the government and individuals in the two weeks following the typhoon (Government of Canada, 2013). As we elaborate below, the remittances provided by migrant communities are increasingly being discussed with regard to their potential as a development panacea, seen by some as the answer to lifting migrants’ home communities out of poverty, regardless of whether the evidence points to long-term developmental potential (see De Haas, 2005; Faist, 2008). Nonetheless, the environmental migration literature has paid limited attention to these debates, particularly with regard to the role of remittances for disaster relief provided by international migrants residing in the Global North, and even less to how remittances can be viewed in relation to power dynamics and agency. We suggest that a transnational approach is useful for investigating the ways in

which remittances may reduce the environmental risk and vulnerability of communities in the Philippines, with a number of important insights into issues of social justice for those who provide or have access to remittances and those who do not.

Contributing to disaster relief was perceived as an important action for nearly all of our study participants, all of whom contributed in some capacity to relief efforts for typhoon Haiyan and for other typhoons in the past. One of them put the reason for community action this way:

Filipino communities in general, when big disasters happen, they really feel bad, whether they have family members that are affected or not, they feel almost ... obligated. Maybe they're thinking like 'hey we're living here really well', I mean, not even wealthy, but we don't get floods and disasters here, and people think 'I'm sure we can give some of our money, we can really help'. And so, whether it's through church or other organizations, they just get together and at least give financially, directly to family members or to organizations, churches.

Here, Tanya,⁶ a youth worker, speaks of the commitment that many Filipino migrants make to assist those in need in the Philippines. She suggests that the migrant community partially feels obligated to help because it does not have to suffer through the same floods and disasters in Canada. The “super typhoon” starkly represented the differences in quality of life between the Philippines and Canada, and prompted acts of solidarity between Filipinos transnationally – between the Philippines and other countries, and within the diaspora abroad – thereby creating transnational social fields that extend beyond household connections.

Moreover, we learned that the acts of generosity by overseas Filipinos stretch beyond the realm of community fundraising; migrants in Canada were organizing to actually perform the work that they perceive the Philippine government should be doing. As one participant whose family was “back to zero” after typhoon Haiyan put it: “all [the destruction] is still there, nobody's cleaned

⁶ All names are pseudonyms to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

it. Because politicians, they're not helping others, they're just helping themselves" (Mary Ann). Another expanded: "even [to get] rice, just a little bit of Asian rice, [officials ask:] 'Did you vote? Did you vote for me?' If your name isn't there [on the list,] you don't get anything" (Marilyn). Some focus group participants explained that they were helping to organize a walk to raise money for resettlement so that people would have "something to start with," which seemed necessary to them because "until now, see, the government didn't do anything" (Marilyn). The transnational social fields maintained between the Philippines and Canada are perceived by the participants as crucial determinants in assisting those affected by major disasters due to the absence of the state. Moreover, the reach of the social fields seems to scale up and down, encompassing specific individuals and communities known to the migrants, and simultaneously taking on a much larger role as a substitute for support at the national level.

Furthermore, these findings contribute to current debates on the relationship between remittances and development assistance (see de Haas, 2005; Faist, 2008). On the one hand, as the quotes above demonstrate, without disaster relief (and remittances more generally), the people affected by disasters may not receive the help they need from more official channels. On the other, the assistance provided by remittances lets the government off the hook for providing for the needs of people affected, and responsibility for coping with disasters and managing risk is left up to the migrants. According to some interviewees, this tactic is not even covert. Ruby's family who were affected by typhoon Haiyan did not receive relief aid because government officials knew that they had family in Canada. She and the two other members of her focus group explained:

Ruby: My brother said ... 'we don't have anything to eat' because ... [I] could not send [anything] right away ... But [the government officials] choose that if you have siblings in other countries they don't help you!

Sarah: Yeah [they] don't give food ... don't give anything.

Ruby: they won't help you because they thought that your family will send something!

Jemma: the government! It's just not fair, right?

This example suggests that being part of a migrant household does not always lead to risk reduction; in fact, it may increase the risk of those who stay behind, especially in the short-term after disasters when infrastructure is not in place to receive boxes and money from relatives.

These results point to a number of significant issues which highlight the relevance of using a transnational social fields approach to studying the environment-migration nexus. First, the issue of remittances is introduced as a major factor in providing disaster relief, with transnational migrants in Canada explicitly indicating that they are performing the work that they perceive should be done by the Philippine government. Remittances are sent to help with recovery and rebuilding, thus contributing to communities on the ground gaining the ability to remain near their homes, rather than be displaced in the long-term. Moreover, the participants indirectly point to a number of larger concerns, including the social justice implications of their actions. For one, how much are they, as transnational migrants, being held responsible for coping with environmental problems in their home countries and communities? Furthermore, what impact does it have for non-migrants to have a migrant in their household, and what types of stratifications are created between migrant and non-migrant households in the Philippines? Our results reveal the complexity of transnational migration in both contributing to environmental risk reduction and relief through remittances – although not necessarily in the short term as per Ruby's anecdote – but perhaps also creating divisions between the haves and the have-nots. Moreover, as we elaborate in the sections that follow, relying on migrants to continually take on the government's role of social, economic and environmental support raises complications related to the relationship between mobility, agency and power dynamics at a number of scales, including between migrants, their families, communities, and the state.

Remittances and risk reduction at the household scale

In this section we further discuss the role of migrants as supporters of non-migrants in their social fields, but take a closer look at the role of remittances in risk reduction at the household scale. As explained above, remittances are a significant aspect of maintaining transnational social fields. Moreover, there have been recurring debates about whether migrants' remittances should be considered a successful or sustainable form of development assistance as opposed to a form of conspicuous consumption (see Faist, 2008; de Haas, 2005).

Scholarship on the Philippines indicates that remittances most often go towards household consumption, education and medical assistance for family members who stay behind (Tabuga, 2007; Yang, 2008). This was also the case for most of our participants who nearly all were regularly sending remittances to family and friends in the Philippines for these reasons. We learned, however, that remittances were also significant for mitigating the environmental risk of family members who stay behind. For example, Lily's remittances allowed her family to build a second floor on their house so that they can go somewhere safe during almost monthly flooding incidents in their home. She explained: "What if the water goes high? They would die! So that's why I decide[d] we [were] going to put a second floor. So now [when it floods] they're okay." This finding reveals that investments in home additions can also contribute to reducing the environmental risk of households with effects on safety and security (see also Predo, 2010) and thus aligns with scholars who challenge the idea that remittances are primarily used for conspicuous consumption with no long-term developmental potential (de Haas, 2005).

In addition, remittances may reduce environmental risk by increasing the financial security of the non-migrant recipients, enabling them to evacuate their homes in the face of significant environmental challenges. Previous research related to a range of types of environmental change

has shown that land ownership is a conflicting variable in environmentally-related international migration (Obokata et al., 2014; Predo, 2010): in some contexts it provides the financial capital to migrate abroad (Gray, 2009); in others it is negatively correlated to international migration (Massey et al., 2010). Our findings provide a transnational perspective on mobility, home ownership and disasters.

The account of one of our participants, Sophia – who had previously worked as membership manager for a large humanitarian and disaster relief organization in the Philippines and as a result had additional knowledge and experience – illustrates two contrasting responses in the face of natural disasters depending on the presence of a migrant member in the household or not. On the one hand, she explained that many Filipinos refuse to leave their homes in advance of typhoons because they are scared of leaving their possessions – an example where property ownership can impede mobility or migration:

So, they really stay there just to ... protect their property. Like if you have your own house ... they'd rather stay there for security reasons because they would always say that, 'oh if we leave our place somebody would get in and rob the things.'

Another participant, Ruby, whose family lives in an area frequently affected by typhoons, elaborated on the decision—and risk—of remaining at home this way: “they do not want to leave their house because that’s the only place that they have. They go upstairs, they put their things upstairs, [but] then when the house is gone, everybody’s gone.”

In contrast, Sophia described the following order she gave to her teenage sons who live without her in Cavite (a province adjacent to Manila):

When I was talking to them during the typhoon wherein our floor almost got flooded, I told them ‘don’t even wait for the water to rise! You have to get out of that place, secure yourself, go to higher grounds! Just leave everything, just close the house, your safety is more important!’

Interestingly, owning property in these cases seems to have conflicting effects on mobility.

While Sophia observed through her work that many people who own property are too scared to abandon it in advance of disasters, her own family was able to evacuate their home with her encouragement, perhaps because they had more financial security due to her remittances and the knowledge provided by her former job. In other words, higher levels of human and economic capital may have an influence on the different actions taken. Furthermore, Sophia's own perspective of safety may have changed after moving to North America and had effects on the way that she viewed her sons' situation. While clearly there are many factors at play, having one migrant in the family may affect whether preventive evacuation is undertaken. Given that landownership is a complex variable in environmentally-related migration, consideration of the impact that the presence of a migrant member in a household may have in reducing the vulnerability of non-migrants, is a useful avenue for future investigation.

Using the lens of transnationalism, these findings show not only the role of remittances in materially reducing a migrant household's risk to environmental problems, but also that a migrant's changing notions of risk and safety may influence the actions of the household members who stay behind. These findings are significant in illuminating the roles of migrants and non-migrants within their social fields, but also gesture to broader questions regarding the differences between non-migrants. That is, discussions regarding the vulnerability of 'immobile' people who cannot/do not migrate away from environmental problems, should increasingly strive to consider differential outcomes of environmental change on different groups of non-migrants—specifically, between migrant households vs. non-migrant households.

The results presented thus far point to the role of transnational migrants in reducing environmental risk of non-migrants, thereby re-enforcing more standard representations of migrants as supporters of non-migrants. Our participants, who have access to international mobility, play a large role in assisting those in their social fields without it, and indeed, take on a role of power and responsibility when environmental problems occur. However, the next sections aim to complicate issues of agency/power and mobility by discussing how environmental problems shape power dynamics within transnational families in complex ways, whereby migrants are also placed in positions of vulnerability when environmental problems affect their families 'back home'.

Environmental problems and the power dynamics of transnational families

Scholarly and popular literature have the tendency to equate mobility with agency, and immobility with the lack of it (Hanson, 2010). The issue of power/agency in relation to mobility is significant when conceptualizing responses to environmental change and disasters, particularly with regard to understanding who moves, who stays, and how much choice is presented to affected communities. Our findings show that transnational households undergo complex negotiations of power, agency and vulnerability when environmental problems affect their 'home' communities. These findings contribute to debates regarding mobility and immobility within the environmental migration literature by pointing to the ways in which transnational experiences of major environmental hazards complicate common values attached to mobility and immobility.

In this section we draw primarily from the stories of two participants, Ruby and Maricel, each of whom participated in a different three-person focus group interview, and whose experiences (particularly with regard to family separation) highlight well the feelings and transnational

experiences of a number of the other participants. Ruby's family was directly affected by typhoon Haiyan, while Maricel's family was directly affected by the 8.2 magnitude earthquake in Bohol in 2013. Although the aim of our project is primarily to investigate environmental change rather than hazards (such as earthquakes), Maricel's experience nonetheless provides important insights into issues of vulnerability and power in relation to transnational families when environmental problems occur. Maricel's story highlights the ways in which environmental problems exacerbate her negative experience of family separation and increase her own feelings of vulnerability, while also providing an entry point to the next section in which we discuss mobility rights. Ruby's story, on the other hand, highlights the agency and power of non-migrant members of her family during typhoon Haiyan. We start by discussing her experience.

Agency and (im)mobility

Ruby has been in Canada since 2002 working as a caregiver and self-employed cleaner. Some of her immediate family still resides in Aklan, an area of the Visayas that was directly affected by typhoon Haiyan in 2013. She has been active in supporting her family members in the Philippines, particularly by sending money for her siblings' post-secondary education. In the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan, Ruby and the other two focus group members (who were her close friends) were diligent in preparing and sending boxes to Ruby's family and community. As mentioned above, however, Ruby was unable to send the boxes right away due to a lack of infrastructure, and her family was simultaneously denied access to relief aid because the government officials knew that they had family members abroad. Nonetheless, when Ruby spoke about the actions taken by her family members during the typhoon, she was not describing helpless victims awaiting her support; rather she spoke in depth about their actions as supporters to other non-migrants in their community during the typhoon, explaining: "Oh they're the ones

who were helping all the people who [need], like the old people.” Ruby’s brother in particular was tireless in assisting less mobile community members by going “house to house to check that all the people [were] safe,” even heroically carrying a paralyzed woman who lived far away to safety in the community’s church. Ruby explained that typhoon Haiyan was not the only instance in which her family acted as supporters on the ground: “a lot of people come to my brother because my grandparent was a councillor in my town [for 20 years] and she help[ed] a lot of people [with] food, shelter, things like that...if they need a house we provide the bamboo because we have a farm, or [if] they need[ed] food, we gave.”

Ruby’s experience is significant in that provides a clear demonstration of the dynamic nature of agency and power across transnational space in the face of environmental problems. As a household existing transnationally, both Ruby in Canada and her brother and other family members in the Philippines took on different active roles within the household and community at different times. While Ruby’s role as a migrant allowed her to send relief boxes to her brother and other members of their community, and to send her other siblings to school, her brother played an active role in assisting the community on the ground; even as a non-migrant, he was certainly not ‘immobile’. Furthermore, it is likely that the social position of Ruby’s family enabled her to migrate in the first place, meaning that her broader family circle was instrumental in her ability to be in a position to send remittances and boxes. This example shows that representations of immobility in the face disasters should be tempered with acknowledgement of the agency of people affected on the ground. Moreover, this example points once again to the importance of a transnational lens in examining issues related to environmental risk, and the role that transnational migrant households as a whole can play when disasters occur.

Mobility and feelings of powerlessness during the Bohol earthquake

Maricel is a mother of three whose family was directly affected by the 8.2 magnitude Bohol earthquake in October 2013. Her story is striking in revealing how a transnational lens, rather than a “push-pull” lens, can add to our understanding of the links between environment and migration. Her experience of the earthquake highlights that environmental factors can and do influence the lives of migrants—maybe not during their initial decision to move, but through their worry for family members ‘back home’. The following excerpt from her focus group interview points to two key issues that warrant further analysis. First, Maricel describes how the environmental problems affecting her family intensified the worry and pain that she was already experiencing due to an extended separation from them, and even more, that her physical distance led to her feeling a lack of agency. Second, she points to the agency and decision-making power of her family who assert their own right to (im)mobility:

Can you imagine when there was a big earthquake, my family, my children, are sleeping outside! And [they] still don’t want to go somewhere. And I told them ‘evacuate now to another place, you have to go now!’ But they don’t want to leave! I don’t know why! I’m so scared I can’t sleep, knowing there’s no electricity, they’re using candles, and there’s no store open. How can you buy food? And there’s no trip as well, there’s no boat ... there’s still aftershock, every day, every day. And they’re used to it. And the people are just outside. The people from the hospital? They’re just outside in the streets! And they don’t want to leave! I can’t imagine that.

Characteristically, the non-migrants affected by natural disasters are viewed as the victims and receivers of aid, while the migrants are the ones actively working to support them. In this excerpt, Maricel, the migrant in Canada, describes that she is the one who feels helpless, scared and unable to sleep, while her family in the Philippines are the ones sleeping outside, feeling the aftershocks, but asserting that they do not want to leave. This example suggests that typical

categorizations of mobility and immobility (i.e. active/passive; powerful/vulnerable; giver/receiver) are more complicated than we might initially imagine.

As the conversation continued, we turned to the issue of mobility rights by discussing whether the people affected by the earthquake actually *do not want* to leave, or whether in reality, they *cannot* leave, an avenue which was insightful for pointing to issues of agency and mobility rights:

Maricel: yeah, yeah maybe [people can't leave]. There's no money? [But] I have a sister-in-law in Switzerland, she still wants to go home! Even if there's aftershocks she still wanted to visit. I don't know.

Reiko: Is it maybe because their family and community is there?

Maricel: Yeah, but you know, there's always news every day that ... the water will go up and swallow the place because our place is a small island ... And they're not scared. I don't know.

Reiko: But you're scared— for their safety.

Maricel: I am scared. But myself, I want to go home still (laughs). I'm going home [to visit] next month.

Beginning with the issue of agency, when it comes to her family suffering through a disaster Maricel is, of course, incredibly worried. But this conversation raises the question of how much the worry is related to feelings of guilt and helplessness brought about by distance, in addition to actual perceptions of risk. Maricel and her sister-in-law are not scared for their own physical safety, but rather feel helpless to protect their families. To expand, we turn briefly to a statement made by another interviewee, Sophia, a mother of two who described the following feelings of helplessness in her role as a mother when her sons experience typhoons:

It's really hard, especially for me, being away and I can't do anything! If I'm there I would be more comfortable that I can deal with that, but it's like, even if my kids are grown-ups already I always think I can do better than them, especially when it comes to their security. It's really hard, it's hard. But you have to do what you have to do!

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (2010) writes about the shame that is placed on many Filipina caregivers who make the decision to go abroad and leave their own children to look after others' children. This guilt seems to be exacerbated in the face of environmental disasters—indeed, both Maricel and Sophia are aware that in Canada they do not have to experience disasters of the same scale that their families face in the Philippines. Thus, not only are they not in the Philippines protecting and caring for their families, but they are also living in physically safer conditions.

Maricel's story shows that although she does not physically experience the earthquake, she is nonetheless profoundly impacted by it through her role as a transnational migrant. Moreover, her own feelings of guilt and helplessness are exacerbated by the occurrence of the disaster because through her transnational connection to her family, she is able to communicate with them, but unable to physically assist them. Thus, Maricel experiences a loss of agency, even as her family asserts their own. These power dynamics are even more complicated if we take into account how gender roles may be at once re-inscribed and re-scripted in relation to mobility and vulnerability. That is, even as the “breadwinner” with access to international mobility, Maricel still feels responsible for emotional, environmental and economic care within her Philippine household, and her own feelings of power and vulnerability are constantly negotiated in relation to her broader social field.

Issues of agency and the representation of immobility are also apparent in Maricel's story and point to important concerns related to the right to stay and the right to return. When Maricel describes her family's experience during the earthquake, she continually repeats that although she tells her family to evacuate, they and the other members of the community do not want to leave. Maricel claims she does not know why, but that her family and community are

nonetheless asserting their own right to stay. Indeed, rather than actually being trapped, unable to leave, and waiting for help, Maricel's understanding is that members of the community in Bohol are choosing to stay and actually turning down offers to go elsewhere. Furthermore, Maricel and her sister-in-law assert their own desires to return, even in the face of an earthquake and its aftershocks.

By looking at these personal experiences of migrants as members of transnational communities, we can see the myriad ways that the agency of migrants and non-migrants shift in relation to the other members of their social fields and according to social constructions of gender, structural constraints in origin and destination (which contribute to extended family separation), and attachments to home (see also Toyota et al., 2007). The aim here is not to detract from the seriousness of exposure to natural disasters and the actual, physical risks that they pose, but to take a closer look at the nuances of individual stories and complicate the typical roles often prescribed to migrants and non-migrants in these situations. These examples demonstrate that to be mobile, even as an international migrant in the Global North, does not necessarily mean to have all the power and choice, and to be immobile does not mean to be passive and without agency; rather, these positions are dynamic and constantly negotiated throughout the migration process and mobility spectrum. Moreover, Maricel's story points to the very important issue of mobility rights. Even in the face of an 8.2 magnitude earthquake in which a member of their family is willing to get them into a safer area, Maricel's family asserts their right to stay. Affected by natural disasters or not, Bohol is their home, and they feel compelled to stay even as aftershocks force them to sleep outside. The next section further addresses these issues of mobility rights by discussing the finding that the majority of participants highly value their right to return.

The right to return

As in the case of Pacific Islanders who have fought for their right to stay and right to migrate with dignity in the context of climate change, our results provide insight into mobility rights with regard to the “right to return” in the face of deteriorating environmental conditions (see Jeffery and Murison, 2011 for a review of scholarly work on return migration without an environmental focus). Our findings show that 17 out of our 23 participants are seriously considering moving back to the Philippines eventually, rather than settling in Canada permanently. Even though they all discussed knowing the differences in environmental conditions and appreciating those differences (e.g. clean air, no flooding, less garbage), this knowledge did not translate into making Canada a more desirable place to live. While the main reasons people expressed for wanting to move back were to be with family and to not have to end up in a retirement home (more for the older generation), or to go back and help their country (more for the younger generation), when asked whether thinking about the differences in environmental conditions would influence their decision to move back, only a few made comments such as: “oh yeah, the lack of water, air, and you know trash everywhere” would make them think twice about returning (Tanya). The rest stressed that even knowing of the differences in environmental qualities between Canada and the Philippines, they would still want to return. For Charlene, whose family still has a home in a rural area of the Philippines, environmental factors matter in her choice of settlement location, but not enough to persuade her to stay in Canada:

For me I want to move back still because I love my country. It's just that it's too hot. And not everybody can afford air conditioning, unlike here. It's more convenient to stay here than in the Philippines, but still I [would] love to go back [to] my home town.

For others, such as Rosalyn, it was, in fact, the climate in Canada that would encourage them to move back to the Philippines:

[I] already agreed with my husband that we cannot stay until we get very very old. ... when we are weak already, [and] we cannot work here. Especially [because of] the weather, you know? The weather is not so convenient for older people. It's good for [if] you're still young, but ... I don't think I can stay here.

For Rosalyn, whose grandfather was killed in a violent land-grab in the north of the Philippines when she was a child, climate matters, but the heat in the Philippines is seen as preferable to Canada's cold winter, regardless even of the fact that she described her hometown as "not so safe." Others, such as Justine, felt that regardless of the environmental conditions, there was simply an obligation to return and contribute to making the Philippines a better place:

In my opinion, everybody [should not] just think [about] going away from the Philippines. How about let's go back to the Philippines? How about, you know, we can improve it. .. How about [we] just go back, and whatever we learn from other countries we apply it in our country?

For Justine, a commitment to improving the situation in the Philippines shows that she attributes greater importance to non-environmental factors when considering whether to stay in Canada in the long-term. In the context of the lack of state support described above, Justine was not the only interviewee who spoke about her dream to go back and improve the social, environmental and political situation in her home country. For some, the time spent in Canada was seen as a step through which to gain the education, money and experience necessary to go back and improve conditions in the Philippines.

Many of the participants spoke in quite nostalgic terms about their dream of return, demonstrating a deep attachment to their home communities and lifestyles. The following conversation with a group of three caregivers highlights this nostalgia well:

Justine: The province is, life there is nice. You can eat what you want: greens, fresh, healthy.

Maricel: You're satisfied and contented.

Justine: And just grow [food] at the back of your house.

Maricel: Here you have to buy everything.

Charlene: Or [over there] you can go to your neighbor and ask, 'Can I have some?'

Justine: You don't need to buy.

Charlene: And you'll survive.

Maricel: Well the food is cheaper there! And you don't have to pay taxes as well.

Justine: Simple life.

Charlene: Simple life and happy.

The 17 participants who hope to return to the Philippines embody the transnational nature of many migrants' lives who experience attachments to more than one place. Moreover, the dream of return runs contrary to more traditional, linear narratives of immigration, and indeed the Western belief that all of the Global South dreams of coming to the North. A key informant who was the pastor of one of Ottawa's Filipino congregations elaborated on the importance of community and attachment to place when discussing peoples' responses to natural disasters:

Filipinos anyway, have learned to live with very basic, minimum things in life, like a tin roof on your house and plywood for your walls. A one-room house is good enough [and] many homes are even more flimsy than that. But the community is what makes Filipinos come back, this is where my grandfather was buried, the family of my mother is here, this is where my work is.

As other work that has been conducted on perceptions of risk to climate change has noted, the risks of relocation are sometimes perceived to be greater than the risks of staying in disaster-prone or environmentally marginal areas (Dun, 2011; Hugo, 2011; Patt and Schroter, 2008). That is, access to family, community, livelihood activities, and connections to ancestral lands may outweigh the benefits of living somewhere with better or less dangerous environmental conditions.

Looking at the links between environment and migration from a transnational perspective shows that even after experiencing life in Canada—a place with greater security, less pollution, less humidity, and no natural disasters on the same scale—the participants maintain such deep connections to their home communities that they hope to return. As in the case of the Pacific islanders who are asserting their right to stay, this finding points to the need to critically assess that migration as adaptation may not correspond to people's actual perceptions and desires for their futures and that we must remain cognizant of people's full spectrum of mobility rights. However, whether transnational migrants are given the option to return to conditions that are safe and habitable in the long term is highly dependent on how global environmental change is addressed by the wider international community.

Conclusions

In lending a transnational perspective to the environmental migration field, our findings demonstrate that the environment is linked to migration experiences as more than a potential causal influence—a reminder that we must remain conscious of lived realities of (im)mobility that do not correspond to simple push/pull calculations. We explained that environmental factors influence the remittances that migrants send to non-migrants with the potential to reduce environmental risk; they exacerbate the worries created through family separation; and they influence power relations between migrants and those who stay at home. The concept of transnational social fields illuminates the continuity between those who move and those who stay, and demonstrates that among the 'immobile', there may be those who want to stay and those that want to move, and among the 'mobile' there may be those who want to stay, move, and return.

For scholars who study environmental migration, we stress that a transnational analysis can be a useful framework for highlighting the interconnectedness of people and places across and between state borders. Environmental change and migration are inherently transnational and should be seen and addressed as such. We concur with Jackson et al. (2004) that: “We must not let the often elite ideology of transnationalism blind us to the practical and emotional importance of attachments to and in place” (p. 6). Taking this perspective, it is important to acknowledge peoples’ own perceptions and desires for their futures and the attachments that they may maintain to ‘home’ regardless of the environmental conditions and the risks that return might pose. Furthermore, the values attached to mobility and immobility are not clear cut, and we as scholars must remain conscious of the dynamic nature of agency and vulnerability in the context of environmental problems.

We suggest that fieldwork should increasingly attempt to connect origins and destinations, tracing migrants’ networks and seeing how movement affects environmental risk and power dynamics between transnational families, and between migrants and the state. More qualitative case studies that speak to people who have already migrated would prove useful to improve understandings of how environmental factors are influencing migration decisions already, and how they may or may not influence future settlement locations. It would also prove useful to investigate how state migration policies and practices contribute to creating the conditions in which migrants become responsible for mitigating and adapting to environmental change. In the case of the Philippines, how much are migrant women in particular being held responsible for addressing environmental risk in their home countries, all the while being emotionally drained by immigration policies that knowingly keep them separated from their families? How are power dynamics negotiated across space for transnational families, and what gender roles are inscribed

or re-framed for the better or for worse? Furthermore, if remittances are being relied upon as development assistance to reduce risk to disasters and cope in their aftermath, what does this mean for those households that do not have the capital to send a family member abroad in the first place? What types of divides are being created between those who have access to remittances and those who do not, and how might this be exacerbated by environmental and climate change? The ways in which a transnational lens can contribute to our understanding of the environment-migration nexus are many, and we urge future research to continue to investigate the possibilities of using this framework to address the issue of mobility rights and social justice in relation to global environmental change.

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Chapter 4

Summary and Conclusions

4.1 Introduction

This thesis took a qualitative approach to investigating how environmental conditions in the Philippines are influencing migration to Ottawa, Canada. Using semi-structured focus groups and personal interviews, it contributes some of the first ever empirical research on the links between environment and international migration to Canada. This qualitative approach makes an important methodological contribution by privileging the role of agency and the personal perceptions of the research participants. In addition, while previous work in the field has primarily investigated the environment as a “push” factor of migration, this thesis makes an important theoretical contribution by utilizing a transnational perspective that highlights the multiple connections that migrants maintain between their places of origin and destination. In so doing, it provides important insights for the study of the environment-migration nexus on the role of migrants’ remittances for environmental risk reduction, experiences of family separation, agency/power, and mobility rights in relation to environmental change. The key findings and contributions are outlined below.

4.2 Review of Key Findings

- **Environmental problems are not perceived as influences on migration from the Philippines to Ottawa, Canada.**

Although the research participants were able to speak in depth about first-hand experiences with many environmental problems in both rural and urban areas, the environment was not perceived as an influence on any of their decisions to migrate. The main reasons can be summarized as: (1) environmental problems such as flooding, typhoons, and pollution are so constant or frequent

that they are not perceived as disruptive enough to lead to long-distance migration; (2) structural factors such as political corruption, a lack of social support and job opportunities, and a well-developed immigration infrastructure provide the main motivations for people to migrate out of the Philippines; and (3) access to financial, cultural and social capital assisted the research participants to migrate, precluding them from being the most vulnerable to environmental problems.

- **Nature and society are intertwined and thus may contribute to migration in a more holistic sense.**

Although the participants did not perceive environmental factors to be influences on their decisions to migrate, the interviews revealed complex linkages between ‘environmental’ and ‘non-environmental’ factors. Due to the constant and dynamic interaction of nature and society, the results suggest that from a broader perspective, the environment was indeed a migration influence, albeit indirectly. The mutual constitution of nature and society could be seen in a number of ways: for one, the participants could easily discuss first-hand experiences with a number of environmental problems, such as flooding, that were described as being connected to structural problems in the country, such as poor urban planning and corruption. That is, the participants expressed concerns about issues that manifest as “environmental,” but were believed to be caused by human action and inaction. Therefore, in many ways, “environmental problems” were perceived as “political problems” by the participants. At the same time, the frequently occurring natural hazards in the Philippines have major economic costs that divert income and resources away from other social and economic needs in the country. Thus ‘nature’ has major impacts on the country’s social, political and economic functioning. Moreover, the participants perceived rampant government corruption and ineffectiveness in the face of disasters, which

exacerbated their lack of belief in the government, and perpetuated an acceptance that structural factors are the main problems (and migration motivations) in the Philippines.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 shows how other empirical case studies have found strong links between economic and environmental motivations for migration, with authors such as Afifi (2011) utilizing the term “environmentally-induced economic migration” to describe mobility that occurs in subsistence households that face losses in natural capital due to environmental degradation. In the case of the Filipino participants of my research, the line of causality between environmental and other motivations for migration is not so direct. This finding may be due to the fact that only a small number of participants came from rural, farming households directly dependent on natural resources. The connections between human and natural factors in the Philippines are thus mainly seen from a broader perspective that acknowledges the constant dynamic interaction between the ‘social’ and the ‘natural’.

- **Environmental factors influence the process of transnational migration.**

Environmental factors may not have been influences on out or in-migration, but they did affect the participants’ experiences of re-visiting, the remittances sent, the power dynamics of transnational families, and experiences of family separation. Viewing the participants’ lives as transnational helps to shed light on existing connections between environment and migration, even if the environment is not a “push” factor. The transnational perspective is useful for illuminating not only the cross-border practices of the research participants (e.g. discussing remittances), but also the ways that environmental problems impact the entire experience of migration for both migrants and non-migrants, with broader implications for our understanding of (im)mobility, mobility rights and access to agency and power in the context of global environmental change. The significance of these findings is elaborated below.

4.3 Primary Contributions of Thesis

- **Bringing transnational migration theory into scholarship on the environment-migration nexus.**

The majority of previous work on the environment-migration nexus has been conducted by environmental and demography scholars who have primarily considered the environment as a potential “push” factor, and to a lesser extent “pull” factor, of migration. An important contribution of this thesis is that it brings well-established migration theory into discussions of the environment-migration nexus. Specifically, the lens of transnationalism connects places of origin and destination, demonstrating that migration is not undertaken by relatively simplistic, or uni-directional ‘push-pull’ calculations, but rather that it is a process through which connections are maintained between origin and destination.

Empirically, by acknowledging that migrants maintain connections to multiple places, this thesis highlights how environmental factors impact not only material, but also emotional forms of transnationalism—e.g. not only remittances, but also perceptions of environmental quality and safety; increased worry and concern; and feelings of vulnerability and power. The results also illuminate that even in the context of having experienced extreme environmental conditions such as typhoons, most of the research participants hope to return to the Philippines—a finding that complicates ideas about migration as an ultimately desirable adaptation to environmental change.

Theoretically, by suggesting that lived experiences of migration are not confined by territorially defined borders in which ties are severed between ‘origin’ and ‘destination’ communities, transnationalism challenges a methodologically nationalist view of the world. This perspective thus provides the opportunity to re-think other binary categories, starting with rigid notions of geographical scale (i.e. the nation as a natural category), to binaries such as:

internal/international, voluntary/forced, and economic/environmental. Furthermore, the concept of “transnational social fields” provides a useful lens for investigating connections that are created or maintained across state borders, particularly as they encompass migrants and non-migrants. The tension between mobility and immobility is now an issue at the heart of the environment and migration conversation, and migration theory has much to contribute to the discussion. While previous work related to environment and migration has argued for either the right to stay or the right to move, my research brings these two concerns together under the umbrella of a broad notion of mobility rights by reiterating that mobility rights entail the right to move, return, and stay. In addition, I argue that future discussions about mobility and immobility must remain cognizant of the tension between environment, structure and agency. While immobility is often equated to powerlessness, and mobility to agency, my results demonstrate that these categories do not adequately represent the dynamic relationship between agency and mobility in relation to environmental problems.

- **Bringing environmental considerations into scholarship on Filipino transnationalism.**

My work also contributes to a large and growing body of work about global Filipino migration. While much of it has taken a transnational perspective, previous work has not had a strong environmental focus. My results reveal that the transnational social fields created between the Philippines and Canada relate not only to realms labeled economic, political and social, but also to the environment. For instance, remittances to families, communities and the nation may be used to reduce risk to environmental problems or help to re-build communities after natural disasters. In addition, environmental problems impact the experiences of transnational families by exacerbating the worries of family members who are abroad and affecting power dynamics in

the family. Investigating transnational relationships with an environmental focus lends an important perspective to our understandings of the interactions of (im)mobility, agency, power, and gender by complicating the common conflation of immobility with powerlessness. In particular, when natural disasters occur in the Philippines, the people who stay may be at once “vulnerable” and active agents on the ground, while the migrants abroad may be active fundraisers, while simultaneously feeling powerless to help their loved ones. Many Filipino migrants in Canada are women who have left their families in the Philippines, and my research suggests that there must also be a recognition of how socially constructed roles of gender may be at once re-enforced and re-written in response to environmental problems experienced in the Philippines, with women acting as powerful supporters of their families and communities, but simultaneously taking over the state’s caring role and facing constant worry due to a forced separation from their families.

- **Empirical results from a North American “receiving country.”**

This project collected some of the first-ever empirical results about whether environmental factors are influencing migration to Canada. Canada’s immigration system currently accepts immigrants for economic, humanitarian, and family-reunification reasons and does not question whether environmental factors played a role in people’s migration decisions (Veronis and McLeman 2014). Therefore, in Canada (as elsewhere), little empirical evidence exists to explain whether environmental factors in other countries are influencing migration flows through the immigration categories that do exist. Given the interest of governments, policy-makers, NGOs and scholars about environmental or climate ‘refugees,’ this case study provides some much needed evidence of what role, if any, environmental factors have in influencing international migration.

- **Privileging agency and personal perceptions.**

Due to methodological choices, this project also contributes to our understanding of personal perceptions about environmental change. In taking a semi-structured, qualitative approach, this research privileged the interviewees' personal stories, allowing their experiences to guide the direction of the research and the conclusions reached. This choice is evidenced through the way that the theory I explored in my initial research proposal shifted from a major focus on "social-nature" to a focus on transnationalism due to the themes that emerged throughout the research process. A qualitative focus on perceptions of the relationships between environment and migration is an important but undeveloped research tactic in the field, and my project demonstrates that a focus on individual stories has much to offer about our understandings of how environment impacts people's choice of settlement location, desire to return, and economic and social relations maintained between their origin and destination communities.

4.4 Policy Recommendations

My findings have implications for a number of policy-oriented issues. First, environmental factors exacerbate the negative effects of labour immigration policies that enforce family separation. The LCP explicitly denies applicants the possibility to migrate with their families—a situation that has drawn criticism and concern from a number of NGOs and migration scholars (Kelly 2014; migrantworkersrights.net; Pratt, 2012). My findings add to the chorus of voices that document the very troubling nature of this policy. Rather than duplicate criticisms that have already been made, I add that consideration of the environmental risk of families who remain in the Philippines could be taken into consideration when processing applications for family reunification. In the past, Canada has fast-tracked visa applications for families affected by extreme natural disasters (e.g., Haiti 2010) and my findings suggest that extending this initiative

to families affected by recurrent problems, such as typhoons and flooding, would be a productive next step. No family should be forced to live apart for upwards of five years, and making wait times shorter for families affected by environmental problems would be one step towards correcting this situation. This suggestion equally applies to participants of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in Canada who should be given the opportunity to apply for extended stays or permanent residency based on the nature of the environmental conditions in their regions in the Philippines.

Additionally, although this finding was not included in this thesis, I feel compelled to mention that two of the participants who arrived under the LCP spoke of abusive situations with their first employers, and who, at the time, were unsure of where to turn for support. I thus strongly urge labour brokers, immigration officials, and settlement agencies in the Philippines and Canada to provide practical information to LCP applicants on where they can turn for help should they need upon arrival in Canada. Moreover, this suggestion aligns with broader concerns outlined by organizations such as the National Alliance of Philippine Women to abolish the live-in requirement of the LCP which opens caregivers up to increased abuse (Tungohan, 2012).

Drawing from results related to mobility rights, agency, and representation, I also urge climate change activists, scholars and policy-makers to take seriously the desires and attachments of people on the ground who are affected by environmental change. Although well-intentioned to argue for the right of ‘climate refugees’ to be re-settled in other countries, this call must be tempered with the realization that not all environmentally ‘vulnerable’ people want to leave their homelands, and those who do, may not want to be labeled as “refugees” (i.e. helpless victims). Therefore, future activism and policy must think creatively about ways to provide employment opportunities, skills training, and education exchanges as ways to allow people to migrate with

dignity. Even more, the need to address global environmental change, and especially climate change, is as serious as ever, and is the only avenue through which we can address the right to stay and the right to return in the long-term.

4.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As addressed in the introduction chapter, I would have liked to recruit more male participants to learn of their unique experiences of migration and settlement. Additionally, more in-depth interviews with participants from rural areas would have been useful for disentangling the different experiences and perceptions of environmental problems in rural versus urban areas. This brings me to my next suggestion that future research should consider targeting newcomers who arrived under a wider range of immigration categories to see how the experiences of those arriving under skilled worker, family-class or other temporary worker designations differ or align with those arriving under the LCP. In particular, interviews with other temporary workers would be a crucial next step for continuing this research and providing a more inclusive perspective of the ways in which Filipinos migrate internationally to Canada, and how their motivations for migration may be linked to environmental factors, specifically for those arriving from rural, farming households in the Philippines. Next steps could include recruitment in regions of Western Canada in which the proportion of temporary workers is much higher than in Ottawa. On the other hand, I would also be curious to learn whether higher-income ‘skilled workers’ arriving from urban areas may in fact be more likely to migrate in order to seek out a better quality of life, with environmental challenges such as air pollution, garbage and flooding playing more of a role in their decision to migrate.

Empirical work conducted in other North American or European receiving countries is also encouraged.

I would also suggest that collaborative fieldwork undertaken in the Philippines would be useful for understanding whether environmental factors influence short-distance migration, and how factors such as education and social networks play a role. How do people living in hazardous environments perceive risk and do they actually desire to migrate into other areas? Furthermore, tracing transnational connections between migrants and their stay-at-home households would allow a better understanding of the non-migrants' perceptions of environmental risk and their own feelings of power or lack of it. I would also be interested to see Gray and Mueller's (2012) quantitative study from Bangladesh replicated in the Philippines to see whether in the context of recurrent typhoons and flooding, it is in fact El Niño and drought that cause more migration. Finally, I reprise the calls of a number of other scholars in encouraging more empirical work on the environment-migration nexus in general, and especially approaches that take into account perceptions, agency and the complex interactions of environmental and non-environmental factors.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide: Key Informants

Introduction of Project

A number of international studies have suggested that environmental issues such as droughts, floods, land degradation and natural disasters are affecting migration patterns in many parts of the world already, and are expected to increase in coming decades as a result of climate change. For instance, you may have heard recently about a man from Kiribati who is trying to claim asylum in Australia for being a climate change refugee. Given that Canada is one of the leading destinations for international migrants and also a country with many environmental amenities such as fresh water and green spaces, Canadians might be wondering if environmental conditions in key immigrant source countries are influencing people's decisions to come to Canada.

We have been working on this project for about two years and have already interviewed a number of newcomers from regions of Africa, Haiti, and Vietnam. Many of these migrants have spoken to us about issues such as deforestation, problems related to urbanization and quality of life in cities due to pollution and garbage, issues related to water scarcity and drought, and of how these issues relate to the economic and political situations in their home countries.

As you may know, the Philippines is now one of the largest source countries of newcomers to Canada and also a country that deals with environmental issues such as natural disasters, sea-level rise and also things like mining and deforestation. So, I am curious to know if there are any links between environmental factors and migration from the Philippines.

I'd like to begin by speaking to you about your organization and your role within it so I can get a better idea of who your clients are and what your relationship is with them.

Introduction and Q's about Organization

- Please introduce yourself. Tell us your name, your job title and what your job entails. Activities of your organization.
- Can you provide a general description of the clients/people you work with? (e.g. regions of origin, types of migrants (temporary, skilled worker, LCP, etc.), age groups, socio-economic status)
 - What are their main needs? What types of services do they use most?

Is there anything else you want to share about your job/organization before we move on?

Environmental Factors and Migration

We would like to discuss the potential role of environmental factors in migrants' decisions to leave their place of origin.

- We have clearly heard a lot about Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan recently. In your opinion, is there a relationship between disasters like this and people deciding to migrate to Canada?
- Are you aware of any other environmental problems occurring in the Philippines?
- Among the migrants you have worked with, are you aware of these environmental factors having any influence on their decision to leave their region/ country of origin?

If so...	If not...
• In such cases, do migrants leave ‘voluntarily’ or ‘involuntarily’? How do these factors compare with non-environmental factors (e.g., economic, political, social, cultural, other) in terms of significance? Can you explain? • Among the migrant groups you have been working with, have you noticed whether environmental factors might becoming more prevalent (or not) than in the past? • Have you noticed any trends or patterns in terms of regions/types of migrants where environmental factors seem to be influential? (from urban or rural regions; types of livelihoods or socio-economic class; levels of education; gender; ethnic groups; etc.?)	• Thinking of environmental problems mentioned above, might these combine with non environmental problems to lead to migration? For example • Informal settlements combined with disasters? • Mining projects combined with political issues/inaction? • Economic issues linked to agriculture?

- Is it possible that some people affected by environmental issues do not make it to Canada?
 - Are there any specific groups that might be ‘left out’? If so, which ones? (e.g., women; children; those who are poor, have low levels of education, no knowledge of Canada’s official languages; those with health problems; etc.)?

***Canadian Immigration (Depends on interviewee)**

We are now interested in hearing about migrants’ experiences with the Canadian immigration program.

- To the best of your knowledge, is the current immigration program open to taking into account environmental factors as a criterion to accept new migrants to Canada? (What are the main challenges and/or barriers that such migrants face with the current/existing Canadian immigration program and policy?)
- Have you noticed any ‘strategies’ that migrants affected by environmental problems might develop to leave their countries/to come to Canada? (e.g., through the family

- reunification program; as sponsored refugees; as skilled migrants; relying on existing networks or established communities; other)
- How big a role do processing centres/recruitment agencies play in assisting Filipinos to come to Canada?
- Do you think environmental factors should be given consideration in Canada's immigration policy? If so, can you make any suggestions on how?

Environmental Factors and Settlement

We now want to ask you about how environmental factors may have shaped migrants' selection of a destination.

- Why do the migrants you work with decide to come to Canada as opposed to another country?
- Do Canada's environmental characteristics/qualities play a role in migrants' decisions to come here?
 - If so, which ones? (e.g., climate, green spaces/nature, air quality, availability of resources such as safe water, etc.) (How do migrants find out about these conditions?)
- (If not) what about if we take a broader understanding of the notion of "environment"? Is Canada perceived to provide a safer, cleaner environment? How important are these factors in relation to non-environmental factors?
- Within Canada, why did the migrants you work with decide to settle in Ottawa?
- Have you noticed any trends or patterns in terms of people from specific regions in the Philippines choosing to come to Ottawa specifically?
- Did environmental factors play a role? If so, which ones? (e.g., city size, green spaces/presence of nature, climate, location, air quality, etc.)
- Did they settle in other cities/provinces before coming here? Explain why they might have relocated within Canada.

Environmental factors and settlement process/needs

Our next set of questions is regarding migrants' settlement process and needs.

- What are the main concerns or priorities of the migrants you work with after landing in Canada in the short term/long term? (e.g., stable legal status in Canada; health issues; family reunification; employment, education; going back to the country of origin; solidarity with the people in the home country; other)
- Are you aware whether environmental factors in the countries of origin may have any lasting effects on migrants' overall settlement experience? If so, can you explain? (i.e. health)

- Do such migrants undergo a different settlement process than other groups? If so, how? (Do existing services meet their needs?)

Transnationalism

I would like to speak to you about remittances and people's connections to the Philippines once they settle in Canada.

- What do you know about the relationships that people maintain between Canada and the Philippines? Are remittances a big concern?
- Do you know generally how remittances are used by the families of your clients? (individuals, households, **community projects**?)
- I've seen on the news how the community has come together to raise money for disaster relief. Can you speak a bit about this? (What initiatives have people taken? Is this common? Is this an important thing for the community?) Are people often involved in other human rights or social justice campaigns in the Philippines?
- Do you know if most people are hoping to settle in Canada permanently/ bring their families here? Or eventually return to the Philippines. Why?

Before we close, is anything else you wish to add on any of the issues discussed, about yourself or anything else about your clients?

Follow-up

- Other key informants
- Organizing focus groups

Appendix B
Interview Guide: Focus Groups

Theme: Introduction to the research project	
Environment and international migration to Canada	• A number of international studies have suggested that environmental issues are affecting human migration patterns in many parts of the world already, and are expected to increase in coming decades as a result of climate change. For the past two years we have been conducting a study at the University of Ottawa to determine how environmental factors in other countries may influence immigration to Canada, and also how environmental factors may affect the settlement of migrants after they arrive. • As you may know, the Philippines is now one of the largest source countries of newcomers to Canada, and at the same time, is a country that deals with a number of environmental issues such as natural disasters, flooding, sea-level rise, and also more human-influenced issues such as pollution, mining and deforestation. So, we are curious to know if there are any links between environmental factors in the Philippines and migration to Canada. In addition, we are also interested in hearing about whether Filipinos in Canada are concerned about environmental issues in the Philippines, and if so, what sorts of community efforts are taken here to assist with environmental problems there (for instance, fundraising for disaster relief). • Introductions: we would like to invite each of you to introduce yourselves, and to share with us what environmental problems you are concerned about in the Philippines. (country as a whole or your city/town of origin more specifically).
Theme: Environmental factors and migration decisions	
Environmental factors	We would like to discuss the potential role of environmental factors in your decisions to leave your country of origin.

	- Based on your experience, did any environmental factors influence your decision to leave your country of origin? (link to issues discussed in intro) - If so, what types of environmental factors? (e.g., drought, floods, air pollution, natural disasters, etc.) - How do these compare with non-environmental motivations (e.g., economic, political, social, cultural, other) in terms of significance? Can you explain? - To what extent did environmental factors combine (or not) with non-environmental factors? (other prompts) - Can you describe your town or city of origin? - And how has it been affected by environmental conditions? - Do these cause displacement or migration within or outside your country/region of origin? - We have heard a lot about Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan recently. In your opinion, is there a relationship between disasters like this and people deciding to migrate to Canada?
	Before moving on, are there any additional thoughts you wish to share around these issues?
Migrants' strategies of immigration	We are now interested in hearing about your migration experiences to Canada. - When was the first time you, or another member of the family, wished to migrate? - What factors influenced you make the final decision to leave your country of origin and to live abroad? - Is the environment one of your criteria? And why? - How did you obtain information about migrating to Canada? What kinds of information did you receive? - Did you migrate to Canada alone or with family members? - Did you directly come to Canada from your city/town of origin? - If not, to which city or country did you migrate to before moving to Canada? - How was your migration experience? (getting through the system, paperwork, how long did it take?)

	- Based on your knowledge, is your experience/venture common? - Did you face any challenges? - Based on your contacts, are there people who would like to immigrate to Canada but cannot? - If so, what types of barriers stopped or are stopping them (e.g., women; children; those who are poor, have low levels of education, no knowledge of Canada's official languages; those with health problems; etc.)?
	Before moving on, are there any additional thoughts you wish to share around these issues?
Theme: Environmental factors and settlement	
Settlement destination	We now want to ask you about how environmental factors may have shaped your selection of a destination. 1) <u>Canada as a country of settlement:</u> - Did Canada's environmental characteristics/qualities play a role in your decision to come here? - If so, which ones? (e.g., climate, green spaces/nature, air quality, availability of resources such as safe water, etc.) - How did you know or find out about Canada's environmental conditions? - Were there any non-environmental factors also at play? - If so, which ones? (e.g., economy, politics, culture, multiculturalism, established community, existing networks, etc.) - What was the significance of environmental factors in relation to non-environmental factors? 2) <u>Ottawa-Gatineau or Toronto as destination cities:</u> - Within Canada, why did you choose to settle in Ottawa-Gatineau? - Did environmental factors play a role? - If so, which ones? (e.g., city size, green spaces/presence of nature, climate, location, air quality, etc.)

	- How did you know or find out about the city's environmental conditions? - Did you settle in other cities/provinces before coming here? - Explain why you might have relocated within Canada. - Were there any non-environmental factors that also influenced your settlement decisions? - If so, which ones? (e.g., culture, language, presence of an established community, existing networks, availability of social and health services, employment, education, politics, public transit, housing, etc.) - What was the significance of environmental factors in relation to non-environmental factors? 3) <u>Possible Prompt</u> - Thinking about environmental factors and quality of life, can you compare the environmental conditions in your home city/country to Ottawa/Canada? - Did you know of the differences/similarities before migrating?
	Before we close, are there any additional thoughts you wish to share around these issues?
Theme: Environmental factors and settlement needs	
Settlement needs and integration process	Our next set of questions is regarding your settlement process and needs. - What were your needs upon arrival in Canada? - Were these related to any environmental factors that you experienced in your country of origin? If so, can you explain? - Were there any particular needs that were not met? - If so, can you explain? - How did you hear about newcomer services? Did you receive sufficient information? - What were your main concerns or priorities once you arrived to Canada? (e.g., stable legal status in Canada; health issues; family reunification; employment, education; going back to the

	country of origin; solidarity with the people in the home country; other) - Did these change over time? - What were the main challenges you faced after the initial settlement process in Canada? - Based on your contacts, are they common? Please, explain.
	Theme: Transnationalism Our last set of questions is regarding remittances and your connections to the Philippines now that you are settled in Canada. - Have you been back to the Philippines since you moved here? (How many times? When was the most recent?) - If so, can you compare the environmental conditions between here and there? Would you consider moving back to the Philippines? - Can you discuss the importance of maintaining relationships between Canada and the Philippines? Are remittances a big concern? - Do you know generally how remittances are used by families in the Philippines? (individuals, households, community projects?) - I've seen on the news how Filipinos in Canada have come together to raise money for disaster relief for Typhoon Yolanda. Can you speak a bit about this? (What initiatives have people taken? Is this common? Is this an important thing for the community?) - Are people often involved in other human rights or social justice campaigns in the Philippines? - Do you know if most people are hoping to settle in Canada permanently/ bring their families here? Or eventually return to the Philippines. Why? (do environmental factors play a role?)
	Before we close, are there any additional thoughts you wish to share around these issues? We thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix C

Interview Guide: Personal/Follow-up Interviews

Theme: Introduction to the research project

International studies have suggested that environmental issues are affecting human migration patterns in many parts of the world already, and are expected to increase in coming decades as a result of climate change. For the past two years we have been conducting a study at the University of Ottawa to determine how environmental factors in other countries may influence immigration to Canada, and also how environmental factors may affect the settlement of migrants after they arrive.

The Philippines is now one of the largest source countries of newcomers to Canada, and at the same time, is a country that deals with a number of environmental issues such as natural disasters, flooding, sea-level rise, and also more human-influenced issues such as pollution, mining and deforestation. So, we are curious to know if there are any links between environmental factors in the Philippines and migration to Canada, (and if there are no links, to know what factors do influence people to migrate).

Introductions

How long have you been in Canada? What were you doing in the Philippines before migrating? Are you employed now?

Theme: Environmental factors and migration decisions

What sorts of environmental problems occur in the Philippines (in the country as a whole and/or your city/town of origin)? What did you personally experience?

Based on your experience, did any environmental factors influence your decision to leave your country/region of origin? Or anyone you know? (Link to environmental issues discussed- do any of these cause even internal migration? Link to Typhoon Yolanda and other disasters; possible health problems due to pollution/smog?)

What are the main (non-environmental) motivators?

Could non-environmental factors combine with environmental factors? (e.g. what are the main causes of poverty? Links to farming? Mining and displacement? Resource extraction? Not enough local employment? Rural-urban migration?)

Theme: Strategies of immigration

When was the first time you, or another member of the family, wished to migrate? (Did you migrate alone?)

What factors influenced you make the final decision to leave your country of origin and to live abroad?

- Is the environment one of your criteria?

Did you directly come to Canada from your city/town of origin?

How was your migration experience? (dealing with the system/getting papers/how long did it take?)

- Based on your knowledge, is your experience/venture common?
- Did you face any challenges?

Based on your contacts, are there people who would like to immigrate to Canada but cannot?

- If so, what types of barriers stopped or are stopping them (e.g., women; children; those who are poor, have low levels of education, no knowledge of Canada's official languages; those with health problems; etc.)?

Theme: Settlement destination and needs

Why Canada? Did you know much about Canada before you migrated here? Did you know anything about environmental qualities here? Quality of life? Safer/cleaner? Health care?

Within Canada, why did you choose to settle in Ottawa-Gatineau?

How was your settlement experience?

- What were your main needs and challenges after migrating? Are these common based on people you know? Did you use any newcomer services? Do you have any suggestions for how the process could be made easier?

Theme: Transnationalism

Have you been back to the Philippines since you moved here? (How many times? When was the most recent?)

- If so, can you compare the environmental conditions between here and there? Would you consider moving back to the Philippines?

Can you discuss the importance of maintaining relationships between Canada and the Philippines? Are remittances a big concern?

Do you know generally how remittances are used by families in the Philippines? (individuals, households, community projects?)

I've seen on the news how Filipinos in Canada have come together to raise money for disaster relief for Typhoon Yolanda. Can you speak a bit about this? (What initiatives have people taken? Is this common? Is this an important thing for the community?)

- Are people often involved in other human rights or social justice campaigns in the Philippines?

Do you know if most people are hoping to settle in Canada permanently/ bring their families here? Or eventually return to the Philippines. Why? (do environmental factors play a role?)

Appendix D

Individual Survey

To help us to better understand who we are speaking with, please complete the following demographic survey. Please note that your participation is voluntary, and that all information gathered will be kept confidential.

Name: _____

1. Age (circle one): 18-24 25-34 35-54 55-64 65+

2. Gender: _____

3. What is your marital status?

- a. ☐ Single b. ☐ Married/ Common-law relationship
c. ☐ Separated d. ☐ Divorced
e. ☐ Widowed f. ☐ Other, please specify: _____

4. Do you have children?

- a. ☐ Yes. How many? () b. ☐ No

5. What is your level of education?

- a. ☐ Less than 8th grade
b. ☐ Some high school
c. ☐ High school graduate
d. ☐ Some college/ vocational training/post-secondary/ university
e. ☐ College/vocational training/ post-secondary/ university
f. ☐ Some graduate school
g. ☐ Graduate degree
h. ☐ Professional degree
i. ☐ Other, please specify: _____

6. Please specify your employment status:

- a. ☐ Homemaker (Stay at home dad/mom)
b. ☐ Student
c. ☐ Employed for salary

Please specify occupation: _____

- d. ☐ Self-employed

Please specify: _____

- e. ___ Out of work and looking for work
- f. ___ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- g. ___ Retired
- h. ___ Unable to work
- i. ___ Other, please specify: _____

9. Please indicate your yearly household income:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. ___ Less than \$10,000 | d. ___ \$30,000-\$39,999 | g. ___ \$60,000-\$69,999 |
| b. ___ \$10,000-\$19,999 | e. ___ \$40,000-\$49,999 | h. ___ \$70,000-\$79,999 |
| c. ___ \$20,000-\$29,999 | f. ___ \$50,000-\$59,999 | i. ___ \$80,000 or more |

10. What is your country/place of birth? _____

11. What language do you speak most commonly?

At home: _____ At work: _____ With friends: _____

12. What is your level of English?

- a. ___ Little or no knowledge of English
- b. ___ Elementary or basic level of English
- c. ___ Intermediate level of English
- d. ___ Advanced level of English
- e. ___ Fluent level of English

13. For those not born in Canada, what is the date of your arrival in Canada?

_____/_____/_____

(Year) (Month) (Day)

14. Under which category did you immigrate to Canada?

- a. ___ Economic Immigrant
- b. ___ Family
- c. ___ Refugee
- d. ___ Other

15. Did you arrive in Canada alone or with your family?

a. ☐ Alone b. With family members, please specify: _____

16. Are you a Canadian citizen?

a. ☐ Yes b. ☐ No

In the short time available, and with a group of individuals in a room, there may be difficulties in fully exploring each question with individual persons. Should the need arise, the research team may wish to extend an invitation to individuals who participated in this focus group to participate in a one-on-one conversation with a member of the research team to further delve into these issues. If this need arose, would you be interested in participating.

I am interested in participating (please circle):

YES NO

If yes, you can contact me at (telephone or email):