

## INTRODUCTION

# Tangled Mobilities in the Age of Transnational Migration

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And now I write you how I am getting along. I am getting along well, very well. I have worked in a factory and I am now working in a hotel. I receive 10 (in our money 32) dollars a month, and that is very good. If you would like it, we could bring Wladzio over some day. We eat here every day what we get only for Easter in our country. We are bringing over Helena and brother now. I had \$120 and I sent back \$90.

—A passage from the letter of Walercia to Olejnickzka in 1912 (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918: 312)

The excerpt above demonstrates the transformations in a Polish woman's life in the United States of America (USA) in the early twentieth century. This woman's improved economic condition and subsequent reunification with her family members appear tied to her migration. Such spatial movement can be considered "transnational" (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1995). It crosses nation-states' borders and entails various social practices linking the migrants' countries of origin and destination. This transnational migration constitutes a site of transformations for migrants like the Polish woman who wrote the letter above. Over time, transnational migration has become increasingly complex due to the globalization of labor markets, the advent of new technologies of communication and transportation, and the tightening of migration policies in many countries. This complexity involves the intersections and overlaps of different processes in the lives of migrants and their families.

To understand these intertwined processes, the present volume investigates the experiences of migrants into, within, and out of Asia—the largest continent in the world, comprising five geographical regions (East, Southeast, South, Central, and West) and more than forty countries (UNSD

2021). While being traditionally a migrant sending continent, Asia has taken on the status of a major destination of migration since the late twentieth century. In 2019, while it was the birthplace of over “40 percent of all international migrants worldwide” (IOM 2020: 26), Asia also received the highest number (84 million) of migrants in the world (ibid.: 24). It witnessed a 69 percent increase of immigration between 2000 and 2019 (ibid.). The characteristics of this populous and geographically expansive continent—the enormous economic developmental gaps between countries, a broad spectrum of political regimes, and divergent social and cultural contexts—have made Asia a unique context to observe complex transnational migration patterns. The geographic movements of people and their cross-national border practices connect Asia to different regions of the world. The social spaces, both local and transnational, resulting from this situation are therefore an exciting site to consider in examining the intertwined processes that individuals and social groups experience in different stages of their life course. The present volume captures these processes through case studies of migration phenomena involving selected countries in the following Asian regions: East (China, Japan), Southeast (Philippines, Vietnam), South (India, Pakistan), and West (United Arab Emirates). We use the term “Asian migration” to refer to the migration phenomena into, within, and out of these regions.

In this introductory chapter, we present the analytical framework of “tangled mobilities”—a concept inspired by the empirical phenomena observed in the case studies in the volume. We build from the growing literature on human mobility, and incorporate transnational and intersectional approaches to develop this framework. We also revisit and establish dialogue with the recent literature on Asian migration, highlighting the volume’s scholarly contributions. After this state of the art, we unveil the different forms of entanglements depicted in our collection of empirical cases. We conclude by emphasizing the added value of “tangled mobilities” as a way of looking at phenomena in contemporary transnational migration.

## **Tangled Mobilities: Making Sense of Transnational Migration**

The “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006) in the social sciences provides an innovative approach to studying and conceptualizing transnational migration. In this paradigm, “mobility” has become understood

as a social process involving movements, mobility, or the capacity to move, networks, imaginaries, representations, and experiences (Canzler, Kaufmann, and Kesselring 2008; Cresswell 2006; Salazar 2019). This “complex assemblage” (Salazar 2019: 14) also involves affects, ideas, and discourses, which allows for expanded empirical scope and theoretical innovation in transnational migration studies.

From an empirical point of view, the “new mobilities paradigm” brings scholars’ attention to the institutional frameworks, material infrastructures, and social systems that facilitate or hamper human mobility. It encourages migration research not only to inquire why some people move from one place to another while others do not, but also to investigate how migrants manage to move. Its focus on the process of mobility, in particular, makes it possible to notice the materiality of movement, the different power dynamics that affect individuals’ unequal experiences of mobility, and the relationship between mobility and immobility. It brings into the spotlight the various forms of movements that are not only spatial but also temporal (Kakihara and Sørensen 2001), and not only those traversing national borders, but also those crossing social classes (Noret 2020), cultural realms (Salazar 2010), ethnic boundaries (e.g., Borch 2017), fields of intimacy (Groes and Fernandez 2018), and “regimes of mobility” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). These movements operate according to different logics, and are either interdependent or entail others’ movements toward different and sometimes even contradictory directions.

Recently, studies have also brought to attention the entangled nature of these movements. For example, Groes and Fernandez (2018), in their pioneering work on “intimate mobilities,” demonstrate the open-ended relations between mobility and intimacy. They elucidate these relations by examining their “three highly entangled and interchangeable fields”: “migration regimes and their intimate discontents,” “circuits of sex, race and gendered bodies,” and “moralities of money, mobility and intimacy” (9–10). This specific work highlights the importance of paying a critical attention to “(en)tanglement” in the study of mobilities, which the present volume takes into account to make sense of contemporary transnational migration.

The focus on “(en)tanglement” in the field of scientific research can be traced back to Darwin’s groundbreaking work, *The Origin of Species*, that introduces the theory of natural selection, specifically in his famous description below of a “tangled bank”:

It is interesting to contemplate a tangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent upon each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. (Darwin 1872: 429)

The above description unveils the complexity and interdependency of different forms of life inhabiting such a space at any given moment. The (en)tanglement of these life forms echoes Hernes' (2008) "tangled world," that is, "a world where there are discernable elements, but ones which are twisted together, entwined in ways that add up to an untidy mass" (XIV). Within the "untidy mass," it is possible to "identify and give names to separate strands" that represent "processes" (ibid.). The changes occurring in this mass are individually and collectively experienced as "an unfolding process, a flow of possibilities, and a conjunction of events and open-ended interaction occurring in time" (ibid.; Tsoukas and Chia 2002: 572). Mobility as an assemblage appears akin to this "untidy mass" with different strands in constant change. These strands stand for the different elements (animate and inanimate), components (ideas, representations, practices, imaginaries, and affects), and forms of mobility (spatial, social, temporal, intimate, and temporal). In this case, mobility can be conceptualized as a "tangled" social process, and to understand its dynamics, the tanglement of its different strands should be put to the fore in the analysis rather than treating them separately from one another. Hence, we can speak of "tangled mobilities"—that is, a dynamic, unfolding process in which elements, components, and forms of mobility exist alongside, intersect with, and overlap one another in complex ways, resulting in stasis and movements across different life dimensions (social, legal, intimate, sexual, digital, and temporal).

Given their respective characteristics, each strand of mobility can also be conceived as tanglement in itself. In this regard, strands resemble the "constituent strands" of what Ingold (2008) calls a "meshwork." According to Ingold, "every organism" and "every thing—is itself an entanglement" (ibid.: 1806). Using the metaphor of lines, he explains how individuals become interconnected: "Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with each other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot" (Ingold 2011: 149). A "meshwork" appears here as "a tissue of knots" that "become tied up with other strands, in other bundles" (Ingold 2008: 1806).

Hence, based on this conception, each “tangled” strand of “tangled mobilities” is critically important in the study of transnational movements of people in order to bring out the nuances and subtleties of this phenomenon. Treating mobilities as both inadvertently and inevitably tangled allows a full understanding of individuals’ agency and shifting subjectivity, while also demonstrating mobility and immobility as inseparable and mutually constitutive.

To elucidate the tangled nature of mobilities in the context of migration, a transnational perspective (Basch et al. 1995) seems useful to unveil how migrants and non-migrants, and spaces and places, become interconnected through different human practices and activities traversing the borders of nation-states. Another heuristic approach to highlight the tangled nature of mobility is intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), which brings scholarly focus to the simultaneous crisscrossing of different categories of difference, notably gender, social class, and “race,” producing and reinforcing unequal power relations and marginality of minority groups—not only migrant women but also LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people. Thus, the present volume considers as much as possible the transnational dimension and intersecting categories in the lives of migrants and non-migrants, thereby illuminating the links between places, affects, and personhood.

In this volume, places refer to geopolitical locations that migrants and their families inhabit, which could be a nation at the macro level, or a city, village, or home at the micro level. Migration and the activities, consciousnesses, memories, and emotions of individuals link various places to one another, creating translocal and/or transnational social spaces and fields. This process informs and is shaped by the affective universe of the migrants. To capture the dynamics of this universe, this volume pays attention to “emotions,” which Thrift (2008) defines as the “everyday understandings of affects ..., constructed by cultures over many centuries and with their own distinctive vocabulary and means of relating to others” (221). Affect, on the other hand, is understood as “intensity” or the “strength or duration” (Massumi 1995: 84–85) of the effect of objects, images, figures, people, or discourses on individuals, such as “physiological reactions (muscular contraction, secretions) and visible symptoms (voice changes, facial expressions)” (Frykman and Povrzanović Frykman 2016: 14). Understanding emotions can therefore reveal the subtleties of affects in the context of

migration, and can also highlight the “personhood” or sense of self of migrants, notably how personhood evolves across time and spaces.

Through the empirical cases of intra-Asia and Asia-Europe/USA mobilities, this volume expands the concept of “mobility” to capture changes in terms of the spatial, social, intimate, and legal positioning that migrants experience during the migration process. It highlights not only the entangled nature of such positional changes but also the entanglement of different forms of mobilities (spatial, social, sexual, intimate, legal). While the empirical focus of the volume is the “spatial mobility” of people across national borders and the phenomena associated with their geographic movement, within the purview of traditional migration research, the concept of “tangled mobilities” allows us to bring in different types of changes in terms of positioning accompanying people’s physical movements in the migration process. “Spatial mobility” is defined here as human mobility across socio-geographic spaces that most often unfolds temporally over one’s life course and that changes direction due to certain turning points and to the influence of different institutional and cultural norms. The collection of studies in this volume builds on recent developments. It aims to bring the mobility scholarship one step further by focusing on the entanglements of different elements, components, and forms of mobilities.

## **Mobility Research in the Context of Migrations into, within, and out of Asia**

Researchers of Asian migration show that migratory patterns have gradually changed in complex ways, notably from the 1980s onwards with the feminization of Asian migration that strongly contributed to the development of gender and migration research in the Asian continent. This development departs from the gender-neutral approach observed in Asian migration studies from its advent in the latter 1920s to the 1970s (Fresnoza-Flot 2022 forthcoming). Aside from this change, there are also increased intra-Asia movements, new pathways, and intertwined migration channels, which have reinforced the scholarly interest in Asian migration. As Asis, Piper, and Raghuram (2019) observe, “Asia has become an empirical, theoretical and policy exemplar contributing to driving global migration research” (13).

An example of such contributions are the conceptual and theoretical innovations that Asian migration studies brought to the broader field of mobility studies. For example, Asia is the origin and the main destination of women's intimate and labor migrations, which leads to the rise of analytical concepts of "global hypergamy" (Constable 2010), "global householding" (Douglass 2010), and "care chain" (Parreñas 2012; see also Hochschild 2000). The flows of millions of international students and skilled migrants into, within, and out of Asia result in several studies on "brain circulation" (Saxenian 2005) and "educational mobilities" (Waters 2018). The temporary labor migration in and out of Asia that is often mediated by private recruitment agencies causes concerns about "protracted precarity" (Piper, Rosewarne, and Withers 2017). Scholars also remark that Asian labor and intimate migration channels can intersect in the lives of individual migrant women (Lan 2008; Piper and Roces 2003) and that migration can be serial and multiple as migrants seek better pay and work conditions (Paul 2017; Parreñas et al. 2019).

These conceptual and theoretical innovations suggest an increasing complexity of Asian migration. They echo the gradual and complex evolution of the broader field of migration studies that has been witnessing since the 1990s important theoretical developments, such as the rise of the transnationalism perspective and the growing emphasis on sociocultural and intimate factors/dimensions of migration. What is evident is that Asian migration has become characterized by the entanglements of diverse migration paths, places, personhood, and affects, as unveiled in the literature review below, and later in the empirical cases of our volume.

### ***Migration, Personhood, and Affects***

The recent literature (1990s–2010s) on Asian migration reveals the link between mobility and personhood. It also highlights the importance of an existential understanding of migration and the heuristic value of an affective lens of analysis.

Although attaining self-actualization through mobility is not a uniquely Asian phenomenon, mobility has an elevated value in Asia. Historically, the modern nation-building process in most Asian countries, by adopting political ideals from the so-called "West" (that is, Europe and North America), economic theories, and political institutions, has been inseparable

from international migration to Western countries (Liu-Farrer and Yeoh 2018). Recently, the positive value of international migration is institutionalized through migrant-sending countries' programs that either encourage their nationals to seek overseas work and remit (Palmer 2016; Rodriguez 2010), or implement preferential policies to induce the return of emigrants with foreign educational credentials, professional experiences, and financial resources (Ho 2018). More practically, the material resources and stories of success remitted back home by emigrants have instilled in those in the sending regions a desire to migrate, shaping a culture of migration (Kandel and Massey 2002; Asis 2006). For many Asian people, the capacity to migrate to the West or a developed country in the Asian continent constitutes modern subjectivity (Coates 2018). This applies to the migrants or those waiting to migrate in Chinese villages in Fujian (Chu 2010), to medical tourists in Southeast Asia (Whittaker 2018), as well as to those Chinese millionaires who spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to purchase overseas residency permits and citizenships in order to fashion themselves as members of the global elite (Liu-Farrer 2016). Spatial mobility, therefore, becomes a family strategy for upward class mobility among socially less privileged Asians (Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki 2017; Thai 2014), and a way to accumulate cultural capital and facilitate the social reproduction among the middle- and upper-middle-class Asian families (Waters 2008; Liu-Farrer 2016).

The intricate connection between mobility and personhood can also be observed in the case of journeying, an existential need related to one's sense of self. Labeling this form of mobility as existential, Madison (2006) points out that people who volunteer to migrate, ostensibly for practical reasons, sometimes do so out of the desire to escape from a constraining home environment in search of a space to express their independence and freedom. This existential dimension is salient in many strands of migration, and applies to people at different life stages. Many young Japanese working holidaymakers left Japan for Australia in the 1990s and 2000s. They did so to escape the oppressive salarymen lifestyle and a stagnating economy, as well as to fashion a cosmopolitan self through acquiring English skills and living in a Western cultural environment (Kawashima 2010). This lifestyle-driven cross-border mobility applies also to retirees in Asia and the Pacific—for example, Japanese retirees move to Southeast Asia because of their desire for a more leisurely lifestyle after decades of taxing corporate life,



their attraction to the warm climate, their quest for the meaning of life, and their assertion of independence in old age (Ono 2010). At the same time, their migration decision is shaped by the fact that only in Southeast Asia can their Japanese pension afford them a comfortable lifestyle (*ibid.*). This factor also influences the “lifestyle migration” (Benson and O’Reilly 2009) of many middle-class Europeans to Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand (Scuzzarello 2020).

Moreover, the geographic movement of young women toward the domestic service sector or the institution of marriage is another form of existential migration. In many cases, they migrate and enter binational unions to escape their home country’s oppressive gender norms, especially the pressure to marry and biologically reproduce (Mahdavi 2016). For example, many Southeast and East Asian women who are highly educated, in their late twenties, or with children from previous relationships, engage in marriage migration to form a family due to the difficulties they encounter in finding a potential partner in their own country’s local marriage market (e.g., Lapanun 2012). Their intimate journey to other countries allows them to attain a certain level of social respectability (Suksomboon 2007).

In addition, studies on Asian migration have illuminated the emotional dimension of migration motivation. Studies show that marriage migration of Asian women—initially dubbed as “mail-order” migration (Glodava and Onizuka 1994)—is not devoid of romantic interests or the possibility to fall in love (Constable 2003; Fresnoza-Flot and Ricordeau 2017). Emotional drivers of migration also exist in most forms of return migration in Asia. Although the ethnic return is often “a project driven by enterprise rather than by nostalgia” (Xiang 2013: 2) and a response to state policies and economic incentives, such migration is also driven by a longing for the ethnic homeland (Tsuda 2018).

The affective lens helps scholars register the entangled forces driving migration and the fact that mobilities yield emotional outcomes. Research employing this lens reviews that career strategies, cultural interests, desires for adventure, and lifestyle choices are tangled together, driving Westerners to move to countries in East and Southeast Asia (Farrer 2019; Debnár 2016; Liu-Farrer 2020; Green 2015; Statham et al. 2020), and pushing Japanese youth and retiring salarymen to find or resume life and careers in China (Kawashima 2018, and this volume). Likewise, the desires for sexual expressions and intimate relationships are both compelling reasons for

international migration and inevitable migration consequences, affecting migrants' decisions either to continue moving or to settle (Guzman 1997; Liu-Farrer 2020; Farrer, Liu-Farrer, and Tran, this volume).

### *The Mediated and Tangled Mobilities*

With the political history of colonization, Asian countries' nation-building processes are often hostile to population mobility. They see migrants, especially the ethnic "others," as having no place in the nation-state (Liu-Farrer and Yeoh 2018: 2). Although many Asian countries started to import foreign labor in the late twentieth century, the institutional frameworks for international migration did not develop in some, and are non-existent in others (ibid.). Therefore, empirical studies in the Asian context highlight the role of both the sending and the receiving states (Ortiga 2017) and the migration industry (Asis et al. 2019; Fresnoza-Flot 2012; Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019) in facilitating and hindering cross-border mobilities as well as shaping varied mobility outcomes. "Migration infrastructure" (Xiang and Lindquist 2014) is a concept that emerged out of empirical observations to account for such a heavily mediated process of migration.

Moreover, studying Asian migration allows researchers to gain insights into the tangling of different forms of mobilities. Most Asian countries have had a history of being colonized or occupied by the West. Many sent migrants overseas as farmers and laborers. Asian migrants' international migration to the West and to more advanced economies on the Asian continent has often been accompanied by downward social mobility, career stasis, and legal constraints. Such mobility outcomes result from the unequal positions the sending and the receiving countries occupy in the global political and economic orders, and the difficulty in converting professional credentials or skills across borders (Liu-Farrer, Yeoh, and Baas 2021). Racism, nationalism, and gender hierarchies affect immigrants' skill recognition and consequently their labor market outcomes, even when they enter as professionals or investors, as seen in the labor market experiences of highly skilled Asian and other migrants in Canada and Europe (Bauder 2003; Ley 2011; Nohl et al. 2014). Even the very wealthy Asians with elite North American education feel the constraint of the racialized glass ceiling, having difficulty converting their economic and cultural capital into the kind of

symbolic capital recognized by the upper-class white community in North America (Ong 1992).

The same uneven mobilities have appeared in the recent flows of migration into Asia and between Asian countries. First, the concept of “race” and racial hierarchy originated in the West, through military and technological power, and colonization; these have had a lasting influence on Asian people’s perceptions of themselves and others (Kowner and Demel 2012). Second, many countries within this continent have experienced rapid but recent economic development, and have not yet solidified their positions in the global economic and political order. Such uncertainties and divergent positions in the global economic, political, and racial hierarchies result in uneven and sometimes contradictory directions of economic, legal, and sexual mobilities of migrants from different continents. Such complex mobility trajectories are reflected in the migration experiences of people from the earlier developed countries in Asia to those that are more recently developed on other continents, and from these continents to Asia. The white Europeans and North Americans in China (Farrer 2019; Farrer, this volume), Japan (Hof 2020; Debnár 2016), and Singapore (Hof 2020) might, on the one hand, enjoy some privileges in the corporate environment because whiteness is traditionally associated with expatriates and highly skilled workers in Asia (ibid.). Some also perceive an elevated social status (Liu-Farrer 2020) or see their sexual capital increasing in value, such as the white men in Shanghai (Farrer 2010; Farrer, this volume) and British women in Dubai (Walsh 2007). On the other hand, in some restrictive immigration regimes in Asia, even rich and successful business people only have access to fixed-term visa categories. Their residence might be terminated when they lose institutional ties to the host countries (Farrer 2019). Professionally, some white migrants, whether they are native English speakers or not, are pigeon-holed into niche occupations such as teaching English, essentially entrapped in a dead-end career with a precarious employment situation (Debnár 2016).

### ***A Way Forward through a “Tangled Mobility” Lens***

The literature review in the preceding sections, albeit not exhaustive, points to the contributions of Asian migration scholarship to the larger field of migration and mobility studies. Asian migration research has advanced the field by bringing in plural perspectives on migratory motivations, notably the

rising aspirations and desires for mobility among a broad spectrum of people, despite restrictive immigration regimes and competing logics of mobilities operating in individuals' spatial movements. It has changed the scholarly understanding about the driving forces of Asian migration which, rooted in North American experiences, had been dominated by economic analysis (Asis et al. 2010). It points out that affects, emotions, and the desire for social class mobility all play a role in the way individuals experience migration. Interestingly, it unveils the entanglements of different elements, components, and forms of mobilities in the lives of migrants, which have not yet been fully conceptualized in Asian migration in particular, nor in mobility studies in general. The volume's proposed lens of "tangled mobilities" offers researchers a possibility of capturing such complexities of migration through its critical attention to the tangled nature and underlying processes of mobilities. The empirical cases in our edited volume further the discussion on how mobilities are tangled in the different norms, institutional conditions, and power structures. They collectively illustrate how spatial mobilities unfold with such contingencies.

## **Tangled Social Spheres, Mobilities, and Stasis: An Overview of the Volume**

The present volume offers ten empirical case studies featuring intra-Asia migratory phenomenon, Asian migration to Europe, and migration to Asia from Western countries. These case studies carried out by anthropologists and sociologists of migration highlight the voices of diverse actors: both heterosexual and LGBTQ people; mixed couples in which the partners have "different nationalities and/or ethnicities" (De Hart, van Rossum, and Sportel 2013: 995); children of migrants; and highly skilled migrants. It unveils the tangled mobilities in the lives of mainly Asian migrants within the Asian region and beyond. These tangled mobilities involve three strands linking and shaping places, affects, and personhood: the interweaving of social spheres, different forms of mobilities, and mobilities and stasis. These entanglements provide a perspective toward understanding the complexities of transnational migration, and the stakes they entail, in the lives of migrants and their families.

### ***Interweaving Social Spheres***

Five chapters in this volume demonstrate the entanglement of the reproductive (family, home) and productive (economic, employment) realms, as well as the so-called “private” (intimate life, family) and “public” (stateregulated social life) spheres. They show the porosity of these socially constructed divisions by revealing how state policies and widely held gender and religious norms regulating and shaping social interactions affect the “private” lives of migrants and their family members.

Two of the chapters (Pardis Mahdavi; Fiona-Katharina Seiger) show how the receiving countries’ policies intricately shape the lives of migrants and their children. Through its migration, labor, and citizenship laws, the state governs the family life of migrants and affects their sense of self. The chapter by Mahdavi demonstrates how the “contractual sterilization laws” and the *kefala* (sponsorship) system in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates determine migrants’ access to employment and legal status. In these countries, some migrant women employed as domestic workers, such as Indians and Filipinos, who refused to return to their natal countries after giving birth outside of marriage, found themselves undocumented. Their lack of legal status subsequently puts their children in a more marginal, precarious position than them. Compared to the mothers, who are still citizens of their countries of origin, their children are both undocumented and stateless. These mothers and children are ensnared in what Mahdavi calls “a cycle of irregularity” due to discriminatory state policies.

The porous division between the private and the public is also evident in the case of Filipino mothers who migrated to Japan with their Japanese-Filipino children to work as caregivers. The chapter by Seiger shows that the migration of both mothers and children is inscribed in “a system of brokerage” based on Japan’s family reunification policy, and geared toward the Japanese labor market. As “primary carers” to their (soon-to-be) insider citizen children, Filipino mothers qualify as “migrant workforce” catering to the needs of brokers and employers. Without such status of “primary carer,” these mothers would not have been able to migrate with their children and work in Japan. This in-tandem migration leads to undesirable separations between mothers and their non-Japanese-Filipino children and situations in which Filipino mothers in Japan have to work and leave their Japanese-Filipino children alone at home. Work and family become intertwined spheres as the brokering system continuously anchors itself to state laws on migration, labor, and citizenship.

The economic sphere of migrants' lives appears twisted with their personal desire to maintain or reinforce their sense of self, which is often alienated due to aging and/or financial difficulties in their natal countries. Two chapters (Kumiko Kawashima; Jocelyn O. Celero) provide examples on this issue. The first example is the case of highly skilled but aging Japanese migrant men in Dalian, China. In her chapter, Kawashima unveils how the downward social mobility of these men due to demotion in their workplaces and the mandatory retirement age in Japan motivated them to migrate to Dalian where they could continue working in a comfortable, rewarding work environment. The impact of the economic recession in Japan on these men's social status affected their sense of self, driving them to migrate to a country where they could enjoy prestige as highly skilled workers. In Celero's chapter, migration to Japan becomes possible for Japanese-Filipinos thanks to Japan's migration policies, which stress a migrant's biological link to a Japanese citizen (in this case, the fathers). Japanese-Filipinos' economically challenging life in the Philippines and their growing up under their kin's care but without their Japanese fathers' support inspired them to engage in Japan's labor market and transnational caregiving. Emphasizing the notion of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), these migrants sustain multiple social ties in both Japan and the Philippines.

Finally, one chapter in this volume (Masako Kudo) uncovers how gender-linked and religion-shaped social norms alongside the Japanese state's control of binational marriages influenced the geographic mobilities and the trajectories of family-making of Japanese-Pakistani couples and their children. Kudo describes in her chapter the marriages of Japanese women and their Pakistani husbands as "tangled with law, economy, and religion," which affects these unions' social incorporation in Japan. Aside from the difficulty of accessing the spousal visa, they had difficulty being accepted by their partner's family. Kudo explains how Japanese-Pakistani couples created "affective circuits" characterized by transnational caregiving. Raising children, notably daughters, in an environment where they could easily interiorize Islamic teachings and values, represents another challenge for Japanese-Pakistani couples. As a result, these couples resort to different care arrangements and mobilities, such as relocating to Pakistan, making Pakistani family members visit Japan, or becoming transnationally split families. These complex family lives reflect how the public realm where

social and legal norms are located directly affects mixed families' private spheres and intimate lives.

### *Tanglement of Different Forms of Mobilities*

Not only does the migratory journey unfold simultaneously in different spheres, by lifting them out of one social context and inserting them into another; cross-border spatial mobility also entails the individual's changing positions in different social fields. In this volume, empirical studies collectively illustrate how various forms of mobilities—social, economic, sexual, intimate, educational, and legal—occur in different directions. Their trajectories tangle in the migration process because of the changing logic of the fields. Consequently, such divergent mobilities result in affective responses that might trigger the desire for continued geographic movements, if such options are available. Moreover, studies show that different forms of mobilities are not only entangled with each other, but also with material objects, as well as with a person's life course and that of their children.

Several chapters in this volume deal with the entanglement of different mobilities involved in geographic movement. Kawashima's comparison of the experiences of the older and the younger Japanese who migrated to the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian reveals not only that these migrants' geographic, social, and economic mobilities point in different directions, but that such uneven mobilities also affect people differently at various stages of their life course and career progression. The older migrants who had established a corporate career before the economic recession but were marginalized thereafter were able to secure higher status positions and enjoy more professional and social recognition by moving to China. By comparison, the younger migrants whose career development in Japan was stalled by the economic recession underwent downward social class mobility as they were less able to advance their careers by moving to China, and so were more likely to be trapped in a dead end and in precarious conditions.

The chapters by James Farrer and An Huy Tran highlight the entanglement of sexual mobility with spatial, social, educational, and sexual mobilities. Sexual mobility "concerns the relationship between geographic mobility and a larger social field in which sexual desires and sexualities are experienced and defined" (Farrer, this volume). It is tied to a sexual field, which is

“constituted by relations among differentially desirable and differently empowered actors in a sexual scene, determining what forms of desire and action are legitimate, who has the power of sexual initiative and refusal, and what is conventionally at stake in sexual interactions” (ibid.). By moving to another society, migrants find their own sexual desirability rising or declining according to the different logic in the new sexual field. Farrer shows that among the elite migrants in Shanghai, white and ethnic Asian male migrants experience elevated sexual status after migrating to China, while white women find themselves less attractive and often have to adopt new sexual strategies to enhance their desirability. Moreover, the local sexual field evolves with the mobilities of people, money, and culture over time. Those who previously occupied higher positions in the sexual hierarchy, such as white male migrants, might find their sexual status drop when the sexual field includes increasing numbers of wealthy return ethnic Chinese migrants.

Tran’s chapter investigates the entanglement of sexualities with social and economic statuses in queer Vietnamese’ migration journeys, and how such experiences result in conflicting desires, forcing them to re-evaluate their migration decisions and trajectories. While the existing literature on queer migration tends to celebrate such mobility as a form of sexual emancipation, informants in Tran’s study experienced the adverse effect of “race,” nationality, and social class on their sexual desirability and opportunities upon migration. Regardless of whether achieving freer sexual expressions was part of the motivation to migrate, sexual encounters, or the lack thereof, become part of their migration experience, influencing both their migratory trajectories and sexual orientations. Some migrants, therefore, decided to return to Vietnam, where their status as migrants to Japan and their material resources gained through migration elevated their sexual status in their home country.

Angelie Marilla’s study adds a new form of mobility that rarely shows up in migration research—the mobility of the material objects. Her chapter demonstrates that material objects are tangled in people’s geographic and social mobilities. Observing the objects displayed in Vietnamese migrant families’ homes and businesses in Belgium and those present in the households of Vietnamese-Belgian families, Marilla emphasizes the agency of the mobile objects. The furniture, photos, cups, religious paraphernalia, and print of a famous painting document their owners’ journeys, and



symbolize the migrant households' spatial and social mobilities. They also accompany, hinder, and sometimes replace human mobilities.

Because different forms of mobilities take place simultaneously during the course of one's geographic movement, and especially because geographic mobility affects one's intimate social and personal life, migration has emotional consequences—and emotions, in turn, matter in one's migration decision-making. Gracia Liu-Farrer's chapter presents highly educated professionals' narratives of their often multinational migratory journeys in Japan and Germany, demonstrating that the outcomes of tangled mobility can be examined through the affective lens. People articulate their motivations through emotional words. What motivates their decision to stay or leave a place often has to do with people's emotional responses to the places they currently dwell, and/or the one they might aspire to move to. The study also highlights the different effects of positive and negative emotions in influencing individual migration decisions. Negative migration, caused by a lack of intimate social or personal relationships and the loss of social recognition, tends to exert a more decisive influence on mobility decisions and to drive people away from where they are.

Finally, it is not only the migrants themselves who get caught in tangled mobilities. For example, in Kudo's study, the migratory directions of the children of Pakistani fathers and Japanese mothers are influenced by their family's social and economic mobility as well as the changing power balance between their parents. In one case, a child hoped to return to Japan to study so as to bring his mother, stuck in his father's family in Pakistan, back to Japan.

### ***Entwined Mobility and Stasis***

The entanglement of mobility and stasis is explicit in six chapters of the volume. These chapters expose the relational aspect of personhood, and pinpoint how a migrant's sense of self is challenged, redefined, or reinforced as they inhabit, cross, or connect social fields and spaces. Affects and emotions are part and parcel of this process, shaping migrants' family and mobility trajectories.

Transnational migration often leads to spatial and social class immobility, as unveiled in a few cases in the volume. Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot remarks that some Filipino women who married Belgian or Dutch men became tied to

the realm of home in their receiving countries, due to their husband's disapproval of their labor market engagement. By moving to a different country in their new roles as wives and mothers, some became deprived of basic spatial mobility due to not possessing a driver's license. This mobility and immobility entanglement coincides with these women's social class mobility in their natal country. There their marriage and transnational migration allowed them to attain the ideal Filipino womanhood, thereby increasing their respectability. Another example of tangled mobility and stasis can be found in the chapter by Liu-Farrer, which illustrates how emotions and intimate relationships can drive people to move to or settle in Asia or Europe. In this chapter, she shares stories of Asian migrants who settled in a country where they found self-fulfillment from family, legal, and professional points of view. This spatial immobility is often coupled with other forms of mobility, such as in sexual and social class terms. Liu-Farrer's findings confirm what "intimate mobilities" (Groes and Fernandez 2018) mean, and show their connection with stasis at some points in migrants' life trajectories.

Furthermore, mobility and stasis can be a shared experience between two or more individuals, either between migrants or between migrants and non-migrants. The chapter by Celero uncovers how working Filipino mothers' migration to Japan becomes tangled with the spatial and social class immobility of their stay-behind Japanese-Filipino children. When the latter migrated to Japan, they experienced legal mobility thanks to Japan's immigration and citizenship policies that emphasize one's biological link to a Japanese parent. This mobility takes place while their mothers experience legal and social class immobility. Another chapter, the one by Marilla, demonstrates that settlement in one country after migration can be tangled with spatial mobility of objects. She observes that Vietnamese migrants in couple with Belgians exchange objects transnationally with their natal families in Vietnam throughout the migration process. Objects follow where the migrants are, and when they reach their destination place, they move within the realm of home or from this place to public places where migrants engage in social activities or work. As they become spatially immobile, objects decay, but they remain temporally mobile in the memories and emotions of the owners.

In addition, spatial mobility can tangle with sexual immobility. In Tran's chapter, the migration of queer Vietnamese in Japan intersects with their

sexualities and social class mobility. Their transnational spatial mobility is tangled with their immobility in terms of expression of their sexual identities in Japan, where they do not fit the image of a “desirable” figure in ethnicized, racialized, and classed queer dating sites. Their return migration to Vietnam, where they finally settle, allows them to regain a sense of respectability, as they become “desirable” potential partners in Vietnamese’ sexual fields due to their past transnational migration to Japan. Therefore, their spatial immobility becomes twisted with what Farrer, in his chapter, calls “sexual mobility.” Drawing from his long ethnography in Shanghai, Farrer reveals that migrants (transnational or translocal) move not only across spaces but also within and across social and sexual fields. During their movement and stasis, migrants may experience upward or downward sexual mobility. For instance, white Western men enjoyed upward sexual mobility during the period between 1998 and the early 2000s in Shanghai’s transnational sexual field, whereas their white Western women counterparts underwent downward sexual mobility. This situation had changed by the 2010s, when rich Mainland Chinese men called “fuerdai” (the rich second generation) replaced both white Western and overseas Chinese men as “desirable” partners in this sexual field. Farrer remarks that sex, money, and status tangle in sexual fields, and that spatial mobility can become coupled with either sexual mobility or immobility.

## **Conclusion**

The present volume draws on the mobility literature and Asian migration scholarship, as well as building on recent developments in transnational migration into, within, and out of Asia. Through the lens of tangled mobilities, it does not merely display different combinations of motivations or the messiness of entwined mobilities, but provides fresh perspectives on transnational migration phenomena in conceptual, empirical, and analytical terms.

From a conceptual point of view, the volume’s focus on entanglements avoids adopting the dichotomic approach “mobility versus stasis” observed by Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) in early mobility scholarship. It puts to the fore the relational aspects of mobilities. These aspects concern the plural, compounded motivations of migration, the interweaving social spheres, and the entwining of places, affects, and personhood. The various chapters

demonstrate that different motivations (economic, existential, familial) become entangled in the migration of all migrants. Regardless of where migrants come from, where they go to, and how they articulate their initial motivations, their migration experiences and outcomes are affected by the simultaneous unfolding of their mobility trajectories in different fields. Migration, in other words, is “tangled mobilities,” and viewing it as such is an effective starting point for understanding the power dynamics causing and resulting from it. Another relational aspect of mobilities highlighted in this volume is the interweaving of different social spheres (public, private, reproductive, and productive), which is due to the structuring power of state policies over migrants and their children’s lives. This finding highlights the porosity of the socially constructed divides between social spheres (Fresnoza-Flot 2018; Lan 2008). Alongside these intertwined spheres is the entanglement of the often invisible dimensions of migration, including self-making and feelings of belonging. By paying attention to the complex emotions that shape, accompany, and stem from migration, this volume unveils the affective universe of individual migrants and their families. It lays bare the reality that people embark on the migratory journey with various aspirations and desires that are innately human.

Empirically speaking, through its case studies showing the recent developments in Asian transnational migrations, the volume diversifies the literature on mobilities that has, to date, mostly seen empirical examples from Western societies. The cases examined confirm previous observations that migration is multifaceted, and its patterns can overlap each other (e.g., Piper and Roces 2003). In most recent and emergent migration destinations in Asia where migration policy is nearly always presented in the utilitarian discourse, migrants are primarily considered as labor, whether productive or reproductive; or, more politely, as “human resources” or “global talents” (Liu-Farrer, forthcoming). By emphasizing complex migratory motives, the volume carries to policymakers the message that one cannot separate the manpower from the personhood of individual migrants.

In terms of analytical value, the volume’s lens of tangled mobilities leads to a different approach to migration, as it focuses on entanglements and their processes at different levels of analysis (micro, meso, macro). Instead of fixing its analytical regard on only one or two forms of mobility, it takes into account the interrelatedness among mobility forms. This approach brings out the nuances, subtleties, and complexities of individuals’ migration

experiences, thereby avoiding an oversimplified and linear portrayal of their life trajectories. Drawing on qualitative case studies focusing on the micro level of human life, the volume shows the influence of intersecting categories of difference (e.g., gender, social class, sexuality, and age) on the occurrence of tangled mobilities in migrants' translocal and transnational social spaces. These observations challenge the conventional views that tend to associate lifestyle and existential migrations with the North-North or North-South mobilities of the middle-class and wealthy migrants, and equate economically driven migration to working-class labor migrants from the Global South. It also reveals the entanglement of different elements, components, and forms of mobilities as a factor in making migration outcomes unpredictable. In addition, by embracing an inclusive stance, the volume uncovers how heterosexual and LGBTQ migrants experience the sexual fields in their social spaces, (re)define themselves as they undergo (im)mobility in these fields, and gain new subjectivities during this process.

The different crisscrossing trajectories analyzed in this volume offer possible research topics for the study of tangled mobilities. First, the temporality of entanglement needs to be further incorporated in the analysis of migration. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth investigating how this pandemic disentangles or further complicates the intertwined (im)mobilities that migrants and their families experience. There is an urgent need to conceptualize stasis in this context and to revisit the degree to which it is linked to mobility, including the different social, economic, and political stakes it entails. Second, to understand the entanglement of elements, components, and forms of mobilities, it is crucial to design innovative methodological approaches appropriate to this intellectual enterprise. The volume highlights the usefulness of qualitative methodologies in this regard, leaving open the question of novel methodologies suitable for dealing with ongoing societal changes and challenges. Because mobility is an "assemblage" (Salazar 2019), the most effective methodologies for capturing its complexities will probably turn out to be assemblages too.

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