

**Negotiating respect(ability).
A transnational ethnography of Indonesian
labor brokerage**

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von

Samia Dinkelaker

aus

Filderstadt

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies how the Indonesian state facilitates the migration of its female citizens for employment as domestic workers in Hong Kong. Applying the research perspective of ethnographic migration and border regime analysis, I scrutinize the multiplicity of state and non-state practices in one of Asia's major 'labor brokerage' countries. Building on a 12-month multi-sited ethnography in Indonesia and Hong Kong, the study sheds light on the desired and lived subjectivities of the workers and asks how these negotiate visions of national development and official expectations brought forward to them. Informed by Foucauldian, postcolonial, and feminist perspectives, I carve out how a variety of actors are invested in making Indonesia's migrant domestic workers more respectable. I introduce the concept of respectability and situate official notions of the 'ideal migrant' in aspirations to modernize Indonesian brokerage on the one hand and in discourses that circle around national dignity on the other. I discuss respectability in light of the tensions inherent in labor brokerage. I show that in their subjective practices, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong challenge official strivings for respectability, thus engaging in everyday politics from below that have repercussions on the Indonesian society. The dissertation extends earlier studies that highlight the role of gendered morality in disciplining migrant labor force. In addition, it incorporates notions of progressiveness and class distinction and points out that negotiations over migrants' subjectivities are indicative of fundamental contestations over the self-conceptions of labor brokerage states. By examining a sending state in the Global South, it provides a global view and productively connects research on transnational migration in Asia with ethnographic migration and border regime analyses, which have hitherto mainly focused on European and North American border regimes. The dissertation gives insights in how transnational labor migration shapes the modes in which questions of (national) belonging and visions of societal well-being are negotiated in postauthoritarian Indonesia.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Dissertation untersucht die staatlich geförderte Migration von indonesischen Haushaltsarbeiter*innen nach Hong Kong. Indem ich die Forschungsperspektive der ethnographischen Migrations- und Grenzregimeanalyse anwende, untersuche ich die vielfältigen staatlichen und nichtstaatlichen Praktiken in einem der wichtigsten Entsendeländer Asiens. Ich beleuchte normative und gelebte Subjektivitäten und frage danach, wie die Arbeiter*innen Vorstellungen nationaler Entwicklung und offizielle Erwartungen, die an sie gestellt werden, verhandeln. Dabei stütze ich mich auf eine 12-monatige, multi-lokale ethnographische Feldforschung in Indonesien und Hong Kong. Mit einem Ansatz, der von foucaultschen, postkolonialen und feministischen Perspektiven geprägt ist, arbeite ich heraus, wie die involvierten Akteur*innen versuchen, Migrant*innen respektabler zu machen. Ich führe das Konzept der Respektabilität ein und verorte offizielle Vorstellungen der 'idealen Migrantin' zum einen in dem Versuch, das indonesische Migrationsprogramm zu modernisieren, zum anderen in Diskursen um nationale Würde. Dabei diskutiere ich Respektabilität vor dem Hintergrund der Spannungen, die der staatlich geförderten Migration inhärent sind. Ich zeige auf, dass migrierte Haushaltsarbeiter*innen in Hong Kong die offiziellen Bestrebungen nach Respektabilität herausfordern und somit eine alltägliche Politik von unten konstituieren, die auf die indonesische Gesellschaft zurückwirkt. Die Dissertation erweitert frühere Studien, die die Rolle von vergeschlechtlichter Moral in der Disziplinierung migrantischer Arbeitskraft hervorheben. Darüber hinaus beziehe ich Vorstellungen von Fortschrittlichkeit und Klassenunterschieden mit ein und zeige auf, dass Aushandlungen über die Subjektivität der Migrant*innen auf grundsätzliche Auseinandersetzungen um das Selbstverständnis von Entsendestaaten verweisen. Indem sie einen Entsendestaat im Globalen Süden untersucht, bietet die Arbeit eine globale Perspektive und verbindet die Forschung zur transnationalen Migration in Asien mit dem Feld der ethnographischen Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung, die sich bislang primär mit europäischen und nordamerikanischen Grenzregimen auseinandergesetzt hat. Sie gibt Aufschluss, wie die transnationale Arbeitsmigration gesellschaftliche Aushandlungen zu Fragen um (nationale) Zugehörigkeit und Vorstellungen eines guten Lebens im postautoritären Indonesien prägt.

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Note

In line with academic conventions and to protect anonymity, I use fictive pseudonyms for protagonists and interlocutors, unless they appear as public figures. I also use pseudonyms for places that I visited and institutions where I met my interlocutors. The names Sumberbaru, Tegalrejo and Wonorejo are pseudonyms for districts in East Java. The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusanatara* agency and the *Thomson* and *Best Care* agency are pseudonyms for recruitment and placement agencies. The *Kasta Bank*, the *Bank Jasa Bumi*, the *Bank Jawa Usaha*, and the *Bank Jawa Maju* are pseudonyms for banks that engage in activities for Indonesian migrant workers.

I refer to the protagonists by a first name, since it is common in Indonesia not to have a surname. I use common Indonesian forms of address: *Ibu* for married, respected women, *Mbak* for younger women, *Mas* for younger men, and *Pak* for older, respected men. I adopted the forms of address used at the training center of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency: Some female staff and instructors were addressed as *Mam* (for *Ma'am*), Cantonese instructors were addressed as *Jiejie* (Cantonese for 'elder sister'), while Mandarin instructors were addressed as *Laotse* (Mandarin for 'teacher'). Other vernacular forms of address are explained in the glossary.

When I describe practices addressed at *female* migrant workers, I refer to a female subject-position as a "culturally constructed and ideologically dominant social category[] within which individuals are slotted" (Blackwood 2010, 21). Indonesian migrant domestic workers are addressed as *women*. Before, during, and after their stay abroad, migrant workers, however, also define themselves in ways that do not conform to their ascribed gender. This also applies to workers from the Philippines, whose demonym 'Flipino' (other than the demonym 'Indonesian') is gendered. To include people of Filipino descent who identify as Filipina, Flipino, and in ways that do not conform to their ascribed gender or the gender binary, I use the term 'Filipina/o/x' (see Hanna 2017, 697).

I communicated with most of the protagonists and interlocutors of the study in Indonesian and translated their statements into English. I cite some Indonesian and Javanese terms and their particular meanings in brackets after their English translation within the text to provide better understanding for readers with Indonesian and Javanese language skills.

1. Introduction: Dignity and respect in regimes of labor brokerage

This thesis studies how the Indonesian state brokers female citizens for employment as domestic workers in private households in Hong Kong. Among all migrant sending states in East Asia, Indonesia has become the third in importance, following the Philippines and China. Nine million Indonesian citizens are currently working abroad in places such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Brunei Darussalam, or South Korea (World Bank 2017, 2). Remittances sent by the workers have outdone incoming foreign aid; they are the second largest source of foreign income after the export of crude oil and gas (Elias 2013, 398; Palmer 2018, 145). In collaboration with private recruitment agencies, the Indonesian state actively facilitates and regulates the outmigration of its labor force, an involvement in global markets that sociologist Robyn Rodriguez (2010) has called “labor brokerage.” In the late 1960s, the Indonesian government started to consider the migration of its citizens as a measure to combat unemployment and to generate remittances and foreign exchange. After the Asian economic crisis in 1997, it openly promoted temporary migration on a large scale, in conjunction with an economic restructuring and the permeation of market rationality into ever more spheres of life (Chan 2014, 6954). In striving for ‘development’ through the ‘export’ of its labor force, Indonesia has emulated the Philippines, the role model for migrant labor sending states in Asia. A relative latecomer in this specific engagement in the global labor market, Indonesia specialized in the export of low-waged female domestic workers (Cremer 1988; Palmer 2016, 33; Robinson 2000). Women who migrate for employment in private households have grown to represent the great majority of migrants who have left Indonesia through the state-sanctioned migration scheme over the last two decades (Killias 2018, 5). Indonesia’s specialization in sending domestic workers parallels a growing demand for flexible and low cost care labor¹ in

¹ Narrow definitions of care work entail face-to-face services that sustain another person (P. England, Budig, and Folbre 2002, 455). In contrast, I refer to care as activities involved in “sustaining a population” (Parreñas 2015,

middle and high-income households in the course of neoliberal globalization in all parts of the world (e.g. Hochschild 2000; Parreñas 2001; Sassen 2008; Yeates 2009). In Hong Kong, families across social strata welcome migrant domestic workers as a solution to predicaments of fulfilling household and care needs and thus to enable more Hongkongers to join the paid workforce in the service-oriented economy. Following the community of Filipina/o/x workers, the 150,000 Indonesians domestic workers form a large share of those migrant women who clean flats and houses, prepare lunches and dinners, take care of babies, bring children to school and pick them up, and accompany elderly people to parks and take care of their daily hygiene. Controversial since the beginning of its migration program, the Indonesian government currently attempts to modernize this strategy of national development, which nowadays involves a great number of state and non-state actors. In this thesis, I focus on how attempts to refurbish the Indonesian labor migration program are linked with ideas of “ideal migrants” (Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013): compliant workers meeting the demands of global markets, compatriots capable to uphold national self-esteem, and self-responsible citizens who maintain good relations to the ‘homeland.’ Focusing on the encounters between the migration apparatus and the mobile workers, I discuss how Indonesian migrant domestic workers negotiate the variegated notions of an ideal migrant in their own migration projects, aspirations, and desires. Thus, I highlight the ambivalences of the official agenda of modernizing the ‘export’ of Indonesian migrant workers. In this introduction, I outline the main theme, subject, and research interest of this dissertation, introduce my research perspective, and provide an overview of my fieldwork and the historical context necessary to understand my major findings.

47). According to wider definitions, care covers activities such as “purchasing household goods, preparing food, laundering clothes, dusting furniture, sweeping floors, maintaining community ties, caring for adults and children, socializing children, and providing emotional support” (Parreñas 2015, 47). As it becomes clear in the course of this thesis, care covers a continuum of activities that spans over communicative, affective to physical activities (Precarias a la Deriva 2006, 36). According to this wide definition of care, I use care work and domestic work interchangeably. I speak of domestic work when I consider it important to highlight the particular feature of care work performed in private households.

A matter of (national) dignity and respect

We should not send workers to countries that do not have clear laws to protect Indonesian overseas workers. We should suspend sending workers to those countries. We need to be firm on these things. Because this concerns human beings, this concerns our national citizens abroad, and it concerns our dignity.

Joko Widodo (presidential candidate for the general elections 2014), 22 June 2014

It is the duty of our government to prepare the workers with a good training. If at all they are forced to work abroad, then at least they should receive good incomes. So that they don't become street sweepers only, so that they don't become domestic helpers only. (...) Indonesia will be respected only if its people are prosperous.

Prabowo Subianto (presidential candidate for the general elections 2014), 22 June 2014

Since its early stages, the Indonesian labor migration program has caused the public's discomfort. Although the contribution of migrants to the overall economy and the income of their families is welcomed, severe cases of abuse and executions of workers abroad have caused anxieties related to the plight of Indonesia's female migrant workers (Chan 2014; Killias 2018; Palmer 2016; Platt 2018; Robinson 2000; Silvey 2007b). These worries also underlie the two statements that prelude this section. They were made when Indonesia was electing a new president in 2014. During a TV debate, the two presidential candidates were discussing the future of the state's involvement in sending female workers abroad (Metro TV 2014). The two statements capture the undertone of the main *theme* of this thesis and point to a central concept by means of which I describe how the different actors involved in labor brokerage imagine modern migration policies, ideal migrant workers, and the image of the nation: respectability.

In modernizing Indonesia's labor migration program, policy-makers and practitioners pledge to turn Indonesian domestic workers into more honorable and proper citizens and, in extension, to restore national dignity. During the TV debate at the forefront of the elections, both candidates expressed the view that the lot of Indonesia's migrant workers is primarily a matter of national dignity. The winning candidate Joko Widodo emphasized that the bodily integrity of female citizens is a matter of respect towards the whole nation. For his opponent

Prabowo Subianto, sending Indonesian migrants in low-income jobs is unfortunate, since only prosperous people can make a dignified nation. The debaters thus share a common sentiment towards Indonesia's self-image as a migrant sending country that reflects current policy developments. Policy makers wish to see the sending of unskilled domestic workers as a dinosaur, a phase-out model of the Indonesian labor export. After he had been elected president, 'Jokowi,' as he is colloquially called, announced that he planned to stop sending Indonesians abroad for work in private households—a plan, however, that the government has repudiated in the meantime.² Nevertheless, in hoping that Indonesia's migrant workers will achieve more than being 'domestic helpers only,' policy-makers have announced channeling Indonesia's labor export into spheres that enjoy recognition as skilled labor such as caregiving, nursing, or catering. Banks offer finance products designed to push domestic workers' entrepreneurial spirits, which should eventually redeem them from the fate of being a dependent wage worker. Recruitment agencies also engage in modernizing Indonesian brokerage by equipping prospective workers with perfected competencies that go well beyond manual household chores.

I witnessed the mentioned TV debate when I was conducting the fieldwork that I build this thesis on. For a period of 12 months, I stayed in Indonesia and Hong Kong to follow the complex procedures that the workers must undergo on their journeys to Hong Kong and back: I met government officials, visited migrant workers' home villages, stayed at the training center of a private recruitment agency, accompanied a group of migrant workers on their way to Hong Kong, visited placement agencies and the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong, and got to know migrant workers' organizations. Between January and July 2018, I returned to Hong Kong to take up the position of the person in charge of a shelter for migrant domestic workers, mainly

² In the run-up of the elections in April 2019, again Joko Widodo and Prabowo competed against each other. Joko Widodo won the elections with a greater share of the votes than in 2014.

from Indonesia. My experience of working with workers who were filing legal cases in the wake of infringements of their rights further informs this study.

The trajectory of my fieldwork led me to engage with official quests for national respectability in the context of Indonesian labor brokerage and with the question of how the workers themselves relate and respond to these quests. Therefore, one strand of this thesis explores the multifarious modes in which the desires to turn Indonesian lower-class migrants into more respectable workers and citizens are articulated in the quotidian practices of Indonesia's migration apparatus. The other strand studies female migrant domestic workers' own desires, their aspirations, and their transnational experiences. In the course of the following chapters, I juxtapose policy-makers' and practitioners' wishes for a more dignified future of Indonesia's migrant workers and the whole nation on the one hand with how Indonesian migrants in Hong Kong express their own quests for dignity and respect on the other. I observe a remarkable discrepancy between what officials responsible for the Indonesian labor migration program imagine as national respect and dignity, and which meanings migrant domestic workers themselves attach to self-respect against the backdrop of the experience of daily devaluation. The mentioned discrepancy is indicative of negotiations situated in the interstices between migrant domestic workers' lived migration projects and official attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage.

How migrant domestic workers' narratives differ from official perspectives on labor brokerage became very clear to me when I was listening to Rita and Utari. They were tenants at the shelter for migrant domestic workers in distress in Hong Kong where I was working in 2018. The two workers painted a nuanced picture of their transnational experiences: Constraints in their contexts of origin and during employment in Hong Kong stand next to suffering, to moments of freedom, and to the experience of subjective well-being. Once, in a conversation with Rita, Utari, and other tenants at the shelter, they explained to me what Sunday activities in

Hong Kong mean to them. On Sundays, many Indonesian domestic workers have their legally guaranteed day off from work. Hong Kong legislation requires migrant domestic workers to live with their employers, and thus the workers do not have a place of their own. Thousands of Indonesian and Filipina/o/x domestic workers gather in public space and spend their leisure time together. They have picnics, congregate to study the Qur'an, teach each other skills like sewing or makeup art, rehearse dance choreographies, organize beauty competitions, or maintain street libraries.

Rita had worked in Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong for years, but her most recent employer assaulted her physically. She was not paid her full salaries when she escaped the flat of her Hong Kong employer. Despite her most recent bitter experience, she underlined the freedom she felt in Hong Kong, when she was on her day off from work: "It's as if we forget that we have an employer when we have our day off. But then, when we must go back, it's like going back into the lion's den" (recording 18 Jun 2018). As she contrasted the time off from work with her employer being a predatory cat, Rita pointed to the relief, the emotional ease, and good spirit she feels when she can meet her friends and share what is on her mind. Rita also explained that the freedom she enjoys on Sundays in Hong Kong has no equivalent in the village she comes from on the island of Java. "I am strapped (*terikat*). I have a responsibility as a housewife." She explained: "Anywhere I go, I need money, while I don't have any income." In addition to these economic constraints, she pointed to the gender-specific limitations of her personal freedom: "In the village, if I spend too much time [outside the house] and have a husband, this will not be seen as proper behavior (*tidak baik*)." Utari, who joined our conversation, agreed with Rita that in the villages, women, married and unmarried, are under tight social control: "It is more pleasant here" (*ibid.*).

The fact that as migrant domestic workers they are under the constant surveillance of their employers notwithstanding, Rita and Utari appreciate the freedom they enjoy once a week

because in their home villages they face limits to their liberties. Stating that anywhere she goes she needs money while she doesn't have any income points to the expansive commodification of various spheres of life in migrants' villages of origin, while at the same time, there are only few opportunities of gaining an income (see Killias 2018, 61–64). In the search for wage employment elsewhere, Rita and Utari get out of limitations in their liberties set by the ruling gender norms. They experience emotional ease precisely while they work abroad, even though this is limited to their days off only. Notably, when she described her experience of emotional ease, Rita used the Javanese term *ketentraman*, which in Javanese ethics is an emotional condition that bears a high cultural value; it is an achievement one is respected for (Stodulka 2017, 60). Thus, Rita sheds a different light on the question of dignity and respect that seems so pressing to Indonesian politicians and their fellow country people expressing shame as they witness the injustices Indonesian women experience abroad. Rita's and Utari's narratives join the polyphonic counter subject to the theme of national dignity in official rhetoric. They exemplify the dynamic relationships between official attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage and Indonesian domestic workers' aspirations, practices, and desires, including their own articulations of self-esteem and national belonging.

These dynamics traverse the chapters to come: I discuss moments in which migrant domestic workers challenge imaginations of officials or recruitment agents of the ideal migrant, a desirable worker, citizen, or family member. Other sections focus on situations and conditions in which their interests coincide: instances in which workers appropriate dominant symbols of nationalism and instances in which recruitment agencies build on strategies of resilience tried and tested by migrant domestic workers.

A regime perspective on migration

While negotiations over migrant workers' respect and respectability build a reappearing *theme* throughout the thesis, regime analysis provides its *research perspective*. The concept of a migration regime designates the interplays and negotiations between multiple actors, institutions, and practices in shaping migration and its subjects (Pott, Rass, and Wolff 2018). For my study, regime analysis is a beneficial lens to shed light on the multiplicity of actors involved in Indonesian labor brokerage, including their practices, rationalities, discourses, and affects.³ In dominant political science debates, migration regimes are defined as institutionalized processes of negotiation and cooperation between various actors, mainly national governments (see Schwenken 2018a, 17). In addition, I avail myself of an extended notion of a regime: the perspective brought forward by ethnographic migration and border regime studies (Hess, Kasparek, and Schwertl 2018; Hess and Tsianos 2010; Transit Migration 2007).

Because this perspective conceptualizes a regime as a broad spectrum of actors and practices, it allows me to grasp the interplay of the multiple state and non-state actors involved in Indonesian brokerage: private recruiters, recruitment and placement agencies, local government institutions, diplomatic representations abroad, certified health clinics, agencies that certify the workers' competencies, financial institutions, as well the networks among migrant workers themselves. Furthermore, ethnographic migration and border regime analyses put emphasis on societal negotiations of migration, rights, and societal participation (Schwenken 2018a, 18). They examine the spectrum of actors that shape contemporary migrations in light of the transnationalized modes of regulating mobility, without ignoring the structural conditions under

³ In the course of the thesis, I differentiate between the concepts 'affects,' 'emotions,' and 'sentiments' to describe different facets of embodied, sensory, and interpersonal dimensions of experience (see Chapters 2.1, 3.2, 7.1). I speak of affects to designate "bodily, sensory, inarticulate, sometimes nonconscious experience," and of emotions to designate experiences that can be articulated in "shared or recognizable modes of communication" (Thajib, Dinkelaker, and Stodulka 2019). I refer to sentiment to designate affectively and emotionally opinions and judgements (both individual and collective) (Bens and Zenker 2019). At this point, in describing the different elements that constitute a migration regime, I decide to speak of 'affects' in a wider sense that includes aspects of 'emotion' (culturally coded experience) and 'sentiment' (opinion and judgement).

which migrants act, feel, and behave (Schwenken 2018a, 18). Thus, modes of regulating human mobility are addressed in relation to past and current transformations of labor processes and modes of capitalist accumulation, to complex global inequalities, as well as to social and political exclusions. The interdependence of a variety of actors and their conflicts constitute this regulation (De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles 2015; Karakayali and Tsianos 2007, 13).

Ethnographic migration and border regime analyses adopt a different perspective than most of the dominant migration theories of sociology and the political sciences, which from varying theoretical angles explain what kind of migration happens where (see Pries 2013; Schwenken 2018a, 63–106). Ethnographic migration and border regime studies take into account migration's critical role in global divisions of labor (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 73). They, however, depart from functionalist and deterministic assumptions (Karakayali and Tsianos 2005, 48; Moulier Boutang 1993; Schwenken 2018a, 106). They are interested in the political nature of *regulating* migration through a conglomerate of actors, discourses, practices, and affects, a conglomerate that I describe by the Foucauldian term 'dispositive' (Chapter 4).

This focus on the regulation of migration is based on the assumption that human mobility is neither caused by simple demographic reasons, nor solely by poverty, but driven by the search for better life perspectives, be it in political terms, or by the demand for their labor force. While global divisions of labor capitalize on migrants' flexible and cheap labor force, migrants do not automatically submit to the demands of global markets, therefore a row of regulating and controlling practices come into play (Karakayali and Tsianos 2005, 53; Schwenken 2018a, 107). Ethnographic migration and border regime studies address open and subtle modes that *mobilize*, *regulate*, and *tame*, or in other words: 'govern' (Foucault 1982, 2012), migration.⁴ They draw

⁴ In Chapter 4 I spell out the analytical terms with which I examine Indonesian labor brokerage as different dispositional formations.

on Michel Foucault's influential work on the conjunction of knowledge and power: Which mobile person counts as a 'migrant,' and as what kind of migrant—illegal, refugee, or expat—she is perceived, is no given, but a reality produced through knowledge, for instance through scholarly research, think tanks, government classifications, and statistics (Karakayali 2008, 43). The operations of the power that structure how societies think about migration, the behavior of those who regulate migration, and the behavior of migrants themselves, are dispersed and dynamic (Hess, Kasperek, and Schwertl 2018, 260).

It is the distinct feature of ethnographic migration and border regime studies to take seriously migrants' role in societal negotiations. This implies neither to reduce migration to a dependent variable of an equation, nor to conceive of migrants themselves as completely determined and denied of any agency (for further discussion see below). Closely related to this focus on negotiations is the attempt of ethnographic and border regime analyses to trace the fissures and constant transformations of the modes that govern migration (Hess, Kasperek, and Schwertl 2018, 269). In this matter, they call for ethnographic investigation as a suitable methodology (Hess and Tsianos 2010). I build on the conceptual and methodological takes of ethnographic migration and border regime studies in examining Indonesian labor brokerage.

Studying labor brokerage states

Ethnographic migration and border regime studies have generated a number of empirical studies on European and U.S.-American border regimes and thus focus on the dynamic policies and politics of receiving contexts (Hess et al. 2015; Kasperek and Hess 2010; Transit Migration 2007). The negotiations that occur between migrants and those sending states, which actively promote and regulate the temporary labor migration of their citizens, the *subject* of this research, has yet been underexposed to this strand in migration theory. I relate the above outlined notion of the migration regime to the concept of the brokerage state in order to describe Indonesia's role as a sending state in the political economy of migrant care labor. In her study of Philippine

labor brokerage, deemed as the prototype of labor brokerage, Rodriguez (2010, x) describes this development strategy as a:

neoliberal strategy that is comprised of institutional and discursive practices through which [a labor brokerage state; SD] mobilizes its citizens and sends them abroad to work for employers throughout the world while generating a 'profit' from the remittances that migrants send back to their families and loved ones remaining in [their places of origin; SD].

Rodriguez has shown that the role of brokerage states is crucial in facilitating and regulating the mobility of their citizens to economies in demand of short-term employees. Her notion of the brokerage state is a critical intervention in a discussion in international policy arenas which is debating the 'triple win' effects of temporary labor migration programs, i.e. instruments of governance that are supposed to enhance the positive potentials of 'circular migration' to receiving states, sending states, and the migrants themselves (Rodriguez 2010, xxxiii; see also Castles and Ozkul 2014; Thieme and Ghimire 2014). Rodriguez critically situates such programs in postcolonial, global disparities and offers an analytical lens that focuses on the role of institutional apparatuses of sending states in facilitating global divisions of labor. These apparatuses ensure that migrants are compliant with the terms of employment contracts and immigration rules of labor-receiving states, thus making sure they will not make claims to membership and return to their places of origin. They ensure that their citizens abroad maintain relations to the homeland, sustain their families, and invest in the economy, thus taking up responsibility for the fatal consequences of structural adjustment or financial crises, like in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of 1997. To underline that labor brokerage states enhance the role of migration in sustaining societies in migrants' regions of origin as well as in areas of their destinations, and of ensuring the survival of the migrants' themselves, I refer to the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics (Chapter 3). Labor brokerage is an ambivalent development strategy, however. Labor brokerage states master the stretch between sourcing global demands of flexible labor and bearing responsibility for the discriminations their citizens may experience

abroad: racism, exploitation, devaluation, wage dumping, compromised labor rights, and family separation. Under these circumstances, labor brokerage sustain particular relations to their citizens and invoke specific and gendered forms of “migrant citizenship” (Rodriguez 2010, 96): They warrant to ‘protect’ their citizens abroad, while they incite them to act as ideal migrants, i.e. possessing the right faculties to compete on the market, developing the prosperity of their families, and representing the nation on the international stage (see also Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013; Schwenken 2018a, 181–86).

My study shows that combining ethnographic migration and border regime analyses with the concept of labor brokerage is a mutually fruitful endeavor. A fine-grained analysis that eschews the functionalism discernible in Rogdriguez’ concept of the labor brokerage state becomes possible for two reasons: *Firstly*, the perspective of ethnographic migration and border regime analysis allows a nuanced perspective on ambiguities in the interplays between a multiplicity of actors and modes of governing. *Secondly*, this perspective integrates migrants’ subjective, or idiosyncratic, modes of living their migration projects in the study of migration regimes. The respective locations of my multi-sited fieldwork can thus be conceived of as spaces of negotiation between migrants, the respective agents of labor brokerage, and the social discourses they are embedded in. In turn, by shedding light on the processes of negotiations in a sending state, the study contributes to broadening the perspective of ethnographic migration and border regime studies. It is a reminder that the manifold political and societal negotiations about transnational migration not only transform the centers of global migration movements, but also the social and political contexts of migrants’ origins—a perspective that has been identified as a desideratum in the migration regime literature (Schwenken 2018a, 175; Walters 2015, 11).

Yet, there is a large body of literature that has, mostly from the perspective of anthropology and area studies, studied the Indonesian state-sponsored migration scheme.⁵ These studies illuminate the specific features of Indonesian labor brokerage. Studies of the evolution of the Indonesian migration program (Palmer 2016; Tirtosudarmo 1999, 2009) highlight that since the beginning of a significant state engagement in the ‘export’ of labor in the 1980s, Indonesian labor brokerage had to compete with more established market actors, mainly the Philippines. Wayne Palmer’s (2016) study shows that the Indonesian labor migration program has always been traversed by turf wars of different state factions. Drawing on theories from political science, he gives detailed account on collusions between the recruitment business and government actors, thus highlighting the political influence of private recruitment agencies in Indonesian brokerage. Johan Lindquist’s (2010a, 2012, 2015, 2018a, 2018b) ethnographic research of the intermediaries that facilitate transnational migration elucidates the constitutive role of private companies and informal brokers as well as the cultural forms that intermingle with formal practices of regulating mobility. Using the concept of “migration infrastructure” (Xiang and Lindquist 2014), his work resonates with ethnographic migration and border regime studies insofar as both approaches consider actors, practices, discourses, and affects that matter for the regulation of migration, but go well beyond government and formal institutions. Due to the concentration on the feminized sector of domestic care labor, the gendered nature of Indonesian labor brokerage is obvious. Several studies have shown that gendered notions of female vulnerability and female morality have been a key in the public perception of Indonesian labor migration, in paternalizing control of transnational domestic workers’ mobility, and in dealing

⁵ Conspicuously, I do not cite many authors who are based in Indonesian universities. Unlike at universities in other countries in the region such as India, Thailand, or Bangladesh (see Schwenken 2018a, 21–22) migration research has not been established as a field of research at Indonesian universities. This mirrors the relatively weak position of (qualitative) social science in Indonesia and is a legacy of Suharto’s authoritarian government (1966–1998) for which establishing a broad and independent academic landscape in the social sciences was not a priority. Academic social science research under Suharto’s rule was characterized by its technical and formal nature (Heryanto 2005).

with the contradictory role of the state in labor brokerage (Chan 2014, 2017; Killias 2010, 2018; Platt 2018; Robinson 2000; Silvey 2004, 2007b). In studying the quotidian practices that constitute Indonesian brokerage, I build on earlier studies which examine such practices at specific sites of the migration process: training centers, local bureaucracies, or the special reception terminals for migrant workers on Indonesia's international airports (Ford and Lyons 2011; Kloppenburg 2013; Palmer 2012, 2013; Rudnycky 2004; Silvey 2007b).

In extension to existing studies, the study provides insights to more recent developments of Indonesian labor brokerage. Beyond the Indonesian case, it contributes to studies of labor brokerage in Asia that consider the case of the Philippines (e.g. Guevarra 2010; Rodriguez 2010), the case of Sri Lanka (e.g. Gamburd 2000; Frantz 2011), the case of China (e.g. Xiang 2012), or the case of Vietnam (e.g. Bélanger and Wang 2013). I provide an intersectional framework that allows for critically engaging with the modernizing aspirations of labor brokerage states and highlight how these are entangled with nationalism, postcolonial and postsocialist strategies of development, social valuations of different kinds of labor, as well as gendered and classed notions of morality. Furthermore, through the lens of transnational migration, the transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological perspectives of this thesis shed light on contemporary developments in Indonesia's state-society relations (see e.g. Berenschot and van Klinken 2018; Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018). I show that, through their subjectivities and everyday politics, Indonesia's migrant domestic workers have their part in shaping the dynamics of citizen formation, normative gender construction, and politico-religious governing.

Migrant subjectivities

To account for the fine-grained modes of regulating migrants, on the one hand, and migrants' agency in societal negotiations over the aims and ends of migration, on the other, calls for a closer look at processes of subject constitution of migrants. I place the subject constituting

practices involved in the various stages of the migration process at the center of my *research interest* and ask:

How do the various actors involved in Indonesian labor brokerage imagine and shape the ideal migrant, and how do Indonesian migrant domestic workers answer the expectations brought forward to them in their individual migration projects, aspirations, and desires?

By subject constitution, I mean, on the one, hand practices that mold migrants' conduct and experience to conform to what or who the multiple actors involved in the Indonesian labor migration program imagine as an ideal migrant. On the other hand, subject constitution describes how migrants live in the world, how they make sense of it, and how they perceive themselves.⁶ Studying subject constitution means to trace the sociality of individual conduct, experience, and feeling, without reducing individual behavior to socially determined practice. By the study of subject constitution, one can gain a deeper understanding of “how regimes work” (Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013, 379; see Chapter 3) and illuminate the subtle, ambiguous, and contested nature of the regulation of migration. An ethnographic focus on subject constituting practices adds ethnographic depth to migration regime analyses, as it scrutinizes the efficacy of programmatic agendas that underlie the regulation of migration (see Bührmann and Schneider 2012, 152). Following the migration process, I learned that ‘becoming’ an Indonesian migrant domestic worker implies certain expectations towards (prospective) migrant domestic workers to mold their bodies and attitudes and to develop certain affective competencies. Migrant domestic workers are expected to undergo several personal transformations along their journeys: to become virtuous migrant-citizens, to become professional affective laborers, and to become self-reliant and self-optimizing passionate entrepreneurs. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 scrutinize these transformations and discuss them as ‘subject figures’—a term with which I capture the polyphonic modes of addressing Indonesian migrant domestic workers. As I show,

⁶ In Chapter 4, I spell out the analytical terms by means of which I examine subject constitution.

migrants embody the desirable traits of these subject figures in multiple ways and, in various instances, challenge them. Thus, they negotiate labor brokerage on an everyday level.

Shedding light on such everyday processes of negotiation, I seek to take into account migrant domestic workers' agency and avoid victimizing representations of marginalized migrants. Such victimizing representations concern Asian migrant domestic workers in particular, for instance in transnationally travelled trafficking discourses (e.g. Ford and Lyons 2012; Liebelt 2011, 11; Kloppenburg and Peters 2012; Lindquist 2013). In these discourses, domestic workers tend to epitomize the oppressed "third world woman" (Mohanty 1984)—"perpetually frozen in backwardness, ignorance and docile victimhood" (Fernando 2016, 395). Instead of understanding migrant domestic workers as powerless victims, I draw on the perspective of ethnographic migration and border regime studies, which account for moments when migration and mobility articulate people's desires to escape the effects of relations of power and domination, to create new forms of living, and to change their material conditions (Bojadžijev 2008, 147; Tsianos and Karakayali 2011, 18). The force of such new forms of living has been illustrated in Rita's account of her days off in Hong Kong, whereby her narrative by no means allows for romanticizing her experience. Rather than ascertaining migrants' agency as an end in itself, however, ethnographic migration and border regime studies attend to migrants' subjectivities to highlight conflicts between migrants' socialities and the attempt to control their mobility.

This line of thought has been framed as "autonomy of migration," which is a reference to the Italian *autonomia* movement, i.e. the struggles of workers against the Fordist factory regimes (e.g. De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles 2015; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; *Transit Migration* 2007). In this sense, a case in point of the autonomy of migration are migrants 'stubbornly' crossing the borders of the European Union without authorization, even if this means

their illegalization. The autonomy of migration thesis has, however, been criticized as overestimating migrants' transformative force and as being blind to the intersectional relations of power that structure migrants' agency (Benz and Schwenken 2005, 370). Almost 20 years after the autonomy of migration-thesis was first formulated, its proponents themselves have critically reflected upon the approach. The approach has tended to equate migrants' agency with an ascribed liberating, progressive force bearing the potential to disrupt capitalist formations of society, similar to Marxists who generally ascribe an emancipatory force to the working class (Mezzadra 2010; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013, 189).

Avoiding both voluntaristic and teleological invocations of agency, Martina Benz and Helen Schwenken (2005, 375) have proposed the alternative term "willfulness" (*Eigensinn*).⁷ The term accounts for capitalist and gendered social structures that may both constrain and enable a migrant's mobility (see also Schwenken 2018a, 111).⁸ I sympathize with Benz and Schwenken's notion of migrants' willfulness, because the term is not attached to the specific tradition of European factory workers' activism. Furthermore, it avoids a too hasty conflation of migrants' agency with notions of emancipation and individual autonomy. These may reflect activists' and critical scholars' prescriptive concepts of resistance, but do not necessarily cover the multi-faceted and nuanced forms of migrants' agency (Bojadžijev and Liebelt 2014, 342; Mahmood 2005, 10). Although I prefer the term willfulness to describe the agency that lies in marginalized subjects' mobility, I do not fully repudiate the autonomy of migration thesis. One figure of thought has become particularly important to my analysis: acknowledging the political moment in migrants' everyday quests for better lives or better conditions in their struggle to

⁷ Benz and Schwenken borrow this term from Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's volume *Geschichte und Eigensinn* on the history of labor-power (1981 in Benz and Schwenken 2005, 374). In 2012, this volume has been translated with the title *History and Obstinacy*. I use the alternative translation 'willfulness' with reference to Sarah Ahmed's (2014) *The Willful Subject*, who, like Negt and Kluge, references the Grimm fairytale *The Willful Child*.

⁸ With regard to the Indonesian context, specific cultural forms should also be taken account of: In Indonesia, for instance, the cultural experience of *malu* (shame) can make migrants keep in mobility—if their migration projects, once planned temporarily, are not successful (Lindquist 2004, 2009).

sustain their lives and claims to respect and self-value (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013, 188). As I argue, even if they are not declared as such, these everyday quests are a form of politics.

Studies on migrant domestic workers have shown that the willfulness of migration and practices of regulation and control are not restricted to transnational border crossings; there are “many forms of mobility that matter to migrants apart from their movements between countries” (Akalin 2018, 427). Killias’ (2010, 2018) work confirms this point. She gives a detailed account of state-sanctioned regulations and practices that contain Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ mobility during the migration process (being under escort of a recruitment agent, living in secluded training camps) and in employment (being subject to contracts that legalize indentured labor and servitude) in Malaysia. Killias (2018, 175) elaborates how the immobilization of migrant domestic workers curbs their “quest for more autonomy” and aims at preventing domestic workers from using their “trump card—market mobility” (Lan 2007 in Killias 2018, 176), i.e. workers’ rights to choose their employer independently and quit their jobs in the search for higher wages and better working conditions.⁹ Some of the domestic workers in Killias’ study escape these controls by circumventing the ‘legal’ but nevertheless coercive state-sanctioned migration schemes (see also Silvey 2018, 204).

As I discuss in the course of this thesis, Hong Kong’s migrant domestic workers also make use of willfull mobilities in seeking better work and life conditions. In addition, I highlight that in seeking for better lives, dignity, and respect, migrant domestic workers live and enact new subjectivities and socialities—along their journeys, in Hong Kong, and upon return to Hong Kong. Rachel Silvey (2018) highlights the socialities migrant domestic workers establish on their journeys abroad. She sheds light on the training centers of private recruitment agencies. In contrast to representations of NGOs which depict the training centers as “sites of inhuman

⁹ Control over domestic workers’ mobility is vital to their constant availability for their employers (as live-in workers), to their flexibility (as temporal laborers), and last but not least, to paying off the expenditures that recruitment companies (as guarantors for the loan migrant workers take in to pay the placement services) and employers have made prior to their employment (the fees they pay to placement agencies).

treatment” (Silvey 2018, 197), Silvey shows that prospective workers do not exactly experience these centers as oppressive, but puts emphasis on the social contacts they make in these spaces as a formative experience. Several studies of domestic workers’ communities in Hong Kong discuss the new subjectivities migrant domestic workers cultivate in coping with and protesting against the degrading and racialized stereotypes they face in Hong Kong while developing socialities amid the opportunities Hong Kong provides. These studies have discussed a variety of community practices (Chen and Szeto 2015; Constable 2007), migrants’ enactments of non-normative gender subjectivities and intimate relationships (Chang and Groves 2000; Y. K. Lai 2014; Sim 2007), and their transnational activism (Constable 2009; Hsia 2009; M. Lai 2010; Lopez Wui 2015; Rother 2017). Carol Chan (2017), shows how these new, transnational subjectivities are received in migrants’ villages of origin.

The contribution I make to the scholarship engaging with migrants’ subjectivities in the transnational spaces between Indonesia and Hong Kong and beyond is conceptual and methodological. I situate workers’ willful mobilities, subjectivities, and socialities within the undertaking of modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage. I do so by juxtaposing migrants’ subjective practices, their desires, and aspirations with the multifarious notions of the ideal migrant, as these are articulated by different actors involved in labor brokerage. This transnational approach (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) to migrants’ subject constitution brings to the fore how migrants *simultaneously* negotiate expectations brought forward to them by family members, friends, and neighbors in their contexts of origins, by actors involved in the migration apparatus, by their employers, and by state actors in Hong Kong who regulate immigration to the city. Thus, I illuminate multifaceted fields of tensions that saturate Indonesian labor brokerage. As I argue, the various tensions inherent in Indonesian labor brokerage and the attempt to modernize it are connected by concerns about migrants’ and the nation’s respectability.

Respectability: Matters of modernity, gender, and class

As a *result* of the data analysis, the concept of respectability appears appropriate to capture the practices, affects, and negotiated subjectivities that constitute the multifaceted engagements in refurbishing Indonesian labor brokerage. ‘Respectability’ saturates the manifold processes of negotiations over migrant subjectivities and current modernization of the Indonesian migration program. Merriam Webster’s (2018) online dictionary of the English language defines being respectable as “worthy of respect: estimable,” “decent or current in character or behavior: proper,” and “fit to be seen: presentable.” These connotations of respectability resonate with my exploration of Indonesian labor brokerage. Concerns over being estimable, proper, and presentable traverse the normative appeals and attempts of modernization I encountered in the field: Workers’ compliance is discussed as a matter of female morality and virtuousness; migrants are reminded of their proper outward appearance; bureaucrats and training instructors express concerns over female migrants’ intimate relationships; migrants are equipped to represent Indonesia on the world stage; officials enthusiastically display the most modern instruments of biometrical technology; and training instructors pity the backwardness of migrants from more ‘peripheral’ regions in the archipelago.

Feminist sociologist Beverley Skeggs (1997) uses respectability as a concept to describe markers of class, shaping how people behave, dress, speak, and who they associate with, and to describe hierarchical definitions of people’s worthiness. Sarah Attfield (2016, 45), who studies working class culture in Great Britain and Australia, points out that “[r]espectability should not be confused with respect, which, according to bell hooks is about ‘being seen and treated like you matter’” (ibid. citing hooks 2000, 20). Respectability, in turn is a tool to classify and exercise control over marginalized parts of society.

It has been used to classify and divide the working class into those who *are* and those who are *not* deserving of assistance and sympathy—classification that has its roots in Enlightenment desires to categorise and order people and things (in order to control them) (Attfield 2016, 45).

Respectability is deeply entangled with global history. Scholars of modern nationalism and (post)colonialism have argued that the *standards* of what is defined as respectable are colored by judgments of race, class, gender, sexuality, and national belonging (Freeman 2014; Mosse 1985; Skeggs 1997; Stoler 2002). For Skeggs (1997, 2), both in the European centers and in the colonies, standards of respectability were first and foremost central to social distinctions, thereby connoting respectability with white bourgeois female morality and progressiveness as well as with their implicit oppositions: degeneracy and decay. Historically, domestic workers—‘servants’—have epitomized the antithesis of modern respectability (Duffy 2007; McClintock 1995, 53; Skeggs 2010).

Studies of Indonesian labor brokerage have pointed out that appeals and representations of female morality figure prominently in Indonesia’s labor migration program (Chan 2014, 2017; Killias 2010, 2018; Platt 2018). They identify these as paternalistic modes of regulating migrants’ behavior and work discipline, as a key in dealing with the contradictory role of the state, and in capturing how gender, sexuality, and national belonging are interwoven in negotiations about female workers’ morality. In my view, pointing out appeals to and representations of female morality still provides an incomplete picture of the dynamics that characterize current developments in Indonesian labor brokerage. The concept of respectability allows me to shed light on the entanglements between appeals to migrant workers’ morality as a mode of molding migrant labor-power and defining national dignity. They can be theorized as attempts to ‘upgrade’ Indonesian labor brokerage in order to enhance national prestige, and engagements with high technological and high modern instruments in preparing migrant domestic workers as aspirations to cultivate progressiveness. It thus brings together my conceptual migration regime

approach and my takes on subject constitution. I argue that the brokerage of Indonesian domestic workers is an inherently ambivalent enterprise, not only because of the ‘moral hazards’ of female mobility, but also considering the image of backwardness, devaluation, and humiliation that is attached to domestic work, globally and in Indonesia, in particular.

Feminist accounts on care work contextualize this devaluation of paid domestic care work within social processes in global capitalist history (e.g. Dalla Costa and James 1972; Saptari 2006). As reproductive work, care work is essential to the sustenance of reproducing of labor-power, and beyond, it is essential to survival since it sustains the “creation and maintenance” of society in general (I. Bakker and Gill 2003, 18; Fisher and Tronto 1990, 40; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 3–6). Yet, in the making of global modern history and capitalist relations of production, care work, particularly when it is carried out in the domestic realms, has been systematically devalued and invisibilized, for instance as ‘banal’ and ‘informal’ work. This denigration has been explained with the generic relation of care to the precariousness and vulnerability of life and bodies, the dependence on other people’s care, and the illusiveness of a fully autonomous life (Lorey 2015a, 27). Particularly due to its dealings with dirt, morbidity, and neediness, care work has been fended off as something threatening (Campkin and Cox 2008; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014b, 81; Lorey 2015a, 27–28; Müller 2014, 37). Racialization and immigration rules perpetuate this denigration of domestic care work (e.g. B. Anderson 2000; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 110; Lan 2007; Triandafyllidou 2013) Notions of paid domestic care work as a degraded kind of labor reappear throughout the following chapters; they haunt the endeavor to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage.

In adopting the lens of respectability, I concur with feminist authors Skeggs and Carla Jones, who—cautiously and considering historical specificities—have called for “reinstating class” (Skeggs 1997, 4) in analyses of socio-political phenomena in Indonesia (Jones 2012, 147) and other geographical contexts (Skeggs 1997 for Great Britain). Furthermore, the concept

of respectability takes account of the reminiscences of colonial relations of power and their tensions (Skeggs 1997; Stoler 1989, 2002). The notions of progressiveness, female morality, class distinction, and national dignity that figure in the subject-constituting practices of Indonesian migrant domestic workers are inscribed in the global histories of modernity. The concept of respectability finally accounts for migrant workers' politics that manifest in negotiations about the desirable and lived subjectivities of Indonesian domestic workers. While respectability is a major concern of those involved in labor brokerage, many of the workers I studied with seek for respect. The brackets in respect(ability) in the title of this thesis serves as a reminder of the claims to self-worth—what I refer to as “person-value” (Skeggs 2016; Chapter 6.3)—, and quests for emotional integrity that are inherent in the protagonists' subjective practices. Respect is an essential claim of domestic workers' organizations around the world. Some of them contain this claim in their names, such as the European RESPECT network of migrant domestic workers (see Schwenken 2003) or the ‘Netzwerk Respekt’ of 24-hours live-in carers of elderly in Basel, Switzerland (see Schilliger and Schilling 2017). In the course of this thesis, I elaborate how Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers negotiate the standards of respectability in their distinct ways. In contemplating about migrant workers' respect(ability), I last but not least wish to account for those voices within the Indonesian labor brokerage apparatus, for whom, in light of disparities within Indonesia and the global division of labor, domestic workers' respect is a major concern.

Multi-sited ethnography: Field localities

Anthropologist George Marcus (1995) has proposed to observe and participate in multiple sites in order to study the transnational activities of lifeworlds and their close relations to the world-system. Following this proposition, during my fieldwork in 2014, I applied the *method* of multi-sited ethnography to study the transnational practices of mobilizing and regulating

Indonesian migrant domestic workers. I traced the processes that aspiring migrant domestic workers have to undergo until they arrive at their places of destinations, the practices that monitor them while they are abroad, and the mechanisms that accompany their return to Indonesia. My study thereby complements Killias’ multi-sited study (2009, 2010, 2014, 2018) of Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ migration to Malaysia.



Figure 1: Map of Indonesia¹⁰

¹⁰ Open source map (“copyright free”) retrieved from https://aseanup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/indonesia_sm_2008.gif (June 17, 2019).

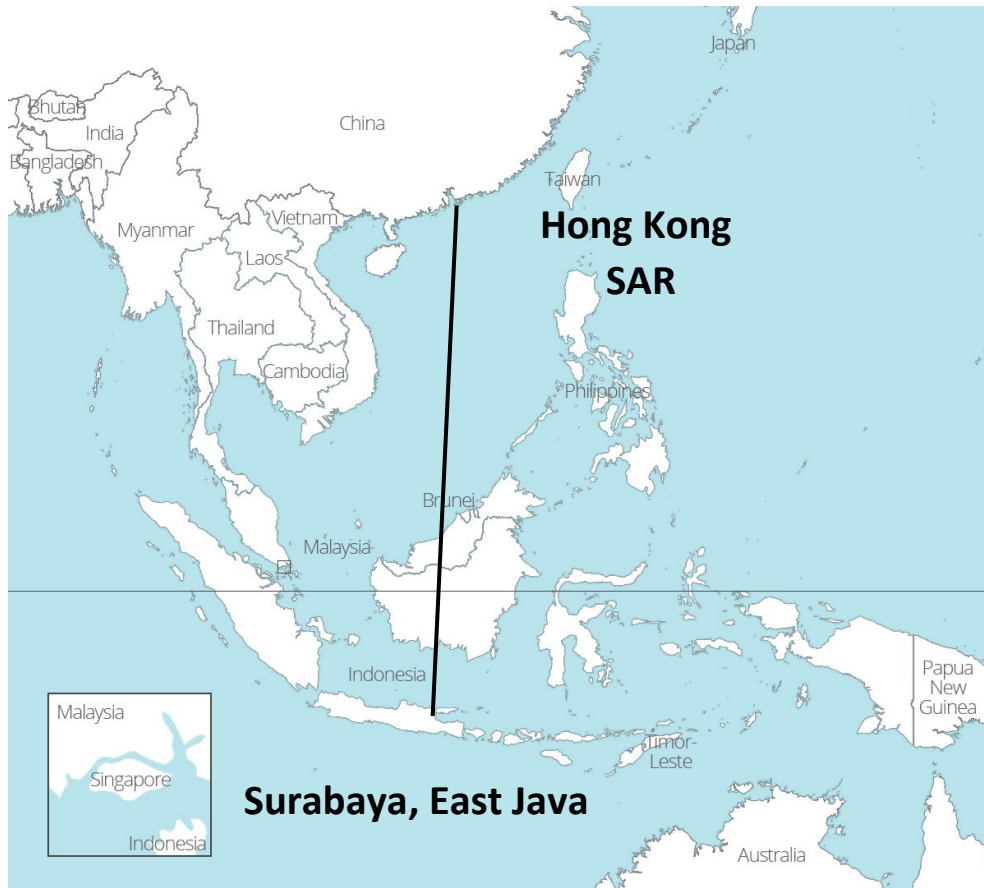


Figure 2: Map of Southeast Asia¹¹

My fieldwork brought me to government offices in the capital Jakarta where central government officials introduced me to the recent developments in policy directions related to Indonesia’s labor migration program. Large parts of my research took place in the Province of East Java, where in terms of numbers most transnational migrant workers originate from. Indonesia’s transnational migrant workers originate from various parts of Indonesia, yet the main origins are concentrated in some areas of the archipelago. Most migrant sending ‘pockets’ are located on the island of Java, where 130 million inhabitants, more than half of the country’s population, are concentrated; besides, significant numbers of transnational migrant workers

¹¹ Open source map (“copyright free”) retrieved from <https://aseanup.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/South-east-Asia-map-white.jpg> (January 4, 2019).

come from West Nusa Tenggara, a chain of islands on the eastern part of the archipelago (World Bank 2017, 79). Java looks back to a history of state encouraged and independent migration to other islands of the archipelago and places as far as Suriname and New Caledonia that reaches back to Dutch colonial rule (Allen 2018; Rosemarijn Hoefte 1998; Rosemarijn Hoefte and Meel 2018; Houben and Lindblad 1999; Stoler 1985).

In March, May, and December 2014, I stayed several weeks in the East Javanese regencies of Sumberbaru and visited several villages to talk to migrants' husbands and other relatives, private recruiters and local government officials. About a four-hours bus drive from Sumberbaru, in the industrial outskirts of the provincial capital Surabaya, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency and its training center provide services to aspiring migrant domestic workers, factory workers, and seafarers. In May 2014, I stayed at this training center for prospective migrant domestic workers for almost four weeks and visited it twice in June and December. During my live-in stay, I participated in the daily routine of the center, joined the trainees on their ways to health checks, to competency exams, and to a pre-departure briefing, which is provided by the Indonesian government. Aspiring migrant workers undergo a 'rite de passage' in the training centers (Killias 2018, 115): They transform from villagers into disciplined workers and responsible citizens, dedicated to the well-being of their families and the good name of the nation. As I immersed in this "liminal space" (Turner 1977), the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center has become one of the major sites of the episodes discussed in the chapters to come.

It should be noted that earlier studies denote the training facilities of recruitment agencies as *camps*, thus characterizing the isolating nature of these facilities and translating the Indonesian *penampungan*, a common designation for these facilities (see Killias 2018; Rudnyckyj 2004; Silvey 2018). Many recruitment agencies, including the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*

agency do not allow their recruits to ever leave the training facilities of the agencies unaccompanied during their preparation prior to departure. I choose to speak of *training center*, following the director and the staff of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency who deliberately denoted their facilities as *center* (using the English term). This emphasis reflects how the agency was invested in its reputability and modernity, a specific feature that reappears throughout the thesis.

In July 2014, along with a group of former trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency, I boarded an airplane to Hong Kong and witnessed how staff of the local placement agency *Thomson* took over the custody of the travelling workers before these were placed at their employers' homes. At the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong, I attended the compulsory orientation program for freshly arrived migrant domestic workers as well as advanced trainings the Consulate offers to domestic workers in order to 'upgrade' their skills. I met representatives of the branches of Indonesian banks who engage with the community of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and offer them entrepreneurship trainings. On their weekly days off, I met again with some of the former trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency and experienced how they adapted to their new workplaces and environments. I also got to know some of the countless migrant workers' associations in which Indonesian migrant workers organize themselves. These range from trade unions over faith-based organizations and hometown associations to East Javanese football club supporters or writers' clubs. Not only due to the mandatory day off from work, which in other migrant domestic workers' destinations cannot be taken for granted, but also due to the conditions for collective organizing, Hong Kong stands out as a destination country. In contrast to contexts such as Malaysia or Singapore, where migrant domestic workers are not covered by the labor laws, and where the spaces for trade unions and political organizations are generally more restricted (Elias 2013; Killias 2018, 175;

Viajar 2019; Yeoh and Huang 2010, 224), Hong Kong has a vibrant tradition of migrant domestic worker organizations with ties to local unions (Rother 2017). I met migrant workers' organizations and support structures which advocate for fairer migration procedures as well as for fairer conditions of stay and employment in Hong Kong. During my second stay in Hong Kong between January and July 2018, I renewed contacts I had established during my first stay, and, because of my occupation at the shelter, gained more insights in the complex emotional struggles and coping strategies of Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers.

In the course of the ethnographic Chapters 6, 7, and 8, the significance of the particular localities of my research to the subject constitution of Indonesian domestic workers become apparent, e.g. in the recurrent recourse to cultural knowledge and forms, in migrant workers' cultivation of Javanese cultural ethics, or in problematizing the public visibility of Indonesian migrant workers' distinct ways of dressing and hairstyles, their intimate relationships, and modes of spending their leisure time.

Situating respectability in postcolonial and postauthoritarian Indonesia

My proposition to conceive of the current—contested—attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage as an attempt to enhance migrant workers' and the nation's respectability, nourished by a conglomerate of gendered, classed, and national concerns, needs to be *contextualized* in Indonesia's postcolonial and postauthoritarian history. Within Indonesia's history, who and what rates and should rate as estimable, proper, and presentable has undergone shifts and reiterations. The following historical sketch necessarily cannot capture the complexity, nuances, and dynamics of prevalent notions of respectability in Indonesia. It rather aims at giving some points of reference to put contemporary negotiations over migrant domestic workers' respectability in perspective, since particular notions of respectability that were shaped during late colonial rule, early independence, Suharto's authoritarian state, and during the postauthoritarian present intermingle in the contemporary quest for (national) respectability. The

following outline accounts, furthermore, for the situation of postcolonial states in the so-called Global South: of nationalisms that move between anti-colonial liberation, legitimization of authoritarian rule, and the relative disadvantage within global economy in the context of extracting Indonesia's surplus labor and resources.

Before declaring its independence in 1945, Indonesia experienced 350 years of Dutch colonial rule and three years of Japanese occupation.¹² Specific traits of respectability in the Netherlands East-Indies, the colonial name for Indonesia, were employed as a marker for racial superiority of the colonizers and the status of Javanese élites, *the priyai* (e.g. Brenner 1998, 70–71; Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis 1987; Gouda 1993; Stoler 1989), and, during the late colonial state, also of the small middle-class (Hatley and Blackburn 2000; Schulte Nordholt 2015). As in other colonial contexts, Javanese female domestic servants embodied a threat of racial and moral degradation in colonial Dutch imaginaries of worthiness. Their presence in the private and domestic sphere, deemed the cradle of white (moral) superiority was considered necessary to maintain a bourgeois lifestyle, while they were also met with suspicion and mistrust (Stoler 1995, 2002). Such ambivalent attitudes towards Indonesian domestic workers reappear in contemporary sentiments towards Indonesian migrant domestic workers, whether by their Hong Kong employers, or whether by Indonesia's middle-classes (see Elmhirst, 1999).

The national movement, which emerged in the early 20th century, led the independence struggle and built up the 1945 declared independent nation, strongly rejected Dutch exploitation, subjugation, and racist degradation, but incorporated the commitment to progress that had been held up by the Dutch colonizers as well as ideas of modernity—not least the idea of modern nationalism and the appeal to the citizens to devote to themselves to the nation. For Indonesia's first President Sukarno, who ruled the young nation state from 1945 until 1966,

¹² Dutch colonial rule was preceded by a century of Portuguese colonial presence. The Dutch colonial rule was interrupted by four years of British colonial rule in the early 19th century.

increasing the newly born state's *international* standing was a key project. His claim that Indonesia's anti-colonial mission remained unfinished (Reid 1998, 238) figures in his plea to free the nation from the status of a 'nation of coolies' (McIntyre 2005, 85)—a nation of the Javanese indentured laborers working in the colonial plantation industries. Sukarno's plea reverberates in some of the voices who today wish to set an end to the sending of low-paid Indonesian migrant workers abroad. One of Sukarno's signature features was his anti-feudalism, valuing the poor classes: He named a book dedicated to the role of women's participation in the national struggle and Indonesia's first department store after the domestic worker who had cared for him when was a baby, *Sarinah*.¹³

Sukarno's "national-popular regime" (Farid 2016, 15) was violently substituted by Suharto's self-designated 'New Order,' which was inaugurated with an enormous purge killing around one million people who were alleged of being communists (Cribb 1990; Heryanto 2012). Suharto's militaristic authoritarian rule, lasting for 32 years, was dedicated to achieving and maintaining political order, economic prosperity, and eliminating mass participation in political processes, all in the name of 'national development' (see e.g. Aspinall and Fealy 2010). Hence, Sukarno's anti-imperialist stance gave way to Suharto's cultivation of cooperative relations with states affiliated with the cold war Western bloc; Sukarno's anti-feudalism was superseded by Suharto's resort to values cultivated by the Javanese nobility and to revitalized colonial notions of respectability (Jones 2010, 275; Kusno 2000; Pemberton 1994). In the wake of an expansion of civil service, of economic growth that started in the 1970s, and of the burgeoning of the middle class, proper conduct, worthiness, and appearance were responsibilities ascribed to middle class women as bearers of a "state-sponsored femininity" (Jones 2010, 275).

¹³ Sukarno's expression of admiration for his babysitter and valuation of her care for him is remarkably progressive in light of the colonial and feudal denigration of domestic worker. The book *Sarinah*'s stance on the role of women in the national struggle is contradictory, however, with regard to his take on structural inequalities in the domestic sphere (Rahayu 2018).

The female factory workers employed in the labor-intensive manufacturing industries that secured Indonesia's integration into global markets, the domestic workers who enabled urban middle-class families to live respectable lifestyles, and the migrant domestic workers who generated foreign exchange held a place at the fringes of the respectability rhetoric. Among middle-class circles, they were considered to be backward villagers, although the official rhetoric celebrated the contribution of factory workers and migrant workers to national development (Jones 2003, 198; Suryakusuma 1996; Wolf 1996b; see Chapter 6.1). The contemporary attempt to modernize Indonesia's labor migration program is, in some sense, a continuation of modes of dealing with contradictions that characterized New Order development agendas and national ideologies. The postauthoritarian situation, however, is more complex.

In May 1998, Suharto stepped down from his presidency, in the face of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, in the face of crumbling support from his allies, and in the face of a moral crisis due to the loud criticism of economic and political corruption upon which the power of the *élite* had rested for more than thirty years (Jones 2012, 148; Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018; Rudnyckyj 2010). In light of the post-1998 democratic transition, liberal rights and a growing vibrancy of labor unions, women's and LGBT organizations, environmental organizations, peasant organizations, indigenous organizations and many others who expressed their interests, conservatives have responded with often religiously toned charges of immoral behavior. In recent years, moral panics have mostly circled around issues of gender and sexuality, premarital sexual activity, and drugs. Discourses around people identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender and their expression of sexual citizenship have figured particularly prominent in these moral panics (see e.g. Boellstorff 2016; Hegarty and Thajib 2016; Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018). (National) morality has become a "heightened currency" (Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018, 12) that shapes public agendas and everyday atmospheres in nuanced and manifold ways, including migration policies. Furthermore, and as already pointed out in the opening

of this introduction, Indonesia's current political landscape is characterized by a rhetoric of national dignity which indicates aspirations to gain international prestige rather than justifying authoritarian rule like during the Suharto years (Aspinall 2016). As I argue in the conclusion of the thesis (Chapter 9), the current modernization of Indonesian labor brokerage can be characterized as part of a pervasive project of biopolitical respectability that nowadays includes migrant workers by connecting concerns over their morality and over their embodiment of the nation's image with appeals to individuals' self-responsibility, the latter being a trend across the globe.

A transnational ethnography of Indonesian labor brokerage: The thesis chapters

The following chapters are structured in two parts. The first four chapters (PART I) expand on this introduction and theorize on this study's methodological and epistemological foundations (Chapter 2), discuss 'biopolitical government,' i.e. the regulation of population (Chapter 3), as well as 'subject constitution' as the conceptual framework (Chapter 4) by means of which I conceive of the negotiations of Indonesian domestic workers' migration, and contextualize current developments in Indonesian labor brokerage (Chapter 5). The three ethnographic core chapters build the second part of the thesis (PART II). They discuss three 'subject figures' that stand for the imageries of the ideal migrant worker, thereby considering how the workers who I studied with respond to and challenge the expectations and prescriptions they encounter. Chapter 6 discusses the expectation to become virtuous migrant-citizens and laborers. Chapter 7 explores engagements in perfecting migrant domestic workers' competencies of affective labor. Chapter 8 scrutinizes those practices that aim at preparing migrant domestic workers to turn into entrepreneurs once they return to Indonesia. The three ethnographic core chapters critically reflect concepts such as 'migrant citizenship,' 'affective labor' or 'neoliberalism' from feminist and postcolonial perspectives in light of my findings. Each of

the ethnographic chapter scrutinizes the specific modes of power at work in modelling Indonesian migrant domestic workers' subjectivities and situates these in the project of modernizing the Indonesian labor migration program. These ethnographic chapters carve out the ambiguities underlying the many subject-forming practices that Indonesian migrant domestic workers encounter along their journeys. Finally, each chapter explores different facets of how migrant domestic workers challenge the multiple imageries of the ideal migrant worker. The conclusion (Chapter 9) summarizes the major insights of the study, contextualizes it within current scholarship on migration, and formulates future prospects of research.

All chapters are opened with episodes from my fieldwork. This is to underline, within the narrative representation of my research findings, I considered theoretical concepts, existing literature on Indonesian labor brokerage, and field experiences in dialogue with each other throughout the empirical research processes.

PART I:
**Approaching the Indonesian
migration regime**

2. Travelling *along* the migration circuit and *between* fieldnotes: Crafting ethnography

When I embarked on the fieldwork for this study, I sought to learn about the Indonesian labor migration program from persons who are involved in it through their daily routines: policy-makers, and people who meet each other along the migration circuit—migrant domestic workers, recruitment and placement agents, bureaucrats, and instructors of professional trainings and government briefings. I relied on participant observation and interviews as the tools to grasp the discourses, practices, and affects that configure the Indonesian labor migration program. I approach the modes of governing and the subject-constituting processes involved in Indonesian labor brokerage through ethnography and intend to grasp the complexities, ambivalences, and tensions that permeate practices of rule and lived subjectivities. I thus endeavor to withstand the temptation to rashly subsume my experiences and observations under ready-made conclusions and categories. ‘Ethnography’ both designates a *process* and the *product* of interaction, documentation, interpretation, reflection, and writing.¹⁴ This chapter expounds the epistemological processes and methodological approaches that underlie the ethnography at hand. Due to the small extent to which ethnographic research is standardized, I consider it necessary to make the research process transparent and give a detailed account on choices and decisions concerning the gathering of my research material and its interpretation. As a research approach, ethnography has been defined by a number of characteristics: a) fieldwork conducted

¹⁴ Much of the methodological literature makes no clear distinction between ‘ethnography,’ ‘fieldwork,’ and ‘participant observation’ (see e.g. Hockey and Forsey 2012; Ingold 2014; Sluka and Robben 2012). I use ‘fieldwork’ to reflect on my interactions not only with the agents of Indonesian labor brokerage and domestic workers, but also on conversations and encounters with friends, colleagues, and acquaintances in Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Germany (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997 for a critical reflection on constructions of the ‘field’ and ‘fieldwork’ in anthropology). I speak of ‘participant observation’ to describe the periods when I participated in and documented the routines that migrant domestic workers are involved in along the migration circuit. I employ ‘ethnography’ to describe the process of interacting in the field, documenting, interpreting, and writing up.

over an extended period of time, b) a combination of different research techniques—with participant observation in the settings of the research protagonists figuring as its most prominent technique—, and c) its focus on practice, experience, interaction, and discourse in their particular contexts (Skeggs 2001, 426). In comparison to more standardized forms of research, two defining features of ethnography stand out: the unpredictability and serendipity of insights as well as the researcher’s intellectual, bodily, and sensory involvement in multiple relationships between the researcher and the researched. This involvement has been characterized as “engaged investigation” (Hockey and Forsey 2012, 85).¹⁵

I this chapter, I will consider the particularity of ethnographic research in epistemological terms. Furthermore, I will attend to the methodological particularities of ethnographic research. I will outline my trajectories of fieldwork, interpretation and writing up. I will introduce conducting interviews as well as writing fieldnotes and an emotion diary as my main sources of fieldwork material. Fieldnotes constitute the main corpus of data I refer to in the ensuing chapters. In my analysis, I was moving back and forth between the notes and related them to relevant academic literature, a circular process that led to the final structure of the ethnographic chapter. The title of this chapter owes to this process. I will outline this process and discuss some of the considerations that accompanied my writing process. Although ethnography has been described as unpredictable and serendipitous when compared to more standardized data construction methods, I will highlight that it is far from arbitrary. On the contrary, it grounds the researcher’s perspectives, theorizations, and writing in the lives of those she studies (with).

¹⁵ There is a vivid debate among anthropologists about what ethnography is and what it is not. The knowledge generated *between* researcher and researchers has been described as intersubjectivity (Jackson 1998), and the knowledge generated *among* researcher and researched as correspondence—as a result from “*attentively* living with others” (Ingold 2014, 389; see also Cook 2016). I sympathize with the notion of engagement because it grasps the involvement and negotiations of subjectivities, including their embeddedness in social and historical relations of hierarchy, in ethnographic research relationships.

2.1 Ethnography in practice

Ethnography is an engaged and embodied investigation that can imply various challenges. Yet, exactly these challenges of fieldwork can evoke unexpected insights. I open this chapter with an episode that depicts some of the difficulties I was facing during my fieldwork. Reflecting upon them has been key in developing the arguments of the ensuing Chapters 6,7, and 8. By recounting this ethnographic episode, on the one hand, I highlight fieldwork as an endeavor that is constituted by engagement with complex relationships, hierarchies, and affects. On the other hand, I trace the epistemological qualities of reflecting on the researcher's involvement. Besides discussing ethnography as an engaged investigation that involves notions of the researcher's positionality and emotions, the following episode also introduces the trainees and the instructors who were living and teaching at the training center of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency and who reappear as protagonists in the course of the following chapters.

Fieldwork engagements

In May 2014 I spend three weeks at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency in the East Javanese city Wonorejo, where I tried to blend in with the daily routine as much as possible. When in late March 2014, I met Ibu Wijayanti, the director of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency, for the first time, she didn't hesitate a single moment to offer me the opportunity to conduct my research at her training center and to study the preparation of her recruits. I was relieved that this field-access turned out to be so smooth, which was not to be taken for granted. I had gone through a complex application process for different research permits from the Indonesian authorities. Furthermore, I had been aware of other researchers' difficulties in gaining access to conducting research in recruitment agencies due to the public

criticism of domestic workers' exploitation abroad (for the Philippine context see Guevarra 2010, 12; for the Indonesian context see Killias 2018, 15).

Ibu Wijayanti, the staff, and the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency welcomed me as a guest. To meet my needs as a visiting researcher, Ibu Wijayanti readily gave me permission to document the daily routine in detailed accounts. When I asked her for approval to take photos in the training center, she had no objections. Instead, she encouraged me to bear witness of the center's conditions even in its intimate corners: "Take pictures of the bathroom!" she encouraged (fieldnotes 30 Apr 2014). Grateful for the opportunity to be able to conduct my research at the center and cautious not to jeopardize this access, I sought to be respectful of the generosity of my hosts and the prevailing rules of behavior. These rules attached utmost importance to the trainees' deference, restraint—the central feature of refinement in Javanese social-cultural norms—, and the display of joy. In the beginning of my stay at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, it was not hard for me to express enthusiasm and the pleasure that came with my fascination for the insights that I was gaining. My curiosity in the detailed practices which equipped the prospective domestic workers for their departure gave me a positive spirit. Ibu Ani, the 'dormitory mother (*ibu asrama*),' who was responsible to manage the routines that took place outside the classroom, once even applauded my decent attire, respect, and easy smile in front of the other trainees. Although Ibu Ani's compliment was, a means of disciplining the trainees' behavior, I felt satisfied for having managed to adapt to this peculiar setting and to immerse into the field, in the very spirit of *participant* observation (see e.g. Bernard 2011, 256–90; Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013, 75–112).

Within time, my stay at the center proved emotionally more complex and challenging, however. My curiosity and excitement about my field-access were conjoined with a blending

of intense feelings. I felt discomfort towards the trainee who was assigned to me as my “personal assistant,” a job that I was not expected to compensate for monetarily. One trainee, Dina, was given the task to wash my clothes and make sure I did not feel alone. Besides assisting me, Dina had to manage her daily tasks of studying Cantonese, preparing for the competencies exam and doing her assigned chores on the compound. Although the strict ambience at the center should not have surprised me—I had read about the rigidity of training centers that made other ethnographers characterize them as military camps (see Killias 2009; Wee and Sim 2004)—, the harshness with which Ibu Ani instilled the rules of behavior, impacted my emotional state. The center cultivated playful and energizing methods from human resources management, and many of the instructors were caring in their interactions with the trainees. However, a rigid tone was all the same ever-present at the center.

In moments when the trainees were not under the instructors’ surveillance, some of them broke the “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979) of the center that demanded from them to display joy. Some complained about the rigidity. On one Sunday, when there were no classes, and when an atmosphere of idleness came up in the compound, I was chatting with one of the trainees, Fitri. She reasoned that Ibu Ani should not yell at the trainees when they had done mistakes; after all, the trainees were not children any more (fieldnotes 04 May 2014). One day I accompanied a group of trainees to the immigration office, and while waiting for hours to get her passport procured, Ririn approached me: “Samia what do you think of the training center?” She asked me whether I found the activities at the training center “too stern (*terlalu diforsir*).” While Pak Wira, the driver who had shuttled us to the immigration office, was out of sight, she leaned closer towards me and complained that the trainees were not given enough rest time and expressed that she found that the provision of food at the center was not appropriate (fieldnotes 14 May 2014). I never witnessed any of the trainees criticizing Ibu Ani, the instructors, or the

staff of the company openly. In fact, displaying respect was one of the characteristics that would make the trainees a successful migrant worker.

While trainees and instructors refrained from open critique, it was for once, when *I* involuntarily stepped out of my role as a polite and cheerful guest and thus publicly opposed the center's fine-grained "emotional regime" (Reddy in Plamper 2010). The night when I had come back from the immigration office with Ririn and the bunch of other trainees, we were all exhausted. We had left the complex at eight in the morning, spent the whole day at the immigration office, and got caught in the evening rush hour. When we reached the training center, I wondered how Ririn and the others would still manage to complete chores like cleaning the kitchen that night. I couldn't keep up with the trainees' endurance, not only to complete their chores, but also to stay calm and polite. Everything I wished was to fill my rumbling stomach and go off to sleep.

To my surprise, in the court, a big screen had been put up. I learned that Mam Fahida,¹⁶ a Cantonese and household instructor, was inviting the trainees to watch a Chinese fantasy movie. Mam Fahida had been assigned to take care of me and was the instructor I had most contact with. I joined her Cantonese classes, and at lunch time she usually invited me to join her and the other staff at the dining hall where the trainees served the company's instructors and staff. Although the day after was a public holiday, that night Mam Fahida would stay at the training center, instead of heading home on her two-hours motorbike drive. Until late in the afternoon, beyond the regular class time, she had been practicing to cook dishes that are popular in Hong Kong with a group of trainees who were departing to Hong Kong the day after. Now she had the trainees prepare a projector and cover the floor with rattan mats so that they could enjoy the movie. "So that they can relax," Mam Fahida explained to me, when I entered the court from

¹⁶ Staff at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency were addressed as *Mam* (equivalent to the English *Ma'am*). This form of address is only one 'citation' of historical maid-mistress relations in the metropolises and colonies (see e.g. McClintock 1995; Stoler 2002), which was made use of at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency.

the dinner hall. The first movie scenes were already unfolding on the screen, while some trainees were getting ready to watch. They had bought themselves crackers from a small store on the compound that was selling sanitary articles and snacks. Since I was tired, I decided to stay only a moment and then to vanish to my room. I sat down on the mat with Indah, a trainee who was to depart to Hong Kong. She caressed my arm and in accent-free English, which she had learned when she had stayed as a domestic worker in Singapore, she said: “Let’s watch and have cookies together!” I had usually enjoyed her cheerfulness, but this time it overwhelmed me. Farah, another trainee, invited me to sit on a bench; as a guest I should not be sitting on the floor. Being treated in a special way made me feel awkward. More and more, my role as a guest was challenging me and my effort to be a ‘good ethnographer.’ The enactment of hierarchy that was implied in my treatment as a guest seemed to contradict the text-book ideal of rapport to research participants as a prerequisite for a successful ethnographic undertaking (e.g. Bernard 2011, 277; Okely 2012, 45; Spradley 1979, 79)—and hinder a more ‘sincere’ exchange. Was this a performed cheerfulness, or was it sincere?

This insecurity added up to my increasing feeling of irritation: How could Mam Fahida’s entertainment program go together with the fact that some of the trainees still had to do work on the compound despite the exhaustion of having been out all day? Ririn’s complaints were still on my mind. Mam Fahida noticed that I was anything else than energetic. She said to me in English: “Go and have a rest, one of the kids can give you a massage!” Mam Fahida’s offer was a last straw to make me lose temper. I snapped: “No I don’t want them to give me a massage, I want them to enjoy their rest time!” My troubled feeling toward my role as a guest and my irritation with contradictory experiences at the training center—care, attention, the simultaneousness of warmth and harshness, the trainees’ accounts on being treated unfairly, and my own complicity in exploiting the trainees’ services—culminated in my reaction to Mam

Fahida's offer. The very moment I said these words, however, I was shocked about the poignancy of my reaction and of having criticized Mam Fahida in front of the trainees. I regretted and longed for a rewind-button that could undo the scene. In the Javanese context, where deference, restraint, self-control and saving other people's face belong to the key guiding principles in social behavior (Brenner 1998; Stodulka 2017, 59–64), I was transgressing the imperative to control one's impulses. Mam Fahida felt prompted to explain: "I just want to prepare them as best as possible for their future employers." I nodded and agreed with her by showing my thumb and left to my room, where I couldn't fight the scruples about my explosion. For the rest of my time I decided to be even more cautious not to repeat what I interpreted as a severe faux pas—transgressing the rules of behavior and being disrespectful of those who hosted my fieldwork (fieldnotes and emotion diary 14 May 2014).

As a matter of fact, my outburst did not entail any consequences. Perhaps, in seeking rapport with the trainees, I identified with the rules of behavior more than was expected from me. The instructors did not treat me any different than before, Mam Fahida continued to invite me to have dinner with her and her colleagues, and I continued to have sympathies for her. Over time, I developed more subtle modes to express my discomfort with some of the practices at the center and to compensate trainees for services rendered, without compromising my role as a respectful guest. Meanwhile, the short argument with Mam Fahida taught me a lesson I might otherwise not have witnessed in the same explicitness: Mam Fahida took her task seriously to optimally prepare the trainees for employment abroad. In this mission, she not only ascribed myself the role as a guest, but also as a potential employer of the trainees. As a white woman, engaging in a white-collar profession—research—, and being able to afford to travel from Europe to Indonesia, I fit in the range of profiles of Hong Kong employers. Not only Mam Fahida addressed me as a potential employer, the trainees did so, too. Monica, a trainee with whom I had established a good relation, for instance, sent me a text message upon her departure to Hong

Kong, when I had already left the training center. It said: “Pray for me, hopefully I will get an employer who is as good as you are (*Doakan aku semoga dapat majikan yg baik seperti kamu*)” (fieldnotes 25 May 2014). When I implicitly criticized Mam Fahida’s offer to receive a massage by a trainee, her response implicated that she had no bad intentions in training the workers to be at their future employers’ services. Herself once a domestic worker in Hong Kong, she knew well that working abroad in the search for a better life meant to get oneself into very demanding work relationships. As I describe in Chapter 7, she and her colleagues were committed to teach the trainees domestic workers’ time-proven strategies to maintain their emotional sanity, for example by keeping up a cheerful spirit, just like Indah was cheerful in her interaction with other trainees, instructors, and myself.

To take Mam Fahida’s and the workers’ modes of addressing me seriously was thus an entry point in my attempt to grasp how instructors and workers made sense of the contradictory processes involved in labor brokerage. As highlighted by sociologists Lisa Smyth and Claire Mitchell (2008), establishing a good rapport is not the only way to gain meaningful ethnographic insights. Reflecting on the dynamics and negotiations of distance, proximity, and hierarchies in research relationship can equally elicit knowledge.

Learning from engagement

The above described episode is a rather awkward memory of fieldwork. I chose to discuss it nevertheless because it gives a good insight in what an ‘engaged investigation’ implies in terms of field dynamics and interpretation: *Firstly*, it gives insights into the insecurity that many (novice) ethnographers experience regarding the difficulty in defining standards of how one should appropriately behave in the field and its multiple relationships. The remorse I felt over my reaction to Mam Fahida’s offer and my simultaneous unease with my own implication in some of the practices at the training center echoes Allaine Cerwonka’s (2007) description of

ethnographic fieldwork as a “nervous condition.” Although seldomly written about in ethnographic publications, this condition can implicate moments of crisis and perceived failure (see e.g. Goslinga and Frank 2007, xvii; Takaragawa and Howe 2017). *Secondly*, the episode exemplifies that ethnographic research and knowledge production imply constant negotiations within research relationships. I was in negotiations with myself over my aspiration to behave as a respectful guest, my attempts to be a ‘good’ ethnographer, and my wish to establish rapport and fair research relations. The short argument with Mam Fahida made me realize that my role as a guest was related to specific expectations, such as acting as a test-employer. My negotiations with different personal and outside expectations has certain similarities with Ping-Chun Hsiung’s (1996) dilemma of being “a keen observer and a vocal feminist,” when she conducted research among workers and employers in Taiwanese satellite factories, or with Julian Grove and Kimberley Chang’s (1999) accounts of negotiating their differing positionalities as expatriate researchers in their interactions with Filipina/o/x migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. As also reflected in Hsiung’s and in Grove and Chang’s accounts, the above depicted episode makes clear that, *thirdly*, constantly negotiating multiple positionalities, subjectivities, and expectations, as implied in ethnographic fieldwork, can elicit important *in situ* insights. Thus, Mam Fahida’s offer of the trainees’ service to me and her explication that this was meant as a preparation for offering their service to Hong Kong employers were an effect of negotiating our respective roles.

Understanding ethnography as an engaged investigation means to treat it as more than a detached venture. Detachment is an attribute of “traditional empiricism,” which in early positivistic anthropology and sociology represented the ideal approach to construct ethnographic knowledge (Davies 2010b, 2). Traditional empiricism, a designation introduced by philosopher William James, “is more concerned with studying ‘things themselves’ than the *relations* between things” (ibid., 29, fn 1). This approach furthermore “treats subjectivity in both

quantitative and qualitative research as something to controlled and restrained” (Davies 2010b, fn 1). Despite the necessary presence of the researcher in the production of ethnographic knowledge, positivist models of ethnography treat the researcher’s personal experience and impressions as a bias and thus suggest to ‘clean’ representations of ethnographic data from accounts on research relationships and personal experience (Cerwonka 2007, 29–31). Feminist epistemologist Donna Haraway (1991, 189) criticizes the denial of the role of subjectivity in dominant claims of objectivity as a transcendence into the “god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere.” Feminist and postcolonial ethnographers (e.g. England 1994; Narayan 1993; Ong 1995; Skeggs 2001; Viseswaran 1994; Wolf 1996b) as well as a growing number of anthropologists interested in researchers’ emotions and experiences as an empirically informative resource (e.g. Davies and Spencer 2010; Spencer and Davies 2010; Jackson 1989; McLean and Leibing 2007) counter such claims of objectivity. Not only do they acknowledge the overt implication of the researcher and her positionality in ethnographic research processes, they also argue for making use of this implication for a hermeneutics of interpretation and processes of learning. This implies to acknowledge that every ethnographic fieldwork is constituted by multiple hierarchies, role conflicts, and dilemmas (see e.g. Cerwonka 2007; Wolf 1996; von Vacano 2019a) and that it can elicit difficult emotional experiences (see e.g. Davies 2010a; Pollard 2009; McLean and Leibing 2007). Psychological anthropologists highlight that ethnographers’ affective and embodied experience can be read as manifestations of the relations that unfold throughout their fieldwork, of how a researcher is addressed, or what is expected from her. As “embodied social communicators between ethnographers and their interlocutors” (Stodulka, Dinkelaker, and Thajib 2019, 282; see also Burkitt 2014; Röttger-Rössler and Stodulka 2014,

20), emotions in the field thus bear epistemological qualities (e.g. Crapanzano 2010; Cook 2010; Davies 2010a; Jackson 1989; Spencer 2010).¹⁷

Pursuing this idea, below, I exemplify the epistemological potentials of the experiential dimensions of field engagement and extend my interpretation of the *in-situ* insight that my conflictive roles in the training center evoked.¹⁸ I thus elaborate how further contemplating on my emotional quandaries has become a key to complexifying my own conclusions on the multifaceted modes of governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers. In doing so, I anticipate some of the arguments developed in the ensuing chapters of this thesis.

By reflecting on Mam Fahida's commitment and her response to my outburst, I developed an understanding of the practices through which the center sought to professionalize aspiring domestic workers and which are discussed in detail in Chapter 7. During my stay at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center I was often troubled by the question of why I was granted almost unrestricted access to the routine, although I was witnessing practices, which were subjected to the fierce critique of NGOs in Indonesia: seclusion, lack of rest time, unpaid labor. To some extent, the episode above illuminated this apparent contradiction. The scene revealed that in the training center I was addressed as a guest and test-employer, treated with striking attention and care. Mam Fahida and her colleagues were committed to improve the trainees' capacities to attend to their employers in a caring manner. The instructors repeatedly asked me to assess the professionalism of their performance and to report to Ibu Wijayanti, and while Ibu Wijayanti herself asked me to recommend the center to Indonesian government agencies. In doing so, they ascribed yet another role to me: As a 'Western' researcher who was

¹⁷ See footnote 3 for the analytical distinction between 'emotions' and 'affect.' In describing concrete, 'lableable' sensory, bodily, and interpersonal experiences in my fieldwork, I speak of 'emotions.'

¹⁸ The epistemological qualities are not the only aspect to highlight in reflecting on research relationships. Another important discussion of research relationships attends to reciprocity as an approach to address the inequality that is inherent in ethnographic fieldwork as a "transaction of knowledge in which the researcher is on the receiving end of insights provided by the research participant" (von Vacano 2019) and to address the structural power relationships that shape ethnographic research, including the post-/colonial setting that shapes the mainly one-sided travels of (often) white researchers from the Global North to the Global South (Asad 1973; Smith 2012; for an excellent overview on the discussion on reciprocity in ethnographic research relationships see von Vacano 2019a).

engaging with different levels of Indonesian bureaucracy, Ibu Wijayanti and her staff apparently deemed myself not only a potential employer, but also competent enough to assess the center's performance, to recommend the company, and thus to enhance its reputation. I assume that the colonial figure of the white expert (Goudge 2003) reverberated in our interaction and that Ibu Wijayanti and her staff sought to tap into this "cultural" and "social capital" (Bourdieu 1986). The center's undertaking of professionalizing the trainees was overlapping with the government's agenda to protect migrant domestic workers by training their skills (see Chapter 3), and was thus in line with official understandings of how to best ensure migrant domestic workers' safety and well-being. By reflecting on my positionality and experience of being ascribed the role of potential employer and referee, as well as by attending to the impact that the emotional regime shaping the daily life at the center had on myself as I was trying to be a respectful guest, I applied and further developed the concept of "affective labor" (see Chapter 7). With this concept I frame both domestic workers' competencies to produce an employer's comfort and their capacity to manage their own impulses, anxieties, and worries. In my attempts to deal with my own ambivalent experiences at the training center, I myself was engaging in a kind of affective labor. It could be argued that, in fact, any ethnographic fieldworker performs affective labor, turning her efforts in engaging with her interlocutors and protagonists into academic currency and advancing her professional career (Stodulka 2014a, 123–24, 2015).¹⁹

With regard to my research question, the concept of affective labor facilitates a nuanced description of the modes of governing that are at play in migrant workers' preparation prior to departure. This also resonates with a reflection on Mam Fahida's motivation to professionalize the trainees' affective labor. When she explained to me that she encouraged the trainees to be at their employers' service at any time, Mam Fahida was committed to maximally prepare the

¹⁹ The notion of affective labor thus allows to capture research relationships as a complex economy generating cultural, social, and economic capital (Stodulka 2014b, 2015) and is compatible with more recent discussions on research ethics, to which I only briefly point to here (see e.g. Cerwonka and Malkki 2007; von Vacano 2019a).

trainees, foreseeing that in Hong Kong, the labor laws do not clearly limit working hours, neither those of domestic workers nor those of the rest of Hong Kong's employed population (Ng and Leung 2018). Ethnographers' engagement in multiple relationships ethically prescribes them to "treat participants of ethnography with respect" (Skeggs 2001, 433); this implies to portray research protagonists in their complexities. Depicting Mam Fahida solely as being in the service of manufacturing disciplined domestic workers ready to obey their employers in migrant labor-consuming countries would dismiss her and her colleagues' own complicity in facilitating pathways for young women to pursue some of their aspirations in relative independence from constrictive gendered expectations towards young women (see Chapters 6 & 7). The defiance of voluntaristic conceptions of power in Foucault's notion of governing and its incorporated acknowledgement of individuals' idiosyncratic modes of agency (see Chapter 4) aptly captures my encounters with Mam Fahida and her colleagues, which reveal an entanglement of care, work on the self, qualification, professionalization, and control of migrant labor.

In the course of this thesis, I only selectively make explicit the modes in which the experiential dimension of my fieldwork nourished my generation of knowledge and which in the beginning of this chapter I canvassed through narrowing my focus on one episode of my fieldwork.

2.2 Chronicling fieldwork

Ethnography relies on a variety of types of data to document the insights gained during fieldwork. The main sources that document my fieldwork are recordings of interviews and seminars, fieldnotes, and several emotion diary booklets. Below, I depict how I proceeded in generating these different types of data.

Interviews

During my fieldwork, formal interview settings were rather exceptions. I conducted a dozen problem-centered interviews (Flick 2006, 164) with government officials, recruitment and placement agents, with a representative of the employers' association of domestic workers in Hong Kong, with a representative of the legislative council in Hong Kong, and with representatives of the Hong Kong-branches of two Indonesian banks. With the consent of my interlocutors, I voice-recorded these problem-centered interviews and transcribed them according to a "simple transcription system" (Dresing and Pehl 2013). As a distinct interview type, problem-centered interviews were established in German psychology, where they are used to study professional biographies (Flick 2006, 161). I made use of them as a "more or less pre-formulated and () flexibly applied interview guide" (Schnell, Schneider, and Kolbe 2014, 94; translation mine). Yet my use of this interview type departs from its original orientation on biographies. Borrowing elements from narrative interviews (e.g. Fritz 1983; Rosenthal 2008, 137), problem-centered interviews seek to give interviewees the opportunities to talk about what they find particularly relevant. They, however, also seek to make sure that a number of topics in which the interviewer is interested come up during the interview.

During the interviews, I sought to gain background information and posed questions about activities of the institutions which my respective interlocutors represented. I asked them about the history of their respective institution and its involvement in the labor migration program. The Indonesian government officials whom I talked to provided insights into the programmatic agendas of the Indonesian labor migration program. Recruitment, placement agents, and bankers outlined the ways in which they engaged with migrant (domestic) workers. The representative of the employers' association and the representative of the legislative council in Hong Kong explained how they sought to advocate for the interests of employers and migrant domestic workers respectively.

I asked my interlocutors what they considered to be challenges and milestones of their work and which challenges they saw in the Indonesian labor migration program. In all interviews I asked my interlocutors to describe how they envisioned the Indonesian labor migration program in 20 years. I never strictly followed an interview guideline (as suggested in expert interviews; see Gläser and Laudel 2010), since I was not aiming at comparability of the interviews, but at capturing their particular viewpoint on the Indonesian labor migration program and the situation of Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong more generally. In correspondence to my overall interest in the modes of governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers, I placed more importance on getting a sense of the themes my interlocutors found important to discuss in relation to Indonesian migrant workers (their definitions of phenomena and reality), how my interlocutors saw Indonesian migrant domestic workers (which subject positions they ascribed to domestic workers), what they perceived as problematic with respect to the Indonesian labor migration program, and what they thought serving best to solve the problems they had identified.

In some cases, apart from providing me with background information, my interlocutors facilitated access to my subsequent field sites: The representative at the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers, for instance, delivered a recommendation letter for me, which allowed me to approach the local branch of the agency in Surabaya, East Java; my interlocutor at the Indonesian association of recruitment agencies APJATI referred me to association members in East Java, one of which was Ibu Wijayanti who offered me to conduct research at her training center; and my interlocutor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitated the contact to the head of chancery at the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong.

Fieldnotes: Preservation and reflection

The bulk of my fieldwork is based on informal conversations with bureaucrats, instructors, migrant workers, friends, and colleagues, as well as on my observations of events and ordinary interactions that I witnessed: language classes, a job interview, the celebration of Indonesia's Independence Day in Hong Kong, or a visit of migrant workers to their placement agency in Hong Kong, just to name a few. With the consent of the organizers of government briefings and education programs, I was able to voice-record these seminars. Some of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae also agreed to voice-record three conversations which I had with them on their days off—one while we were sitting on the bus and two in public parks. Respecting the limited time available to the workers on their days off to handle their private matters, I did not ask them for more extensive interviews. During my second stay in Hong Kong, when I worked at a shelter for migrant domestic workers in distress, I voice-recorded two conversations with the tenants of the shelter where I was working and conducted a recorded conversation with a domestic worker who had become a trusted friend.

Principally, I documented field encounters, observations, and reflections of my own learning processes in fieldnotes, which “captur[e] and preserv[e] the insights and understandings stimulated by () close (...) experiences (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 14). Fieldnotes are “detailed, context-sensitive, and locally informed” (ibid., 14) accounts of ethnographers’ engagements in the settings and events they study. They allow for “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973) of these settings and events, which, through the ethnographer’s lens, make transparent what she has learned about her respective field of interest.

I left my fieldwork with 244 handwritten fieldnotes, which I had transcribed, so afterwards I could work with digital documents. I wrote these notes as close as possible to the moment of occurrence of the experience they give an account of, trying to record details that I noticed: a conversation during lunch with the instructors of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training

center, my first-time visits to shelters for domestic workers in Hong Kong, or participating in an orientation program for freshly arrived workers at the Consulate in Hong Kong. In line with the feature of openness in qualitative research (Flick 2006, 15), I did not follow a strict grid of criteria that prescribed which experiences and observations deserved to be written down and which ones not. Generally, I tried to grasp daily routines, concerns that occupied the protagonists, issues that they found worth telling either amongst themselves or towards myself and incidents that triggered my own affective experiences. This implied to document what might appear as ‘minor’ events, “even if they seem[ed] insubstantial or only vaguely relevant at the moment” (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 57). Besides limiting “distortion of memory loss in recalling more distant events” (ibid., 17), in the ideal case, fieldnotes document emergent processes of learning and gaining insights, while they build on previous insights and experiences. Fieldnotes should preserve the idiosyncratic and distinct character of activities, utterances, and expressed feelings (ibid.). With reference to anthropologist Clifford Geertz’ work, Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw (ibid.) point to the mutually constitutive relation between writing fieldnotes and participating and observing:

[W]riting fieldnotes () helps the field researcher to understand what [s]he has been observing in the first place and, thus, enables [her] to participate in new ways, to hear with greater acuteness, and to observe with a new lens.

I agree with this explanation and believe that within time, writing fieldnotes refined my modes of attention to recurring motives and topics: for instance, the metaphors some of my interlocutors drew on to express their unease with Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ same-sex relationships and outward appearance (see Chapter 6), their calls on Indonesian migrant domestic workers to actively work on their emotional states to enhance their work performance (see Chapter 7), or the appeals to the workers to get “mentally prepared” for their transformation into successful entrepreneurs (see Chapter 8).

Mirroring the multi-locality of my fieldwork, I wrote my fieldnotes in very different settings: before going to bed in my room in Jakarta, during short moments of rest in my room amidst the dense routine at the training center, in Hong Kong's and Jakarta's coffee shop chains and convenient stores between appointments or meetings, or during extensive visits to the central library in Hong Kong. At the training center, I sometimes took a seat in one of the rooms that are part of the training facilities. At times I joined the trainees during their study time from seven to eight at night and wrote down notes, while they were studying Cantonese or Mandarin or were practicing housekeeping techniques. By writing my fieldnotes in a way that the trainees and instructors could *see* me doing it, I could be more transparent about my research activities than I would have been in hiding in my room, and occasionally I got into conversation with the trainees and instructors about my research.²⁰

Text-books urge ethnographers to produce fieldnotes that are as accurate and detailed as possible. In “getting [my observations and experiences] down on the page” (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 89), I drew on *in situ* scratch notes or jottings that capture observations of events and impressions in key words and phrases (Bernard 2011, 292; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 29). Yet, in many instances, for example when I accompanied former trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency whom I met again in Hong Kong on their days off, taking out my notebook to jot down observations was no option. Not only did I feel odd about jotting in these situations, also, one incident quickly followed the other. Therefore, I had to rely on mental notes—so-called “headnotes” (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 22–23)—and “sensory experiences” (Pink 2009; see also Csordas 1993) that I registered during the events I was witnessing. In a number of cases, when I felt that what I was witnessing was too intimate, I followed the impulse to leave my “writing orientation” aside and “participate [in

²⁰ On where to write fieldnotes Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 37.

the situation] ‘naturally’—without (...) analytical orientation” (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 41).²¹

Fieldnotes are constructions of social worlds and mirror particular selections of details and certain ways of sequencing and organizing descriptions (ibid., 127). This understanding resonates with constructivist social science approaches more generally (e.g. Hess and Tsianos 2010, 253; Schwenken 2018a, 16; Ziai 2016, 9–10). In consequence, the writing style of my fieldnotes corresponds with my “situated knowledge” (Haraway 1988). The research interests I pursued during my fieldwork and after are inextricably linked to my biography and my exposure to particular knowledge, for instance my German academic training during the first decade of the millennium or my interest in feminist economics and Foucauldian perspectives (see also Skeggs 2001, 430). The principle of reflexivity in qualitative research (e.g. Flick 2006, 16; Olesen 2017, 160) calls on researchers to acknowledge and critically reflect on the factors that constitute their stance towards people and phenomena as well as the particular insights that they gain through this stance. It is indispensable that in the ethnographic representation, the researchers’ modes of interpretation are considered for their plausibility and explained comprehensibly.²²

In the context of my involvement in the interdisciplinary research project *The Researchers’ Affects*, which explores and reflects on emotions during ethnographic fieldwork,²³ I used a particular tool to generate reflection on my lens as an ‘engaged’ observer. In addition to orient

²¹ Natashe Lemos Dekker (2019) uses the apt metaphor of the “doorstep” that a researcher decides to either transgress or stop in front of, when she describes her “engagement with sensitivity, proximity, and distance, and being respectful.”

²² Presenting my interpretations during various occasions such as colloquia, symposiums and conferences and discussing them with colleagues has been one important opportunity to review the plausibility of my arguments.

²³ The research project is a collaboration between social and cultural anthropology, literature science, and primatology and based at Freie Universität Berlin, and the University of Bern, Switzerland. The Volkswagen Foundation funded the project and supported my research with a three-years stipend and a seven-months extension. Its aim was to explore which emotions occur during fieldwork, how researchers module affects during the process of knowledge generation, and to what extent affects are consciously or unconsciously articulated in texts that depict and refer to fieldwork. I was a research fellow of the Social and Cultural Anthropology sub-project (*The Researchers’ Affects* 2013). Thomas Stodulka, Ferdiansyah Thajib—both situated in anthropology—, Julia Keil, a primatologist, Lea Ulrich, a psychologist, and I designed the template which I used during my fieldwork.

myself by classic fieldnotes guidelines in writing my fieldnotes, I kept an emotion diary, in which I regularly chronicled affective fieldwork experiences.

The emotion diary and the researcher's affects

Before I left for my fieldwork in November 2013, my colleagues of the research project *The Researchers' Affects* and I designed a semi-structured emotion diary, which I used to chronicle affective experiences. We built on the anthropological approach elaborated in Subchapter 2.1 that considers emotional episodes or affective experience in the field as epistemologically valuable and thus worthwhile to be documented. We thus designed the emotion diary as a tool that could assist ethnographers in sharpening their emotional literacy and reflexivity (for a detailed description see Stodulka, Dinkelaker, and Thajib 2019).

It consisted of open questions that generate descriptions of emotional states or episodes and a self-report questionnaire that allowed me to gauge, and therefore bring to mind, the intensity of emotions (see appendices A, B, & C). I used the emotion diary on a regular, sometimes daily, basis and completed seven booklets throughout my fieldwork. I used the emotion diary as a tool for self-care and coping with the difficulties of fieldwork. The episode above describes feelings of tenseness that accompanied my fieldwork throughout. As many other fieldworkers who have to grapple with the lack of footing that non-standardized research can imply, I was often insecure whether I was gathering enough or the right data (see also e.g. Cerwonka 2007; Jackson 2010, 41; Pollard 2009). The multi-sited character of my fieldwork and its dense episodes of engaging in the field made it an exhausting endeavor. Furthermore, the emotion diary trained myself in paying attention to the affective dimensions of my observations and experiences and thus helped me to take note of the affective dimension of governing migration. The diary allowed me to document affective experiences and preserve them as 'data,'

which I could juxtapose with more detached observations of my interlocutors' practices.²⁴ Regularly writing down my self-observations sharpened my attention to the affective dimensions of my encounters and helped to incorporate these dimensions in my habitual mode of observing the practices of others.

Similar to the processes involved in writing 'classic' fieldnotes, regularly writing and describing affective experiences shaped my lens of putting more attention to the affective and relational dimensions of my fieldwork. Within time, I integrated observations on affective experiences in the notebook where I kept more 'classical' fieldnotes, while sometimes I used the emotion diary for first drafts of descriptions of events and experiences that I later expanded on in my notebook.

2.3 Writing up

As I showed, during my fieldwork I compiled different sets of data. How can this material be transformed into a written ethnography? The following sections outline how I went about in processing the data I generated during my fieldwork.

The step back: Taking distance

Method books on ethnography speak of ethnography as an activity where involvement, engagement, firsthand-experience and observation are in dialogue with 'tidying up,' organizing and analyzing, and relating field experiences to each other and to broader academic discussions, say on citizenship, neoliberalism, or affective labor. Ethnographers weave stories about the social worlds they have engaged in and thus transform fieldwork material into texts that speak to

²⁴ Certainly, similar to the fieldnotes in my notebook, discourses and styles that I have been exposed to during my own biography permeate the style of writing in my emotion diary. In a further research, these personal accounts could be read through a rhetorical or discourse-analytical lens in order to critically reflect on the situatedness and relatedness of my researcher subjectivity in and to the post-/colonial history of science. My colleagues Mira Shah and Fermin Suter, two literature scholars who were part of the sub-team 'literature studies' in the project *The Researchers' Affects* undertook such readings of popular scientific and literary publications of primatologists (Shah 2018) and travel writers (Suter n.d.).

wider audiences (Breidenstein et al. 2013, 109; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 172; Sluka and Robben 2012, 2).

‘Stepping back’ and taking distance begins with writing fieldnotes or the emotion diary, even though fieldnotes are supposed to bracket interpretations and evaluations of observed events and interactions first. For me, this process of stepping back and taking a distance from my material continued when I typed my handwritten fieldnotes from my notebook into digital word-documents, or when I transcribed interviews. I gave these documents labels that indicated the date, the context, and a tag that described the key content of these notes and helped me to identify the respective document (see Figure 3). After I came back from Indonesia and Hong Kong in early 2015, I sorted through all my material and clustered my material according to themes and sub-themes. The distinction between material that contains information on a) programmatic agendas of regulating migration, b) encounters with stakeholders in the migration process, c) migrant domestic workers’ ascribed and lived subjectivities, and d) context, roughly guided me in organizing my material.

Topic	Type of data	Document name
Encounters with stakeholders in the migration process	Local Recruiter	
	FN	2014_04_04_PRCTKI bei Pak Fajar
	FN	2014_04_14_Petugas Lapangan_Gespraech mit Mas Hari
	FN	2014_04_16_Arbeit eines PRCTKI ein Tag mit Pak Fajar
	Local Bureaucracy	
	FN	2014_04_25_Arbeitsweise der lokalen Behoerden in Sumberbaru_Gespraech mit Hasan
	FN	2014_04_23_Sicht des Dinsosnakertrans_Gespraech mit Pak Harto
	D	Disnakertranssos Sumberbaru - Syarat2 Dokumen Permohonan Registrasi Online CTKI di Disnaker Kab - Dokumen yang harus Dimiliki CTKI - Dokumen yang diterbitkan oleh Disnaker
	D	Dokumente, die die Recruitment Agencies vorlegen müssen Rencana Kebutuhan Calon TKI Program AKAN und Surat Ijin Pengerahan

Figure 3: Extract of a scheme of organizing the data of the research²⁵

At different stages during the process of crafting this ethnography, I read through my fieldwork materials, i.e. my fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and my emotion diary in chronological order. I drew on my fieldnotes in drafting the scaffold of the ethnography. During a first round, for which I printed out all my fieldnotes, I read closely through them as a complete corpus and made unsystematic notes on the side. I noted aspects that I found remarkable, and only after this first re-approaching to my fieldwork experiences and observations, I started a process of coding the materials by using the data management software MAXQDA: I read my field materials line-by-line to identify and formulate themes, issues, and ideas that could be found in the material (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 172). I first approached my fieldnotes and turned to interview material later on. I repeatedly revisited the entries of my emotion diary to juxtapose ideas that I gained while I was engaging with my fieldnotes and interview materials. I had formulated a set of heuristic questions that should help me to approach the materials without

²⁵ For the document types, I used the abbreviations FN for ‘fieldnotes,’ D for ‘documents’ that I collected such as information sheets, an ‘I’ for interview recordings and/or transcripts.

fully limiting my attention to these questions, but being open for themes and issues that did not answer these questions. The methodological literature on dispositive analysis and critical migration studies (Bührmann and Schneider 2012, 111–19; Hess and Tsianos 2010; Schneider 2014, 111; Ziai 2007; see Chapters 3 & 4) had informed my attention when I “review[ed], reexperienc[ed], and reexamine[ed]” (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 173) my materials (see Figure 4).

Context:

Does the material contain information on the context of international division of labor, the labor brokerage state, the organization of care in Hong Kong, and the history of labor migration from Indonesia to Hong Kong?

Phenomena, definitions of reality:

What phenomenon is addressed? What definition of reality is constructed as ‘true?’ Which boundaries of the speakable, doable, visible, and perceptible are drawn? Which ‘feeling rules’ are established with regard to the definition of appropriate feelings?

Problematizations:

What in the material is identified as problem and how should this problem be overcome?

Subject constitution and subjectivities:

Which expectations towards migrants/which self-conceptions are expressed in the material? How do the stakeholders involved in the migration program interact with the migrant workers? Which behavior, emotions, and affects are both evoked and displayed? How do migrant workers express their own self-conception?

Techniques of governing:

By what means are migrant workers shaped in the way they think, act and feel, and desire?

Rationalities:

How do the protagonists involved explain certain actions, utterances, and evoked emotions? Which reasons can be extrapolated? Are they part of a (historical) set of practices, discourses and regulations of emotions or of broader (globalized) migration management agendas?

Relations in the field:

As whom am I addressed by the research protagonists? Which emotions do they evoke in myself and which emotional reactions do I evoke in them? What can I learn from these relations and interpellations with regard to my research interest?

Figure 4: Guiding questions to approach the data analysis

My first attempts of open coding left me with a sense of messiness, fuzziness, and being unable to manage the process, which has been reported by other young ethnographers as well (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 185). Amidst the process of coding, I took the decision to further structure the outline of my ethnography around subject-constituting practices and the migrant workers' lived subjectivities. Subject-constituting practices and migrant workers' lived subjectivities lay at the heart of my academic interest, before and after fieldwork, and thus I put these at the center of drafting the ethnographic chapters. I took the initial fuzziness of my data as a reminder to take seriously the contradictions and tensions within the modes of governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers, while I was comparing fieldwork experiences, incidents, and observations, related them to each other and rearranged them (ibid., 137–38).

Relating fieldwork experience

My point of departure was the question of how bureaucrats, training instructors, recruitment and placement agents, and other stakeholders involved in the labor migration program *ideally* see migrant domestic workers, and how the workers respond to these ideal expectations. I clustered my material under three thematic fields—or three 'subject figures' in order to grasp different facets of the ideal migrant domestic workers: a) 'virtuous migrant-citizens,' b) the 'affective workers,' and c) the 'entrepreneuse of the self.' I drafted the core chapters in correspondence to these thematic fields. I decided to focus on these three fields because of three aspects that strongly appear in my documentation: a) bureaucrats' and training instructors' concerns with migrant workers' morality, outward appearance, and sexualities, b) recurrent

practices that aim at regulating others' and the workers' own emotions, and c) appeals to migrants' entrepreneurial practices upon their return. When I drafted the ethnographic core chapters, I sought to explicate theoretical concepts that corresponded to these thematical fields and to address the existing literature on them. I sought to juxtapose these concepts and insights from the existing literature with observations, statements, and experiences from my fieldwork. I thus engaged in a circular process of recurrently revisiting my research material and academic literature. In drafting the chapters, I sought to be attentive to tensions, ambivalences, and overlaps that become discernable by comparing different incidents, statements, and experiences of my fieldwork. The drafting of the chapters involved several loops of re-reading and rewriting conclusions, revisiting portrayals of the research protagonists, and reflections on representations of the field.

To conclude these explications, I would like to relate the trajectory of my research process to critical perspectives on Michael H. Agar's (1996, 61) classic description of the ethnographic research process. In his introduction to anthropology, Agar speaks of the ethnographic research process as a "funnel" approach." This metaphor suggests a one-directional process of narrowing down the focus from a vast corpus of 'data' to key concepts and resonates with textbook explanations of ethnographic data analysis. Judith Okely (1996, 32) has criticized the funnel metaphor as "inappropriately mechanical." Okely (2012, 23) contemplates that what "to the professional positivist () seems like chaos () is creatively inevitable." In a similar vein, Cerwonka (2007, 18) speaks of ethnographic research as a hermeneutical process that is "characterized by partial understanding as well as floods of insight, in a process that is more spiral in nature than linear and cumulative." The characterization of ethnography as a spiral process resonates with my experience, in which ideas and arguments developed in my engagement with different sources that speak to each other: fieldnotes, interview transcripts, recordings, my documented affective experiences, other ethnographic, and historic accounts on

migration and domestic work, discussions with colleagues, as well as more theoretically oriented literature.

A note on writing strategies

I build the arguments of the respective chapters on episodes that narrate instances, observations, and experiences of my fieldwork. In drafting these episodes, I drew on my fieldnotes, my emotion diary, voice recordings, and photographs that I took in the field. I wrote my fieldnotes and the entries in the emotion diary in my mother tongue German, but complemented them with quotes and expressions in Indonesian. I had studied Indonesian at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and at Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia, and I had spent in total about 22 months in Indonesia before my fieldwork and thus attained a language level that allowed me to conduct my fieldwork without an interpreter. The dialogues embraced in the vignettes are translations; like fieldnotes, translations are constructions. “Translations from a foreign languages can never be literal” Kirsten Ghodsee (2016, 66) reminds her readers, “they must channel the tone and spirit of the conversations you overheard.”²⁶

Since the use of my emotion diary made me draw attention to the affective and relational dimensions of encounters in the field, I have detailed accounts at my disposal that allow me to selectively “put [myself] into the data” (ibid., 23) and, as exemplified in Subchapter 2.1, reflect on the relevance of my positionality to the interactions described. Thomas Stodulka, Ferdiansyah Thajib, and I (2019) proposed “empirical affect montage” as a technique to draw on the researchers’ accounts of their emotional experience when describing field encounters. This approach resonates with other reflexive approaches which integrate the researcher’s subjectivity in data analysis, such as ethnopschoanalysis (Bonz et al. 2017) or autoethnography (Ellis 2004). It differs from the ethnopschoanalytical approach, as it does not necessarily rely on

²⁶ My choices for particular translations build on discussions with Indonesian and Indonesian-speaking colleagues Ferdiansyah Thajib, Ruth Indah Rahayu, and Thomas Stodulka. I am indebted to their explanations.

group supervision as in ethnopschoanalysis. Furthermore, empirical affect montage is distinct from autoethnography, as the approach suggests to deliberately move between perspectives and *juxtaposing* accounts on the researcher's emotions with more detached observations and accounts of the experiences and lifeworlds of research protagonists. Montage, "the joining together of different elements in a variety of combinations, repetitions, and overlaps," is mostly associated with cinematic editing, but it has also been suggested as a valuable method in writing ethnographic prose (Willerslev and Suhr 2013, 1). I suggested that selectively integrating this technique in ethnographic representation might prevent ethnographers from "falling into the trap of self-indulgence" (Stodulka, Dinkelaker, and Thajib 2019, 287). Against earlier conventions that aspired to provide detached and thus 'neutral' descriptions, anthropologists nowadays refer to feminist epistemologies and encourage fieldworkers to use self-reflexive material in writing up their ethnographies. (e.g. Behar 2013, 6; Ghodsee 2016, 25; Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007; Leibing and McLean 2007, 13; Okely 1992). Yet, they caution that the significance of such material pertains "only to the point that the author shows its relevance to the production of knowledge" (Frank in Leibing and McLean 2007, 13). Trying to take this call for attention seriously, I selectively integrate accounts of my personal experience with the aim to 'thicken' the ethnographic data I respectively discuss.

The upcoming chapters outline the conceptual tools for the later investigation of migrant domestic workers' subject constitutions and the techniques of governing at play in these processes. Chapter 3 lays out my conceptualization of Indonesian labor brokerage as biopolitical government, and introduces Foucauldian vocabulary for an ethnographic investigation of nuanced modes of power. Chapter 4 outlines the conceptual tools I refer to in my investigation of migrant domestic workers' subject constitution.

3. Labor brokerage and governmentality: Managing lives and people

Labor brokerage implicates procedures of and reflections on molding Indonesian migrant domestic workers' behavior in the name of the improvement of their own and their families' lives and in the name of the betterment of the Indonesian society as a whole. The Foucauldian notion of "governmentality" (Foucauld, 2007a) captures the operation of these procedures and reflections as a defining characteristic of modern modes of exercising political power. This chapter spells out how Indonesian labor brokerage can be understood as 'biopolitical government.' The notion of governmentality allows me to put my focus on the pervasive and fine-grained modes of molding the conduct of Indonesia's migrant workers. By qualifying the methods of governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers as 'biopolitical,' as a mode of managing the conditions of the lives of a population in capitalist relations of production and reproduction, I highlight the conjunction of these methods with political-economic matters: the individualization of the social needs of rural populations, the individualization of the care needs of Hong Kong's society, and the regulation of the migrant labor force through the individualization of protection. The vocabulary introduced in this chapter forms part of the scaffolding of my inquiries into Indonesian migrant domestic workers' subject constitutions discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Those migration scholars who are engaged in the ethnographic migration and border regime approach as well as anthropologists engaging in the Foucauldian notion of modern political power as a 'conduct of conduct' have highlighted the ambivalence and ambiguities of modern governmentalities. Subjective practices that challenge the governing of migrants and mobility, they contend, are constitutive of governmentality.

Below, I will introduce the concept of governmentality, its employment in migration studies and studies on Indonesian politics, and my adaptation of the concept of biopolitical governmentality in the context of labor brokerage. Against this background, I will define the

vocabulary that allows for an analytical approach to governmentality and a nuanced understanding of power and rule. I will discuss ethnography as a suitable approach to capture ambiguities, ambivalences, and negotiations of the biopolitical governing of migrant domestic workers. Eventually, I will sketch out the framework and approach that informed the design of this study: dispositive analysis.

3.1 Governmentality and labor brokerage

Foucault's notion of governmentality has influenced migration studies and studies on Indonesian development politics. I enter my discussion on the concept of governmentality with a brief sequence of an encounter with an Indonesian government official, who, using Indonesian terminology, captured the various connotations of the Foucauldian notion of government.

Managing people: Governmentality

Thinking about the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, I often recall an encounter with an Indonesian government employee who I met in Singapore in January 2014. At the end of our encounter, Pak Hartono, as I call the official, was talking about his professional background, and, while he was searching his bag for his business cards, he explained: "I obtained a PhD in *human power management*." Still searching for his business cards, he seemed absorbed in thoughts and mumbled to himself: "managing people" (recording, 14 Jan 2014).

Pak Hartono used the Indonesian term *mengatur orang*, which covers a spectrum of terms that can be translated as 'adjusting,' 'managing,' 'modulating,' 'tidying up' or 'regulating' people (Kamus.net 2018). The term *mengatur* describes an interventionist relation to individuals as it adjusts and modulates, it contains the purpose of tidiness or order, and finally it describes a certain mode of intervention, namely managing or regulating. *Mengatur orang* can refer to 'people' and to 'persons' and thus implies relations to an impersonal conglomerate of people and relations to an individual. Notably, since Pak Hartono has obtained a doctoral degree in

mengatur orang, this capacity to *mengatur* not only rests on common sense knowledge, but constitutes a field of expertise.

Pak Hartono's reference to *mengatur orang* resonates with the Foucauldian notion of *government*, a notion that has proved fruitful to capture subtle modes of exercising power that manage populations and act upon individuals without explicitly forcing particular modes of behavior, thinking, and feeling upon them. Foucault developed this term in a series of lectures he held in the years 1978 and 1979. In Foucault's use of the term, government does not exclusively refer to the common understanding as the exercise of authority through a political unit. He uses the term in a more general meaning: the guiding of people's conduct—their desires, habits, aspirations, and beliefs—by calculated means, i.e. schemes, plans, programs, and concrete measures (Foucault 1982, 789–90). In its reception, the concept of governmentality has been referred to as an analytical framework to reveal the subtle modes of exercising power and control in knowledge formations and practices that have been formative for modernity, particularly those of liberalism and neoliberalism (e.g. Bröckling, Krasmann, and Lemke 2011; Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991; Rose 1999).

As Foucault has argued, government as a mode of shaping human conduct has been central to modern political power. Government operates and shapes people's lives on two levels: It manages populations 'at distance,' and it molds subjectivities, thus acting upon collectives and individuals (Foucault 2000 in Tazzioli 2016, 99). In combination with coercive—sovereign—and disciplinary modes of power, government forms part of modern 'governmentality,' a conglomerate of "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics" that manage populations and individuals (Foucault 2007a, 144).²⁷ Foucault traces modern governmentality to 18th-century Europe, in conjuncture with an increasing concern of modern states

²⁷ Foucault's remarks on governmentality have been read as a "teleological unfolding toward government as a superior form of rule" (Li 2007, 12). Yet, Foucault (2007a, 125) spoke of modern governmentality as a "sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management."

with populations as a specific problem to handle. This was a time of increasing populations, rural-urban migrations, the developments of cities, monetary affluence, increasing agricultural yields, the expansion of commercial trade, and the formation of the bourgeoisie (Foucault 2007a, 140; see also Demirović 2015, 71). Foucault highlights the distinction between concerns of European modern states with populations, on the one hand, and the concerns of feudal and absolutist sovereigns with the preservation of rule and with the obedience of their subject people to the law on the other. Since the 18th century, the condition of, at least certain parts of, populations, their security, their health, their longevity, their prosperity, and their felicity have determined the strength of a modern state—rather than the size of a sovereign’s territory, the number of his subjects and the wealth the sovereign extracted or appropriated (Foucault 2007a, 227–54). With the expansion of capitalist modes of production, managing the hazards that may affect the conditions of a population and their productivity thus have become critical to modern political power.

When the purpose of rule is not merely its preservation and extension, but the well-being of populations through sufficient wealth, it requires “distinctive means” (Li 2007, 5): “At the level of population, it is not possible to coerce every individual and regulate their actions in minute detail” (ibid.). Rather, improvements of populations are approached through the attempt to shape human conduct and through acting upon people’s possible modes of behavior, upon relationships and conditions of life (Foucault 2008b, 22). Government, hence, describes a mode of power that neither rests on coercion nor on deliberate consent, but relies on the self-government of individuals and populations. In that respect, knowledge production on social processes that enable the government and self-government of populations is crucial to modern political power (Hindess 2001, 97). Thereby, state actors share the endeavor of improvements of populations with multiple networks of non-state actors (ibid. 1982, 784), nowadays for instance think-tanks, NGOs, experts, philanthropic foundations, and professionals.

Although Foucault neither touched upon the topics of cross-border mobility nor upon contexts outside of Europe, his terminology has been taken up by migration scholars and by scholars working on Indonesian politics. I draw on both groups of scholars in conceptualizing and analyzing the brokerage of Indonesian domestic workers in terms of governmentality. I now turn to migration scholars and scholars of Indonesia and other contexts beyond the European center and ask how they have productively expanded the concept of governmentality.

Governmentality in migration scholarship and in studies of Indonesia

Migration scholars have made use of governmentality for a wide range of topics: for instance, programs, actors, practices of international migration management, the role of humanitarian discourses and practices in the field of migration regulation, or the technologization of borders (e.g. Bartels 2017; Fassin 2011; Kalm 2010; Meyer and Purtschert 2007; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Schwiertz 2011; Transit Migration 2007; Walters 2001). They have worked out the subtle modes of power, control and categorizing migrants through what policy makers and experts term ‘governance.’ Drawing on Foucault’s reflections on governmentality, they have carved out the interplays between state actors and (international) non-state actors, the role of knowledge production, and fine-tuned methods of regulating mobility. Scholars working on Indonesian politics, i.e. collaboration between state actors, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and international organizations, have drawn on Foucault’s reflections of governmentality to work out how interventions in the name of ‘development’ and ‘improvement’ in the fields such as environmental conservation, family planning, or urban planning regulate the habits, beliefs, and behaviors of Indonesia’s rural and urban populations (e.g. Kusno 2010; Li 2007; Philpott 2000). Both migration scholars and scholars working on Indonesian politics have extended the analytical lens of governmentality, thus developing more differentiated perspectives than those provided in Foucault’s Eurocentric contemplations.

Along with postcolonial scholars and scholars working in contexts beyond the European and North American centers (e.g. Inda 2005b; Mbembe 2003; Scott 1999; Stoler 1995), they demonstrate that the birthplace of modern governmentality should not be located only in the European center, but that it is embedded in the “entangled histories” (Conrad and Randeria 2015, 40) of global modernity. Modern governmentality is inextricably linked to the imperialist project in the colonies and the colonial “normalcy of illiberal practices within colonial rule” (Walters 2015, 15). This insight rectifies a tendency in the scholarship on governmentality to view illiberal practices as an exception to the constitutive role of individual liberty to modern political power (ibid.; see also Hindess 2001, 100). In fact, liberal modes of governing and their entanglement with the imperialist-colonialist project implied hierarchizations with regard to the worthiness of lives within population groups as well as violent suppressions of resistance. The concomitance of ‘soft’ and constraining, coercing modes of exercising power lingers on and is part and parcel of contemporary migration politics—think of the concurrency of humanitarianism and militarized borders in ‘managing’ migration to the European Union (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 202). A concurrency of soft and coercing modes of exercising power also runs through my elaborations on the regulation of the migration of Indonesian domestic workers in the Chapters 6,7, and 8.

Brokerage of domestic workers and biopolitical government

Taking Foucauldian notions of government and governmentality as a major point of reference for the study of Indonesian labor brokerage allows for a specific view on the attempts of modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage, the policies, plans, and agendas that have been pursued to reform the Indonesian labor migration program. Through the lens of governmentality, the measures proposed and reflections made in these policies, plans, and agendas can be scrutinized in detail and read as modes of control. The lens of governmentality allows to capture

subtle modes of exercising power that act upon the conduct of Indonesian migrant domestic workers and that shape desirable migrant subjectivities.

Considering that the targets of modern governmentality are the lives of (sub)populations, the Foucauldian notion of governmentality furthermore allows capturing Indonesian labor brokerage itself as a mode of governing populations in light of capitalist modes of production and social reproduction. Governmentality is closely related to biopolitics, another term Foucault used in his study of modern political power and its purpose of managing the lives of societies. Biopolitics describe “the general procedures for taking charge of life” (Foucault 2007a, 165 fn*), or in Mitchell Dean’s (2010, 266) words, “the administration of the conditions of life of the population.” Biopolitics thus capture a crucial field of modern political power that is inextricably linked to the emergence of the latter. The brokerage of Indonesian domestic workers can be understood in Isabell Lorey’s (2015b, 23) notion of “biopolitical governmentality.” By highlighting its biopolitical character, Lorey takes into account that modern (self-)government centers “on preserving the life of each and every individual in a population, so as to strengthen the state and serve the productivity of the capitalist economy” (ibid., 13). My conceptualization of Indonesian labor brokerage as biopolitical governmentality includes the political-economic dimension of Indonesian labor brokerage, and it relates the notion of biopolitics to what feminist economists termed social reproduction: the sustenance of human life and the ecology, the sustenance of labor-power, and the creation and maintenance of communities (I. Bakker and Gill 2003, 17–18). In capitalist societies, social reproduction must be managed, whether through welfare state measures or by conditioning societies to take up responsibility individually (Brodie 2005). Lorey (2015b, 26) connected this self-responsibilization for the needs of social reproduction to the measures and methods of biopolitical government.

The programs and measures applied in the brokerage of Indonesian domestic workers can be understood as a kind of biopolitical government, or management of social reproduction, in

a threefold sense. *Firstly*, the Indonesian state relies on the crucial role transnational migration plays for the life of the societies in migrants' villages of origin. On Java, where most of the protagonists of this study come from, the conditions of life have changed drastically since the 1970s, due to seizures of land by the military in the early years of the New Order and agricultural modernization projects, which effected a higher dependence of the population on waged labor and a commodification of consumption (Chandrakirana, Ratih, and Yentriyani 2009, 72; Farid 2005; Spaan 1999).²⁸ Employment abroad helps to compensate for the lack of perspectives of decent employment in Indonesia. This has been so particularly after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which heavily affected employment opportunities in Indonesia, a sharp drop in real wages, and a stark appreciation of foreign currency (Palmer 2018, 141, 145). Indonesian policy makers rely on migrants' remittances as a resilient and sustainable resource for rural Indonesians to sustain their immediate well-being (Chan 2014, 6955). Saskia Sassen (2008, 469) aptly depicts labor export policies that rely on migrants' remittances as an "alternative survival source." Along the migration process, Indonesian migrant domestic workers encounter appeals on their reliability as remittance senders (see Chapter 6) as well as appeals on investments in self-sustaining businesses in Indonesia (see Chapter 8). Indonesian labor brokerage can, *secondly*, be understood as a biopolitical mode of governing, because by providing flexible, temporary and inexpensive domestic workers at the disposal of Hong Kong employers, the Indonesian state indirectly contributes to the administration of those parts of the Hong Kong population, which rely on commodified care labor to sustain their lives, or, more precisely to ensure their "state-of-the-art survival" (Sassen 2008, 488). Hiring a domestic worker who takes care of shopping, prepares food, cleans apartments, takes care of children and/or an elderly in the household has become a critical solution for the organization of the lives of a large part of

²⁸ In some of the villages in Sumberbaru that I visited, the state forest company *Perum Perhutani* seized forest lands that had been used by the communities as agricultural land. It was from these communities that in the early 1980s people began to venture out to plantations in Malaysia and to private households in Saudi Arabia in order to seek alternative sources of income

society in the global city, whereas public care facilities are few, whereas financial pressures are high due to housing and education costs, and whereas professional jobs are demanding in terms of work load and working hours (see e.g. Constable 2016, 50; Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR 2017; Tam 2016, 120). Anthropologist Aihwa Ong (2006, 201–2) describes the biopolitical quality of migrant domestic workers in the region with the following words: “Having a maid at home is a social right, like access to good schools, housing, shopping malls, and leisure, all entitlements of the middle-classes bent on buying their way to the good life.” Labor brokerage implies measures that aim at optimizing the role of domestic workers’ migration in managing the conditions of populations in Hong Kong and in Indonesia. This includes capitalizing on migrant domestic workers’ embodied cultural and gendered knowledge, which enables them to free their Hong Kong employers from a row of their care responsibilities (see Chapter 7). I, *thirdly*, read Indonesian labor brokerage in terms of biopolitical governing as the various actors involved in it apply measures that manage the conditions of the migrant-population itself. I show that labor brokerage as biopolitical government also refers to fine-grained measures that aim at ensuring migrants’ safety and integrity under precarious working and living conditions through their self-protection (see Chapter 7).

My understanding of labor brokerage as biopolitical government resonates with Rodriguez (2010, xix), who characterizes Philippine labor brokerage as a “quintessentially neoliberal” mode of government. She highlights that by harnessing its citizens’ migration the Philippine state transfers responsibility for its withdrawal of social supports on the population (*ibid.*). Furthermore, she argues that by controlling flows of temporary workers, the Philippine brokerage sustains neoliberal restructurings of markets in labor-importing countries (*ibid.*, xxii). Although I agree with Rodriguez’ characterizations of labor brokerage, I choose to characterize Indonesian labor brokerage as a biopolitical project. Lorey pointed out that self-responsibilization for the needs of social reproduction is not an utterly neoliberal phenomenon, as is implied in much

of the scholarly work on political-economic transformations (in Western Europe and the U.S.) associated with the dismantling of the welfare state. Rather, since the turn to the 19th century, with the expansion of bourgeois modernity—and with the experiments in the colonial “laboratories of modernity” (Stoler and Cooper 2007a, 5)—people were trained to take charge of their reproduction needs individually (Lorey 2015b, 27–31). In a similar gesture to Lorey’s illustration of historical continuities within the biopolitical management of the lives of populations, I aim to keep in mind tradition lines of contemporary labor brokerage to earlier biopolitical projects that aimed at regulating Indonesians’ mobility. It has been argued, for instance, that contemporary labor brokerage needs to be contextualized by taking into account the Indonesian transmigration program (*transmigrasi*), which involved state-sponsored resettlement of families from Java to the so-called outer islands (Killias 2018, 34; Lindquist 2018b, 838). The project started in the early 20th century under Dutch colonial rule and was remade in the late 1960s, during the Suharto government (1966-1998). The largest land settlement scheme in the world rests on the idea that it is an effective means to address the welfare-problems of the Javanese population, to handle social unrest and to provide labor to the growing plantation industry (Elmhirst 2018, 27–28; Stoler 1985, 38; Tirtosudarmo 1999, 213–18). The techniques of governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers are thus related to earlier development projects such as the transmigration program, while they also coalesce with the programs of international migration management and human resources management. I use the term ‘neoliberal’ in highlighting the particular techniques that mobilize migrants as workers and citizens defined by their ‘entrepreneurial’ qualities (see Chapter 8). On a more general level, however, I frame the liaisons of the techniques of governing with their various genealogies as biopolitical government. Thus, I highlight the significance of Indonesian labor brokerage as a transnational management of social reproduction and of precarious living and working conditions on the one

hand, and the set of practices that shape migrant domestic workers' behavior and subjectivities on the other.

3.2 Studying governmentality

Approaches to governmentality following Foucault make use of a number of terminologies and vocabularies. There is no clearly defined set of tools to investigate governmentality. Studies of governmentality have proposed their own taxonomies of dimensions that need to be taken account of when studying governmentality. I partly draw on these taxonomies in outlining the major dimensions that are of interest for my study: the techniques of government and the subjectivities they shape. Below, I clarify my choice of analytic terms and provide the framework by means of which I describe attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage (Chapter 5) and the different subject constituting processes of Indonesian migrant domestic workers (Chapters 6, 7, and 8).

Vocabularies of governmentality: Techniques and subjectivities

This study focuses on the practical dimensions of governmentality: techniques that shape migrant subjectivities. Governmentality takes on “pragmatic form” through governing techniques (Inda 2005a, 9). *Techniques of governing* refer to methods, procedures, and “means in directing the actions of individuals and populations” (ibid., 9), and they describe how power relations operate. They refer to programmatic sources on the one hand—for instance, strategic policy agendas, or training curriculums—and to mundane activities—for instance, training units, pieces of advice, technical devices, or rituals on the other (ibid., 9; Legg 2005, 148). A set of techniques can be termed a *technology* of governing.²⁹ The employment of techniques of governing rests on *problematizations*, *reasons*, and it correlates with *sentiments*. The policy

²⁹ Foucault tended to use ‘technique’ and ‘technology’ interchangeably (Behrent 2013). In Foucault’s reception, this inclination to avoid a clear-cut distinction between the two terms subsists.

makers and operators of Indonesian labor brokerage employ certain methods and procedures because they have identified certain problems, or “deficiencies that need to be rectified” (Li 2007, 7). Problematizations are manifold: They can refer to deficiencies within a scheme of government, and they can refer to challenges, resistance and irritation from outside to which they react (Legg 2005, 147). Problematizations cause renewals and refinements of techniques of governing. These furthermore correspond to a variety of reasons, rationalities, and logics: expertise, conceptualizations of the exercise of power, definitions of goals and purposes of the employment of certain techniques, moral justifications, and discussions on appropriate forms (Inda 2005a, 8). The techniques of governing Indonesian domestic workers also relate to certain sentiments. Anthropologists engaging in an anthropology of affect have defined sentiments as conjunctures of cognitive formations of opinions and judgments with emotional and affective dynamics that exist both on the individual and the collective level (Bens and Zenker 2019, 96). Sentiments are embedded in social processes of meaning-making or knowledge orders (*ibid.*, 97). The techniques that aim at keeping up Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ respectable appearance, for instance, correlate to sentiments of national shame and discomfort with domestic workers’ public appearance in Hong Kong. During my fieldwork, I encountered particular and recurring “emotives” (Reddy 1997, 331)—or emotional expressions—among policy makers and operators of Indonesian labor brokerage. In their considerations of the diagnoses and logics that undergird certain techniques of governing, most governmentality studies omit the role of sentiments and affects such as the quest for national dignity. Yet, anthropologists like Ann Laura Stoler (2007) or Begoña Aretxaga (2008) point to the affective dimensions that drive certain policy directions (see also Slaby and Bens 2019).

Techniques of governing “seek to cultivate particular types of individual and collective identity as well as forms of agency and subjectivity” (Inda 2005a, 10). It is the focus of this thesis to ask which particular ideal and lived migrant subjectivities arise from Indonesian labor

brokerage, and the ethnographic core chapters of this study are organized around the constitution of Indonesian migrant subjectivities. The constitutions of subjectivities build on *interpellations*, *social practices*, and *knowledge orders*. Because I discuss these terminologies in detail in Chapter 3.2, I mention them only briefly here. Normative or desirable subjectivities are defined in interpellations or forms of addresses. They are nourished by particular knowledge orders, for instance, state promoted gender discourses, or cultural, Javanese ethics. Subjectivities are formed by performing repeated every day practices, by cultivating skills. One could say subject constituting practices are the substance of techniques of governing described above. In analyzing not only desirable, but also migrants' idiosyncratic lived subjectivities, I refer to other Foucauldian terminologies related to the subjectivities that arise through labor brokerage, such as "counter-conduct" (see below), or "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988, see Chapter 7).

Governmentality entails a nuanced notion of power. In order to apply Foucault's complex conceptualization of power to the study of labor brokerage, sovereign, disciplinary, and governing modes of exercising power are introduced in the next section.

A nuanced notion of power

In the Foucauldian sense, "power is to be understood as a strategic relation of force that permeates life and is productive of new forms of desires, objects, relations, and discourses" (Mahmood 2005, 117). Governmentality characterizes such relations. 'Government' and 'discipline' stand in juxtaposition to prohibitive modes of power, which rest upon social rules and sanctions, and which Foucault (1978, 89) describes as 'sovereign.' *Sovereign* power implies "power of one person *over* another, and, hence, of one group over another" (Kelly 2009, 39). In the ethnographic core chapters of this thesis, I describe severe interferences in domestic workers' personal lives and thus show the role of practices of sovereign modes of power in the

processes of constituting migrant subjectivities. Discipline and government highlight “impersonality, or subjectlessness, of power, meaning that it is not guided by the will of individual subjects” (Kelly 2009, 39). Productive modes of power thus operate through a variety of practices. These might not always be intentional acts of rule. *Disciplinary* power consists of practices of control and of shaping norm-conforming bodies, say, in schools, factories, or prisons, through strict time tables, seating orders, surveillance-techniques and comparison such as school grades. Disciplinary techniques of power raise docile bodies and model souls. Disciplinary power rests on demarcations between norms and deviation (Foucault 1975, 2012). Disciplining techniques, as appeals to act in a proper way, as reprimands, and as problematizations and astonishment about migrants’ ‘odd’ behavior, are ever-present in the quotidian routines of labor brokerage. *Government* describes techniques that “shape [human; SD] conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors” (Dean 2010, 18). Government implies “guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (Foucault 1982, 789). It describes techniques that incite, discourage, support, and inhibit the actions of ‘subjects.’ It grasps the regulation of people’s interest and self-interest (Reckwitz 2008, 36). Indonesian domestic workers are animated to optimize their capacities in self-governing through appeals on Javanese cultural ethical practice, through affective labor, or, after their return to Indonesia, through self-employment as entrepreneurs. Indonesian migrant domestic workers experience the coexistence of a wide spectrum of practices of rule: confinement in training centers or their employers’ homes, disciplinary routines and fine-grained techniques of self-government which relate to their own moral registers, self-care strategies, and desires. Hence, sovereign, disciplinary, and governing modes of exercising power coalesce.

I have outlined the set of tools to understand Indonesian labor brokerage in the terms of governmentality. But how is this governmentality negotiated on an everyday level? Ethnographic migration and border regime analyses are invested in this question, to which I turn in the following section.

An ethnographic regime perspective on biopolitical government

The perspective of ethnographic migration and border regime analysis, which I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, highlights that migrants negotiate and challenge the intended effects of the techniques that govern them (e.g. Hess, Kasparek, and Schwertl 2018; Karakayali and Tsianos 2007; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). Thus, the regulation of migrants' behavior must be understood in its dynamics, responding to migrants' willful behavior. Along with anthropologists studying the state or the politics of development (e.g. Inda 2005b; Li 2007b; Sharma and Gupta 2006a), the ethnographic migration and border regime approach suggests to study technologies of governing migrants and mobility on the level of everyday practice (Hess, Kasparek, and Schwertl 2018, 272; Hess and Tsianos 2010). Ethnographic attention to everyday practices, the approach suggests, can reveal migrants' "everyday politics which interferes with hegemonic politics" (Stephenson and Papadopoulos 2006, 271 in Hess and Tsianos 2010, 249) on the one hand and the ambiguities and tensions in the governing of migrants and mobility on the other (Hess and Tsianos 2010, 250).

The ethnographic regime perspective underlines Foucault who contended that the 'conduct of conduct' interrelates with 'counter-conducts,' i.e. not necessarily visible or expressly political "struggles against the processes implemented for conducting others" (Foucault 2007a, 201). Counter-conducts rest on a refusal of "being governed like that and at that cost" (ibid., 2007b, 45). As Foucault has demonstrated in his contemplations on the genealogies of modern political power, technologies of governing are constituted in response to 'counter-conducts,' for instance

to Christian asceticism and mysticism. It has been suggested that since counter-conducts are situated in the realms of the everyday, ethnography is apt to illuminate practices of counter-conduct (Demetriou 2016).

In studying Indonesian labor brokerage, I follow the approach suggested by ethnographic regime analysis and the reception of the Foucauldian notion of ‘counter-conduct.’³⁰ The ethnographic approach brought me to the interstices between official techniques of governing and ideal migrant subjectivities on the one hand and unofficial, ordinary techniques, problematizations, reasonings, sentiments, and migrants’ lived subjectivities on the other. This revealed the ambivalences and ambiguities of the Indonesian labor brokerage’s techniques of biopolitical governing and the coexisting different modes of exercising power. I encountered various modes how Indonesian migrant domestic workers and their quests for respect implicitly and explicitly challenge the different forms of power expressed in biopolitical governmentality: through the messages they convey in their outward appearance, through their willful and persistent mobility, or through their idiosyncratic modes of coping and surviving (see Chapters 6.3, 7.3, and 8.3). In order to describe these expressions of migrant domestic workers’ lived subjectivities in relation to interpellations and practices that shape ideal, desirable subjectivity, Chapter 4 outlines the conceptual analytical tools to study subject constitution. In the course of the ethnographic core chapters, I expand the analytical concepts with which I describe migrant

³⁰ Foucault’s notion of ‘counter-conduct’ has entered the reception of the author’s work relatively recently (see e.g. Binkley and Cruikshank 2016; Odyseos, Death, and Malmvig 2016). This can be explained by the circumstance that Foucault’s (2007a, 2008b) ‘governmentality-lectures,’ where the notion of ‘counter-conduct’ were published in full length only in 2007 and 2008. Despite its proximity to the basic ideas of ethnographic regime analysis, the idea of ‘counter-conduct’ has hardly been taken up by migration scholars (for an exception see e.g. Tazzioli 2016). Ethnographic regime analysis has criticized governmentality studies for limiting their focus to the programmatic dimensions of government (Hess, Kasperek, and Schwertl 2018, 268–69; Hess and Tsianos 2010, 255). Yet, in contrast to the critique that ambivalences, ambiguities, and fissures disappear from the view of governmentality studies, the inconsistencies of governing migration has been equally highlighted by scholars who approach migration politics through the lens of governmentality (see Schwenken 2018a, 136).

domestic workers' 'counter-conducts' as particular forms of class politics, for instance by availing myself of the notion of 'disidentification,' (Rancière 1992; Skeggs 2016), of 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008), or of the willfulness of their mobility (Benz and Schwenken 2005).

Before turning to conceptual questions of subject constitution, I outline how the particular formations and arrangements of the elements and modes of power that constitute the biopolitical governing of Indonesian migrant domestic workers can be captured and investigated. In the following subchapter, I suggest the Foucauldian *dispositive* as a conceptual framework to study the interplay of the various elements that constitute labor brokerage as biopolitical government.

3.3 Dispositives of governing Indonesian domestic workers

In designing this study, I drew inspirations from social scientific and philosophical engagements with the concept of the dispositive (Bührmann and Schneider 2012; Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Thaning 2014). These have been instructive for me in approaching the interrelations between the manifestations of the myriad elements that work together as social techniques of power that form and bring about Indonesian migrant-subjects. Foucault (1980, 194) uses the term dispositive in order to describe "the relations that can be established between [elements]" of an apparatus: "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions." Dispositive analyses take into account the dynamic social political contexts of the working of these interrelated elements (Bührmann and Schneider 2012, 118), because for Foucault, a dispositive has the strategic function to "at a given historical moment () respond[] to an *urgent need*" (Foucault 1980, 195).

Ethnographic border and migration regime studies resort to the Foucauldian notion of the dispositive in order to describe the "transversal infrastructures and institutions/

institutionalizations of problem-solving” (Schwertl 2015, 27 fn 16; translation mine).³¹ In order to grasp this transversality, I planned my fieldwork as a multi-sited undertaking (see Hess and Tsianos 2010, 259), trying to trace the various institutions encountered by Indonesian migrant workers during the migration process as well as the spaces where migrant domestic workers come together and seeking to study the programmatic agendas that underlie the labor migration program. Having in mind that ‘dispositive’ is about relations between a variety of elements, the concept allows me to juxtapose a) techniques, reasonings, problematizations, interpellations, everyday practices that I observed on the ground (e.g. during training sessions, briefings, bureaucratic procedures) at different stages of the migration process, with b) programmatic sources (e.g. regulations, manuals, interviews that I conducted with government officials), and with c) accounts of the protagonists’ lived subjectivities, their experiences, and practices.³² Thus, I draw connections, for instance between the practices of different actors or institutions and regulations, locate discrepancies, and ambiguities, and highlight fields of negotiation.

Foucault made use of the dispositive in order to distinguish “dispositional prototypes” (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Thaning 2014, 13). These “can be regarded as major formations of social technologies” (ibid.) and correlate with the different modalities of power that I have addressed above: sovereignty, discipline, and government. Borrowing the term ‘dispositive,’ I do not follow the Foucauldian distinction. Instead, I distinguish between three

³¹ Border and migration regime analyses have approached the intermeshed elements in the regulation of migration by means of the concept of the ‘assemblage’ (Hess and Schwertl 2013; Schwertl 2015, 27). ‘Assemblage’ highlights “the ephemeral, the emergent, the evanescent, the decentered and the heterogeneous (Marcus and Saka 2006, 101)” in social process and cultural meaning—in this case with regard to the political regulation of migration. The term dispositive in distinction describes more stable—which does not mean static!— institutionalized modes of regulating people’s mobility. Because in this study I deal with the institutionalized procedures of the Indonesian labor migration program, I took the term dispositive, rather than ‘assemblage’ as a starting point for my investigation.

³² In order to conceptualize the relational nature of the different elements of the apparatus that constitutes the Indonesian labor migration program, including the migrants’ lived subjectivities, I drew inspiration from the proposal to operationalize the dispositive that has been formulated by the German sociologists Andrea Bührmann and Werner Schneider (2012, 109–42).

dispositives based on the different problem fields, which the programs and practices that I observed during my fieldwork gave answers to, and based on the particular ideal migrant subjectivities they produce. Corresponding to the three subject figures that are discussed in the Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I distinguish between a) a migrant citizenship dispositive, b) a labor dispositive, and c) a particular formation of a dispositive of return which strongly intermingles with a growing financialization of social life. By way of this distinction, I describe the conglomerates of practices and programs that respond to what the various actors involved in Indonesian labor brokerage regard as a) matters of national belonging, civic duties, and provisions that aim at their protection; b) problems related to the competitiveness of Indonesian migrant workers on the global market, the optimization of their qualities, and matters of their (self-)protection; and c) concerns with respect to migrant workers' productivity after their return from abroad.

All three arrangements are gendered, they are tinged by certain ideas about class behavior and the valuation of paid domestic work, and they are embedded in binary notions on progress and backwardness deriving from colonial orders of knowledge. They all touch on different aspects of the endeavor to enhance migrants' and the labor brokerage state's respectability. None of these dispositives could be assigned to one singular modality of power, because in each dispositive sovereign, disciplinary, and governmental modes of power operate and interact. Nevertheless, in my observations of the Indonesian migration regime, disciplinary techniques and the boundary making between norms and deviance figure prominently in the migrant citizen dispositive (Chapter 6), while the labor dispositive conspicuously features techniques of government and self-government (Chapter 7). In my analysis of technologies that constitute the particular dispositive of return that I provide a sketch of appeals to migrants' self-governing characteristically joining with negotiations of norms and deviations (Chapter 8). In elaborating

these three dispositives, I expand my conceptualization of labor brokerage as biopolitical government and engage in conceptual discussions on ‘migrant citizenship’ (Rodriguez 2010), ‘affective labor’ in private households (Akalin 2015; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010), and ‘the entrepreneurial self’ (Bröckling 2016) in the context of international migration policies.

Notably, the three dispositives I describe are based on my analytical distinction. Rather than representing clearly separated realms in the biopolitical project of labor brokerage, they respectively highlight particular characteristics of governing migrant domestic workers. The dispositives overlap: in calls on the workers’ civic duties, in attempts to enhance the marketability of their labor-power, or in calls on their self-protection from the hazards of exploitation and violence abroad and of social risks ‘at home.’

The Foucauldian view on modern political power shapes my analysis of the brokerage of Indonesian labor brokerage. I showed that shaping individual behavior, thinking, perceptions, and feelings is a constitutive part of modern political power. An analysis of the relation between desirable and lived subjectivities of Indonesia’s migrant domestic workers however requires a conceptual framework that complements and at the same goes beyond the Foucauldian vocabulary. I turn to this conceptual framework in the following chapter and discuss ‘subject constitution.’

4. Subject constitution: Learning and unlearning to be a migrant domestic worker

Notions of ideal Indonesian migrant workers draw on a wider set of social norms and discourses. In living their migration projects and pursuing their aspirations, desires, and dreams, the workers I studied with, implicitly and explicitly, embody particular and complex answers to the expectations that are entailed in imaginations of how Indonesian migrant workers should desirably act, think, feel, and perceive themselves and the world. This chapter outlines the theoretical concepts and terminologies that frame my ethnographic study of Indonesian migrant domestic workers' 'subject constitution.' By means of this conceptual framework, I approach the encounters between migrant domestic workers and the manifold actors involved in the Indonesian labor migration program and the ways in which the everyday procedures of Indonesian labor brokerage intend to shape migrant subjectivities.

Below, I will outline the poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial expansions of Louis Althusser's (2001) notion of 'interpellation,' thereby highlighting discourse and everyday practices as crucial elements that build a vocabulary for an analysis of subject constitution. Subject constitution, *nota bene*, also refers to the ways migrants relate to the procedures and activities they encounter along the migration process and the various ways they fashion their 'being a migrant worker.' Thus, I will suggest using the concept of subject constitution not only to study desirable migrant domestic worker subjectivities, but also as a heuristic concept to juxtapose these with migrant domestic workers' 'lived subjectivities.' Various perspectives on desired and lived migrant domestic workers' subjectivities indicate fields of tensions between the migration apparatus and migrants. As I will reflect, in striving for an enhancement of respectability of Indonesian migrant workers, the operators of Indonesian labor brokerage expect aspiring and practicing migrant domestic workers both to 'learn' and 'unlearn' being a migrant-subject.

Meanwhile, the workers I studied with engage in their own ways of ‘learning’ and ‘unlearning’ to be a migrant worker.

4.1 Approaching subject constitution: Interpellation(s)

Subject constitution is a process embedded social interactions that are structured by power relations. To illustrate this, I open the chapter by an episode from my fieldwork in Hong Kong. This episode shows that different ways of addressing Indonesian migrant domestic workers reveal social imaginations of who or what a migrant domestic workers is. Thus, the episode allows preparing the theoretical discussion on subject constitution that is addressed in detail in ensuing subchapter.

A hesitant form of address

In late August 2014, the Hong Kong based branch of the Indonesian bank *Negara Indonesia* (BNI) celebrated the opening of the first cash machine owned by an Indonesian bank and operated in Hong Kong, a measure to facilitate services for migrant workers, Indonesian students, and Indonesian business people in Hong Kong (Nurbianto 2014). The bank invited Indonesian government officials, bank staff, expatriates, journalists, and members of migrant workers’ organizations to a ceremonial launching event at its branch office in Hong Kong’s business and financial district Admiralty. The night before, Nuria, the coordinator of an alliance of migrant domestic workers’ organizations in Hong Kong, had invited me to join her and her friends to attend the event.

The launch was opened by speeches given by two Indonesian government officials: the Indonesian General Consul and an official of the Jakarta-based Financial Services Authority. The latter official was on a visit to Hong Kong and was the first to deliver his address to an audience which had gathered in the lobby room. Small groups gathered in front of the cash machine to attend the launching. I was standing amongst a group of members of migrant

workers' organizations. The official from Jakarta addressed the attending consulate officials, the BNI management and bank staff: "Dear ladies and gentleman from BNI, dear ladies and gentlemen from the Consulate." Then he turned to the group of migrant workers, and his speech halted for a moment: "Dear ladies from...from... (*Ibu-ibu dari...dari...*)." He seemed to search for an adequate wording. After a small pause, the speaker chose the following address: "Dear ladies who are working here (*Ibu-ibu yang bekerja di sini*)," and continued his speech. The Consul General was the next official to give his short speech. I noticed that his greeting to the attendees was more fluent than the previous speaker's. He also greeted the attending government officials and bank staff, and when he addressed the attending domestic workers, he welcomed them by addressing them as "*Mbak-mbak*," a Javanese form of respectful address used for younger women, thus avoiding the form of address "*Ibu-ibu*" (fieldnotes 24 Aug 2014).

Polyphonic ways of addressing Indonesian migrant workers

I chose to discuss this episode in order to enter into a reflection on the ascriptions of social positions through mundane practices. Thus, I illustrate the analytical concept of subject constitution that is discussed in detail below. When I observed the ceremony of the opening of the cash machine, I noticed the differing self-evidence—or 'naturalness'—with which the two officials addressed the attending migrant domestic workers, while neither of them hesitated to find an appropriate address for the Indonesian expats attending the event. The General Consul had his appropriate form of address readily available. He routinely met various migrant worker groups as one of the 'stakeholder'-groups in the social and political landscape of Indonesian citizens living in Hong Kong. The representative of the Jakarta-based government agency in turn seemed insecure about an appropriate manner to address the attending migrant domestic workers. I suggest a reading of the episode above that does not understand the official's pause in his speech as an expression of individual confusion, but as a moment that reflects the

embeddedness of ways of addressing somebody in certain social and political contexts. Literature and cultural studies scholar Yasemine Yildiz (2009, 84), who engaged in “act[s] of approaching somebody, turning to somebody or addressing somebody” (translation mine), pointed to implications in the ways members of German majority society address marginalized members of minority groups. She discussed the opening speech of an official event at a German museum—a scene that resembles the episode described above in terms of its formal character and the official address of welcome. Yildiz argues that forms of address by members of the dominant society involve the ascription of a certain position in the hierarchized fabric of a society and can thus effect marginalization (ibid., 84).

What are the implications of the acts of addressing Indonesian migrant workers at the opening-ceremony of the cash machine? The short irritation of the official from Jakarta can be read as an indication that he could not categorize the attending domestic workers; apparently their attendance at the ceremony was not as self-evident as one of the Consulate members and the bank staff’s. He might have been irritated to encounter migrant workers in a setting that somewhat differed from the ‘typical’ places where one expects to meet migrant domestic workers: the Indonesian Consulate, Victoria Park—the iconic main site in Hong Kong where Indonesian domestic workers meet on their weekly days off—, training centers, or placement agencies. At this rather exquisite occasion, they might have appeared somewhat out of place. This is not least to be understood in relation to their social position as domestic workers, which is considered as lower class, due to the classification of their profession as ‘unskilled’ workers (see Palmer 2018, 145). He might have been as overwhelmed as I was vis-à-vis the self-confident appearance of Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong, which starkly contrasts with their uniformed and shy appearance prior to their departure. That the official was irritated by the presence of migrant workers in the ceremony does not mean that he had no idea at all about migrant workers. I rather assume that he had a different conception of migrant workers

and their participation in events of the white-collar service sector. The Consul General's choice of addressing the attending migrant domestic workers as *mbak-mbak* is also noteworthy. He signaled that their attendance at the event was welcomed. By his choice of *mbak-mbak*, he addressed the attending migrant workers as *young* women, although a lot of them have a family in Indonesia, hence, they would be eligible to be addressed as *Ibu*, the respectful Indonesian address for married women. Perhaps the Consul General referred to the appearance of female migrant workers in Hong Kong as single women. The fact that female migrant workers in Hong Kong are perceived and 'read' as single women, however, needs also to be understood against the backdrop of the fact that neither their economic situation nor the immigration regulations *allow* these workers to bring their families to Hong Kong. The form of address as *mbak-mbak* contains an ascription of a *lower* position than the addresser's, corresponding with their class position. Furthermore, the address as *mbak-mbak* is a clear marker of sex and gender and makes the choice of migrant workers in Hong Kong invisible who live non-conforming gender identities. They identify as *tomboi*³³ and adopt an outward appearance and habitus that is culturally coded as a masculine behavior (Blackwood 2010; see Chapter 6). Within migrant worker communities in Hong Kong, migrant workers who live *tomboi*-subjectivities are addressed as *mas*, the male equivalent to *mbak*.³⁴ Among the migrant worker groups who I accompanied to the ceremony of the opening of the bank, there were also workers whom I read as *tombois*. Not surprisingly, I never met an official who chose a more inclusive form of address to migrant domestic workers, for example by addressing them as *mbak-mbak* and *mas-mas*. The management of the Hong Kong branch of the *Bank Negara Indonesia*, yet ascribed the attending migrant workers a different position. As the largest target group of cash machine users, the migrant domestic workers living in Hong Kong are addressed as customers and financial actors

³³ *Tomboi* is a self-description and is derived from the English *tomboy*.

³⁴ Or, as 'om,' an Indonesian informal form of address for 'Uncle' (see Sim 2007, 232).

(see Nurbianto 2014).³⁵

The different ways of addressing Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers, which I witnessed at the opening of the BNI cash machine, do not constitute a singular instance. In variations, they are reiterated by bureaucrats, recruitment agents, Indonesian expats, and members of Indonesian society. Therefore, the mentioned ways of addressing Hong Kong's migrant workers illustrates at least four aspects that are relevant to the conceptual framework of my discussion of migrant domestic workers' subject constitution. *Firstly*, the ways of addressing Indonesian migrant workers depend on—repeatedly invoked—social images and connotations about 'who an Indonesian migrant worker is.' These images and connotations are the result of particular and historic circumstances that shape social understandings about reality. *Secondly*, there is no single dominant way of addressing Indonesian migrant domestic workers, but there are many competing forms of addressing them. *Thirdly*, notions prevalent among government officials and the public of 'who an Indonesian migrant worker is' and in which spaces she 'naturally' can participate are challenged and irritated by the self-confidence displayed the migrant workers themselves.

4.2 Analyzing subject constitution

Scrutinizing those processes along the migration circuit that shape Indonesian migrant domestic workers' subjectivities—involving modes of exercising power as well as desires, individual and collective aspirations—, requires extended conceptual clarifications on subject constitution. The following sections therefore outline poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist approaches to the notion of 'subject.' Althusser's notion of interpellation is introduced as

³⁵ In my field notes I did not document whether and how the BNI-management held a welcome speech, thus explicitly addressing the attending migrant domestic workers.

a key concept to capture the relations of power involved in subject constitution, and further central vocabularies for the study of subject constitution are discussed.

Epistemological perspectives on subject constitution: Decentering the modern subject

The epistemological perspective implied in ‘interpellation’ or the conception of the term ‘subject’ in its double-sense are a critique of the *modern idea* of ‘the subject’ as pre-social, as sovereign, as autonomous in its actions and thinking, and as existing independently from social relations of power and domination (S. Hall 1996). Interpellation is an allegory to deconstruct this notion as ideological. In fact, the idea of a fully coherent, conscious human subject has provided the basis of much Enlightenment thought since René Descartes. This idea has ever since been particularly influential in classic subject philosophy (Dhawan 2014, 20).³⁶

Poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist critiques of the idea of the modern subject of Enlightenment highlight that the concept of the autonomous, conscious, and coherent subject rests upon the demarcation from, and domination of, its constitutive *Other*: the non-rational, and emotional feminine, defined by her natural needs, as the *Other* of the rational male subject; the mad as the *Other* of the reasonable subject; the pervert as the *Other* of the moral subject; and the racialized *Other* of the European, white, civilized, and again, rational, subject (e.g. Dhawan 2014; Foucault 1965, 1978; Said 1994; Spivak 1988). These *Others* are “disqualified from the subject status (*aus dem Subjektstatus ausgeschlossen*)” (Bargetz, Ludwig, and Sauer 2015, 17; translation mine), and thus dominance and violence towards these *Others* are not necessarily contradictory to the values of Enlightenment and modernity (Dhawan 2014, 25). The unmarked embodiment of the autonomous subject is the white, abled male subject. Critical

³⁶ In migration theory, such a notion of the autonomous subject can be found in neo-classical approaches, which understand migrants as voluntarist, rational, and utility-maximizing subjects (for an overview see Pries 2001, 13–16).

notions of the subject, particularly those situated in feminism, queer studies, postcolonial theory or *crip theory*, thus, “denaturalize” (Butler 1999, xx) the notion of an autonomous subject. They ‘demask’ the claim of universality and normativity inherent in this notion as one of its main mechanisms of domination and (mundane, i.e. discursive, symbolic, or normative) violence towards its *Others* (Conrad and Randeria 2015, 56; Dhawan 2014, 24,33,44; Ludwig 2015, 178–80; Spivak 1988).

Critical engagements with processes of subject constitution do not assume a naïve notion of the subject. This means that they engage with ascriptions of certain *subject positions* within a multiplicity of hierarchizing orders such as the ‘heteronormative matrix,’ racism, ableism, the access to rights through national citizenship, or the international division of labor (see e.g. Brah 1992; Butler 1999; Campbell 2008; Collins 2000; Davis 1981; hooks 2000; Mohanty 1984; Said 1994; Shildrick 2012; Spivak 1988). Critical notions of the subject do not necessarily assume a binary opposition between a dominant white male, free and active European subject, and the excluded and dominated *Others*. They point to the formation of marginal, but *governed* and *disciplined* subjects (see Chapter 3) whose behavior is to be shaped, conducted, and improved for the sake of societal development (Hindess 2001, 104; Li 2007, 15). The ‘migrant-subject’ I engage with in this study is faced with expectations to behave in certain ways and meet particular standards in order to qualify as a ‘migrant-subject,’ while continually facing the possible disqualification through ascribed *Otherness*.

‘Hey, you there’ – Interpellations

The multiple ways of addressing Indonesian migrant workers can be understood as part of larger processes of migrant workers’ subject constitution: Through these forms of address, migrant workers are ascribed a place in society, based on which they are recognized as subjects; they are ascribed an identity. To borrow Yildiz’ (2009, 84) words: “Through addressing the other, the existence of the other is approved (*bestätigt*), or more precisely: The one who

addresses signals that she has noticed (*wahrgenommen*) the other” (translation mine). Yildiz’ description builds on Althusser’s (2001) notion of ‘interpellation’ (see also Butler 1997, 106–9). This notion is part of Althusser’s reflection on the workings of ideology, and offers a concept that describes “the way in which the social order speaks to us as individuals and as it were calls us by name” (Jameson 2001, xiv). ‘Interpellation’ implies that “only through being addressed as someone, the person addressed *becomes* the one who is being addressed” (Villa 2003, 46; translation mine). This means, the concept of interpellation is about how our modes of perceiving ourselves and the world are socially structured in a very profound way and are permeated by power relations.

To illustrate subject constitution as a process, Althusser (2001, 118) makes use of the example of a police officer hailing a passerby on the street: “Hey, you there.” The moment the individual turns around and reacts to the hail, the individual becomes a concrete subject and “accepts the terms by which he or she is hailed” (Butler 1997, 106). The individual has realized that the hailing addressed her, she identifies herself as the one who was meant, and through this recognition and feeling of being guilty, she becomes subjective to, in this case, the ideology of law and crime. A crucial moment in the interpellation scene is the recognition-desiring addressee’s *active* “turning around” (*ibid.*, 107), as she is affected by the inscription of social norms, guilt and shame in her modes of perception. This turning around indicates the addressee’s self-recognition and at the same time approves her subjection to a social order. The interpellation scene thus implies that individuals are not “purely passive in the face of subjection” (Kelly 2009, 93). Subject constitution can be related in the double-sense of the word ‘subject’ as it is used in modern societies: It is simultaneously about external ascriptions and expectations towards individuals and individuals’ active adoption of identities and occupation of social positions. In Foucault’s (1982, 777) contemplations on “the question of the subject,” he summarizes this double-sense:

subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. [The two meanings of the word ‘subject’] (...) suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault 1982, 781).

Foucault’s remark reveals that his take on the modern subject is closely associated to an understanding of power not only in the sense of coercion, but in its more subtle, productive sense. Pursuing the explanations on the varieties of modes of power in Chapter 3.2 and relating these to the concept of interpellation, the subtle operation of power manifests in interpellations of disciplined, norm-conforming subjects, or subjects capable of self-governing. To understand the speeches given at the ceremonial opening of the cash machine in Hong Kong as interpellation means to assume that the ways in which migrant workers are addressed have effects on their self-conceptions. That is to say, they have an effect so long as the forms of address are embedded in large conglomerates of similar ways of address that migrant workers encounter over and again.

Vocabularies of subject constitution: Knowledge formations, practice and lived subjectivities

A number of aspects should be taken into account in making the notion of interpellation fruitful for an analysis of subject constitutions that compose the Indonesian migration regime. Expanding the vocabulary of studying governmentality (Chapter 3.2), below, I outline the conceptual tools which I deploy in exploring processes of subject constitution.

Discourse and knowledge formations

In Althusser’s considerations, ideology figures as the key in defining subject positions, in terming what a subject is, when it is recognized as such, or, how the individual should think, act, perceive, and desire in order become “the ‘human being,’ which () social orders prerequisite” (Reckwitz 2008, 10; translation mine). For the Marxist Althusser, ideology is “a system of representations that masks our *true* relations to one another in society by constructing imaginary

relations between people and between them and the social formation” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 15; emphasis mine). By recognizing their “already-existing subjectivity” (Kelly 2009, 92), individuals misrecognize the domination inherent in the capitalist relations of production. Beyond Althusser, the framework of this study pursues a Foucauldian understanding, which does not share Althusser’s take on the “distorted recognition of the real social relations” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 15). Rather it seeks to be attentive to the terms under which knowledge orders are generated. It is attentive to the conditions of emergence of knowledge orders and takes into account a variety of discourses, i.e. orderly and institutionalized manners of speech made up of statements that produce certain truths (Bührmann and Schneider 2012, 25–26). Knowledge orders make certain “subject positions intelligible and practicable” (Reckwitz 2008, 32; translation mine). To conceive of discourses as truth-producing implies being skeptical towards essentialist claims because people’s understandings of reality are *always* framed by historically specific truth-making discourses. According to Foucault, there is “no possibility of getting behind the discourse to a ‘truer’ truth” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 18).

The framework of this study takes up the suggestion of Critical Discourse Analysis (Jäger 2015, 38–49; Fairclough 1995, 91–111; see also Karakayali 2008, 44) that discourses are traversed by divergent positions of the various actors involved in the making of a discourse. This implies that “subjects do not become interpellated in just one subject position” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 17)—say, for instance, as obedient, passive, and thus exploitable migrant worker—, but “different discourses give the subject different, and possibly contradictory, positions from which to speak[, act, and feel; SD]” (ibid.). To take into account that various discourses “connect, overlap, intersect, condense, and knot together” (Lorey 1996, 148; translation mine) in an individual, which can be compared to a field of conjuncture, implies to conceive of subject constitution as a dynamic and incomplete process (ibid., 148, 154). The

episode of the ceremonial opening of the cash machine in Hong Kong illustrates that migrant workers are not interpellated homogenously. Rather, interpellations that speak to Indonesian migrant workers are “polyphonic and contradictory” (Karakayali 2008, 42; translation mine). In this study, I seek to ‘dig up’ knowledge formations that are related to these polyphonic interpellations: for instance, corporatist notions of the worker who is loyal to the company or references to Javanese ethics of restraint, or life-coaching literature circling around fantasies of entrepreneurial extraordinariness.

Everyday practices

Although criticized for its totalizing understanding of ideology, Althusser’s allegory of interpellation is nevertheless productive for the interest of this study. It is useful because it takes seriously the repeated everyday practices that are involved in the reproduction of social relations, the formation of subjects, and unequal power structures (Althusser 2001, 117). These practices are not only made up of verbal address, but also of cultivating and mastering skills (ibid., 89; see also Lorenz and Kuster 2007, 34). The consideration of concrete interactions in the constitution of subjects is shared by Foucault (1997, 277), who claims that “the subject is constituted in real practices—historically analyzable practices” both exercised by others upon the self and exercised by the self upon the self. This means to go beyond discourse analysis-orientated studies of subject constitution, which confine their focus on the *discursive* formations that define the recognizability and intelligibility of Indonesian migrant workers. Instead, the perspective put forward in this study looks at the mundane practices through which migrant-subjects are constituted and constitute themselves: for instance, by engaging in the routines of trainings of prospective workers, but also by taking into account migrants’ everyday life in Hong Kong, in order to obtain an understanding of the skills that migrant workers are supposed to master as well as of the behaviors they are expected to show. This implies to be attentive to what practice-theorists described as “temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of

doings and sayings” (Schatzki 1996, 89), i.e. “seemingly banal ways of behavior, () movements of the body, () forms of communication” (Reckwitz 2008, 10; translation mine) as well as displays of feelings. As scholars theorizing on emotions and affects remind us, there is an affective and emotional dimension to the mundane ‘social practices’ at work in the formation of subjects: Social practices are not solely made up of doings and saying, but of “feeling bubbles” (Beer and Wetherell 2014), because: “[S]ocial formations *grab* people” (Wetherell 2012, 2; emphasis mine). “Affective practices” (ibid., 22) connect individuals to each other and point to the relational and social processes of subject constitution (Röttger-Rössler and Stodulka 2014, 20; see Chapter 7.1). In these processes, subjectivities come into being that exceed the reproductions of ascribed subject positions. I now turn to conceptualizations of lived subjectivities, i.e. subjectivities that have come into being.

Lived subjectivities

In Althusser’s (2001, 123) considerations on the workings of ideology, interpellation ‘produces’ subjects who “work [in the mechanistic meaning of functioning; SD] by themselves,” in compliance with the requirements of the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. According to such a functionalist and deterministic understanding, an engagement with the “experiential dimension () of truth, power, and conduct” (Kelly 2009, 82) would be unnecessary.³⁷ It would not be of interest, in which ways “individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the ‘positions’ to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and ‘perform’ these positions” (S. Hall 1996, 14). Too deterministic understandings often effect victimizing portrayals of individual lives, because they deny agency. Such portrayals “seem[] inaccurate, partial at best, and demeaning” (Good et al. 2008).

³⁷ In claiming that “the subjects, they ‘work by themselves’ in the vast majority of cases,” Althusser (2001, 123) concedes that there is an “exception of the ‘bad subjects.’” These ‘bad subjects’ “on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus.”

The discussion of the ceremonial opening of the cash machine at the BNI-branch in Hong Kong, in turn, suggests that ascribed subject positions do not necessarily translate smoothly into the migrants' *lived subjectivities*. Not only do the different ways of addressing the attending migrant workers indicate a multiplicity of discursive figures at play in the definition of the subject positions of Indonesian migrant workers, as an unrecognizable social group in a white-collar working context by the Jakartan official, as young women of a lower position by the General Consul, and as customers by the BNI management. Also, the attendance of the organized migrant domestic workers at the event did not quite 'fit' with neither of these forms of address: A lot of them moved self-confidently in the white-collar context, although the Jakartan official supposedly addressed them as 'members of the working class,' some of them identified as *tombois*, and, Nuria, my contact at the alliance of migrant workers' organizations, went to the event not only as a customer and cash machine user, but as a public figure who is well respected in her community.

There are various conceptual approaches that give good reasons to assume that functionalist and deterministic notions of subject constitution have significant limitations. Judith Butler (1999, 175–79), for instance, argues that in the performative iteration of certain subject-constituting practices, there always occurs a shift that creates variation, incoherence and resignifications. Hence, idiosyncratic subjectivities emerge that can subvert ascribed subject positions. Foucault (1997) argues genealogically and, by designating his analysis as a context-specific one of the modern subject, highlights that subject constitution does not inevitably have to imply subjection to control, as in history modes of subject constitution have existed that did not service dependence. In Chapter 3.2, his notion of counter-conduct as struggles against the power effects of being governed has been mentioned already. In the essay *The Subject and Power*, Foucault (1982, 782) puts the formation of the subject into the focus of his contemplation about power. Considering the contested nature of subject making, he sees

“struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission,” as a starting point to examine today’s forms of power. Thus, he leaves open the possibility of “new forms of subjectivity” (Foucault 1982, 785).

Saba Mahmood (2005, 15) insightfully clarifies that, against a tendency among feminist scholars to conflate agency with resistance to relations of domination, subjects “cultivate various forms and capacities of ethical action”—agency. Accounting for a multiplicity of lived subjectivities and multiple ways in which one inhabits norms and cultivates modes of self-conduct, Mahmood offers an alternative conception of agency, which seeks to depart from “binary model[s] of subordination and subversion” (ibid., 14). She agrees with Butler’s argument that the reenactment of subject-constituting norms bears an openness and the possibility of reappropriation and resignification other than the consolidation of norms, but highlights an analytical sensitivity that “move[s] away from an agonistic and dualistic framework” and “think[s] about the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated” (ibid., 23). I deem Mahmood’s reminder instructive, as ethnographic studies of subject constitution inevitably encounter ambiguities that are not easily subsumed under the analytical grid of subjugation and resistance.

In scrutinizing the relation between lived subjectivities and ascribed subject positions empirically, I seek to preserve an openness towards the migrant domestic workers’ modes of relating to themselves and the world, at times ‘answering the hail’ of interpellation, at times contesting and subverting it, at times inhabiting the norms that underlie dominant modes of address, and at times cultivating alternative modes of self-conduct. The study shares an interest in ethnographic investigations in “the modes perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate subjects” (Ortner 2006, 107). These imply “complex ways in which people’s inner states reflect lived experience within everyday worlds” (Biehl, Good, and Kleinmann 2007, 5) and “messy dynamics of human experience” (Fong 2010, 338). Ethnographic “studies of

subjectivity (...) pay attention to that which is *not* said overtly, to that which is unspeakable and unspoken, to that which appears at the margins of formal speech and everyday presentations of self” (Good et al. 2008, 14–15). In line with the attentiveness of ethnography to ‘complexity,’ ‘messiness’ and ‘the implicit,’ I seek to grasp the nuances, the ambivalences, complexities and the incompleteness in the relations that the protagonists of this study enact in living out their migration projects and in relating to the manifold meanings attached to desirable migrant subjectivities.

4.3 Subject constitution along the migration process

In the course of this study, I explore *practices* that *form* the protagonists of this study as subjects identified as migrants. Taking into account knowledge orders that frame these practices, I am attentive to the “codes, the bodily routines, and desire structures” (Reckwitz 2008, 14; translation mine) that the protagonists are expected to incorporate in order to become not only a recognizable, but also an ‘ideal migrant subject.’ I elaborate on three *subject figures*³⁸ as nodes of condensed interpellations that I observed along the migration process: a) ‘virtuous migrant-citizens,’ b) ‘affective workers,’ and c) the ‘entrepreneuse of the self.’ Gendered and classed interpellations, nationalism, and particular notions of morality interweave in the respective figures.

Notably, inhabiting the various positions ascribed to migrant-subjects is always precarious, not least because the protagonists were constantly confronted with possibly being addressed as an *Other* “anti-subject” (ibid., 28): for instance, as being immoral, backward, or a servant, and thus not worthy of protection or deemed an improper representative of the Indonesian nation

³⁸ In his considerations on “the relationship between figure and type, or between example and theoretical exemplar,” Lindquist (2015, 162) highlights that “the figure is a real person who also is a symbol that embodies the structures of feeling of a particular time and place” (ibid., 163). My exploration of migrant subject figures is, similar to Lindquist’s ethnographic elaborations on different figures of the *Petugas Lapangan* (‘field agent’) as “mediators of migration” (ibid., 171) specific to a certain spatial and historic context. An understanding of these figures “must begin in a particular ethnographic milieu” (ibid., 163).

on the national stage. I am attentive to the modes in which (prospective) migrants openly and tacitly relate to the expectations brought forward towards them, by considering how they experience and engage with the practices involved in the Indonesian overseas labor migration program. Instead of conceptualizing dichotomous conflicts between policing interpellations from agents of labor brokerage and recalcitrant migrant-subjects, I conceive of the processes of subject constitution as a dynamic field of tension generated through the multiplicity of discursive formations, social practices, and incongruities between ascribed subject positions and lived subjectivities.

In being confronted with and embodying the three mentioned subject figures, Indonesian migrant domestic workers engage in processes of *learning to inhabit* the subject form³⁹ of the *migrant*. Against the backdrop of national shame attached to the role of an exporter of unskilled, devalued domestic workers, migrant domestic workers are invited to entrepreneurial practices that supposedly assist them in *unlearning* to be a simple domestic worker and transforming into passionate entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, (some) migrant domestic workers engage in their own, idiosyncratic modes of *unlearning* traits attached to dominant ascriptions to domestic workers, as they socialize on their one day off in Hong Kong. Claiming respect, they challenge official notions of respectability. The dynamics and specificities inherent in each ‘migrant figure’ discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 can only be understood against the backdrop of current attempts to modernize the Indonesian labor program. In preparation of those core chapters, the following chapter attends to the technologies that make up this endeavor.

³⁹ Cultural studies scholar Andreas Reckwitz (2006, 11) uses the term ‘subject form’ in order to designate certain “‘types’” (translation mine) of subjects: “the ascetic entrepreneur, the femme fatale, the irrational and exotic Oriental, the bourgeois reader and late modern internet user, the ‘courtier,’ the socialist worker, and the stoic” (ibid. 2008, 10; translation mine). I use the term in order to designate types on a higher level of abstraction: the ‘colonial subject,’ the ‘subject of development,’ or ‘the migrant subject.’ My use of the term ‘subject form’ resonates social anthropologist Lindquist’s (2015, 163) description of ‘social type[s]’ as “aim[ing] to classify or identify the role that an individual plays in society, thus *allowing for comparisons across space and time*” (emphasis mine).

5. In the name of protection and progress: Modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage

Over the past 15 years, policy-makers and operators of Indonesian labor brokerage have engaged in various reforms of the migration program. These reforms were initiated during the that followed the Suharto's resignation in 1998. On the one hand, these reforms respond to public outcries in the wake of severe cases of abuse. On the other, they incorporate measures of international migration management. As a stated goal, the 'protection' of Indonesia's migrant workers plays a pivotal role in these reforms. This chapter discusses policy developments in the field of Indonesian labor migration. It provides an overview of measures that allow for a contextualization of the subject-constituting processes scrutinized in the ethnographic chapters to come. Taking into account the gap between commitment and accomplishment, the chapter discusses the effort to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage as a "will to improve" (Li 2007), its governing effects, and the sentiments that motivate it.

The reforms of the Indonesian labor brokerage manifest in intensified regulatory activities of state actors as well as in several technical approaches to solve what is identified as the challenges to migrants' protections: procedures that do not adhere to regulations, insufficient preparation, and lack of skills. I will illustrate these manifestations before I will discuss two fields of interventions that the reforms have focused on. The first field of intervention concerns formalization of migration procedures and draws on measures to ensure 'procedural' migration, while the second comprises attempts to transform the Indonesian labor brokerage state from an exporter of 'unskilled' domestic workers into a facilitator of 'skilled' care labor. I will discuss the plans and measures of reforms as 'technologies of improvement,' which are supposed to protect migrant domestic workers yet disregard the systemic conditions that structure the workers' vulnerability. I will show that, despite strong criticism of the recruitment industries from

civil society, the technologies of improvement have buttressed migrant domestic workers' dependency on profit-seeking private agencies. In conclusion, I will argue that the attempt to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage and its technologies of improvement form part of policymakers' and practitioners' effort of turning Indonesian workers, the nation, and the migration program into a more respectable venture. Thus, I underline that notions of respectability, progress, and modernity, inherent in the vision of respectability, figure prominently in the subject-constituting practices I observed along the migration circuit.

5.1 A snapshot of the Indonesian labor migration program

I open this chapter with an episode that depicts an encounter with a bureaucrat involved in Indonesian labor brokerage. The episode captures the quotidian involvement of private intermediaries and a local state institution, the local labor office in the East Javanese city of Tegalrejo, in the export of Indonesian migrant workers, thus illustrating its mundane operation. The local labor office is one actor among a broad network of institutions that has expanded since the early millennium. A spirit of modernization colored the encounter, which is characteristic of the reforms that have been introduced to the Indonesian labor migration program in the postauthoritarian era.

Visiting a labor brokerage bureaucrat

On a midday in April 2014, I found myself at the local labor department in the East Javanese city of Tegalrejo, capital of the same-named regency, from where each year several thousand workers depart to work abroad. This authority is charged with the task to monitor the recruitment process of prospective migrant workers in its early stages. I accompanied Pak Fajar, a local recruiter who was working for the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency

and was handling some of the complex paperwork that is required for migrant worker candidates to register as a migrant.⁴⁰ That day's task for Pak Fajar was to deliver a row of documents of *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruits, for which in return he would receive an official letter which allows migrant worker candidates to apply for a special Indonesian migrant workers passport. Dealing with local bureaucracy is one of the duties Pak Fajar is charged with; the other is to recruit potential migrants in his home village in Sumberbaru and surrounding regencies and to deliver them to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency. Having himself worked in the plantation industry in Malaysia, the 'field agent' (*petugas lapangan*), as his occupation is called,⁴¹ now peddles from door to door and uses his social network, to advertise the service of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* company and to facilitate prospective workers in registering as a migrant worker candidate.

"You find yourself in the office for overseas placement. There is also the office for placement to another province and also the office for placement to another regency, but we are the office for overseas placement." This is how Pak Susilo, an official at the local labor department introduced his workplace to me, when Pak Fajar and I were sitting in his small office room. Pak Fajar had notified Pak Susilo that he would bring a student eager to learn about the formal migration procedures to his visit to Tegalrejo. In contrast to many other mid-ranking government officers who I had met when dealing with paper work related to my visa and research permits, I could sense an enthusiastic air already in Pak Susilo's introducing sentences. He immediately turned to me and took up his role as an informant for my research. He jumped

⁴⁰ In order to register as a migrant, a villager is required to submit a birth certificate, a letter of permission for female migrants from parents or her husband, and an identity card. Since many villagers who for the first time venture out do not possess these documents, local recruiters play a central role in obtaining these documents. Upon registering with a private recruitment company with these initial documents, migrant worker candidates undergo a medical examination of a licensed clinic, which declares them 'fit' or 'unfit' (Lindquist 2018b, 842).

⁴¹ In the wake of formalization measures that are discussed below, the official, bulky term *recruit agent for Indonesian migrant worker candidates* has been introduced as a new designation for the more common term *petugas lapangan*.

right into a dense provision of information on the migration process, overwhelming me with abbreviations and jargons: “G-to-G,” “G-to-P,” KITKI, KTKLN.⁴²

He continued: “I will now explain the online system to you. We will learn directly from practicing it.” Officially called ‘Computerized System of Overseas Labor’ (*Sistem Komputerasi TKLN, SISKOMTKLN*), the ‘online system’ is a database developed by the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BNP2TKI) and supposed to connect the data and documents of about thousand and a half stakeholders involved in the placement process of Indonesian migrant workers (M. Hidayat 2015). It was introduced along with a ‘migrant workers’ card’ (KTKLN) that contains all personal data of migrant workers, and that records all steps that migrant candidates have to take before departure. Supposedly, it prevents medical clinics from issuing health certificates without undertaking the complete standardized examinations, and it prevents recruitment agencies from bypassing the provision of a mandatory amount of training hours (transcript of interview at the BNP2TKI 05 Feb 2014). Government officials in Jakarta whom I had talked to had been enthusiastic about the online system as one of *the* measures to guarantee the workers’ protection against ‘trafficking’ and exploitation.

Pak Susilo turned the monitor of one of the computers towards myself. He logged in, clicked us through a number of tabs, and guided us to one that showed the record of outgoing migrant workers from Tegalrejo of the preceding two years “The online system was introduced on the first of May 2012.” His vivid tone suddenly shifted to lamenting. “Sorry. I say sorry because before the first of May 2012, we did not have any data, and we could not backtrack when there were problems. I myself had to learn to master this program. I have a major in administrative sciences, I wrote my thesis on e-government.” I could sense the pride with which

⁴² KITKI and KTKLN are documents that identify migrant workers. The ‘identity card for migrant workers’ (KITKI) was introduced in 1983 as a means to expand the Ministry of Manpower’s administrative role in managing labor migration (Palmer 2016, 31), while the introduction of ‘the migrant workers’ card’ (KTKLN) is of more recent date (see below).

Pak Susilo carried out his function. “Now we study it together. When, for example, a prospective worker intends to change her recruitment agency, she cannot switch agencies just like that.” He got up and handed a confirmation letter from a recruitment agency to me. “So, now we will enter the data of the new migrant worker-candidates.” Pak Fajar handed a bundle of documents to the female staff sitting next to Pak Susilo. Then, Pak Fajar put his finger on a fingerprint reader, the most modern device in the office that was otherwise furnished in an old-fashioned way, and Pak Susilo said: “Only Pak Fajar can access the file where I will enter the data.”

A moment after, Pak Susilo held a document in his hand listing names of migrant candidates that were to be processed that day. Once the data were checked, Pak Fajar would receive a number of documents, including the recommendation letter for the immigration office and an ‘official report on the selection’ of the migrant worker candidates, which confirms the eligibility to depart abroad.⁴³ Pak Susilo continued the lesson on the migration procedures and showed me the computer screen, which displayed the login-site to the online system. “If it has been inactive for fifteen minutes, the system logs one off automatically. Safe, isn’t it? Now I will show you that we check all the data that we received from Pak Fajar. Take this letter of permission.” He took up one of Pak Fajar’s documents, a letter of permission from the parents of one of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruits. This letter is usually obtained with the help of intermediaries such as Pak Fajar and confirmed by the village head. “See the signature of the village head. I will check whether this village head really exists or whether names were faked. I can tell you, in the past everybody forged data, but now I own a list with all the more than 200 village heads in Tegalrejo. We can revoke migrant workers’ identity cards if the data don’t

⁴³ According to Ministerial Regulation 14/MEN/X/2010 article 14 to obtain this document, migrant worker candidates have to undergo an administrative selection and a selection that confirms the interest, aptitude, and skills of the candidate. Officials of the local labor department and recruitment agency staff are supposed to carry out the selection, hence, the candidates should show up at the local labor department. Apparently the Tegalrejo labor department accommodated the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*-agency with issuing this document without the migrant worker candidates’ presence.

match. Pak Fajar knows this. We had to revoke IDs from *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*-candidates twice.” Pak Fajar’s facial expression turned to a polite smile. Pak Susilo continued: “That this happens is only human, but we have to teach the companies. If we are not strict about it, this will end up being chaotic.” Pak Fajar eventually received the promised documents. We made our way back through East Java’s winding roads to Pak Fajar’s home village in Sumberbaru (fieldnotes 16 April 2014).

Labor migration bureaucracy ‘at work:’ A spirit of modernization

My visit to the local labor department in Tegalgrejo is a snippet of the Indonesian labor migration bureaucracy “at work” (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014, 5), an episode that depicts the daily functioning at one of its local sites. I chose to narrate this episode for two interrelated reasons: *Firstly*, Pak Susilo’s references to jargons and deliberations on devices, letters of permission, and statistics demonstrate the expanded regulatory authority of state agencies such as his office. This expanded authority responds, on the one hand, to the outcries evoked by publicly exposed cases of migrants’ abuse, and, on the other, reacts to international demands to combat undocumented migration and enforce national borders (Killias 2018, 40–43; Palmer 2016, 50–63; Silvey 2007b; Xiang and Lindquist 2014, 139). *Secondly*, Pak Susilo’s enthusiasm for the online-system and the finger print machine epitomizes a certain spirit and trust in technical solutions to the challenges Indonesian labor brokerage has been facing since its inception. Both aspects, regulatory authority and trust in technical solutions, are important to the self-understanding of participants in the Indonesian migration apparatus as a reputable and progressive endeavor.

Pak Susilo forms part of an intensified regulatory framework of transnational labor migration that has been established in the first decade of the new millennium in the wake of initiatives to reform Indonesia’s labor migration program after Suharto’s resignation. Suharto’s government had outsourced the task of finding job opportunities and delegated problems that migrant

workers might face abroad to private agencies with transnational relations (Palmer 2016, 30; Tirtosudarmo 1999, 222). This was in the 1980s, when Indonesia inscribed labor migration in its development plans, when Indonesia's foreign exchange revenues that had relied heavily on petroleum exports were in danger, due to the global recession of the early 1980s (Cremer 1988, 78). The private recruitment agencies that had been charged with implementing the new development strategy, came to prioritize profit interests while neglecting their responsibility to prepare the workers and provide adequate training (Palmer 2016, 43). During the 1980s and 1990s, the government accommodated the profit motives of recruitment agencies. For instance, it rewarded certain licensed recruitment agencies by restricting the number of authorized recruiters and transferring the responsibility for recruitment fees from employers to workers, ostensibly to make Indonesian migrant workers more competitive. A case in point of the close connections between Indonesian state institutions and business actors and characteristic of the New Order (see Robison and Hadiz 2002), Indonesian bureaucrats had benefited from financial rewards they gained from the migration business (Palmer 2016, 35–38).

In the wake of the Asian crisis in 1997, as the unemployment rate in Indonesia rose and costs of living increased due to the weakening of the Indonesian rupiah and higher costs for imports, employment in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore became increasingly attractive. Wages in these places increased in rupiah value, despite the fact that private recruitment agencies promoted Indonesian workers as willing to work for salaries below minimum standards (Palmer 2016, 50, 2018, 144). Indonesia thus experienced a sharp increase of transnational labor migration and an unprecedented growth of the recruitment industry (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, 139). In the context of the liberalizing political climate and a flourishing civil society in Indonesia after Suharto's resignation in 1998, however, public criticism of the Indonesian labor migration program, also became more vocal (Ford 2006; Palmer 2016, 55–57). Early on, the Indonesian government had had to face public criticism. Yet, under Suharto's rule, politicians

had navigated the defusing of criticism in an authoritarian mode (Palmer 2016, 36; Robinson 2000, 267). After the New Order, in turn, the Indonesian government had come under greater pressure to undertake steps to protect migrants, especially female migrants from recurring abuses that have regularly caused public outcries. Along with intensified deportations from Malaysia and international demands to meet global security standards, these outcries led to the expansion of a regulatory infrastructure (Lindquist 2018a, 79, 2018b, 843). As a constitutive part of the reform process of Indonesian brokerage, new institutions were established such as the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (*Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, BNP2TKI*). This agency was set up in 2006 and is both invested in promoting transnational migration and in enhancing migrant workers' protection, for instance by conducting pre-departure trainings or setting up the online data base Pak Susilo was explaining to me (Palmer 2016, 62).

Pak Susilo's enthusiasm for the online system and finger print machine as a technological device to carry out his regulatory function and supposed to protect migrant domestic workers goes along with the promotion of 'e-government' in Indonesia. It is indicative of a certain zeitgeist of the postauthoritarian era that praises technological solutions to social, economic, and political issues, for instance to reform Indonesia's infamous sluggish bureaucracy and challenge the residues of corruption that had survived the New Order (Winters 2014). Lindquist (2018b, 843) characterizes the enthusiasm for technological solutions among Indonesian bureaucrats and recruitment agents as "technological phantasies." Such phantasies form part of what Li (2007) calls a "will to improve," i.e. projects aimed at improving the condition of the population that politicians and bureaucrats, international aid donors, specialists, and NGOs engage in (see also Killias 2018, 21).

Technological phantasies and the will to improve both capture the commitment of the stakeholders involved in Indonesian brokerage to change and modernization, but they also point

to a “gap between what is attempted and what is accomplished” (Li 2007, 1): Despite the stated goal of protecting migrant domestic workers, the initiatives to modernize brokerage could not prevent continuous cases of abuse. For instance, in 2014, the year I was conducting the fieldwork for this thesis, the case of Erwiana Sulistyaningsih aroused a public outcry. The 23-year-old domestic worker was locked up, intimidated and severely abused by her Hong Kong employer. Burned and scared, Erwiana was found barely conscious at the Hong Kong International Airport. Pictures taken by a fellow domestic worker who discovered and helped her went viral internationally (South China Morning Post 2019). When I was working at the shelter for migrant workers in distress in 2018, I witnessed other severe, but less publicly prominent cases of maltreatment and violence.

Building on Li, I understand the interventions aimed at protecting migrants and at reforming the Indonesian labor migration program that have been undertaken since the first decade of the new millennium as ‘technologies of improvement.’ The technologies of improving Indonesian labor brokerage are situated in two fields: techniques of formalizing labor migration that are invested in ‘procedural’ migration, and techniques of upgrading Indonesia’s migrant labor force through professionalization. Li (2007, 5) situates the will to improve in historical and contemporary modes of *governing* (see Chapter 3.2), i.e. modes of shaping the conduct of rural populations, workers, colonial subjects, and citizens. The will to improve is translated into concrete programs and interventions through problematization and “rendering technical.” Technologies of improvement rest upon problem definitions, while they disregard others and shape the identification of certain fields for intervention (ibid., 7). They characteristically depoliticize political-economic questions as well as the legal regulations and conditions that “support systemic inequalities” (ibid., 11). They can be employed to perpetuate the status quo from which certain powerful political or economic profit, by containing forces and developments that challenge the status quo (ibid., 8). Describing the reform measures aimed at

protecting migrants as technologies of improvement takes into account that the reforms of Indonesian labor brokerage, while aimed at protecting migrants, leave the systemic inequalities on which migrants' vulnerability rests, unaddressed: immigration and labor policies as well as the racialization and devaluation of migrant labor. In effect, they have perpetuated private agencies' control over migrants' (labor market) mobility. It could be concluded that state and private actors dedicate themselves to technologies of improvement in order to legitimize ongoing inequalities, while they capitalize on migrants' willingness to perform cheap labor abroad. But, the chapters to come show: State and private actors dedicate themselves to technologies of improvement as a genuine commitment to reputability, modernity, and progress. The will to improve embodied by figures such as Pak Susilo reappears throughout the ethnographic chapters of this thesis. Notably, the problem definitions, measures, and ideals invoked by the reforms of Indonesian labor brokerage, are not fully new to the modes of governing in Indonesia. They are reminiscent of projects modernizing colonial rule and its concomitant extraction of wealth, resources, and labor-power at the turn of the 20th century (see Li 2007; Lindquist 2018b). Considering that some of the contemporary technologies of improvement go back to colonial rule underlines that reforms of social and economic policies in Indonesia have had the effect of regenerating capitalist modes of production and reproduction for a long time, and that the ambivalences of the will to improve are deeply inscribed in modern concepts of 'progress.'

5.2 Technologies of improvement

The following sections discuss the effects and limits of reforming Indonesian labor brokerage. They focus, on the one hand, on measures of securing 'procedural' migration that were first introduced at the beginning of the millennium, when the numbers of outmigration from Indonesia had reached a large scale. On the other, they focus on programs that have come about more recently, after 2010, committed to the professionalization of Indonesian migrant workers.

Techniques of formalization

One constant solution that runs through the current Indonesian legislations is a greater commitment to the containment of undocumented, or more precisely, falsely documented migration, with the online system as one technological tool in achieving this objective. Internationally, funding organizations such as the International Labor Office (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) had promoted combatting undocumented migration since the mid-1980s (Palmer 2016, 39–41). A focus on protection and measures against undocumented, non-procedural migration, gained significance in the beginning of the millennium (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, 139) and coincided with the prominence of the humanitarian discourse in international migration policies since the early millennium (Fassin 2011a; Ticktin 2011; Walters 2001). Techniques of formalizing Indonesian labor migration rest on the criminalization of informal intermediaries, while they depoliticize discriminatory regulatory frameworks in destination countries and, in the name of protection, perpetuate the control over migrants' mobility. As the following section shows, contemporary techniques of formalization have similarities to the colonial criminalization of Asian intermediaries, when modern immigration laws first introduced. Analyses of the colonial discourses are informative for a better understanding of the current enforcement of 'procedural' migration. Yet, some 'non-procedural' elements of emigration remain important in facilitating Indonesian labor migration.

Procedural migration: Governing through protection

The argument underlying the relation between formalization and protection in Indonesia suggests that the prevention of 'non-procedural' migration is supposed to safeguard the workers from abuse and exploitation by employers and intermediaries, as irregular fees are meant to be prevented (Palmer 2012, 154). Workers are not to be sent abroad "arbitrarily (*asal-asalan*)," a high-ranking official of the BNP2TKI explained to me (transcript of interview 05 Feb 2014).

Formal procedures are supposed to make sure that only “fit” workers equipped with valid documents and with adequate skills leave the country. The online system, for instance, is meant to prevent recruitment agencies from bypassing health examinations or the provision of a mandatory amount of training hours. The procedures are to minimize the possibility that workers do not meet the standards demanded by their employers and thus dissatisfy them (M. J. Hidayat 2013, 96; Palmer 2012, 162, 2016, 68–69).

The commitment to procedural migration has been encouraged by anti-trafficking campaigns, in which private labor recruiters have been met with mistrust (Lindquist 2012, 2015), and female migrants perceived as potential victims of trafficking, smuggling, and prostitution (Killias 2010, 2018, 47–49; Kloppenburg and Peters 2012; Lindquist 2013). The bureaucracy warns of un-authorized brokers, whose exploitative practices allegedly resemble ‘dubious brokers,’ who in times of less formalized migration channels used to facilitate undocumented labor migration to Malaysia, the *tai kong*, a Chinese term that literally means ‘ship’s captain’ and is used for migrant smugglers (Lindquist 2015, 167). Pak Susilo implicitly resorted to the untrustworthy figure of the un-authorized broker when he highlighted Pak Fajar’s qualification as licensed broker but at the same time demonstrated the need to monitor intermediaries. This mistrust has similarities with the historical demonization of migration brokers at the turn of the 20th century when modern immigration laws were first introduced and transnational mobility was controlled by regulating entry at national borders (McKeown 2012, 23). The demonization of brokers echoes the contemporary criminalization of ‘smugglers’ in the context of enforcing and controlling borders across the globe (Lindquist 2012, 85, 2015, 165, 2018b).

Similar to the historical discourses that problematized informal brokers, contemporary anti-trafficking discourses tend to leave those regulations that structure migrant domestic workers’ vulnerability to abuse unaddressed (Ford and Lyons 2012; McKeown 2012, 25): In contemporary Hong Kong, a ‘live-in’ rule obliges migrant domestic workers to live with their

employers, while standards for working hours do not apply. A ‘two-week rule,’ furthermore, allows workers only to stay in Hong Kong for two weeks after a completed or terminated contract, thus shaping migrant domestic workers’ “deportability” (De Genova 2002), i.e. the risk of being deported should they stay in Hong Kong. The two-week rule puts workers who wish to conclude a contract with a new employer under considerable pressure, and it puts migrant domestic workers in a weak position to refuse exorbitant job demands and to resist abuse, despite the possibility of making use of the Labor Department’s mechanisms of labor dispute mediation. And even if workers choose to file cases against abusive or exploitative employers, migrant domestic workers are not allowed to work while their cases are pending. Immigration and labor regulations thus create a climate that is conducive for compromising workers’ rights (Constable 2007, 119–50; Palmer 2018, 146–49).

Measures of formalizing labor migration buttress practices of *formal* intermediaries that take advantage of migrant domestic workers nevertheless (see also McKeown 2012, 43). In 2004, the 39/2004 on *Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Overseas* was enacted as a reaction to the attention to migrant workers’ cases and the pressure that has come from civil society.⁴⁴ It required prospective migrant workers to register with private recruitment agencies in order to be able to ‘legally’ migrate. Attempts to emigrate without registering with a private recruitment agency that also cooperates with placement agencies in the destination countries are considered ‘illegal’ (Killias 2010, 2018, 41; Palmer 2016, 58, fn 213). Killias (2018, 41) describes the peculiarity of this regulation:

⁴⁴Along with the pressures prompted by a torture case of an Indonesian domestic worker in Malaysia, fierce criticism after the ‘Nunukan tragedy’ of 2002 led to the introduction of the *National Law on Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers*. In 2002, Indonesian migrants who were deported from Malaysia died in camps at the Indonesian-Malaysian border on Borneo. The camps were run by state owned recruitment agencies, which had been set up by the Ministry of Manpower in the late 1980s to foster competition in the recruitment industry and incite recruitment for sectors other than domestic work. Government institutions had missed to take responsibility for the deportees, who had no interest in repatriation but aspired to return for work to Malaysia. The case triggered a citizen’s lawsuit of a group of 53 people against the responsible government officials, including then President Megawati Soekarno Putri and Minister of Manpower Nuwa Wea (Ford 2006; Palmer 2016, 55–57).

[W]hile ‘illegal’ migration is generally conceived of as the ‘illegal’ *immigration* and is thus considered from the perspective of the destination country, Indonesia, as a labour-sending state, has implemented a law that contains the possibility, at least theoretically, of rendering ‘illegal’ its own *emigrant* citizens. Migrants who organize their migration independently are breaking the law.

While responding to a need for action, urgently called for, Law 39/2004 was also a cornerstone to affirm the role private recruitment agencies had gained within Indonesian labor brokerage since the 1980s. The collusions between the migration industry and policy-makers had survived the political reform process in the early 2000s. Private agencies influenced the process, resulting in the predominance of the strong interest by recruitment agencies in the legislation (Palmer 2016, 58). Hence, refurbishing Indonesia’s labor regulations has perpetuated the role of private recruitment agencies and their control over migrants’ mobility.

Using the services of formally licensed recruitment and placement agencies, migrant domestic workers have to accept loans for recruitment as well as wage deductions for the first six months of employment (see e.g. Killias 2018, 41; Palmer 2018, 148–49).⁴⁵ Yet, addressed as potential victims, female migrants are reminded of their moral responsibility to avoid migration practices independent from procedural and orderly migration, including running away from their employers (Killias 2010, 2018, 48). Procedural migration implies close supervision by the migration apparatus and engenders a fine-grained control of migrants’ mobility across the migration circuit, a situation that Lindquist (2010a, 117, 2018a) referred to as “encapsulation.” Echoing the colonial practices of indentured labor under Dutch colonial rule, the practice of encapsulation is in line with the provision of controllable migrant labor force demanded by global labor markets (Breman 1989; Killias 2018, 37; Lindquist 2018b, 838). Since they pay fees for the hiring of workers to placement agencies, employers in migrants’ destination countries seek workers who will not make use of mobility to prematurely finish their contracts

⁴⁵ At the time of my research, Indonesian domestic workers were to deposit 2,596 HKD (approx. 290€)—almost two thirds of their monthly salary of 4,010 HKD (approx. 440 €)—during their first six months of employment in order to pay back the loans for their training and other services related to their placement.

(Killias 2018, 150). Encapsulation extensively conditioned the experiences of the workers I studied with.

The obvious representation of private recruitment agencies' interests in the law 39/2004 has been exposed to the criticism of a number of committed parliamentarians and civil society organizations. After a revision process of the law that had been going on for seven years (Migrant Care 2017), the new law 18/2007, titled *Law on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers*, was enacted. This law aims at taking measures of protection more seriously and curbing private recruitment agencies' profit-making from the migration procedures by reducing the fees of the migration process, which, as debts, tie workers to these companies. The recent law strengthens the position of regional governments in overseeing preparatory vocation training and placement of workers (Missbach and Palmer 2018). It loosens the requirement that all migrant workers make use of the services of private recruitment agencies in order to seek employment abroad. For domestic workers, this opportunity to emigrate independently, however, does not apply. Since their employment contracts are not entered with a legal entity, but with individuals, they are exempted from the possibility of 'independent migration' (Government of Indonesia 2017, para. 63). Migrant workers' dependency on the services of private agencies is also underpinned by Hong Kong regulations. Hong Kong immigration rules require that the Indonesian Consulate endorses domestic workers' employment contracts with future employers when visa are applied for. The Consulate, in turn, stipulates that (prospective) workers use the service of accredited job-matching agencies in Hong Kong when they conclude a contract with their employer. When they are still in Indonesia, their Indonesian recruitment agencies collaborate with Hong Kong based job-matching agencies to facilitate employment contracts. Once in Hong Kong, each time Indonesian workers want to conclude a contract with

a new employer, they are required to use the service of a Hong Kong based agency, and pay fees accordingly (Palmer 2013, 4).⁴⁶

State officials explained to me that the stipulation for domestic workers to make use of recruitment and placement agencies makes sure that domestic workers can be back-traced in case of maltreatment and that recruitment and placement agencies can be held responsible (fieldnotes 12 Aug 2014). However, this stipulation is also tinged with paternalistic attitudes towards migrant domestic workers, which recurrently appear in the course of the following chapters. Killias (2018, 41) has shown that the legal requirement to go through the whole bureaucratic process conflicts with experienced migrant domestic workers who have already worked abroad before, who have attained training, and who master the language of the destination country. The requirement to use private placement agencies in the destination countries has also proven to be an obstacle for migrant workers from using their market mobility as a bargaining tool (ibid., 163; Lan 2007; see also Chapter 7.3).

It is noteworthy that the formalization of Indonesian labor migration is neither implemented in all its aspects, nor did government officials deem the procedural approach sufficient to solve migrant workers' problems. I turn to such realities on the ground in the next section.

Real but fake: Procedural migration and non-procedural practices

In 2014, recruiters in Sumberbaru continued to place prospective migrant workers informally, without being authorized. Also in 2018, I encountered migrant workers who arrived to Hong Kong with “real but fake (*asli tapi palsu*)” documents which, for instance, contain falsified age statements in order to make migrant domestic worker candidates' ages suitable to the

⁴⁶ In Hong Kong, the dependency on job-matching agencies has been loosened, when the Consulate introduced the possibility to renew a contract with the same employer without using the service of a local placement agency (Antara News 2017; see also Chapter 7.3). New contracts still have to be facilitated by private agencies. Moreover, I got to know workers who had experience as domestic workers and who came to Hong Kong through ‘calling visas,’ i.e. without having run through the preparation and training process in Indonesia, but who nevertheless had to use the service of local placement agencies in order to submit their domestic workers' visa.

prescribed minimum age of 21 and maximum age of 35 years (see Ford and Lyons 2011; Palmer 2012, 160, 2018, 144).⁴⁷ By ethnographic evidence, Michele Ford and Lenore Lyons (2011) and Palmer (2012, 160) show that agents of the Indonesian state tolerate these ‘non-procedural’ activities. They do so not necessarily out of an interest in self-gain or political influence, by extortion of irregular fees, but also because they refuse to be responsible for inhibiting migration projects. Due to lack of employment opportunities in places of origin, migration projects continue to be of crucial economic significance for migrant worker candidates and their families. Palmer’s as well as Ford and Lyon’s studies therefore underline the role of labor migration as a continuous stopgap solution to social problems in Indonesia.

It has become obvious that techniques aimed at fostering ‘procedural’ migration as a mode of protecting Indonesian migrant domestic workers are ambiguous: Relying on anti-trafficking narratives and demonizing ‘informal’ brokers, they have increased the control of private profit-seeking agencies over the mobility of migrant domestic workers. Some ‘non-procedural’ practices of emigration remain important in facilitating Indonesian domestic workers’ migration. Nevertheless, as the upcoming chapters show, committing to formalized standards is important for actors such as the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency to maintain their reputability. In the wake of the reforms of Indonesian brokerage, a will to improve and distinction from disreputable brokers has thus shaped the identity and self-image of many of the stakeholders of the Indonesian labor migration program.

In official reform discourse, apart from commitment to procedural migration, another strategy to safeguard migrants’ protection has gained prominence: plans to upgrade Indonesia’s migrant labor force and shift focus on sending ‘professional’ workers abroad. I turn to these in the next sections.

⁴⁷ Recruitment agencies also falsify school education certificates, especially for workers who grew up in the 1980s and early 1990s, when the government had not yet guaranteed the nine years of school education required by Law 39/2004 (Palmer 2018, 143).

Techniques of professionalization

Since the early years of Indonesian labor brokerage, government officials have argued that it is lack of professionalism and skills, supposedly germane to the occupation of domestic work, that causes migrants' vulnerability abroad (see Cremer 1988, 83). Ever since, this has been a gendered discourse, because male migrants' vulnerability has hardly been addressed. The government has endeavored to turn away from sending 'informal' domestic workers and instead to mobilize 'skilled' care workers as a solution to migrants' vulnerability to violence and exploitation. The case of Philippine 'professional' care workers shows, however, that due to the racialization of care labor and deskilling in destination contexts, for the workers, 'professional' care migration is be an ambivalent endeavor. Nevertheless, driven by sentiments of national dignity and shame, professionalization forms part and parcel of labor brokerage states' will to improve.

Zero domestic workers: Upskilling domestic workers

Although references to ostensible lack of professionalism and skills have been ubiquitous in official discourse, it was only in 2012 when under the President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014), the *Zero Domestic Worker Roadmap* was launched (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower 2012b), a plan to cease sending domestic workers abroad by the year 2017. The roadmap was welcomed and followed up by the ensuing government under Joko Widodo. In the following years, the government, however, backtracked on the plan of ceasing the placement of domestic workers, because apparently it turned out a too difficult project to be realized in light of the significance of transnational migration to certain rural areas in Indonesia (Ejinsight 2017; Platt 2018, 91).

The endeavor to 'upskill' migrant workers is still pursued, however. The government classifies domestic work as 'unskilled' and 'informal' work. Sending predominantly 'professional,'

‘skilled’ workers nourished the ‘vision’ for the future labor migration program of all government officials I talked to, whether at the BNP2TKI and its regional branch in East Java, at the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or at the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong. In continuation of its engagement in the global care and service sector, the Indonesian government aims at providing specified workers: cooks, babysitters, housekeepers, professional caregivers, and nurses. Thus, it seeks to prevent the sending of “general workers,” obliged to work in live-in arrangements (transcripts of interviews at BNP2TKI and Ministry of Manpower 05 Feb 2014 and 07 Mar 2014, see Chan 2014, 6957) ⁴⁸ Furthermore, it seeks to support micro business in migrant workers’ sending pockets and to channel potential and returning migrant workers to the domestic labor market (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower 2012b, 51–59; see Chapter 8).

In diversifying Indonesia’s labor brokerage portfolio, the national migration agency BNP2TKI has promoted training programs and job opportunities in the nursing and elder care sectors in West Asian countries and the Asia Pacific region. During roadshows in migrant sending pocket areas, officials of the agency underline their intent to upgrade these areas as suppliers of professional workers, and they point to the comparatively high wages medical workers could earn abroad (BNP2TKI 2016a, 2016b). In 2017, Hong Kong authorities and the Indonesian government had consultations on the recruitment of Indonesian caregivers with professional nursing skills. These caregivers should be employed in private and subsidized government elderly centers, a measure that from the Hong Kong side is meant to meet the care needs of Hong Kong’s strongly increasing elderly population (Wanxia 2017). Specially trained migrant care

⁴⁸ According to statistics of BNP2TKI, the number of the yearly emigrating workers who are classified as “caregivers” is now the second highest after the number of workers classified as “domestic workers” (BNP2TKI 2019, 9). Yet, these statistics neither indicate how the two categories differ from each other, nor do they make transparent how many of these “caregivers” work in private households and how many in elderly homes.

workers working in elderly centers would earn considerably higher wages than ‘foreign domestic helpers.’ Notably, elderly carers were not supposed to substitute the latter, since domestic workers are still needed to carry out a range of tasks, including domestic chores, child care and, also, bodily care for the elderly private homes (Chui 2017). After all Hong Kong society continues to demand affordable domestic workers from Indonesia, since migrant domestic workers are brought into Hong Kong “out of necessity rather than as a luxury” (Palmer 2018, 147).

Since its beginning, Indonesian policy-makers have looked at their neighbor country in establishing labor brokerage as a development strategy (ibid. 2016, 31). In aspiring to send more ‘professional’ care workers, policy-makers have been inspired by the Philippine’s brokerage of nurses. Since for the Philippine government, brokering ‘professional’ care workers is an established strategy, it is worth to have a look at the ambivalences of the Philippine brokerage of ‘professional’ carers.

Ambivalence of brokering professional carers

The Philippines are the most significant provider of migrant nurses globally. In the Philippines, migrant nursing is “a symbol of social and economic mobility” (Amrith 2017, 5). In her insightful study of Filipina/o/x nurses migrating to Singapore to work in high-end hospitals and nursing homes for the elderly, Megah Amrith (ibid.) depicts very ambivalent experiences of migrant nurses, however. While in the Philippines nurses enjoy a reputation as “caring professionals,” in Singapore they are confronted with understandings of nursing that are at odds with the professionalism attached to the occupation in the Philippines (ibid., 76). They perform tasks that they do not associate with the profession of nurses. In Singapore’s highly modern medical landscape, technologized biomedical tasks are performed by biomedical scientists, doctors, and experts, while nursing involves bodily bedside care and is thus regarded as ‘low-status,’ dirty and not easily distinguishable from domestic care giving (ibid., 92–93). Compared

with their responsibilities in the Philippines, Filipina/o/x nurses' positions are often downgraded in the hierarchy of nursing ranks (Amrith 2017, 97). In addition to the different understanding and valorization of nursing and the deskilling they experience in Singapore, Filipina/o/x nurses "confront a widespread perception of Filipino workers as coming from a 'nation of servants'" (ibid., 5), regardless of their certified qualifications. In a similar vein, Rodriguez (2010, 33) points to "harsh living and working conditions" which Filipina/o/x nurses are subjected to in the U.S., despite the country's reputation as the ideal destination for migrants.

In seeking to upgrade their migrant care labor, labor brokerage states such as Indonesia and the Philippines are confronted with the racialization and deskilling of care labor in destination countries.⁴⁹ Despite the ambivalent experiences of professional migrant carers, and despite the fact that Indonesia continues to send domestic workers abroad, in official discourses, professionalization is considered a key in improving the plight of migrant workers. Indonesia's commitment to professionalization plays a crucial role in the attempt to gain more reputability as a labor sending country. Thereby, the techniques of professionalization need to be contextualized within the role of national shame and dignity in contemporary public discourse: When in early 2015, President Joko Widodo promised to end the sending of domestic workers, he publicly expressed that in reaction to reports of abuses against Indonesian migrant workers, he felt "'broken-hearted' and 'ashamed' on behalf of the nation" in reaction to reports of the abuses against Indonesian migrant domestic workers (Chan 2017, 117; see also *Bisnis.com* 2015). The promise to professionalize Indonesian migrant workers is hence tied to Indonesia's quest for national prestige (see introduction of this thesis). The subsequent chapters show that national sentiments attached to the brokerage of 'unskilled' female migrant domestic workers oscillate

⁴⁹ On deskilling of care migrant workers see also (Cuban 2013; Kofman, Phizacklea, and Raghuram 2000).

between concerns about female migrants' experiences abuse and violence, which are understood as a humiliation of the whole nation, and sentiments of "transnational shame" (Aguilar 1996) for appearing as a nation of 'unskilled,' devalued, and humiliated workers—a 'nation of servants.'

5.3 Modernization and respectability

Demonstrations of regulatory authority, the spirit of modernization embodied by Pak Susilo's, the belief in technical solutions, and the commitment to professionalize Indonesian migrant workers are part of a will to improve that build the context of the chapters to come: The will to improve figures in the interpellations directed at workers I and in the self-understandings of recruitment agents, officials and bankers. The previous subchapter showed that with regard to their capacities to elicit substantial change in the practices of labor brokerage, the effectivity of the reforms limited. Technologies of improvement, aimed at protecting migrant domestic workers, have in effect perpetuated their dependency on recruitment agencies and the control of their mobility, while they do little to respond to the structural factors that shape migrant workers' vulnerability. Presented as modern solutions to problems labor brokerage faces, technologies of improvement do not challenge the systemic inequalities upon which labor brokerage rests: social problems in Indonesia (unemployment, costs of living) and in receiving contexts (the need for affordable care labor). Yet, the will to improve that characterizes the reforms of Indonesian brokerage should not only be considered in narrow political-economic terms, i.e. as first and foremost legitimizing continuous practices of state and non-state actors that capitalize on migrants' cheap labor, either to generate profit or to resolve Indonesia's social problems. The technologies of improvement complement the desire to enhance migrant workers' and the nation's respectability. The attempts to modernize Indonesian brokerage are situated within postauthoritarian Indonesia's quests for national prestige, through commitment to progress and reputability. In combination with calls on migrants' morality and work ethics,

the promise of procedural migration and professionalization constitute the endeavor to enhance the respectability of migrant workers, labor brokerage, and the nation at large. Respectability traverses the following chapters, in which I zoom in on the mundane encounters between the workers and the migration apparatus along the migration circuit. I discuss in detail how the Indonesian migration apparatus is invested in respectability and how the different aspects of this investment are negotiated in the subjective practices of Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. The ensuing chapters will illuminate that contemporary attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage are situated in tensions that stem from the ambivalences inherent in Indonesia's labor migration program as well as from the dynamic interrelations between techniques of governing and migrants' subjective practices

PART II:
Three ‘migrant figures’

6. “They come back in high heel shoes and blonde dyed hair:” Virtuous worker-citizens

What characterizes an ideal Indonesian migrant? And how are notions of the ideal migrant negotiated? The following chapters are dedicated to these questions. This chapter explores the ‘migrant citizenship dispositive’ of Indonesian labor brokerage—one of the three dispositional formations of the techniques that govern Indonesian migrant domestic workers. The chapter shows: Migrant domestic workers are prepared to meet the demands of transnational markets, and they are also prepared to fulfill roles as virtuous mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. This is meant literally and in a metaphorical sense, since their role as citizens is largely defined in family metaphors. I build on Rodriguez’ (2010, xx) concept of migration citizenship to describe the particular relations between labor brokerage states and their national citizens residing abroad as temporary laborers. I relate calls on the female virtues of migrant domestic workers to moralizing discourses that circle around female mobility on the one hand and to practices that increase and maintain their marketability on the other. Endeavors to uplift the image of workers and the nation as respectable are inextricably linked with shaping labor-power and securing remittance flows. Yet, they are also traversed by ambivalences that stem from class-specific notions of respectability and from the particularities of paid domestic employment, which is characterized by the commodification of the workers’ personhood.

In the course of the chapter, I will scrutinize practices that constitute migrant citizenship on the ground: during the preparation process and in Hong Kong. I will make a case for a dynamic concept of migrant citizenship that takes into account ambivalences and paradoxes, on the one hand, and inarticulate and alternative practices of migrant citizenship on the other, thus highlighting transnational processes of negotiating female norms, valuations of persons and their labor, as well as national belonging. Throughout the chapter I will recurrently come back

to a theme that I encountered at every turn of my fieldwork: the outward appearance of Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong ('high heel shoes' and 'dyed hair'). I will show that this is, on the one hand, symptomatic of negotiations over societal transformations that are triggered by female mobility and global economic processes, and on the other, an expression of quests for respect in light of the class-specific devaluation of migrant domestic workers' work and lives.

6.1 Matters of national morality

Moralizing discourses circling around female mobility can be found across Asia. How do they articulate in the case of Indonesian migrant domestic workers? I turn to this questions in the following sections. I discuss everyday discourses and relate them to gendered predicaments that permeate Indonesian labor brokerage. I suggest migrant citizenship as a conceptual framework to explore notions of ideal female behavior in dominant notions of desirable migrant subjectivities.

Troubling hairstyles and unruly sexualities

My discussion takes two scenes at a government pre-departure briefing for migrant domestic workers as a point of departure. A bureaucrat and a cleric problematize Indonesian migrant domestic workers' subjectivities, thus reiterating two tropes that I were ever-present in everyday discourses on female migration that I encountered among Indonesian bureaucrats, training instructors, and villagers.

Moral advice at a pre-departure briefing

In mid-May 2014, I accompanied the trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency to the provincial branch of the BNP2TKI, the National Agency for the Placement and Protection

of Indonesian Overseas Workers.⁵⁰ Early in the morning, a group of ten trainees were escorted to the provincial capital Surabaya, in order to participate in a day-long pre-departure briefing (*Pembekalan Akhir Pemberangkatan*). This briefing is supposed to ensure that prospective migrant workers depart well-prepared to their respective destinations. The great majority of the participants of the briefings were female. They were about to leave to Taiwan, Singapore or Hong Kong. In fact, among the audience that I was joining, there was only one male participant who was going to work as a bus conductor in Brunei. I was sitting in the front row of a classroom-like array of chairs with integrated fold-up tables, next to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*-trainees and was listening to the lectures of the instructors; almost all of them were government officials.

The first session on the agenda was titled “Regulations on the Placement of Indonesian Overseas Workers,” which is supposed to equip prospective workers by informing them on relevant government regulations both in Indonesia and the destination countries (BNP2TKI 2013b). Before the session started, I had introduced myself to the instructor Ibu Eda, a friendly government employee in her 40s, and asked her for her consent to attend and record her session. Ibu Eda began the session by addressing me: “If you write your book later on, write a book about Indonesian migrant workers as national heroes, and hopefully the workers we place from Indonesia will truly become dignified (*bermatabat*)”—the participants interrupted Ibu Eda’s address with a chorused “Amin!”—“professional, of course, and: successful.” Still addressing me, she explained that abroad the workers face many challenges and that “our brothers and sisters (*saudara-saudari kita ini*)” were truly fighting—“fighting for their future, for their families and also for themselves.” Ibu Eda advised the participants to “make the best use” of this opportunity to work abroad, set up a business with the money they would earn on their return,

⁵⁰ This local agency is called UPT P3TKI (Technical Implementation Unit for Service, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers). In contrast to the other local branches of the BNP2TKI, the UTP3TKI is additionally under the authority of the provincial labor department.

or, she was addressing those participants who were not married yet, to continue to study. Working abroad forever should not be their purpose. Before Ibu Eda started to talk about relevant Indonesian government regulations—the actual topic of this session—, she repeated that Indonesian overseas workers’ current problems were not necessarily solved by working abroad. Chuckling, she reminded the participants: “There are many challenges. If there are [workers] whose faith isn’t strong, eventually they will end up what we call ‘lemon drinking lemon’ (*jeruk minum jeruk*).” Ibu Eda anticipated that I was not familiar with this expression and therefore added that later the other participants would explain to me what ‘lemon drinking lemon’ was about. She continued the session (transcript of recording, 13 May 2014). After the session, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees explained that Ibu Eda was referring to being *lesbi*—the Indonesianized term of lesbian—or having a same-sex romantic relationship. In Hong Kong this often involves the enactment of non-normative, *tomboi* gender subjectivities.

Later that day, the participants of the pre-departure briefing were listening to Pak Usman, a member of the East Javanese branch of the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) who facilitated the session on “Character Formation (*Pembinaan Mental Kepribadian*).” This session addresses the “mental and spiritual preparation (*persiapan mental*)” of the prospective workers. A manual for instructors explains that this session serves to prepare prospective workers for the “difficulties” that migrant workers might face abroad, including the different climatic and cultural conditions as well as the social settings. In light of these difficulties, prospective workers need to be equipped against “mental disorders, stress, insanity, inconsequential behavior, homesickness, illnesses, and other dangers” (BNP2TKI 2013a, 3). Mental preparation is supposed to support prospective workers in developing work ethos and work motivation, self-adaptation (*penyesuaian diri*), and character development (*pengembangan kepribadian*) (see Chapter 7). Pak Usman’s lecture took up all these issues by referring to various anecdotes. Touching on the aspect of self-adaptation to the conditions abroad, Pak

Usman reminded the participants: “Our Indonesian nation has an Eastern culture, is that true or not?” In contrast to Eastern culture, the prospective workers were going to come in contact with “cultures full of excess (*budaya-budaya yang serba kebablasan*).” He outlined that in Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan they would encounter the hazards of an individualized culture: lavishing money or showing intimacy in the streets. And, the workers “begin to have their hair dyed blonde (*mulai rambut pirang*).” All of this comes from a bad mind (*mental yang tidak baik*), Pak Usman resumed (transcript of recording, 13 May 2014). Later in the afternoon, when we were picked up by one of the drivers of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency in order to head back to the training center, I asked the trainees which impression the briefing had left on them. I received only one answer: “It left me sleepy (*ngantuk*)!” (fieldnotes 13 May 2014).

From the trainees’ point of view, the pre-departure briefing is not a particularly spectacular event within the row of procedures they have to undergo in order to be able to embark on their journeys. Nevertheless, I chose the two excerpts of the pre-departure briefing to open this chapter. Ibu Eda and Pak Usman address two aspects that occupied many of my interlocutors: Hong Kong-based migrant domestic workers’ outward appearance and their same-sex romantic relationships. Migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong adopt a diversity of styles of dressing and cultural activities, and they also visibly enact and live non-normative, *queer* subjectivities and relationships (Chang and Groves 2000; Constable 2007; M. Lai 2010; Y. K. Lai 2014; Sim 2007). Being *lesbi*, in turn, is largely tabooed and often not lived openly in Indonesia (Blackwood 2010; Findeisen, Großmann and von Vacano 2015; Thajib 2014).⁵¹ Being in Hong Kong allows the workers to withdraw from strict control of parents, husbands, and parents-in-law and from experiences of gender-based violence (Sim 2007, 174, 181). Hong Kong provides them with a space where they can experiment with diverse lifestyles and cultural activities and visibly

⁵¹ In Indonesia, since 2016 people identified as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) even have become the target of attacks and were alleged to be a foreign threat (Boellstorff 2016; Hegarty and Thajib 2016).

live non-normative subjectivities and relationships in public on their days off, when they are not subject to their employers' control over their appearance (Sim 2007, 246).

Negotiating Indonesianness

I encountered Ibu Eda's and Pak Usman's concerns about female workers' intimate relationships and transformed appearance all throughout my fieldwork: in conversations with bureaucrats, instructors at the training center, villagers, and migrant workers themselves. This surprised me because I had expected that people would talk more about abuse, exploitation, and maltreatment, which had repeatedly induced public outcries in the media. During my fieldwork, I never encountered similar concerns that were related to men's emigration.⁵² None of the programmatic, written sources such as regulations, or brochures that I found problematized migrant workers' non-normative subjectivities, same-sex relationships and outward appearance. In everyday discourse, informal chats and off-hand comments, however, my interlocutors expressed their concerns about changes in the workers' attitude and behavior, how this ostensibly affected their family responsibilities, and how this affected their Indonesianness. They expressed unease whether female migrants could deal with the liberties they were exposed to, about wrong social contact, and about material excess. The following instances of my fieldwork illustrate such unease.

Government officials whom I talked to described the issue of same-sex intimacies as a flipside of Hong Kong's liberality. Bureaucrats praised the city's regulations for guaranteeing a relatively high degree of protection, but lamented uncontrolled social intercourse (*pergaulan bebas*), drug use, the risk of being cheated by fellow workers or other foreigners, and finally: 'becoming *lesbi*' (fieldnotes 24 Jun & 14 Jul 2014). An instructor at an orientation seminar at

⁵² This is not to say that the production of masculinity does not play a role at all with regard to *male* emigration. However, *female* migrants are under closer scrutiny of institutions involved in the migration program, as they are considered more 'vulnerable' and, hence, in need of 'protection' not only related to migrant domestic care workers. In Hong Kong, the 'problem' related to male migration that was most often touched on was their illegal status and deportation.

the Consulate in Hong Kong once warned about the consequences of drug use and commented the contexts in which migrant workers mingled with each other: Newly arrived workers still wear black hair, but once they visited Victoria Park on a Sunday they would meet their fellow migrant workers, and imitating their colleagues, their hair would turn blue (recording, 18 Jul 2014). Mam Ati, the instructor for housekeeping at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, once complained during a chit-chat, that in distinction to other destinations, in Hong Kong workers behave oddly (*aneh*), that they wasted their money and “are *lesbi*” (fieldnotes 05 May 2014). An article by a Hong Kong-based migrant worker blogger I came across during my fieldwork warned: “[L]esbians can destroy their homes in Indonesia” (S. Utami 2014). A bureaucrat in East Java problematized returning migrant workers’ high heel shoes and said these were incompatible with the habitats in the workers’ hometowns. He reasoned that the streets in the home villages were not made for such kinds of shoes (fieldnotes 21 May 2014). Another bureaucrat recalled with regret how he once observed a mother who didn’t recognize her daughter upon her arrival from abroad, because the returnee was wearing short cut jeans and a tank top (fieldnotes 08 May 2014). A female interlocutor in a village in Sumberbaru who had never left to work abroad once remarked that migrant workers coming back with red dyed hair were exaggerating, and after all, “they looked like a ghost!” (recording, 18 December 2014).

In these everyday discourses, which were affectively colored by irritation, pity, astonishment, and ridicule, female migrants’ bodies, their public appearance, their roles as family members, and consumption signify the possible *Other* of Indonesian culture and Indonesian norms: Dyed hair represent something uncanny, transmitted through social interactions in Hong Kong. Hong Kong can make some female workers unrecognizable, even for their own families. The prominent role of the tropes of female migrants’ attire, public, family responsibilities, codes of decent behavior, and the image of Indonesia they convey are at the heart of the discussions in this chapter and will reappear throughout the rest of this thesis. It is the symbol of dyed hair

that made me inquire into the moral negotiations over Indonesian migrant domestic workers' transnational migration, into the intersection of the nation and civic female virtues in interpellations of desirable migrant subjectivities. Indicative of societal transformations, the everyday discourses I encountered point to social dynamics that are triggered off by migrants' lived subjectivities in Hong Kong. In Subchapter 6.3, I address how Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong express their personal aspirations and interests, and I address why I take these seriously as a particular form of class politics.

Migrant moralities

The “gendered morality tales” about the “active, desiring, and immoral” (Mills 2017, 316) behavior of transnational migrant domestic workers from Indonesia which I encountered in everyday discourse during my fieldwork have caught the attention of a row of recent studies (e.g. Chan 2014, 2017; Killias 2018, 28, 49–52; Platt 2018). Below, I discuss insights of these studies: the gendered contradictions that are intrinsic to labor brokerage in the region and the prominent role of female virtues in public discourse circling around migration in Indonesia.

Gendered ambivalences in labor brokerage

Recent studies, older studies on Indonesia (e.g. Robinson 2000; Silvey 2004, 2007a, 2009), and studies of other migrant sending contexts in Asia (e.g. Gamburd 2000; Guevarra 2006; Rodriguez 2010) have pointed to various ambiguities and contradictions in states which actively facilitate the transnational migration of female domestic workers. Due to the complexity of these ambivalences, it is worth to briefly summarize them with respect to (at least) four interconnected aspects: *Firstly*, by sojourning and working abroad, female migrants leave behind their families and children, while dominant national gender discourses ascribe women a place as nurturing mothers and wives. *Secondly*, states which promote female migration face

public outcries when female migrants' experiences of abuse and gendered violence are scandalized as hurting the whole nation. *Thirdly*, female migrants' experience of abuse, gendered violence, and stereotyping in low-status jobs are met with public sentiments of national shame. *Fourthly*, by gaining more (economic) autonomy, female migrants irritate the established social fabric. Yet, labor brokerage states and migrants' families benefit from female migrants' migration: States garner foreign exchange earnings and gain advantage from migrants' families capacities to sustain themselves through transnational migration without state support. They also profit from the purchasing power of the migrants' families. Workers are able to pay for their children's higher education, afford medical treatment in case of emergencies, afford more consumerist lifestyle, build modern houses, or start businesses.

When in the 1980s the Indonesian government made temporary female labor migration part of its development agenda, this stood at odds with the New Order's state doctrine on the fixed duties of men and women. Recurring to Javanese feudalist values and Dutch colonial bourgeois ideas, the state systematically propagated men's and women's 'biological destiny (*kodrat*):' the one of men as husbands and heads of the heteronormative family, and of women as housewives (Boellstorff 2005, 198; Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis 1987; Sunindyo 1993, 12; Suryakusuma 1996).⁵³ In the authoritarian context of the New Order, the role as housewife not only implied responsibility for reproductive care work, but also moral responsibility for national prosperity, societal order harmony, which was to be produced by women's self-sacrifice for the family (Jones 2004, 514). It needs to be noted that the New Order doctrine that defined the role of women as that of devoted housewives was powerful and harnessed by popular culture, but that if at all, it only materialized as a middle and upper-class reality and competed with the

⁵³ The gender state doctrine was promoted pervasively: through a national organization for women's organizations in government offices and a program called the 'Family Welfare Guidance,' women's duties were propagated down to the grassroots level (Sunindyo 1996, 125). This doctrine of women's natural roles as housewives competed with many women's central economic role for instance in managing household finances or as market sellers (Brenner 1998).

central economic role of women who managed household finances or were dominant actors in markets (Brenner 1998). Nevertheless, women's moral responsibility for national prosperity permeated New Order family and labor policies. Twenty years after the end of the Suharto regime, official discourse has dropped the idea that women must be housewives only. Today, hegemonic gender ideals combine women's participation in the labor market with consumerism and with their role as good and pious wives and mothers in the "harmonious family" (Wieringa 2015; see also Robinson 2015, 60). Hence, the gender trope of the good wife and mother persists in the current context, where conservative religious and conservative nationalist actors have a major influence on public discourse (Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018).

In reaction to the apparent contradiction of female migration with dominant images of their role as devoted mothers and wives, the governments of labor brokerage states have hailed women's temporary migration as a heroic, sacrificial act of migrants towards their families and in extension, to the nation. In the beginning of the 1980s, the Philippine President Corazon Aquino addressed Filipina/o/x migrant workers as new heroes, whose achievements were comparable to those of the national heroes of the anticolonial struggle (Rodriguez 2010, 84). In Indonesia, where the national heroes and heroines of the independence struggle are also actively commemorated, the figurine of the migrant-heroine was quickly taken up by policy makers at the time (Hidayah, Susilo, and Mulyadi 2013, 30). A banner at the international airport in Jakarta welcomes the "national heroes of foreign exchange earnings (*pahlawan devisa*)" upon their return from abroad. In public speeches, contemporary government officials express their gratefulness for the contribution of Indonesian migrant workers to the national economy and their families. They praise this as "hard work and selfless devotion to the welfare of their family back home," like former President Yudhoyono did at the International Labor Conference in 2011 (International Labour Organisation 2011; see also Platt 2018, 94). In a similar vein, Juhur Hidayat, former Chairman of the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of

Indonesian Overseas Workers “expressed his gratefulness to the migrant workers for helping Indonesia bear the impact of the economic crisis” (BNP2TKI 2013 in Chan 2014, 6955), when in 2013 he drew on a World Bank report that highlighted the beneficial role of remittances for development. These statements reiterate the trope of women’s essential responsibility for their families and national development.

Despite framings of female migrants’ role as virtuous heroines, the image of the state’s active engagement in transnational female migration has been unsettled since beginning because of public outcries triggered by cases of gendered violence and abuse experienced by female migrants. Concerns about the protection of female migrants’ physical and mental integrity were also expressed in President Joko Widodo’s speech on female migrant workers that was quoted in the introduction of this thesis. His statement that female workers’ treatment was a matter of national dignity resonates with previous scandalized cases of abuse that were discussed in nationalist terms (Killias 2018, 49; Platt 2018, 96; Robinson 2000). It has been pointed out that such sentiments of national shame are intimately linked with cases of rape (Blackburn 2004, 169). I also came across articulations of such sentiments during my fieldwork. For instance, once a recruitment agent who I met in Jakarta explained to me why policies concerning the monitoring and licensing of private recruitment agencies were of importance. Thereby, he linked violence to the image of the nation and domestic work: You know the issue is very, very sensitive. Because of the occurrence of harassment, violence.” He continued:

But this concerns the good name of the nation, right? The image abroad is also woah, ugly. Indonesia will only be considered to send *helpers* (*pembBANTU*), who are not skilled, right? (interview transcript, 05 Feb 2014).

Pak Muchsin, as I call the recruitment agent, iterated a nationalist trope that is by no means specific to the Indonesian case. Feminist scholars of international relations have pointed out that in many contexts notions of the “honor of the nation” entails the notion that the “rape of

the woman” is a “rape of the nation” (Thapar-Björkert 2013, 811; see also Enloe 2000). In Pak Muchsin’s statement it becomes clear that the sentiment of national dishonor is not only linked to gendered violence, but also to female migrants’ occupation as ‘unskilled’ domestic work. Not included in his reasoning about the lack of migrant workers’ education are the structural factors that cause female migrants’ vulnerability to gender based violence that can be found in paid domestic work arrangements across the globe: live-in work arrangements, immigration regulations, the devaluation of this gendered labor, and the notion that migrant domestic workers are the ‘property’ of their masters (B. Anderson 2000; see also Platt 2018, 101). Pak Muchsin’s statement remains ambiguous whether his concern about the national image reflects “gendered assumptions about the inability of the state to protect ‘its’ women” (Elias 2013, 403), or whether he is concerned about the image of sending unskilled service labor. The latter concern hints to anxieties of being ‘a nation of servants,’ which haunt engagements in the brokerage of domestic workers and which have been discussed in the case of Philippine labor brokerage (Aguilar 1996; Amrith 2017, 98).

Moralizing discourse in labor brokerage

It is in light of gendered and nationally framed ambiguities causing sentiments of shame and concerning the physical absence of (potential) mothers, female workers’ abuse, their occupation as domestic workers, and their ostensible lack of education, narratives about the protection of vulnerable women, and about moral behavior play a pivotal role in labor brokerage. These narratives are not only reproduced by state officials, but also by the media and to some extent, by NGOs working on humanitarian and human rights issues. Earlier studies have carved out how in the Indonesian state discourse migrants’ successes are represented as depending on their “gendered, moral, and religious responsibilities as good mothers, daughters, and wives” (Chan 2014, 6957). As Chan has shown, in public media’s and NGOs’ accounts of

violence against migrant workers, these also produce moralizing discourses in their representations of migrants' victimhood. She has identified representations that depict 'immoral' victims who deserve their plights, 'moral,' innocent victims who should be entitled of social justice, and morally neutral victims 'of fate' who are unlucky (Chan 2014, 6959–63).

As it has been shown, the moralizing discourses on female migrants' virtues, their success, and their plights, have governing and disciplining effects: *Firstly*, these discourses tend to individualize responsibility for cases of violence and abuse, while normalizing everyday experiences of abuse and infringements of labor rights abroad. They make individual success a question of morality and create hierarchies between more and less deserving victims of their plight, and in turn, of access to protection (ibid.; Ford and Lyons 2012; Platt 2018; Robinson 2000). *Secondly*, they buttress the paternalizing modes of restricting mobility: by legitimizing bans on female migration to certain countries as a measurement against bad treatment of migrant workers abroad (Platt 2018), by legitimizing migrants' confinement at recruitment agencies' training centers (Killias 2010, 2018, 10-11;48;109-110), and by legitimizing the enforced return of migrants identified as 'illegal' or 'victims of trafficking' (Lindquist 2013). *Thirdly*, in societal negotiations over the transformation of gender relations in migrants' villages of origin, moralizing discourses circulate in disciplining behavior that transgresses patriarchal norms and reinforce these (Chan 2017, 128; Platt 2018).

I build on the mentioned literature in exploring the role of hegemonic gender norms in constituting the 'ideal migrant worker,' in distinction to those behaviors which are regarded as deviant. I scrutinize how during their preparation prior to departure, migrant domestic workers are continuously reminded of their female duties as national citizens, and how appeals to their civic responsibilities stand in an ambivalent tension to the particularities of brokering domestic workers.

Gendered migrant citizenship

Rodriguez' (2010, 96) notion of gendered migrant citizenship is an instructive framework to analyze appeals to migrants' female civic virtues. Rodriguez illuminates an aspect which resonates with my observations: Female virtues are called upon with regard to the workers' capacity to reliably generate remittances and endure harsh working conditions, with regard to the workers' bestowed responsibility to hold up the good name of the nation abroad, and with regard to provisions that are meant to guide and protect supposedly young and uneducated aspiring workers (ibid., 93–115). Before I turn to discuss my observations of practices that cultivate gendered migrant citizenship in the migration process, I briefly discuss Rodriguez' definition of migrant citizenship, to then outline how I make use of her concept with respect to my case.

Reformulations of citizenship in labor brokerage

Rodriguez introduced the term migrant citizenship to capture the specific relations between citizens and the state in the context of labor brokerage. In essence, for Rodriguez, migrant citizenship is a reformulation of overseas workers' rights and responsibilities, as well as a border-crossing extension of the definition of national belonging (Rodriguez 2010, xx). Migrant citizenship comprises provisions such as sending labor attachés to its diplomatic representations abroad to mediate in case of contractual disputes with employers, creating mandatory training programs for workers employed in 'vulnerable' jobs, offering vocational programs for workers while they are abroad, or offering scholarship funds to migrants' children.

According to Rodriguez, reformulations of citizenship are instrumental to labor brokerage: They placate "migrants' fears about being vulnerable as foreign workers." Furthermore, they pledge "particular kinds of protections and entitlements to secure legitimacy for its migration program among citizens" (ibid.). Migrant citizenship calls for a rearticulation of nationalism and national belonging, since "[a]fter all, in a society where people are forced to

secure their livelihoods far from their families and country of birth, ideas of ‘home’ and ‘the nation’ are destabilized” (Rodriguez 2010, xxi). When officials of governments like the Philippines or Indonesia address citizens working abroad as national heroes and heroines, this is a very specific iteration of nationalism. The ‘rights’ promised by migrant citizenship mainly account for provisions that are supposed to protect the workers, while “overseas employment itself is cast as a ‘right’” of [the citizens of labor brokerage states]” (ibid., xx). More importantly, migrant citizenship comes with responsibilities for overseas citizens and their families: to exemplarily represent the nation abroad, to abide to the law, to perform their work diligently, and to return to the Philippines when employment visas expire (ibid., xxi). Thus, migrant citizenship has a governing effect on worker-citizens who are expected to adjust their aspirations, dreams and desires to servicing their families and the nation. Gendered migrant citizenship refers to the gendered measures of protections and expectations towards migrant workers in light of the above mentioned gendered contradictions and ambiguities of labor brokerage: gender specific measures of ‘protecting’ migrants and particular expectations related to their female duties.

Rodriguez does not define her notion of citizenship, but implicitly she resorts to critical extensions of the common notion of citizenship as a person’s (civil, political and social) rights and duties defined through full membership in a community (Marshall 1950, 28). She develops her concept of migrant citizenship by referring to sociologist David Fitzgerald’s (2009, 31) elaborations on the Mexican state’s engagement in migrants’ “extraterritorial citizenship” through managing Mexicans working abroad (Rodriguez 2010, 80). By discussing legal and institutional mechanisms of defining citizenship on the one hand and cultural productions of citizenship in rituals and mundane bureaucratic practices on the other, she implies an understanding of citizenship both as status and as practice (Isin 2009, 369). Moreover, in accounting for how “gender has shaped migrant citizenship since inception” (Rodriguez 2010, 96), she

accounts for gendered difference in citizenship (Yuval-Davis 2006, 74–75). My observations suggest that Rodriguez’ definition of migrant citizenship would profit from a more systematic perspective on the classed differentiation of citizenship as well as from more “relational” and “dynamic” understandings of citizenship that are able to account for ambivalence and negotiation (Isin 2009, 371). I discuss such an understanding in the conclusion of this chapter.

Migrant citizenship education along the migration process

Indonesian migrant citizenship is defined in the Indonesian Law 18/2017 on the Protection of Indonesian workers, which displaced the Law 39/2004 that was still effective when I was doing my fieldwork in 2014. Both laws rest on the reasoning that the state facilitates migrants’ right to access work and a decent life, while granting migrants’ protection from human trafficking, violence, and abuse of their human rights (Government of Indonesia 2004, 2017). In addition to this definition, Indonesia’s diplomatic representations offer trainings, cultural events, and ensure that migrants can take part in general elections. Recruitment agencies are given a crucial role in carrying out the state’s mandate to protect migrants (see Chapter 5). Like in the Philippines, migrant citizenship is characteristically gendered. Because domestic workers are regarded as ‘unskilled’ workers on the one hand, and because policy makers argue that the main reason for abuse and maltreatment is a lack of skills on the part of domestic workers on the other. Hence, Indonesian regulations stipulate that prospective domestic workers need to certify that they have undergone a certain amount of training units (Killias 2018, 109).

In the following subchapter, I explore gendered migrant citizenship “in practice,” thus drawing on a strand in citizenship studies which scrutinizes “routines, rituals, customs, norms and habits of the everyday through which subjects become citizens” (Isin 2008, 17; see also Köster-Eiserfunke, Reichhold, and Schwiertz 2014, 183; S. Moser 2016). I scrutinize verbal address, spatial order, attire, and bodily performance during preparation prior to departure which address Indonesian migrant domestic workers as national citizens. I focus on practices

at the training center of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency. Private recruitment agencies are major sites where migrant citizenship is produced on an everyday level, since the state bestows responsibility for the migration process and training the workers on these agencies. The focus on practices on the ground shows: The ‘virtuous migrant citizen’ is an ambivalent, ambiguous, and paradoxical figure.

6.2 Cultivating virtuous migrant citizenship

How does Indonesian gendered migrant citizenship manifest on the ground? I discuss three intersections of definitions of national belonging and official norms of female behavior, or three facets of the ‘virtuous migrant citizen:’ a) sacrificing mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives, b) representatives of the nation, and c) daughters of the nation. These facets reflect a number of measures adopted by the various actors involved in labor brokerage in dealing with the predicaments of labor brokerage: *Firstly*, official discourse casts migrant domestic workers’ remittances and work discipline under difficult conditions as a selfless act in the service of the nation. *Secondly*, migrant domestic workers are bestowed responsibility in the endeavor to represent Indonesia as a respectable nation abroad and restore the image of moral dubiousness that afflicts mobile, working-class women at home. *Thirdly*, migrant domestic workers are put under closer supervision and monitoring than their male colleagues, with the aim to protect domestic workers who are regarded particularly vulnerable due to their occupation as what is called unskilled labor.

Sacrificing mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives

Official and public discourses define migrant domestic workers’ citizenship by their familial responsibility and the discipline that derives from female devotion. As I described earlier, this is implied in the speeches of government officials who hail Indonesian migrant

domestic workers' hard work for their families and their designation of the workers as national heroines. The motif of the hard working female migrant devoted to help her family is the central positive reference in public discourse on Indonesian domestic workers' migration. Motifs of motherly selflessness that are deeply inscribed in dominant gender discourses underlie the interpellation of the sacrificing heroine. Rhetorically, female migrants' efforts are acknowledged in this interpellation, while at the same time, their continuous contributions to their family incomes are encouraged. Tracing how the female virtues of selflessness and sacrifice were negotiated at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center reveals essential paradoxes of official rhetoric, it shows how dominant ideals of female behavior are negotiated, and it illustrates motivations of female migration that remain largely unaddressed in public discussions on female migration, namely female migrants' escapes from gendered and symbolic violence.

Learning to sacrifice

When aspiring migrant domestic workers move into the training center of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency and get used to the routines at the center, they receive an orientation class, which is facilitated by the dormitory overseer, Ibu Ani. She lives in the dormitory with the trainees and is responsible for the daily routine. She makes sure that trainees attend the morning roll and gymnastic sessions every morning and every afternoon, that they perform their duties in cleaning the compound, and that they are serious in practicing during the study time every night. She also determines the self-cooked daily menu for the trainees. Ibu Ani herself had worked in Malaysia, previously as a domestic worker and then at the boarding house of a Malaysian placement agency. She had not seen her own family for all the years she worked for at the placement agency in Malaysia, she once told me (fieldnotes 29 Apr 2018).

One of the very first lessons Ibu Ani gives the trainees, paradoxically, is that the newcomers learn to *forget* about their families. Once, when I attended her class, Ibu Ani emphasized

that in order to be successful in the future the prospective workers must not lose focus. She explained:

Do you know the rules of *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency? While you are here, don't think of your husband or your boyfriend. Don't look right, left, or back. Put your focus on the process. Here you learn discipline and you learn to focus, because you seriously aspire to go abroad (fieldnotes 16 May 2014).

When calling them national heroines, government representatives applaud female migrants' selfless devotion as mothers and hard work. While migrant workers are warned of adopting behaviors that imply wasting money, being narcissistic, and being egoistic, at official speeches, workers are constantly reminded not to lose their actual aim out of sight—earning money for a better future with their families in Indonesia. Ibu Ani's speech bears an essential paradox of the call on migrant domestic workers' female duties: A central feature of live-in paid domestic work is the worker's constant availability for her employer. Recruitment agencies market a domestic worker's "personhood" (B. Anderson 2000, 180), her "detachment from her private life" (Akalin 2018, 422). For this reason, from entering the training center, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees were drilled to restrain private concerns, including their attachment to their families.

This demands great affective effort from the workers. Many migrants who I studied with shared stories about the pain of being separated from their families, especially their children, at the training center and while working abroad. The trainees, the instructors of the training center, and migrant workers who I got to know in Hong Kong often asked me empathically whether I would go back to Germany in between my fieldwork in order to see my family or have family members visit me (fieldnotes 01 May & 03 Aug 2014). That I didn't and wasn't seeing my family for a whole year seemed pitiable and odd to them. After all, my mobility was neither confined by the walls of the recruitment center nor by the employer's apartment, and my immigration status would have allowed me to bring family members in. My interlocutors indicated

that not being separated from one's family is a class privilege. Migrants' affective effort as well as the structures of inequality that underlie female migration remain largely unaddressed in the official hailing of female migrants' sacrifice. Strikingly, official rhetoric praises female migrants for taking up economic responsibility for their families. This is remarkable, given that dominant gender norms define the ideal woman by her caring role in the family.

Selflessness and moral spaces of negotiation

Ibu Ani, but also Ibu Eda in her speech at the pre-departure briefing, reminded the trainees that finally, their heart-racking separation from their families could lead to 'being successful' (*sukses*). Most of the instructors at the training center had themselves worked abroad and epitomized successful migration projects. Like Mam Fahida, who once, at the end of a Cantonese class that I attended, shared the narrative about her career as a former worker in Hong Kong, as a wife, a businesswoman, and a motivated white-collar employee. Mam Fahida now is a mother of a two-year old son, and apart from teaching Cantonese at the training center, she runs a chicken farm. Selflessness weaved through the account of her self-description: Mam Fahida worked in Hong Kong for seven years. Right after high school, even before she received her diploma, she left to Hong Kong. She left although she was given a scholarship in order to study at university because she was the second best student in her district. However, because she had two younger brothers who were supposed to study at university, she chose (*pilihan*) to go to Hong Kong. First, her aim had been to stay in Hong Kong for two years and to study at university then. Because her father fell sick she stayed two more years, and eventually she added three more years. She said she was an independent woman and for a long time she hadn't been interested in getting married. But finally, at the age of 29, which is comparably late in the Indonesian context, she did get married, not least for the sake of her mother, she recounted. But, she said, her husband was "good" and "protective," and he supported her. She also said that her husband is the type of man who always had to be served. That was the reason why she gets up every day

at three o' clock in the morning in order to prepare food and then hit the road to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center. It is her spirit (*semangat*) that keeps her fit and young, she said. Her friends tell her that her body is weaker than her spirit, but she counters her friends by saying that spirit doesn't kill anybody, but instead helps us to recover when we are sick. The pride with which she narrated her story was clearly palpable (fieldnotes 30 Apr 2014).

Mam Fahida embodies the often evoked virtue of selflessness: She gave up her interest in studying at university although she was a talented student, she stayed in Hong Kong to pay the fees for the treatment of her sick father, and nowadays, she pushes her physical health to the limits in order to navigate her different tasks. Combining this selfless devotion with modernity and an intact family, she has achieved the desirable middle-class Indonesian womanhood that has been described by Carla Jones (2004): juggling between work and their responsibility for the emotional well-being of the family through their care.⁵⁴

While through her staging of selflessness, Mam Fahida exemplified official notions of female morality, it is important to note that she also emphasized that employment abroad enabled her to gain some independence and to successfully delay her marriage in a “society where marriage is universal” and where staying single is often stigmatized (Himawan, Bambling, and Edirippulige 2018, 3676; see also Situmorang 2007). She emphasized her loyalty to her family, but gained some autonomy, as she financially contributed to her family. As other scholars have shown, economic familial contributions are an important resource in negotiating female autonomy and non-normative sexualities (Chan 2017, 129; Thajib 2019). Mam Fahida's narrative is noteworthy, since, in other contexts, like in Central Java, where Killias (2018, 77) did her fieldwork in the mid-2000s, travelling overseas for work, unmarried and childless women would

⁵⁴ Most middle-class women in Indonesia rely on domestic workers to perform their different duties, particularly the ideal to perform a role as devoted wife. I did not document how Mam Fahida organized childcare for her son, but possibly she relied on familial support, as rural East Javanese migrant workers also do when they work abroad.

have clearly transgressed societal norms of femininity and motherhood. But Mam Fahida's narrative resonates with many other stories I heard from East Javanese migrant women as well as with those of Maria Platt's (2018, 100) informants, for whom migration was a "smart" strategy to delay marriage, which could also mean avoiding an arranged marriage.⁵⁵ Delaying her marriage and gaining economic power is a resource in protecting herself, for instance from being left by her husband. Many workers experienced this and were facing social stigma.⁵⁶ As a role model for gendered migrant citizenship, Mam Fahida showed how female migrant workers can navigate inbetween the moral spaces of dominant expectations on women as wives and mothers.

Mam Fahida's navigation in the moral interstices of dominant gender norms not least reflect social realities that never fully conform officially with propagated norms. This concerns delaying marriage, but also flights from unhappy marriages or from the stigma and economic uncertainties of being a divorcee.

A shelter for escape

Many migrant women shared with me that for them, migration was a way out of their marriage rather than a selfless act for their families. In Hong Kong, I met women who were explicit about this (fieldnotes 29 Jul 2018). The women at the training center rather generally hinted to me that they first and foremost leave Indonesia and work abroad because they "have domestic problems (*bermasalah di domestic*)," without giving details (fieldnotes 07 & 15 May 2014). I also encountered this general reference to 'domestic problems' when I talked to Pak Rendra, a

⁵⁵ Juliette Koning (2000, 193–94) states that before the urban and rural transitions that occurred since the 1970s, arranged marriages at young age used to be very common in Java, and that despite a decrease, they are still practiced. The anthropologist reflects that there are "differing reasons why marriages were arranged at such young ages. (...) Some [of her research participants] suggested that for parents, especially mothers, marrying off a daughter or son was a token of being a good and competent mother. Others mentioned the transfer of responsibilities for a daughter from the parents to a husband, and for the more elite families it was often a question of securing wealth and *sawah* [a rice field] by making sure the children of these families married each other."

⁵⁶ While women are socially sanctioned for transgressing dominant gender norms, men's failure as responsible husbands and fathers faces less social sanctions (Suryakusuma 1996). That adulterous men 'run away' has to do with the matrilineal residence practice: On Java, not always, but often, when young couples marry, they move in with the bride's family (Koning 2004, 269 in Killias 2018, 78). The stories that I heard suggest that men face less social pressure if they live in new surroundings, the bride's social environment.

local bureaucrat in Sumberbaru. He was explaining to me how the local government takes over responsibility in protecting migrant workers, which included migrants who overstayed their visas or female migrants in Malaysia who didn't go through the formal process when they concluded new contracts. He added to his explanations: "They have economic problems, domestic problems, they are divorced" (fieldnotes 23 April 2014). His statements leave some ambiguity whether he was acknowledging structural problems that heavily disadvantage women, or whether he reiterated the self-blaming tropes identified by Chan (2014, 6960) in media discourse and by Kathryn Robinson (2000) in official rhetoric. The 'argument' that mainly divorcees go abroad has already been used in 1984 by the then Minister of Manpower in order to "downplay the concerns about the failure of the state to protect women working overseas" (Robinson 2000, 259). This rhetoric draws social legitimacy from the devalued status of single divorcees (Brenner 1998, 153; Ong 1987, 89; Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016) and suggests that the morals of (single) women who leave to work abroad as domestic workers are already defected. Single female divorcees in particular are met with suspicions of being sexual autonomous, improper, and uncontrolled (Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016, 27).

In contrast to such a stigmatization, I witnessed how Ibu Ani supported the escape of Dina, the trainee who was assigned to function as my "personal assistant" and who was mentioned in Chapter 2. For several years, Dina had been divorced from her first husband; her three children lived with her first husband. She had worked in Hong Kong before, spoke a good level of Cantonese, and never received any reproach from the instructors. The fact that she was bestowed responsibility to accompany me is proof of the trust the instructors had in her as a diligent and capable domestic worker. I learned that for her, the decision to register at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency had been an escape from her unregistered 'customary' marriage

(*kawin siri*)⁵⁷ with a man she didn't love. In a sense, the training center became a 'shelter' for Dina where she prepared her migration as an escape from a problematic relationship. It is worth to note that training centers not only prevent recruits from running away, but also prevent people—husbands trainees were escaping from—from coming in.⁵⁸ To my knowledge, there is rarely an infrastructure of safe houses for women in rural East Java. Spoken with Foucault's notion of heterotopia (Foucault 2008a), as a space of prospective migrant workers' temporary sojourn, training centers take on a heterotopic form (see Johnson 2013, 790–91), i.e. they take on the form of a space that mirror but at the same time invert the prospective workers' patriarchal realities.

When he found out about her whereabouts, Dina's customary husband called Dina back. Dina was in a dilemma whether she should give in to her customary husband who promised to care for her financially and pledged her to go back with her, or whether she should persist in her decision to leave for Hong Kong. Dina admitted to me that she felt her decision to go to Hong Kong was egoistic (*egois*) towards her children. It was Ibu Ani who gave her supportive advice to stay at least one year in Hong Kong in order to clear her mind (*pikiran tenang*), and to make plans for a better future in independence from her husband. It turned out that Dina abandoned her plan to go to Hong Kong and that her husband paid to the company, to pay for the expenses that the company had already made to facilitate Dina's future employment, including broker fees, accommodation for several months, training fees, fees for the medical

⁵⁷ *Kawin siri* or *nikah siri* refers to a marriage without government registration and is often conducted secretly. Lyn Parker, Irma Ryani, and Brooke Nolan (2016, 33) explain that “[s]iri is taken from Arabic *sirrun-sirri*, meaning secret. Couples who decide to conduct *nikah siri* generally do so because they fail to fulfill one or several of the requirements for a valid marriage, like the requirement for a guardian or witness (*wali*), or for a first wife's consent to a husband taking a second wife. This type of marriage is unregistered because they do not report it to the marriage registration office (KUA, Kantor Urusan Agama). *Nikah siri* is risky for women, both socially and legally. *Nikah siri* is subject to gossip, and legally a woman cannot claim the rights she is entitled to within marriage (...). This kind of marriage is officially considered never to have happened.”

⁵⁸ It is important to note that migrant workers in Hong Kong who I talked to reported of sexual abuse at recruitment companies, and, hence, that training centers are by no means always safe spaces (see also Killias 2009, 164).

checkup, and visa expenses (fieldnotes 17 & 18 May 2014). Ibu Ani's support of Dina's subjective, what Dina called 'egoistic,' migration project, shows a reality beneath the official interpellation of selfless devotion. Without fully questioning the paternalistic logic of migrant citizenship, it shows that *practiced* migrant citizenship (the socialities Indonesian women enter through migration as well as the rights and responsibilities they exert), *de facto* is *also* the migration process as a provision of safety and care in the context of Indonesian women's experience of gendered and symbolic violence. This form of care and protection thus constitutes an aspect of practiced migrant citizenship that has no articulation in official notions of migrant citizenship.

The instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency act in the interstices of this un-represented migrant citizenship in practice and the official interpellation of the selfless remittance sending heroine. They train migrant domestic workers to cultivate dominant norms of female behavior as a prerequisite for their migration projects. Yet, they also participate in facilitating safety for aspiring workers whose migration projects are escapes from the patriarchal social fabric of their home places.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that in contrast to media and official discourses which call on migrants' familial responsibilities as selfless devotion, the everyday cultivation of this facet of virtuous migrant citizenship is ambiguous. Ibu Ani's instruction to focus one's full attention on the process and 'forget' about one's family members hints to the paradox of official appeals to transnational working class mothers,' daughters,' wives,' and sisters' family responsibilities. Mam Fahida's and Dina's cases show that training centers can be spaces where the dominant female norms with respect to dominant concepts of wifhood are negotiated and circumvented.

Representatives of the nation

In light of anxieties that circle around the immorality of migrant women, the agents involved in Indonesian labor brokerage engage in shaping a respectable image of Indonesia. As migrant workers enter the transnational world of their migration projects, they become participants in this endeavor, which demands their professionalism, decency, and propriety. Yet, in everyday practices, domestic workers deal with ascriptions that contradict official notions of respectability: Connotations of being uneducated and immoral as well as the devaluation of menial labor stick to their migration projects. A closer look on the ground shows that enhancing migrant domestic workers' respectability is undermined by a pervasive control of their personal lives.

Embodying a culturally rich, professional and modern nation

On weekdays, all trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency wear the same uniform: a white polo-shirt with the company name printed on the front pocket, and a blue colored labelling “*Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* vocational training” on the back. On the day of their journeys, when the prospective workers enter the cosmopolitan stage of international airports and airplanes, and when their ways cross those of travelers from all over the world, they remove the company's uniforms. Instead, they wear shirts with imprinted traditional *batik* patterns. In Indonesia, *batik*, a wax-resist textile often labelled as the ‘national costume,’ is worn on official occasions like weddings, formal meetings, or communal gatherings, but also as a uniform by civil-servants (Jones 2010, 274; S. Moser 2008, 132). The Javanese pattern of the trainees' shirts integrated the logo of *Chinatrust*, the bank where the trainees took up their loans to pay for placement and training, and where they were given the shirt.

Pak Arif, a *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* staff, who was running the travel agency which belonged to the agency and which facilitated Muslim Umrah pilgrimage travel packs to Mecca, once explained to me the custom of wearing *batik* during their journey. All prospective workers

obtained the *batik* shirt when they signed the loan agreements with one of five officially approved finance institutions to pay for the migration process. The government had stipulated that these finance institutions provide the uniforms. By this stipulation, Hidayat, the former Chairman of the BNP2TKI, wished to make batik more known internationally (fieldnotes 11 May 2014; see also *Tribun Manado* 2013).⁵⁹ Hidayat's hope that Indonesia's migrant workers would represent Indonesia's culture internationally resonates with the hopes of the Councillor for Cultural and Social Affairs at the Consulate Hong Kong, who explained to me that the Consulate encourages the workers practice and perform Indonesian traditional dances, thus acting as "cultural diplomatic agents" (fieldnotes 05 Aug 2014).

Pak Arif himself was skeptical about the stipulation that made the travelling workers wear the *batik* uniform. His reason was practical: Placement agents who pick up the workers at the airports in Hong Kong, Taipeh, or Singapore would not recognize which Indonesian recruitment agency the workers belonged to if they were wearing *batik*. He was concerned with a different issue. During the same conversation he had commented on the workers' "village culture (*dari desa*)."⁵⁹ It was a Sunday, and the trainees were allowed to receive family members and husbands. Pak Arif and I were chatting on an open corridor on the first floor of the building that hosted classrooms, office rooms and the guestroom where I was staying. He was commenting the view in front of us, where the staircase led down to the patio of the compound: Small groups and couples scattered over the compound of the training center, sitting on the floor and sharing wrapped up food and snacks from their home places, men were smoking. During these few hours, the compound turned into a picnic area. The trainees and visitors were sitting on the

⁵⁹ In 2009, *batik* has become an issue of popular nationalism, when there was a public outcry in Indonesia over the rightful claim of *batik* as cultural heritage: The UNESCO had listed Indonesian batik on its Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was cause for some media to allege that Malaysia was also nominated for inclusion on the list. Such allegations were part of a row of accusations that Malaysia was 'stealing' Indonesian cultural heritage (Clark 2013, 399).

floor and left cigarette butts. Pak Arif was thinking about a solution for the untidiness the visitors caused. “They’re still like this (*masih seperti ini*).” Pak Arif commented that abroad, in Hong Kong, society had already overcome this culture (fieldnotes 11 May 2014).

Hidayat, the Councillor at the Consulate in Hong Kong, and Pak Arif were, in one way or the other, concerned with how Indonesian workers contributed to Indonesia’s (self-)image: Hidayat and the Councillor entrusted Indonesian migrant workers with representing Indonesia’s culture. It could be argued that, beyond symbolizing Indonesian culture, the *batik* shirt also symbolizes professionalism: On their journeys, the domestic workers appear like their fellow (male) migrant workers as ‘formal’ workers. Pak Arif’s concern was one of modernization and development. His comment on the provincial village culture of the trainees’ visitors hints to a trope of development that divides Indonesia’s rural working classes from modern middle-class culture on the one hand, and the Indonesian nation from ‘more developed’ countries, including Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ countries of destination, on the other (Killias 2018, 125). ‘They’re *still* like this (*masih seperti ini*)’ implies the state of ‘not yet developed (*belum maju*),’ which in the Indonesian context is equaled as ‘underdevelopment’ (Lindquist 2009, 147-148 in Killias 2018, 124). Cleanliness and tidiness, which were lacking in the scene Pak Arif and I were witnessing, and which were key values at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency (see Chapter 7), are signifiers of development (Jones 2004, 514, 521). Pak Arif’s concern resonates with the discursive practices Killias (2018, 124) found in other recruitment agencies in Indonesia, where trainees were urged to “keep up the good name of the Indonesian national abroad, so that Indonesia will one day reach the rank of developed country (sic) (*sudah maju*).” She describes how the agents of recruitment agencies step up educating the rural population of society and help them to ‘develop’ through work ethos and discipline, thus echoing European colonial myths of ‘lazy natives’ in the colonies (ibid., 125).

As migrant-citizens, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees were encouraged to act as representatives of a culturally rich, professional and modern nation, expressed in neatness and symbolized by the *batik* shirt the workers wear during their journeys abroad. Strikingly yet, exactly when they were obtaining their shirts at the *Chinatrust* office, spatial demarcations placed the aspiring workers outside the realm of the modern and neat: The *batik* blouse they receive at the *Chinatrust* office in order to represent the Indonesian nation to the outside world contrasts the symbolic treatment they receive *inside* the *Chinatrust* office.

The backroom of modernity

Approaching their departure, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees are escorted to the *Chinatrust* office in the provincial capital and Indonesia's second largest city Surabaya, where they sign the conditions of the loans they take up for the placement and training process. I accompanied a group of trainees who were about to depart to Taiwan. Pak Gilang, one of the drivers of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency dropped us in front of the business tower *Intiland*. Along with other Indonesian and multinational companies mostly in the finance, insurance, information technology, and staffing business, *Chinatrust* is one of the tenants in the *Intiland* tower. The building was designed by the renowned U.S.-American architect Paul Rudolph and completed in 1986, and thus it represents one of the earlier landmarks of the modernist and postmodernist landscape of Surabaya's business-district. This landscape, a symbol for modernity and development, differs clearly from the industrial landscape where the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency is located. The only high buildings around the training center are smoking factory towers, and there is an urban *kampung*⁶⁰ close by. We entered a polished lobby hall, with marble floor and high marble columns—an interior design that is

⁶⁰ *Kampung* is a Malay term and literally means village. In an urban setting it refers to settlements as “dense neighbourhoods” (Newberry 2008, 241).

popular in Indonesian and Hong Kong high end office buildings or real estates. I remember taking up the elevator to the sixth floor felt odd after having stayed for several weeks in East Javanese towns, villages, and the compound of the training center, where the only multi-story buildings around were department stores, which lacked the shine of modern malls that mushroom all over urban Java. The security in front of an opal glass door that marked the entrance to the *Chinatrust* office indicated the trainees to go to take the corridor to the back-room. From this room, a door entered to another room where the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees would sign their loan agreements. Two other groups of recruits from other companies, identifiable by the respective company shirts, were already waiting. A sheet of paper that hang next to the door gave information on the documents needed by “TKI (*migrant workers*)” in order to conclude the loan agreement and suggested that this room was not used by any other customers than prospective migrant workers. In contrast to the lobby hall of the *Intiland* building, this waiting room was rather carelessly furnished: The worn-out grey carpet floor was laid untidily, and some of the wallpaper came off the wall. The signing room accommodated a whiteboard and rows of tables. During the signing itself, the bank staff instructed in detail how to fill the respective forms, a procedure that resembled a school dictation (fieldnotes 19 & 26 May 2014).

The spatial separation, its furnishing and the school-like instruction during the loan signing hardly elicited the impression of being a customer service. Rather, the loan document marks an instance when migrant worker-citizens are positioned as uneducated lower-class citizens, separated from ordinary *Chinatrust* customers and addressing them as to-be-educated school children. The spatial setup at the waiting room and the signing room not only contrasts the polished lobby hall, but also the nationalist-professional symbolism in wearing batik uniforms in front of a global audience. Migrant domestic workers’ separation from other customers at the *Chinatrust* bank echo the spatial practices at the special terminal for returning migrant workers at the international Soekarno-Hatta airport in Jakarta observed by Silvey (2007b) in the early

2000s. The special terminal separated returning migrant workers from ‘regular,’—international travelers and middle and upper class Indonesians who can afford to travel overseas—thus positioning migrant workers as marginal citizens (Silvey 2007b, 266).

The ambivalence in the interpellation of the migrant-*cum*-cultural diplomat resonates in Killias’ observation that Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ citizenship is flanked by their ascribed rural, working-class origin. Citing Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2001), Killias (2014, 890) resumes: “[T]heirs is only a ‘partial citizenship.’” She exemplifies this by referring to the ‘special migrant worker passports:’ “[T]hese are different from those of ‘regular’ citizens, as they are valid for three instead of five years, have fewer pages and can only be obtained through registration with a private recruitment agency” (ibid.). Instead of referring to Parreñas’ ‘partial’ citizenship, I suggest to resort to Ong’s (2006, 78–79) concept of “graduated citizenship.” Graduated citizenship accounts for variations in valuating and guaranteeing rights of particular sections of society. As I show, migrant domestic workers’ allotted position on the scale of varied citizenship oscillates between a citizen-*Other*, (school) children, daughters, and mothers. I consider the notion of graduation more useful than ‘partiality,’ which evokes a fix position, whereas ‘graduation’ accounts for the slippage between those varying ascriptions.

The citizen-subject that is epitomized by migrant domestic workers conjoins ascriptions of working-classness, of rural origin, and of the moral ambiguity that is connoted with female mobility. Therefore, decent appearance and proper behavior are key values at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center. I discuss the ambivalences of these values in the next section.

Decent worker-citizens

Feminist scholars of nationalism pointed out that in many contexts of nationalism, female morality plays an affectively charged symbolic role, and is equated with the honor of the national collective (Yuval-Davis 2006, 45). In studying pre-orientation seminars for Filipina/o/x workers, Rodriguez (2010, 113–14) has argued that migrant citizenship in the Philippines bestows female migrants a doubly charged responsibility in restoring the nation's image: Their morality should compensate for the ostensibly “defective” behavior of fellow nationals, consumerism, materialism, and sexual promiscuity. Indeed, proper and decent appearance are deemed currencies in the endeavor of restoring Indonesia's image in light of connotations of the dubiousness related to female mobility. Yet, norms such as deference and restraint that are exercised in cultivating decent appearance and proper behavior also appear instrumental in disciplining migrant domestic workers. Thereby, the call on migrant domestic workers' restraint goes as far as preparing them for employment relationships in which employers “command the whole person of domestic workers” (B. Anderson 2000, 125). Here, the cultivation of female virtues at the training center slips into a cultivation of full compliance to the command over their private lives by future employers, which appears to be the advantage of Indonesian recruiters in competing on the global market for domestic workers.

Decent appearance and proper behavior were major concerns at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center. Not least because the agency owner Ibu Wijayanti frequently received guests—from overseas and government officials with whom she collaborated—, the trainees were reminded of their responsibility to hold up the good name of the center. In a sense, the trainees were prepared for a quality of migrant citizenship they would, once in Hong Kong, perform on a larger scale: presentable manners. During the orientation class for newly arrived trainees, Ibu Ani shared her concerns about the trainees' decency. She referred to my presence as a guest at the center and reminded the newcomers about the etiquette of the agency:

Our guest is a good example. I am ashamed (*malu*) that we don't set a good example. We should set an example and show that we do the gymnastics with élan. But instead it is our guest who is waiting, even before the gymnastics begin. She adheres to the mealtimes. She is friendly to everybody and always greets one with a smile. She dresses decently (*sopan*) because she has self-respect (*kehormatan diri*). You do not have any self-respect when you linger in the front yard in your short attire (fieldnotes 16 May 2014).

By way of setting me, the guest at the center as an example to follow, Ibu Ani's address conveyed what she defined as respectable manners: being good spirited, complying with routines and formal dress codes. Ibu Ani spoke of *shame*, an emotion that, as anthropologist William Reddy (1997, 347) pointed out, "derives from thoughts about how one is seen by others." Shame often relates to actions "aimed at managing appearances" (ibid.). Instructions of how to appear decent and behave properly ruled the routines at the center. At the dormitory and the dining hall for the trainees, signposts said: "Do not speak loudly and do not guffaw (*jangan bicara keras-keras dan tertawa berbahak-bahak*)." The trainees were expected to only speak "in *do*—as in the solmization '*do, re, mi, fa, so, la, si*'⁶¹ (field notes 16 Dec 2014). 'Inappropriate' behavior on the compound was scolded. Once, for instance, two trainees who were piggy-packing, evoking childish playfulness, were scolded by Ibu Ani: "Don't do such odd things (*jangan yang aneh-aneh*)!" (field notes 30 April 2014).

The exercise of restraint and deference to instructors, which are demanded by these rules of appearance and behavior, is part of cultural codes of etiquette that apply in Java aiming at a person's refinement and have been integrated in national notions of ideal womanhood (Brenner 1998, 251; Tiwon 1996). Chapter 7 discusses at length how the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency appealed to the trainees' embodied cultural knowledge in managing their affects and emotions and comply with the rules of the center. Here, my point is to discuss how such norms of ideal female behavior defined the trainees' constraints to cultivate their own and the agency's public image, while the call on such female virtues could slip into a technique

⁶¹ '*do*' as the lowest note in a musical scale.

of cultivating the trainees' compliance to their future employers' control over their whole personhood, which eventually undermines the ideal of respectability.

This slippage becomes clear by considering one of Ibu Ani's scoldings, which occurred on one Sunday. The day after, a group of male recruits who were about to depart to Korea as seafarers began to be trained at the center. Days before, the staff had contemplated about measures that would hinder the trainees from mingling with the male trainees. The female trainees' lunch schedule was changed, so that the two groups would not have their lunch breaks together. After the Sunday gym session, Ibu Ani gathered the trainees. She obviously was in a bad mood when she started to give instructions on how the trainees should prepare the classrooms for the training of the new male recruits. Apparently, these announcements were not everything Ibu Ani had to say to the trainees. She took the occasion to reproach the trainees for their attire. Since on Sunday no classes took place at the center, the trainees didn't wear the agency uniforms but were dressed casually. In my estimation of East Javanese standards, their appearance was not provocative, none of them was wearing pants with length above the knee. Instead, their attire was reminiscent of what they would wear in a more private setting at home.

Ibu Ani harshly scolded the trainees: "Many of you are mothers. Think of your children. Show that you have self-respect (*kehormatan diri*), and dress properly." She reminded the trainees that the guests who frequented the center respected Ibu Wijayanti for being *Ibu Haji*, a person who is respected for having performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁶² "You pay no respect by dressing like this (*begini-gini*)." Bowing their heads, the trainees stayed still and quiet. Ibu Ani turned to Fitri, one of the trainees: "Take off your necklace. Your pants are too short. You are a mother. You have a child. Your behavior shows that your child will become as rampant

⁶² As a testimony of religious piety, making the pilgrimage to Mecca is a symbol of honor and prestige, and given the restricted quota of haj travelers each year and a long waiting list (Septiari 2019), a privilege.

(*liar*) as you are.” She continued her tirade, warning the trainees of liaising with the male trainees who were expected the next day: “I do not want to see anybody exchanging phone numbers with these guys.”

This invective was powerful, but the trainees learned to take her tirades not too seriously. Fitri who was not only once targeted by Ibu Ani’s tirade, told me later that she stopped listening to her scolding (*tidak masuk telinga*) (fieldnotes 18 May 2014). Amid the routines, the trainees enjoyed little pleasures, made jokes, gossiped, stilled each other’s fears, and supported each other in memorizing vocabulary. Fitri, who was going to work in Hong Kong, and another female trainee whose destination was Taiwan were in a relationship.⁶³ None of the other trainees were negative about this. In fact, when I met some of them again in Hong Kong, they felt empathetic with their colleagues who had to separate when they departed to different destinations (fieldnotes 14 July 2014).

Ibu Ani’s scolding after the Sunday gym session was one of the instances when she apparently felt the trainees needed to be disciplined. Reiterating the general suspicion of female migrants’ rampant behavior, she appealed to their duty as mothers. A closer look shows that questions of reputation, disciplinary power and sovereign control over the trainees’ private lives conjoin in Ibu Ani’s speech. It is worth to disentangle the various concerns that crystallize in her speech: *Firstly*, her worries express concerns about the center’s image in light of societal anxieties that circle around female mobility. Ibu Ani exerted the role of guarding female migrants’ sexuality that is socially assigned to recruitment agencies (see Killias 2018, 113). Mentioning Ibu Wijayanti’s status as a respected person who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, she appealed to the trainees to hold up the image of the center as a respectable institution. Some future employers consider migrant domestic workers as ‘morally suspects’ and

⁶³ see Y. K. Lai 2014, 45–54 for same-sex intimacies in training centers.

harbor anxieties that their domestic workers affect their respectable image (Constable 1997). I met workers in Hong Kong whose employers restrict where and with whom domestic workers should spend their day off from work, and how they should (not) look (fieldnotes 28 July 2014). Yet, Ibu Ani's concerns went beyond reminders to maintain the good reputation of the agency or, implicitly, of their future employers, because, *secondly*, her warning that the trainees should keep away from the male recruits, who were about to receive their training at the center, clearly need to be understood in the context of the profitability of brokerage. Control over female migrants' sexuality is vital for recruitment agencies. They test their recruits whether they are pregnant and stipulate that they are given contraceptive injections when they are on home leave. They do so because a recruits' pregnancy would terminate the process immediately (Killias 2018, 110; Lindquist 2010a, 118). Beyond this reasoning still, Ibu Ani's moralizing reproach must be, *thirdly*, understood as a general interference in the trainees' personal interests and desires. Here, the appeal to female virtues slips into an appeal to mere compliance to the command of the agency and future employers. To underline this point, Killias' observations in other recruitment agencies are illuminating. Killias (2018, 121) describes "painstaking supervision of and interference with even the smallest details of an activity." She characterizes the training camps which she was studying as "total institutions" (Goffman 1961 in Killias 2018, 109),⁶⁴ whose practices may lead to complete loss of the inmates' sense of autonomy. Killias argues that trainees' and domestic workers' personal activities, interests, and autonomy bear the potential to nurture their desire to prematurely terminate their contracts, and they may stand in conflict with employers' interests, who hire live-in domestic workers who stand at their disposal six days a week at almost any time of the day. Killias' argument is plausible, considering that in Hong Kong, migrant domestic workers' pursuit of personal interests is limited to their day

⁶⁴ I chose not to use the Goffman's concept of total institutions in my description of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*, because incitements of the recruits' self-governing were as important to the training as were practices of sovereign power which interfered in the trainees' personal lives. I focus on the cultivation of self-governing practices in Chapter 7.

off. As I learned from domestic workers in Hong Kong, their personal matters such as when to take paid and unpaid holiday, or the use of cellphones during a 15-hours workday, are frequently subject to (subtle) conflicts with employers (see also Palmer 2018, 150). Against the background of such conflicts, recruitment agencies seem to have an interest in maintaining the stereotyped image that Indonesian domestic workers are hardworking, apt for menial work, and submissive (M. Lai 2010, 505; Loveband 2004; Palmer 2018, 149). Instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center praised Indonesian workers' compliance as an advantage in competing with Filipina/o/x workers (fieldnotes 07 May 2014), thus highlighting submissiveness as an important asset in competing on the global market. The rule that trainees had to cut their hair short and the prohibition of wearing make-up are measures to desexualize domestic workers and ostensibly prepare them to 'protect' themselves from gendered violence and avoid the impression that they are "sexually 'available' to their male employers," whereas they do not receive any information on procedures for reporting gendered violence (Guevarra 2006, 535; see also Killias 2018, 116). But, considering that the trainees were not allowed to wear the Muslim veil either, such interferences in the trainees' personal lives should be understood as a general preparation for the trainees' full availability to their employers. Ibu Ani's instruction that Fitri should take off her necklace needs to be understood in the context of these ambiguities.

It can be concluded that teaching the trainees' decent appearance and proper behavior is an investment in female migrants,' the agency's and the nation's respectability, i.e. qualities of being proper, estimable, and presentable. At the same time, the cultivation of restraint appears as a crucial advantage of Indonesian recruitment agencies in competing on the global market of domestic workers. In essence, domestic workers of quality need to know how to restrain their personal interests and desires to an extreme extent. Thus they show that they are at their employers' disposal at almost any time of the day. Restraint and propriety form part of the

repertoire of Javanese and national norms of femininity and motherhood, and they are capitalized on in the context of domestic worker brokerage.

As the above discussion shows, migrant domestic workers' decency, propriety, restraint and deference, all of which are traits of ideal female behavior, are called on for paradoxical aims: They are called on as a civic duty in the service of representing Indonesia's image as a respectable nation, while simultaneously, they are regarded as an asset of Indonesian domestic workers' compliance with the control over their personhood. Notably, as I show in Subchapter 6.3, in light of the depreciation they experience, migrant domestic workers' negotiate standards of appearance and definitions of how and by whom the nation may be represented. For now, I turn to the third facet of the figure of the 'virtuous citizen worker:' the dutiful daughters of the nation.

Daughters of the nation

Although the majority of Indonesian domestic workers who I studied with were married and had their own children already, I seldomly observed situations in which they were addressed by the respectful Indonesian form of addressing married women, *Ibu* (Ms. or Mrs., literally meaning 'mother'), but as *mbak-mbak* (the form of addressing young women), *adik-adik* ('little sisters'), or *anak-anak* ('children') (see Chapter 4.1). These forms of addressing migrant domestic workers reflect the pervasiveness of migrant domestic workers' representation as innocent, young and inexperienced—a motif that in social and public discourse coexists with the motif of the selfless heroine. Addressed as 'children' and 'young women,' domestic worker-citizens are ascribed the role of daughters in the nation-family. Yet, as they are continuously reminded of their servant status, their role in the nation-family is situated at the very fringes of this family.

Daughters in need of guidance

Recruitment and placement agencies are charged with responsibility to take over “paternal custody” (Rodriguez 2010, 102) of the migrants during their journeys. This rests on the fact that, “[t]raveling alone is generally considered inappropriate, dangerous, or even strange across Indonesia and large parts of Southeast Asia, particularly for women” (Lindquist 2018a, 78). In addition, because policy makers regard domestic work as unskilled labor, and because they see the main cause of abuse and maltreatment of domestic workers abroad in lack of skills (see Chapter 5.2), they bestow responsibility to recruitment agencies to provide language education and training in household labor. The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency took both roles seriously: acting as the recruits’ guardians and providing skills that should prepare the trainees for employment abroad in the most ideal way.

The former role was staged every Saturday morning at the training center. Then, the trainees performed the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* song, an Indonesian theme, for which Ibu Wijayanti had the lyrics rephrased. Lined up and weaving their hands, they sang the song, hailing the agency for their help “to chaperone us to our destination countries in order to work with motivation, zeal and élan” (fieldnotes 09 May 2014). The idea that female workers, who work in distant places from their kin, need particular guidance has parallels in the role of female members of the Indonesian armed forces as “little daughters” (Sunindyo 1993, 4), or of the “factory daughters” (Wolf 1996b, 156) employed in Indonesia’s export industries. As pointed out by feminist scholars of nationalism, such familial iconographies imply appeals to the nation’s daughters’ dutifulness and restraint (McClintock 1993; Sunindyo 1993, 15). As the next sections show, the sort of guidance the trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency received contains a full repertoire of practical skills, bodily performance and advice.

Domestic worker-students and the dormitory-family

The trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency enacted the role as children in multiple senses. Preparation prior to departure meant reactivating their experience as school children. For the younger trainees who had only recently graduated from junior high school or high school, their memories of their school days were still fresh. But for the majority of them, school days dated back fifteen years and more. Some of them had left school after elementary school—to find work as domestic workers first in Indonesia and then abroad. In various aspects, their training resembled a formal school setting: classroom sessions, vocational training, and references to official versions of national belonging. One such reference were the daily gym sessions. Every morning at 4.30 a.m. and every afternoon at 5 p.m. the trainees exercised a 20-minutes light aerobics choreography in the front yard, where the Indonesian flag was displayed on a flag pole. These resembled the state gymnastics which all school children in Indonesia and civil servants exercise simultaneously every Friday morning, a ritual called ‘Indonesian Morning Exercise’ (*Senam Pagi Indonesia*). With changing choreographies, this ritual has been practiced since the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. Similar to geographer Sarah Moser’s (2016, 253) description of the ‘Indonesian Morning Exercise’ ritual, the trainees lined up in rows, while Ibu Ani surveilled and corrected them. Like the senior students at schools, who are given a particular role, Ibu Ani selected some experienced trainees to stand in the front row, face the other trainees and thus instruct the sessions. The purpose of the morning exercise at school “is less for health reasons or for personal expression than to teach students how to follow instructions obediently” (ibid., 254). Echoing this reasoning, health matters were not the primary reasons for the gym session, but to teach the trainees how to do their work “with élan” (fieldnotes 02 & 16 May 2014). Like the morning exercise at school, the gymnastics at the training center, in combination with the uniforms and short haircuts, evoked the association of military drill. In addition, every morning the trainees chorused the agency’s etiquette after the

exercise was finished: “I must be responsible. I must be polite. I must take initiative. I must be disciplined. I must be diligent. I must be honest.”

Beyond enacting a role as children in reminiscence of their school days, the trainees became the children of the dormitory in a more literal sense. During the same orientation class that was quoted above, Ibu Ani explained to the newcomers:

I treat you all the same. You are like a family to me, like my children. When I’m sick, it is not my own children who care for me but you. You are like my children. When I am upset and scold you, then not because I hate you, but because I want you all to be successful (fieldnotes 16 May 2014).

Ibu Ani’s description of her relation between her, the ‘dormitory mother’ (*Ibu asrama*), and the trainees enter into a relationship of mutual care. This points to the role of relationships in practicing migrant citizenship that go beyond the more formal teacher-student relation. The mother-daughter relationship between the trainees and Ibu Ani meant in practice that the trainees performed practices of care to Ibu Ani and other instructors, such as giving massages, or keeping her company whenever she called them. Interestingly, this reflects the ambivalence of domestic workers’ participation in their employers’ families, which entails that live-in domestic workers enter a “special relationship beyond the simple bond of employment” (B. Anderson 2000, 122–23). This, however, implies that “employers can not only ignore the worker’s other relationships, but feel good about doing so—for it is an honour to be part of the family” (ibid., 125).

Ibu Ani claimed that she would prepare the trainees ‘to be successful:’ strict rules should train their restraint, their deference, and their capacity to endure and respect their employment contracts—allegedly, the ultimate prerequisite for success (Killias 2018, 29). The trainees had no other choice than to defer to such arrangements of ‘apprenticeship:’ after all, there was no other way to go abroad than to register with a recruitment agency, comply with the rules, and engage in the formal and informal practices of ‘training’ provided by the agency. Within the frame of such asymmetries, as I discussed by the case of Dina, whose subjective migration

project as an escape from marriage was supported by Ibu Ani, this less formalized relation with the trainees was also a space where they received care and protection.

The stark asymmetries that underlie the relation between trainees and instructors become apparent in the *mise-en-scène* of mistress-servant relationships that was integrated in the daily routine at the center, to which I turn to in the following section.

Embodied servants

Through verbal address and bodily performance as school children and daughters, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees are interpellated as daughters of the nation, the agency, and the dormitory mother. Yet, this ascription as being part of the family is undermined by practices that explicitly positioned them as servants. As part of their vocational training, mistress-maid relations were integrated in the everyday routines of the center. The trainees always had to be ready to serve the staff, whom they deferentially addressed as *Mam*, as from *Madam*. Performance of the mistress-servant relation went beyond such modes of address, however: By rule, inside and outside buildings on the compound, the trainees were barefoot, while staff and instructors were not. Not being allowed to wear shoes is evocative of the feudal sign of submission that characterized colonial hierarchical relations in the Dutch Indies at the turn of the 20th century when the colonized were excluded from wearing shoes, especially when they encountered the Dutch colonizers (Schulte Nordholt 1997, 21). When, every day twice, the trainees wiped the floor of the class rooms, the office, and the lab building, they had to do so by moving a piece of cloth with their hands. This forced them into a kneeled or squatted body position, indicating their subordination to instructors, agency staff or myself, the visitor and occasional ‘test-employer.’⁶⁵ This practice provoked questions by the trainees. Ririn, a trainee, who was introduced in Chapter 2.1, once confided to me: Why were they made to wipe the floor like

⁶⁵ This is the traditional way to wipe the floor and in fact has brought benefits to women when giving birth as it strengthens their pelvic diaphragm.

this, while in the households of their future employers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, they ultimately would use swaps and vacuum cleaners? (fieldnotes 14 May 2014). Ririn's question points to the paradoxes that permeate domestic workers' migrant citizenship. Deemed as a major provision of protection, migrant domestic workers' training is supposed to equip them with formal skills necessary to perform household labor in foreign countries. In contrast to other training centers where these formal skills are not taken seriously (see e.g. Killias 2018, 122), the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center were very committed to teach the trainees formal skills and enhance their professionalism. In addition to this, the training also implied that the recruits accustom themselves with inhabiting a position as *Other*, subordinate, servants. Ibu Ani was clear about this: When she called upon the trainees' discipline, she emphasized that she herself knew what the trainees were going through. After all, she herself had worked as a servant before, she said (fieldnotes 02 May 2014). It is important to note that Ibu Ani used the Malay term *babu*, which became part of the vocabulary of the Dutch colonizers in the East Indies. Javanese housemaids who were working in the households of Dutch colonizers at the turn of the 20th century were called *babu*. As historians have pointed out, the *babu* "illustrated the 'otherness' of the colonized subject in its most poignant clarity" (Locher-Scholten 1994, 23; see also Stoler 2002, 49).

With respect to the pervasive address of migrant domestic workers as children, it can be concluded: Domestic worker-citizens enter paternalistic relationships with those actors who are bestowed responsibility for their custody—recruitment agencies, the placement agencies in Hong Kong, or the Consulate in Hong Kong. Migrant domestic workers share this role with other working women, such as female members of the armed forces, or female factory workers. Yet, while as children and daughters they are addressed as citizens in need of guidance, their enactment of subordination points to the ascribed *Otherness* of domestic workers as servants, which puts them at the very fringes of official notions of citizenship.

Interim resumé: Gendered migrant citizenship in practice

The point of departure of this chapter are anxieties over Indonesian migrant domestic workers' outward appearance and intimate relationships that are articulated in everyday discourses. I situated these articulations within moralizing discourses, which have evolved in Indonesia in reaction to the gendered predicaments of the brokerage of domestic workers. While their remittances are welcomed by their families, and while state actors profit from generating foreign exchange, in light of patriarchal gender norms female mobility is regarded as morally suspicious. Furthermore, brokerage of female domestic workers has evoked sentiments of public, national shame, due to scandalized cases of violence, which have been explained by their lack of skills and education. I suggested to apply Rodriguez' concept of gendered migrant citizenship to explore how official rhetoric and recruitment agents resort to dominant norms of female behavior and national belonging in dealing with the mentioned predicaments.

I have discussed the gender-specific provisions and duties of Indonesian migrant citizenship in the case of domestic workers. Official rhetoric appeals to migrant domestic workers' devotion to their families, their preparedness to work under difficult conditions, and their loyalty in sending remittances. Policy makers bestow responsibility to domestic workers as representatives of the nation and stipulate that domestic workers make use of the services of recruitment agencies and their training facilities, as a provision to protect them from trafficking and abuse. Since policy makers deem their employment in 'unskilled' jobs to be the reason for their vulnerability to abuse, domestic workers undergo training provided by recruitment agencies. I explored migrant citizenship of Indonesian domestic workers in practice, mainly by focusing on practices at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency. Due to their crucial role in facilitating the migration procedure and, importantly, in preparing migrant domestic workers for their employment abroad, they are major sites in the production of migrant citizenship. I discussed how national ideals of female behavior and attitude are evoked in interpellations of

Indonesian domestic workers as migrant citizens. Thereby, I described appeals to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees' devotion to their families, their decency and propriety as well as their diligence in (implicit) interpellations as sacrificing family members, as respectable representatives of the nation, and as dutiful daughters of the agency, instructors, and the nation.

My discussion illustrates that due to ascriptions related to female mobility, to the workers' rural working-class origin, and to their 'unskilled' occupation as domestic workers, their migrant citizenship is a graduated citizenship. For instance, unlike other migrating Indonesians, domestic workers' right to mobility is limited due to the stipulation that they make use of the services of recruitment agencies and undergo several months of training, which often takes place in secluded training camps. In light of dominant notions of development, as originating from rural areas in Indonesia, and in light of gender discourses that consider independent female mobility as inappropriate or dangerous, domestic worker-migrant citizens are allotted the role as children within the national community. As children they are promised to receive protection, guidance, and education. By definition, migrant citizenship is inextricably linked to being a worker, and, hence, appeals to citizen workers' female virtues are entangled with the demand to stay competitive on the global market. Thereby, migrant domestic workers' training at recruitment agencies evoke questions that reveal a momentous paradox: Migrant citizenship demands hard work, selflessness, respectability, and diligence for the promise of protection, a decent life in the future, and appreciation as national citizen-subjects and heroines. Yet recruitment agencies not only market domestic workers' labor-power, but also the workers' compliance with the "command [of] the whole person of the domestic worker" (B. Anderson 2000, 125), and thus they heavily curtail the trainees' personal and private lives. Therefore, however, the virtues and expectations of migrant citizenship are constantly undermined: How should migrant domestic workers act as devoted family members while at the same time, they are trained to forget about their families? Why are they addressed as children eager to learn and

as daughters to represent the nation on the international stage, while at the same time they embody servants largely deprived of personal space and value? As I discussed, during their training at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, migrant workers' interpellations oscillate between being a responsible mother, a dutiful daughter, a school child, and the citizen-*Other*—a servant. I suggest that domestic workers' ambivalent place between worker-citizens and *Other* lies at the heart of the attempts to channel Indonesian labor brokerage in more 'professional' occupations (Chapter 5.2).

My exploration of citizenship showed that beneath the official cultivation of virtuous worker-citizens, migrant citizenship in practice also means negotiation of dominant gender norms. I discussed how instructor Mam Fahida inhabits the norm of sacrificial womanhood, but also that, beyond fulfilling the role as a selfless provider for her family and the nation, her migration project meant delaying her marriage and thus negotiating a certain degree of independence. I met many female migrants for whom migration meant delaying marriages, escaping from a problematic marriage or from the stigma of divorce. Beyond the biopolitical reasonings that underlie labor brokerage (the mobilization of resources that help Indonesian rural society sustain itself in light of the pervasion of market logics in ever more spheres of life, that help sustain Hong Kong's care need, and the governing of migrant workers' labor-power), Indonesian female migration effects social transformations for which the anxieties circling around female mobility are symptomatic. Interestingly, for the recruits' subjective migration projects, labor brokerage institutions such as the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency play a role that goes beyond cultivating migrant citizenship and biopolitical governing of their labor-power. As I suggested, for some prospective migrant domestic workers, the walls of the recruitment agency guarantee protection, not necessarily from the hazards of traveling alone, but from violent husbands or husbands they don't love. For these workers, migrant citizenship in practice means that, regardless of reiterations of dominant gender roles that define women mainly over

their family roles, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agencies facilitate protection and care in their subjective escapes from patriarchally colored gender relations and their pursuits of better lives. The subjective practices of migrant citizenship do not imply explicitly articulated claims, they can rather be described as “imperceptible politics,” a term coined by Niamh Stephenson and Dimitris Papadoulos (2006, 138) in contemplating on the significance of everyday experience to irritations of governmentality. Imperceptible politics describe everyday practices of living and surviving which defy and transform dominant social fabrics. Flight and escape can be regarded as imperceptible politics when they effect socio-political transformations (Köster-Eiserfunke, Reichhold, and Schwiertz 2014, 191–92; Stephenson and Papadopoulos 2006, 138). So far, imperceptible politics have mainly been discussed as politics ‘from below,’ meaning migrants’ subjective practices. Notably, the above discussion of lived migrant citizenship showed that the instructors of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency, to an extent, are complicit in these imperceptible politics, thus occupying neither a position ‘on the top,’ nor ‘on the bottom,’ but rather ‘in between.’ The case evokes the question, how in other geographical contexts, actors situated in the interstices of migration infrastructures are involved in imperceptible politics of migration. This notion of migrant citizenship in practice calls for a more relational concepts of migrant citizenship that integrates migrants’ subjective practices of living, surviving and claims to respect and value, thus accounting for the multiple processes of negotiating citizenship (see Isin 2009; Köster-Eiserfunke, Reichhold, and Schwiertz 2014).

6.3 Enacting migrant citizenship differently

Migrant citizenship is subject to negotiation. In the following subchapter, I juxtapose notions of ‘the virtuous migrant citizen’ with the lived subjectivities of Hong Kong’s migrant domestic workers. In the first case, I revisit the motifs of dyed hair and high heel shoes. I trace

how migrant domestic workers make sense of these motifs. In the second case, I discuss how several groups of Indonesian migrant domestic workers performed a national ritual on Indonesia's Independence Day, thus reworking official notions of migrant citizenship.

Politics of appearance

When I arrived in Hong Kong, the changed appearance of the former *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees impressed me. I had arrived in Hong Kong together with Wiwin, Citra, Maryani, and Bunga, four *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae. During the two months I stayed in Hong Kong, I met with other alumnae and got to know other Indonesians who were working in Hong Kong. At the *Thomson* agency, I met Fitri and Ratih who had arrived about a month earlier. Fitri's and Ratih's appearance differed drastically from back at the training center in East Java, where I had met them the last time. Fitri was now wearing a baseball cap backwards, a striped shirt, and sandals that imitated a toe post model of *Birkenstock*-sandals, which were very popular in Hong Kong and urban areas in Indonesia at the time of my research. Ratih was wearing a checkered shirt, and both women were wearing make-up (fieldnotes 12 Jul 2014). During my stay in Hong Kong I met other former trainees on their days off who were wearing lipstick and Japanese brand canvas shoes, which were trendy in urban Indonesia and Hong Kong (fieldnotes 31 Aug 2014). During their first six months, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae barely saw anything of their salaries, because almost two thirds of their monthly salaries went towards settling placement and training fees, while they sent the remaining third almost completely to their families in Indonesia. Some of the workers I had met therefore borrowed money from relatives who were also working in Hong Kong in order to buy new clothes and make-up: things they were deprived of during their preparation at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, whereas bureaucrats had warned them that exactly these things would seduce them into lavish behavior.

Claiming person-value

It was Nuraini, another *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumna, who revealed to me what spending money on fashion articles meant to her. When I met Nuraini on a Sunday in late July 2014, she had just recently arrived in Hong Kong. I met Nuraini and her friend Yeni in the busy area of Mong Kok, which is full of shops and restaurants and where a great deal of placement agencies have their offices. We strolled through the market close to Prince Edward Station and entered a shoe store. Nuraini commented: “Us migrant workers, we cannot buy anything, we only look at things.” I told Nuraini that I was actually thinking of looking for a pair of sandals. Nuraini picked up a pair of shoes with plateau high heels. Today, my reaction to Nuraini’s pick embarrasses me: “I think such shoes are impractical.” The symbolic meaning of high heel shoes was not on my mind at the time. Nuraini explained herself: “We might need such shoes when we’re invited to a wedding party.” We continued our walk through Mong Kok to a pedestrian bridge. Hundreds of Indonesian migrant workers gather on the bridge on Sundays to stretch out plastic mats, to have picnics, and to enjoy watching the dance performances of fellow migrant workers who on Sundays gain some extra money as buskers. Nuraini performed the role of a guide and explained the scenery to me: “We can refresh ourselves here. Only in Hong Kong we can have time for our own (*buat kita diri sendiri*). Back in *Indo*, we are responsible for our families and barely have time for ourselves.” (fieldnotes 27 Jul 2014).

Walking through Mong Kok with Nuraini, I learned about the particular significance of high heel shoes as an expression of personal aspirations. Nuraini clarified that for her the pair of high heel plateau shoes symbolize a social life, something Nuraini wanted to have, or that in her words she actually *needed*, but what she could not yet afford. She reminded me that she is a person who has social duties, such as wedding parties, and needs to dress up. The sensitive nature of her explanation becomes clear against the backdrop of curtailing her personal interests during training at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency, and against the background that

in Hong Kong, time and space to pursue personal interests are mostly limited to occupying public places on Sundays. Notably, Nuraini also let me know that being migrants in Hong Kong, in contrast to her social obligations in East Java, she appreciates to have “time for themselves.” Like Rita and Utari, who I quoted in the introduction of the thesis, Nuraini mentions that back home in her village in Java, time and space for herself are very limited.

High heel shoes are far from useless or impractical in the lifeworlds of Hong Kong’s migrant domestic workers. Rather they are a claim to personhood: Nuraini’s pick of high heel shoes was a statement that she has a life other than being a domestic worker. Nuraini’s pursuit of personal aspirations and interests can be described as a claim to “person-value,” a term Skeggs (2016, 14) has introduced to describe values extracted from a person as well as values “attached to and produced by persons” (ibid.). When Nuraini commented that she could not afford to buy but only look at the pick of her shoes, because she was still paying back recruitment fees and was transferring the remainder of her salary to her son, she indicated that her work was not valued enough to allow her to pursue her personal interests. Being able to afford high heel shoes would mean an appreciation of and respect of her desires and aspirations, of her person. To remain in Skegg’s vocabulary, the ‘devaluation’ of migrant domestic workers is not limited to the devaluation of their labor in monetary terms but also implies definitions of “moral worth” (ibid., 4). Despite hailing migrant domestic workers’ sacrifices as a contemporary national heroism, the conditions of migrant domestic workers make it hard to meet dominant standards of moral worth in Indonesia: As mobile women, their morality is questioned at every turn, while ascriptions of *Otherness* impede them to accrue moral worth. For Nuraini, her claim to person-value does not diminish her moral worth. Enjoying this space and time for herself does not diminish Nuraini’s care for her little son back in Indonesia. On the same day we met, she recounted that she was in constant contact with her aunt who now takes care of her son—her husband was working abroad as well—in order to make sure that her son is taken care

of well. Unlike the taunting comments on migrant workers' materialist behavior as being selfish, Nuraini presented her interest in high heel shoes and in time for herself not in conflict with her familial responsibility (fieldnotes 27 Jul 2014).

Acting like a star

Migrant domestic workers' claim to personhood and person-value has a class-dimension. This becomes explicit in a statement by Indah, an Indonesian worker who I met in August 2014. Then she was a tenant in the shelter for migrant domestic workers where four years later I myself was employed. Indah had stayed in Hong Kong for two years. She captured in a nutshell what dyed hair, high heel shoes, and being fashionable meant to her and her colleagues: "Within our employers' flats we are servants (*babu*), but on our off-days, we are like stars (*artis*)"⁶⁶ (fieldnotes 07 Aug 2014). Indah contrasts migrant domestic workers' social position as servants with the attitude of acting like a star. The claim to person-value implied in dyeing one's hair or wearing fashionable and glamorous clothes is clearly put in context with the devaluation of being a servant. It is important to note that Indah used the colonial term *babu*, which I discussed above. The term not only resonates a position created by the classed devaluation of household labor as in the term *pembantu* (helper), which is often used for domestic workers in Indonesia, but it also resonates colonial relations of power.

'Acting like a star' can be read with Jacques Rancière's (1992) and Skegg's (2016) notion of "disidentification."⁶⁷ Disidentification describes a demonstrated "denial of an identity given

⁶⁶ The direct translation of the Indonesian loanword *artis* would be 'artist' as a performer or a skilled person in fine arts. I chose the translation 'stars,' because in Indonesian everyday use, *artis* is mainly used as a synonym for 'movie star,' or 'pop star.'

⁶⁷ 'Disidentification' is also used by queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz (2008, 4) to describe the "survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship." Muñoz' engagement with the performances, the activism, and survival strategies of queers of color also offers links to Indonesian migrant domestic workers' public staging of their extravagant outward appearance. Yet, I chose Rancière and Skeggs as the main references, due to their emphasis on political subjectification and quests for person-value.

by an other” (Rancière 1992, 62), or, in the words of Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006, 138), a refusal of being “who one is supposed to be.” In that sense, migrant domestic workers’ distinct appearance can be read as a refusal to recognize themselves in the social position that has been allotted to them, the subordinate place of the servant. This refusal becomes powerfully visible on Sundays when Indonesian domestic workers are present in the Hong Kong public in great numbers. On weekdays, in turn, their presence is rather discrete. Sent by their employers to do the groceries, then they rush in pajama pants and plastic sandals to the supermarket, the work clothes they wear in the households that employ them and which clearly distinguishes them from fashion-conscious Hongkongers’ smart casual styles. Nicole Constable (2007, 169) captures the Sunday scenes of disidentification when she describes how migrant domestic workers dress up in public on Sundays as a becoming of “someone other than ‘Mrs. Liu’s maid’.” In glamorous costumes, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong stage themselves as stars when they organize beauty pageants held on the streets of Hong Kong’s business center Central that mimic the international Miss Universe competitions, as we can witness in Babyruth Villarama’s (2016) award winning documentary *Sunday Beauty Queen*.

Importantly, it is not only Hong Kong society that allots the place as a servant to Indah and her colleagues, but, as I showed, also *Othering* practices migrant domestic workers experience along the migration process, notably during their process of preparation. I suggest that migrant domestic workers’ cultivation of distinct appearances is to be understood as a multifaceted, so to speak transnational, disidentification that speaks both to their experience in Hong Kong (in their employer’s flats), but also to their designated status in Indonesia (expressed through the Malay term *babu*). ‘Acting like a star’ is an immediate claim to being part of those fragments of society who are appreciated and celebrated: stars. Rancière delineates such disidentifications that imply the transgression of the boundaries of an allotted position through orders “by which

places, parts (shares), tasks and roles are allocated” (Marchart 2011, 121) as acts of political subjectification (Rancière 1998, 36; see also Schwiertz 2019, 51).

Indonesian migrant domestic workers irritate the order that allocates them the role of decent Indonesian worker-citizens, as Hong Kong non-citizens, and as servants. This irritation becomes apparent in the discomfort of Indonesian officials, training instructors, and villagers with the distinct outward appearance of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. Building on the idea of disidentification as a political subjectification, I understand migrant domestic workers’ staged outward appearance and their renegotiation of the devaluation of their work and lives as politics. The notion of politics I refer to is neither restricted to a narrow sense of labor politics nor to the sense of claims to labor rights. Rather, I highlight the political moment that comes to the fore when migrant workers’ claims to person-value and their collective refusal of being neither servants nor the moderate and decent overseas worker-citizens is rendered publicly visible (for a wider sense of migrants’ politics see Ataç et al. 2015; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). The act of “becoming public” (Schwiertz 2019, 79; translation mine) that is implied in migrant domestic workers’ collective refusal of being a servant on Sundays is crucial for an understanding of the political moment of their new subjectivities. To disrupt the order that ascribes migrant domestic workers the position of the servant—bound to the invisible domestic realm—by ‘acting as a star’ presupposes a public stage. Furthermore, it is the public visibility of migrant domestic workers on the international stage that builds the backdrop of the concerns of Indonesian officials about the country’s image. Conspicuously, the power of the visibility of migrant workers’ claims to person-value in public space on Sundays does not solely stem from migrant workers’ deliberate occupation of public space (like the spectacular occupations by the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in September 2014, the occupations of the Arab Spring in 2011, or the public assemblies in South Europe in the course of the Euro crisis of 2010). Since migrant domestic workers may not live on their own, it happens that there is no

other space than the public realm where they can spend their days off from work. Yet, migrant domestic workers' occupation of public space is a contested issue, so that their enactment of 'being a star' is also an assertion of their participation in Hong Kong's public life: The local city administrations repeatedly attempted to—without success—relocate migrant domestic workers from prominent places in the center to more peripheral places in the city (see Chen and Szeto 2015, 62; Constable 2007, 7–8).

It can be concluded that the outward appearances of Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers symbolize new subjectivities that come into existence through migrant domestic workers' transnational mobility and experiences along the migration process. Read as politics, these subjectivities effect negotiations over migrant citizenship, its implications on participation and the representation of the Indonesian nation. In the next section, I discuss an instance, when Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong explicitly enacted an alternative form of migrant citizenship, one that essentially differs from dominant notions of migrant citizenship and that embodies migrant domestic workers' diverse subjectivities. In August 2014, to commemorate Indonesia's Independence Day, a broad coalition of Indonesian migrant workers' organizations in Hong Kong staged their own, self-organized national ritual. This ritual can be understood as an explicit "act of citizenship" (Isin 2008), an act in which migrant domestic workers constituted alternative modes of representing Indonesia and new modes of national belonging.

Acts of citizenship: Reworking a nationalist ritual

In contrast to concepts that conceive of citizenship as institutionalized and official practices, Engin Isin (2008) has proposed to think of citizenship as a relation that involves negotiation and claims to rights, belonging, and participation that go beyond institutionalized procedures of obtaining one's rights (see also Köster-Eiserfunke, Reichhold, and Schwiertz 2014, 186). Isin (2008, 186) accentuates moments when claimants for rights, belonging, and

participation challenge and transform existing orders through “acts of citizenship,” as “moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens.” I draw on this figure of thought to discuss a moment when Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ organizations in Hong Kong demonstrated an alternative version of citizenship, as they constituted alternative modes of representing Indonesia and new modes of national belonging. In August 2014, for the first time these organizations commemorated Indonesia’s Independence Day by staging a flag ceremony. Up to then, only the Consulate had performed the yearly ceremony, with a selected circle of Indonesian expatriates. In light of the earlier discussion of migrant citizenship as graduated citizenship and in light of moralizing discourses that circle around migrant domestic workers’ subjectivities, the alternative ceremony appears as a site where new political subjectivities emerged.⁶⁸

Commemorating Indonesia’s Independence Day

Every 17th August, Indonesia commemorates the declaration of its national independence from 350 years of colonial rule. All over the archipelago, villages, towns, and urban neighborhoods decorate streets and central places with lampions and pennant chains, all in red and white—the colors of the national flag. Residents engage in playful activities: They run hop sack races, compete in eating *krupuk* crackers hung above their heads, and play tug of war. Apart from the playful gatherings, no Independence Day omits the flag ceremony—a reenactment of the first raising of the national flag and of the declaration of independence by Indonesia’s first president Sukarno and his vice president Mohammad Hatta in 1945. On Independence Day, the best-performing school children are selected to be part of the team to raise the national flag at district or town halls, provincial governments, and even at the State Palace

⁶⁸ The following discussion is based on an article published in the working paper series gender(ed) thoughts of the Centre for Gender Studies Göttingen (Dinkelaker 2018).

in Jakarta. The ceremony is led by the highest-ranking government officials and follows a strict procedure that was codified after independence. Like the morning exercise in Indonesian schools, which I referred to earlier, the flag ceremony is a ritual through which its performers are interpellated as citizens (S. Moser 2016).

Indonesia's Independence Day is also commemorated in Hong Kong, where the majority of residing Indonesian citizens are domestic workers. It is usually celebrated on the Sunday following 17th August. The Consulate commemorates Independence Day with a flag ceremony. For this occasion, it invites a selected group of expatriate citizens to the Consul General's residence. For its flag ceremony, the Consulate in Hong Kong does not recruit overseas school children, as most other Indonesian diplomatic overseas representations do (R. Utami 2015). Instead, a group of 12 Indonesian migrant workers are to perform the honorable task of raising the flag. To qualify for the Consulate's 'flag raising brigade,' applicants must be at least 160 cm tall, they need to pass a health test, and they must undergo an interview in which they are questioned about their personal motivation and attitude towards the nation (Dompot Dhuafa 2014; R. Utami 2015). As the government newswire *Antaraneews* cited the Consul General in 2015, the participation in the flag ceremony educates Indonesian migrant workers "to possess a feeling of responsibility towards the nation and their country" (R. Utami 2015). Particularly because they work overseas, "they have to be able to carry Indonesia's good name through a deep sense of nationalism," the Consul said (*ibid.*). The Consul's statement encapsulates the official notion of Indonesian migrant citizenship. The performance of the official ceremony embodies this notion.

In 2014, a staff member of the Consulate uploaded a video of the ceremony on his YouTube channel (Sahardi 2014) and shared the Consulate's ritualized *mise-en-scène* of national identity. In perfect synchronicity, a squad of uniformly dressed female migrants hoist the

Indonesian flag, while the Consul, elevated on a platform, directs the ceremony. The flag-raising brigade members' knee-long skirts, which resemble the uniforms of Indonesian government officials, echo female state servants' normative femininity. "Civil servants' uniforms are a powerful symbol of the Indonesian state" (S. Moser 2008, 129). As "example[s] for the rest of society" (Suryakusuma 1996, 92), female civil servants represent the ideal "national femininity" (Sunindyo 1993, 16). The elevated position of the ceremony leader, the Consul, marks the hierarchical relation between citizens and state institutions. This arrangement reiterates interpellations of migrant domestic workers as 'daughters of the nation,' and it reenacts the hierarchies between migrant workers and bureaucrats, recruitment agents, or training instructors.

The Consulate's ceremony was not the only flag ceremony that took place in Hong Kong on Independence Day, which in 2014 fell on a Sunday. This was the first year a broad coalition of Indonesian migrant workers' self-organizations in Hong Kong staged their own flag ceremony, which in some aspects significantly contrasted with the Consulate's ceremony. The *Hong Kong Network of Indonesian Migrant Workers* (JBMI) is well-known for mobilizing thousands of workers on the streets to claim their rights, demand fairer wages, criticize a lack of protection by the Consulate, and condemn profit-seeking practices of private placement agencies. On Sundays, members of the coalition meet to pursue the activities of their respective organizations: They provide education on labor rights, celebrate religious holidays such as Eid-al-Fitr, rehearse dances or song performances for upcoming competitions among migrant workers' organizations, or carry out discussions on political topics such as the presidential elections.

On the Sundays preceding Independence Day in 2014, members of the coalition rehearsed and prepared the ceremony on the sports fields in Victoria Park. On one of these Sundays, Sringatin, the coalition's coordinator, explained to me that the coalition invited all domestic workers and Indonesian citizens residing in Hong Kong to this distinct ceremony on

the forthcoming Independence Day, because there was no other option for the wider public to perform the ritual, as the Consulate's event was only open to a select group of migrant workers and Indonesian expatriates. When I asked her why she found the flag ceremony important, Sringatin explained: "The ceremony has been planted in the migrants' minds since they were children. Why shouldn't they be able to perform the ritual while they are here?"⁶⁹ Sringatin addressed the migrant domestic workers' position on the variegated scale of migrant citizenship. Graduated migrant citizenship hence becomes manifest in the secluded character of the Consulate's ceremony.⁷⁰ On another occasion, Sringatin further underlined the importance of the ritual for the workers' feelings of national belonging. Knowing about my intention to discuss the migrant workers' alternative flag ceremony in my academic work, she expressed her hopes that I would "explain the meaning of [the performers'] love to [their] homeland and [their] national feelings" (e-mail communication 25 Aug 2017). While Sringatin positively highlighted the norm of enacting national belonging through performing the ritual on Independence Day, the performers resignified some of the hegemonic norms that define national belonging.

An act of citizenship

I suggest to read the Indonesian migrant domestic workers' alternative flag ceremony as an act of citizenship. Isin (2008, 25) defines 'acts' in distinction to 'actions.' An action is a "deed, a performance, something that is done." Like Rancière's notion of disidentification, Isin's 'acts' of citizenship denote moments of rupture: They denote actions that interrupt "given

⁶⁹ It is to be noted that in later years, selected representatives of migrant worker's organizations were invited to the Consulate's ceremony, which I consider a gesture of respect towards migrant workers' self-organizations. This suggests a dynamic relationship between Hong Kong-based migrant workers' organizations and the Consulate, which is open to reconfiguration.

⁷⁰ The Consulate does invite migrant domestic workers to their celebrations on Independence Day on a Sunday around Independence Day. A big stage is put up in Victoria Park, the most popular place for Indonesian domestic workers to spend their leisure time on Sundays. Each year pop stars are flown in from Indonesia. Fashion shows and comedians entertain crowds of thousands of Indonesian workers. Sringatin, however, pointed to the exclusion of the vast majority from the more serious and formal Independence Day ceremony.

orders, practices and habitus” in the name of justice (Isin 2008, 36, 39). Thereby, acts of citizenship create new political subjectivities and spaces. The alternative flag ceremony can be understood as an act of citizenship not only because before 2014, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, with the exception of the ‘flag brigade,’ had no possibility to participate in the flag ceremony of Indonesian independence. Equally important, the performers demonstrated the diversity of their lived subjectivities as explicitly Indonesian, against the moralizing discourses that deny the Indonesianness of migrant domestic workers’ non-normative subjectivities. Furthermore, the performers transgressed the role they are allotted in official notions of migrant citizenship, namely the role of children. They negotiated how and by whom the Indonesian nation may be represented. This becomes clear by having a closer look at how they performed ceremony, and at the controversy it provoked.

On 17th August 2014, about 450 performers gathered in Kowloon Park to celebrate Independence Day and carry out their own, distinct flag ceremony. With the exception of one expatriate citizen, all performers were migrant domestic workers. The performers’ red and white attire matched the russet paving of the piazza and the sparkling glass facades of the skyscrapers that formed the background of the scene. A commander’s instructions echoed in long-drawn-out sounds across the square: “Siaaaap gerak!”⁷¹ The ceremony performers lined up in squads and followed the instructions. A squad of performers in white uniforms and black velvet *pecis*, a type of cap that was worn by president Sukarno and vice president Hatta, marched along the square. Their lockstep produced synchronous clattering sounds. Muthi, coordinator of the League of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Sumber, chairperson of the *Beringin Tetap Maju*-group who is known for their splendid Hip Hop performances, and a third performer formed the trio that led the squad to hoist the flag. They could, however, only imitate the flag-

⁷¹ This precise instruction is used in military language and means ‘Stand in formation!’

raising because there was no flagpole. A choir made up of performers wearing white blouses and red hijabs or red ribbons sang the national anthem and a song that is part of a canon of national songs recalling the independence fighters. Yima, vice chair of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union in Hong Kong, was part of a group of separately lined up performers waiting to read out the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution, the Indonesian state philosophy *Pancasila*, and a prayer. She was wearing a red and white scouts' bandana and red sneakers. Earlier that day she had worn big pilot glasses which resembled the emblematic glasses worn by the first president Sukarno in historical photographs. As coordinator of the ceremony, Sringatin held a speech—a task carried out by the President himself at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. Speaking into a microphone, Sringatin reminded the audience of colonial oppression. She spoke about the “spirit of resistance” that was evident in the early days of the independence struggle. Her speech made an appeal to learn from the heroes and heroines⁷² of that struggle saying: “We must keep on learning, support migrant workers who are in need, and support the struggle of the Indonesian people for prosperity.”⁷³

I observed the ceremony from the side. There was practically no audience for the ceremony, because everybody was involved in it. An exception were the few journalists—migrant workers who freelanced for Indonesian-speaking newspapers in Hong Kong—documenting the event. Standing next to me was Andi, a *tomboi*. He⁷⁴ could not take part in the marching and saluting due to a leg injury. A crutch supported him and a straw hat protected his head from the sun, while he was filming the 40-minute choreography. Without mercy, Andi lectured the journalists who entered the ceremony field to capture the unique scene with their reflex cameras. He kept commenting: “Wow, this gives me goose bumps!” Other participants shared Andi's

⁷² The term *pahlawan*, heroes, in Indonesian does not have gender-specific forms, but Sringatin also refers to the women involved in the struggle for independence (Wieringa 2002, 52–96).

⁷³ I am thankful that Sringatin shared the manuscript of her speech with me (e-mail communication 09 Sep 2014).

⁷⁴ In Indonesian, personal pronouns are not gendered. Since Andi was addressed as *mas*—a respectful form of address used for men—among fellow migrant workers, I use the English third-person singular form ‘he.’

feeling: “I haven’t done the flag-raising for 14 years,” exclaimed Fidah, another performer who had worked in Hong Kong for more than a dozen years. Other participants lamented that the midday sun had made them dizzy. There was no doubt, however, that this morning had been a highlight among the manifold events migrant workers organize almost every Sunday. Photos of the event were shared enthusiastically on social media afterwards (fieldnotes 17 Aug 2014; see also Jinawi 2014).

The successful event sparked the organizers’ enthusiasm not least due to a controversy among the Indonesian community in Hong Kong, which arose on Facebook, calling into question the lawfulness of the ceremony. An Indonesian expatriate was upset about the call for an alternative independence ceremony. He claimed that performing the flag ceremony was unlawful, because it took place outside the Consulate, which is Indonesian territory. He called the organizers “odd (*nyeleneh*)” and “stupid (*bodoh*)” (Nuraini 2014). The organizers felt insulted but, referring to relevant regulations, they could show that the event was fully lawful (fieldnotes 17 Aug 2014).

The expatriate’s complaint and insult of the performers is evocative of Monika Swasti Winarnita’s (2016) study of dance performances by Indonesian female marriage migrants in Australia married to Australian husbands. Winarnita shows that the self-chosen representatives of the Indonesian culture and nation constantly negotiate their legitimacy and aesthetics, as they are questioned by members of the Indonesian Consulate and the Indonesian expatriate community in Perth, the site of her study. It seems that the upset expatriate similarly questioned the flag ceremony in Kowloon Park as a legitimate representation of Indonesia on the international stage. The fact that the ceremony took place in a public space outside Indonesia, virtually in front of an international audience, is crucial to the controversy. In Indonesia, communities perform the ceremony in non-government spaces without being questioned. However, in the case of (female) migrant workers, the image of the nation is at stake. As Winarnita has argued, non-

official representatives of Indonesia evoke fears “that they will publicly embarrass the nation” (Winarnita 2016, 133). The controversy shows that the fact that domestic workers publicly perform the ceremony at least triggered irritation among the Indonesians living in Hong Kong. It created a “rupture in the given,” as it significantly differed from the “conduct, practice, behavior and habit” (Isin 2008, 25).



Figure 5: The flag raisers at the flag ceremony in Kowloon Park, Hong Kong in August 2014, photo: SD



Figure 6: The choir and “elite” functions of the flag ceremony in Kowloon Park, Hong Kong in August 2014; photo: SD

New political subjectivities

By iterating the national ritual and by referring to norms of enacting national belonging, the ceremony performers in Kowloon Park attached particular meanings to nationalism and negotiated official notions of migrant citizenship. In contrast to the performers at the flag ceremony at the Consulate and in contrast to the trainees’ uniform appearance at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, the performers’ uniforms and identical movements did not deny their diverse gender subjectivities: Some performers were wearing a hijab, others had integrated accessories such as ribbons into their hair. Some of the performers had unique hairstyles, whether dyed or cut short. Some *tombois* took leading roles, just as in their Hong Kong communities, where *tombois* often assume roles of responsibility (Chang and Groves 2000, 82; Sim 2007, 294). This composition of diverse gender subjectivities depicts the lived everyday realities of Hong Kong-based migrant domestic workers, which, as I discussed above, involve

quests and claims to person-value. For the performers, diverse gender subjectivities are compatible with their feeling of national belonging.⁷⁵ The performers' diverse subjectivities defied the othering discourses which denote migrant domestic workers' non-normative subjectivities as contradicting Indonesian culture and identity. They performed a particular form of national belonging, which, in contrast to the moralizing function of cultural norms of restraint, decency, and propriety in dominant notions of migrant citizenship, accommodates their desires, aspirations, and claims. The flag ceremony in Kowloon Park can be read as a resurrection of the motif "unity in diversity" (*bhinneka tunggal ika*), which, as the official motto of the nation, is crucial to the image of the Indonesian post-colonial nation. During president Suharto's New Order, the national motif of unity in diversity was reduced to depoliticized multiculturalism (Barker 2008, 534; Pemberton 1994). Remarkably, by reiterating this motif and by referring to the traditions of popular struggles in Indonesian history, the flag performers re-politicized it, thus, challenging the exclusion of migrant domestic workers' non-normative gender subjectivities from national belonging.

The performers also defied the infantilizing ascriptions implied in official notions of migrant citizenship. Citing the leaders of the young nation, by enacting the proclamation of independence during the ritual but also through symbols such as imitations of Sukarno's pilot glasses, the leaders of the ceremony took the substance of the ceremony literally and made a statement of their maturity. Their distinct enactment of the ceremony reveals alternative visions of migrant citizenship. By involving all Indonesians who came to Kowloon Park in the ceremony, and not excluding them as spectators (like the Indonesian expatriates who were invited as guests to the Consulate), the ceremony in Kowloon park created a collective experience rather than a spectacle. The missing flagpole and the fractures in the performers' uniformity,

⁷⁵ The flag ceremonies carried out in the migrants' home towns and villages likewise do not comply with norms of perfect synchronicity and uniformity at official flag ceremonies. The diversity in gender performance, however, would generally not be seen in the migrants' home towns and villages.

which contrasted with the sublimity of the official flag-raising ceremony and the uniform appearance of its performers, did not give the organizers any reason for embarrassment. The self-confidence of the organizers is noteworthy, given the salience of government officials' and the Indonesian public's concern about the image of the Indonesian nation overseas. The Indonesian Consulate encourages migrant domestic workers to represent the Indonesian nation and carry the nation's good name, as flag-raising brigade members or as members of groups practicing and rehearsing Indonesian cultural performances at the Consulate. Norms in physical appearance and attitude, articulated in the selection process of the flag-raising brigade, regulate whether a migrant domestic worker qualifies as a representative of the nation. In contrast, the performers in Kowloon Park neither hide imperfections in their performance nor their background as migrant domestic workers who claim legitimacy to perform national identity and, thus, negotiate the norms that define who is eligible to represent the nation in the international arena. When in 2014, the organizers of the flag ceremony in Kowloon Park convened such an event for the first time, they (re)defined and performed national belonging in *their* terms—in a way that opens up the rigid grid of moralizing gendered migrant citizenship; asserts their diverse subjectivities, interests and aspirations; and, ultimately, claims respect and equality.

The organizations which invited to the flag ceremony had protested in front of the Consulate for years and had condemned the government for policies that affected their freedom of movement, their freedom to choose an employer, and lack of protection against the profit-seeking practices of agencies. The ceremony, in turn, carried a special, affectively charged meaning, as it awakened the performers' memories of enacting Indonesian citizenship through the ritual. In their protests, domestic workers claimed their rights as excluded *Other* citizens. In their performance to the national ritual, they explicitly stated that they belonged to the nation in their capacities as domestic workers in ways that accommodated their lived subjectivities.

6.4 Resumé

As they undergo the migration process, migrant domestic workers are not only interpellated in their capacity as workers, but as dutiful female citizens. To be more precise, they are interpellated as *migrant* citizens to whom particular provisions and relations to the state and the nation apply. For domestic workers, particular moralizing standards of migrant citizenship apply, which resort to notions of respectability that are cultivated in middle class environments but dominate official gender discourse. Instilling middle class virtues of respectability on working-class migrant workers is an ambivalent process. Migrant workers are addressed as second-class citizens, poor, rural, and in need of guidance. On a scale of graduated citizenship, interpellations of migrant *domestic workers* oscillate between partial citizens and citizen-*Others*—servants, whose compliance to the control over their personhood is marketed on the global market for care workers. The figure of the virtuous citizen is negotiated, as it is itself a reaction to social transformations that stem from the large scale of female mobility in migrant villages origins. I have suggested to read the lived subjectivities of Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers as claims to person-value in light of the devaluation of their work and citizen-status. Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong constitute new notions of migrant citizenship that compete with official versions. Juxtaposing the official rhetoric of migrant citizenship with citizenship in practice and with migrant domestic workers' (political) subjectivities calls for dynamic conceptualizations, which extend the notion of migrant citizenship coined by Rodriguez (2010). Such a dynamic conceptualization would take into account both the creative and governing moments of citizenship, as suggested by Isin (2009, 371), and it would furthermore take into account both explicit acts and imperceptible politics of (migrant) citizenship (see Köster-Eiserfunke, Reichhold, and Schwiertz 2014). In the case of Indonesian migrant domestic workers, citizenship is negotiated through affectively charged symbols, such as national rituals or dyed hair, and, in a less visible way, through everyday practices of care and protection. I

referred to Rancière's and Skegg's notion of disidentification to describe how migrant domestic workers claim class positions not ascribed to them in dominant discourse through their extravagant appearance, turning from 'servants' into 'stars.' Isin's 'act of citizenship' served as a framework to analyze how Indonesian domestic workers challenged dominant notions of migrant citizenship by staging their distinct, independent flag ceremony to commemorate Indonesia independence day in the year 2014.

While in this chapter I discussed the ambivalences of interpellations of migrant domestic workers as citizens, which are always linked to their capacity as laborers, the next chapter puts the focus more narrowly on the biopolitical governing of the workers' labor-power, on the anxieties and worries of mobility, on creating (an employer's) comfort, and on (self-)care.

7. “Love your Work” and “Win your employer’s heart:” Professional affective workers

This chapter engages with the ‘labor dispositive’ of Indonesian labor brokerage. Domestic workers perform complex labor. The designation of their labor as ‘unskilled’ conceals an amplitude of capacities ranging from sensing the needs of the members of the household that employs them to creating a comfortable atmosphere for managing their own anxieties in light of their precarity. Discussing the multifaceted nature of these abilities, this chapter focuses on the endeavors of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency to perfect their trainees’ performance of affective labor. I use the terminology of affective labor to discuss competencies which recruiters label as ‘mental preparedness.’ By meticulously teaching their trainees how to be ‘mentally prepared,’ the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* instructors engage in the larger, national, project of modernizing and professionalizing Indonesian migrant labor. They are invested enhancing the workers’ and the nation’s respectability, while they call on migrant domestic workers’ self-governing capacities.

Below, I will provide a detailed terminological discussion of the terms emotional and affective labor and choose affective labor as a useful concept to describe the nuances and subtleties implied in the work that Indonesians perform in Hong Kong. In scrutinizing the mobilization of migrant domestic workers’ affective labor, I will introduce an analytical distinction between competencies of affective labor directed towards future employers on the one hand and skills of affective labor that address the workers’ ‘selves’ on the other. I will explore the multifarious competencies of affective labor and pay attention to the techniques, rationalities, and ambiguities of the practices that I observed along the migration process. I will argue that perfecting the trainees’ affective labor serves two interconnected goals: *Firstly*, they can be seen as an endeavor to modernize the agencies’ image and to compete on the global market. *Secondly*, the training in affective labor constitutes a biopolitical mode of governing through a

training in the capacity to their own insecurity and anxieties. In contrast to the ‘migrant citizen dispositive’ discussed in the previous chapter, which strongly rests on norm-defining and disciplining practices of subject constitution, I will argue that the figure of the ‘affective worker’ is primarily a self-governing subject. As I will show, the endeavor of enhancing migrant domestic workers’ affective labor resorts to the workers’ embodied cultural and gendered knowledge, and it mobilizes their spiritual practices. But rather than fully corresponding to the polyphonic interpellations condensed in the desirable laborer-subject, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong master the competencies required for the performance of affective labor on their own terms. I will explore how their modes of coping constitute socialities at odds with the techniques that govern them.

7.1 Brokering affective workers

The chapter is opened by a description of my participation in the character-building class at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center. This episode illustrates how the agency trains prospective workers in perfecting their skills of affective labor. Following a reflection on this episode, I enter into a discussion of the concepts of emotional and affective labor. I delineate of my understanding of bureaucrats’ and instructors’ emphasis of the workers’ mental preparedness as an engagement in mobilizing their affective labor.

Character building

On Monday mornings, character building (*bina karakter*) was on the time table for all *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees. After having stayed at the training center for a week, I joined the class instructed by Laotse Wiwik,⁷⁶ the Mandarin teacher who prepared trainees for their employment in Taiwan. Dina, my “personal assistant,” had already told me about classes

⁷⁶ ‘Laotse’ is Mandarin for ‘master.’

that should motivate the trainees and prevent them from experiencing stress at the training center (fieldnotes 29 April 2014). Dina had also explained to me that such classes distinguished this training center from the ones she had been trained at years before, when she had gone for Hong Kong for the first time.

On that Monday in early May 2014, about 80 trainees gathered on the second floor of the lab building, where ‘practical’ subjects such as household chores, laundry, ironing, sewing, cooking, child care, and care for the elderly were taught. I was sitting among the trainees on the white tile floor. Laotse Wiwik welcomed them with the Islamic greeting of “assalamualaikum,” and a “prosperous greetings (*salam sejahtera*) for those who are not Muslims.” Laotse Wiwik, about 40 years old and once a migrant worker herself, appeared jovial whenever I met her. The atmosphere in the character building class was similarly comfortable. The trainees were sitting in groups according to their destinations Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. They built a semicircle, in the middle of which Laotse Wiwik positioned herself. She began the class by checking the attendance of the trainees. Quite some time of the class went to Laotse Wiwik reproaching those women who were late for class. However, her way of reproaching the latecomers was humorous. They had to line up in front of the other trainees, fold their arms behind their backs, and explain the reason for being late. Laotse Wiwik talked to them in English and Mandarin; she made the trainees chuckle because of her exaggerated indignation. She intensively interrogated one trainee who was preparing to work in Singapore. The woman could hardly express herself in English, but somehow managed to explain that she “had made breakfast” for Mam Luthfi, a staff working in the agency office. She explained that when she had seen Mam Luthfi enter the compound on her motorcycle and carrying shopping bags, she offered Mam Luthfi her help. The trainee had assisted Mam Luthfi to carry the bag filled with bunches of grapes to the office and share them with the other staff members. Laotse Wiwik commented: “What you have done was right. You acted proactively.” When offering her help

to Mam Luthfi, the trainee should, however, have asked her whether the grapes had already been washed. Laotse Wiwik drew a parallel to the trainees' future employment relations: "It's you who carries responsibility. Imagine you're alone with the granny you're looking after, you have to make sure you are both safe." As a gesture of reward, Laotse Wiwik allowed the trainee to sit down and join the 'Singapore-group.' A few other latecomers had to stay lined up in front. One of them had explained that she had been to the bathroom and thus not made it in time to the class. "You spent such a long time in the bath room?" "I did my business (*BAB*)." Laotse Wiwik asked whether the trainee had a stomach ache, the latter affirmed this, and Laotse Wiwik commented in her exaggerated and thus comical way that probably the trainee had eaten chili. A few days earlier, Dina had explained to me that during their preparation in the camp, the trainees were not allowed to eat chili because the hot spice was considered unhealthy, and trainees who had already passed the medical test were not supposed to become "unfit"—the company may not retrieve the capital that has been invested in the trainees (fieldnotes 29 April 2014; see also Killias 2018, 113).

Laotse Wiwik now turned to the whole class to explain that the work of the prospective migrants requires three things: labor-power (*tenaga kerja*), feeling (*perasaan*), and brain (*pikiran*). The destination country-groups were turned into teams that competed against each other. Their task was to name examples for "labor-power, feeling, and brain." First, the members of the Singapore-team answered: "Labor force means to clean thoroughly," and: "We need to use feeling in order not to upset the employer (*biar majikan tidak marah*)." Doing one's work with "brain" meant "to recheck (*cek kembali*)," they shouted. When it was the turn of the Hong Kong-team to name examples for labor-power, feeling, and brain, some trainees of the team shouted: "Labor-power means to do the work seriously (*serius-sungguh*)." They dropped other keywords: "willing wholeheartedly (*ikhlas*)," "sincere (*tulus*)," "loving your work." Laotse Wiwik commented: "All these words are part of 'feeling.'" Being asked about what

doing one's work "with brain" meant, a trainee of the Hong Kong-team shouted: "You must check whether you did your task properly." Laotse Wiwik cheered the Taiwan-team on: "Come on, don't lose against Singapore and Hong Kong." The members of the other teams challenged the Taiwan-team: "Nothing may be named twice!" Answering to Laotse Wiwik's question what doing one's work with brain meant, members of the Taiwan-team shouted out: "patience," "win your employer's heart," "reexamine your work." Laotse Wiwik dismissed this latter guess: "not everybody will understand this term."

Another latecomer interrupted the competition. Laotse Wiwik instructed her to join the other latecomers who still had been lining up. She took the occasion and called two trainees who had been slouching—instead of sitting up straight—to come to the front. Now she addressed five trainees who were all standing in a row. They were about to receive a penalty. Laotse Wiwik turned to the rest of the trainees: Should they serve their sentence inside or outside? "Inside!" the other trainees shouted. Laotse Wiwik asked each team to suggest an appropriate punishment. Eventually the latecomers were to sing a song, the lyrics of which were to be modified by replacing each vowel with a 'u,' and they had to dance to it. Chuckling, the latecomers were performing their punishment while the other trainees were laughing and shouting, and Laotse Wiwik cheered them on.

She got back to the subject of the class. Shifting topics, she addressed work relationships with employers, a topic that is part of the curriculum of the work competence standards for housekeeping of the Ministry of Manpower (2005). Laotse Wiwik explained that there are neither stingy nor cantankerous employers. She advised the trainees that abroad, each day they should concentrate and recite a passage of the Qur'an. Those who were not Muslims should recite passages from the Bible. They should do so instead of adding urine to an employer's glass of water—Laotse Wiwik was referring to migrant workers' practice of "bringing magic (*sihir*)" along their journeys abroad in order to influence or protect themselves from employers (see

Kayoko 2014, 258). As I had learned from one of the staff, exercising “black-magic” is one of the many reasons employers lay off their workers, especially in Saudi Arabia (fieldnotes 11 May 2014; see also Farbenblum, Taylor-nicholson, and Paoletti 2013, 115).⁷⁷ Laotse Wiwik reminded the trainees to always remember their parents. They should communicate with the Almighty, and finally they would be successful and rewarded by God (*dapat rezeki*). This would save them from “*stres*.”⁷⁸ She warned the trainees about shady healers who would scam them with empty promises “Don’t believe anyone who tells you that you can earn money without working for it.” She herself had experienced being cheated. “Otherwise you will experience *stres*—*sosote* in Cantonese.” She put her finger diagonally on her forehead, a gesture that in Indonesia signifies madness.⁷⁹ With this last piece of advice, Laotse Wiwik closed the class. She instructed us to pray “according to everyone’s belief.” At the very end of the class, the trainees joined her enthusiastic cheer: “*Sukses dan Makmur, cia yo, cia yo!*”⁸⁰ (fieldnotes 05 May 2014).

Being mentally prepared

Considering the subject-constituting processes of Indonesian migrant domestic workers and the techniques of governing them, the episode of the character building-class is remarkable for at least three reasons. *Firstly*, Laotse Wiwik created a cheerful atmosphere during her class.

⁷⁷ The ‘magical’ has figured high in othering and exoticizing post-/colonial dominant anthropological knowledge-production, and it has been a crucial category in perpetuating the epistemic violence-bearing dichotomies of ‘the rational’ and ‘the irrational.’ Being aware of this representation of the “magical,” I intend to discuss Laotse Wiwik’s reference to “magic” as one of the many practices to deal with existential precariousness and politically, socially, and economically produced precarity (see below). The ‘magical’ is also a motive in the demeaning discourses circulating among Hong Kong employers and the media depicting threats by migrant domestic workers such as adding pubic hair or menstruation blood in their employers’ food (transcript of interview 01 August 2014).

⁷⁸ In an article on the emotion work that urban Indonesian middle-class wives perform in their homes, Jones (2004, 25) explains that the “term stress is spelled in two ways in Indonesian public culture, both as a direct borrowing of the English *stress*, and *stres*.” Like Jones, I use the spelling *stres* in order “to connote the specifically Indonesian sense of the term” (ibid.).

⁷⁹ The actual term for “crazy” in Cantonese is “*chisin*,” while “*sosote*” is rather used for “silly” (personal communication with the Hong Kong based domestic worker and writer Arista Devi on 06 July 2016).

⁸⁰ *Cia yo* is an ‘indonesianized’ version of the Mandarin motivation cheer *Jiayou* that is used in order to encourage athletes (Wang 2008).

This starkly contrasts with many other scenes in the training center that I witnessed. On other occasions, the trainees were treated harshly, for example when they had to listen to Ibu Ani's, the dormitory overseer's, tirades of invectives that scolded them for indecent clothing or for lacking seriousness in the weekly sessions of reciting Qur'an surahs (*Yasinan*). Then, the giggles that accompanied the character building-class were completely absent. Performing a song as a punishment also differed from other penalties such as being condemned to clean the toilet for a week (fieldnotes 20 May 2014). Although the latecomers of the character building-class were exposed in front of the other trainees, the affective tinge of Laotse Wiwik's dealing with rule breakers lay in a spectrum between embarrassment, being teased, and amusement. Other studies on training centers describe humiliating situations, such as dormitory overseers who insult trainees by calling them monkeys and dogs, unworthy to "be called humans" (Killias 2018, 127), harsh commands of staff who act "like kings" (Wee and Sim 2004, 117), and scoldings by agency managers who "bang[] at the desk to show [their] anger" (Liang 2011, 1823). Laotse Wiwik's teaching methods were no exception, however. Her methods illustrate a set of training practices at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center which involve laughter, amusement, excitement, cheering, and, hence, create periods of comparably comfortable atmospheres.

The character building-class is remarkable, *secondly*, because of Laotse Wiwik's depiction of the competencies that would equip the trainees for employment abroad. Performing a job that requires 'labor force, feeling, and brain,' the trainees would need to obtain a complex set of skills that are by no means limited to physical tasks such as operating household appliances or cooking skills. Feminist authors have pointed to this complexity of skills required in reproductive care work and its simultaneous invisibilization and social devaluation (e.g. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 10). Notably, Laotse Wiwik does not solely *instruct* the trainees about different components of a migrant domestic worker's job, but she also teaches the trainees

to *reflect* on the skills that their occupation requires. The existing literature on the preparation of migrant domestic workers has put emphasis on the teaching of deference, on the creation of docile bodies and obedient workers who “*follow* the instructions they receive” (Constable 2007, 74 & 83; see also Killias 2018, 126). Laotse Wiwik, in turn, addressed the trainees as self-conscious workers, and thus appealed to their capacity to work autonomously. Hong Kong employers strongly demand this faculty, since their “households need to function like clockwork” (Sassen 2008, 465).

The class is noteworthy, *thirdly*, because Laotse Wiwik recommended measures to the trainees that should prevent them from *stres*, such as the recitation of Qur’an surahs or passages from the Bible. Her course exemplifies how Indonesian migrant workers are trained to stay emotionally healthy. According to the *Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language*, *stres* is a “mental and emotional disorder or disturbance caused by external factors” (Indonesian Language Center 2018). Laotse Wiwik’s gesture of putting her forefinger diagonally on her forehead links *stres* with madness. In the Indonesian context, madness implies several meanings: impurity in a religious sense, being affected by the spiritual practices of powers and forces that cause harm and destroy a person’s vitality, or suffering a psychosis in the psychiatric sense (Good, Subandi, and DelVecchio Good 2007, 254–59). Laotse Wiwik’s advice to refrain from practices she labelled as “magic” implies an understanding of mental healthiness that includes both the affliction and the mastering of spiritual forces. The manual for instructors of the “mental and character building”-sessions at the government pre-departure training, which were described in Chapter 6.1, references a more psychiatric understanding of *stres* as “everything that can cause mental or physical disorder” (BNP2TKI, 2013, Annex 3, 5). Yet, similar to Laotse Wiwik, the manual also suggests the recitation of prayers as one of the measures to cope with *stres* (ibid. 2013a, 13).

In summary, the character building-class at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training

center illustrates how the agency mobilized what I frame as migrant domestic workers' 'affective labor.' In the following sections, I discuss this analytical term in juxtaposition to the term 'emotional labor,' and explore how it can be made productive in understanding endeavors to advance Indonesian domestic workers' position on the market for care labor.

From emotional to affective labor

All three aspects I highlighted as characteristic of Laotse Wiwik's character building-class relate to the concepts of 'emotional' or 'affective labor' (Akalin 2015; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014a; Hardt and Negri 2004; Hochschild 2003; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). These refer to the production and management of emotions and affects: By means of her teaching methods, of her exaggerated indignation, and of entertaining punishments, Laotse Wiwik evoked laughter and created a cheerful affective atmosphere in the class room. Furthermore, the production of affects and emotions are the subject matter of her playful reflection on the skills required for working abroad. These imply the trainees' skills to "love their work" and "win their employers' hearts." Lastly, by Laotse Wiwik's explanation on how the trainees could avoid *stres* by "talking to the Almighty," the trainees were expected to bring themselves into a state of emotional equipoise.

In the academic discussion on the growing importance of emotions and affects in the sphere of waged labor, both concepts of 'emotional labor' and 'affective labor' are deployed. They describe very similar activities, but they are situated in different theoretical traditions. Having the two concepts at hand, I am faced with the question: Which concept is productive to describe the role of the production and management of emotions and affects in brokering Indonesian domestic workers? I turn to a discussion of these terms with respect to the field of paid domestic work performed by migrant workers in the coming sections. I explain my choice of the concept affective labor as an apt term to describe subtleties that are required from domestic workers in

creating a comfortable atmosphere and managing their own worries and anxieties in light of the precarity of their migration projects. This choice borrows from the basic lines of thought provided in Arlie Russel Hochschild's concept of emotional labor, however, it goes beyond this concept by taking into account that the work migrant domestic workers perform is not confined to addressing other persons, but that it implies being sensitive to the inarticulate processes of a whole environment.

Emotional labor

Hochschild's work is a "necessary point of departure" (Altomonte 2015) in clarifying the characteristics of emotional or affective labor. Hochschild (1979, 561) describes "emotion work" as the "act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling", which is done "upon the self, by the self, upon others, and by others upon oneself" (ibid.). In her book *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild introduces the term 'emotional labor' in reference to her study with Delta flight attendants and debt collectors as symbolic figures in the post-industrial work world. Emotional labor refers to the *management of feeling* (ibid., 1979, 551) within the context of waged labor (ibid., 2003, 7). Emotional labor "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place" (ibid.). The Delta flight attendants are trained to regulate feelings through "surface acting" and "deep acting." The first comprises disguising and pretending feelings, the latter signifies an intrusive method to work on the self, including imagination, self-talk, and work on the body (ibid, 33, 38–48). Emotion work is constitutive for the 'domestic' and 'private' realm in capitalist societies, and is in many social and cultural contexts perceived as a natural female skill and duty (ibid., 11). Commodified emotional labor has been highlighted as the core of global care chains. Households in affluent societies extract the commodified emotional labor of female workers from poorer countries (see e.g. Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2004; Hochschild 2000; Lutz and

Palenga-Möllnbeck 2012; Parreñas 2001; Yeates 2009). Although widely received, Hochschild's terminology has been criticized for her understanding of emotion, acknowledging that this understanding reflects the "emotion theories of her time" (Wetherell 2013, 225; see also Neckel 2009, 185; Penz and Sauer 2016, 58; Weeks 2007, 241). I do not fully share all the criticism of Hochschild's work. But to provide a picture of some of the discussions on affects and emotions, I rehearse some of the arguments that have been brought forward to criticize Hochschild's concept in the following paragraphs.

Social psychologist Margaret Wetherell (2013, 225) criticizes that the term "emotional labour assumes that there is something that needs regulating, a pre-existing natural emotional range that is spontaneous and potentially out of control, needing to be brought under control as best one can." Commenting on the distinction between "socially constructed signals and predefined and biologically determined action plans," Wetherell (ibid.) criticizes:

Hochschild remained caught among a series of contrasts: the managed heart versus the non-managed heart; self-consciously regulated emotion versus spontaneous spirit; deep acting versus spontaneous feeling; inauthentic versus authentic emotion; and the repression of natural emotional responses versus emotion registered at its proper volume.

Hochschild (2003, 7,13, 131, 230) ascribes emotional labor the potential of individual and social alienation, which stems from the mentioned dichotomous distinctions. Wetherell (2013, 225) points out, however, that at the time of the first publication of *The Managed Heart* in 1983, such dichotomous divisions of social regulation and biological essence were common in the social sciences.

During the past decades, feminist and cultural studies as well as anthropology have offered nuanced theories of emotions which do not reproduce the essentialism of 'authentic' emotions (e.g. Abu-Lughod and Lutz 2009; Ahmed 2004; Leavitt 1996). The field of anthropology of emotions offers a particularly fruitful take on emotions because it includes the social, the body, discourse, culture, social interaction, and power mechanisms in the conceptualization of

emotions. In this perspective, emotions are defined as bio-cultural, social, and relational processes (Röttger-Rössler 2004; Röttger-Rössler and Stodulka 2014, 19–22). This means, emotions are understood as physiological, bodily arousals that are cultural in the sense that they are influenced by context and cannot be naively considered as universal phenomena. Emotions furthermore “unfold in social interactions, that is how they are produced, expressed, regulated, and reciprocated in communicative acts” (Röttger-Rössler and Stodulka 2014, 20).

Affective labor

While the academic interest in emotions has for a long time been a rather specific field of study in the social and cultural sciences and feminist research, nowadays there is a growing interest in corporeal experiences. This interest supersedes a long-standing orientation towards linguistic phenomena and is often discussed in the terminologies of affect (Clough 2007; Penz and Sauer 2016, 37; Seigworth and Gregg 2010; Wetherell 2012, 2). The career of the term ‘affective labor’ relates to this development. The two postoperaist authors Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (1999; 2000, 2004)⁸¹ have made use of the term with regard to discussing post-Fordist shifts in the organization of labor and the undermining of industrial production modes. In their analysis of contemporary “cognitive capitalism,” affective labor captures the significance of creativity, relationality, inventiveness, and knowledge to contemporary modes of production (see also Mühlhoff and Slaby 2018; Penz and Sauer 2016, 63–67). While Hardt and Negri (2004, 108) do not explicitly refer to Hochschild’s work, their description of the term resembles her characterization of emotional labor:

⁸¹ Postoperaism is a variety of Marxism that focuses on the disciplining, governing, and struggles of labor. While as an intellectual and activist current, operaism developed in Italy’s industrial centers of the 1960s, postoperaism overturned operaism’s focus on industrial labor. Drawing on poststructuralism, postoperaism designates theoretical debates on post-Fordist regimes of labor, for instance covering the logistical, creative, IT, and service sectors (see Mezzadra 2009).

Affective labor produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion. One can recognize affective labor, for example, in the work of legal assistants, flight attendants, and fast food workers (service with a smile).

Affective labor is an important subcategory of ‘immaterial labor:’ “labor that creates immaterial products such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 108). Unlike Hochschild, who highlights alienation as an implication of the growing importance of emotional labor in the post-industrial world, Hardt and Negri ascribe a liberating potential of creating solidarity and collective action to affective labor. They derive this potential from the argument that this kind of labor produces human relations (Hardt 1999, 96; 98). Yet, feminist scholars have criticized Hardt and Negri for insufficiently considering the appropriation of racialized and feminized reproduction labor in their emphasis on the liberating potential of affective labor (e.g. Caffentzis and Federici 2007; Oksala 2016, 290).

Hardt and Negri (2004, 108) justify their choice of the term ‘*affective* labor’ by stating that “[u]nlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. Referencing Baruch Spinoza, they describe affects, for instance joy or sadness, as “the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking” (ibid). The bodily feature that is considered by the term *affective* labor has been highlighted with respect to migrant domestic work in private households. Sociologist Ayşe Akalin (2015, 70) criticized that Hochschild’s study of the emotional labor incorporated in the “face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact” between flight attendants and passengers insufficiently takes account of the body. Akalin stressed that the “bodily features” extracted from migrant domestic workers “extend from hygiene to bodily odour, from talkativeness to kindness and from her clothes to her public manners” (ibid., 71).

Emotional or affective labor?

The term *affective* labor has been favored for taking into account the bodily features of the labor involved in the production of feelings of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion. However, as I have discussed above, in contemporary scholarship on the anthropology of emotions, emotions themselves are equally conceived as *embodied*, social, and relational processes; they are *not*, as Hardt and Negri claim, reduced to mental phenomena (Röttger-Rössler 2004, 85). If this scholarship is considered, it is the characteristic of a not-yet-named intensity and inbetweenness, rather than features of bodiliness, that distinguishes affects from emotions in analytic terms (e.g. Baier et al. 2014, 17; Gould 2009; Slaby and Röttger-Rössler 2018, 2; Stodulka 2017, 29; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 7; Wetherell 2012, 12). Drawing on philosopher Brian Massumi, Deborah Gould (2009, 19) defines affect as

nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body. (...) Affect, then, is the body's ongoing and relatively amorphous inventory-taking of coming into contact and interacting with the world.

The sociologist clarifies affects as an experience

that we do not quite have language for, something that we cannot fully grasp, something that escapes us but is nevertheless in play, generated through interaction with the world, and affecting our embodied beings and subsequent actions. I call that bodily, sensory, inarticulate, nonconscious experience affect (ibid., 20).

Relating to this aspect of 'affect,' and further clarifying affects as "self-aware physiological arousal," Stodulka (2017, 30) distinguishes 'affects' from 'feelings' as the latter are an individual's subjective appraisal of a physiological arousal as pleasant or unpleasant. 'Affects' are furthermore distinct from emotions as the latter can be expressed and labeled "in intersubjectively shared and understandable emotion words" (ibid., 31). Resuming her definition of affect, Gould furthermore highlights affects as intensities or "unattached, free-floating, mobile energy," which "prepare[] the organism to respond to that which is impinging on it" (2009, 20).

This points to the inbetweenness of affects; they are arousals as much as they are energies, intensities, or “flowing activity” (Wetherell 2012, 12).

Akalin (2015) and Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010) take into account these characteristics of affect in their studies of migrant domestic labor. They distinguish ‘affective labor’ from ‘emotional labor’ to highlight that migrant domestic workers deal with their own and their employers’ ‘lableable’ emotions, i.e. cognitive appraisals of physiological arousals, and beyond this, with the inarticulateness of affects (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 131). Gutiérrez-Rodríguez conceives of migrant domestic workers’ affective labor as “haunted by past intensities.” The circulating intensities are embedded in the colonial shaping of work relations in private households (ibid., 5).⁸² Migrant domestic workers are thus affected by these intensities, and they themselves contribute to the production of intensities (ibid. 2014, 79). The (prospective) migrant domestic workers I studied with were not only involved in the affects circulating between household members, but also in the circulation of affects at the training center and in the city of Hong Kong, outside their employers’ homes. Akalin highlights the “precision and subtlety” (2015, 71) required by affective workers. Taking up the characteristic of affects as “dispersed, [as] fluctuat[ing] in space, connecting different elements together,” Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010, 14) clarifies that *affective labor* goes beyond the activities of emotional labor that are “intentionally oriented towards caring for others, like combing their hair, bathing or listening to them.” Affective labor also encompasses the at first sight impersonal “activity of infusing the household with vitality” (ibid., 131), which does not necessarily directly address another person, but rather an environment. This labor is made invisible, as

⁸² Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010, 5) clarifies that although affects are conceived of as circulating intensities or energies, they are not detached from historically evolved relations of power and domination: “Affects not only unfold context, but they emerge within a concrete historical and geopolitical context. While they emanate from the dynamics of our energies, impulses, sensations and encounters, affects also carry residues of meaning. They are haunted by past intensities, not always spelled out and conceived in the present. Immediate expressions and transmissions of affects may indeed revive repressed sensations, experiences of pain or joy. Although not explicitly expressed as such, they are temporal and spatial constellations of certain times, intricately impressed in legacies of the past and itineraries of the present/future.”

domestic workers should not disturb the routine and normalcy of the household in which they are employed (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 138). Cleaning the stairs therefore can be conceived of as affective labor as well, because this activity is about the, not necessarily intentional, creation of an “agreeable environment” (ibid., 4). The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees rehearsed this infusion of the agency compound with affects prior to their departure abroad.

I am critical of a hasty preference for the concept of affective labor, as in some cases the term rests upon a simplistic understanding of emotions. Nevertheless, following Gutiérrez-Rodríguez’ and Akalin’s work on migrant domestic workers, I use the term affective labor in describing the nuances of the skills that are expected from the domestic workers I encountered. Contrary to Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010, 14, 2014b, 78), I do not distinguish my protagonists’ affective labor from emotional labor in the narrow sense. She defines the latter as interpersonal, *cognitive* regulation of emotion. Both dimensions overlap in the multiple facets of Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ affective labor. Concurring with Wetherell (2012, 22–25, 2013, 233–37), I understand affective labor as working on emotions and affects that is constituted by “affective practices.” The terminology of practice allows for capturing both the creative dimension of and the orchestrated side of affective labor, instructed and structured through social texture: “[P]ractice thinking (...) is a way of conceptualizing social action as constantly in motion while yet recognizing too that the past, and what has been done before constrains the present and the future” (ibid., 23). I build on Hochschild’s (1979, 561; see above) formulation of emotion work as an activity done “upon the self, by the self, upon others, and by others upon oneself,” when in the subsequent elaborations I distinguish between ‘affective labor for the employer’ and ‘affective labor on the self.’ A clear-cut distinction of this bidirectional understanding of affective labor is impossible to sustain, because the plethora of capacities required from the workers often cover both dimensions. By distinguishing an affective labor performed for the employer from an affective performed labor on the self, I take into account the effort

that is expected from Indonesian migrant domestic workers in producing their employer's comfort, satisfaction and pleasure, and the effort that is expected from them in managing and dealing with their own emotions and affects as they work and live in households of places where their labor is devalued, where they enjoy only limited rights, where time for their personal lives is heavily restricted, and where they are regarded as alien *Others*. Again, following Hochschild (2003, 7), who distinguishes emotional *labor* from emotion *work* when it is performed in the sphere of waged labor, I use the term affective *labor*, rather than affective *work*. Thus I indicate that Indonesian migrant domestic workers perform affective labor for their employer and on the self in the context of wage work, and that recruitment agencies capitalize on both aspects in order to enhance the workers' marketability.

Mental preparation as an investment in affective labor

Neither the terms 'emotional labor' nor 'affective labor' were ever made use of by any of the protagonists in the field. Another term was used to designate competencies that go beyond more technical understandings of housekeeping, care for children and the elderly, and language skills: *siap mental*, or 'being mentally prepared.' The Indonesian loanword 'mental' can be translated into the English 'mental,' if the term is not understood in its narrow sense as "relating to the mind," but in its wider sense as "relating to the *total emotional and intellectual* response of an individual to external reality" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2015; emphases mine). *Siap mental* is a competency that comprises both emotional and cognitive skills. According to the *Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language*, the term 'mental' concerns the "inner life (*batin*)," implying the "heart (*hati*)"—the "seat of emotions" (Boellstorff and Lindquist 2004, 438)—as well as the "character (*watak*)" of a person (Indonesian Language Center 2019b). Instructors at the training center and at pre-departure briefings, bureaucrats, and the workers themselves deemed being *siap mental* crucial; this essential competency was on everybody's

lips. A prospective migrant domestic worker's mental preparedness must even be certified before her departure: If she passes the exam taken by the staff of the *Lembaga Sertifikasi Profesi TLRT Indonesia*, a private organization authorized by the National Board for the Standardization of Professions (*Badan Nasional Standardisasi Profesi*), amongst other competencies, her "emotional maturity and work motivation" will be approved.⁸³

According to the national competency standards, emotional maturity and work motivation consist of four elements: a) knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, b) adapting to a new household environment in the destination country, c) managing one's emotions, and d) work motivation (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower 2005). These four elements are further specified by certain criteria, which were part and parcel of the routines at the *Makmur dan Sukses Nusantara* training center: for instance, doing the household work with joy, communicating politely with the employer, comporting oneself disciplined, honest, and faithful towards the work, assuming responsibility, and being capable to work independently. At the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, mental preparation of the workers was practiced both inside and outside the class-room. *Mental guidance* and *character building* were part of the curriculum. Newly arrived trainees were to copy a list that contained the requirements for becoming a successful migrant domestic worker and another one which contained the etiquettes (*Tata Etika dan Sopan Santun*) of domestic work. Simultaneously, the development of *mental* competencies was integrated in the daily routine at the training center. The dormitory overseer Ibu Ani once explained during an orientation class for new trainees: The fact that the trainees were only allowed to wash themselves (*mandi*) during certain periods of the day and that they had to queue up for a long time due to the limited facilities were means to train patience (fieldnotes 09 May 2014).

Describing the practices involved in the mental preparation of migrant domestic workers

⁸³ For the list of competency units on a competency certificate see appendix D.

as an investment in their quality of affective labor, allows me to highlight various aspects: *Firstly*, the term ‘affective labor’ takes into account the prominent presence of emotions in activities that are labelled as mental preparation. The term grasps a condition, in which migrant domestic workers sustain their employer’s emotional well-being through their affective labor while being affected by submission, surveillance, social devaluation, and isolation. I join Akalin’s and Gutiérrez-Rodríguez’ punchline that migrant workers’ affective labor is constitutive for social reproduction. This perspective goes beyond a problematization of harassment and abuse experienced by migrant domestic workers (see e.g. Amnesty International 2013), but provides a concept to grasp the additional work of migrant domestic workers in affective terms and to describe the valorization of that work. The program of *mental* preparation is hence to be seen as an involvement in the international division of social reproduction and the workers’ activities as a highly complex, but devalued task. *Secondly*, the term ‘affective labor’ allows me to describe refined modes of governing that resort to the active aspects of affective labor, and not only to the creation of compliance through external control and disciplining in the narrow sense (see Chapter 3.2). Labor brokerage capitalizes on migrant domestic workers’ capacities to make their employers feel comfortable on the one hand and their *mental*, self-governing capacities on the other. My understanding of migrant domestic workers’ affective labor as a technique of governing is inspired by Renate Lorenz’ and Brigitta Kuster’s (2007) concept of “sexual labor.” The two artists and cultural researchers used the term to describe a kind of work that is “doubly productive,” producing “embodied, engendered, and sexual subjectivity and products [or services] at the same time” (Lorenz 2012, 30; see also Lorenz and Kuster 2007, 155). They highlight that gender and sexual desire are produced and shaped at the workplace, and at the same time, they emphasize that ‘becoming a subject’ involves the *effort* of an individual. In my understanding, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees’ and alumnae’s affective labor produces the well-being of their Hong Kong employers’

families, and simultaneously it produces migrant-subjectivities, or modes of perceiving and relating to the self and the world. *Thirdly*, by deploying the term ‘affective labor,’ I aim at taking into account that migrant domestic workers perfect their mental training on their own terms. Understanding the work on their *mental* capacities as affective labor allows for a perspective that takes seriously migrant domestic workers’ active ways to relate themselves to the expectations put forward towards them and develop their ways of coping in light of the precarity that characterizes their working and living conditions (Lorenz and Kuster 2007, 153).

7.2 Refining affective labor

Perfecting Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ performance of affective labor is a multi-faceted endeavor. I structure the following elaborations on the cultivation of migrant domestic workers’ affective labor along the distinction between a) an affective labor that is done for the employer and b) an affective labor that is done on the self. Two arguments weave through my descriptions of the sets of skills and practices demanded by migrant domestic workers: *Firstly*, I highlight the cultivation of affective labor as a means to modernize and at the same time increase the economic competitiveness of Indonesian labor brokerage. *Secondly*, I discuss the cultivation of migrant workers’ affective labor as a biopolitical mode of self-governing, a mode of mobilizing migrants’ “self-activating capacities” (Ong 2006, 13) of regulating the affective impacts of their own, existential precariousness, thus restoring their individual self-responsibility for their safety and integrity. Both aspects relate to each other. The workers’ self-governing capacities are essential to Indonesian labor brokerage. On the one hand, these capacities are a means of (self-)protection, while on the other hand, they enhance migrant domestic workers’ advantage on the global market for care labor.

Performing affective labor for the employer

The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees are trained creating their employer's comfort. They are expected to sharpen their attentiveness to proactively produce their employers' state of contentedness while keeping up a cheerful appearance. Thereby, the trainees are reminded to resort to their embodied cultural knowledge of Javanese ethics, which put high value on a person's capacity to be attentive to her surrounding and to respect social hierarchies. In line with state discourses that situate migrant domestic workers' protection from abuse and exploitation in their capacities to protect themselves, the training at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* implies the promise that perfecting the workers' capacities of performing affective labor for their employers equips them with the prerequisites for self-protection in light of vulnerabilities produced by Hong Kong's and Indonesia's migration and labor regulations.

'Be proactive and have an easy smile!' – Producing pleasantness and comfort

Starting with my very first interactions with the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency, the welcoming, attentive, and caring behavior that I was met with by Ibu Wijayanti, by the staff, and by the trainees themselves impressed me. I had not expected to be received as openly as I was by the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency, because recruitment agencies enjoy a bad reputation: NGOs criticize them for neglecting responsibilities and for providing inadequate training (Rudnyckyj 2004, 418). When I first contacted Ibu Wijayanti, the owner of the company, by a text message, the details of her responses drew my attention. In the messages that she sent to confirm and arrange our first meeting, Ibu Wijayanti was not only offering me the opportunity to conduct my research at her agency even before I met her personally, but she also sent warmhearted expressions of attentiveness such as "Take care." She expressed concern because of the long distance I had to travel in order to reach the company: "What a pity. It's a long way" (fieldnotes 21 March 2014). Interlocutors at government agencies or NGOs whom I

asked to meet had never communicated with me in such a caring manner. My first impression of the compound of the company and its training center were similarly pleasant. Despite the fact that the compound was surrounded by high walls that secluded the premises from the outside world, a busy major road, the compound conveyed an atmosphere of friendliness: The yard was decorated with neat plants, bushes, trees, and flowers, the buildings were kept in warm pastel colors, and an aura of cleanliness and tidiness infused the whole compound. This aura was part of the agency's appearance as prestigious, reliable, and of a different kind than other, dubious companies which accommodate their trainees in "sheds (*gudang*)," as Ibu Wijayanti lamented during our first meeting (fieldnotes 21 March 2014).

When I moved into the training center, I was to learn that the charming landscape of the place was based on the trainees' labor who, every morning at 5.30 a.m. and every afternoon at 5.00 p.m., cleaned and tidied the compound and all buildings, and who watered and took care of the plants. Beyond these periods set for cleaning, the trainees were required to keep the compound clean. Whenever they crossed the second yard that was covered by hibiscus vines they were to act "proactively (*inisiatif*)"—one of the essential traits of being *mentally* prepared—pick up and dispose blossoms that had fallen on the floor, as if this had been done by an invisible hand.⁸⁴ The trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency were to proactively "infuse" the compound with "positive affective energies," to borrow Gutiérrez-Rodríguez' (2010, 22) words: They performed affective labor.

After I had moved into the training center, I was still treated with care. Trainees and staff oftentimes acted *proactively* to make me feel comfortable, treating me as a quasi-employer: Dina, who was assigned my personal assistant, one morning surprised me with steamed cassava

⁸⁴ Rudnyckyj (2010, 76) observed that "being 'proactive' in one's work and home lives" started to be an imperative for employees in state owned companies after the end of Suharto's authoritarian government and in the context of 'post-developmental' management strategies. Being proactive became "a key lesson for employees of institutions that during the Suharto era were rigidly hierarchical and in which workers were expected to wait for orders from superiors rather than taking initiative of their own accord." I expand on appeals on the workers' self-governance below, in the section 'Affective training: mental guidance and human resource development.'

and sweat potatoes because I had once told her that this was my favorite dish (fieldnotes 12 May 2014). During one cooking class, in which the trainees practiced recipes that are popular in Hong Kong, Mam Fahida, the Cantonese and household instructor, had the trainees prepare vegetarian Wan Tan especially for me because she knew I don't eat meat (fieldnotes 07 May 2014). I was touched by Mam Fahida's and Dina's attentiveness. During my fieldwork I was dealing with emotionally demanding situations, due to the arduous requirement of obtaining research permits from local authorities, the importance to stay focused on the unfolding interactions, and the witnessing of distressful situations (emotion diary 05 & 08 May 2014; see also Chapter 2.1). Mam Fahida's and Dina's gestures felt comforting. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez points to the role of attentiveness in the performance of affective labor. Citing the sociologist Vega Solís' study with migrant domestic workers in Spain, her description resonates with how the instructors' and the trainees' care affected me. It is worth to quote Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010, 128) at length:

To be attentive to somebody means the recognition of the other person as a complex subject. It also implies the recognition of the difference between one's perceptions and the other's feelings. Thus, as well as entering the world of the other, the disposition of 'being attentive' is linked to giving support and reinforcing security. 'Attention' addresses the recognition and well-being of the other. It is in this sense that Vega Solís understands 'being attentive' as an affective force. As such 'being attentive' is related to the transfer of information, but also emotions. The impact of 'attention' on somebody leaves an imprint, a trace.

Just as trainees and instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center treated me with attentiveness, in the international division of care labor, migrant domestic workers are employed to relieve the stress of their employers, who are involved in the emotionally demanding everyday life of late capitalism. The attention I received by the trainees, instructors, and the management of the agency also further shows the "observational skills in studying the nuances" of employers (Cohen 1991, 210). The literature on relations between domestic workers and their employers has drawn attention to these skills (ibid.; Rollins 1985, 214). I could witness

that some of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* workers had elaborate observational skills. In Hong Kong, I met Nuraini, who was introduced in Chapter 6.3. She was an experienced domestic worker, having worked in private households in Indonesian cities and in Singapore since she was twelve years old. When we met on her day off, Nuraini repeatedly explained my behavior and preferences to her friends and showed how she took notice of my habits. For instance, when a friend of hers offered to carry an umbrella for me, she explained: “She is not the kind of person who wants to be served all the time” (fieldnotes 27 Jul 2014). Or she explained to her friend who supposed that the purpose of my stay in Hong Kong was that I was on vacation, that it only *looked* as if I was relaxing when I was joining her on her day off, but that at night, I would write everything that I had seen down. Based on her close observation, she perfectly described my field work routines (ibid.).

The requirement of being proactive and attentive was paired with the expectation to appear cheerful. When I told Dina that I was concerned that her charge as my personal assistant would exhaust her—she took care of me besides her assignments of the daily routine—she answered that she “happily (*senang*)” performed her task to accompany me, wash my clothes and clean the room in which I was staying, and that she wanted to avoid to trigger the anger of Mam Fahida, who had appointed her to do this task (fieldnotes 30 April 2014). “Always be cheerful and enjoy your work” and “have an easy smile, be friendly, and make your employer feel comfortable” were two points listed under the category ‘work attitude’ of the “key to success”-list that newly arrived trainees had to copy. The instructors taught them that even if they were upset, they had to be confident (*tegar*) and smile (fieldnotes 08 May 2014). This lesson was part of the ‘intercultural’ preparation the trainees received: They were told that “Chinese” employers believed that people crying in front of them brought misfortune (fieldnotes 16 May 2014; see also Lan 2006, 55).

The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees' skills of proactive behavior and attentiveness as well as their cultivation of a cheerful appearance are closely entangled with the requirement of permanent availability to the instructors and their prospective employers (see Chapter 6). In their studies, Akalin (2015, 71) and Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010, 135–37) highlight this close relationship. They emphasize that the full availability of migrant domestic workers is made possible through their separation from their kin and social networks through migration policies (Akalin 2015, 74)—or the seclusion in the training camp. My role was thus partly integrated in the social architecture of the training center, where the trainees were always at the service of the staff: serving them coffee, carrying their bags, giving them massages or serving drinks during the lunch break. This as well was supposed to simulate future employment relations, as Laotse Wiwik's comment on the latecomer in the earlier mentioned character-building class, who was assisting a staff, suggests (also fieldnotes 14 May 2014).

Being proactive, being attentive, and appearing cheerful are central traits of the affective labor the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees and alumnae were expected to perform. But *how* do prospective migrant domestic workers actually learn these capacities? In the following section, I suggest that the brokerage of the migrant workers' affective labor relies on embodied social and gendered knowledge on refinement as well as on the performance of deference in social interaction.

Sopan-santun: Cultural sources of migrant affective labor

When I expressed my gratitude towards Ibu Wijayanti for having received myself so openly and treated me so attentively, Ibu Wijayanti replied that this was in fact how guests were treated by the company (fieldnotes 30 April 2014). Mam Fahida once explained to me, while we were having a relaxed chat, that in Java guests were always met in a polite (*sopan*) manner. *Sopan santun* (deference, etiquette) is another core trait of being a successful migrant domestic

worker. The “key to success”-list that newly arrived trainees were to copy defined *sopan* in terms of speech, behavior and outward appearance as well as performance. While the items on the list of behavior rules read as concrete directives, the references to *sopan-santun* also resort to a more nuanced and embodied knowledge on Javanese codes of social behavior. These references were invoked in the instructors’ explanations and the interactions between instructors and examiners at the training center.

ETIQUETTE (*SOPAN*), consists of:

- In speech
 - talk genuinely, not in a put-on manner
 - don’t laugh while speaking
 - don’t snap
 - don’t goggle
 - begin your sentences with the words “sorry” or “excuse me”
 - don’t interrupt your employer
- In behavior/outward appearance
 - wear polite clothes
 - don’t wear jewelry in an exaggerated manner
 - nails must be worn short and hair must be worn neatly, long hair must be tied together
 - you must greet all employers accordingly when you meet them
- In performance
 - sit in a position below your employer
 - eat at the place that your employer has appointed to you

Figure 7: Excerpt of the “keys to success” (training material shared with the trainees); translation mine

Mam Fahida once proudly explained to me that Hong Kong employers preferred domestic workers from Indonesia, and she explained this advantage with Indonesian domestic workers’ “Javanese culture” (fieldnotes 07 May 2014). In fact, making a guest feel “at home” (Beatty 2005, 68) is part of the social ethics or “moral norms of social conduct” (Stodulka 2017, 62) that sustain community life in Java. These norms of ‘Javanese culture’ are not an element of an ahistorical ‘tradition,’ but they are deeply entangled with the dialectics of colonial techniques of governing and the ideological exploitation of ‘tradition’ and ‘culture’ discourses by the New Order (see Pemberton 1994). The social ethics referred to by the instructors at the *Sukses dan*

Makmur Nusantara training center must not be understood in an essentialist sense, but as a historically embodied shared set of knowledge, practices, and meanings. Ethnographic accounts of social ethics in Java have described that in the perspective of Javanese social-cultural values, *sopan santun* is embedded in an ethics that strives for refinement and a balance of the “outer (*lahir*) and the inner (*batin*) self,” for social harmony (*rukun*), and equanimity or emotional ease (*tenteram*)⁸⁵ (Stodulka 2017, 60; see also Geertz 1960, 110–18). Stodulka (2017, 61), who conducted an extensive study with marginalized street-related youth in the Central Javanese city of Yogyakarta, depicts the crucial role of *sopan* in Javanese ideals of social conduct, highlighting the interconnectedness of harmonious social and spiritual relationships and subjective well-being:

The balance of the outer self is achieved by the performance of politeness (*sopan*) and pleasantness in social interactions, which is connected to the ordering of inner life and a refinement of subjective experience, including private feelings.

Refinement demands a person’s competencies to master her emotions and those of others, and it requires sensitivity towards social hierarchy (Geertz 1960; Stodulka 2017, 63). The majority of the trainees at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center were of Javanese origin and spoke Javanese, a language that contains a complex system of registers depending on social context and thus requires a high degree of sensitivity for an interactant’s social rank and proximity (Stodulka 2017, 63). When the instructors at the training center and the pre-department briefings, bureaucrats, and examiners of the competency exams reminded prospective migrant domestic workers that it is deference what it takes to be a successful migrant worker, they implicitly resorted to the trainees’ embodied knowledge on the performance of deference in social interaction. The host-guest relation of community members inherent in the notion of *sopan*

⁸⁵ In Javanese terms, the distinction between “*batin* (the sphere of feelings and emotions) and *lahir* (the sphere of visible social behavior)” may however not be mistaken as a Western, Cartesian “body and mind dichotomy,” since these spheres are “mutually related” (Stodulka 2017, 60).

santun is, however, substituted by the economic employer-employee relation, which is textured by racial, class, and gendered boundaries (Lan 2006). The agency mobilizes *sopan santun* as the prospective workers' contribution to the "emotional (...) and affective sustenance of all the members of the [employer's] household," making them "feel at home" (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 104).

Instructors and examiners also referred to Javanese norms of conduct when they problematized migrant worker-candidates from East Nusa Tenggara, a group of islands in Eastern Indonesia. In articulating their skepticism with regard to the aptitude of these candidates, they drew on essentialized differences due to "ethnolocalities" (Boellstorff 2002).⁸⁶ The depiction of people from Eastern Indonesia as "harsh" needs to be understood against the background of a prevailing Java-centric discourse on national development which dates back to colonial orientalism and constructs Eastern Indonesia as 'underdeveloped' in contrast to 'civilized' Java (Elson 2008, 253; Kusno 2000, 135–42). For instance, during a competency exam, examiner Ibu Tati commented the participation of examinees originating from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT): "How many are from NTT here? People from NTT are harsh (*keras*). You must unlearn this when you go abroad. Never forget to be polite" (fieldnotes 08 May 2014). Corresponding to the dichotomy of underdevelopment and civilization, the depiction of workers from East Nusa Tenggara as "harsh" implicates an understanding described by Clifford Geertz (1960, 232) that Javanese are refined (*halus*). Concerned that the examinees from Eastern Indonesia could not resort to the embodied knowledge of *sopan santun*, Ibu Tati explicitly addressed the

⁸⁶ Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff (2002, 25) reflects that the labelling of views of "the Balinese, Javanese, Acehnese" as "the native point of view" is a colonial construction. However, because Indonesians themselves make use of these ethnonyms, he introduced the term 'ethnolocality' "to name a spatial scale where 'ethnicity' and 'locality' presume each other to the extent that they are, in essence, a single concept" (ibid.). The author explains his terminological choice: "By examining this spatial scale (rendered usually as 'ethnic group' or 'tribe' (*sukubangsa*, *suku*, *etnis*) but sometimes 'region' (*daerah*) or 'community' (*kaum*, *masyarakat*), I ask how the nation (and other translocal spatial scales as well) might sometimes constitute a 'native point of view' amenable to fieldwork" (ibid.).

former as the stereotypical Javanese *Other*. In a similar vein, Ibu Ani once said about Ferla and Rosa, two trainees of NTT origin:

You have to keep your emotions under control, above all the NTT-kids. Ferla can't control herself when she is laughing. Her laughter is loud. I must tell her to cover her mouth with her hand, or else she laughs too loud. Rosa is dangerous. If I had a problem, I'd only need to call her [and she would get physical]. She doesn't know any affection. I need to teach her affection (fieldnotes 16 May 2014).

Ibu Ani explained Rosa's lack of affection with Rosa having grown up without a mother. Cultural, embodied knowledge, and the notion of civilized behavior are thus also put in relation to dominant gender roles. Existing studies on migrant affective labor performed in private households similarly argue that in these employment arrangements, the embodied knowledge of "affectionate mother[s], () caregiving sister[s], [and] () mindful daughters" is capitalized on (Akalin 2015, 76; see Chapter 6).

There were other instances, in which I learned that the culturalizing notions of etiquette evoked in the training of migrant domestic workers are specific to sector and gender: Towards the end of my stay at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency, the training center hosted a group of prospective male migrant workers who were trained as seafarers. After I had stayed in the secluded training camp for a few weeks and had accustomed myself to restraint as a fundamental principle of conduct, the atmosphere among the male trainees appeared loud and rough to me. Whenever I passed the corridor to my room in the building that also hosted some of the class rooms where they received their training, I was whistled at. In the canteen of the compound, one of them, without having asked for permission, sneaked from behind my back and touched my camera. I was startled by what I experienced as a form of transgression of my personal boundaries. During a chat with Mam Fahida I told her that I was surprised how the rude behavior of these men stood in stark contrast to the warm and soft behavior of the prospective migrant domestic workers. Mam Fahida answered that men just were like that and

referred to their low level of education (fieldnotes 20 May 2014). This experience shows that in the brokerage of Indonesian migrant labor, Javanese etiquette, which equally applies to men (Stodulka 2017), is mobilized in a gendered way. In fact, it is for women of certain classes to which the imperative of female restraint applies more loosely (Brenner 1998), hence, the affective labor involved in cultural refinements of Indonesia's domestic workers' behavior may be understood as an investment in their respectability.

I suggest that Javanese etiquette is a central source for the affective labor migrant domestic workers are trained in. In this context, culture and gender play the role of an embodied knowledge that are activated to enhance the workers' work performance. But what are the motives for the stakeholders involved in the brokerage of migrant labor from Indonesia to invest in migrant domestic workers' affective labor? I turn to this question in the following section and argue that Indonesian migrant domestic workers' perfected capacities of affective labor are deemed a competitive advantage on the global market for care labor.

Perfecting affective labor as an investment in competitive advantage

Ibu Wijayanti and other staff at the training center repeatedly encouraged me to give feedback on the shortcomings of the training, but also to recommend the agency to my contacts in the Indonesian bureaucracy (fieldnotes 01 & 30 April; 05, 07, 09 & 11 May 2014). Apart from being assigned the role as guest and test-employer, it seemed that as a researcher I was deemed competent to assess the performance of the center scientifically (see Chapter 2.1) Ibu Wijayanti and the staff expressed their willingness to improve the agency's performance. Perfecting the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees' affective labor was one of the competitive advantages cultivated by the company. This, for instance, became apparent, when Mam Ati, the house keeping instructor, was lecturing a group of examinees before the competency exam. While the examinees were waiting for the examiner in a class room, sitting up straight with their hands on the integrated fold up table of the classroom-chairs, Mam Ati, reminded the

examinees to be polite (*sopan*) and always to answer the instructions of the examiner by saying ‘Yes, Ma’am.’ Mam Ati remarked that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency had a reputation for its etiquette, and if examinees were reported for not being polite, she would be held responsible (fieldnotes 08 May 2014).

I learned that mastering the competencies involved in affective labor was not so self-evident for prospective migrant workers. At a language examination taken at the provincial manpower department, I observed how an examiner, who was about to take the examination of a future migrant worker from a different recruitment agency, requested the examinee to restart the examination and repeat her initial address. “In Hong Kong, it is important to know how to smile,” the examiner had explained. “Do you know how to smile?” During the language examination I caught myself thinking that this would have never happened to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees. Given the countless lessons on the importance of smiling politely, I was convinced that they would find it impossible to forget this crucial competency (fieldnotes 12 May 2014).

In Hong Kong, I furthermore had the chance to learn that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees had a certain reputation among Hong Kong based placement agencies: At the office of the *Thomson* placement agency, I once witnessed an interaction between Jiejie Indri, the Indonesian speaking staff at the agency, and Indonesian workers. Jiejie Indri instructed a worker who had just been dismissed by her employer and was then waiting to be placed to a new employer. This worker had not been trained by the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency. Jiejie Indri requested her to clean the air conditioner and asked whether she knew how to do this. The worker answered that she had done this once. Then Yulia, a newly arrived worker who had been prepared at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center stepped in the interaction: “I know how that works. I can do it. Tomorrow I will do it.” Jiejie Indri admonished the worker who had not been trained by the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency: “You are slow.

Yulia is proactive. The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*-kids really learn how to work.” Later that day, Jiejie Indri applauded Yulia once more for her proactive attitude: Yulia had brought a towel from the *boarding house* where she and the other newly arrived workers were staying until they were picked up by their employers. Apparently, the towel didn’t belong to anybody, so Yulia cut it into two pieces, reasoning that the agency office needed some wiping cloth. Yulia’s attentiveness caused Jiejie Indri’s surprise: “That’s what you call being proactive!” (fieldnotes 22 Jul 2014).

As I have discussed earlier, being proactive (*inisiatif*) was one of the essential competencies the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara*-trainees were taught in order to enhance their performance in affective labor directed at the comfort of their future employers. The episode at the *Thomson* agency shows that being *proactive* is one of the currencies that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trained workers make use of in convincing Hong Kong based placement agencies of their qualities. The good reputation must have been in the company’s interest, not least because it was seeking to expand its services beyond the domestic workers-sector.

The investment in migrant domestic workers’ affective labor suggests a slight turn in the marketing of Indonesian migrant domestic workers. Previous literature showed that Indonesia gained an advantage on the global market for domestic workers through manufacturing docility submissiveness (Killias 2018, 39; Liang 2011, 1821). These traits are highly demanded from migrant domestic workers during their training, however, the investments of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency suggest that the company also strives to compete in the market by brokering competent, pro-active affective workers. This can be understood as an imitation of the Philippine brokerage of “supermaids.” In the mid-2000s, the Philippine government introduced a skill upgrading program for migrant domestic workers which touts these as “more than usual employees’ who exemplify an exceptionally high quality of service” (Guevarra 2014, 143). Filipina/o/x “supermaids” “are not only workers who can manage households but are also

highly educated—what brokers often refer to as having a ‘maid and a tutor for the price of one’” (Guevarra 2014, 143).⁸⁷ As more labor brokerage states such as Sri Lanka enter the market in Hong Kong, competition amongst them becomes tougher, and Philippine and Indonesian brokers try to make their mark as high quality providers of migrant domestic workers.

In this section, I depicted the investments in migrant domestic workers’ affective labor as an investment in competitiveness on the global market. This is not the only reasoning that undergirds the cultivation of migrant domestic workers’ affective labor. In the following section, I scrutinize how the importance of affective labor is communicated to migrant domestic workers as a means of self-protection. This is part of the biopolitical mode of governing migrant domestic workers from Indonesia and thus plays a crucial role in sustaining the brokerage of Indonesian labor brokerage.

‘Win your employer’s heart:’ An invocation of self-responsibility

During a lunch break at the training center I once witnessed a job interview between a trainee and a Hong Kong employer. I had been chatting and having coffee at the agency’s staff and instructor office. Jiejie Sumi, another Cantonese instructor who was also in charge of the communication with Hong Kong based placement agencies, called one of the trainees for a skype interview with a potential employer. Atik entered the office; she seemed shy and nervous. It was the first time for her to depart for Hong Kong. Mam Fahida reminded Atik to comb her hair and neatly tuck her shirt into her pants. Both Jiejie Sumi and Mam Fahida advised Atik to speak clearly and slowly, and, of course, smile; during the interview she was expected to perform the affective labor that she had been practicing since entering the training center. When

⁸⁷ The term “supermaids” as it is used by the Philippine government and agencies was never used by any of the protagonists or my interlocutors. However, the comment of an instructor during the Welcome Program could be read as a reference to the marketing of Filipina/o/x “supermaids.” Responding to a question about the multifarious tasks set by the work contract, he remarked: “Indonesian are very super (*orang Indonesia super banget!*)” (transcript of recording 18 July 2014).

Skype was dialed up, Atik positioned herself in front of the webcam. The interview went no longer than ten minutes. Atik introduced herself in Cantonese and repeated the sentences that she had been practicing during the previous week. She gave short answers to the questions posed to her through the laptop speakers. Sometimes Jiejie Sumi chipped in and translated the employer's questions: whether Atik treated children tenderly (*sayang*), whether she was afraid of dogs,⁸⁸ and whether she was willing to get used to go to bed late at night. After the interview, Jiejie Sumi summarized: Atik would stay with a family with two children, the female employer stayed at home and would explain the tasks to Atik. The employer requested, however, a "helper" with self-initiative. She would not give orders but expect that her helper would, for instance, dust off proactively. After the job interview, I asked Jiejie Sumi what a good employer was like—I had overheard trainees and experienced migrant domestic workers talk about "good-natured employers (*majikan yang baik*).” Hence, I was curious how Jiejie Sumi would define a good employer. She answered that the good-naturedness of employers was not important and that, in fact, it didn't exist. She said, it were rather the workers' attentiveness (*perhatian*) and care (*care*) that were the key. If the workers were attentive and caring, their future employers would also be fair and treat them with care (fieldnotes 02 May 2014).

Jiejie Sumi's assertion that there are no good-hearted employers and her simultaneous emphasis on the crucial role of the prospective workers' capacities in performing affective labor is noteworthy. Her explanation is another version of one of Laotse Wiwik's remarks cited in the vignette that opened the chapter. The narrative that there are no stingy employers was a 'truth,' which I often encountered among instructors, but also trainees themselves (fieldnotes 09 & 16 May). Yulia, whom I met at the *Thomson* agency in Hong Kong, for instance, commented a worker who then visited the agency with her employer because she wanted to

⁸⁸ In Islam, dogs are conventionally seen as ritually impure. For Muslim Indonesian migrant domestic workers, taking care of their Hong Kong employers' dogs can therefore imply ethical dilemmas.

prematurely finish her contract. When Yulia and I went for a walk in a park that day, we talked about the employer-domestic worker couple. I shared with Yulia my impression of the employer: I thought she was gossipy. Yulia, in turn, explained to me that actually, she was a “good” employer, but that one needed to know how to “win her heart” (fieldnotes 22 Jul 2014). Workers who I studied with and the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center knew by experience that the treatment they received by their employer depends on their affective labor: being attentive, caring, and “knowing what the employer wants,” as Ibu Ani once underlined as the key faculty during an orientation class (fieldnotes 16 May 2014). This communal knowledge serves as a certain protection against being maltreated and against being exposed to employers’ capricious moods. Domestic workers apply their delicate sense for their employer’s character to negotiate better working and living conditions. Constable (2007, 174), for instance has shown that migrant domestic workers “appeal to the employer’s pride and embarrass [them] into providing [them] either food or food allowance.

In the context of migrant domestic workers’ training, appeals to capacities of performing affective labor is also a transfer of the responsibility for safety, integrity, and guarantee of their rights to the individual workers. Jiejie Sumi’s explanation suggests that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency interprets this responsibility as a qualification for self-protection. Given the structural conditions migrant domestic workers are exposed to, appeals to the trainees’ competencies of self-protection are ambivalent, however. The obligation to work as live-in workers, visa policies that are bound to migrant workers’ work contracts, constrains in choosing an employer and the debt-relationship, and excessive working hours of sometimes 18 hours a day (see Palmer 2018, 148) remain unquestioned. During their preparation at the training center, but also during government briefings which I observed, migrant domestic workers were not informed how they can effectively claim their rights in legal issues through mechanisms provided by the

labor department in Hong Kong.⁸⁹ The plea to the trainees' self-responsibility harmonizes well with government discourses which regard the increase in quality of skills as the best means of self-protection against abuse and exploitation. On several occasions during my fieldwork, I encountered an argument which reasoned that domestic workers face problems because they were lacking skills such as not knowing the language, or because their intercultural incompetence caused misunderstandings: For instance, as an instructor at the pre-departure briefing explained, migrant workers could misunderstand an employer to hand her a spoon and instead hand a knife, hence, it was only natural that employers were scared of their employees (transcript of recording 13 May 2014). This illustration, which my interlocutors at Indonesian government institutions countless referred to, implies a privatization of rights abuse. Robinson (2000, 269), who observed the same argument in government discourses of the 1990s, concludes: “[P]roblems [are] thrown back on the women [migrant workers].”⁹⁰

The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency's self-presentation as a manufacturer of affective laborers went hand in hand with its self-representation as a professional and reliable recruitment agency. The concern of stakeholders involved in labor brokerage about migrant domestic workers' safety abroad and the emphasis on self-responsibility or self-formation as a means of protection can be read through the registers of biopolitical governmentality (see Chapter 3), which differs more repressive techniques of force. The workers' qualities of affective labor become a source for their capacities of 'self-government.' Migrant domestic workers are taught that through mastering affective labor they can self-responsibly make sure their own security and well-being as well as manage their vulnerability to rights abuse, while they are expected to submit to the conditions of servitude.

⁸⁹ This has changed by 2018. During the 'Welcome Program,' the Consulates' briefing for migrant domestic workers upon their arrival, NGOs are invited to share their expertise on migrant domestic workers' rights according to the Hong Kong legislation and the mechanisms to claim these rights.

⁹⁰ Minister of Manpower Cosmas Batubara (1988-1993) had introduced "higher standards for mandatory training and certification." Migrant domestic workers were to be taught skills in domestic work and baby care and had to have a minimum competency in language (Palmer 2016, 43).

Lorey's (2015b) contemplations on the regulations of a population's precariousness⁹¹ are instructive. The political theorist addresses how modern states deal with the state of precariousness, i.e. "a fundamental social dependency of a living due to its vulnerability" (ibid., 19). She underlines: "Biopolitics strives to reduce the vulnerability of an existential precariousness by way of specific techniques of self-formation, in order to ensure on average an economically productive life for the population." Perfected qualities in affective can be understood as a means of self-protection and form part of biopolitical modes of governing migrant workers (see Chapter 3). During the early days of the Indonesian labor migration program, bureaucrats denied the abuse of workers abroad (Robinson 2000, 255). In contrast, nowadays policy makers do not ignore, but take into account the risks and vulnerabilities that may await abroad. Equipping prospective workers with the qualities of affective labor is a technique of self-formation that is supposed to ensure migrant domestic workers' relative physical and economic safety, while enhancing their competitiveness. A certain level of precarity—i.e. precarious conditions that are *produced* through a row of Indonesian and Hong Kong regulations—that affect all migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, becomes normalized through self-responsibilization.

Despite the advice to "win their employers' heart," many of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae experienced that they were *not* (yet) able to win their employers' heart. As I reflect in the coming sections, a great number of them had to deal with arbitrariness and their employers' disrespect while they were simultaneously dealing with anxieties that are deeply intertwined with moral expectations in their home contexts. However, by working on themselves, migrant domestic workers are encouraged to endure their situations.

⁹¹ Lorey (2015b) extends Butler's distinction between precariousness and precarity. The former is defined as an "existential, social" (ibid., 17) "vulnerability of the body" (ibid., 18), and the latter as "a relationship of inequality" (ibid., 17). I concur on this distinction with Lorey because it allows me to describe Indonesian labor brokerage capitalized on the workers' affective labor of (self-)care as a social activity to deal with existential precariousness. In a biopolitical manner, the workers are called on to individually manage the vulnerability owed to their status and the devaluation of their labor.

Affective labor on the self

The workers' capacity to produce an employers' comfort and be at their disposal is closely related to their 'labor on the self:' the capacity to manage anxieties, emotional injuries that go along with the devaluation and experience of denigration as well as uncanny feelings that come along the precarity of working and living abroad. In order to enhance the recruits' capacities to perform affective labor on the self, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center resorted to up-to-date human resources management methods that have become popular in middle-class contexts. Furthermore, for labor brokerage spiritual practices has come to play a key role in ensuring migrant domestic workers' emotional integrity. In the following sections, I show that encouraging migrant domestic workers' affective labor on the self is essential to the biopolitical governing of Indonesian migrant domestic workers.

Learning to feel good: Accommodating to conditions of immobility

On my second day at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, a group of trainees approached me while I was sitting on a bench in the yard: "Do you feel comfortable here (*kerasan di sini*)?" I answered in the affirmative and, vice versa, asked the women whether they felt comfortable in the training center. They answered: "We have to feel comfortable here (*mesti kerasan*)!" (fieldnotes 30 April 2014). During the following weeks I learned that making oneself feel comfortable was another fundamental skill of a *mentally* prepared migrant worker: Oftentimes reiterated by Ibu Ani, "Enjoy yourself, despite the rules!" seemed a rule itself. Considering the emphasis that was put on the effort to evoke the positive emotion of "feeling comfortable" and, hence, an affective practice upon the self, I refer to the skill of "making oneself feel good" as affective labor on the self. Ibu Ani explained, making oneself feel good would help to bear the boredom of performing domestic work, and that time would go by without noticing it if one learned to feel comfortable (fieldnotes 01 & 02 May 2014). Ibu Ani's and the trainees' use of the Indonesian term *kerasan* is worth to discuss. The *Great Dictionary of*

the Indonesian Language (2019a) defines the term as “feeling pleasant, comfortable, and to be able to stay in a place.” The relation to place and the capacity to stay is remarkable against the backdrop of the condition that migrant domestic workers are heavily constrained to *move* from a place—be it the secluded training center or be it the workplace (Killias 2010, 2018, 65, 113; Lindquist 2010a).

During the Welcome Program at the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong, participants were similarly told during a session on the work contract: “Please bear up (*tolong dibetahin*),” using the Indonesian term *betah*, which is a synonym for *kerasan*. An instructor encouraged the trainees to bear up Hong Kong employers’ “harsh” way of talking which, according to him, stood in contrast to an Indonesian “soft” way of talking, thus appealing to their intercultural tolerance (transcript of recording 18 Jul 2014). As I mentioned earlier, in Javanese ethics, restraint and refined behavior are closely related to the avoidance of conflict and harmony. Hong Kong employers’ “harsh” way of talking irritates these social norms. In the context of domestic workers’ migration, the skill to affectively work on oneself needs to be considered in relation to the control of mobility: Prospective and active migrant workers are advised to accommodate themselves to the conditions of constrained mobility and emotional distress. The workers’ ability to *finish kontrak*, i.e. to stay for the entire period of a contract with an employer without prematurely terminate the contract, as well as the imperative to use their money earned abroad “productively,” and thereby serving family members and the nation, are deemed the key for a migrant domestic workers’ success (Killias 2018, 26, Chapter 6.2). Affective labor on the self is a crucial self-technique in achieving this success. The workers I studied with take this seriously, as they do not want to risk being dismissed by their employers and lose their source of income. I learned, however, that at some points the trainees had difficulties to make themselves feel comfortable: Their ‘rite de passage’ (ibid., 115) at the training center proved to be an emotionally challenging episode. The exact point of time of their departure was everything else but

certain, and some trainees, although they had already undergone the whole process of training and paperwork, had to wait for additional weeks for the turnover of employees because their prospective employers were still engaging another domestic worker. The trainees experienced time as only slowly passing by, and while their main goal was to earn money abroad, they even had to pay for the work, designated as “internships,” they were performing for the staff and the management of the agency, as Yuni, one of the trainees, once told me (fieldnotes 04 May 2014). Another trainee, Fitri, once shared with me that she “didn’t feel comfortable any more (*sudah tidak kerasan*)” because her departure to Hong Kong was still uncertain. A week earlier she had been more enthusiastic. Then she had told me that she didn’t mind having to wait for her departure, she would use the time to enhance her language skills. She had told me that she was motivated by her urge to show her parents that she had the strength to endure the process and thus was successful in working on herself (fieldnotes 19 May 2014). Fitri’s account shows that enduring the migration process demands considerable effort from the trainees.

This effort was also of great importance when the workers reached Hong Kong. I met with former trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency during their first weeks in Hong Kong. A row of them had difficulties in managing to ‘make themselves comfortable’ due to the disrespectful behavior of their employers, who, at times, even got physical (fieldnotes 22 Jul; 31 Aug 2014). When Yulia, who I quoted above, entered into employment, she sent me messages that expressed her disappointment. She felt challenged to meet the requirements of her employment, such as using 20 different washcloths to bathe the elderly woman whom she had to care for. “It seems I won’t be comfortable [working here] (*kayaknya q gk kerasan*),” said one of her messages (fieldnotes 26 Jul 2014). Elia told me of the boredom and the seclusion in cramped Hong Kong flats, as she could only move “between kitchen, bathroom, and the living room” (fieldnotes 21 Jul 2014). Some of them shared with me that they struggled with their employers’ strict character. Monica, a *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumna who had worked

in Taiwan before, repeatedly recalled her previous experience: “Taiwanese employers are more understanding and forgiving when we make mistakes” (fieldnotes 21 Jul; 18 Aug 2014). From the perspective of employers, their harsh tone stems from their stressful everyday-life. Joseph Law, chairman of the Hong Kong Employers of Domestic Helpers’ Association explained to me:

Life in Hong Kong is tough, Samia. Don’t think that people in Hong Kong live happily (...). The financial burden. (...) They put a lot of heart, love in their children. They want their children to have the best. Send them to good schools, buy them good clothes, and yet, their income may not be sufficient. So, some Hong Kong families are under constant stress for earning not enough [in light of the high rents in Hong Kong] (interview transcript 01 Aug 2014).

Experiencing financial pressure, Hong Kong employers had “no way to ventilate their anger or the stress built up inside.” Law reasoned: “[Is] that one of the reasons that contributes to the relationship being not as harmonious as it should be?” Law’s perspective suggests that Hong Kong employers transfer the stress they are experiencing due to the financial pressure which reigns the city to their domestic workers.

Several *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae, especially those workers for whom it was the first time in Hong Kong, had to deal with disorientation in the city. When they were out in the city on their days off from work, they were insecure. Their affective experience was different than mine, who as a first-time visitor was equally disoriented in Hong Kong. When some of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae spent their days off with me, I found them to be alert not to upset other Hongkongers. I had the impression that the city gave the workers the feeling that their presence was questionable. My European passport, by contrast, made me part of Hong Kong’s expatriate population, and compared to the protagonists of my fieldwork, I had more privileges, such as being able to choose my living place independently and not having curfews. Also, I could ‘afford’ mistakes such as cueing for a bus in the wrong line without risking annoyed comments or gazes of other passengers. Our different status in the city thus

shaped our affective experiences. Elia, who had just arrived in Hong Kong two weeks earlier, repeatedly bemoaned: “Samia, you are lucky, you know English, and you can communicate here” (fieldnotes 21 Jul 2014). The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae were affected by the intensities of being marked as ethnicized and classed *Other* in public and domestic realms (see also Ong 2006, 202).

Notably, migrant domestic workers’ anxieties do not only stem from the treatment they receive from Hong Kong society. Some of the workers came to Hong Kong already carrying a baggage of bitter experiences. Wati, for instance, told me of the “trauma” that made her leave for Hong Kong: Shortly after marrying her, her husband had left her, taking with him the earnings of Wati’s father’s family business (recording 30 Aug 2014). Wati thus faced the painful social shame of being a divorcee (see Chapter 6). When in 2018, I was working at the shelter for workers who were filing cases to claim their rights or sue their employers, I further learned about the multiple sources of migrant domestic workers’ emotional strains: They struggle in keeping up with their own ideals to fulfill their roles as caring mothers whose absence is compensated by remitting money (see also Morokvasic 2007, 83; Schwenken 2018a, 160); they face the shame of possibly not meeting social expectations of being a successful migrant (see also Lindquist 2004); and they need to endure the pain when kids and family members at home are sick or have other problems.

The capacity of “learning to feel pleasant in a place” can be understood in the Foucauldian terminology as a “technology of the self” (Foucault 1988), an active work on the self-development. This becomes clear when the story of Farah, another *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae who shared her emotional struggles with me, is considered. It was Farah’s first time working abroad. Once, while we were having a picnic in Victoria Park, she shared with me that her employer vented her spleen on Farah when she was actually having quarrels with other

family members. Farah was having tears in her eyes when she talked about her working situation. She said that she had to learn to swallow her anger, and that talking back to her employer would create “a big problem.” Farah was regularly corresponding with Jiejie Sumi and Mam Fahida who gave her advices to “be strong” and “patient,” in order to endure the whole period of her two-year contract. Jiejie Sumi and Mam Fahida discouraged Farah to change employers as this would cost her an additional wage deduction to the existing deduction of six-month salaries that all Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong are subject to. Farah explained to me that Sumi’s and Fahida’s advices were helpful at moments when she was “confused (*kebingungan*).” Actually, she said, she was “stressed (*tertekan*)” and could “not work peacefully (*kerja ndak tenang*).” Intimating that she was failing at achieving the social norms of inner peace and harmony, she would never want to return to Hong Kong and become a “helper” again. She admitted that actually she was “not strong (*bukan orang yang kuat*).” But remembering Sumi’s and Fahida’s pieces of advice helped her to be motivated again (*semangat kembali*). She admired Sumi for her professionalism and enjoyed Fahida’s motherly care. Her friend Nuraini added that Jiejie Sumi’s and Mam Fahida’s pieces of advice were to be taken seriously because the two instructors themselves had experienced working as “helpers” in Hong Kong. That day, when we met in Victoria Park, Farah was talking on the phone to Jiejie Sumi, and she assured that she would improve herself, that she would not turn to her agency in Hong Kong, and that she would try to *finish kontrak*. Farah agreed with Jiejie Sumi, Hong Kong workers indeed needed to be strong (*kuat*) (recording 31 Aug 2014). Farah’s deployment of the term “confusion” points to an active effort to work against impulses to leave a work situation that seems emotionally unbearable, an “affective precarity” (Akalin 2018) that characterizes migrant domestic workers’ conditions, not only in Hong Kong. This situation is structured by the fact that a change of employers would mean a new debt-relation with the Hong Kong based placement agency. Farah shared that she had been well aware of the “risk” of experiencing

difficulties from the start, before she had departed to Hong Kong (recording 31 Aug 2014). Jiejie Sumi's and Mam Fahida's advice reminded her to activate her capacities to perform affective labor on the self. The message Jiejie Sumi and Mam Fahida convey is: Farah's and her fellow workers' well-being depends on their individual capacity to successfully operate "on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being" (Foucault 1988, 18). Any alternatives, such as negotiating with her employer or finding another employer, are neither encouraged or supported nor foreseen by those stakeholders of the Indonesian overseas labor migration program who Farah trusted most—her former instructors Jiejie Sumi and Mam Fahida. Although Farah had difficulties to live up the ideal of a strong and enduring migrant domestic worker, she identified with this image. Thus, self-government and the rationality of governing the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* workers—enhancing their capability to endure their employment situation—intertwine. The skill of "making oneself feel comfortable" was imparted to migrant domestic workers through advices by instructors at the training center and the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong. Additionally, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency made use of state-of-the-art human resources training methods to cultivate their trainees' affective labor on themselves. I turn to these motivating methods in the following section.

Affective training: Mental guidance and human resources development

Every Saturday morning, the trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency attended a mental guidance-class (*pembinaan mental*). In contrast to the character building-class, which was instructed by a staff member of the training center, the training center had an external instructor come to teach this class, Pak Budi. Giving motivational classes was Pak Budi's side job, besides working as a gym teacher at a public school. Before Ibu Wijayanti hired him, he had worked as an insurance manager. Even before I attended Pak Budi's class for the first time, the trainees had told me that they were looking forward to the Saturday morning activities. When he came on my first Saturday at the training center, Dina introduced me to him. Pak Budi

welcomed me, and we chatted for a moment. He explained to me that the prospective migrant workers were to be equipped with three things: They should master the language of their respective destination countries, they should master skills like ironing, cooking, and child care, but, more importantly, they should also be “mentally prepared (*siap mental*).” He stressed that other training centers didn’t have this class included in their curriculum. His class was supposed to motivate the trainees, “not like at the military” because, he admitted, the training center was like “in detention (*pertahanan*).” The trainees should also have fun.

The trainees gathered in the courtyard, and Pak Budi instructed games: They stood in lines, sang songs, and clapped their hands. I knew some of these games from team building exercises in German NGOs. The trainees seemed to enjoy, as they giggled all through the almost two hours of game playing. There was a lunch break, and we gathered again afterwards, but this time not in the court but in the “meeting room,” a big conference hall. I was sitting on the floor amongst the trainees. Pak Budi started the session with a concentration game, which this time didn’t involve as much physical activity as before. It marked a transition to a more thoughtful ambience: After the game, the light was turned down and the shutters were closed. Pak Budi showed a couple of video clips, each one with a particular message.

One of the clips was titled *Respect Towards a Mother (Hormat Ibu)*, and it narrated a parable of an encounter between a baby ready to be born and God. The baby asks God how it is going to live once it has descended from heaven, and God answers that he has chosen an angel who is going to teach the baby to pray and protect it. Being asked the name of this angel the baby is going to live with, God answers that this angel’s name is “MOTHER.” The clip encouraged the audience members to ask for forgiveness for past disobediences. After the class Pak Budi enthusiastically shared the file of the clip on my thumb drive. The title of the file ‘to reflect on (*untuk direnungkan*) the concept of the self’ reveals that the clip was meant to encourage self-reflection. A contemplative atmosphere pervaded the meeting hall. Tears were

running over the cheeks of the trainee sitting next to me; she was not the only one. The last clip we were watching displayed a series of images of the Paralympic Games and was accompanied by Mariah Carey's "Hero." At the end of the clip a lettering was displayed: "If they can do it you can also do it!"

Pak Budi turned on the light again and invited the trainees to share their reflections about the class. He asked the trainees: "Why did I instruct you to play these games? What do you need for these games?" "Concentration!" one trainee shouted. "Discipline!" said another. "And what else? You need to be cheerful (*ceria*)." Pak Budi challenged his audience:

Do you know Diego Maradona? Who is Maradona—he is a soccer player. He made his hobby a profession. You should also see your work as your hobby. We did these games because that's how you need to do your work: with *élan* (*semangat*). There are two ways how to perform your work: You can love (*mencintai pekerjaan*) your work or you can complain about your work (*mengeluhkan pekerjaan*). You should avoid these five sicknesses.

He listed five Javanese terms, all beginning with 'n:': "cursing (*ngomel*)," "grumbling (*ngedumel*)," "gossiping (*ngegosip*)," "shouting (*ngeyel*)," and "complaining (*ngeluh*)"⁹² (field-notes 03 May 2014).

The dramaturgic script of Pak Budi's class resembles the human resources trainings analyzed by Daromir Rudnyckyj (2010). The anthropologist explored the popular human resources program "*Emotional and Spiritual Quotient* (ESQ) training," which was introduced to the state-owned company *Krakatau Steel* in the aftermath of Suharto's rule. ESQ trainings became so much popular in state-owned companies that also the staff of the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BNP2TKI) underwent the training (Killias 2018, 45). Like in the trainings studied by Rudnyckyj, Pak Budi's class lived from sensory experience: During the first half of the class, the trainees were to set their bodies into motion, while they were being entertained by Pak Budi's cheerful instructions. The second part,

⁹² I am grateful to Pak Budi for sharing some of his teaching materials with me.

taking place in a new spatial context addressed yet different senses: The clips that he showed spoke a visual and auditive language and moved the trainees to tears. Pak Budi's core message: 'Love your work' instead of complaining about it, joins the rank of Ibu Ani's, Jiejie Sumi's, and Mam Fahida's advice to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees and alumnae to perform affective labor on themselves. The clips reminded the trainees of their responsibility towards their mothers, and they were promised that, like the Paralympic competitors, they could be successful—'despite disabilities,' which in the case of prospective migrant workers could be a metaphor for their 'economic' or 'family' problems which so far have prevented them from being successful (see Chapter 6).

Interestingly, Pak Budi himself engaged in a kind of affective labor. Rudnyckyj (2010, 158) described the tailoring of the training room of human development trainings to "elicit intense affective displays" as a mode of "governing through affect" aimed at enhancing the productivity of *Krakatau Steel* employees and at achieving their personal transformation. Life-coaching, personal growth trainings, and human resources approaches have gained extreme popularity in Indonesia (see Jones 2010). Self-help literature makes a great share on the retail space of Indonesian book store chains such as *Gramedia* or *Gunung Agung*, and social media posts or statuses on instant-message clients cite the pieces of advices of motivational coach Mario Teguh, who is popular for his TV-show *The Golden Ways*. Much of the literature, trainings, and TV-shows combine their contents with religious practices such as Islamic prayer or Qur'anic recitation. The narration of the dialogue between God and the baby in one of the clips shown by Pak Budi exemplifies such a combination.

Pak Budi's training materials and the ESQ-trainings echo a global trend of the growing popularity of human resources approaches and a psychologized self-help and advice culture that has developed in North America, Europe, and Asia since the 1970s (Illouz 2007; Kondo 1990, 76–115; Neckel 2009, 188; Olds and Thrift 2006; Rose 1996). In the sphere of qualified

labor in high position jobs, this trend went hand in hand with the endeavor to maximize the productivity of employees through granting them more freedom. Human resources development approaches emphasize that a job should ‘enrich’ employees and offer the possibility for personal fulfillment (Donauer 2014, 10; Neckel 2009, 187; Olds and Thrift 2006; Penz and Sauer 2016, 140). Described as the “subjectification of labor,” the incorporation of the employees’ interest in subjective freedoms, this strategy to increase productivity has been understood as a particular mode of governing labor (Moldaschl and Voß 2003). From the angle of feminist critique, Kathi Weeks (2017, 40) points to the pronounced role of love and happiness in popular management and career consultancy, which “recruit () waged workers into a more intimate relationship with work,” thus mobilizing a middle-class idea of romantic love. As Weeks points out, U.S. and European feminist critique of the 1970s pointed to the ideological function of this idea in assigning domestic work to women (ibid.), thus naturalizing the affective, physical, and intellectual effort and naturalizing the unequal distribution of domestic work. The tropes of love and happiness appear in Pak Budi’s prompt to love one’s work like one’s hobby. Weeks elaborates how these tropes operate in activating productive labor and in concealing “the power relations that govern work’s daily grind” (Weeks 2017, 44).

Pak Budi’s explanation that his motivation class was different from that in the military—one of the paradigmatic operators of disciplinary power (Foucault 1975)—indicates the investments of *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency in ways that do not *constrain* the trainees’ conduct. Rather, his class *incited* a behavior conducive to the competitiveness of the company through resorting to the trainees’ feelings of responsibility towards their families, their capacities for self-reflection, their willingness to improve their talents, and their capacity to perform their work with joy. The labelling of Pak Budi’s class as “mental guidance” or *pembinaan mental* is noteworthy in this respect.

This is a legacy of the ‘leadership’ sessions called “realization and implementation of the state philosophy Pancasila (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengalaman Pancasila*),” which junior high and high school students, university students, civil servants and military personnel had to undergo during the Suharto regime. In his *Professional Dictionary of Modern Indonesian*, Southeast Asia-scientist Ingo Wandelt (2016, 68) translates the term *pembinaan mental* as “mental leadership (fostering military world-view), defense psychology measures,” and “character building.” This underlines the proximity of the term with Indonesian military terminology. My friends in Indonesia who underwent the indoctrination classes as university students still recall that instructors used lecturing styles towards a passive audience (see also Bouchier 2015, 192–97). In contrast, Pak Budi’s mental guidance class constitutes a transformed conduct of migrant domestic workers, which coincides with the neoliberal invocation of a pliant but self-initiating subject (Olds and Thrift 2006, 275; Rose 1999, 159).⁹³

In Indonesia, the growing popularity of self-help, life-coaching, and human resources trainings followed the dissolution of society’s faith in the developmentalist project of the Suharto regime. This loss in faith was not least triggered by the widespread practice of corruption, which bureaucrats, the military, and managers of state-owned companies had been implicated in (Rudnyckyj 2010, 74). Remarkably, the cultural and religious adaptations of human resources management training are marketed for employees in white-collar work contexts, or as courses on feminine comportment of middle-class women (Jones 2010; Rudnyckyj 2010, 93–98, 135). In the context of migrant domestic workers’ training, Pak Budi’s methods thus appear somewhat peculiar. Given the startling situation that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees are educated to love their work like their hobby despite the obvious condition of bondage through indebtedness and seclusion inherent both in the training and their employment in Hong Kong,

⁹³ In Chapter 8, I contextualize neoliberalism in Indonesia and discuss its germane notions of self-responsibility, self-optimization, and entrepreneurialism.

one might ask: Why does the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency invest in such trainings? I suggest that through human development programs, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency aspires to prove its grade of professionalism. A professional company in step with the time should provide such trainings. They are an investment in the quality of Indonesian domestic workers, and, given the increasing popularity of such trainings in a situation of dissolving faith in the government, they are a demonstration of moral righteousness. Thus, Pak Budi's human resources management training can be read as another modality of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency's engagement in the larger project of enhancing respectability. Professionalism at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center was a value in itself. Thereby, the trainees perfected competencies they would hardly apply at their future workplaces, such as making beds according to hotel standards.

Notably, domestic workers themselves appreciate this professionalism. Some of the domestic workers I studied with told me that before deciding upon working in a private household abroad, they thought of this profession as something inferior. Once talking to Farah at the training center, she told me that she used to disregard (*memandang sebelah mata*) this kind of work (fieldnotes 06 May 2014). For Hesti, a worker I got to know in Hong Kong in 2018, becoming a helper had actually been beyond her imagination. Having graduated from high school, she was looking for employment in the East Javanese city Surabaya. Passionate to learn new things, Hesti had been dreaming of studying at college, but her family was experiencing financial difficulties, so she didn't want to burden them with the fees. When a cousin of hers suggested to work abroad, Hesti felt her dignity insulted (*saya terpukul sekali*): "Becoming a helper?" It was the professionalism of the training center where she was preparing her departure, a training center with a good reputation in East Java, that helped her in coming to terms with her ambivalent feelings about her decision to postpone her dreams for an indefinite period. "Luckily the company was really proper, like a school boarding house," she recalled her time at the training

center. For Hesti, obtaining professional skills as in hotel housekeeping and the serious training curriculum meant being taken seriously as a person and opposed what she feared about being a domestic helper (recording 04 Jul 2018).

I have suggested that hiring Pak Budi was part of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency's endeavor of professionalizing the trainees and that his training, thus, fulfills an important function in creating a positive and dignified self-image of the company. Moreover, Pak Budi's training methods joins an array of measures shared at the training center that prepare the trainees in stress-management. Indonesian recruitment agencies are challenged by the costs of the rigidity of the training, the drastic constraints in migrants' mobilities, and the demanding work load implied in migrant domestic labor. As Ibu Ani once explained to me, the trainees needed to be treated strictly, but joking was also considered important, because the trainees needed to learn how do to deal with *stres* (fieldnotes 29 April 2014). In the following section, I expand the discussion on techniques of affective 'crisis-management' imparted to Indonesian migrant domestic workers.

Worshipping workers: Spirituality, affective labor on the self, and 'crisis-management'

In the opening vignette of the chapter, Laotse Wiwik recommends the trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency to turn to religious practices in order to avoid becoming *stres*. The dormitory overseer Ibu Ani explained this central role of spirituality in the performance of affective labor on the self on one Thursday night, when the trainees gathered for *Yasinan*, the weekly sessions of Qur'an recitations. Ibu Ani was indignant because of the trainees' lack of seriousness in the *Yasinan*. She lamented that the trainees were talking on the phone instead of taking the time to recite the Qur'an. She gave the trainees a long lecture and reminded the trainees that prayers could calm their fears. Commenting trainees who were yawning, she said that if they read the Qur'an the trainees would not feel any fatigue (fieldnotes 01 May 2014).

During the migration process, Indonesian migrant domestic workers are repeatedly reminded that religious practices enhances work motivation and that hard work is “a worldly means of accumulating otherworldly merit” (Rudnyckyj 2010, 239). This notion, which links religious practice to capitalist values of maximizing profit and to neoliberal reform, has become widely popular in Indonesian management programs, and is one crucial component of what Rudnyckyj has termed “spiritual economies,” a combination of religion and neoliberalism which “enlist[s] subjects in governing themselves” and which has some commonalities with the entanglement of protestant ethics with the evolvment of capitalism as described by Max Weber (in *ibid.*, 154).⁹⁴ For instance, the teaching materials on work ethos that Pak Budi shared with me after the *mental guidance* class explain that work is “God’s blessing (*rahmat Allah*)” and “worship (*ibadah*).”

The terminology that depicts work as “worship” and a person’s “spiritual quotient” as a tool for individual success derives from the “Spiritual Reform” discourse manifested in human resources development programs. This discourse builds on religious practice as a crucial principle (Rudnyckyj 2010, 93). While in these programs, the role of spirituality is highlighted with regard to work ethics, I argue that in the case of Indonesian migrant domestic workers, these are also called upon to practice spirituality as a kind of affective labor on the self, critical in managing the feelings of insecurity and stress that are evoked by the precarity implied in their migration projects.

One manifestation of crises during the period of preparing prospective workers are the frequent spirit possessions (*kesurupan*) occurring in Indonesian training camps (Killias 2009,

⁹⁴ However, Rudnyckyj (2010, 145) reflects that there are “some important differences between the spirit of capitalism and spiritual economies. For Weber, the ethical orientation that emerged from the doctrinal revisions made by Protestant theologians later precipitated an austere rationalized, capitalist way of life. This relationship was historical and thus contingent and unintentional. In contrast, for spiritual reformers in contemporary Indonesia, the link between corporate success and religious piety is calculated by design. They are convinced that developing faith will bring Indonesia prosperity.”

164). Once Dina told me that only the night before my arrival at the training center, three trainees had been afflicted by spirit possessions: Their bodies had been “entered by spirits (*masuk roh*).” Ibu Ani had been able to calm them by reciting Islamic prayers (fieldnotes 08 May 2014). Spirit possessions are experienced as disturbing and violent attacks on the body, and they occur in places of former violence which has left its traces through the spirits (Ong 1987, 201–13). In her seminal ethnography on experiences of female factory workers in Malaysia amidst the proletarianization of agricultural regions, Ong (*ibid.*, 8) relates the spirit possession episodes that afflict female factory workers in free export zones to the “continuing personal and social crisis” brought about by “corporate control and labor discipline.” Although I have described scenes of (instructed) cheerfulness, the routines at *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency’s training center were, like the factory regimes described by Ong, marked by rigid rules, constant surveillance, seclusion, exhaustion, reprimand for the smallest violations of rules, for instance leaving a towel on a locker, or accusations of indecent clothing (e.g. fieldnotes 18 May 2014). Some trainees told me that there was too much disciplining at the training center (fieldnotes 10 Jul 2014), that the training involved too much force (*terlalu diforsir*), and that the trainees were lacking resting time (fieldnotes 14 May 2014, see Chapter 2.1). I observed that those trainees who had completed their training and were chartered to the pre-departure briefing were hardly able to absorb the information given at the briefing simply because they were too exhausted (fieldnotes 13 May 2014). The routines at the training center mirrored the seclusion of the private homes of the trainees’ future employers: Some of the trainees would also be surveilled by cameras and be challenged by the isolation they found themselves in.

Remarkably, Ibu Ani’s and Laotse Wiwik’s advice to recite the Qur’an or the Bible as a means to calm down and find peace, does not so much imply the practice of religious rituals such as practicing the five prayers a day (*sholat*), or fasting. At the session on “Mental and Character Building (*Pembinaan Mental Kepribadian*)” given by a member of the Indonesian

Ulema Council at the pre-departure briefing, I learned that employers in Hong Kong oftentimes do not allow their employees to conduct the five prayers, fast during Ramadan, or wear white *mukena*—the veil worn by females at prayer—, because they “think of [the workers] as ghosts” if they wear the white veils (transcript of recording 13 May 2014). The prospective workers were advised to secretly conduct (*mencuri waktu*) the prayer ritual and to find less provoking ways to cover their bodies while conducting the prayer. While these pieces of advice were an attempt to unify the religious duties of a virtuous Muslima in order to find “happiness in the afterlife” and the restrictions in practicing one’s religion as they are imposed by employers of migrant domestic workers (transcript of recording 13 May 2014). Ibu Ani referred to religious practice as a way of dealing with existential insecurities in this life.

Ibu Ani and Laotse Wiwik furthermore did not solely call upon the practice of Islamic rituals, but most of the times, non-Muslims were addressed inclusively, for instance when after each class and before rest time, the trainees were invited to pray “according to everyone’s belief.” Most of the non-Muslims were trainees originating from Eastern Indonesia and hence from a different region than the majority of the trainees who originated from Muslim dominated East Java. Ibu Ani once explained to me that she felt responsible to avoid ‘horizontal’ conflicts between trainee cliques from different regions, another manifestation of crises in many training camps (fieldnotes 16 May 2014; see also Killias 2009, 164).

The recourse to spirituality is not to be seen as an external instruction, since spiritual practice was also an existential practice of (self-)care and community at the training center, before their departure, and also in Hong Kong. Usually, the night before a group of trainees departed to their destination country, all trainees gathered for *Istighosah*, a mass prayer for safety and God’s protection (see e.g. Crouch 2014, xxi).⁹⁵ When one night I joined the *Istighosah* at the

⁹⁵Crouch (2014, 100) refers to the Indonesian religious mass organization *Nahdlatul Ulama*, which translates *istighosah* as “*pertolongan* or help and liken[s] [the practice] to the [Arabic Islamic] *tawassul*, that is, intercession or drawing near to God.”

Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara agency, at the time that was usually the study period, we gathered in the class room in the laboratory building. The trainees, covered in their *mukena* or other fabrics—knowing that abroad they would not be allowed to wear their *mukena*, some trainees didn't bring theirs to the training—and were sitting in rows. They sung endless loops of *Salatullah Salamullah*, an Arabic Islamic prayer chant, and the four trainees who were going to depart the following day, said good bye to all other trainees. Some of the trainees around me gave the departing candidates long hugs, and many shed tears. The repetition of the prayer made the atmosphere intense. I knew the *Salatullah Salamullah* prayer because in East Java and Jakarta it is often blasted out from the speakers of the mushollas and mosques, sung by a male voice. The prayer, sung solely by female voices involved a powerful affective experience (fieldnotes 04 May 2014). The *Istighosah* was an important community-building practice through which the trainees prepared for the precarity they would face abroad. This resonates with the experiences of the informants in Silvey's (2018) study of domestic workers' migration to Saudi Arabia. Silvey's informants appreciate the training centers as a "space of social contact" (ibid., 199; see also Killias 2018, 129–34). Silvey's description aptly captures what the preparation prior to departure meant to the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees. When I worked at the shelter for migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong four years later, *Istighosah* belonged to the shelter tenants' repertoire of strategies in coping with their emotional strains. In many migrant domestic workers' communities around the world religious practice and spirituality are crucial for self-empowerment and also a possibility for meeting other migrant workers (see e.g. Akalin, 2014; Liebelt, 2010).

The migration apparatus mobilizes this potential in order to equip migrants with a set of skills to endure demanding migration and working conditions. The trainees were endlessly advised to "stay focused" and fade out the thoughts and concerns for family members at home.

Thus, they were called upon performing affective labor in order to cope with inner unrest (fieldnotes 30 April, 01, 02 & 16 May, 28 Jul 2014).

“Inner peace (*sakinah*),” and “anxieties” were also the subject of the *Idul Fitri* sermon at Victoria Park in Hong Kong in order to celebrate the end of the fasting month Ramadan. The Indonesian Consulate had the popular television preacher Aa Gym flown into Hong Kong in order to give the sermon in Victoria Park. The field of a size of two soccer fields was packed with thousands of Indonesian migrant workers. The charismatic preacher had gained immense popularity in Indonesia as an epitome of a combination of life-coach, giving advice on how to obtain personal and business success, religious preacher, and virtuous husband (Hoesterey 2007).⁹⁶ Resonating his self-help advice of “Managing the Heart (*Manajemen Qolbu*)”—an advice that remarkably resembles the title of Hochschild’s *The Managed Heart*—his charismatically staged voice transmitted his core message from a booming loudspeaker: “No matter how great it may be to possess material wealth, a throne, and status, if Allah doesn’t give us inner peace (*sakinah di hati kita*), we don’t have anything.” Without inner tranquility (*ketenangan*), coming to Hong Kong in order to make a living would end up in suffering. Inner peace, Aa Gym reasoned, was different from material wealth, status, appearance or fame, because inner peace is infused into the hearts of devout people. Aa Gym explained that inner unrest stemmed from the lack of religious teaching (*ilmu agama*), from a lack of conducting prayers (*sholat*), sinning, and wrong social contact (*salah pergaulan*) (recording 29 Jul 2014; see also Utami 2014). Putting more emphasis on the performance of religious rituals than Ibu Ani and Laotse Wiwik, Aa Gym also connected religious practice to achieve the affective state of tranquility. After the sermon I asked some of the workers who attended it how and whether they were touched by Aa Gym’s sermon. All of them said they were sorrowfully reminded of being separated from their families (fieldnotes 31 Jul 2014). This indicates that the topic of

⁹⁶ Aa Gym however lost popularity after he had taken a second wife (Hoesterey 2007).

inner unrest indeed touches migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. However, Aa Gym's plea for self-inspection and call to evaluate and improve *individual* religious practice does not contain any reflection of the non-individual reasons that structure migrant workers' conditions in Hong Kong and feed the workers' strong feelings of missing their families in Indonesia: The lack of holidays and financial resources to afford to go on a home visit or have their families over to Hong Kong. Aa Gym's invocation of self-responsibility through affective work on the self—"management of the heart"—as well as his self-dramatization embedded in an attention economy combines religious and neoliberal knowledge (Rudnyckyj 2010, 154; see Chapter 8).

Interim resumé: Beyond extracting affective labor—techniques of survival

During preparation, prospective migrant domestic workers are constantly reminded that what is required to fulfill the role of an 'ideal migrant' is much more than mastering the obvious skills, which employment in a household abroad requires. Instructors refer to such additional skills as being 'mentally prepared.' The trainees of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency learn: The state of being mentally prepared involves the trainees' competencies to generate and control affects and emotions, by attentively engaging with their surroundings and the members of the households which employ them, and by managing their own impulses. I described the subtleties of these capacities as affective labor and depicted an array of practices by means of which the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency is invested in enhancing its trainees' affective labor. The trainees are given advice how to perform affective labor by their instructors, and they constantly probe their performance of affective labor at the training center, which turns into a simulation laboratory. For an enhancement of their affective labor, they are incited to make use of knowledge and practices that are already inscribed in their everyday lives—Javanese norms of conduct and spirituality. Furthermore, motivation trainers or charismatic preachers perform affective labor on their own part in order to incite the workers' performance

of affective labor. These practices call upon the workers' self-government. For the state facilitated migration of its labor force in the name of development, domestic workers' affective labor is essential. I introduced an analytical distinction to the notion of affective labor and differentiated between the service labor performed by Indonesian migrant domestic workers to produce their employers' comfort and the labor implied in managing their anxieties, impulses, and affects. This provides a nuanced understanding of the extensive skills domestic workers master, not only in Hong Kong, but in private households across the globe. Perfecting both mentioned aspects of affective labor enhances Indonesian recruitment agencies' advantage on the global market of care labor. For state actors, the extensive skills of affective labor guarantee that the workers conclude their contracts 'successfully,' and they secure the flow of remittances. Recruitment agencies and state actors can rely on the workers who endure their precarity and stay emotionally healthy in light of the devaluation of their labor, in light of the working conditions, and in light of being morally questioned as mobile women. The commitment of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency to improving the workers' skills, through state-of-the-art human resources training methods, is indicative of a self-understanding as a modern and reputable actor in the migration business dedicated to the well-being of the workers. Such a self-understanding reflects the will to improve, which is characteristic of contemporary labor brokerage policies (Chapter 5). Yet, in effect, enhancing migrant domestic workers' skills in affective labor implies a refinement of the modes that govern them.

Certainly, not all the techniques that are deployed in the investment in affective labor impacted the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees to the same extent. For instance, the fun that the trainees enjoyed during Pak Budi's or Laotse Wiwik's class and which was supposed to evoke the trainees' self-motivation could not hide the fact that the trainees had no other choice than to participate in the *mental* preparation. Each training day was recorded on an online-database that is directly connected to the authority that issues the *Overseas Worker's Card*

(KTKLN), which is required for the departure abroad (see Chapter 5.1). In turn, there are also techniques of governing that stand out, like the impression that role models such as Jiejie Sumi left on the trainees. Many *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees and alumnae regarded Jiejie Sumi an inspiring example. Asking the trainees and alumnae about what had impressed them the most about the training, I often received an unhesitant answer: Jiejie Sumi. She impressed the trainees because she was hard-working and because they found that her advices were upright. She epitomized the self-image that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* workers were supposed to—and desired to—cultivate (fieldnotes 10 May; 10 & 22 Jul; 08 Aug 2014). In Hong Kong they kept in touch with Jiejie Sumi and asked her for advice.

It is important to note that the skills imparted by Jiejie Sumi, Mam Fahida, Laotse Wiwik, and Ibu Ani do not fully exhaust themselves in the purpose to capitalize on the migrants' biopolitical self-governing. Based on their own experience, the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center imparted survival skills that Indonesian migrant domestic workers deploy in pursuing their own, willful migration projects. This consideration takes up a line of argument that I discussed in Chapter 6: The instructors at the training center hold a position in between, in which on the one hand they form part of the technologies that discipline and govern Indonesian migrant domestic workers, thus extracting their biopolitical potentials, and on the other hand, by equipping them with skills that potentially enhance workers' bargaining positions, they are supportive in realizing Indonesian migrant domestic workers' subjective, willful migration projects. I turn to the workers' subjective practices in the remaining subchapter. Migrant domestic workers perform affective and care work on their own terms, thus willfully pursuing quests for respect and well-being that are at odds with the technologies of modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage.

7.3 Defying the imperative to endure *like that*⁹⁷

The workers who I studied with demonstrated how they performed affective labor on their own terms, thus challenging the governmentality of the multiplicity of practices involved in the migration circuit. In this subchapter, I discuss two modalities in which migrant domestic workers (re)appropriate skills of affective labor. The first modality points to how migrant domestic workers deploy their capacities of performing affective labor in seeking labor market mobility, thus breaking with the imperative to endure harsh working conditions. The second modality concerns Indonesian migrant domestic workers' alternative modes of coping. Through collective laughter, creativity, and arts, migrant domestic workers cultivate modes of caring for themselves and each other, which in effect support them to endure the variegated forms of devaluing their labor and social status. I argue that these collective practices of coping constitute a form of everyday politics.

Reappropriating affective labor

The case of Halima—a *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumna—explores how the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees skillfully performed practices of affective labor for their own ends, and how this led to conflicts with the migration apparatus. Searching for respect, she sought to use her mobility on the labor market to improve her working conditions. She and her colleagues deployed their capacities of affective labor to choose an employer in a certain independence from the migration apparatus. Halima's attempt to make use of labor market mobility failed. Yet, as I argue in the following sections, her attempt needs to be understood in the context of earlier practices of local domestic workers who had gained considerable bargaining power in their negotiations over working and living conditions.

⁹⁷ The title of this subchapter is a reference to Foucault's (2007b) discussion of the notion of critique as a question of "how not be governed *like that*."

Searching for respect

“If you worked with them, your soul would already have been broken into pieces (*kalau Samia di sana batinmu sudah hancur*).” These were the words of Halima, when she desperately wanted to leave the work relationship she was in and find a new employer. I had become acquainted with Halima during her training at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency and met her again in Hong Kong in July 2014. She had departed for Hong Kong in late May. Halima had her day off from work on Mondays, like her colleagues Monica and Elia, and during these first weeks of their employment in Hong Kong, the three newcomers met regularly. They had to adapt to their employers, they didn’t know their way around, and they had hardly any money because, like the other *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* alumnae, they were still paying off the placement and training fees. Hence, although it was their day off, the workers could hardly relax. A lot was on their minds, and I often experienced them being tense.

Bit by bit, the former *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* trainees found each other again, because they met at the agency’s office or because they obtained their respective new Hong Kong phone numbers. I was joining them, when Monica and Elia met Halima for the first time in Hong Kong. Monica, Elia, and I had been returning from the *Best Care* agency, which was an hour long bus ride away from Monica’s and Elia’s neighborhoods. Monica’s and Elia’s employment contracts were handled by the *Best Care* agency, while Halima had been placed at her employer’s household by yet a different agency. We met Halima on a square in front of the famous Wong Tai Sin temple and were surrounded by shopping malls and the imposing high-rise housing complexes that shape most of the cityscape of Hong Kong. The first impression that Monica and Elia got from Halima was that she had grown very slim. Indeed, Halima had considerably lost weight since I had seen her before her departure from the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency. We learned that Halima was not comfortable with her employer, a single woman who was living with her mother. Halima was responsible for the cleaning and had to

take care of her employer's elderly mother (fieldnotes 28 Jul 2014). This first reunion with Halima was only a short one because the workers had to be at their employer's house before their curfew. We arranged to meet again a week after, when the three of them had their next day off. That day, the four of us again made our way to the *Best Care* agency. Elia's employer required her to spend her days off at the agency because she didn't want Elia to interact with other Indonesians who were "odd (*aneh*)"—she was referring to stereotypical images of migrant workers who were considered untrustworthy (see Chapter 6.2). The employer would check whether Elia really was at the agency. The three found this requirement pointless, especially because it requested a long bus ride and implied transport costs. On the bus, Halima told me that her employer and the *popoh*,⁹⁸ her employer's mother whom she was taking care of, were rude to her. The *popoh* had beaten her a few times, but apparently was told to stop it by her daughter because she knew this could cause the police to intervene, so Halima reasoned. Her job was tough, she told me. Every day she had to massage the *popoh* for two hours. She was sharing a room with her, and the *popoh* was listening to the radio until late at night, so that Halima could not rest, although she had to get up early in the morning. "I cry inside," Halima told me when I asked her how she endured the situation.

When the four of us reached the *Best Care* agency, located in the ground floor of an office building, we were disappointed: We were standing in front of closed doors, apparently 'Mami,' the owner of the agency, was not there. Amongst themselves, the three were negotiating whether we should stay and wait, or leave again—what was the sense of coming there anyways? However, since Elia's employer would check whether she really had been at the agency, we stayed and waited until Mami was back. An elderly lady approached the closed agency door. She was also searching for Mami. Monica, Elia and Halima interacted with this *popoh* in their

⁹⁸ *Popoh* is the Cantonese term for 'grandmother' or an elderly woman.

rudimentary Cantonese, and they offered their help. Monica took over the conversation, in Mandarin, which she was proficient in because of her previous employment in Taiwan. She managed to fairly get by in conversations with elder generation Hongkongers because many of them speak Mandarin, while the younger employers often only speak Cantonese. I observed the three women; they were charming in conversing with the *popoh*. Monica was friendly and confident. She often impressed me with her joviality, which also seemed to make her win the sympathy of the public city cleaners at the park nearby her employer's house. Apparently, the *popoh* had come to the agency because her daughter wanted to hire a domestic worker. Turning to Halima, Monica was joking: "Maybe she wants to hire you!" Monica told the *popoh* that Halima would actually like to have a new employer, that Halima's current employer was not good to her. When Mami eventually came back to the agency office, the *popoh* and the three workers entered the agency, while I was waiting for them outside.

After some time, Elia came out. Mami had already talked to Elia's employer and confirmed Elia's presence, and, hence, she had completed her duty. She also told me that, as it happened, the *popoh* was interested in hiring Halima, and that Mami wanted to help Halima, to facilitate an employment contract with the *popoh*. Therefore, Mami was calling Jiejie Sumi in Indonesia. Eventually Monica and Halima also came out of the office and told me about the conversation with Jiejie Sumi. The latter had told Halima what she had told Farah, whose narrative was discussed in one of the previous sections: to be patient, and that it was anything but certain if the *popoh* would really be a good employer. Jiejie Sumi called on Halima's affective labor on herself to endure her difficult situation. Remarkably, Halima did not receive any advice on how she could communicate her difficulties to her employer and, thus, find a solution for her situation.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ During my second stay in Hong Kong, I could get insights into some of the communication problems between Indonesian workers and their employers. A training on how the workers could enhance their 'assertiveness' and train their ability to deal with conflicts by a social worker at the shelter was well received by the shelter tenants.

Shortly after, the *popoh* stepped out of the small agency office and turned to us: “Come with me and see the flat.” Monica was surprised and asked in Mandarin: “One, two, three, four persons?” The *popoh* repeated her invitation to come with her. We didn’t have much time to think and followed her. I didn’t find the elderly lady particularly friendly, but the others remarked that she was very nice. We followed the *popoh* out of the office and traversed a bustling market. Her pace was, like the pace of most Hongkongers, fast, and I had to make an effort to keep up. Elia offered her help to pull the *popoh*’s trolley. I was impressed by the three workers’ attentiveness and fascinated that the inculcation at the training center with the competency of deference at any time had obviously borne fruit. The *popoh* took us on a bus ride. On the bus we had time to talk about Jiejie Sumi’s reaction. Although Monica, Halima, and Elia had great respect for Jiejie Sumi, they questioned Jiejie Sumi’s instruction to Halima to be patient and endure her situation. They all agreed that being employed by this *popoh* would be a better alternative than Halima’s current employment situation. The three of them did not accept Jiejie Sumi’s advice. Monica justified her disagreement with Jiejie Sumi, and implicitly invoked a sense of justice: “She doesn’t experience herself what it feels like (*Jiejie Sumi tidak merasakan*).”

After quite a journey, we arrived at a forty-floor social housing complex, where the *popoh* led us to her daughter’s flat: a small three-room flat that appeared crammed because in addition to the usual furnishing, there was a crib and a shelf full with diapers. We were invited to sit down, and the *popoh*’s daughter, a new mother, and the *popoh* explained in Cantonese what Halima’s job would be if she started working for her. Monica and Elia translated into Javanese. Halima would have to sleep on the sofa in the living room, the other two rooms were inhabited by the young mother, her husband and her in-laws. Halima would not be allowed to perform

Agencies in Indonesian and Hong Kong, however, do little to assist the workers in dealing with conflicts with their employers.

sholat. “No, no, no,” the *popoh* said and vigorously shook her head. Whether Halima ate pork.¹⁰⁰ No, but she would be willing to prepare pork. Her daughter explained that she was still on maternity leave, and because she hadn’t started working again, it would not yet be clear, on which weekday Halima would have her day off from work. The *popoh* and her daughter hardly took note of my presence. This was an unfamiliar situation to me, since in Indonesia visiting a stranger’s house as a white European usually leads to curious questions, sometimes embarrassment, and most of the time being attentively hosted as a guest. Nothing of the sort happened in this lower middle class, double-income household. This encounter was a matter of business: It clearly focused on the interest of finding a suitable domestic worker. We left the flat after approximately twenty minutes. Outside, Monica, Halima, and Elia were excited. This had been a very “good” and “soft (*lembut*)” employer, the three women said. Monica and Elia commented that they wished they had an employer like the lady we had just visited. I was startled by their enthusiasm, still under the impression of the small and cramped flat, the idea that Halima would have to sleep on the sofa in the tiny living room, and the lack of privacy. The three women’s reaction and emphasis on the tone of the employer sheds light on the emotional struggles migrant domestic workers experience (see also Cock 1989; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010): In their view, a respectful interaction with an employer was decisive in defining a work relationship worth of changing employers, rather than other aspects such as being granted privacy, working hours, or being granted the right to perform *sholat*. Monica’s, Halima’s, and Elia’s reaction hint at the emotional difficulties migrant domestic workers have with working for, in their eyes, cantankerous, moody, and harsh employers. On our way back to Monica’s neighborhood, where we spent the rest of the day until they had to return to their employers’ home in order to comply with their curfews, we were elated: The journey to the agency—which we had actually doomed

¹⁰⁰ The majority of Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong are practicing Muslims, who abstain from eating pork for religious reasons.

a senseless undertaking that needed to be carried out in order to satisfy Elia's controlling employer—had eventually brought luck and hope for Halima (fieldnotes 04 Aug 2014).

Halima's hope in being able to evade an employment relation that is unbearable through changing her employer is a hope in using the "proletariat's trump card—market mobility" (Killias 2018, 176; Lan 2007, 259). On that day, Monica, Elia, and Halima had made use of their skills of attentiveness, deference, and language competencies on their own terms. They were convincing enough to make the *popoh* consider to hire Halima. Half a century earlier, in Hong Kong and in Malaysia, domestic workers from the silk producing Canton Delta in Guangdong Province in mainland China, had comparably made use of their skills and their mobility on their own terms. These domestic workers, called *amahs*, migrated to Hong Kong "as free women, who paid for their own passage either with their own savings or borrowed from relatives and friends" (Saptari 2006, 491). They organized their own solidarity networks, changed their employers or threatened them to do so. By enhancing their skills, they acquired considerable bargaining power. These aspects were important resources in negotiating better working conditions: Because *amahs*—it is known that a lot of them were resisting marriage—organized themselves in sisterhoods, they had a safety net, which in interim phases gave mutual financial support and sought employment for each other (Constable 2007, 24; Gin 2013, 421; van Nederveen Meerkerk, Neunsinger, and Hoerder 2015, 7–8; Sankar 1984).¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² I assume that

¹⁰¹This combination of the professionalization of skills, labor mobility, and solidarity networks was not only practiced by domestic workers in Malaysia and Hong Kong, but also by early twenty-century migrant domestic workers in North America who originated from Finland. Van Nederveen, Neunsinger, and Hoerder (2015, 8) ascribe these strategies not at last to the "background of the strong class consciousness and communist movement in Finland."

¹⁰² The generation of *amahs* lacked a successor generation, as employment in factories in the growing industries became more attractive from 1960s on. In the 1970s and 1980s, Hong Kong employers started to hire foreign domestic workers, not least because *amahs* demanded higher wages and benefits and because, due to their longtime employment in Hong Kong families, they had acquired considerable authority in these families (Constable 2007, 28). The Chairman of the Hong Kong Employers of Domestic Helpers' Association explained to me that he and his wife turned to hiring a domestic worker from the Philippines in 1975, after they had employed a "local amah." They had been dissatisfied with the local amah. He told me: "[She] was very old and if I asked her to do something, as regards to how to take care of the baby, she would turn back to me and say, 'you were still a child when I had the experience of looking after children.' My wife said, 'we better try a Filipina'" (interview transcript 01 August 2014).

the support they provided for each other also included emotional support and advice in dealing with conflicts with employers. The migration and labor regimes that governed *amahs* and contemporary migrant domestic workers significantly differ from each other: Indonesian migration policies prevent Indonesian migrant workers from choosing their employers independently. Unless migrant workers prolong their contracts with an existing employer, self-organized employment and migration arrangements are only possible outside the official migration scheme and thus illegalized (see Chapter 5.2). A Hong Kong specific regulation issued by the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong called *Surat Edaran 2524/2011* furthermore does not allow migrant domestic workers to change Hong Kong based employment agencies as long they haven't finished one contract of two years (Luigi 2012; Nuraini 2012; Palmer 2013).¹⁰³ Hong Kong placement agencies and the workers are monitored through an online-system, which documents the workers' arrival, their employer's address, their agencies, and their contracts. At the Consulate, I was informed that these restrictions should protect the workers from the profit-making of Hong Kong placement agencies, from indebtedness and trafficking. Despite the attempt to better monitor placement agencies, some of these, nevertheless, charge workers who change agencies to find new employment (fieldnotes 12 Aug 2014).

Halima's endeavor to seek employment with the young mother who we had visited in her flat was inhibited due to migration regulations and the debt relationship that her migration implies. After her encounter with the *popoh* and the employer, Halima told her agency that she wanted to resign from her contract. Upon hearing this, her agent hung up the phone. Halima concluded that she would have to "make herself comfortable (*dibetahin*)" with her current employer until she had paid back all the fees for her procurement and training (fieldnotes 18 Aug 2014). However, a week later, Halima decided that she couldn't bear the situation any more,

¹⁰³ Laid-off workers or workers who have filed a case at the Hong Kong Labor court against their employers may only change agencies if they have approval from their Indonesia based recruitment agency based (Luigi 2012).

and, remembering that Mami had promised to help her, she asked me to accompany her to the *Best Care* agency. In fact, when Halima called Mami to ask whether the *popoh* was still looking for a domestic worker, according to Mami, the *popoh* was waiting for Halima. I could not convince Halima to seek advice from the Consulate and enquire information about her right to change agencies, so I accompanied her to the *Best Care* agency. On the way to the agency, Halima told me about her problems with her employer. Constantly she was blamed for mistakes she had not even done. Bitterly, Halima said about her situation: “Who would be able to stand it there?” Halima was not able to “make herself comfortable” as she had been preached at during her training. Indeed, when we had reached the agency, Mami indicated that there were ways to circumvent the restriction of changing agencies, and she would have facilitated Halima’s placement with the employer, for a charge of 6,000 HKD (approx. 670 €, almost one and a half one month salary)—a charge that is neither in line with Indonesian nor with Hong Kong regulations, but common practice among Hong Kong based employment agencies (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower 2012a; Labour Department of the Government of Hong Kong SAR 1997; Palmer 2013, 6). Again, Halima talked to Jiejie Sumi whose approval would have been required to realize the change of agencies. This time, Jiejie Sumi was angered by Halima’s stubbornness. She would not help Halima to find a new employer, as long as Halima had not completed the six months of wage deduction, and as long as Halima was not seriously abused. Her insistence in asking Halima to stay with her employer stems from the fact that the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency acted as a guarantor for Halima, when she took up a loan from *China Trust Indonesia*, which had a contract with the Hong Kong finance institution *Toyo*, to settle the placement and preparation fees (see also Palmer 2013, 6).

Jiejie Sumi reproached Halima for her ostensible impolite behavior: “Don’t you have any respect towards your own agency?” Halima was explaining herself on the phone, that she couldn’t endure her situation anymore, and that even the previous domestic workers of this

employer had quit. Jiejie Sumi reminded Halima of her virtuousness: “Don’t compare yourself to others (*Jangan menyamakan orang!*)” (fieldnotes 25 Aug 2014). In this scene of interpellation, Halima’s position as debtor is intermingled with an appellation to her morality. Sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato (2011), drawing on Nietzsche, Marx, Deleuze, and Guattari, has identified this intermingling of an economic relationship with morality in debtor-creditor relations as a fundamental mode of governing in capitalist societies.¹⁰⁴ Killias (2010, 901) pointed to the official framing of migration outside the state-sanctioned scheme in moral terms. Jiejie Sumi’s appeal on Halima’s morality in her position as debtor adds another dimension to the role of evocations of migrant workers’ morality.

Affective labor as a source of willful mobility

Halima’s story is illuminating with respect to two aspects: *Firstly*, Halima, Monica, and Elia used their competencies in performing affective labor on their own terms and tried to evade the pervasive scrutiny of the paternalistic migration apparatus. As they make use of their competencies of affective labor for the aim of labor market mobility, they challenge the motives of recruitment agents, who cultivate their recruits’ affective labor in order to enhance the workers’ capabilities to endure their employers’ control over their time and labor. As I learned, many Indonesian migrant domestic workers have earlier experiences in using their mobility in “running away,” either as domestic workers in Indonesia or as migrant domestic workers in other destination countries such as Malaysia or Taiwan. Killias (2010, 908–11, 2018, 173–77) also describes how a migrant domestic worker organized her migration and employment in Malaysia independently, and though illegalized, created better migration and employment conditions for

¹⁰⁴ According to Lazzarato (2011, 25), “debt creation” is the “strategic heart of neoliberal politics.” Being in a debtor-creditor relationship nowadays is an encompassing experience, for workers, students, the unemployed, and citizens in many geographical contexts. Lazzarato’s outlook is interesting because it suggests that the experience of migrant domestic workers as being at the mercy of the migration apparatus due to their indebtedness—which is not a new experience, but was already part of the colonial *coolie* regime—is relatable to an experience made by people in very different contexts across the globe.

herself. While Killias (2018, 175) describes the self-organized migration of her protagonist Arum as a “a clear quest for more autonomy,” Halima highlights that hers is primarily one for respect. This becomes clear in her invocation of strong feelings of her ‘hurt soul’ and wounded dignity—articulated in her rhetoric question: ‘Who would be able to stand it there?’

I, *secondly*, recounted Halima’s story because it illustrates the fine-grained techniques of control that intermediaries exert over migrant domestic workers’ mobility and their possibilities to establish independent support structures: Halima’s attempt to make use of her mobility was impeded by regulations that require domestic workers to make use of the services of private agencies when they search for employment, by the online system that limits the workers’ choice of agencies, and by Jiejie Sumi’s insistent appeal to her morality. I pointed to the independent support structures local domestic workers, *amahs*, had established *before* the 1970s, when Hong Kong opened the opportunities of employing migrant domestic workers in private households. Those *amahs* had organized in sisterhoods and, like Halima, Monica, and Elia, supported each other in finding new employers when they were not satisfied with their work conditions. In contrast to the possibilities the *amahs* had, immigration rules and private agencies hinder migrant domestic workers from establishing such support structures. Against the backdrop of this history of domestic workers’ self-organizing, I would understand the contemporary techniques of exerting control over migrant domestic workers’ mobility as a reaction to the earlier bargaining power of local *amahs*. Halima, a newcomer in Hong Kong, not yet familiar with the various forms of migrant domestic workers’ organizing, could only pursue an individual, ‘covert’ strategy in striving for better working and living conditions (see also *ibid.*, 175). Her flight and escape from unbearable employment relations can be read as “imperceptible politics” (Stephenson and Papadopoulos 2006, 138; Chapter 6.2), which are responded with refined techniques of governing: the call on the workers’ capacities to endure through performing affective labor on the self.

Halima's case shows how migrant domestic workers reappropriate the skills they are supposed to cultivate in ways that circumvent the apparatus that controls them, even though Halima's endeavor to make use of the resource of labor mobility was impeded. I now turn to another mode in which migrant domestic workers practice affective labor differently: specific modes of coping—laughter and creative work—and their role in constituting migrant socialities.

Politics of coping

Through their alternative modes of coping, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong bring about socialities which are crucial in navigating everyday denigration, discrimination, and pain in Hong Kong. Below, I take my own experience at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency as a starting point and explore how I reencountered the practices of laughing and creativity among migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. I argue that migrant domestic workers' alternative modes of coping constitute another modality of migrant domestic workers' politics—an implicit form of politics beyond the obvious political actions of open protest.

Laughter and emotional integrity

During my participation in the routines of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, my position as an observer and guest differed completely from the trainees' position. Nevertheless, my participant observation of surveillance, discipline, the norms of propriety and restraint, and at times boredom, evoked my strong emotional reactions (see Chapter 2.1). I developed my own strategies to cope with the rigid rules, for example during the daily gymnastic sessions. The gymnastics choreography that the trainees did every morning and afternoon, and in which I joined, symbolizes well the discipline and the surveillance of the everyday life at the training center. The routine consisted of the same sequence of movements and was always accompanied by the same instructions and music, which blared through the court from a stereo

equipment. While we were performing the sequences, Ibu Ani went through the rows, watched us and instructed the movements. Right on my second day, Ibu Ani placed me in the front row that was facing the four other long rows of gymnastic-performing trainees. I enjoyed the calisthenics in general, but at times was bored of the ever-same choreography. Once, acting on an impulse, I spontaneously added a movement to one of the sequences. The gymnastic sequence contained a movement that I knew from the *Macarena*-dance that was popular in the 1990s: One arm after the other were to be stretched out in front at shoulder height, while hips were to swing from side to side. First the hands were showing to the floor, then one palm after the other were to be shown by turning the hand. Then, to the rhythm of the swinging hips, one hand after the other was to touch an ear, while the arms were opening up. I added an extra move to this last part of the sequence and rhythmically moved into a knee bend. For me, this slight variation in the sequence was a strategy to entertain myself through a small interruption of the ever-same sequences. It made the trainees laugh who were positioned opposite me and who took notice of my smuggled-in movement. After the calisthenics session, Rina approached me. She said that the comic situation gave her stomach aches because of laughter. I was ashamed, surprised by my own little undermining of the norm of constraint, and even concerned of possibly having caused Ibu Ani's anger. Fitri, who joined our short conversation, commented: "Be proud of yourself. You make us laugh." She was referring to the monotonous routine at the center (field-notes 08 May 2014).

This was not the only instance when I encountered laughter as a way to get relief from tension. In Hong Kong, when I once visited the shelter for migrant workers who take refuge from abusive or exploitative employers, I was sitting at a table with around fifteen workers from Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The shelter tenants were having a meeting with Beth, the Indonesian social worker who was in charge of the shelter activities. They were arranging their activities: going shopping for food, appointments at the labor tribunal, providing self-made snacks at an

NGO gathering. The room was filled with loud talking, at some instances with loud laughter. I noticed my own irritation, because the atmosphere and the pitch in the room contrasted the restraint that was practiced and preached to domestic workers at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency. Commenting on their behavior, Sekar, one of the shelter tenants, turned to Ibeth and to myself: “Let us laugh, we otherwise have so many sorrows. We are glad when there is something to laugh about!” (fieldnotes 17 Jul 2014). Apparently, Sekar felt prompted to explain and justify why she and the other shelter tenants were violating the dominant codes of behavior for domestic workers, while she was also reminding us of the function of laughter as a mode of coping with the distress she and her colleagues were experiencing.

On yet another occasion, Anik, a leader of a migrant workers’ alliance made a similar comment. After a conference of Asian migrant workers that had taken place in one of Hong Kong’s university campuses, I joined some of the participants to have dinner in Jordan, a bustling working-class area with markets and street food. Two speakers from the conference of a regional NGO who were in Hong Kong for the purpose of the conference were also joining us. We were a big group, with members of different migrant organizations. Some of them were singing self-composed songs and were giving a music concert using the cutlery as instruments. The atmosphere was high-spirited. Anik explained to the two speakers of the conference: “They laugh about food, about cutlery—about everything. But that is now, tomorrow they’re back at work again” (fieldnotes 31 Aug 2014). Anik’s comment, similarly to Sekar’s, reminded us visitors that the ease we were experiencing that night was not innocent, but that it was attached to the workers’ demanding working routine on six days of the week.

Against the background of Fitri’s, Sekar’s, and Anik’s comments I understand laughter as a playful and creative mode of coping with the challenges and emotional costs of the training and employment in Hong Kong, a way to stay emotionally intact. It is in fact common psychological knowledge that laughter functions as mode of coping with stress. It is presented as a

self-help strategy in online publications such as ‘psychology today’ (Malchiodi 2008) or ‘mentalhelp.net’ (Schwartz 2012), and people practice laughter yoga for tension-release. I understand the shelter tenants’ and the activists’ shared laughter as an *alternative* mode of coping that both irritates the fundamental norm of restraint and the *guided* laughter, which I witnessed at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center. My observations resonate with Rina Cohen’s (1991) research with live-in domestic workers in Canada. Cohen identifies laughter and joking as one of the “coping, resistance, and empowerment methods used by live-in domestics to survive, and, occasionally, even master their work environments” (ibid., 198). She stresses that

joking and laughing serve not only as tension-release mechanisms for individuals, but also allow the participants to reinterpret experiences, share in mutually reassuring communication, and provide solidarity and support by transforming individual experiences into collective experiences” (ibid., 203).

In line with Cohen’s observation of laughter as resistance, queer theorists have discussed laughter as a tactic to criticize and defy ruling conditions, and to unmask or provoke dominating norms (Tsaros and Woltersdorff 2016, 1). In Fitri’s, Sekar’s, and Anik’s comments, such tactics of resistance are less exposed; rather, they highlight laughter, playfulness, and creativity as modes of coping in light of suffering. Nevertheless, as I argue in the subsequent section, these modes bear a subtle political meaning that stands in tension with the governing techniques and current attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage. For now, I wish to call to attention the interactive, interpersonal dynamic in the affective practice of laughter, which Cohen (1991, 204) points to by characterizing joking and laughing as a transformation of individual into collective experience. All three cases of migrant domestic workers’ laughter that I cited are interpersonal or collective instances of “affective relationality” (Slaby and Röttger-Rössler 2018, 3; Thajib 2019). In his nuanced study of Indonesian Muslim *queers* and their modes of “inhabiting difference,” Thajib (2019) relates such instances of affective relationality to his

research protagonists' ways of enduring and envisioning of 'community' "amidst structural marginalization and harmful gestures of the heteronormative society."

Industrial sociologist Marek Korczynski (2003) also attends to the role of affective labor in the formation of community. Korczynski criticizes Hochschild's concept of emotional labor in focusing on individualized labor processes. In contrast, he emphasizes the collective aspect of emotional, or affective, labor (ibid., 56). He suggests to take into account that workers "seek support from each other, thus creating *communities of coping*" (ibid., 58). Situated in *Labor Process Theory*,¹⁰⁵ Korczynski refers to service frontline workers, but nevertheless I find his term apt for migrant domestic workers' collective forms of laughing and creative activities.¹⁰⁶

Inspired by Thajib's analysis and Korczynski's concept of communities of coping, in the next section, I discuss the crucial role of coping mechanisms of laughter, playfulness, and creativity as a signature of Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers' communities. I suggest that migrant domestic workers' communities of coping provoke tensions within Indonesian labor brokerage. These tensions become visible in open critique through creative expression, in claims of subject-positions not destined for migrant domestic workers, and in the significance of communal coping for migrant domestic workers' endurance of the pain and devaluation they experience *as* paid domestic labor, *despite* endeavors to upgrade their status.

Communities of coping

There are countless Indonesian migrant workers organizations in Hong Kong, which give the city its characteristic face as migrant workers' destination (Constable 2009; M. Lai 2010;

¹⁰⁵ *Labor Process Theory* is a theory on the organization of work under capitalism from a Marxian tradition, which is interested in workers' subjectivities and workplace resistance as a manifestation of capitalist class struggle. Proponents of this perspective on Industrial Sociology have engaged in the significance of emotional labor in the labor process (Brook 2013). I find this perspective interesting because of its perspective on tensions, contradictions, and dynamics between workers and management that stem from workers' deviating subjectivities.

¹⁰⁶ For domestic workers' communities of coping in Great Britain see Jiang 2018.

Rother 2017).¹⁰⁷ An outstanding feature distinguishes the migrant domestic workers' movement in Hong Kong from grassroots organizations in the Philippines and Indonesia and which, also, distinguishes them from the local democracy movement: the role of creative expression in their rallies, protests, and countless other activities (Constable 2009, 152; M. Lai 2010). Almost every Sunday, migrant workers' organizations and their networks organize song contests and hold dancing, photography, or fashion competitions. I witnessed such an event in late July 2014, when the Indonesian Migrant Workers' League against Overcharging (*Persatuan BMI Tolak Overcharging*, PILAR) organized a "protest-song contest." The participating migrant organizations playfully articulated their critique of the above-mentioned practices of overcharging and the online system as a symbol for the constraints in labor mobility in order to claim worker rights (fieldnotes 20 Jul 2014). The members of the *Beringin Tetap Maju* (BTM)¹⁰⁸ group won the contest. To the rhythms and tones played on plastic bottles and tins, an organization member rapped:

Migrant workers are national heroines
But our hearts are constantly torn into pieces,
Discrimination takes no end
Beginning from KTKLN, to overcharging and the online system¹⁰⁹
—scrap them scrap them scrap them (song transcript 20 Jul 2014; see appendix E).

¹⁰⁷ The existence of migrant domestic worker's groups reflects several political circumstances and active efforts in building up a migrant domestic workers' movement in Hong Kong: They reflect the post-1998 political atmosphere following the demise of the authoritarian New Order. Disillusioned by the government and political parties, civil society activists engaged in political organizing from below (Thajib 2019). The presence of migrant domestic workers' organizations in Hong Kong also owes to the legal framework in Hong Kong which allows non-citizens to form organizations (M. Lai 2010, 501). Indonesian migrant domestic workers' organizations furthermore received support from local groups active in the Hong Kong democracy movement (Lopez Wui 2015, 94) as well as from established organizations of Filipina/o/x workers in Hong Kong (Constable 2009, 152; Hsia 2009; Lopez Wui 2015; Rother 2017, 97).

¹⁰⁸ Translated, *Beringin Tetap Maju* means "Banyan tree keep pushing on." The group used to be a unit of the *Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers* (ATKI). Still with ATKI, the unit's name was *Beringin* because they used to meet under a banyan tree. The group had already been well known under their unit-name, and when they chose to become an independent organization, the *Beringin Tetap Maju*-members chose their name because they strived to become even bigger and more "rooted"—like the banyan tree (Nuraini 2013).

¹⁰⁹ As mentioned earlier, the KTKLN (*Overseas Workers Card*) and the online system introduced by the Indonesian Consulate and synchronized with the online data base that was introduced by the *National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers* (BNP2TKI) are part of the technologies that put Indonesian migrant workers under the scrutiny of the migration apparatus, which is supposed to protect migrant domestic workers but controls their mobility and autonomy.

Domestic workers' vocal critique and tenacious activism impacted some of the recent reforms in migrant worker policies. For instance, in January 2017, the Indonesian Consulate introduced the 'independent contract (*kontrak mandiri*)' scheme, which allows workers to renew an existing contract without using the service of a local placement agency (Antara News 2017; Consulate General of the Indonesian Republic in Hongkong 2016). This stipulation must be understood in light of the consistent demand of migrant worker's organizations for the option to conclude contracts independently, although their demands have not been fully successful, since new contracts still must be facilitated by private agencies (see Chapter 5.2). The enactment of the new *Law on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers* in 2017 also owes much to Hong Kong migrant domestic workers' unmistakable protest.

Min-yan Lai (2010), an anthropologist who conducted research with migrant domestic workers' movements in Hong Kong, has shown how migrant worker activists have impressively made use of playful and creative performance to foster migrant worker activism. Thereby, she highlights three aspects: Creative performance builds community and collective identity among the activists, it makes migrants' agency visible, and visualizes migrants' diverse subjectivities (ibid., 502). I agree with Lai that ludic performances and creative expression are conducive in advancing migrant domestic workers' activism and advocacy for workers' rights. Yet, I wish to push further some of Lai's arguments and suggest that beyond this instrumental role of staging creativity for the "cultivation and promotion of activism among the diverse MDW [migrant domestic worker] population," (ibid.) collective playfulness and creativity in themselves entail a political dimension.

I argue that migrant domestic workers' everyday practices of coping are to be taken seriously as class politics in at least three aspects. I suggest to embrace (self-)care as being constitutive of any form of political action and highlight the political dimension of the new subjectivities that emerge from migrant domestic workers' communities of coping. Thus, I try

to grasp the political dimension even of such modes of coping, which do not transform into open protest, conscientization, and explicit advocacy for workers' rights, instead of labelling these as "less political" (Constable 2007, 206) than union activities.

Firstly, beyond being conducive for the cause of activism, playfulness and creativity are important *sources* of coping that *enable* the workers to bring up the energy to engage in any activism. I often wondered from where, after having worked six days a week from early morning until late at night, migrant domestic workers take their energy to organize events, competitions, and performances every Sunday. I recall Rita, who I quoted in the introduction of this thesis. She reminded me that it explicitly *is* shared time, shared laughter that makes migrant domestic workers carry on. Rita summarized my puzzlement about migrants' energy to engage in all kinds of activities on their days off, without, in effect, having any time to rest:

You mean, how come that only one day is enough to wipe off the suffering of six days? It's because we can be outside, sister.¹¹⁰ We can seek for advice from our friends. Sometimes I ask my friends, how is it with your employer? Ah, don't think about it now, think about it later, but then when we go home, the thoughts come again (recording 18 Jun 2018).

As much as 'forgetting' that they are domestic workers is essential to migrant domestic workers' intact "sense of humanity" (Constable 2007, 206), it is part and parcel of any activist engagement. From a feminist perspective on (self-)care as the *maintenance* work for any societal activity (Fisher and Tronto 1990; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 7), affective labor and coping with their everyday life need not be seen as external, but integral elements of struggles for rights and respect. For the workers, collective coping is a *condition* to engage in their activities—be it migrant domestic worker's organization who have an explicit political agenda, such as BTM and ATKI, or be it in other activities such as Qur'an recitation groups or dancing groups.

Secondly, the *creative expression* that migrant domestic workers engage in implies a class-related claim to a social position that is not conceded to domestic workers in dominant

¹¹⁰ Rita addressed me as *kakak*, meaning 'elder sister,' as a respectful form of address.

social fabrics in Indonesia and in Hong Kong. The domestic workers' communities of coping in Hong Kong stand out for their cultivation of creative talents, as exemplified by the masterful hip hop performances of the BTM members. The editors of the anthology *Afterwork Readings*, which comprises migrant and domestic worker literature, propose an interesting reading of creative expression among Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers (KUNCI Cultural Studies Center 2016). They highlight the political moment in domestic workers' desires to live creative subjectivities that are not reducible to the degraded labor of paid domestic work. Contemplating on the activities of a community of writers among Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, the editors of the *Afterwork Readings* anthology refer to Rancière's notion of 'dis-identification' (see Chapter 6.3), to attach meaning to the laborious activities of this community and thus frame them as political. They draw parallels between migrant domestic workers' use of their limited rest time to create narratives and 19th century French laborers who produced a worker-run newspaper, and which Rancière (2012) studied in his book *Proletarian Nights*, arguing that this was their way of contesting their class position:

For Rancière, the act of writing performed by the workers can be seen as an attempt to disrupt the established division of labor, where the educated elite/capitalist owners are assigned with intellectual tasks, while the workers are burdened with menial work. By featuring and endorsing the creation of narratives by migrant workers that revolve around their refusal to be domesticated by an identitarian label, we can tease out the different ways they exercise their rights to think critically. As an autonomous site for producing, distributing, and accumulating knowledge, the act of writing ultimately provides migrant worker communities with the critical capacity to cultivate a culture of epistemic disobedience (see Mignolo, 2009) and disrupt the established concept of 'intellectuality' (KUNCI Cultural Studies Center 2016, 22).

When Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers engage in creative, aesthetic practices—be it as writers, dance, and music performers, or as photographers—, they claim subject-positions as 'artists.' In doing so, these writers echo other workers who claim being 'stars' by wearing extravagant hairstyles (Chapter 6.3). Dominant interpellations do not designate the worker-artists a position among the 'creative class;' as service labor, migrant domestic workers learn virtuoso

skills (making their hobby their profession, as Pak Budi proposed) for the sake of servitude, and not for the sake of aesthetic pleasure. Furthermore, some employers do not approve their employees to engage in activities that exceed their role as domestic workers: I got to know workers who clandestinely wrote short stories on their cell phones under their blankets to evade their employers, who would not have allowed their domestic workers to engage in such artistic activities (fieldnotes 29 Jul 2014).

Thirdly, collective coping, necessarily visible in the public space, makes migrant domestic workers endure their occupation as domestic workers despite the pain that Anik, Sekar, Fitri, and Rita reminded me of and, hence, defy official rhetoric that seeks to cease the sending of domestic workers. Thus, collective coping allows migrant domestic workers to *continue* to work *as* domestic workers. The persistent migration of Indonesian women into private households, where they are occupied as domestic workers, is at odds with the rhetoric of upgrade which is articulated in the announced attempts to disengage in the brokerage domestic workers and to channel migrant workers to other, more respectable sectors (see Chapter 5.2; Chapter 8). Collective coping enables migrant domestic workers to endure demeaning experiences, “withstand, live through, put up with, and suffer” (Kleinman 2014, 120), while at the same time, through engaging in communal coping and searching for person-value, they live subjectivities that cannot be reduced to being a ‘domestic helper.’

Do these modes of coping, which enable migrant workers to endure and bring about new subjectivities, have repercussions on current Indonesian labor migration policies? Official aspirations to turn away from brokerage of domestic workers could be read as an implicit response to migrant domestic workers’ loud and extravagant appearance in the public space in Hong Kong. Amrith’s (2017) study of Filipina/o/x migrant medical workers in Singapore gives an idea of the subjectivities enabled and enacted by those workers who perform jobs that Indonesian officials imagine as the respectable alternative to paid domestic work. Filipina/o/x

'professional' carers engage in more individualized and 'quiet' modes of coping, in distinction to the "creative engagements and new friendships" sought by the domestic workers she met (Amrith 2017, 188). Such modes are conditioned by long shifts at work and the absence of a common day off from work, like the Sundays for the majority of domestic workers. However, these quiet modes are also "linked to the subjectivities that nurses wish to cultivate" and their modes of 'inhabiting norms,' including "so-called respectable and modest behaviour" (ibid.).¹¹¹ Is it also these modest forms of behavior, which contrast starkly the eye-catching presence migrant domestic worker communities in public space and which are shaped by the working arrangements of 'formal' care labor, that motivate the desire to channel Indonesian domestic workers into more 'decent' employment? I would argue that against the backdrop of the distinct desired and lived subjectivities of so-called 'skilled' migrant workers, migrant domestic workers' communal and vocal modes of coping become legible as particularly classed modes of coping that stand in tension with dominant notions of respectability and restraint.

In highlighting the political moment in migrant domestic workers' collective modes of coping, it is important to warn "against the romance of community" (Joseph 2002). Migrant workers' communities are not immune from causing pain: I have met tenants at the shelter who felt bullied by other workers because of temporarily being unemployed and filing cases against their employers, and I have met workers who felt uneasy with the gossip circulating in these communities. But rather than arguing for the 'right' form of community building, my aim is to discern how migrant workers negotiate subjectivities in ways that exceed the subjectivities incited through biopolitical governing.

¹¹¹ Amrith (2017, 193) carefully shows that her informants cannot be reduced to passive subjects of a migration scheme that is imagined as an honorable alternative to domestic worker migration; she describes inter-Asian socialities that develop and take shape in "cultural exchanges between carers and care for, neighbours and colleagues, strangers and friends."

7.4 Resumé

Recruitment agencies are invested in optimizing Indonesian migrant domestic workers' affective labor and, thereby, form part of the project of modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage. I have illustrated how the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency endeavors to sharpen the profile of Indonesian domestic workers on the global market, thereby striving to have its finger on the pulse of the global labor brokerage business and perfecting the workers' affective labor in order to meet the demand of always available, attentive, and proactive workers. As a provider of highly modern workers, the agency makes its own contribution to the national agenda of enhancing the workers' respectability. In contrast to official announcements to end the sending of domestic workers all together that transpired in the 'Zero domestic workers' plan (see Chapter 5.2), the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* does not aim at fully relinquishing the brokerage of domestic workers, however. In perfecting their affective labor, the workers' social, cultural, and spiritual resources are mobilized. The techniques of cultivating the workers' skills in affective labor draw on migrant domestic workers' attentiveness and on their capacities to endure employment relations despite the emotional, affective, and existential challenges that these employment relations can imply due to the precarity of the workers' conditions abroad. Thereby, the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency builds on techniques of staying emotionally intact that have been practiced by wage-dependent domestic workers across the globe.

In extension to the existing literature on the demands on migrant domestic workers' affective labor in migrant labor receiving contexts (Akalin 2015; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010), the regime approach of this thesis provides insights into how skills of affective labor are *imparted* in a sophisticated manner, thus guaranteeing the advantages and profits of labor brokerage for governments and recruitment agencies. The analytical distinction between affective service labor aimed at creating the employers' comfort, on the one hand, and affective labor

upon the self, on the other, illuminates various facets of the biopolitical character of labor brokerage: Migrant domestic workers are trained to blend in the affective management of the postindustrial Hong Kong society, and they are imparted complex competencies, including self-management, that are crucial to sustain labor brokerage and the flow of remittances.

However, the subject-constituting practices involved in the figure of the ‘professional affective worker’ are ambiguous: They invoke an individualization of responsibility of migrant workers’ protection, while rights-based approaches to workers’ agency remain marginal. At the same time, affective labor is a central source of agency for Indonesian migrant domestic workers, as it is appreciated, (re)appropriated, and creatively employed by migrant domestic workers. Migrant domestic workers deploy their skills in their subjective quests for respect and dignity. As they make use of the skills of affective labor on their own terms, and as they engage in communal modes of coping and creative practices, they evade the scrutiny of the apparatus that controls them. I have highlighted the tension between Indonesian domestic workers’ creative and collective modes of coping, current modes of upgrading Indonesian labor brokerage, and attempts to channel migrants into more ‘respectable’ jobs in the global care sector. With their distinct modes of enduring their situations and enacting artistic subjectivities in search for person-value and dignity, the workers willfully withstand attempts ‘from above’ to turn them into more respectable migrant-subjects.

It needs to be critically reflected that the range of migrant domestic workers’ modes of coping is much richer and wider than the segment I discussed here. I have confined myself to the outstanding role of playfulness and creativity. For instance, it remains a task—informed by postcolonial reflection (Abu-Lughod 2013; Dhawan 2013; Mahmood 2005)—to extend discussions on migrant domestic workers’ cultivation of piety in light of the Indonesian migration regime (Latief 2017; Silvey 2007a, 2018; for comparison with the Philippine migration regime see Liebelt 2011). Having acknowledged the need for further research, I now turn to the next

chapter and discuss a ‘migrant figure’ that is closely related to more recent ‘technologies of modernizing’ labor brokerage and attempts to upgrade Indonesia’s migrant labor force: the entrepreneurship of the self.

8. “Develop the mindset of a boss:” The entrepreneuse of the self

In the previous chapters I discussed various disciplining and self-governing techniques of learning to become and being a migrant worker. I analyzed practices of the ‘migrant citizen dispositive,’ which interpellate female migrants as loyal daughters, wives, and sisters. These practices call on migrants’ sacrificial devotion for their family, teach them to properly represent the nation on the international stage, and ascribe them roles as worker-citizens in the fabric of the nation-family. Evoking technologies of the self, the ‘labor dispositive’ interpellates affective workers capable of meeting the sophisticated standards of Hong Kong’s demand for care labor and endure their preacriarized situations. Interestingly, however, at a certain stage, Indonesian migrant domestic workers also learn how to ‘unlearn’ being a migrant worker.

This chapter sheds light on the ‘dispositive of return’ and on interpellations of return-migrants as passionate entrepreneuses. It discusses the call on migrant domestic workers to transform themselves upon their return to Indonesia—from waged employees to bosses of their own. I draw on a close reading of a one-day entrepreneurship seminar, which took place at the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong in late August 2014, and on interviews which I conducted with representatives of Hong Kong based branches of Indonesian banks. The scenes of the seminar reveal a variety of aspects implied in entrepreneurship trainings.

I will scrutinize the techniques that build the repertoire of activating Indonesian domestic workers’ entrepreneurial skills in light of transnational discourses on migrants’ potentials for the development of sending countries. The Indonesian migrants-for-entrepreneurship agenda is presented as a solution to the lack of social security for returning migrant domestic workers and a growing financialization of everyday life. I will argue that beyond these motives, the call on migrant domestic workers to engage in entrepreneurial activities needs to be understood against the background of a desire to upgrade ‘unskilled’ domestic workers and restore the nation’s

respectable self-image. Yet, migrants challenge the techniques that encourage returning migrant domestic workers to engage in business ‘at home.’ Their persistent transnational mobilities defy bureaucrats’ and bankers’ hopes that returning migrant workers become respectable businesswomen after their return. Against this background, I will formulate a future research agenda to capture the experiences, aspirations, and diverse economic practices of returned migrant domestic workers. I will suggest that the migrant workers’ lived experiences are important for understanding the ‘dispositive of return’ with its dominating agenda as a field of negotiation. Due to the specific focus of my fieldwork, I can only touch on the idiosyncratic experiences and desires of ex-migrant domestic workers. Hence, I will suggest further explorations of the relatively recent agenda to mobilize migrant workers’ entrepreneurial inclinations

8.1 From workers to entrepreneurs

I open this chapter by zooming into an episode at the Consulate’s so-called ‘Exit Program.’ This seminar is offered to Indonesian migrant domestic workers prior to their return and aims at arousing migrant domestic workers’ interest in entrepreneurial activities and financial markets. The episode serves as a starting point to contextualize appeals to migrants’ entrepreneurial inclinations within contemporary international discussions on migration and development and to reflect on the neoliberal character of such appeals.

Ready for Exit: Another Mental Transformation

In late Aug 2014, staff-members of the Indonesian Consulate in Hong Kong agreed to my request to attend its Exit Program. The program is meant to give Indonesian migrant workers orientation prior to their return to Indonesia by preparing them in economic, social, cultural, and psychological terms. Migrant workers are supported to “be able to return home happily after having finished their work periods in Hong Kong (*dapat pulang kampung dengan bahagia setelah menyelesaikan masa kerja di Hong Kong*)” (Consulate General of the Indonesian

Republic in Hongkong n.d.). The venue of the Consulate's festive event, the Ramayana hall, hosted a full audience: Workers who came on their day off, consulate staff and government officials on their visit from Indonesia, and delegates of the Hong Kong branches of Indonesian banks.

The seminar was opened by the Consul General. "How is it, are you healthy, Mbak?" "Alhamdulillah," the participants chorused energetically. In his short address he advised the participants to make the most of this occasion. "Today you can directly ask anything concerning information and training on banking. Let's say you have made so and so many thousand dollars. What are you going to do with that money?" He proposed the participants to seek for advice about what best to do after they had worked in Hong Kong. "So that when you return home you will be independent, and so that you come back to Hong Kong not as a domestic worker but a tourist." The audience chorused approvingly: "Amin." The Consul General's wishes framed the program of the day, which consisted of an address by a delegate of the Financial Service Agency, sessions on financing by staff of the Hong Kong branch of the *Kasta Bank*, and of short addresses by delegates of the East Javanese *Bank Jawa Usaha* and the *Bank Jawa Maju*. The respective sessions were eased by the giveaway of door prizes, which made the day a splendid event for the participants.

The highlight of the day was a presentation by motivational speaker Tri Sumono who was flown in for this occasion. The audience received his talk "Bold to be a Business Person (*Berani Jadi Pengusaha*)" with applause, cheering, and guffawing. In order to give advice on "how to change your mindset from an employee to a business person," Sumono drew on his own life trajectory: He left his home village in Central Java to the Capital Jakarta as a young man with basically nothing but a high school diploma, worked as a cleaner at the Indonesian media conglomerate *Kompas Gramedia* and became the "Man of four Quadrants." This self-branding is

a reference to U.S.-American self-help guru Robert Kyosaki and describes Sumono's embodiment of a rare species that unifies four types of professions in one person: being employee, self-employee, business owner, and investor (Saatnya Jadi Pengusaha 2015). Until now employed by *Kompas Gramedia*, Sumono has run several businesses with turnovers of billions of Indonesian Rupiah, or several hundred-thousand Euros. These turnovers make Sumono still far from the trillions of Rupiah made by Indonesia's most successful business people, but considering that he literally started off from nothing, they are remarkable. He is an investor, has written a self-help guide, and state agencies and private companies hire him to give motivation talks and entrepreneurship seminars. While he spoke in dynamic rhythm, highlighting his statements with dramatic pauses and crescendos, the Ramayana Hall turned into the *mélange* of a stand-up comedy show, a circus tent, and a spiritual sermon. He evoked the audience's reactions on the push of a button. He declared that "a businessman must always be high-spirited for the sake of himself but also for the sake of being a source of inspiration to others" and attracted the audience's applause. The core message of his one and a half-hour talk was simple: "What makes a business (*bisnis itu apa*)? Boldness and will." Anyone could successfully become an entrepreneur, like he himself who started his business "from zero," without initial capital, without a university degree, and without being exceptionally intelligent. He testified this claim by recounting plenty of anecdotes and by displaying his school reports—his grades had always been only so-so. He rhetorically asked whether employees who assert not having what it takes to do business perhaps "wished to suffer long" or were "afraid of getting rich," raising the laugh of the audience. "An ordinary person can become exceptional by her way of thinking. No more, no less." An exceptional person, he outlined, is independent—an entrepreneur who, once stepping out of the house is always attentive to potential business opportunities. An employee in turn is content with getting her work done well. Sumono was not afraid of taking action and understood doing

business as a process that is like learning to ride a motorcycle: “You won’t be able to master riding a motorcycle unless you do it.”

The adventurer Sumono had started to think of alternative sources of income when almost his whole salary as an office boy at *Kompas Gramedia* had to be spent on the room that he inhabited with his wife. Equipped with no capital, but confidence and commitment, he then started to do petty trading and sell accessories on the street. Employing creativity, he expanded his activities: For small money he printed business cards that said ‘Sumono, general director of LP CV¹¹² Jaya’—the name of a non-existent company—and shared these at business fairs. This strategy helped him to get a foot into the selling of stationary. While he recalled his early business years, the audience was roaring. They paid tribute to Sumono’s testimony of how he had developed his first business that was based on his own assets, starting with a grocery store. Uniting his thinking with his heart, being modest in early stages, being savvy, cultivating good relations, and eventually being loyal and honest, he developed several businesses: letting out rooms, breeding birds, packaging of beverages, distributing stationaries, producing instant ginger coffee and health drink powder, and finally investing in property. The audience expressed their amazement: “Woahh;” whereupon Sumono assured: “You will experience the same!”

He closed his talk by contemplating on the “values of business” and became more thoughtful. “What is the measure for success? It’s not about how much money you make, but in how far we do something meaningful for others.” While the audience was listening expectantly, he declared that his success was not his own success, but his wife’s and his daughter’s. That is why he would never do business with anyone who is unfaithful to his wife. Finally, the climax of his talk was to cherish his mother: “I always ask her for advice. She cannot read and write, but a mother’s heart can guide us anywhere.” In conclusion, he addressed the audience: “You

¹¹² ‘CV’ is one of the legal business entities in Indonesia, abbreviating the Dutch *Comanditer Venootschap* (limited partnership).

will never be able to work well without the prayer of a mother; that is impossible” (recording 23 Aug 2014; Maratina 2015).

I was following the Exit Program sitting next to my friend Lintang, a domestic worker who in her free time writes for an Indonesian newspaper in Hong Kong and publishes her own, price-winning, short stories and poems. I asked Lintang about her opinion on Sumono’s talk. Like the other participants she had joined in the ‘Woaah’s and ‘Ahh’s, while he was speaking. She commented: “Pak Tri doesn’t forget his family.” The same night she quoted some of Sumono’s wisdoms on her Facebook page. I talked to another participant, Ana, who was notably enthused by the program and was aspiring to open a business after her return to Indonesia. I asked whether she had already made plans. “My mindset is not yet ready,” she answered (fieldnotes 23 Aug 2014).

Entrepreneurial remedies: A reconfigured development strategy

I chose to open this chapter with Sumono’s enthusiasm and sparking talk because, in my view, it encapsulates state officials,’ bankers’ and business people’s hopes and expectations towards the return of migrant domestic workers to Indonesia. They assert that the workers’ capacities to become entrepreneurial ‘bosses of their own’ will make them promising examples for the future. Admittedly, Sumono’s talk left me less enthused and enchanted than Lintang and the rest of the audience, including the Consulate staff and bank representatives who were listening. His comedic presentation style hardly surprised me, since I had already been familiar with similar performances from instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center (see Chapter 7). If anything, his anecdotes about how he creatively made his weaknesses appear a strength in the presence of business partners and customers found my attraction. What amazed me most was his insistence on *pembentukan mental*—the need to mold a person’s mindset in order to become a successful entrepreneur and to become rich. Sumono’s talk was not the only occasion when I encountered the view that proposed that developing “the mindset of a boss

(*menjadi bos*)” was a precondition for a better, independent future for migrant workers. I encountered this metaphor in my conversations with employees in leading positions of the Hong Kong branches of the *Kasta Bank* and the *Bank Jasa Bumi*, both of which offer entrepreneurship classes to migrant workers as part of their corporate social responsibility-programs. The idea that domestic workers were to transform into bosses and thus attain self-reliance was, for instance, one of the guiding principles of the entrepreneurship program of the *Bank Jasa Bumi*. In its mission-statement, the program put the aim of “turning employed Indonesian migrant workers into employers (*mengubah buruh TKI menjadi majikan*)” in the first place (fieldnotes 13 Aug 2014).

While observing the Exit Program, I recalled the preparation of aspiring migrant domestic workers prior to their *departure* to Hong Kong. As I discussed in Chapter 7, instructors and government officials had highlighted “mental” aspects as key in preparing skillful and internationally competitive *workers*. Strikingly, now it was exactly their mindset as *employed workers* that migrant domestic workers were supposed to abandon in preparation of their return to Indonesia. Apparently, successful migrant domestic workers should ideally undergo *several* personal-mental transformations along the migration circuit. The final transformation that *returning* workers are to undergo is one that turns them into entrepreneurial businesswomen. The ceremonial ambience of the exit program underlines that this transformation implies an advancement in their recognition as citizens. While migrant domestic worker-candidates are still preparing for their journeys abroad, they are serviced in the shabby back room of the *Chinatrust* bank, where they obtain a loan to finance the migration process, separated from other customers (see Chapter 6). At the exit program, migrant domestic workers do not need to be hidden. They enjoy the same treatment as all other audiences who participate in events like entrepreneurship seminars, NGO workshops or academic conferences, with all the frills, including classy food, seminar materials, and promotional gifts.

The subject-constituting practices that address returning Indonesian migrant domestic workers as entrepreneurial citizens build the core of this chapter, including their multiple references and objectives. The exit Program at the Consulate in Hong Kong is by no means the only occasion in which becoming a businesswoman is suggested as the ideal future scenario for returning migrants. Entrepreneurship trainings are now offered by a row of state institutions, banks, and business associations in most important migration destination countries and in migrants' regions of origin (see Anwar and Chan 2016, 153; Caraka 2015; Lizta 2012; Wahono 2015).

The systematic endeavor of mobilizing migrant domestic workers' entrepreneurial behaviors is a relatively new strategy in Indonesian labor brokerage. The Indonesian state started to carry out programs that encourage aspiring and returning migrants to become local entrepreneurs in 2010 (Anwar and Chan 2016, 152). Hence, earlier pivotal studies of the Indonesian migration regime, which mostly build on fieldwork during the first decade of the millennium, do not yet discuss the figure of migrant-entrepreneur in detail (Killias 2018; Lindquist 2010b, 2018b; Palmer 2016; Rudnycky 2004; Silvey 2004; Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

As I argue in this chapter, inciting migrant workers' entrepreneurial spirit reflects a general motive in Indonesia's national development strategies, which put hopes in the poverty-reducing and economy-boosting contributions of entrepreneurs from all social strata. For instance, the government five-year development plan from 2015 is targeted at one million new entrepreneurs to strengthen small and middle size businesses and cooperatives (Ministry of National Development Planning 2015, 6–133). Indonesia's President Joko Widodo embodies this outlook on national development. 'Jokowi' himself is an entrepreneur originating from Central Java, who worked himself up to President. He ran a furniture company, became the mayor of his home town Solo and was elected governor of the capital Jakarta, before he became President

in 2014. In this position, he introduced an innovative and exceptional style to the rather elitist political culture of high-ranking politicians in Indonesia.

‘The entrepreneurial self’ as a ‘conceptual type’¹¹³ of neoliberalism

Social science scholars have identified the activation of citizens’ entrepreneurial activities in national development strategies as a characteristic “process of neoliberalization” (Tickell and Peck 2002, 383). In light of the excessive use of this designation, particularly in the context of processes of ‘globalization,’ ‘neoliberal’ is a term that cannot be easily pinned down (see e.g. Collier 2012; Ganti 2014; Peck 2013). In the following sections, I address the celebration of entrepreneurial behavior as ‘the very embodiment of neoliberalism.’ By discussing the international migration and development nexus, I point to the career of the ‘entrepreneurial self’ within international migration policy agendas. At the same time, I highlight that ‘neoliberal’ phenomena need to be understood in their historically specific and context-related appearance.

Neoliberalism and the liberation of entrepreneurial freedoms

Following the countless studies of social scientists who are getting to grips with social, political, economic, and cultural transformations seen all over the globe since the 1970s, the mission to encourage migrant domestic workers to turn into bosses can be read as a citation of one of the “key signpost[s]” (Freeman 2014, 1) of neoliberal reason and policies: the entrepreneurial self. Neoliberalism as an economic philosophy that has been shaped by U.S. and Western Europe-based thinkers builds on liberal economy in proposing strong private property rights, free market, and free trade as the institutional framework to advance human well-being. Entrepreneurial freedoms are crucial in this outlook on the achievement of well-being (Harvey

¹¹³ I borrow this term from Maurizio Lazzarato (2011, 9), who speaks of the figuring of “the entrepreneur, the creative visionary, and the independent worker” in the “epic narratives” of Western European and U.S. capitalism prior to the crisis of 2008.

2005, 2). Various strands in critical social science make use of ‘neoliberalism’ as an analytical framework of the present age, while locating the role of entrepreneurship as a guiding principle for development policies and life-style discourses all over the globe.

Authors focusing on political-economic processes put emphasis on the role of self-employment as a strategy of economic livelihood and capitalist expansion. In turn, authors with a Foucauldian perspective on governmentality highlight the new formation of new subjectivities through entrepreneurialism (Freeman 2014, 2; Ganti 2014, 94). The political economists of multifarious Marxist perspectives have highlighted that stimulating self-employment of individual citizens buttresses larger neoliberal political-economic measures: the privatization of state assets, government services, and public functions; the deregulation of markets to foster competition; the marketization of all kinds of spheres from education to health care by strengthening market-principles of competition and choice; structural adjustment policies enforced by multilateral financial agencies to indebted countries; and austerity imposed on state budgeting (see e.g. Harvey 2005; Peck 2016). Many ‘typical’ neoliberal economic policies have not been adopted in Indonesia: “[T]he state continues to play a large economic role through various forms of protection and subsidy and through state-owned enterprises (...), economic nationalism and statism have been somewhat resurgent,” while “[p]rivatization, too has had limited effect” (Aspinall 2013, 31; see also Hadiz and Robison 2005). But “liberalization has affected large swaths of the economy, especially in manufacturing and services, with profound effects on social structure and cultural pattern,” and, as political scientist Edward Aspinall (2013, 31) notes, there is “growing influence of a neoliberal *cultural mode*, characterized by the transfer of ideas about the primacy of markets and competition from economic to social life” (emphasis mine).

Foucauldian perspectives on neoliberalism, in addition to political-economic approaches, have dealt with its appearance as a cultural mode and refer to neoliberalism as a particular way

of thinking or rationality which permeates all spheres of life—work, education, culture, leisure, intimate relations, diets etc. As such, it becomes as “a relatively mundane but increasingly ubiquitous practice of making economic calculation a universal standard for the organization, management, and government of human life and conduct” (Rudnycky 2010, 21). These authors conceive of the invocation of entrepreneurial behavior as a subject-forging mode of governing. The invocation is neither confined to the preaching of a particular “variety of economic activity” nor “the legal status of being self-employed” (Bröckling 2016, viii). Nowadays, “countless motivation gurus and self-management trainers, () economists, education experts, trend researchers and politicians of all stripes” preach entrepreneurial behavior (ibid., xi). Their teachings imply the call to transform oneself “into the last corner of [one’s] soul[], into an entrepreneur *on a mission* of [one’s own] (ibid.). Anthropologist Carla Freeman (Freeman 2014, 1) therefore speaks of *entrepreneurialism* as a “generalized way of being and way of feeling in the world” in distinction to entrepreneurship in the narrower sense as “a mechanism of self-employment [] [i.e.] a vehicle for income generation, an economic matter of business.”

In the course of this chapter, I discuss the invocation of returning migrant workers’ entrepreneurial activities both as a praise of self-employment and an income-generating strategy compatible with privatization and as a general attitude of being, which make self-responsibility and inclinations to invest a central virtue duty of a citizens. The particular encouragement of entrepreneurialism among Indonesian (*ex-*)migrants is paralleled by the praise of “migrant entrepreneurship” (GFMD Business Mechanism 2014, 1) in the migration and development nexus. The entrepreneurial migrant-subject is one of the hinges that connects international development and migration policies in their contemporary neoliberal configurations. In the following section, I briefly sketch these to provide the international policy background against which the entrepreneurship trainings for returning Indonesian migrant workers can be read.

Migrant entrepreneurship in the international 'migration and development' nexus

In international arenas, such as the *Global Forum on Migration and Development*, policy-makers, academics, civil society agencies, and business people welcome migrants' entrepreneurial behavior as a way to mobilize their potential to boost the economy and harness the life quality in emigration countries (e.g. Åkesson and Baaz 2013; M. Bakker 2015b, 23, 60; Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 323; Schwertl 2015, 152). The promotion of 'migrant entrepreneurship,' which is also pursued by international agencies such as the World Bank or the IOM, is embedded in a 'discovery' of migrants' and diaspora communities' potential for the 'development' of emigration countries. This emphasis on the positive potentials of migration within policy discourses in the international arena arose in the 1990s, when it joined discourses, in which migration first and foremost appeared as a security problem or a problem of 'integration.'

The optimistic discussions on the relation between migration and development were preceded by different dominating paradigms that held contrasting views on the matter. These go back as far as to colonial practices. Although they labelled migrants not as agents of development, colonial administrations mobilized entrepreneurial potentials of migrant associations in urban centers to boost the welfare of their rural areas of origin (Giering 2009 in Schwertl 2015, 91). During the post-war decades, in European and U.S.-American development theory, optimistic and pessimistic takes on the potentials of migration for the development of Global South countries alternated with one another (see e.g. Faist 2007; Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 327–28; Raghuram 2009, 103). Since the 1990s, the discourses in the international arena have increasingly assembled around assumptions of yet again a positive relation between migration and development. The World Bank's *Global Development Finance* report of the year 2003 on the topic of remittances boosted an increasing praise of migrants' remittances. In the international discourse, the potentials of remittances are not only recognized due their economic value, but also due to their social and non-material contribution to poverty reduction and investment (M.

Bakker 2015b; Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 328; Raghuram 2009, 105; Schwertl 2015, 124). Considering the increasing attention and euphoria with which policy-makers and international organizations have met the migration and development nexus, the knowledge produced on the potential of migration for development, and its matching policies have been critically called a “trend” (Kunz 2011) or “hype” (Schwertl 2015).

According to political scientist Aram Ziai (2009), the term ‘development’ functions as an “empty signifier” that takes on various meanings ranging from “concepts like progress, improvement, positive social change, poverty reduction and better standard of living” (ibid., 195–96). Development can refer to “completely different projects,” such as infrastructure projects, birth control, biodiversity protection, or improvements in electoral participation (ibid., 196). Similar to what Li (2007) has discussed with regard to the “will to improve” (Chapter 3), Ziai (2009, 197) has pointed out that as a positively charged term, development has, in continuation of colonial interventions, played a role in “legitimiz[ing] certain interventions as beneficial,” thus shaping global North-South relations (see also Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990).

Critics of the migration and development nexus argue that the current discourses which celebrate migrants’ remittances and entrepreneurial practices in fact legitimize neoliberal remodelings of North-South relations. Remittances are praised for being “private financial flows, people-to-people transfers,” which are considered “a more effective form of development assistance than government-sponsored foreign aid” (M. Bakker 2015a, 24).¹¹⁴ Many advocates of the migration and development agenda regard financial institutions and markets as “key mediators between migration and development,” while “the role of government policy and planning in forging these linkages” is rhetorically discounted (ibid.). Critics argue that in the migration and development nexus, migrant entrepreneurship is ascribed a significant role as a buffer to

¹¹⁴ On the neoliberal discard of the market-interventionist character of government development policies and monetary transfers to Global South countries see Ziai 2016, 125–26.

the downscaling of state responsibilities and the absence of (global) redistributive policies (see Åkesson and Baaz 2013, 4; Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 337–38). Furthermore, they contend that migration policies such as programs of ‘voluntary return,’ which have been promoted under the banner of the migration and development agenda, need to be considered in their proximity to the securitization of migration control, though touted as migration management (Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 324; Raghuram 2009, 104, 105; Schwertl 2015, 133).

As outlined in the subsequent subchapter, I encountered a row of motives of the international migration and development nexus in the subject constituting practices that seek to activate Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ entrepreneurial potentials. For instance, the financial literacy trainings which are an important item on the agenda of entrepreneurship trainings, resemble trainings that have been designed by international development agencies in collaboration with Mexican and U.S.-American government officials and policy-makers (M. Bakker 2015b, 105). In fact, the transnational migration between the U.S. and Mexico has functioned as a “a leading canvas on which [internationally, the “remittance-to-development”] policy construction has been sketched” (ibid., 11).

The Mexican programs tend to address male migrants as active remitters and entrepreneurial subjects who receive credit for their commitment to the homeland, whereas women are addressed as passive, left-behind recipients of remittances (Kunz 2011, 111; Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 339). In Indonesia, in contrast, bureaucrats and bankers address female migrants as active entrepreneurial agents. In the Indonesian case, a certain kind of “gender knowledge” (Eberhardt and Schwenken 2010)—one that builds on the normatively desirable role for women, and not necessarily for men, as mainly responsible for the social realm of the family—is mobilized to incite migrant entrepreneurship.

Given the global reverberations of neoliberalism and the constituting elements of the migration and development nexus, one could be inclined to understand the endeavor of turning

Indonesian migrants into entrepreneurs as the local implementation of a global agenda. Yet, policy-makers who participate in the international discussion bring in their topics against the backdrop of the realities of migrants emigrating from their respective countries (Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 332). On a more abstract level, the relation between global neoliberal repertoires of discursive figures and subject constituting techniques on the one hand, and the local appearance of neoliberalism on the other must be considered as a more complex matter. This relation is considered in the following section.

Variegated formations of neoliberalism

Neoliberalism and the invocation of entrepreneurialism are phenomena that we find all over the globe and in all kinds of policy fields. However, critical discussions on neoliberalism have noted that the global reverberations of neoliberal policies and modes of governing neither mean that they come in a uniform ‘pure’ form, nor that they can be deduced from “global ideas” (Goldstein 2012, 305). In the words of social geographer Jamie Peck (2013, 150), neoliberalism “never acts alone,” but it is “found amongst its others within local or national territorial formations.” This description gives credit to ethnographic and anthropological accounts of historically specific and context-related particularities of neoliberal policies and modes of governing (e.g. Collier 2012; Ong 2006, 10), as well as to those critical voices which underline that “‘actually existing’ neoliberalisms” (Peck 2013, 141) are discrepant and contradictory. Therefore, neoliberalism can neither be called a fixed program nor a static condition (ibid., 144).

The manifestations of variegated forms of neoliberalism need to be taken into account when in the following subchapter I use the term in order to make a contribution that allows for “draw[ing] meaningful conceptual interconnections among a range of historical experiences and contemporary problems” (Collier 2011, 247 in Peck 2013, 152).

8.2 Educating entrepreneurs

How is neoliberalism “*assembled* from multiple and diverse elements” (Higgins and Larner 2017, 3)? By revisiting the presentations at the Exit Program, I explore the variegated techniques and ends that are manifest in the mobilization of the entrepreneurial spirit of returned Indonesian migrant workers. The neoliberal promise that individual extraordinary behavior leads to maximal individual and social well-being is a recurrent theme throughout the following pages. The finance-related institutions that facilitate and promote entrepreneurship trainings for migrant workers convey a certain notion of citizenship. According to these actors, the returning migrant domestic workers are full-fledged, virtuous entrepreneurs-citizens when, on the one hand, they act as creditors and investors, and on the other, as responsible mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters. The neoliberal promise of entrepreneurship conjoins a deeply rooted canon of norms that have longer histories than contemporary neoliberal subject-constituting practices. The participants in the Exit Program are reminded that the source of entrepreneurial success is not limited to the human qualities once defined by European and U.S.-American economists. Entrepreneurial success is, according to ‘spiritual trainings’ which the Exit Program borrows from, a matter of living up to Javanese and Islamic values. Thereby, the call on Indonesian migrant domestic workers intersects with nationalist rhetoric of ‘upgrading’ Indonesian ‘unskilled’ labor and with the interest to restore the national image.

Extraordinaries

In the narratives conveyed in entrepreneurship trainings, successful entrepreneurship requires a set of characteristics and skills that aim at personal development and improvement. In the Indonesian context, religious piety inherently forms part of the personal qualities of successful entrepreneurs. The following sections are dedicated to a detailed discussion of the knowledge orders which entrepreneurial interpellations directed towards Indonesian migrant domestic workers resort to.

Self-optimizing and self-reliant returnees

Advice books and entrepreneurship trainers use the Indonesian term *wirausaha* for ‘entrepreneur,’ a composition of the terms ‘wira’ and ‘usaha.’ According to the *Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language* (2016b), *wira* is a male hero, a bold person, or a military officer. *Usaha* implies the double meaning of ‘taking action in trying to achieve a purpose,’ and ‘doing business’ (ibid.). *Usaha* translates “the early nineteenth century French verb *entreprendre* (to undertake)” (Freeman 2014, 2), of which the English *entrepreneur* is derived from. Resonating with Sumono’s opening statement—that making a business takes boldness and will—the Indonesian term *wirausaha* integrates the characterizing traits and personal preconditions of a successful entrepreneur.

Sumono’s narrative also incorporates the major traits of entrepreneurialism as they have been discerned by European and Anglo-American economists in the early twentieth century: being “innovative, alert, daring, and self-responsible” (Bröckling 2016, 77). This has been outlined by Ulrich Bröckling (ibid.) in his extensive study of entrepreneurialism in Anglo-American and European economic theory and life-coaching discourse. The contemporary prescriptions to act as an entrepreneur in all kinds of spheres of life can be traced back to economists such as Ludwig von Mises, Israel Kirzner, Joseph Schumpeter, Frank H. Knight, and Mark Casson. In their works on entrepreneurship, these authors contemplated on the question of how profit is generated. But apart from discussing entrepreneurship as an explaining factor for generating profit and drawing on anthropological assumptions, these authors formulated prescriptions of “the right way to lead a life” (ibid., 75). They discussed a variety of ‘functions’ of the practices that make entrepreneurs exploiting possibilities for making profit:

- (1) [E]ntrepreneurs resourcefully take advantage of chances for profit;
- (2) they innovate;
- (3) they confront the insecurities of the economic process, and
- (4) they coordinate production and marketing (ibid., 69).

I encountered all these traits when I attended Sumono's motivational speech, and when I interviewed bankers of the *Kasta Bank* and the *Bank Jasa Bumi*. Sumono highlighted the alertness to opportunities to start a new business and thus take advantage of chances for profit by characterizing a business person as somebody who scouts potential opportunities once she has stepped out of the house. He staged himself as an innovator by reciting anecdotes that proved his creativity. Having himself created products, which he has brought to market under his own label, he epitomizes the figure of the pioneer, which Schumpeter (1934 in Bröckling 2016, 71) identified as the main driver of entrepreneurial activity. The self-made business man is not daunted by possible setbacks and does not hide the moments of failures in his career when he gives motivation speeches or when he is interviewed in television shows (e.g. Hitam Putih 2014). As Sumono shared his life trajectory at the Consulate in Hong Kong, failures did not discourage his spirit but invigorated him to move on. His formula "doing business needs a process (*bisnis butuh satu proses*)" (recording 23 Aug 2014) resembles Knight's assertion that "profit is a consequence of error" (Bröckling 2016, 73). Bearing responsibility for the staff of an organization and further developing his business by cultivating good business networks, Sumono proves a proper coordinator and decision-maker in the sense of Casson (1982, in Bröckling 2016, 73). It is this trait of entrepreneurs that was also highlighted by Pak Ridha, the head of the Hong Kong branch of the Indonesian *Kasta Bank* when he explained to me the entrepreneurship trainings his bank offers to Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong. He described the training as a process of "changing mindsets from the pattern of thinking from a domestic helper to the pattern of thinking in business" (interview transcript 26 Aug 2014). To see "a problem in the eyes of a business owner," the still-domestic workers needed to learn how to "see a problem from a helicopter view." According to the banker, this meant to "see a way to sell a product without having to do it by herself." A returning domestic worker who planned

to open a hair salon, for instance, would be well-advised not to obtain a training in hair dressing, but to employ somebody who already possesses expertise (interview transcript 26 Aug 2014).

Sumono's speech, however, was not only an iteration of economic theories, just as the "entrepreneurial self is not merely a construct derived from theories of economics" (Bröckling 2016, xvi). His recital of his life trajectory as one of constant creative problem solving in fact reads like a paragon translation of psychological theories of creativity (ibid., 106–14). These economic and psychological theories are important sources for the zealous promoters of entrepreneurial ways of living. Moreover, Sumono's self-staging is evocative of the discourses of empowerment, which, once situated in emancipatory grassroots movements, now from varying political perspectives claim to "enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives" (Rappaport 1981 in Bröckling 2016, 121). His testimony resembles the conceptualization of empowerment in community psychology as a process that "is modelled on the development of the child into a responsible adult" (Kieffer 1984 in Bröckling 2016, 131), thereby evoking the plot of a *Bildungsroman*. It begins with an account of his experience of hardship when he migrated from a village in rural Java to the capital Jakarta. Then, during his early days in Jakarta he had hardly anything to eat (recording 23 Aug 2014). This overture brings to mind psychologist Charles Kieffer (1984 in Bröckling 2016, 131), who compares "crucial and painful experiences" (Stark 1996, in Bröckling 2016, 132) that incite empowerment processes to birth, "characterized by uncertainty and initial tentative exploration of our own possibilities" (Bröckling 2016, 132). Sumono's initial business started by selling accessories. Since, he didn't possess any assets himself, he used his friend's. This mirrors the stage in the empowerment process that "still needs support from without" (ibid.). His process of maturing as a businessman resonates with "the era of incorporation" (ibid.), and his more recent activities as a motivation

trainer who reflects and shares his experience resemble the stage of adulthood in the empowerment process, which is not least characterized by “telling one’s story” (Stark 1996, in Bröckling 2016, 132).

Sumono’s motivational talk incorporates the ideal characteristics of entrepreneurial behavior in an *en passant*-manner. The curriculums of the entrepreneurship trainings designed by the *Bank Jasa Bumi* and the *Kasta Bank* integrate entrepreneurial skills in a more systematic form. These trainings consist of several sessions over a larger period. The basic-level training of the *Bank Jasa Bumi*, for instance, is divided into various modules on topics such as communication, selling skills, creativity, as well as innovation and business planning. The modules of the advanced level trainings address the formulation of business models, business strategies, and financial reporting (interview transcript 13 Aug 2014). The multiple references, which go beyond economist concepts, suggest that the transformation of migrant domestic workers’ mindsets is more holistic than directing them towards self-employment. They suggest the cultivation of an entrepreneurial attitude that is reflective of the encompassing characteristic of the preaching of entrepreneurialism highlighted by the above-mentioned Foucauldian perspectives on neoliberal governmentality.

The message that is conveyed through entrepreneurship trainings like Sumono’s talk to Indonesian migrant domestic workers prior to return can be read as at least one of the “core principles of neoliberalism” (Osella and Rudnyckyj 2017, 11): that ex-migrant domestic workers can and should become self-reliant through “continual[] self-improve[ment] for the sake of the market” (Bröckling 2016, 196). The talk conveyed the message that migrant workers can profit from participating in capitalist markets and maximize the benefit of their migration projects if they are willing to ‘empower’ themselves, if they are able to spot business opportunities, solve problems that might come up creatively, dare risks, and coordinate business processes.

Collective or state support that would help to satisfy the workers' needs post migration—and not becoming a billionaire—were absent in the talk.

The invocation of self-responsibility through entrepreneurship trainings is central in the context of domestic workers' migration not least because they are not entitled to receive any pension. Agencies only recruit migrant domestic workers who are not older than a certain age, hence, the occupation as migrant domestic worker can only be pursued temporarily, even though some migrants who I have met have worked in Hong Kong for almost twenty years. Interestingly, in other occupational contexts, entrepreneurship trainings target employees who are going to retire: Pak Supriyono, a speaker of the *Kasta Bank*, remarked that his colleagues at the *Kasta Bank* receive such trainings 'only' at the age of fifty-five, when they retire. According to Pak Supriyono, the participants of the Exit Program, who were still in their twenties and thirties, were ahead of his colleagues in learning how to become an entrepreneur:

We learn about entrepreneurship. We also learn how to start a business, how to dare making a business. So, when you are learning on entrepreneurship now, you are learning earlier, you will be practicing earlier, and, *insyallah*, you will also succeed earlier? Be successful! (recording 23 Aug 2014).

Apparently, beyond the context of migrant workers, entrepreneurship trainings are a strategy to prepare workers for periods of absent social security through wage labor. The fact that Indonesians engage in self-employed businesses is nothing outstanding, however: In Javanese towns, the manufacturing and the trade of batik, for instance, were thriving in the first half of the 20th century, but experienced a sharp decline, when New Order bureaucratic capitalism swept away dynamic arrangements of household production in the 1970s and 1980s (Brenner 1998). Self-employment has long been a survival strategy for large parts of Indonesia's lower classes when they were neither able to rely on agricultural subsistence nor had stable income, or when they had lost their jobs in the factories of the export industry. For the middle class, self-employment was a strategy of crisis management when they suddenly lost much of their affluence

during the Asian monetary crisis in the late 1990s. What is remarkable about the role of the current entrepreneurship trainings as a technology of mobilizing alternative forms of social security, is the attempt to *optimize* strategies of self-employment, which at best should lead the entrepreneurs to employ others. Pak Yurma of the *Bank Jasa Bumi*, for instance, saw obstacles in the workers' lack of knowledge of how to manage their finances, in their use of their resources for consumptive purposes, in the workers' lack of ideas of what to do after their migration projects, in a loss of financial resources due to transactions through dubious channels, and in untrustworthy business activities such as multi-level-marketing. Making use of the same narrative as Sumono, the banker explained that everybody has the potential to become an entrepreneur, but unskilled laborers like domestic workers were lacking the *knowledge* of how to effectively run their own business (interview transcript 13 Aug 2013).

Bröckling (2016, 77) reminds us, however, the “invocation of the entrepreneurial spirit is () inherently paradoxical.” To build on migrant workers' entrepreneurial success as a development strategy bears a fundamental puzzle because entrepreneurial behavior is about “*pushing back limits and outdoing*”—“being “more innovative, alert, daring, self-responsible and more of a leader than all the others” (ibid.). In Sumono's talk, this logic of entrepreneurial success was indicated in the frequency of his use of the word ‘extraordinary (*luar biasa*),’ or in his advice to only “learn from number-one people” (recording 23 Aug 2014). Pak Ridha from the *Kasta* bank highlighted that, in order to be successful, the prospective entrepreneurs needed to have unique business ideas.

But, can migrant workers' sending regions really accommodate the unique ideas of 150,000 domestic workers who work in Hong Kong alone? Is there a market for so many extraordinary ideas? Bröckling (2016, 77) describes the paradox of the imperative to act as an entrepreneur in the following words: “Everyone should become an entrepreneur, but if everyone really did, none of them would be. Individually, everyone *could* be, but not everyone together.” While not

fully capable to dissolve this paradox, Sumono reminds his listeners that alertness, innovation, boldness, and management-skills cannot alone pave the way to entrepreneurial success. It is the faithfulness and reverence towards one's parents that have enabled his exceptional, but nevertheless imitable, path towards a successful life.

Indonesian entrepreneurialism: More than hunting for profit

Not only the seasoning of Sumono's talk with parallels to Anglo-American economic, psychology, and social work theories, also his reference to the U.S.-American entrepreneur and trainer Kyosaki, which was mentioned in the opening episode of the chapter, indicate the popularity of Anglo-American entrepreneurship-discourse in Indonesia (see also Chapter 7). This discourse has travelled to Indonesian and is an inspirational source for the advice industry. U.S.-American businessman and author of self-help literature Stephen Covey, for instance, was even received by then president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono personally, when he visited Indonesia to launch the translation of his book *The Eighth Habit. From Effectiveness to Greatness* in 2005 (Rudnyckyj 2010, 98). Given these discursive links, one could assume that the neoliberal panacea of entrepreneurial behavior has saturated into the government of Indonesian migrant domestic workers from the U.S. and Europe. Sumono's presentation style and cultural references, however, point to his embodiment of a local type of the 'entrepreneurial self.' Over large parts of his talk he adapted the format of an Indonesian-style stand-up comedy show. Considering the ease with which he triggered his listeners' amazement and laughter, the audience seemed comfortably familiar with this style. Contemporary Indonesian stand-up comedy itself integrates the comedy elements of a Javanese-language melodrama *ketoprak* (see Afidah and Wahyudi 2014), which originates from the second half of the 19th century and is commonly performed and consumed by lower class society (Hatley 2008). Nowadays, in Indonesia, there is a large canon of Indonesian advice books, television shows, and seminars by self-help gurus,

preachers, and successful business people, whose popularity experienced an erratic increase during the early millennium (Hoesterey 2009; Rudnyckyj 2010, 96; Watson 2005; see Chapter 7). In this market, Sumono occupies a niche, since his style addresses a segment of potential entrepreneurs. Through his embodiment of the social climber, his origin from the Javanese country side, his own migration to the capital Jakarta and his experience of economic hardship, which he presumably shared with many of the audience, his figure and cultural style must be particularly appealing to migrant workers whose working-class status is to be transformed to an ‘entrepreneurial-class’ status.

Western liberal social theory and social actors have constructed capitalist markets as an amoral sphere separated from other social spheres such as religion (Rudnyckyj 2017, 163).¹¹⁵ In Indonesia, however, appeals to entrepreneurial subjectivities are strongly interlinked with invocations of religious piety. This link was also present in Sumono’s talk. Towards the final climax, he left the genre of comedy to strike up a more thoughtful but nonetheless emphatic tone and iterated those ‘spiritual trainings,’ which have become popular in the course of the first decade of the new millennium (ibid. 2009, 2010). The motive of deference towards one’s mother—a principal value in Islamic and Javanese ethics—is an inherent part of the seminars given by ‘spiritual trainers’ at Indonesia’s high-profile companies, which I also encountered during the motivation training given to the recruits at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center (Chapter 7.2). By reminding the participants that his extraordinary path of life would not have been possible without the prayers of his mother, Sumono introduces the spiritual source of his success, which is evocative of the link between spirituality and economic success in Christian prosperity gospels (e.g. Coleman 2017) or the integration of Hindu myths in corporate culture in India (e.g. Gooptu 2017). As I show below, (gendered) moralities related to

¹¹⁵ Authors such as Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin or Georg Bataille have shown, however, that moral underpinnings of markets have historically been rather the norm than an exception (Amin and Thrift 2004, x–xi; Osella and Rudnyckyj 2017, 7–10).

financial behavior, citizenship and family roles coalesce in the figure of the migrant entrepreneur.

Homines financieras¹¹⁶

In bureaucrats' and bankers' narratives, full-fledged citizenship is defined through the workers' participation in financial markets. The following section reveals how development schemes that target migrants to integrate in financial markets have travelled from geographical contexts such as the U.S. and Mexico to the entrepreneurship training at the Consulate in Hong Kong.

Participants in financial markets

In the course of the day-long exit-program, a lottery of door prizes sponsored by placement agencies and handing out gifts by the Financial Services Authority and the *Kasta Bank* were small highlights. During the early afternoon, Pak Ridha of the *Kasta Bank* announced that he and his colleagues were going to award several prizes valued 1,000 HKD (approx. 110 €, the salary of a week). "We will credit this amount to your *Kasta* bank-account. And for those of you who don't have an account, we will open one." In order to be the lucky winner of a 1,000 HKD valued credit, the participants were to guess quiz questions. They were to guess which products the bank exposed on its Facebook site, or where the local counters of the bank were located across the city of Hong Kong. "If you really often operate transactions with the *Kasta* bank, you will know the locations of the counter. Now: Where is the address of the *Kasta* counter in Tai Po?"—Tai Po is a district in Hong Kong's New Territories, the densely populated part of the city. In a flash, one participant shouted: "Downtown Plaza." "Downtown Plaza,"

¹¹⁶ This section title is inspired by Christa Wichterich's (2015) investigation into the promotion of microfinance projects by international development agencies. Declared as measurements to empower women in the Global South, these microfinance projects address women as *homines financieras*, as Wichterich finds (ibid., 483).

Pak Ridha seemed satisfied and asked the participant to the front in order to receive a voucher that symbolized the credit of 1,000 HKD (recording 23 Aug 2014). The *Kasta Bank's* awarding of credits to the participants' accounts—which they either already had or which would be opened for them—was an icebreaker within the block of the session on 'financial education' facilitated by the *Kasta Bank*, which included the display of videos of successful migrant worker-entrepreneurs and an introduction to the bank's offers of savings accounts and credit programs.

Financial education seminars are part of a relatively recent variant of Indonesian development policies: a systematic "national strategy of financial inclusion," which is supposed to "enhance the prospects of the poor to engage in Indonesia's financial system" (Secretariat of the Vice President 2012, 1). This is to be achieved through "access to credit, savings accounts, insurance, leasing and payment services" (ibid.). The strategy that, by name, promises to "foster[] economic growth and accelerate[] poverty reduction" (Secretariat of the Vice President 2012, 1) targets migrant workers in particular. Apart from gaining access to credit and savings accounts, migrant workers should be able to reduce the cost of remittances by "understanding the various options offered by service providers" (ibid., 15). The Financial Service Authority, which was one of the sponsors of the Exit Program, monitors the Indonesian financial services industry and is in charge of consumers' "protection." Therefore, it is a central actor in the Indonesian strategy of financial inclusion of the parts of the population categorized as "low-income poor," "working poor," and "near-poor" (ibid., 26).

During the opening of the Exit Program at the Consulate, a delegate of the Financial Service Authority, Pak Haris, had explained the government agency's mission of increasing society's 'financial literacy' as one important aspect of 'financial inclusion:' "Apparently, in Indonesian society, there are still a lot who are not yet financial literates (*melek keuangan*).” He

explained that his agency had undertaken a survey in Indonesian society and shared the findings of this study:

And even worse, if we have a closer look at the composition of financial illiterates between men and women, there are more women who are financially illiterate. And this is among society members of productive age between fifteen and fifty-five years, right. Where do we want to direct our nation to, if there are still many women who are not yet financially literate? (recording 23 Aug 2018).

Pak Haris explained that these findings were particularly striking because in Indonesian households, like in other parts of the worlds, women are responsible for managing monetary issues (see also Brenner 1998, 139). Hence, they should learn how to make good financial planning and how they could eventually make their money “grow and develop” by investing in deposits, mutual funds, precious metals, or in the stock market. He warned the participants of dubious offers of investment in Hong Kong. The collaboration between the Financial Service Agency, the *Kasta Bank*, and the Consulate therefore aimed at supporting migrant workers to gain a maximal benefit from financial products.

When Pak Hari identified financial illiteracy, which he used in the literal translation ‘*melek keuangan*,’ as an obstacle to development in Indonesia, this resonated with the transnational discourse on financial inclusion. In the early second decade of the new millennium, when member states of the G20 announced their commitment to the endeavor of integrating the populations of their countries in financial markets for the greater cause of development as the “universalisation of financial inclusion” (Soederberg 2013, 597).¹¹⁷ They have promoted the access for poor adults to formal or semi-formal financial services as a “policy tool that promotes growth and stability while reducing poverty” (ibid., 593). Within the financial inclusion discourse, poor people’s access to financial services is “translated into a need” of the 2.7 billion

¹¹⁷ This momentum had been preceded by the steep career offerings of microfinance credits for the poor in Global South countries (Schwittay 2011, 383; Weber 2002; Wichterich 2015) as well as by the “credit-based welfare” in the U.S., which imposed that the poor segments of the society support their social reproduction through “payday loans, sub-prime credit cards and housing loans” (Soederberg 2013, 598).

poor people in the world, which presumably can be served by “tapping mainstream financial markets” (Schwittay 2011, 382).

In 2009, the G20 leaders committed themselves to financial inclusion as a cure to the 2008 financial crises and recession that should bring about stabilization (Soederberg 2013, 593). The “G20 Principles for Innovative Financial Inclusion” (GPFI 2010), drafted by an expert group and implementing organizations, including the World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation (IFC),¹¹⁸ were presented at the G20 summit in 2010. This is also the year to which I could trace back the rhetoric promoting Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ financial inclusion. Then, the English-speaking newspaper *Jakarta Post* published an article by a specialist of the World Bank office in Jakarta titled “Financial inclusion. Making life easier for Indonesia’s overseas migrant workers” (Doi 2010). Joining the ductus of the global agenda, the author claimed that “much can still be done to maximize the impact that Indonesia’s migrant workers can have on poverty reduction at home” (ibid.). She advocated for “innovative credit products” for migrants to pay the costs of their placement as well as for “exploring financial literacy for migrant workers and their families” (ibid.). In the years 2011 and 2012, a number of Global South countries—the countries with the globally largest share of what is called ‘unbanked’ population—signed declarations that defined “global and measurable set[s] of commitments” (Soederberg 2013, 599) to strengthen and expand financial inclusion.

Development institutions address *transnational migrants* as agents of financial inclusion. Matthew Bakker (2015b) suggests that the transnational migration of Mexicans to the U.S. played the role of a field for experimentation for policy entrepreneurs of international development agencies, mainly the Multilateral Investment Fund, a member of the Inter-American

¹¹⁸ The IFC is a member of the World Bank Group and focuses on the private sector. The other implementing institutions involved in drafting the G20 Principles were the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor.

Development Bank Group,¹¹⁹ which incorporated migrants in the financial inclusion-agenda. Collaborating with Mexican and U.S. American policy-makers and government officials as well as migrant organizations, during the first decade of the millennium these international agencies put much work in the endeavor of “leveraging remittances to promote the democratization of financial services” (Bakker M. 2015b, 93). They lobbied the formal financial services industry—banks, insurance companies, and specialized housing-finance agencies—to offer migrants “more options” to use and receive the cash made abroad (ibid., 98). They also engaged in combined financial education and entrepreneurship trainings in Mexico and other Latin American states (ibid., 105; Hall 2010, 201–31). These trainings look like prototypical predecessors of the collaboration between the Indonesian Consulate, the *Kasta Bank*, and the Financial Service Agency.¹²⁰

Pak Haris’ citation of the survey his organization had conducted can be read as a truth-producing practice involved in both producing the phenomenon of financial literacy and defining the lack thereof as a problem and obstacle for national development. Remarkably, in (transnational) development discourses, illiteracy has long been a classic motive of development experts’ definition of ‘underdevelopment’ (Escobar 1995, 41; Ziai 2016, 43). This classic motive now discursively conjoins a rather recently discovered source of ‘underdevelopment:’ financial illiteracy. The production of expert knowledge and the assertion that parts of the population—the poor, the migrant workers or female citizens—are lacking certain knowledge and must therefore be targeted by interventions in the name of development or management respectively can be discerned as a common thread of development and migration policies (see e.g.

¹¹⁹ Other protagonists were the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Inter-American Dialogue, and the World Bank.

¹²⁰ Interestingly, as Bakker remarks, the 2008 financial crisis “actually drove many of [the Multilateral Investment Fund’s] partners to suspend their remittances-related financial products because of the instability of remittance flows.” Apparently, such experience from overseas did not discourage the endeavor of engaging in the financial inclusion of Indonesian migrants. To the contrary, as the commitment of G20 members to financial inclusion shows, the broad-based integration of poor populations into financial markets has experienced a boom in the aftermath of the crisis.

Geiger and Pécoud 2012, 11–12; Pécoud 2010, 185; Schwertl 2015, 125; Ziai 2016, 43–44). Pak Haris’ question, where the nation would steer to if female citizens stayed financially illiterate reveals the weight that the bureaucrat rhetorically gives to the society’s financial activities with respect to the future of the nation.

This resonates with the celebration of financial inclusion in the global discourse arena as a tool of poverty reduction. The hailing voices of financial inclusion as a weapon against poverty and a panacea for economic growth, however, do not expose the capital the interests of transnational actors which benefit from finance-led capitalism. Thus, the “exploitative relations and speculative tendencies involved in financial inclusion strategies” remain unaddressed (Soederberg 2013, 594). The finance dominated accumulation regime, which is gaining ground in the Global South in contrast is framed as an emancipatory endeavor: as freeing migrant workers from the hurdles of illiteracy and bringing about inclusion of the formerly excluded (Schwittay 2011, 395; Wichterich 2015, 471). This framing has parallels in other fields of international development policies, in which concepts with an emancipatory connotation such as participation and empowerment are “limited to participating in the growing market economy” (Ziai 2016, 135). As addressed in the following section, in the case of migrant workers’ participation in financial markets, this is discursively normalized, as migrant workers’ full citizenship is defined by their relation to financial institutions.

Becoming financial literates, becoming citizens

During his address, Pak Haris explained that his institution was endeavoring to support the participants in building up a life in prosperity. He outlined the different stages of a life cycle, during all of them we naturally encounter financial institutions and which end at a prosperous life:

From birth on. A mother will surely say ‘I have a child now. I need to take out an insurance for her education, so that she can go to high school and study at university.’¹²¹ From birth to death we deal with financial institutions. While the daughter is still young, she will enter an insurance program, whether an insurance for her education or health. When she is an adolescent, we need to take up a loan for a motorcycle, so that she can ride it on the way to school. Then, the daughter will go to university, will work and might want to marry. She will need a saving credit for the wedding.

Notably, weddings are an elaborate and expensive matter in Indonesia. The participants reacted with giggles, and Pak Haris continued his speech about the close entanglements between life cycles and financial institutions:

After having married, the now grown up child might want to take up a loan for a house. She will deal with a bank, in order to buy a house. Then she might become aware that she has assets. She might want to make more money, where would he or she want to invest the money? In the stock market? Invest in mutual funds? Or invest in property? She might want to obtain a life insurance. ‘So that once I die, my family will still be well-off’ (recording 23 Aug 2014).

It is striking that in his narrative of a ‘normal’ life cycle, issues of social reproduction such as health, education or transportation are represented as an intrinsic relation between individuals and the world of finance. Backed by an illustrated Power Point slide, this presentation of the life cycle was later repeated by Pak Supriyono who spoke on behalf of the *Kasta Bank*, which indicates that this narrative is standardized. Matters of social reproduction are dis-embedded from state-facilitated or other social structures of solidarity, a central feature of neoliberal economic strategies (see e.g. I. Bakker and Gill 2003; I. Bakker 2007; Brodie 2005). The insurance economy that is implied in Pak Haris’ considerations on the ‘normal’ life cycle remains, in his narrative, without alternative.¹²² Apparently, self-optimizing individuals should be capable of

¹²¹ In Indonesian, the third person singular does not distinguish gender. For better readability, I chose to use only one gender in the English translation of Pak Haris’ speech.

¹²² Pak Ridha of the *Kasta Bank* did not reiterate this representation as being without alternative. He raised the issue of education and claimed that education in Indonesia should be more “affordable” to the citizens. This claim was related to his account on his vision for the future of Indonesian migrant workers, which he personally imagined as one that will have overcome the sending of domestic workers by sending what he described as ‘skilled’ workers: nurses in nursing homes, experts on financial issues, or computer specialists. For this aim, potential migrant workers needed to be equipped with high education. His claim, however, stays within an economic rationale that conceives of migrants as an object of human resource development.

managing the uncertainties of their lives individually. Interestingly, Pak Haris neither mentioned the non-formal modes of communal rotating savings and credit associations *Arisan*, nor the established state-sanctioned system of finance cooperatives as well as credit unions as existing alternative sources to finance social reproduction needs. During the Exit Program, cooperatives were rarely mentioned as organizational forms to realize business ventures, although government entrepreneurship trainings explicitly support collective business arrangements (Anwar and Chan 2016, 153). An interlocutor of the Ministry of Manpower, for instance, told me of a successful cooperative in the regency of Blitar in East Java (interview transcript 07 Mar 2014). These collective arrangements remain a desideratum for further research on financial inclusion agendas.

Pak Haris' narrative promises that in the course of the life cycle, stages of debt will eventually turn into stages of prosperity and affluence that allow the 'normal citizen' to invest and make their "money grow, thrive," and finally "blossom," as Pak Haris put it (recording 23 Aug 2014). In the course of the Exit Program, Pak Ridha and his colleagues from the *Kasta Bank* introduced the participants to saving accounts and microcredit schemes that returned migrant worker-entrepreneurs could use to realize their business ventures. The workers' capacities to develop business plans and assess business opportunities are considered when the *Kasta Bank* decides whether an applicant is worthy of credit. The delegate from the *Bank Jawa Usaha*, Pak Romli, who spoke later that day claimed in a similar manner to "help" migrant workers' entrepreneurial ventures to unfold (recording 23 Aug 2014).

Virtuous entrepreneur-citizens

Being 'financially literate' in order to become an entrepreneur is neither merely a matter of the right spirit, nor of knowledge about financial products and managing household and business finances. It is also matter of female workers' 'good' behavior as mothers, wives, daughters,

and sisters and of the national self-image: Gendered notions of morality are mobilized to encourage entrepreneurial behavior, to discipline migrant workers' spending and to nourish the project of turning them into respectable citizens, thus upgrading the national image. This liaison between entrepreneurship, gendered morality and a desire for national respectability characterize the particular Indonesian variation of neoliberal interpellations addressing migrant-entrepreneurs-to-become.

Committed entrepreneurs, loyal remittance senders and upright creditors and investors

The above mentioned economic theories that nurture the figure of the 'entrepreneurial self' are based on the assumption that "the entrepreneurial self is an offspring of *homo oeconomicus*, that model of what it is to be a human, on which the science of economics bases its models of human behavior" (Bröckling 2016, xiv). Feminist scholars have remarked that the hegemonic representations of the *homo oeconomicus*—characterized by "narrow rationality, selfishness and social isolation" (Eberhardt and Schwenken 2010, 102)—assume a male subject as prototypical economic actors (Habermann 2010). Against this background, it is noteworthy that the Indonesian financial inclusion and entrepreneurship agenda explicitly address *female* migrant domestic workers. This interpellation of female domestic workers becomes clear in Pak Haris' reference to the findings of the Financial Service Authority's study on the country's state of financial literacy and his particular worry about the noticed lack of financial literacy among Indonesia's female population. Pak Haris acknowledged the crucial role that women perform with respect to the management of finances in many regions of the world and promoted women's integration in financial markets, a line of thought that resembles the *Women in Development* (WID) approach that entered the international discussion on development in the 1970s (C. Moser 1993). This approach acknowledged the hitherto overlooked role of women

as development actors who contribute to the modernization of developing countries and encouraged integrating women into development initiatives (Kunz 2011, 112). In the 1980s, international development agencies and national governments acknowledged the contribution of women to development through their productive work and encouraged the integration of women in global economies. Targeting females in financial inclusion-programs thus echoes the early “make women productive discourse” (ibid.).

However, it might also be the case that in calling for females’ entrepreneurial behavior and savvy investment-making, the speakers at the exit program drew on the crucial role of female merchants in Java’s once flourishing production and trade of batik. Women used to be central to Javanese businesses based on household production, one reason being that according to prevalent gender norms in Java, the status of men was regarded as dependent on their own spiritual potency and ability to control desires. In Javanese merchant communities, women were considered to be more savvy to control the family firm as well as family finances and thus controlled their husbands’ desires and family assets (Brenner 1998, 140–61). As outlined in Chapter 6, during the New Order, in contrast to the existing gender discourse, state gender ideologies put emphasis on the primary role of middle-class women as housewives (ibid. 241). I cannot discern whether Pak Haris and the other speakers at the Exit Program drew on the make-women-productive-agenda, or whether they were rediscovering the role of women in Javanese merchant communities. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the invocation of a *female* entrepreneurial spirit is compatible with a multiplicity of international and local discourses.¹²³ This multiplicity traverses the following considerations.

¹²³ In her study of the making of the ‘financial inclusion’-agenda at the Institute for Money, Technology and Financial Inclusion at the University of California, which is a central knowledge producer in what she calls the “global” assemblage of financial inclusion, Anke Schwittay (2011, 389) has outlined that anthropological knowledge on local contexts is key to the formulation of financial inclusion strategies. Therefore, I believe that it is highly possible that Pak Haris referred to exactly the economic role of women which was washed away by the New Order when the state actors systematically propagated that women should first and foremost be loyal housewives (see Chapter 6.1).

In Chapter 6, showed that the celebration of migrant workers as heroines is underpinned by an underlying assumption of female migrants' role as inhabiting a place in the heteronormative family as workers and at the same time mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, which charges them with responsibilities and the 'natural' disposition to make sacrifices. The acknowledgement of female workers' contributions is closely linked to normative appeals to migrant workers' faithful performance of family roles as *sacrificing* mothers, wives, and sisters and as *loyal* daughters of the nation. The appeal to female migrant workers' responsibility towards their families not only serves the cause of enhancing workers' work discipline despite unfavorable conditions, but also the cause of securing and mobilizing the flow of remittances for productive enterprises. The entrepreneurs-to-become are, hence, far from being advised to act selfishly. Rather, social gender knowledge on female migrant workers' economic and family roles and 'proper' behavior is activated in service of the project of financial inclusion and invigorating entrepreneurial behavior.

The protagonists involved in entrepreneurship and financial literacy programs whom I met referred to normative assumptions linked to migrant workers' family roles when they stimulate the workers' motivations to 'become a boss' and productively invest their earnings. The aim was to stop being the "the cash cow" of their families, to cite Pak Yumar from the *Bank Jasa Bumi* (interview transcript 13 Aug 2014). Migrant workers did not deserve to be cash cows if their money was all used up for consumptive needs and families continued to be pulled apart. As entrepreneurs, in contrast, migrant workers' families could be unified. In accordance, in its mission statement, the *Bank Jawa Usaha* entrepreneurship training sets itself to "unify families through entrepreneurship (*mempersatukan keluarga*)" (fieldnotes 13 Aug 2014). Pak Yumar explained to me how the bank's entrepreneurship trainings encourage migrant workers to adopt the attitude that is needed as an entrepreneur. He listed the traits of the attitudes of the mindset

of a boss: working hard, focus, purposefulness, being equipped with skills—and finally “having a strong desire not to become a migrant worker.” Pak Yurma explained:

So we always tell them, go back to Indonesia quickly, your family is waiting at home, your kids are waiting at home. As nice it may be abroad, it is still nicer in the homeland. What is the way to go back quickly? You have to have a strong passion to really go back immediately, so here you need to work hard (interview transcript 13 Aug 2014).

In Pak Yurma’s account the unification of migrant workers’ families serves as a motivation booster for migrant workers’ entrepreneurial behavior. This utilitarian idea, that the unification of the family enhances migrant workers’ productivity, resonates with the international discourse arena on migration and development: The argumentation that “migrant workers with access to their usual family structures can be more productive” (GFMD 2011, 11) can be found in reports that contain the reflections of governments, civil society groups, and academics who participated in the *Global Forum on Migration and Development* (see also Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 334).¹²⁴ The strong link between the productive use of remittances and family responsibility is also prominent in Mexican development strategies that seek to mobilize either the wives of male migrants as remittance receivers or female migrants as investors in micro-businesses (Kunz 2011, 110; Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 336–40).

The bankers who spoke at the exit program referred to female migrants’ family duties in order to remind the participants to manage their finances wisely: Making oneself not too comfortable in Hong Kong as well as disciplined spending are apparently considered the key to maximally profit from the potentials as an entrepreneur. At the exit program, Pak Romli of the state-owned *Bank Jawa Usaha* explained his function of giving guidance to ex-migrant workers

¹²⁴ It needs to be noted that the governments of emigration countries argue with the normative desirability of the unity of the heteronormative family in order to critically comment on receiving countries, which profit from workers having to bear the emotional burden of being apart from their families. An interlocutor of the Foreign Ministry articulated this perspective when he explained to me his demand that receiving countries should compensate Indonesian workers for their “lost family time” (interview transcript 02 Jul 2104). In the international discourse arena, this particular ‘gender knowledge’ is thus used for a variety of tactical objectives, which demonstrates the ‘tactical polyvalence’ of discourses (Kunz and Schwenken 2014, 334).

(*membina purna TKI*) and his mission to support workers to become self-reliant by providing small scale businesses and cooperatives with microcredits. It was important for him to emphasize that this mission required a certain moral attitude by reminding the participants:

Don't just spend the money that you, little sisters (*adik-adik*), receive, say, on your own pleasures (*foya-foya*) only. Of course, you spend the bulk of your money back to the homeland for whom? For your families. For the essence of your work is to make your families better off. And on a smaller scale, also to enhance the prosperity of the society in East Java (recording 23 Aug 2014).

Echoing Pak Haris' proposition that migrants' integration in financial markets is central to the country's prosperity, Pak Romli of the *Bank Jawa Usaha* resorted to the motive of migrant workers' sacrifice by reminding them to limit spending on their own pleasures in Hong Kong: The time to enjoy pleasures is postponed to a future, when migrants reunite with their families and when East Jawa has become more prosperous. The cordially meant address of the participants as 'little sisters' allocates the workers a low position in the hierarchy of the nation-family, a position that indicates that the entrepreneurs-to-be-need paternal guidance (see Chapter 6.2).

If necessary, the banks help the workers to protect themselves from the "temptations (*godaan*)" of consumption in Hong Kong: good shoes, nice clothes, and on top of that keeping several cellphones (interview transcript 26 Aug 2014). Migrant workers who open a saving account at the *Kasta Bank* therefore cannot access their savings in Hong Kong, but only once they have returned to Indonesia. At the exit program, Pak Ridha appealed to the participants' restraint:

Why is it that after so many years in Hong Kong there are no savings left? If they are sent so that children can go to school, that's okay. If they are spent in order to build up a house, that's okay. But if they are only used for spending your money on extravagancies (*berhura-hura*), that is very much not okay.

Interestingly, Pak Ridha made a distinction between spending for family needs in Indonesia and workers' individual spending in Hong Kong. Overall, he located lavish behavior in Hong Kong and reasonable spending in Indonesia. During our interview, Pak Ridha referred to migrant workers' unreasonable spending in Hong Kong as well. When we were talking about the products that the *Kasta Bank* offers especially to migrant workers, Pak Ridha explained:

I am sorry for them. They have been here for years but obviously they don't have anything. There are many who are like that. Their money is all used up *just for* dying their hair red! And this happens although their work as helpers requires their physical labor. When they are old, what will they want to do? (interview transcript 26 Aug 2014).

I was somewhat impressed to reencounter the morally charged motif of dyed hair as a trope of deviant behavior, which many of my interlocutors cited when they problematized migrant domestic workers' behavior. In Chapter 6, I proposed that dyed hair was considered as un-Indonesian and as improper, but that in turn, for migrant workers themselves, embodied practices such as dressing up and having their hair dyed implied a claim to respect and person-value. I have discussed moralizing discourses of migrant domestic workers' appearance as a mode of disciplining them that resorts to hegemonic gendered and class-based notions of morality. For the entrepreneur-to-become and the participant in financial markets, restraint is crucial for the continuous flow of remittances and the productive usage of these. Pak Ridha's appeal to the workers' family responsibility calls on moderate consumption, even if this means that the workers give up their personal interests. His iteration of the motif of dyed hair is charged with notions of 'good' *female* behavior.' The ambivalence which migrant domestic workers and their behaviors of consumption are met with has parallels with the ambivalent social standing Javanese female merchants enjoy. The Javanese female merchants Brenner (1998, 160) studied with accumulated considerable wealth, lived more ascetically than their husbands and were engaged in saving clubs and thus generated status and prestige not only for their families, but also for

themselves. Javanese female traders' self-control and control over money were met with suspicion, like today's migrant workers. Brenner (1999, 162–63) outlines:

On the one hand, women are considered to be ever mindful of their families and less lustful than men, which keeps them in control of their desires. These are some of the factors that are said to make them 'naturally' better traders than men. On the other hand, the more money a woman controls the more autonomous she is, and an autonomous woman is always somewhat suspect. Self-control over one's desires is evaluated positively in Java, but a woman who is not subject to any *man's* control is potentially threatening to the male-dominated social order.

The perceived threat of social order through female control over money echoes the unease that female mobility is met with, as discussed in detail Chapter 6. This unease has nourished the wish to stop sending domestic workers altogether. The speakers of the Exit Program and my interlocutors have repeatedly mentioned this target in relation to entrepreneurship trainings for domestic workers. Diverse considerations motivate this target: Pak Hermono of the *Bank Jawa Maju* expressed concerns that workers from mainland China could embody competition to Indonesian workers (recording 23 Aug 2014). In fact, as the chairman of the Association of Indonesian Labor Recruitment Companies APPIH told me, agencies in Hong Kong are looking to other countries to play a bigger role as sources of migrant labor (fieldnotes 14 Aug 2014). Another reason why entrepreneurship trainings are considered to reach the goal of stopping the sending of migrant domestic workers seems the wish of a national future without migration. Because of the widely shared assumption that Indonesians leave to work abroad for economic reasons, offering alternative modes by means of which former and potential migrant workers could gain prosperity is seen as a measure on the road to a future without migration. In the following section, I propose that national sentiments and sentiments of shame that are nurtured by the social devaluation of paid domestic work underpin this wish of a future without migration. I thus shed light on the particular significance of targeting migrant *domestic workers* as future entrepreneurs in the context of state promoted transnational migration, thereby touching

on the gendered and class-related aspects of dignity and respectability that characteristically shape Indonesian labor brokerage.

Domestic workers no more

In his welcoming address of the festively framed exit program, the General Consul of Indonesia expressed his hopes towards the audience: Once the participants would come back to Hong Kong, they should do so as tourists, and not as workers. The workers' migration projects in Hong Kong as 'unskilled' domestic workers should be of temporary character. In his short welcoming address, the Consul General also explained that apart from the exit program, the Consulate offers a "during stay program," which consists of cosmetic courses, cooking classes, or language classes in Cantonese or Mandarin. "The aim is to enhance your qualities," he said. "Why? Because frankly it is not our wish that you work in the informal sector forever. We wish that you can become more independent, that you make it to a better class (*naik kelas*), that you don't work here in the informal but the formal sector." Hong Kong authorities also offered the opportunity to work in nursery homes or as babysitters, he said. The General Consul expressed hopes that mirror the government's 'zero-domestic workers'-agenda, which aims at 'upgrading' the domestic workers defined as informal and as unskilled (see Chapter 5.2).

The hope that entrepreneurship trainings can contribute to overcome the need of sending migrant workers was also voiced by Pak Romli of the *Bank Jawa Usaha*, when he was introducing the audience of the Exit Program to the bank's remittance scheme and microcredit products. He repeatedly appealed to the audience: "Don't come back as migrant workers. If you come back as migrant workers, I apologize, when can we be independent (*mandiri*)?" (recording 23 Aug 2014). I assume that the 'we' Pak Romli evoked is the imagined national community (B. R. O. Anderson 1991), which, in his opinion is not fully independent if it continues to send migrant workers abroad. Pak Romli's rhetoric is evocative of the anti-colonial independence

movement and Indonesia's first President's figurative description of Indonesia under (neo-)colonialism being made "a nation of coolies" (McIntyre 2005, 85).

Pak Yurma of the *Bank Jasa Bumi* specified what he thought was problematic about domestic work as migrant workers' occupation: that it was 'dishonorable' work. When he explained the modules that the facilitators of the *Bank Jasa Bumi* use, he juxtaposed the mindset of an unskilled '*domestic helper*' with the 'mindset of a boss.' Like the Consul General he highlighted the aim of upgrading migrant domestic workers:¹²⁵

We react to [the participants'] lack of knowledge of their own potentials to become *entrepreneur*. Everybody can become an entrepreneur. (...) They are unskilled workers; they don't have the educational background to do office work. We want to upgrade (*bangkitkan*) them to become business people as this is much more honorable than, sorry, now being a helper. Now you are a worker (*buruh*), but your mindset is already the mindset of a boss. That means that one day I must become an employer, become a boss. How? I have to have a business. (interview transcript 13 Aug 2014).

Interestingly, both Pak Romli's and Pak Yurma's expressed intentions to offer an alternative to (re-)migration as a domestic worker contain a rhetorical gesture of apology, which I read as expressions of shame. Pak Romli's parenthesis 'I apologize' refers to the nation's dependency on the migration of its labor force, while Pak Yurma's 'sorry' relates to Indonesian migrant workers' occupation as domestic workers. While Pak Romli's account alludes to the questions of national pride, Pak Yurma's overall plea for an empowerment of migrant domestic workers implies an assessment of paid domestic work as a less honorable occupation. This depiction of

¹²⁵ Pak Ridha of the *Kasta* bank was not so optimistic that the *Kasta* bank's entrepreneurship program was capable to stop sending migrant domestic workers. In his eyes, this project needed government policies that went beyond the imparting of skills on entrepreneurship (interview 26 Aug 2014). Nevertheless, the sharp contrast between domestic *helpers* and entrepreneurs figured prominently in his narrative. His depictions of the extravagant behavior of Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers as immoral indicate a wide repertoire of associations that make domestic worker appear as disrespected. It is in Pak Yurma's statement, however, that the *occupation* as domestic worker is depicted as dishonorable.

the occupation of domestic work as 'less honorable' is evocative of the widely spread devaluation of this kind of work. Questions of national dignity and the devaluation of paid domestic work are intertwined in sentiments related to the unease about appearing as a nation of servants.

Sumono's narrative offered a respectable alternative to the occupation of a domestic worker: He highlighted the intactness of his family and presented his success as the success of a family business. When he introduced himself to the audience, he emphasized: "I have four professions but only one wife." His wife is involved in his business activities: He presented her as his "financial manager." She accompanied him in his earliest business ventures, when they together embarked on petty trading with accessories, and she ran his first own business, the grocery store. Sumono left his comedy-like presentation style when he reached the dramatically staged climax of his talk. He introduced this last act as "values in business" and went on to express his high respect towards his family: "In fact, my success is not *my* success. It is the success of my wife and my daughter!" Consequently, when he meets his business acquaintances, he never asks them 'how much turnover does your business have?' but instead: 'How is your family?'" Should his acquaintance betray his wife, Sumono would terminate the cooperation: "That is the end of the story." How a business acquaintance treated his wife is for Sumono a measurement of his trustworthiness: "I think if he betrays his wife who accompanies him sleeping every night, how would he treat myself?" Triggering the applause of the audience, he assured that he was truly keeping up faithfulness in the domestic sphere and repeated: "it was my wife and my daughter who brought me to the point that I could be successful."

My friend Lintang was touched by Sumono's testimony of his faithfulness to his family. She had told me that many migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong actually do not leave their homes "because of economic reasons (*karena ekonomi*)," but because they escape problematic marriages (fieldnotes 29 Jul 2014; see also Chapter 6). Remembering other workers' accounts of husbands who, for instance, were irresponsibly using up the household's finances (see also

Brenner 1998, 153), I could understand that Sumono's integrity left a deep impression on Lintang and other participants in the audience. I suppose that it is not least his self-staging as a responsible husband that makes him an upright role model in front of this audience.

Gender hierarchies remain intact in Sumono's narrative: It is the *male* head of the family to embody the smartness, alertness, creativity, and leadership of an entrepreneur. In his presentation, he has taught his wife entrepreneurial behavior, notwithstanding the historically crucial role of women in Javanese merchant communities. Once Sumono's wife asked him to buy her a casual home dress. He did not only buy one but ten: "This is the love of a husband towards his wife." He asked his wife to keep two dresses and sell the rest, thus stimulating her entrepreneurial spirit (recording 23 Aug 2014; see also Marantina 2015). When domestic workers learn in entrepreneurship trainings offered by government institutions, business people, and banks, female migrant domestic workers are, similar to Sumono's wife, ascribed the role as female trainees who are *still* learning from dominantly male instructors, similar to Mexican remittance-receivers who "are portrayed as being in need of the promotion of their involvement in productive work" (Kunz 2011, 110).

Interim Resumé: Absorbing migrant workers' desires?

In the preceding sections I described various facets of the endeavor of state actors and banks to turn Indonesian migrant domestic workers into entrepreneurs capable of running their own businesses and participating in financial markets—a transformation that is celebrated as modernizing society, as the remedying alternative to the morally dubious brokerage of migrant domestic workers and an advancement of the nation on the international stage. Thereby, invoking the workers' entrepreneurial activities reflects international, neoliberal development discourses. As the case Indonesian labor brokerage shows, the figure of the 'entrepreneur of the self' is a local variegation of these discourses that links the neoliberal motif of individual

self-responsibility with migrants' respectability. This underlines recent scholarly debates that conceive of neoliberalism as a flexible rationality that, globally, appears in variegated forms (Collier 2012; Ong 2006; Peck 2013). I suggested a reading of the trainings as a technique that incites the self-governing of migrant workers in light of the absence of social security for returned migrant workers, and of their integration in financial markets and their re-integration into the gendered (moral) order. I cited statements that indicated that bureaucrats and bankers consider entrepreneurship the respectable alternative to waged domestic work. The message conveyed in the entrepreneurship trainings is, however, paradox: Everyone can become an entrepreneur, but needs to be *extraordinary*.

This paradox notwithstanding, the invocation of migrant domestic workers' entrepreneurial activities at least partly corresponds with the aspirations of many (former) migrant domestic workers I studied with. For instance, when I was meeting Monica on her weekly days off, after she had just freshly arrived in Hong Kong, she repeatedly talked about her dream of producing and selling jackfruit crackers once back in Indonesia. Jackfruit crackers were more unique than crackers made of cassava or sweet potato and would sell better on the market, Monica reasoned while she was contemplating on her market advantage. When I was in the migrant sending area Sumberbaru, I met many former migrant domestic workers who were running their own businesses. In the urban districts of Sumberbaru, quite some of the small and medium-size businesses are in the hands of former migrant domestic workers: I brought my clothes to a laundry that was run by Mbak Adila, who had worked in private households in Singapore and Taiwan. I had coffee and snacks at Mbak Sum's coffee shop who had become a close friend and who had worked in Hong Kong for twelve years. In the same neighborhood, her cousin, Mbak Rina, who had worked in Singapore, had continued her parents' ironing shop and turned it into a business of curtains. When I visited Mbak Rina's curtain shop, I stopped over at the stall of Mbak Lili, an '*ex-Singapore*'—this was how former migrant workers were introduced

to me in the neighborhood—, who was selling fresh juice, grilled bananas, fried meatballs (*pentol*), and powdered drinks. Remarkably, I learned that for these former migrant domestic workers, economic independency from their husbands and their parents-in-law had been a driver for their economic activities. When I first met Mbak Adila, she was quick to tell me that she had gone to work abroad before she had been married in order to own her own house and not to “be sheltered (*num pang*)” at the place of her future husband or parents-in-law (fieldnotes 19 Apr 2014). The starter cash for the laundry shop that she was running with her husband came from her, and so she could maintain the independence that she had been aiming at with her migration projects. Entrepreneurship trainings seem to capitalize on this wish for independence, but also curtail it by reminding female migrants of their duties in their families.

Organized migrant workers in Hong Kong, in turn, are skeptical about the entrepreneurship trainings offered by the embassy and Indonesian banks. The resonating undertone of the trainings which deem migration into domestic work abroad dishonorable is at odds with the advocacy of migrant workers’ organizations, which rest on a positive and self-assertive identification *as* domestic workers. Kathleen Weekley (2004, 350), who discussed entrepreneurship programs which are run by government agencies, private business and NGOs and are offered to Philippine migrant domestic workers contends that the entrepreneurship trainings “may () undermine the global campaign for the rights of migrant workers and their families by turning attention towards the notion of individual *responsibilities* instead of *rights*.”

The criticism of NGOs and migrant workers’ organizations reveals a different perspective on the agenda of turning migrant domestic workers into entrepreneurs. In extension to this, I now turn to juxtaposing interpellations of migrant worker-entrepreneuses with migrant workers’ subjective experience of returning to Indonesia.

8.3 Return experiences

How do migrant domestic workers' experience their return after migration? How do they organize their lives and sources of income after migration? The following section recounts the story of Dewi, a trainee who I got to know at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency. Dewi exemplifies the "serial migration," i.e. the itinerant, sometimes multi-country, temporary migration (Parreñas et al. 2018), that characterizes some Indonesian migrant domestic workers' migration patterns until an advanced age. These patterns crisscross plans and desires to turn migrants into entrepreneurs as an alternative to migration. Below, I furthermore discuss a field that remains to be studied in closer detail: (returned) migrants who do engage in entrepreneurial ventures, their subjective experience, and the role migration and transnationalism continues to play to them and their lifeworlds.

Persistent transnational mobilities

"When you go back to Germany, do you also sometimes feel bored?" These were the words of Dewi, a domestic worker who I met at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center while she was preparing for her departure to Taiwan. Dewi's story contrasts those of my interlocutors whose aspirations to run their own business in Indonesia and be united with their families coincide with the endeavor to turn ex-migrant domestic workers into entrepreneurs as an alternative to repeatedly venture abroad for work. Dewi's plans diverge from the mission of building up a future without a domestic worker migration through (ex-)migrants' engagement in entrepreneurial activities.

Dewi was using the services of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency in order to extend her employment as a domestic worker in Taiwan. Workers whose Taiwanese employer had passed away, for instance, had to return to Indonesia and make use of the services of a recruitment agency, as visa are bound to employment with a certain employer. With a row of other workers, Dewi neither had to undergo the whole training, nor did she have to stay in

the dormitory of the agency. Nevertheless, she mingled with the migrant worker candidates who had to undergo the full training for preparation abroad. I met her in the small store on the compound of the training center, which was selling snacks and hygiene items. While she and her colleagues were treating themselves with instant milk coffee, accompanied by candid laughter, Dewi shared anecdotes of her earlier experiences with recruitment agencies or her experiences in Taiwan. Her cheerful appearance stood out in light of other stories which were shared in the store and which dealt with missing one's family or headaches about passing the competency test which the trainees were preparing for. Once, Dewi and I went to the market in the close-by *kampong*—in contrast to the other trainees, due to her status she was not confined to stay in the compound. She had dressed herself up with lipstick and mascara for our little tour and thus clearly contrasted the other trainees who wear neither allowed to wear makeup nor jewelry. Her occupation as a domestic worker in Taiwan had not been her first experience of working abroad, before she had worked in Saudi Arabia. Her husband had got divorced from her, her children stayed with him. I learned that Dewi had experienced quite some hardship in her life. She had lost sight of her sister who had worked as a domestic worker in Malaysia and got married there. Dewi told me that the letters she had sent to her sister stayed unanswered after her marriage. These bitter experiences related to her sister's migration project notwithstanding, Dewi repeatedly went abroad. Remarkably she did not venture abroad to raise funds in order to realize a certain undertaking 'at home,' such as building a house, financing a small business, or investing in her children's education. Rather, it was alienation that drove her to live abroad. She recounted that whenever she comes back to the island of Lombok, where she originates from, she doesn't feel "at home (*kerasan*)" there.¹²⁶ "When I get back I don't know what to do with my time. When I'm back I only spend money, but I cannot earn any. All I do is chat

¹²⁶ See Chapter 7.2 on a discussion of the term *kerasan*.

with my neighbors, but I do not feel at home.” Apparently, she managed to feel comfortable in Taiwan, which in Chapter 7 I have discussed as a skill that the trainees learn in order to be able to endure a contract period with one employer, but not in order to finally loosen emotional ties to the homeland (fieldnotes 11 & 18 May 2014). It is still fresh in my mind how Dewi once shared in the store at the training center how she took her elderly employer in Taiwan in the wheelchair out to the shop where she was singing karaoke with her Indonesian friends—and that her employer enjoyed this! Dewi managed to obtain a remarkable degree of control in her employment relationship.

Dewi’s story is evocative of the “stubbornness” (Mezzadra 2016, 36) of migration, which is not easily captured by the measures of migration management and development initiatives that configure in the migration and development nexus. Migration scholarship has underlined “the multiplicity of subjective desires, hopes, and aspirations that animate the projects migrants pursue with their migrations, which is always in excess of their regulation by governmental regimes” (De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles 2015, 85). Dewi was not the only female worker who I met or heard of and who felt driven to migrate anew for reasons that are shaped by economic necessity, but that at the same time exceed economic necessity. Neither can Dewi’s migration projects be captured by rationalities of economic calculating related to the target of making investments. In the migrant workers sending region Sumberbaru, there was talk about women who couldn’t stand being back in Sumberbaru, who “collided (*kebenturan*)” with their ascribed traditional domestic roles and with the gossip of their neighbors about their enhanced mobility at their home places (fieldnotes 16 Dec 2014). Dewi’s transnational mobility also resonates with the experiences of a row of the tenants of the shelter where I was working from January to June 2018. Despite the unsettling experiences that brought the tenants to the shelter, most of them planned on continuing to work abroad, whether in Hong Kong, Macao, or another destination. Some of them worked abroad until they almost reached their 50s. Their reasons

were manifold: Some were ashamed for not having been successful in continuously sending money home (see also Lindquist 2004, 2009), some felt there was no occupational perspective in their home village, neither as employees nor in businesses of their own, some still had costly projects to complete like funding their children's university degrees, some had been fleeing a violent partner at home and did not want to return, and some felt they had more possibilities to develop themselves and pursue their personal interests in Hong Kong.

Certainly, the discussion of migrants' persistent mobility as self-assertion does not sufficiently portray the wide range of how migrant domestic workers experience their return to Indonesia. As a prerequisite for a more extensive juxtaposition of the official promotion of migrant-entrepreneurship with returned domestic workers' lived experience and aspirations, in the following section, I suggest an agenda for further research to address returned migrant domestic workers' economic activities as well as ways of being and feeling in the world.

Post-migration economies and entrepreneurial subjectivities: A research agenda

With exception of a research carried out by Ratih Pratiwi Anwar and Chan (2016), an ethnographic perspective on the interrelation of returnees' economic livelihoods, their strategies to organize social reproduction, and their economic subjectivities still remains a gap in the research landscape, which not only applies to the case of the Indonesian migration regime (see also Åkesson and Eriksson Baaz 2015, 2). Studies on the use of remittances or on returnees' employment provide quantifiable data, but tell us little about how returnees get to grips with their business ventures (e.g. Balambigai Balakrishnan 2013; Eversole and Shaw 2010). Qualitative studies on returnees' experiences give important insights into their negotiations of social roles, however they are not so insightful about their economic strategies under the current and sharpening condition of the commodification of social security and financialization of everyday

life (e.g. Hasan Gaffar 2010; Koning 2005). A study on economic strategies of returning migrant domestic workers would add to the studies on returnees' business projects from other geographical contexts (e.g. Åkesson 2015, 2016; Eriksson Baaz 2015; Sinatti 2015). These have pointed to the lacking success of such ventures and the obstacles the migrant entrepreneurs face, and thus formulated a critique of the migrants-for-development agenda which doesn't deliver what it promises (Åkesson and Eriksson Baaz 2015, 12). Studying return migrant entrepreneurship in migrant origin villages in Java, Anwar and Chan (2016) provide a differentiated analysis and work out the complex role of social relationships and networks in setting up and managing such start-ups, as well as in accessing critical resources. I suggest to extend Anwar and Chan's work and further inquire into returnees' lived experiences, their economic strategies, their modes of organizing their social reproduction needs as well as their subjectivities, not so much with the aim to assess the effectiveness of the call to engage in business after return, but to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics and tensions that underlie the techniques and rationalities that govern returning migrant domestic workers.

Almost two decades ago, the feminist geographers Katherine Gibson, Lisa Law and Deidre McKay (2001) published their contemplations on business ventures of Hong Kong's Filipina/o/x domestic workers. They discussed the 'Reintegration Programme' of the Hong Kong-based Asian Migrant Centre (AMC), an NGO which in the 1990s played a significant role in supporting the establishment of migrant grassroots organizations in Hong Kong. Their program for returnees aimed at creating "a sustainable economic alternative to systematic cycles of labour migration" by encouraging Filipina/o/x domestic workers to pool their savings and engage in enterprises in their villages of origin (Gibson, Law, and McKay 2001, 378). The AMC's reintegration program shares with Indonesian entrepreneurship seminars the aim of creating economic alternatives to labor migration.

Gibson, Law, and McKay portray (2001, 382) the AMC's program as "an innovative intervention that is beginning to create new desires and enact *new economies*" (emphasis mine). They admit that the program has been criticized as "endeavouring to turn returning migrants into capitalists" and as fostering the incorporation of Philippine society into global capitalist markets. They, however, emphasize that the saving groups of Filipina migrant domestic workers are organized as "community ventures," which "instill new values beyond maximizing profit" (ibid., 380). According to Gibson, Law, and McKay, the saving groups create spaces of independence and self-assertion for their members, as they "place limits on the claims of family members back home upon their income" (ibid., 379). They positively highlight that the migrants involved in the reintegration program engage in collective decisions on distributing surplus that has been generated from their labor abroad back into businesses or in communities (ibid., 380–81).

Gibson, Law, and McKay's emphasis on the diversity of economic strategies, which cannot all be reduced too simply to the maximization of profit, give interesting incentives. As I have indicated above, communal or cooperative forms of managing financial resources have an established tradition in Indonesia. Yet, I would be cautious about conceiving of community ventures as the 'emancipatory Other' of profit-maximizing individual and thus capitalist business ventures. This would not do justice to the ambivalences of community practices. Following Anwar and Chan's (2016, 161) call to move beyond a "primarily theoretical, speculative, and optimistic or skeptical nature of debates on migration and sustainable development," I would urge a more thorough engagement with returned migrant workers' economic ventures and lived experience. By way of comparing two migrant-origin villages, they provide a portrayal of entrepreneurship practices and their contribution to the reinforcement of socio-economic inequalities on the one hand and their contribution to fairer socio-economic distribution on the other (ibid., 159). Amongst other factors, they highlight the functioning of local decision-making structures

and participation as a factor in the establishment of sustainable village-level entrepreneurship practices.

Their approach should be in the spirit of Gibson, who co-authored the explorations of the AMC reintegration program. Elsewhere she called for ethnographic explorations of everyday economic practices. Under the pen-name J.K. Gibson-Graham, which she shared with Julie Graham, she suggests that through “‘thick description’ of diverse economic practices” (2014, 147), the very concept of ‘economy’ can be rethought. According to Gibson-Graham, critical engagement in people’s modes to “survive well” (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013, xiii) as well as to live “healthy lives both materially and psychically” (ibid.), can lay bare the diversity of existing economic practices and challenge dominant economic thinking. With regard to the presumably diverse strategies return migrants make their living with, Gibson-Grahams’ proposition to engage in ethnographic studies of economic practice is stimulating.

While Gibson-Graham’s reflections could provide some points of reference in navigating through an exploration of returned migrant domestic workers’ diverse income-generating strategies, Carla Freeman’s (2014) study of the lived experience of contemporary entrepreneurs in Barbados is illuminating with respect to the context-specific modes of entrepreneurial subjectivities in post-colonial settings. Her engagement in the affective dimensions of Barbadians’ navigation within the “contemporary neoliberal milieu [in which] every aspect of life is becoming subject to regimes flexibility, quests, and commands for self-mastery and self-examination” (ibid., 2) are inspiring regarding the quotidian ‘processing’ of the entrepreneurial imperative including the tensions that emerge as this imperative unfolds in a culturally specific setting.¹²⁷ Engaging in returning migrant domestic workers’ entrepreneurial subjectivities should provide a richer understanding of the context-specific particularities of returnee-entrepreneurialism than

¹²⁷ In the Barbadian case, which is inextricable from the traces of the plantation society, this is a setting where “severe, respectable and controlled conservatism” (Freeman 2014, 8) of the middle classes meet the neoliberal urge on “self-examination, intimacy, psychological reflection, and cultivation” (ibid., 2).

what an observation of the programmatic rhetoric in entrepreneurship seminars could provide. It should also provide insights regarding the tensions that emerge when those parts of society who formally had been defined as lower class are now encouraged to engage in the constitution of a new entrepreneurial class—in a setting where, as was repeatedly discussed throughout the preceding chapters, social status distinctions play an expressly important role.

Having in mind the above outlined conceptual insights, I suggest a closer reading of migrant domestic workers' return to Indonesia for a future research agenda. Questions of interest of such an agenda would imply: How do returned migrant domestic workers configure their economic activities after return? With whom do they engage to realize these? Individually, with their kin, friends or communities? Where do they obtain their resources from? To which ends do they engage in economic activities? To which extent do they engage with formal institutions such as banks and state institutions, to which extent in 'informal' contexts? How do they organize their social reproduction needs? Which obstacles do they experience in realizing their economic ventures? How do they imagine their future, and how do they imagine a life of 'good survival?' How do they act out their new class positions? Which role does the persistent migration and transnational mobility of kin members play in their economic practices? Is there anything similar to a new emergent class of returned migrants and, if so, what is its cultural expression? How do returnees deal with the imperative of behaving as an entrepreneur and cultivating a morally upright behavior, an imperative that figures prominently in the Indonesian entrepreneurship discourse? How are returnees' transformations from waged employee abroad to 'bosses of their own' received by their kin, their friends, and community members? How do returnees' economic activities affect gender roles? How do they deal (emotionally) with the economic pressures that stem from the neoliberal permeation of ever more spheres of life?

8.4 Resumé

In the recent period of Indonesian labor brokerage, the Indonesian government and financial institutions have endeavored to mobilize an entrepreneurial spirit among returning migrant domestic workers by providing entrepreneurship and financial literacy trainings. Interpellations of Indonesian migrant domestic workers as passionate entrepreneurs resort to a wide range of references: economic theory, psychological self-help literature, popular culture, Islamic and Javanese ethics, development discourse as well as gendered prescription of family roles. I did not only encounter a variety of discursive referents that converge in the attempts to mobilize migrant domestic workers' capacities, I also encountered a variety of *ends* of these attempts: encouraging migrant domestic workers' to self-responsibly create their own sources of income in the context of limited employment options in Indonesia and limited provisions of social protection, integrating them in financial markets, upgrading the national (self-)image, and reintegrating returning migrant domestic workers in the gendered moral fabric. The configuration of discourses, techniques, ends, and targets of government shapes a new approach to the brokerage of the Indonesian labor force, which implies rhetoric that announces to cease the brokerage of 'unskilled' labor, thereby upgrading Indonesia's role on the global labor market.

The mobilization of migrants' entrepreneurial inclinations resonates with programs situated in the international migration and development nexus (see Faist and Fauser 2011; Kunz and Schwenken 2014; Raghuram 2009). Authors who have addressed these programs, (Åkesson 2015; M. Bakker 2015a; Kunz and Schwenken 2014; Schwertl 2015) concentrate on the effects they are supposed to have on social and economic development and on gender relations. My analysis extends the intersectional perspective of the existing literature by considering the entanglement of nationalism, gendered and classed anxieties, gendered morality, and biopolitics in the effort to turn migrant domestic workers into entrepreneurs. For, in the case of Indonesian labor brokerage, the entrepreneurship agenda apparently also serves the cause of making the

nation more respectable by supporting migrant domestic workers' advancement in economic, social, and moral terms. Migrant domestic workers' persistent mobilities and their distinct aspirations and perspectives for a better life, however, challenge this agenda. As I have showed, further explorations of returnees' lived economic practices and subjectivities would be needed for an ethnographically grounded understanding of the dynamics between the entrepreneurship agenda, migrant domestic workers' subjectivities, and quests for national dignity.

The previous chapters delineated a wide range of ways of interpellating Indonesian migrant domestic workers, of techniques of governing them, and of subjectivities enacted by domestic workers in Hong Kong. I discerned three contested facets of cultivating Indonesian 'ideal migrants' along their migrant journeys. Based on these ethnographic insights, I now turn to the overall conclusion of this thesis.

9. Conclusion: Biopolitical respectability, migrant politics, and global perspectives on migration regimes

This thesis scrutinizes the desired and lived subjectivities of Indonesian domestic workers who are sent to work in Hong Kong. I approached this topic through a multi-sited ethnography and followed the processes migrant workers from East Java, Indonesia undergo on their migrant journeys: when they leave their villages to register with a recruitment agency to find a job abroad as domestic workers, when after a training of several months they make their way to Hong Kong, and when they accustom themselves to their work and lives in Hong Kong. I examined the migration process by focusing on everyday encounters and routines. In East Java, the training center of the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* recruitment agency was one of my major sites. In Hong Kong, I met migrant domestic workers on their days off, visited placement agencies, and observed activities the Indonesian Consulate offers to migrant workers. I carved out my arguments by documenting and reflecting my own encounters with Indonesian migrants along their journeys, with bureaucrats in Indonesia and Hong Kong, as well as with training instructors, examiners, bankers, and fellow villagers in their places of origin. The ethnographic approach I pursued paid particular attention to the affective dynamics that unfolded in these encounters between our different positionalities and made them productive in the process of data interpretation, analysis, and representation. This approach elicited a nuanced analysis of the multifaceted subjectivities of Indonesian migrant domestic workers, taking into account ambiguities and ambivalence in processes of subject constitution.

Subjectivity as a site of negotiating biopolitical governmentality

I conceptualized the aims and procedures that mobilize and regulate Indonesian domestic workers through the Foucault-inspired notion of biopolitical governmentality (Lorey 2015b, 13; Chapter 3). This framework allowed me to highlight Indonesian labor brokerage and its

incorporated calculated measures aimed at improving the condition of rural populations in general and the migrant populations in particular as open and subtle modes of power. The notion of governmentality implies a nuanced characterization of how the multiplicity of policies, measures, and procedures that constitute Indonesian labor brokerage operate. Characterizing them as biopolitical allows for contextualizing Indonesian labor brokerage in larger projects of managing populations and subpopulations: a) Hong Kong's society and their needs of care in light of the privatization of social reproduction, b) rural populations in Java and certain regions in East Indonesia and their survival in light of capitalist transformations, and c) migrant domestic workers and their capacities of self-protection in light of the precarity of their migration projects. As a term that captures modes of mobilizing the productivity of populations in modernity, the attribute 'biopolitical,' rather than 'neoliberal,' furthermore takes into account the continuities of colonial projects of managing populations and subpopulations that have left their traces in contemporary practices of labor brokerage.

Biopolitical governmentality operates not only on the level of collectives (populations), but also on the level of individuals (subjects); it implies the shaping and formation of certain subjectivities. The subjectivities formed and negotiated throughout the migration process of Indonesian migrant domestic workers stand in the center of this study. I outlined a poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial understanding of subject constitution that draws on and expands Althusser's model of subject constitution as interpellation (Chapter 4). Such an understanding, on the one hand, assumes that modes of perceiving oneself and the world and modes of acting, thinking, and feeling are socially shaped and interspersed by variegated operations of power and orders of knowledge. On the other hand, it assumes that such modes are never fully determined by the constraints and subtle modes of governing that characterize modernity.

Guided by this assumption, I studied how those actors who operate the Indonesian labor migration program—recruitment and placement agents, training instructors, examiners, bureaucrats, and bankers—expect migrant domestic workers to act, think, feel, and perceive themselves and the world. These expectations are communicated through skills the domestic workers are to master and cultivate, through forms of addressing them, or through rituals and standard expectations of behavior and conduct. I also studied the lived subjectivities of Indonesian migrant domestic workers, i.e. their actual modes of behaviour, their everyday experiences, and articulations of their desires and aspirations. My interest lay in the ways Indonesian migrant domestic workers negotiate the variety of subjectivities assigned to them by policy makers, bureaucrats, recruitment agents, training instructors, bankers, and the Indonesian public. I have elaborated that paying attention to how subjectivities are negotiated reveals insights in the modes of governing Indonesian labor migration. My interest in the ambivalences, ambiguities, and tensions of governmentality that not least manifest on the level of lived subjectivity resonates with Foucault's (2007a, 2007b) own conceptualization of modes of governing as an interdynamic relation to individual and collective counter-conduct. It also resonates with the perspectives of scholars promoting ethnographic migration and border regime analysis, who take into account the subjective practices of migrants as a force that influences and thus constitutes contemporary modes of regulating migration and whose approaches were a model in designing this study (e.g. Hess, Kasperek, and Schwertl 2018; Hess and Tsianos 2010; Transit Migration 2007). In order to highlight the incongruence of desired and lived subjectivities as well as the irritations and adaptations migrants' subjective practices can provoke in modes of governing, I chose to speak of "willful" subjectivities (Benz and Schwenken 2005).

Below, I recapitulate the findings of my research. I reiterate the three dispositional formations and subject figures that structured the ethnographic core of the study, and I outline that the techniques of governing migrants and shaping their subjectivities that I observed were

framed by projects of modernizing Indonesian labor migration. Summarizing my research findings, I argue that the contemporary Indonesian labor brokerage is traversed by visions of what I call biopolitical respectability, i.e. desires and attempts to increase the respectability of migrant workers, of labor brokerage, and of the nation while rationalizing the self-governing capacities of migrants and populations in some parts of rural Indonesia. I propose that in negotiating subjectivities and in their quests for better survival and respect, Indonesian migrant domestic workers engage in various forms of class and gender politics from below. Their subjective practices challenge the visions of biopolitical respectability that are nourished by policy makers and operators of the Indonesian labor migration program. I summarize that the techniques of governing migrants and shaping their subjectivities are traversed by predicaments and stand in tension with migrants' politics—a term that points to a distinct notion of politics with which I understand everyday practices, claims to respect and person value that challenge the biopolitical governmentality of labor brokerage. I reflect on the transnational research design and the productivity of an affectively reflexive approach to ethnographic research. This chapter closes by reflecting on the contribution of this thesis to a global perspective on migration regimes and by proposing further possible research agendas.

Three dispositional formations and migrant figures

I discerned three compositions of techniques that shape Indonesian domestic workers' subjectivities with respect to different aspects of Indonesian labor brokerage, which I captured as dispositional formations: a migrant citizenship dispositive, a labor dispositive, and a dispositive of return. The distinction is an analytical one; the logics, problematizations, and sentiments that underlie these three dispositives overlap. The three dispositives structure the ethnographic representation of my research findings, and they correspond to three subject figures, i.e. formations of interpellations, on the bases of which I discussed how Indonesian migrant domestic workers negotiate subjectivities: virtuous female migrant citizens, skillful affective workers,

and passionate entrepreneurs. Importantly, the interpellations addressed at the workers are polyphonic and ambiguous, thereby constituting multi-layered modes of governing migrant workers.

Addressed as devoted worker-citizens (Chapter 6), migrant domestic workers are reminded of their responsibility to work hard and selflessly and bear sacrifices in the name of the welfare of their families, of their duty to properly represent the nation abroad, and to submit to the guidance of the migration apparatus. Thus, they are to subordinate their personal interests to the needs of their families, the development of the nation, and, for the period they work abroad, to their employers. Virtuous worker-citizens compensate for a moral dubiousness that is attached to unaccompanied female mobility. During preparation and abroad, Indonesian migrant domestic workers are to practice restraint: through maintaining Javanese etiquette, and through dressing and behaving decently. Restraints form a crucial aspect of middle-class norms of moral gender behavior, which are integrated in the trainings and programs for migrant domestic workers. In Indonesia, hegemonic norms of female behavior are defined by motherhood, by wifeness, and by women's responsibility for the moral invigoration of society. In the workers' trainings, these norms are employed to remind Indonesian workers of their civic duties to be ideal workers, mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. Yet, the invocation of the workers' restraint oscillates between interpellations of citizens and of servants, who are to cut back on their personal interests and desires, in order to be at their employers' disposal at any time.

As affective workers (Chapter 7), Indonesian domestic workers are trained to perfect their capacities in creating the comfort of their employers and to mobilize techniques of manage their own precariousness and anxieties. Thus, they are supposed to enhance Indonesia's advantage in competing on the global market for care labor. Mobilizing their capacities to manage their own precariousness—I referred to this capacity as biopolitical self-government—guarantees that the workers finish their work contracts successfully, thus securing the flow of

remittances. In a biopolitical manner, labor brokerage and families in sending regions in Indonesia rely on migrant domestic workers' strategies to maintain their emotional integrity. Migrants are trained to perform affective labor upon themselves in light of the daily devaluation of their labor, in light of the impacts of constantly being at their employers' disposal on their well-being, and in light of the experience that their moral integrity is constantly questioned at home, because they are mobile women who do not comply with the prevalent, hegemonic gender ideals. The *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* agency used sophisticated methods from human resources trainings, which are popular in white collar work places, to enhance their trainees' affective labor.

As entrepreneurs (Chapter 8), migrant domestic workers are encouraged to invest in their own businesses and provide for their futures after migration in self-responsibility, without any pension entitlement. They are encouraged to meet policy makers' desires to offer alternatives to the transnational migration and occupation as socially devalued domestic workers, thus restoring the dignity of the nation. Since 2010, financial literacy trainings and entrepreneurship programs have increasingly targeted migrant domestic workers. The training that I witnessed in Hong Kong encouraged entrepreneurial behavior in combination with appeals to national duties and proper, morally upright, female behavior.

All three figures, the techniques of governing and modes of interpellating Indonesian migrant domestic workers are embedded in current attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage (Chapter 5) and, related to these attempts, to enhance the respectability of the workers and the whole nation.

Modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage and protecting workers

The Indonesian government started to significantly engage in facilitating the temporary migration of its labor force since the 1980s, as a strategy to come about unemployment and

generate foreign exchange. Until the end of Suharto's authoritarian government in 1998, Indonesian labor brokerage was dominated by motives of providing cheap labor—pronounced as a necessary measure on the path to national development and prosperity—that were also driving Indonesia's opening to foreign investments and export industries. In addition, and mirroring a notorious feature of Suharto's New Order, labor brokerage was widely known to serve the profit motives of colluding recruitment agencies and members of the bureaucracy. In the aftermath of the democratic reforms after 1998 and of the Asian economic crisis of 1997, transnational migration from Indonesia experienced a watershed. It rapidly boosted in terms of numbers of documented migrants venturing abroad for work, but also attracted strong criticism due to scandalized cases of abuse and maltreatment.

Since the turn of the millennium, the government has reformed its migration program. The aims of these reforms have been directed at two targets: formalizing migration and combat 'illegal' practices of placement and mobility on the one hand and upgrading Indonesia's migrant labor force by channeling them into 'formal' and 'skilled' occupations on the other. Despite elaborate plans to stop the sending of domestic workers abroad, the latter aim has not been achieved, but continues to figure prominently in official rhetoric. Some of the measures of modernizing Indonesian labor brokerage are supposed to protect Indonesian domestic workers from unscrupulous brokers and recruitment agencies as well as from abusive employers. Simultaneously, they are indicative of a quest for upgrading Indonesia's self-image as a respectable labor brokerage state: incorporating high-technological devices of migration management, meeting the standards of international migration management, and being redeemed from the national shame that comes along facilitating the migration of menial workers who are vulnerable to abuse and gender-based violence. This quest for respectability is a quest for being estimable, proper, and presentable shaped by standards of bourgeois female morality, national strength, and progressiveness (Freeman 2014; Mosse 1985; Skeggs 1997; Stoler 2002). It is

saturated with gendered anxieties concerning the capacity to protect Indonesia's mobile women and with classed depreciations of paid domestic labor.

A feminist sensitivity on the gendered division of labor and the devaluation of care labor performed in private households, which are both inscribed in the Indonesian migration regime, enabled my analysis of respectability as the main theme of current agendas that attempt to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage: Unaccompanied female mobility causes unease, while paid domestic work has long figured as the counter-folia of respectability, not only in Indonesia. Characterized by menial labor, dealing with dirt and neediness, and as 'intruders' of middle- and upper-class households, across the globe domestic workers have been devalued and met with suspicion (e.g. B. Anderson 2000; Duffy 2007). As I recapitulate below, the anxieties that afflict the Indonesian public as well as operators and policy makers of labor brokerage are not least triggered by migrants' subjective and willful ways of coping and survival, and of their modes of seeking respect, self-value, and better conditions of working and living.

Visions of biopolitical respectability

Visions of enhancing the respectability of the Indonesian nation, of the recruitment of Indonesian migrant workers, and of Indonesia's migrant labor force itself weave through the three dispositional formations of governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers. How respectability was envisioned more precisely, however, varied depending on the extent to which respective actors profited from the continuation of brokering domestic workers. Recruitment agents and bureaucrats put emphasis on the cultivation of migrants' civic duties of moral behavior and carrying the good name of Indonesia abroad; they were eager to appear as modern and upright by applying up-to-date human resources management training methods; bureaucrats and bankers presented entrepreneurship as the path to an honorable future for dubious 'unskilled' and menial domestic workers. These visions of respectability are closely related to techniques of governing and managing the conditions of rural populations in Java and Eastern

Indonesia, the needs of Hong Kong's urban population, and the productivity of the Indonesian migrant labor force. They come in line with continuously treating labor brokerage as a solution to manage the living conditions in rural Indonesia through the population's self-responsibility, with treating the regulated import of temporary workers with limited entitlements as a solution for Hong Kong's need of care, with appeals to migrant domestic workers' self-protection in light of their precarity, and with worker control.

In recapitulating the findings of my research, I suggest characterizing the mentioned visions of the future of Indonesian labor brokerage as an imagination of 'biopolitical respectability.' Thus, I emphasize that visions of making the nation, the recruitment of migrant workers, and Indonesia's migrant population itself more estimable, proper, and presentable are entangled with the biopolitical nature of Indonesian labor brokerage. This vision of biopolitical respectability corresponds to a more general quest of Indonesian politicians and the public for national prestige that is paired with a trending trust in expert knowledge and technological solutions to political and economic challenges, and with the strong reference to moral values in public life (see e.g. Aspinall 2016; Jones 2010; Platt 2018; Rudnyckyj 2010). National greatness and dignity also figure prominently in the rhetoric and political dynamics in other countries of the region, such as in Rodrigo Duterte's Philippines, Narendra Modi's India, and Xi Jinping's China. As discussed in a great number of research, the variegated forms of nationalism in the region have also been inextricably linked to gendered narratives about morality on the one hand and modernist economic development on the other (for overviews on research in the region see Mills 2017; Peletz 2012).

My study has shown the ambivalences, limits, paradoxes, and ambiguities of the visions of biopolitical respectability. I cited voices that envisioned a more proper image of migrant domestic workers by raising their skills and proper behavior, and I cited others who envisioned the end of sending domestic workers abroad altogether. I showed that interpellations of migrant

domestic workers as virtuous citizens are undermined by interpellations as servants, as citizen-*Others*. Thus, migrant domestic workers are allocated an uncomfortable place between being expected to carry out the virtuous duties of female citizens while as devalued domestic workers and mobile women they are denied the propriety of dutiful female citizens.

I furthermore showed the limits of the promise of self-government. Up-to-date training methods implied the promise that by perfecting their performance of affective labor—knowing how to love their work, making themselves comfortable, winning their employers’ hearts, and cultivating piety—the workers were in control of their destinies. The invocation of migrant domestic workers’ self-government in fact conceals the fact that live-in arrangements, the two-weeks rule that obliges migrant workers to leave Hong Kong two weeks after the termination of a contract, and the demanding requirements of filing claims with the Hong Kong authorities, put employers in a situation that is conducive of compromising on workers’ rights. Yet, migrants are aware that they are not in control of their work conditions, and they developed alternative modes to cope with their precariatized situation.

Moreover, drawing on Bröckling (2016, 77), I discussed the paradoxical praise of entrepreneurship as a more honorable future for Indonesia’s migrant domestic workers: If all migrant domestic workers became entrepreneurs, none of them would be successful. For entrepreneurship rests on extraordinariness: All migrant domestic workers should be extraordinary to become entrepreneurs. Individually, by their extraordinary ideas and behavior, they could become successful entrepreneurs, but not all of them together.

Pointing out ambiguities, I showed that to some extent, the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* were complicit in facilitating the workers’ individual migration projects, which partly challenged the defining standards of respectability. Although official discourse that presents female labor migration as a matter of social and economic development, everyday discourses reveal a widely known reality that many aspiring migrant domestic workers search

for work abroad because they wish to escape from problematic marriages or from the stigma of being a divorcee. The secluded training centers where migrants are prepared prior to departure hence do not only figure as disciplinary institutions that incite migrants' self-government; *de facto* they also figure as safe houses, or heterotopic spaces. In giving them moral support, the instructors at the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center were complicit in facilitating workers who defied their roles as dutiful wives, and for whom their migration was an escape from patriarchally structured environments. Thus, to some extent, the instructors were involved in migrants' "imperceptible politics" (Stephenson and Papadopoulos 2006, 138), i.e. everyday practices of living and surviving that defy and transform dominant social fabrics (see below).

Contrasting the interpellations of bureaucrats, recruitment and placement agents, policy-makers, and bankers with migrant domestic workers' lived subjectivities, their aspirations, and desires reveals that visions of biopolitical respectability are subject to negotiation. Migrant domestic workers' quests for person-value, their modes of coping and surviving, their mobility, as well as their modes of living national belonging differently, constitute forms of gender and class politics from below that challenge the outlined visions of biopolitical respectability.

Migrant domestic workers' politics

Migrant domestic workers' lived subjectivities constitute an alternative to the respectability that operators and policy-makers of Indonesian labor brokerage wish to achieve. Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers challenge some of the techniques that govern them, and they undermine some of the interpellations addressed at them, thus having repercussions on attempts to modernize Indonesian labor brokerage. I described the counter-conducts that arise from negotiations about migrants' subjectivities as particular gender and class politics from below. These politics are not limited to political actions in the conventional sense as voiced struggles for justice, political participation, or labor rights, neither are they necessarily expressed in what

is conventionally understood as political action—protests, demonstrations, awareness raising, or campaigns. Indonesian migrant domestic workers’ politics encompass quests for person-value and respect, (self-)care as well as the pursuits of personal interests and aspirations within limited spaces for such pursuits. They are articulated through distinct modes of appearance, modes of coping, migrants’ distinct demonstration of national belonging, and migrants’ mobility.

In fact, Hong Kong’s migrant domestic workers are renowned for their vocal protests. After the torture of the domestic worker Erwiana Sulistyaningsih became public in early 2014, for instance, Indonesian domestic worker organizations mobilized thousands of workers to rally on the streets to demand justice (Pomfret 2014). I, however, suggested that migrant workers who, in negotiating their subjectivities, challenge dominant visions of biopolitical respectability are also political. This contrasts views that reserve the attribute ‘political’ for union activities, or social movements engaging in protests and demonstrations (Constable 2007, 206). In studying social change through the dispersed, everyday acts of ordinary people in the West Asia and North Africa, sociologist Asef Bayat (2013) has called such politics, which are not organized in labor and trade unions, student organizations or political parties, “social nonmovements.” The ‘ordinary people’ of his study are unemployed people in informal economies, urban poor appropriating public space for informal housing, women taking part in public life through neighborhood activities, and youth seeking fun in light of restricted routines (*ibid.*, 4). Being sympathetic to Bayat’s criticism of the Eurocentrism that is implied in considering only formalized social movements as political, I acknowledged the variety of modes through which migrant domestic workers challenge and undermine the techniques that govern them as gender and class politics, although these are not necessarily articulated as explicit demands for justice, social and political rights, and participation. In the preceding chapters I outlined that these politics can be public or imperceptible, explicit or implicit.

The *first* form of migrant domestic workers' politics that I would like to recapitulate here is characterized by its public nature, whereas it doesn't contain any explicit political demand. Through their extravagant outward appearance—eye-catching hairstyles and glamorous outfits—migrant domestic workers seek person-value and 'dis-identify' with the devaluation of their occupation as domestic workers as derogatory. As they told me, their outward appearance is meaningful for them because it allows them to transform from 'servants' into 'stars.' Importantly, this disidentification, a term used by Rancière (1992) and Skeggs (2016) to describe the political moment in subjects' refusal to accept subject positions allotted to them and in claiming person-value, does not (necessarily) mean that migrant domestic workers attempt to find occupations other than being a migrant domestic worker. Many of them do not see any other alternative when considering their 'lacking' of any certified qualification. Through engaging in communities with fellow workers and cultivating practices of coping together, migrant domestic workers endure the devaluation of their occupation and hardship on their own terms. Being with fellow workers, sharing sorrows and laughter, engaging in a multitude of creative and playful practices, such as music, dance, theater, and writing, Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong experience relief from everyday tension and find resources to carry on, thus coping in modes that are alternative to the restraint and discipline they are taught during their preparation prior to departure. Through their appearance, migrant domestic workers stage themselves as stars, and through cultivating creative practice, they turn into artists, thus claiming subject positions that are not allotted to them in dominant interpellations. These everyday practices in the quest for person-value and emotional integrity point to lived alternatives to the standards of being estimable, of self-presentation, and propriety that official discourse in Indonesia promotes. Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers challenge visions of biopolitical respectability as they disrupt the imperative to practice restraint, and as they represent the Indonesian nation on the international stage (i.e. public space in Hong Kong) in their distinct

ways. Due to their live-in work arrangements, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong do not have any private space to pursue their personal interests. They necessarily enact willful subjectivities in public space, and since the great majority of domestic workers have their day off on Sunday, they enact these subjectivities as a large collectivity. Since these enactments are expressions of their refusal to identify with the class-based devaluation of their occupation as menial labor, I highlighted the class dimension of these politics articulated in migrant domestic workers' enactment of willful subjectivities.

It could be objected that granting migrants the time and space to live out their claims of respect and self-value and to engage in distinct modes of coping once a week, on Sundays, is a form of appeasement. This would mean that, by expressing their subjectivities and pursuing their personal interests on Sundays, the workers even strengthen the status quo, rather than challenging biopolitical governmentality. It could be argued that since these practices support their resilience and endurance as cheap and flexible labor force, they themselves perpetuate the exploitation of their labor-power and emotional resources. Such an objection would resonate with Terry Eagleton's (1981, 148) critique of Michael Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque as a destabilizing force to reverse power structures. Bakhtin claimed a liberating potential of the historical carnivals in Medieval Europe and highlighted that the—temporal—loss of control over the revelers experienced by the church and the state during carnival (Buchanan 2010). Eagleton (1981, 148) objects Bakhtin's claim and points out that the carnivals were a "licensed" transgression at best. In fact, my aim is not to ascribe migrant domestic workers an outstandingly critical potential to reverse the structures that perpetuate their exploitation and devaluation. My point is that migrants' politics are struggles on various fronts; these struggles mirror intersectional relations of power that permeate migrants' lives (for a similar perspective on migrants' political subjectivities see Schwiertz 2019, 83). Their lived subjectivities must not only be considered in relation to their employers and Hong Kong migration and labor policies,

but also in relation to the social fabrics and policies in Indonesia. As I show below, it is exactly migrants' outward appearance—as a symbol for their recalcitrant behavior—that triggers anxieties of bureaucrats and fellow country people, thus pointing to the political charge of migrants' lived subjectivities.

A *second* form of migrants' politics that I depicted is public and explicit, in the sense that it was an explicit public event, but not a classic protest or demonstration: I discussed how in an “act of citizenship” (Isin 2008), migrant domestic workers deliberately occupied national symbols when they celebrated the flag ceremony on Indonesian Independence Day 2014 and staged an alternative mode of enacting the national ritual. In juxtaposition to the regulated and exclusive celebration of the ceremony at the Indonesian Consulate, they demonstrated an understanding of national belonging and citizenship that is inclusive of their diverse subjectivities, even though these are repeatedly depicted as deviant, un-Indonesian, and immoral. In their citations of egalitarian motifs of the anti-colonial struggle, they repoliticized the symbolic meaning of the nationalist ritual. Bringing back the liberating aspect of Indonesian nationalism, they challenged infantilizing interpellations of migrant citizenship and class-based notions of national representation that tend to exclude lower class, migrant domestic workers.

As a *third* form of migrants' politics I discussed Indonesian migrant domestic workers' willful mobility. Again a subtle, not explicit form of politics, drawing on Stephenson and Papadopulos (2006, 138), migrants' mobility can be read as an “imperceptible politics,” which do not occur in public space. Yet, these politics disrupt the dominant social fabrics and hint at alternative social relations. As anecdotal evidence suggests, migrant domestic workers make use of their transnational mobility to leave patriarchal village surroundings and problematic marriages. Labor market mobility, i.e. attempts to arrange employment independently from the grip of agencies, is furthermore a desired mode of withstanding unbearable working conditions.

The domestic workers I studied with reminded me that their work can imply difficult, unbearable emotional struggles. Migrant domestic workers' attempts to arrange their employment independently challenges a central tenet migrant domestic workers are inculcated with during their preparation prior to departure: that a migrant's success is tantamount to withstanding the temptation to break the work contract (Killias 2010, 2018, 28). They also negotiate the imperative to consider their migration projects as the devotional act of a wife. Migrant domestic workers' persistent transnational mobilities in pursuit of personal aspirations defy the vision of a respectable future without domestic worker migration. Their desires to make use of labor market mobility, and their defying of appeals to endure difficult working conditions through restraint and managing their affects and emotions, are reminiscent of local domestic workers who used to organize their placements independently from agencies. Formerly, the Chinese *amahs*, domestic workers who until the 1970s dominated paid domestic work in Hong Kong, organized themselves in sisterhoods and obtained a considerable degree of bargaining power towards their employers.

By discussing migrant domestic workers' lived subjectivities through the lens of public and imperceptible as well as of explicit and more implicit forms of politics, I do not aim at disregarding the economic, gendered, classed, and racialized constraints of migrants' agency. The workers I studied with often reminded me emphatically of the fact that their mobilities are a result of economic pressures. Neither do I aim at depicting their lived subjectivities in essentially agonistic terms of 'resistance.' I specify migrants' politics as quests for person-value—drawing on the ethnographer Skeggs—and modes of coping and surviving and situate them in multiple power relations (i.e. employment relations in Hong Kong, the transnational relations between the Indonesian state and its citizens, or their “differential inclusion” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 159) in Hong Kong society). Thus, I insist on a nuanced notion of politics that is open for ambiguity, which also accounts for the implication of all politics in

intersectional relations of power, privilege, and exclusion. All politics bear the potential of exclusion of those who are defined as *Others* within those politics, as postcolonial scholar Dhawan (2015, 12) reminds us.

Instead of depicting the (inter)relations between techniques of governing and modes of interpellating migrant domestic workers on the one hand and migrants' (resistant, emancipatory) lived subjectivities on the other as a binary opposition, I spoke more carefully of fields of tensions that are not necessarily openly antagonistic. In the following section, I reflect on the fields of tensions between migrants' lived subjectivities, techniques of governing, interpellations, and visions of biopolitical respectability.

Fields of tension

I suggest that migrant domestic workers' politics provoke reactions, and that the visions of biopolitical respectability need to be understood, not least, as reactions to these politics, thus constituting fields of tensions. Everyday discourses circling among bureaucrats, villagers, recruitment agents, bankers, and migrant workers themselves that problematize migrant domestic workers' outward appearance and same-sex relations are a case in point. As I have discussed, migrant workers' extravagant appearance and intimate relationships trigger unease and discomfort. Rather than being recognized as claims to person-value in light of classed and ethnicized devaluation, dyed hair, high-heel shoes, and being *lesbi* are perceived as uncanny, un-Indonesian, unnatural and dangerous to Indonesians' family lives and hegemonic gender norms. I suggest reading the attempts to enhance the respectability of Indonesian labor brokerage as a certain mode of dealing with the negative headlines and related sentiments of national shame caused by cases of abuse migrant domestic workers experience abroad, as has been suggested by other scholars (e.g. Killias 2018, 49), but, importantly, also as a reaction to migrant domestic

workers' alternative demonstrations of representing the Indonesian nation and their claims of subject positions they are not supposed to inhabit.

As mentioned, the attempts to enhance migrants' respectability come in various forms: by reminding migrant workers' of their moral duty as citizens to keep up Indonesia's good name, by upgrading Indonesia's labor force through channeling them into caring jobs that are recognized as 'skilled' labor, by encouraging them to invest in entrepreneurial businesses as the honorable alternative to the occupation as domestic workers. The occupation as live-in domestic worker entails an invisibility of the workers during weekdays, as much as it entails an enormous visibility of domestic workers on Sundays. Discussing the case of Filipina/o/x health workers in Singapore, Amrith (2017, 188) juxtaposes this visibility of migrant domestic workers with the invisibility of 'skilled' health workers who work in shifts and live in shared flats. Her study indicates that the sentiments of shame that drive desires for more respectable futures of labor brokerage states such as the Philippines and Indonesia are not least a reaction to the visibility of lower-class domestic workers, and their politics, in the public sphere of their destinations.

The above outlined proposition to read the desire to enhance migrant domestic workers' respectability on the one hand and anxieties about their appearance and same-sex relationship on the other implies the argument that migrant domestic workers' class and gender politics trigger subtle tensions, which are not articulated as open conflict. This argument resonates with Homi Bhabha's (1994, 72–74) consideration of colonial power and his interpretation of the colonizers' anxieties, fantasies, and myths. These, Bhabha argues, indicate the contradictions which the colonizers find themselves in and, hence, the fragility of their power (*ibid.*; see also

Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 222–23).¹²⁸ Along with anthropological research of postcolonial and postauthoritarian states (Aretxaga 2003, 2008; Good et al. 2008), I thus attended to the affectivity of state conduct (see also Slaby and Bens 2019).

In addition to the field of tension between visions of biopolitical respectability, sentiments of shame, and the visibility of migrants' staging of their lived subjectivities, I discern a refinement in the techniques of governing that can be tied to migrants' willful mobilities. In contrast to earlier observations of Indonesian training centers that highlighted the disciplinary techniques of controlling migrant domestic workers (Killias 2018; Rudnycky 2004; Wee and Sim 2004), I witnessed the proliferation of refined techniques of governing. At the *Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara* training center, in contrast, instructors employed enjoyable and playful methods that speak to the trainees' affective experience. Thereby, they incite the trainees to cultivate technologies of the self through performing affective labor upon the self. Entrepreneurship trainings for migrant workers also hire motivation trainers to deliver skillfully performed testimonies of successful entrepreneurial behavior, making use of popular culture that is also enjoyed by migrant domestic workers, in order to stimulate their entrepreneurial inclinations. In addition to being disciplined or coerced, migrants are incited, encouraged and invited to affectively work upon themselves, manage their impulses, and steer their desires towards entrepreneurial behavior. I suggest that these refined methods of arousing migrants' self-governing capacities are, though not exclusively, reactions to migrants' recalcitrant behaviors, as much as they appropriate elements of migrant domestic workers' capacities of coping and the popular culture consumed by Indonesia's lower classes. This refinement of governing thus points to an interdynamic relationship between migrants and the migration apparatus.

¹²⁸ For reiterations of colonial modes of government in postcolonial Indonesia see Pemberton 1994; Philpott 2000.

Considering migrants' lived subjectivities as one factor that reverberates with techniques of governing migrants and their mobility, is in accordance with the perspectives of ethnographic migration and border regime analyses, which put emphasis on the transformative force of migrants' everyday practices and with Foucauldian perspectives on migration politics, and which take into account the dynamics and fragility of the government of migration. As mentioned, I attempted to be careful not to reduce the dynamics of governing migration to a binary antagonism between migrants and the agents that control them. My terminological choice to speak of fields of tensions was inspired by Stoler and Frank Cooper's (2007a, 8, 2007b, ix) endeavor to overcome static conceptions of the dynamic and ambiguous relations between and among colonizers and the colonized in their edited volume *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a bourgeois world*. Speaking of fields of tensions allows me to acknowledge a variety of factors that are involved in the dynamics of the biopolitical governmentality of Indonesian labor brokerage, and it allows me to take into account ambivalent positions in the interstices between control and complicity, such as those of the training instructors, which I mentioned above. Eventually, describing the Indonesian migration regime as traversed by fields of tensions allows for acknowledging the predicaments those responsible for labor brokerage face when they promote the migration of their female labor force, as women's unaccompanied mobility contradicts widely accepted norms of female behavior, while alternatives to migration as a source of survival for rural societies in some parts of Indonesia have not been achieved.

Transnational and affective migration research

The transnational design of this study was decisive in discerning the multifaceted nature of the fields of tensions that constitute the Indonesian labor brokerage. If I had done research only in Indonesia, or only in Hong Kong, I would not have been able to juxtapose articulations of the migrants' lived subjectivities with techniques of governing and modes of interpellating

them at different sites of the migration process. For instance, having done research in Hong Kong only, I would not have been able to relate migrants' distinct politics of appearance and coping to bureaucrats' and public anxieties concerning the social transformations in Indonesia that are triggered off by women's transnational mobility. Having done research in Indonesia only, in turn, could have made me overlook the class dimension of migrants' distinct looks and modes of coping. It was the workers in Hong Kong who demonstrated and explained in their own terms that they were claiming class positions that were not allotted to them. The existing literature on the moralizing discourses on Indonesian migrant domestic workers' willful behavior (e.g. Chan 2017; Platt 2018) is inclined to highlight how (returned) Indonesian domestic workers, family members, neighbors, politicians, and the public negotiate norms of gendered behavior. Yet, they tend to overlook migrant domestic workers' experience as a class of menial labor that is largely devalued in Indonesia and in migrants' destinations.

I believe that the ethnographic disposition to engage in a multiplicity of complex field encounters enabled me to carve out the subtleties, ambivalences, and ambiguities that characterize the modes of governing and migrants' politics that have been described in this thesis. As part of the research project *The Researchers' Affects*, which developed tools to document affective experience during fieldwork and which explored how to make field emotions epistemologically productive, I paid attention to my own emotions as they unfolded in the dynamic processes of field encounters (Chapter 2). Elsewhere, my colleagues and I (Stodulka, Dinkelaker, and Thajib 2019; Thajib, Dinkelaker, and Stodulka 2019) have argued that being attentive to the affective dynamics in the field—although these can be difficult to grasp and are at times unsettling, or they seem irrelevant—can enhance researchers' sensitivity to the nuances of (power) relations in the field. For reasons of better readability of the text, I did not consistently explicate the reflexivity that was encouraged by documenting my field emotions. Yet, this reflexivity pushed me in taking seriously the nuances that are implied in negotiations about

Indonesian domestic workers' subjectivities. For instance, I was able to translate the ambivalent feelings I experienced towards the instructors at the training center into a more nuanced and multifaceted depiction of their role within governing Indonesian migrant domestic workers. As I showed, as much as they were involved in refined modes of increasing migrant domestic workers' capacities to meet the aims of biopolitical governmentality, they were complicit in enabling some migrants to escape the gendered violence (structural, symbolic, and also physical) they experienced in Indonesia; they gave moral support and equipped the trainees with the necessary skills to realize their willful migration projects.

Global perspectives on migration regimes

Critical migration scholars have repeatedly stated the importance of “provincializing” (Chakrabarty 2007) scholarship on migration regimes and governmentality, i.e. the importance of questioning the universality of analytical categories that actually reflect particular historical European experience. Acknowledging the necessity to ‘de-center’ even critical migration studies, they have identified a desideratum in incorporating perspectives beyond the North American and European context (De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles 2015, 60; Killias 2018, 13; Mezzadra 2010; Walters 2015, 11). By examining a sending state in the Global South, this study provides a global perspective to the sociology of migration and a transnational approach to anthropological research dedicated to studying ‘the state.’

I have made use of the perspective of ethnographic migration and border regime research and the vocabularies of governmentality studies and subject constitution to approach Indonesian labor brokerage. I suggest that the main contribution of the study for a global perspective on migration regime research is its focus on how sending states in the Global South negotiate the social transformations corresponding with the contemporary transnational migration of female domestic workers. I suggest that ‘negotiating respect(ability)’—the title of this thesis—captures the specifics of negotiating such transformations in a sending state of the

Global South. There are commonalities with current contentions of nationalist conceptions of belonging in Europe and North America, where notions of modernity, progress, and the protection of women also play a pivotal role. Yet, Indonesia's quest for respectability that manifests in cultivating an image of a modern and morally upright nation points to the global hierarchies in which these quests take place. Labor brokerage states seek for dignity within a global order where they function as providers of flexible, cheap and disposable labor that sustain the "imperial modes of living" of (part of) the societies of destination countries (Brand and Wissen 2018).

From a global perspective on migration regimes and governmentality, it is remarkable that certain techniques of governing and knowledge formations have 'traveled' to the sending state Indonesia: Human resources management tools have traveled from the U.S., entrepreneurship and banking trainings seem to have traveled from the Mexico-U.S. migration corridor, the 'combat' against illegal migration and trafficking has made its way via international organizations, and contemporary Islamic discourses have traveled from Saudi Arabia. As I discussed, these techniques, knowledge formations, and sentiments liaise with context-related forms of knowledge and power. For instance, transnationally travelled human resources management methods and entrepreneurship trainings coalesce with Javanese cultural knowledge of deference and restraint, and with the nationalist and anti-colonial rejection of being a 'nation of *coolies*.' Throughout this thesis, I also pointed out the embeddedness of current techniques of governing, sentiments, and modes of interpellating migrant domestic workers in colonial histories and Indonesia's authoritarian past. Hence, the Indonesian migration regime can be understood as a conglomerate of transnational, context-specific, present-day, and historical practices aligning with contested meshworks of knowledge and sentiments.

I suggest highlighting two epistemological gains from studying Indonesian labor brokerage through a migration regime perspective: *Firstly*, the study suggests that in contexts outside the Euro-Atlantic framework, the governing of migration needs to be understood in

spatialities beyond borders. Images that represent the “border spectacles,” (De Genova 2013) i.e. the performance of bordering practices as the central modes of governing migrants, impose the concept of the border regime in research on the European and the North-American context. By means of the cases of China and Indonesia, Xiang and Lindquist (2014) provide the concept of ‘migration infrastructure’ as an alternative to understand the particular shapes that transnational migrations can take. Migrant infrastructure captures the variety of actors involved in governing labor migrants in Asia. Migration infrastructure not only governs migrants’ graduated access to places abroad, graduated rights and their precarious status. It mobilizes labor force, certain skills and cultivates migrant citizenship. Rather than engaging in notions of a border regime, employing the concept of an ‘infrastructure regime’ consisting of regulatory, commercial, technological, humanitarian, and social dimensions (ibid., 124), fosters an ethnographically grounded understanding of transnational migration. During my transnational journey of tracing the migration process of migrant domestic workers and the production of migrant subjectivities, I encountered and theorized on such infrastructural dimensions: in the form of actors, discourses, techniques, rationalities, and sentiments. Interestingly, Walters (2015, 9) suggests that research on the European migration and border regime would as well profit from an extended attention beyond the operation of borders on infrastructures or routes. Along with Xiang and Lindquist (2014, 143) I propose to ‘import’ such frameworks to the study of European contexts. In an extension to previous work, the thesis contributes a theoretical and methodological perspective to study the entangled, multiple markers of hierarchy (gender, class, ethnicity, race, occupation, level of qualification) inscribed and negotiated in infrastructure regimes, which are particularly salient in the conflicting policies of brokering domestic workers. This perspective strengthens intersectional approaches to migration regimes more generally (see e.g. Neuhauser, Hess, and Schwenken 2016; Schwenken 2018b), since such approaches have been recognized as “previously painfully absent” from this field of study (Rass

and Wolff 2018, 39). *Secondly*, the thesis suggests acknowledging claims and struggles that are not captured with conventional definitions of politics as claims to justice, political participation, and labor rights. I propose that beyond the context of transnational migration from Indonesia to Hong Kong, it seems promising to develop a sensitivity to migrants' politics that stem from quests for person-value, respect, spaces for the pursuit of personal interests, through practices of (self-)care and endurance, to study the fields of tension in which these politics are situated.

Considering the findings of this thesis relevant beyond the particular case of Indonesian brokerage, the identification of biopolitical respectability as the lynchpin of envisioning the future of Indonesian labor brokerage calls for a number of further studies: *Firstly*, there is still a wide variety of Indonesian migrant workers' lived subjectivities which I could not capture exhaustively. Especially, studies that address the distinct cultivation of piety among Hong Kong's migrant domestic workers in relation to visions of biopolitical respectability and experiences of precarity would be desirable. *Secondly*, as I have outlined, further research on (post-)migration economies in rural sending areas remains a scholarly desideratum to close migration circuits, pathways, and trajectories. In light of the increase of financial literacy trainings and entrepreneurship programs for Indonesian migrant domestic workers, it is desirable to complement research with migrants' economic practices once back in Indonesia. *Thirdly*, this desideratum could be linked to a broader perspective on migrant domestic workers' aging and lives as retirees (Amrith 2019). *Fourthly*, studies that scrutinize the interpellations and subjectivities that arise from other formations of Indonesian labor brokerage, such as (male dominated) seafarers' migration, nurses' migration and so-called high-skilled migration, would complement research on the gendered visions of biopolitical respectability for an envisaged future of Indonesian labor brokerage.

I hope that any further engagement with migrants' respect(ability) can draw on the multifaceted nature of aspirations, efforts, and agency that all protagonists of this study made

visible. They taught me that negotiations about migrants' conditions of working and living are always multidimensional, contested, and touch upon issues that significantly matter for all involved actors, stakeholders, organizations, and institutions.

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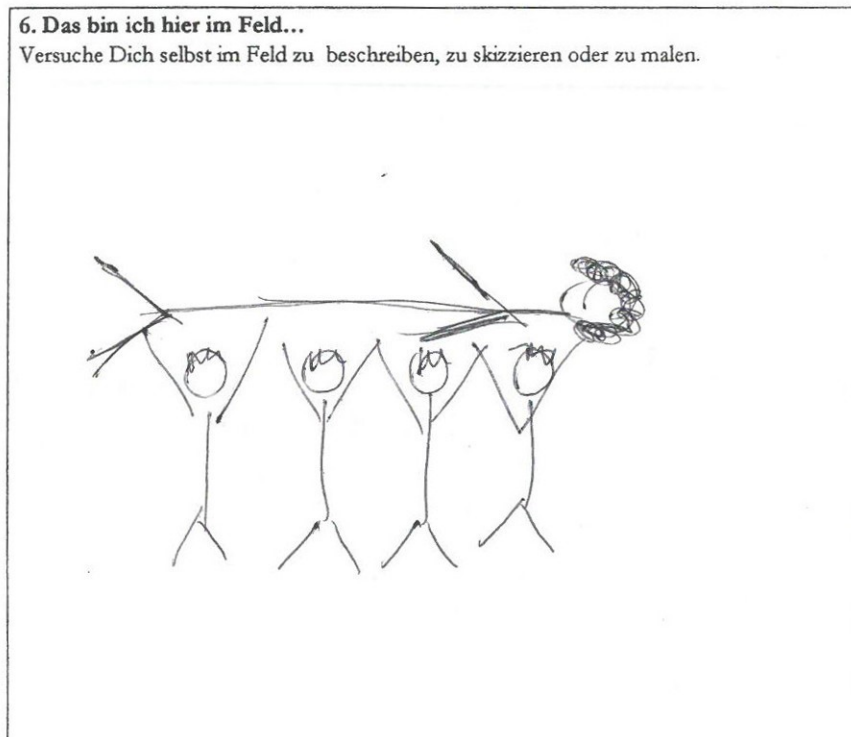
Appendices

Appendix A: Emotion Diary template

Emotion Diary	
Date:	Time:
Where are you now?	
Who else is here:	
1. What do I have to write down here and now?	
2. What feeling describes me best today? Can you describe why?	
3. Is that feeling related to a particular situation person? When did that happen? Can you describe it briefly?	
4. Is there anything particular you would like to do about it?	
5. Who or what surprised or impressed me today?	
6. This is me in the field. Try to describe or sketch yourself.	
7. Will I reach my own research targets? <input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no	
8. Who or what helps me to reach them?	
9. What or who inhibits me?	
10. What am I longing for?	
11. What I will tomorrow is...	

Open questions of the emotion diary. I used a German version of the template.

Appendix B: Exemplary entry in the emotion diary



Entry in my emotion diary that depicts the feeling of gratitude for “being carried” by friends and contacts who supported me during fieldwork with their knowledge, logistical support and care, thus soothing my tenseness

Appendix C: Self-report questionnaire

Questionnaire

Date:

Hour:

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. Indicate to what extent you felt this way today.

	Very Slightly or Not at All	A Little	Moderately	Quite a Bit	Extremely
Interested	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excited	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Upset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guilty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hostile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proud	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irritable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alert	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ashamed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inspired	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nervous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determined	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attentive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jittery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Active	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afraid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Questionnaire based on the Positive and Negative Affect Scale, tool developed in behavioral psychology and claims to cover generalized and comparable emotion states (D. Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988). I used the standardized German version of the PANAS scale (see Krohne et al. 1996).

Appendix D: Competency certificate of a migrant worker candidate departing to Singapore

No	Code of Competency Unit	Title of Competency Unit
1	TLR.LY01.001.01	Development of emotional maturity and work motivation <i>Mengembangkan kematangan emosi dan motivasi kerja</i>
2	TLR.LY01.002.01	Application of occupational health and safety in the household <i>Menerapkan prosedur K3 di rumah tangga</i>
3	TLR.LY01.003.01	Developing cooperation in the household environment <i>Mengembangkan kerjasama dalam lingkungan rumah tangga</i>
4	TLR.LG02.001.01	Cleaning the household <i>Membersihkan rumah tangga</i>
5	TLR.LG02.003.01	Cleaning the bathroom <i>Membersihkan kamar mandi</i>
6	TLR.LG02.004.01	Cleaning up and making bed <i>Membersihkan dan merapikan tempat tidur</i>
7	TLR.LL02.001.01	Taking care of clothes and textiles of the household <i>Merawat pakaian dan lena rumah tangga</i>
8	PAR.HT02.117.01	Preparing and cooking food <i>Menyiapkan dan membuat makanan</i>
9	TLR.LB02.005.01	Preparing drinks <i>Membuat minuman</i>
10	TLR.LB02.0006.01	Serving food and drinks <i>Mengidangkan makanan dan minuman</i>
11	TLR.RB02.002.01	Prepare and feed baby foods <i>Menyiapkan dan memberi makan/minum bayi</i>
12	TLR.RB02.006.01	Looking after and nurturing a baby <i>Menjaga dan mengasuh bayi</i>
13	TLR.RA02.001.01	Training of children and environmental hygienics <i>Melatih kebersihan anak dan lingkungan</i>
14	TLR.RB02.006.01	Stimulating children's growth <i>Menstimulasi tumbuh kembang pada anak</i>
15	TLR.RL02.005.01	Prepare food/drinks and feed elderly <i>Menyiapkan dan memberi makan/minum lansia</i>
16	TLR.RL02.006.01	Accompany elderly <i>Menemani lansia</i>
17	TLR.BI03.001.01	Talking to the employer in English <i>Berbicara dengan majikan menggunakan Bahasa Inggris</i>
18	TLR.BI03.002.01	Communicating on the telephone in English <i>Berkomunikasi di telepon menggunakan Bahasa Inggris</i>

19	RLR.BI03.003.01	Receiving a guest in English <i>Menerima tamu menggunakan Bahasa Inggris</i>
20	TLR.BI03.004.01	Talking outside the house in English <i>Berbicara di luar rumah menggunakan Bahasa Inggris</i>
21	TLR.PA03.001.01	Briefing on work conditions and risks <i>Membekali diri tentang kondisi kerja dan resiko bahaya</i>
22	TLR.PA03.002.01	Briefing on remittances, travel documents and the work contract <i>Membekali diri tentang remitensi, dokumen diri perjalanan dan perjanjian kerja</i>

List of 'competency units' for the field of work (*bidang kerja*) of housekeeping for trainees with the destination Singapore; translation mine.

Appendix E: BTM's song text at the Indonesian Migrant Workers' League's pro-test-song contest in Victoria Park in July 2014: "Opening of the heart of an Indonesian migrant worker (Curahan hati seorang BMI)"

* CURAHAN HATI ~~SEORANG~~ BMI * (2) BTM
 SEORANG

Vlahdana --- Da... Dana... Vlahdana...
 Vlahdana --- Dana --- Dana... Na Vlahdana--

Mbixen nulo siramu wes tak arturi
 Rasah lungu nengo anah golek kerjo
 Tapi matmu mbantu keluarga
 Golek ruwek aduhe neng negoro Ciro

Pitung sabi neng PT ra terbang - terbang
 kerrep PKL bahisamu bekepothan
 Neng gone maotkan kerrep entuk komplinan
 Di tongkon terso ora weruh suter tandang

Di interminit akhiru mbalet neng Agen
 Nambah potongan Limang sabi ro bekuwen
 Mebhu mettu Macau aku ro ketesellen
 Durung sistem online mbayar milih sat gajian

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرَ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ ۗ

وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَ لَهُ ۗ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَّالٍ

(QS - ARRA'DHU : 11)

Di mainkan yang ke bua
Aku & sia-sia
Di paku makan daging babi
Dan & larang untuk puasa
Sering aku & hina lagaknya bukan manula

Tan sakti pun & larang
Katanya seperti setan
Pahala bulan Ramadhan
Mijn ke Jalantan
Vital & negeri orang

Sering aku & pukul & terdang dan & mati
+ hanya karena salah bahasa
Tapi Agan dan KJRI hanya & buruh sabar dan tawakal
KJRI amanat bangsa
Tapi tak pernah melindungi rakyat

BMI adalah palitawan devisa negeri
Tapi tak kami selalu & sunati
Tak hentinya terjadi diskriminasi
Mulai K7 KUN, over charging dan sistem online

Hapuskan Hapuskan

Marilah kawan kita berjuang
Merebut hak buruh migrant
Jangan berdiam diri ketika hak kita & dizolimi.

Glossary

<i>BNP2TKI (Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia)</i>	National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers
<i>Ibu</i>	Polite form of address for married women
<i>Jiejie</i>	‘Sister’ (Cantonese), form of address for Cantonese instructors at the <i>Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara</i> training center and staff of Hong Kong based placement agencies
<i>Laotse</i>	‘Master’ (Mandarin), form of address for Mandarin instructors at the <i>Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara</i> training center
<i>Lesbi</i>	Indonesianized term for ‘lesbian’
<i>Mam (for Ma’am)</i>	Form of address for instructors at the <i>Sukses dan Makmur Nusantara</i> training center that reactualizes colonial madam-mistress relations
<i>Mbak</i>	Respectful form of address for young women
<i>New Order</i>	Self-designation of General Suharto’s authoritarian rule of Indonesia (1966-1998), following President Sukarno’s ‘Old Order’
<i>NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur)</i>	East Nusa Tenggara, the southernmost province of Indonesia, sharing borders with the country of East Timor.
<i>Pak</i>	Polite form of address for married men
<i>Popoh</i>	Cantonese term for ‘grandmother’ or an elderly woman
<i>TKI (Tenaga Kerja Indonesia)</i>	Indonesian Overseas Workers
<i>TKW (Tenaga Kerja Wanita)</i>	‘Female overseas worker’ (designation for domestic workers, who are classified as ‘unskilled’ labor)

Tomboi

Indonesian designation for a girl's or a woman's outward appearance and habitus that is culturally coded as masculine behavior