**Mobile Inequality: Remittances and Social Network Centrality in Cambodian Migrant Livelihoods.**

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This article uses evidence from Cambodia to explore the role of remittances in replicating rural inequalities in urban areas. In doing so, it uses a mixed methodology, incorporating social network analysis, household surveys and qualitative interviews, to highlight the role of familial remittance commitments in determining urban migrant livelihoods via their influence on both social and financial resources. It argues that those migrants who are compelled to remit a higher proportion of their salaries behave differently in their destination from those who remit less or none, changing jobs more frequently, but failing to build productive social networks or advance in terms of income or conditions. In this way, remittances constitute a key mechanism by which rural inequalities are structurally replicated in the urban space.

1. **Introduction**

Just as when Kalab (1968: 525) spoke of ‘the great mobility of the Cambodian peasant’ nearly five decades ago, labour migration in the globalised and economically dynamic Cambodia of today is a familial and systematic phenomenon. Even amongst the foreign-owned factories of Phnom Penh’s recent construction boom, the assets and agricultural needs of the distant rural household determine the actions of those who build buildings or sew clothing as if it remained within earshot. These persistent linkages are highly efficient means of distributing resources, minimising risk, and ensuring the long term survival of the family, but the cost of this efficiency is the transmission of inequality from rural to urban areas.

Migrants from the poorest households make burdensome ‘sacrifices’ in the urban space (Lindley, 2009: 1326), eating low quality food, replenishing their clothing rarely, and spending little on attending social events. By contrast, those migrants upon whom remittances and rural dependency are less burdensome enjoy more of the fruits of their income, consuming goods and services and, crucially, becoming more socially involved with other migrants. The linkages produced by social behaviour such as this appear to be one of the means by which wealthier migrants gain access to urban opportunity (Yu and Berryman, 1996), thereby entrenching and deepening patterns of rural inequality in the long term.

Focussing on three neighbouring villages in Krang Youv commune – a development test case famously patronised by Prime Minister Hun Sen (Chim et al., 1998) – and the diaspora of migrants who emerge from there, this paper constitutes an effort to better understand the interaction of social ties such as these with rural and urban society more generally. It does so by employing an eigenvector-based model of social network analysis to explore migrants’ and their household’s social relations within the context of their migrations and household economies, in order to explore how social ties derive from and underpin migrant inequality.

Having grounded the study in the literature and its empirical context, the paper presents data on this theme in three parts, the first of which emphasizes the intra-occupational nature of migrant inequality and how remittances generate and maintain that inequality. Secondly, it will outline the associated network dimension of this relationship: how migrants from rural households with differing incomes behave distinctly in the city and how households which depend more or less on their migrants behave differently in turn. Finally, the inter-relationship of social networks, remittances and livelihoods “advancement” in the urban space will be explored.

1. **Review of Literature and Rationale**

Recent work on the pressures of remittances, and in particular their restrictive role at migrant destinations (e.g. Rigg, 2014; Lindley, 2013, 2009; Anh et al., 2012), builds upon research conducted in a number of inter-related literatures. To a significant degree, however, it derives from analytical frameworks generated within the New Economics of Labour Migration (see e.g. Stark and Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999). One of the key themes to emerge, both directly and indirectly, from this perspective has been the relationship between migration, remittances, and inequality (e.g. Bertoli and Marcheta, 2014; Beyenne, 2014; Combes et al., 2014; De Haas, 2007; McKenzie and Rappaport, 2007; Taylor, 1999; Skeldon, 1997; Stark, 1991) with which this paper is concerned.

Moreover, in elucidating the dynamics of the household, the linked focus on origin and destination provided by the NELM has been complemented by two additional fields of enquiry. The first of these is the household and gendered literature on migration (e.g. Rindfuss et al., 2012; Resurreccion, 2005; Silvey, 2001; Kabeer, 1997) which explores how differing local circumstances interact with household dynamics to produce unique networks spanning rural and urban areas. This recognition of social and cultural feedbacks to ‘the socio-spatial context of migration’ (Silvey, 2001: 43) is a key achievement of the household literature, helping to open paths of enquiry generally little trodden by the mainstream literature on migration and remittances, albeit on a largely qualitative basis.

Building upon the exploration of power dynamics undertaken by the household literature, several studies (Knodel, 2014; Bengtson and Oyama, 2007) have sought to examine the changing intergenerational dynamics of the household under conditions of high migration. As those studies have shown – both globally and in Cambodia specifically (Zimmer, 2013; Hak et al., 2011) – ‘intergenerational support networks have remained intact despite extensive social and economic development’ (Knodel, 2014: 176), highlighting the extent to which migrants remain bound by household obligations despite their spatial removal from the family. Indeed, as Bengston and Oyama (2007: 14) propose, all indications point to ‘continuity in the contract’ between generations.

Nevertheless, with few exceptions, there remains something of a thematic gap between the household and intergenerational literature on migration and qualitative studies on migrant destination livelihoods more generally (e.g. Rigg et al., 2014; Anh, 2012; Derks, 2008), and the quantitative literature on remittances which tends to rely on ‘macro-economic or household survey data’ (Lindley, 2009: 1317). This is a point taken up by Lindley (2009: 1317), who ‘encourages a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, aiming to provide a richer and more holistic account of the remittance process.’ Moreover, as others (e.g. Manderscheid, 2014; Merriman, 2014; D’Andrea, Ciolfi and Gray, 2011) have additionally argued, even when culture has been admitted to the migration literature, it has tended to be in the form of ‘a residual value’ (Levitt 2011: 2) in the migration process, highlighting ‘the need for a more complete theory of migration that incorporates notions of cultural dynamics as they relate to behaviour and societal outcomes’ (Curran and Saguy, 2013: 54).

Indeed, although the mainstream quantitative and mixed methodology literature has dealt both with “social remittances” (Levitt, 1998; Levitt and Llamba-Nieves, 2011; Taylor, 1999) and the cultural “baggage” brought by migrants to the city (Erel, 2010), it has rarely considered these factors as a coherent element within a wider system. Only recently has a return to Mabogunje’s (1970) classic migration systems framework created the theoretical space (e.g. Bakewell, 2013; De Haas, 2010) and empirical evidence (e.g. Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim, 2014) necessary to view social and economic remittances as part of a cogent, systematic whole.

Nevertheless, although the revival of the systems framework is a relatively new development, this is not to suggest that rural-urban networks are themselves are under-researched. On the contrary, the mechanisms and structures by which money and inequality are transferred between sender and destination areas are clearly visible within the literature (e.g. MacKenzie and Rappaport, 2007; Barham and Boucher, 1998), but are nevertheless rarely considered (with the exception of Lindley, 2013; 2009) in the light of their impact on migrants themselves. Instead, commitment to the household, mutual visitations and remittances are viewed as instruments of rural development (Tacoli, 2003; Deschingkar, 2005) and “safety nets” (e.g., Silvey and Elmhurst, 2003; Smith, 1998) throughout the Global South.

By introducing a quantitative element and reducing the scale of analysis to commune level, this study investigates the corollary to such accounts, building upon the ‘under researched’ (Lindley, 2009: 1317) literature on the repercussions of remitting for migrants themselves (e.g. Rigg et al., 2014; Anh, 2012; Lindley, 2013, 2009) to emphasize the constraints imposed upon migrants by themselves and their households. Moreover, it introduces a new dimension facilitated by this reduction in scale: the analysis of migratory social networks within a giving setting and to a specific purpose, as advocated both in the classic network literature (e.g. Granovetter, 1972; Burt, 2001) and more recently (Borgatti and Halgin, 2011; Radil, Flint and Tita, 2010). Indeed, it is a key tenet of network theory – but one curiously excised by much of the social capital literature (e.g. Putnam, 2000; 1993; Woolcock, 2001; Coleman, 1988) – that “the social cannot be construed as a kind of material or domain” (Latour, 2005: 1), but—much like a chemical compound—is inextricably bound up with the environment in which it manifests (Parsons, 2015).

Work on migratory networks has long pursued this type of specificity. However, although there exists a lengthy history of work on the subject (e.g. Curran and Saguy, 2013; McKenzie and Rappaport, 2007; Kuhn, 2003; Coletta and Cullen, 2000; De Haan, 1999; Massey, 1990), it has tended to eschew the analytical tools of network theory in favour of proxy methodologies. The measurement of ‘community migration prevalence’ (McKenzie and Rappaport, 2007: 13) has been a popular tool, for instance, as have the institutionally focussed, universalistic, tools derived from social capital theory (e.g. Garip, 2008; Pieterse, 2003; Palloni et al., 2001; Espinoza and Massey, 1997). Using a more intensive methodology, this study has applied the eigenvector centrality measure of community integration favoured by Bonacich (2007) and Bonacich and Lloyd, 2002) to the study of migration and migrant livelihoods.

In Cambodia, indeed, where empirical work has examined the scale and extent, but rarely the systematic functionality, or meaning of labour migration, such an approach is especially relevant. Although the multi-scalar social implications of the country’s economic development (Springer, 2013a; 2011; Simone, 2008) and the political economic processes related to evictions and resettlement (Brickell, 2014; Connell and Connell, 2014; Springer, 2013b) have received in-depth attention, only a handful of academic studies have emerged on internal migration as a process (e.g. Bylander, 2014, 2013; Lim et al., 2007; Maltoni, 2006) and fewer still have explored the broad social changes under way as a result (e.g. Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim; Derks, 2008; Hughes, 2001).

Thus, the research presented offers three main contributions to the migration literature and beyond. First, the use of eigenvector centrality measurement has been adopted from network theory (e.g. Bonacich 2007; Bonacich and Lloyd 2002) and applied to Cambodian labour migration as a means of quantitatively analyzing migrants’ and their households’ social behaviour. In doing so, it has sought, secondly, to develop the renascent migration systems literature by demonstrating the utility of social network analysis as a means of elucidating the social and economic processes which underpin labour migration. Finally, via the application of this methodology within a systems framework of migration, it adds an additional dimension to the literature on migration and inequality, by emphasizing the synergistic role of social and financial resources (and their corollaries, obligation and debt) in inequality transmission.

1. **Methodology**

The methodology which underpins this study was constructed in response to two separate, but closely related, calls within migration research. First, it has sought to add to the body of methodological innovation associated with the mobilities paradigm (c.f. Sheller and Urry, 2006), which is aimed at exploring how mobility is both driven by and drives the social and cultural context in which it is embedded. In doing so, however, it has heeded Manderscheid’s (2014) and Merriman’s (2014) call to partner such innovation with more traditional methods, in particular qualitative data collection, in order to maximise the insights they are able to provide. Secondly, this research has been motivated by Lindley’s (2009: 1317) call for ‘a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches’ to the study of remittances.

Consequently, the eigenvector based social networks analysis which forms the core of this paper is presented here in conjunction not only with numerous qualitative interviews, but also alongside a relatively small, locally bounded, quantitative data set on household and urban income, remittances, and assets, in order to ground the process of migrating and remitting more fully within the context in which it takes place.

The research conducted under this theoretical remit was obtained during a six month period of fieldwork undertaken in the Krang Youv commune of Kandal province – roughly 50km or an hour and twenty minute drive south of Phnom Penh – between March and August 2013. This period may be divided into two phases: the period March to May, during which quantitative and social network data were collected from the Krang Youv rural fieldsite and the period June to August, when urban migrant interviews and qualitative rural interviews were undertaken.

During the first of these phases, data were collected from three primary fieldsites: the rural commune of Krang Youv in Kandal province close to the Southwestern border with Takaeo which is the key point of origin in methodological terms; the peri-urban garment worker enclave of Set Bou, to the south of Phnom Penh; and in Phnom Penh itself. Following the completion of the first research phase, fieldwork alternated between these sites so as to reduce the impact of the annual planting season on rural interview schedules and the time constraints of migrant workers on urban ones.

In this way, data collection proceeded from an initial rural site, wherein a detailed asset and income profile of 72 households spread across three neighbouring villages – each comprising around 300 households in total. Quantitative interviews across these sites were conducted by a two person research team consisting of a native Khmer speaker and a second researcher, proficient in Khmer, who enumerated responses and offered follow up questions where necessary. Interviewees, who were household heads unless absent for the duration of the research, were selected via a network mapping methodology originating from three initial interviewees, each sited in one of three areas identified during a period of preliminary qualitative fieldwork as being respectively the richer, medium and poorer parts of the local area. Subsequent informants were selected on the basis of their membership of these first informants’ primary, secondary and tertiary social networks.

As such, the network mapping aspect of the methodology was conducted in tandem with the rural asset survey and involved questioning informants on both their informal lending practices (of money, labour and assets); their work related groups within the village; and their “bonds of affection”, i.e. those people from outside their nuclear household whom they felt closest to within the village. These groups were self-selected by respondents in response to the following questions: “which people do you borrow money from, or lend it to?”; “which people do you often work with or talk to about work?”; and, “apart from your family, which people do you feel closest to in the village?”. During the research process, it became apparent that these groups overlapped very significantly, meaning that the economic and social functions tested for by each question tended to be fulfilled by the same close knit group.

Having established the social connections possessed by informants in the study, their geographic location was then ascertained and recorded, and permission obtained for subsequent interview. This process was repeated for secondary informants, and again to discern tertiary networks. The final group of informants (at three degrees of separation from the initial nodes) were interviewed concerning their assets and income only. This final phase of network mapping was undertaken using a questionnaire reduced from that delivered to the first 72 households, at 1 and 2 degrees of separation from the initial 3 nodes. It captured basic income, risk and migration information from a further 79 households, giving a final key data sample of 151 households.

Having collected these data, the results were analyzed using Gephi, a network graph visualization program which facilitates both the visual presentation and statistical analysis of social networks. From the results of informant interviews, a social network map of the study site was generated which provided data on the position of each of the first 72 informants within the social structure of the village. Each household could in this way be assigned an eigenvector centrality score[[1]](#footnote-1) which reflected their centrality to the village network. This score, an algorithm statistically derived from the network map using Gephi is, as Bonacich and Lloyd (2011) explain it, is an appropriate statistic for the measurement of hierarchy because of its analysis not only of personal popularity (i.e. number of times selected), but of the popularity of those whom a person selects.

As such, the eigenvector score – adjusted using a constant to fall between 0 and 1 – is the sum of all connections possessed by a certain node [or individual], after those connections have been weighted to account for the number of linkages *they* possess. In this way, a link to a node with five further connections is worth more than a link to a node with two. Consequently, ‘the eigenvector is an appropriate measure when one believes that actors’ status is determined by those with whom they are in contact’ (Bonacich and Lloyd, 2011: 199)

Once the onset of the planting season had begun to reduce the number of informants available for interview each day, two additional phases of research were instigated in parallel. First, a second phase of qualitative interviews began, in which a third of the 72 primary informants were randomly selected for further semi-structured conversations concerning labour migration and local livelihoods. This was conducted by the same research team as the quantitative phase, although due to the higher level of linguistic nuance required for qualitative research, a greater emphasis was placed on the translations of the native speaking researcher. Although this had the potential to introduce an element of unreliability in the qualitative data, the only partial reliance on translations, together with the long working relationship of the team were viewed as sufficient to mitigate these.

Thereafter, a second additional phase was embarked upon: the “tracking out” of migrants to their urban and peri-urban worksites. This phase of the research process sought to meet and interview all of the migrant members of the 72 households taking part in the rural side of the study. In doing so, phone numbers were obtained from parents, spouses or from the migrants themselves, and permission requested for an initial 20 -40 minute interview – with the option of an additional half hour – at a place in the city chosen by the informant. This primary migrant interview phase comprised questions on the economic dimensions of urban livelihoods and migratory histories, as well as collecting network information on connections within the city.

This relatively short schedule was designed to accommodate the busy schedules of urban workers in Phnom Penh, many of whom preferred to be interviewed close to their workplaces and therefore tended to be constrained by workplace break times or the need to return home. The ability to fit interviews into existing daily schedules in this way meant that all but one of the migrants in the sample agreed to provide quantitative data, giving a base sample of 50 informants and a small data set on income, expenditure and remittances. Moreover, following the first part of the schedule, 20 of the initial 50 agreed to a further half hour of more general qualitative questions regarding their livelihoods and perspectives on the city.

As such, in accordance with the commitment, outlined above, to produce an holistic analysis of remittance behaviour, the methodology employed in this study is a fundamentally intensive rather than extensive one. Consequently, the data presented here should be considered as a representative case study rather than a source of generalizable data on labour migration and remittances. Nevertheless, it is held here that this limitation constitutes part of a necessary shift in focus in migration research towards a greater emphasis on the social impact of labour movement as well as the specific socio-cultural contexts in which it takes place.

1. **Culture, Gender and Obligation: Understanding the Cambodian Migration System**

During the past two decades, labour migration underpinned by rapid and sustained economic growth has transformed the Cambodian economy from one of the world’s poorest (Shatkin, 1998) to one ‘well on its way to achieving middle income status in the near future’ (UNDP, 2013: 1). Political stability – albeit underpinned by ‘crony capitalism’ and neopatrimonial development (Hughes and Un, 2011: 19) – under the three decade prime ministerial incumbent Hun Sen, teamed with an economy structurally adjusted to be one of Asia’s most open (TRAC, 2013) has seen hitherto unprecedented growth, built on a basis of foreign direct investment (Ibid.).

Indeed, notwithstanding the vital supportive and complementary role played by the construction industry during this period, integration into global garment supply chains has lain at the core of Cambodia’s economic transformation. Consequently, whilst twenty years ago, the garment sector was almost non-existent, today it employs at least six hundred thousand workers (ILO, 2015), out of a population of 15 million (World Bank, 2014), alongside numerous workers in complementary occupations such as construction, petty trade, and transportation (Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim, 2014), who have been estimated almost to match the scale of the garment worker population itself (EIC, 2007).

Thus, the dominance of key modern sector industries, coupled with the “demographic dividend” of a young population entering working age (Beyene, 2015) mean that Cambodia is increasingly a country ‘on the move’ (MOP, 2012: 1). Moreover, it is moving overwhelmingly in one direction. The primacy of Phnom Penh as an economic centre (MOP, 2012; Sheng, 2012) has seen it balloon in size in recent years, doubling in size between 2004 and 2012 and now accounting for 1 in 10 Cambodians, where in 1998 the figure stood at 1 in 20 (MOP, 2012). However, despite the macroscopic flow of people from the countryside to urban areas, this process should not be viewed as unidirectional. Rather, this phenomenon of human movement is comprised in large part of far smaller cycles lasting from a mean few weeks in the case of begging migrants (Parsons and Lawreniuk, 2015) to a few months or years in the case of construction and garment workers (Ibid.).

Furthermore, that the average duration of stay in certain migrant dominated areas appears to have declined significantly during the past half decade (Parsons and Lawreniuk, forthcoming) highlights the extent to which rural and urban areas have become interconnected by these complex systems of movement and remittance. They are linked not only by economic imperatives, but also changing patterns of social relations (Kheam and Treleaven, 2013; MOP, 2012; Lim, 2007) and cultural norms (Parsons and Lawreniuk, forthcoming; Czymoniewicz-Klippel, 2011; Elmhirst, 2007) generated in part by the preference for female workers within the dominant garment industry (Cuyvers et al., 2009).

Indeed, as noted by various authors have noted (e.g. Bylander, 2014; 2013; Brickell and Chant, 2010) young women are becoming increasingly important economic agents in rural villages – with both positive and negative implications for their personal livelihoods – whilst structural unemployment amongst young men has been linked to the emergence of groups of groups of gangsters in rural and urban villages (Czymoniewicz-Klippel, 2011; Elmhirst, 2007; Silvey, 2001). Thus, as Derks (2008) has shown, shifting economic norms are negotiating new narratives of gender in Cambodia, though often without loosening their restrictive characteristics, gender continues to underpin access to and behaviour within migrant livelihoods.

**Table 1 Gender ratios of Major Occupations in the Study**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Occupation (N=50) | Male (%) (12) | Female (%) (38) |
| Garment Workers (N=22) | 13.6 | 86.4 |
| Market Traders (N=8) | 12.5 | 87.5 |
| Construction Workers (N=5) | 12.5 | 87.5 |
| Mechanics (N=3) | 100 | 0 |
| All Krang Youv Migrants (N=50) | 38 | 62 |

**Table 2 Comparative Data from Large Scale Study on Teuk Thla (Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim, 2014)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Occupation (N=1642) | Male (%) | Female (%) |
| Garment Workers | 89.7 | 10.3 |
| Market Traders | 14.3 | 85.7 |
| Construction Workers | 95.5 | 4.5 |
| Mechanics | 100 | 0 |
| All Teuk Thla Migrants | 30.8 | 69.2 |

As tables 1 and 2 – included here for comparative purposes due to the small number of migrants from Krang Youv working in certain occupations – show, for instance, both migration from Krang Youv specifically and to large migrant enclaves such as Teuk Thla more generally, is dominated by women. However, female migrants are not equally represented across occupations. Rather, gender biases associated with certain jobs appear to strongly constrain migrants’ opportunities and therefore both the incidence and form of their migration.

Similarly, household socioeconomic factors play a key role in the migration process. For example, although the trends observed in large scale surveys (e.g. MOP, 2012; Lim, 2007) are enlightening, the assumption, underpinned by the difficult conditions faced by many migrant workers, that migratory networks are dominated by poorer rural households, but have expanded to include richer ones (Lim, 2007) vastly underplays the complexity of the situation. Rather than constituting merely an addition to household livelihoods portfolios, the declining viability of traditional agriculture due to climactic uncertainty and rising input costs (Bylander, 2013, 2014; Oeur et al., 2012) has placed migration at the core of household strategies pursued by rich and poor alike.

**Table 3. Comparing Characteristics of Migrant and Non-Migrant Households in Krang Youv**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Households with at least one migrant (N=61) | Households with no migrants (N=90) |
| Percentage of total | 40.4 | 59.6 |
| Median rice land area | 0.5 Ha | 0.06 Ha |
| Median income (including remittances) | $3068 | $900 |
| Percentage of income from remittances | 43.5% | 0% |

Indeed, as table 3 demonstrates, households with migrants are on average richer than those without in Krang Youv. Moreover, although remittances contribute substantially this distinction, they do not account for it entirely. Rather, the significant difference in wealth suggests either that migration aids in the acquisition of rural assets, or conversely that their possession aids in the successful pursuit of migration.

As the social network perspective adopted throughout this paper will show, the reality is both: poorer households in many cases lack the networks necessary to undertake migration in the first place, but this inequality of opportunity is not limited to the initial migration event. Rather, even if a member is able to achieve urban employment, poorer households tend to be impeded in various ways from accessing the long term benefits of their labour. Indeed, rural assets and income are hugely important in this respect and impact not only upon the long term prospects of migrant households, but of migrants themselves, whose experience of migration differs markedly as a result of them.

1. **Financial Inequality**
   1. **Understanding Migrant Inequality**

In conceptualizing Cambodian migrant livelihoods it is essential to consider that intra-occupational differences are often as important as inter-occupational ones. The conditions faced by construction workers, for instance, differ markedly depending on whether they work for a large company, a single foreman, or anything in between; they may live with family in a rented room, or onsite for months on end. Their wages too depend upon a number of factors. For instance, many female construction workers deemed weaker and hence less valuable than their male counterparts despite undertaking the same labours, work for 7-8000 riel [$1.75-2] per day, alongside unskilled men at 10-12,000 [$2.50-3], and skilled workers earning up to 20,000 [$5]. In the context of migrant livelihoods, these constitute enormous differences,

Similarly, although garment workers’ salaries tend to be relatively homogenous within a given factory (excluding new starters and line leaders who make up a small proportion of most workforces), small variations in wages, conditions and terms are seen as hugely important by those affected. The provision by a factory of a single free meal per day can mean the difference between subsisting and saving for a future business, as could slightly greater flexibility in requesting time off to assist the rural household with agriculture. Such benefits are jealously sought and many factory workers change jobs multiple times in pursuit of the best combination of conditions for their circumstances.

Differences such as these are easily to overlook, but they are nevertheless a key base of inequality in migrant enclaves, where income inequality is relatively low compared with the city as a whole. However, it is not earnings and expenses alone which determine migrant livelihoods, but these factors in combination with outgoings from remittances. Thus, although migrant wage inequality is far lower than rural household income differentials, in Phnom Penh and other migrant enclaves, short and long term livelihoods still differ markedly. In large part, this is because salaries and familial claims upon them cannot be separated for most migrants: it is net income, inclusive of rural-urban flows of food and urban-rural flows of money, that underpins the reproduction of rural structural inequalities in the urban space.

**5.2 Remittances as a Factor in Migrant Livelihoods**

The case of Cambodia – where more than a third of the nation’s eight million strong workforce are migrants (NIS, 2010) – provides an exemplary test case for an increasingly widespread recognition within the migration literature (Coulter, Ham and Findlay, 2015; Jensen, 2009; Law, 1999): that the meaning of migration is dynamically and bi-directionally linked to its economic dimension. Indeed, so vital are remittances becoming to Cambodian households, that narratives of home, gender and duty are being actively recast in the light of new economic imperatives (Brickell and Chant, 2010). A key example of this is the changing role of women and girls in view of their perceived superiority as remitters. As many now say: ‘girls are the only ones who can really help the household’ (Poum Pith Lea Village Chief, Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim, 2014: 16).

**Table 4. Data on Remittances by Gender (N=50)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Male | Female |
| Percentage of Total Remitters | 30.3 | 69.7 |
| Mean Remittances per Month ($) | 37 | 45 |
| Percentage Remitted | 35.2 | 35.5 |
| Mean Monthly Wage ($) | 118 | 129 |

Moreover, such statements are partially supported by the data, which indicate that female migrants do indeed remit more on average than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, as indicated in table 4, the proportion remitted is almost exactly the same for both groups. This suggests that whilst there is some truth to the narrative, it is underlain not by the widely perceived idea that young men are more likely to waste their money drinking and fighting (Shopkeeper and rented room owner, 21/06/13), but by lower wages (when viewed on a monthly or yearly, rather than daily basis) derivable from the migrant employments available to the majority of men.

Construction work, for instance – the major employer of male of migrants in Cambodia – though hugely varied in its pay and conditions, most commonly hires employees on a per job basis, meaning that most construction workers expect to spend a period of the year without employment, whilst their foreman or boss awaits a new contract. By contrast, although job security in the garment industry is declining (Arnold, 2013; Parsons and Lawreniuk, forthcoming), it has in the past been sufficiently superior not only to impact on remittance patterns, but to generate feedbacks such as a preference on the part of MFIs to agree loans to those with family members working in the factories (Krang Youv villagers, 03/06/13)

In spite of such narratives of distinction, however, both men and women in the major migrant occupations are highly efficient remitters. Indeed, as table 1 shows, migrants remit an average of 36% of their total monthly income (after overtime), a figure which includes the quarter of migrants in the study who do not remit to their parental household. Taking only those migrants who do remit, the figure is very close to half of gross income.

**Table 5. Absolute and relative remittance behaviour of selected occupations (n=50)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Occupation | Mean Salary ($) | Mean Remittances per Month ($) | Mean Percentage of Salary Remitted (%) |
| Garment Workers (N= 22) | 127 | 61.30 | 49 |
| Construction Workers (N=5) | 129 | 59.38 | 45 |
| Market Traders (N=8) | 190 | 10.75 | 6 |
| Mechanics (N=3) | 312 | 20 | 12.5 |
| Mean (across whole study) (N=50) | 131 | 42 | 36 |
| Mean for remitting migrants (N=33) | 125 | 56 | 47 |

Thus, the average migrant in this sample retains only $62 per month, or $2 per day for their own subsistence, of which workers generally report that each of their three meals costs an average 2000 riel ($0.50). In addition to this, their rent – which varies significantly due to the number of workers living in one room – amounts to a further ten to fifteen dollars per month, almost the entirety of what remains. Taking the mean figures alone, then, migrant workers appear to subsist at the limits of their income, with almost nothing remaining in case of illness or other unforeseen expenses. Indeed, a lack of personal security resulting from such maximal remittances was a frequent refrain during interviews, as evidenced in the following testimony:

‘I don’t make enough to send money home [easily]. Every month I can send only $70 or $80, which isn’t enough for the people back home. It’s never enough because my parents have a debt from paying for my mother’s hospital treatment. She had something wrong with her throat and needed an operation to take it out. [I know some people but] we only meet each other at the factory every day. I never go anywhere to eat or drink anything because I need to save money and don’t want to go anywhere I can spend it. (Vireah, 13/08/13)

Vireah’s testimony is emblematic of the second of the concerns to be addressed herein. As he explains, the compulsion to remit a large proportion of his salary leaves him with no disposable income, thereby preventing him from integrating into the migrant community in a meaningful manner. Similarly, Chi Im, a garment worker from Boeung Thom Poon, Phnom Penh, explained that:

‘My father is already retired and so doesn’t rent any livestock any more. He has divided all of his land between his children and lives only on what they send him. [Now though], it is only me sending money because the others are either married with families or studying….As a result, I rarely go out because I have to look after three people – my father and two sisters [who are studying]. Generally I don’t go anywhere really’ (Chi Im, 22/07/13).

Although such workers are physically present in the city, they remain conceptually annexed to their rural households. However, these reports of life in the city – which are just two amongst a great many – contrast markedly with those of some wealthier migrants, who expect not only a degree of freedom in their urban lives, but also the opportunity to invest. As Jarp, a car mechanic, outlined, his situation is one characterised by financial self determination, familial support and clear prospects for the future:

‘I never send money to my parents because they say there is no need. They have enough money. I am saving for two things: getting married and to open a shop of my own. This will cost about twenty thousand dollars and with my parents help with half the cost, I will be able to do it next year’ (Jarp, car mechanic, 21/07/13)

Similarly, a female non-remitter commented that:

‘My family at home generally don’t need any money from me, because they have other children working too. They rarely ask for anything from me. I save the money I don’t spend and now have about two months salary. I’m going to use it to buy jewellery and when I get married I will use this money to make more money so that I don’t have to rely on my husband.’ (Pan Mao, garment worker, 01/08/13)

Both of these testimonies highlight the ability the respective informants possess to save and invest their salaries. What is notable, though, is the difference in their urban occupations. Although the first of these informants is one of the highest earners in the sample, a car mechanic with a monthly salary exceeding $500 after “tips”, the second is a garment worker, earning a basic salary of $75 per month and only $115 including overtime.

Nevertheless, though urban income may differ, strong associations are evident between urban livelihoods and lifestyles, and rural wealth. Despite many of them boasting no greater earning capacity than their counterparts from poorer rural households, migrants from wealthier families spend, as highlighted throughout the qualitative data, considerably more on leisure whilst resident in the urban space. Moreover, this variance in economic behaviour has wider implications for the social structure of migrant communities, demonstrating as it does that migrants whose families depend less (or not at all) upon their remittances enjoy economic freedoms sufficient to mark them out as a financial elite in spite of the general parity of wages in some industries.

Such migrants are able to pursue a variety of investment strategies, most commonly either the purchase of ‘gold, especially jewellery and rings’ (Sok Mieng, 01/08/13) or short term money lending to other migrants, who are not able to subsist on their post-remittance salary between pay checks. Indeed, the ability or otherwise to do so marks migrants out from each other in fundamental ways within and between occupations. Not only do the data show a significant correlation (Spearman’s = 0.491, p = 0.008) between migrants’ urban occupations and their rural household wealth – in itself a vital source of segregation in an urban environment in which most social relationships are either familial or occupational – but also within occupations, where the qualitative data above and elsewhere emphasise that migrants cement relationships on the basis of the leisure activities they can afford to engage in.

Moreover, as the following sections demonstrate, the inequality transported by divergent remittance obligations manifests not only in how migrants pursue leisure strategies to embed themselves in a new environment (see e.g. Yu and Berryman, 1996; Glover and Hemingway, 2005). Rather, the importance of familial networks in facilitating migration means that migrants remain tightly bound to the specific needs of their household throughout their migration, continuing to rely predominantly on family members for migratory information long after their initial arrival in the city.

1. **The Dual Role of Networks: Facilitation and Obligation**
   1. **Understanding Familial Networks**

Despite the relative proximity of Krang Youv to key centres of industry such as Phnom Penh and Set Bo, migration from the commune, as elsewhere in Cambodia, tends to be meticulously, albeit informally, planned and executed. Broad familial networks, often spanning rural and urban areas, are, as elsewhere in the developing world (Chort et al., 2012), utilised as both information conduits and crucial logistical tools. Furthermore, migrants continue to rely on their social networks throughout their migration, undertaking occupational moves alone in only a quarter of cases. For initial migrations the figure is 2%.

Moreover, cohabitation with a family member is strongly preferred, with initial migrations moving in with a family member in over 98% of cases (Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim, 2014). However, although familial habitation is lauded by those able to do so as freeing them from ‘having to worry about anything’ in the city (Srey Kon, 08/07/13), alternatives do exist, for instance in the form of high densities of migrants from the same village. Informal construction and garbage collection communities tend to be particularly strongly linked to sender villages, but even in the midst of much bigger and more established urban locales, migrants often comment upon the security they gain from small residential agglomerations involving a block or group of rooms. As one garment worker, resident in Phnom Penh, explained, ‘I feel safe living here, despite living alone, because all of my neighbours in the rented rooms near me are from my home village’ (Chooen Poh, 11/07/13).

Ergo, tables 6 and 7, highlight two things. First, that migrants rely upon a wide variety of people to facilitate labour movement and second, that if the data are aggregated into moves achieved via social and familial linkages, then the latter appear to be the more widely utilised. Indeed, with familial help – including the extended household so as to include uncles, aunts and cousins – being the primary source of assistance in nearly fifty percent of all moves, a sturdy case may be made for viewing migratory information as a primarily familial resource.

**Table 6. Assisters[[2]](#footnote-2) of Migration (to and within the city) and their Prevalence (N=50)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Primary Source of Information and/ or Assistance in Labour Movement | Percentage of Total |
| Uncle/ Aunt | 18.6 |
| Friend from Home Village | 18.8 |
| Friend Met in the City | 4.9 |
| Neighbour in the City | 0.1 |
| Cousin | 9.4 |
| Brother/ Sister | 12.4 |
| Husband | 2.1 |
| Parent | 3.1 |
| General Information | 5.1 |
| Factory Moved Location | 1.1 |
| Self | 24.6 |

**Table 7 Simplified Typology of Migration Assistance (N=50)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Primary Source of Information and/ or Assistance in Labour Movement (Simplified) | Percentage of Total |
| Family | 47.5 |
| Social | 26.8 |
| None | 26.7 |

Furthermore, the qualitative data strongly support this conclusion, including as they do numerous examples of migrants, whose households and extended families contain several migrants, using their family members’ assistance as a means to switch between places and occupations. Linkages of this sort appear to increase the speed and reduce the risk of movement to the extent that migrants become freer to pursue alternative earning strategies according not only to their households’ but also their own needs and preferences. For instance, as highlighted by one such worker from the Krang Youv study site, who had left a well paid job in Thailand to work closer to her family, such advantages are prized highly enough to induce movement in pursuit of them:

‘After a year and a half I felt like I had to return as I missed my parents and family too much. Once I got back, I decided to work in Andaing…[where]…I receive only a medium wage, but live close to my brother and sister and can visit my parents on weekends or on holidays’ (Heng, 30/07/13).

Moreover, given that around 80% of Cambodian migrants provide labour to the rural household at least once a year (Parsons, Lawreniuk and Pilgrim, 2014), proximity to home is a question of practicality as much as pleasure; indeed, for female migrants in particular (Elmhirst, 2002), the ability to participate in household seasonal labour is viewed not only as a financial, but also a moral issue. Nevertheless, despite such obligations frequently clashing with the ability to participate fully in migrant work, those occasional migrants who neglect to remit regularly are branded ‘lazy’ and ‘uncaring’ by their parents (Srawoon, 08/06/13). As a result, migrants whose households require both remittances and rural labour are often placed under extreme pressure to find arrangements which can accommodate both needs, influencing their urban behaviour in the short, medium and longer term.

* 1. **Inequality of Obligation: Understanding Different Rates of Urban Movement**

As the data above demonstrate, the rural household is both a facilitator and determinant of migrant movement. Moreover, it performs these roles both at the point of the initial move and once a migrant is established in the city. This is evident in a number of ways, with migrants frequently citing changes in their rural households’ circumstances, especially serious illnesses, climate shocks, and failures in business, as prominent factors in their movements. For instance, as the garment worker daughter of an elderly widow related:

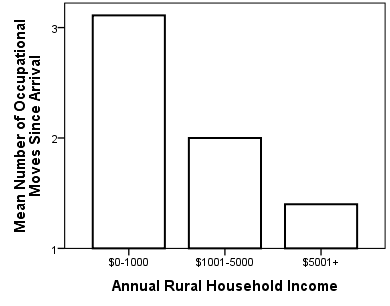
‘[I came here because] I have debts to pay for the medical treatment of my father, who has now died, as well as my mother, who is currently ill and also requires hospital treatment. In total, this amounts to about $60 per month in interest only debt repayments…Any extra money I make goes to the home village. For instance, after overtime I may make $200 this month, so I will send it all home’ (Rueng Wii, 02/07/13).

Aside from medical treatment, failed ventures or investments undertaken by better off households are another common motivator of migration, as in the case of Layin, whose family had previously owned three hectares of rice land but had to sell it. She attributed this to bad luck and a lack of business acumen on the part of her father. In her words:

‘We had to sell our land because my father failed in business. Previously he raised ducks, owning up to a thousand at one point, but they all got sick and died. When he started again, the same thing happened, so we had to sell our rice land. After the ducks [and with the remaining money from the land sale], we bought a large threshing machine for around $12 000, but it continually broke down and was expensive to repair. After a while we couldn’t afford to keep repairing it and had to sell it for a cheap price…Now we have a debt of $4000, so I came here to work and send money home’ (Lida, 13/08/13).

In spite of the many and varied events which might influence the decision to migrate, however, a common theme is that the movements and activities of poorer migrants are more closely determined by the household than those of their wealthier counterparts. Furthermore, heterogeneity in the shocks which promulgate migratory movement does not prevent such trends from becoming visible in the form of clear statistical associations between the rate of movement amongst migrant occupations, remittance behaviour, and household wealth.

**Figure 1. Household income as a factor in occupational movement (n=50)**



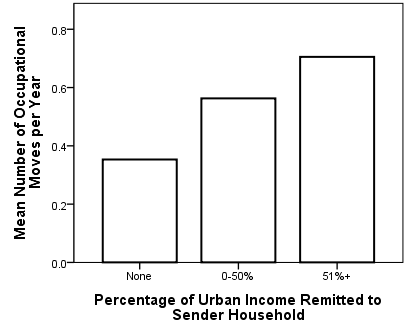
Median rural household income = $1275

Mean number of moves per migrant = 2

Indeed, the data not only suggest a negative association between total rural household income and the mean number of occupational changes undertaken by migrants since departing their village, as shown in Figure 1, but as Figure 2 highlights, also between the rate of occupational movement and the percentage remitted by migrants (Spearman’s = 0.359, p=0.023). These findings suggest, firstly, that migrants from poorer households tend to undertake a greater total number of moves than their wealthier counterparts and second, that the rate of such movement is associated with the need to remit larger sums. One interpretation, supported by a significant correlation (Spearman’s = -0.39, p= 0.012) between net wages (gross monthly income – monthly remittances) and inter-occupational movement, is that even lower paid work may be deemed sufficient if a migrant is able to keep their entire wage, but a heavy remittance burden is likely to result in a protracted search for higher wages and/ or more flexible conditions in order to satisfy the needs of both individual and household, as one such garment worker explained:

‘I left the first factory to return home because I got sick. Then I heard about a nearby factory opening. However, that factory only opened for seven months each year. Because my family was having a difficult time [with her father’s illness] my mother asked me to change to a factory where I could work all year. [I did that but] a year later I had to follow my cousin to Set Bo to another factory because the last one only worked eight hours per day so my basic salary was only $50-$60 per month. I needed more money for my family, so I had to come to Set Bo.’ (Sok Kieng, 09/08/13)

**Figure 2. Mean Moves per Year against Percentage of Salary Remitted to Household (n=50)**

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Nevertheless, analyzing urban activity in terms of remittances alone fails to capture the structural impact of familial and social factors. Thus, following Bonacich (2007) and Bonacich and Lloyd (2001), the eigenvector measure of network centrality has been utilised as a means of measuring each household’s and each migrant’s social integration into their rural or urban communities. This statistical measure, which calculates a score based on the number of a given node’s primary, secondary and tertiary etc. connections, highlights a clear correlation both to total annual remittances received (Spearman’s= 0.549, p =0.01) and the percentage of annual income made up of remittances (Spearman’s = 0.66, p = 0.04).

This may be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, more integrated households may allow themselves to become more dependent on remittances because their rural social networks afford them a degree of security in case of job loss. Alternatively, more remittance-dependent households may generate stronger social networks in the village as an information or loan generating safety net. In either scenario, although the causation is not obvious, the strength of correlation suggests that the social behaviour of rural households, and by extension the social structures in which they are embedded, are tightly bound to the circumstances of their migrant members.

This relationship highlights the need for a more purposive interpretation of the role of social networks in the migration process than that which is often encountered in the literature (Palloni et al., 2001; Massey et al., 1990) and which posits a fairly direct relationship between network centrality and wealth which is not present in these data. Rather, given the importance of familial information and assistance to the migration process, as indicated on the data in tables 6 and 7 above, a preferable interpretation might argue that better connected households are able both to achieve a higher remittance return on migration, and that – due to the risk mitigating aspect of greater information access – they feel more able to depend upon it than the less well connected.

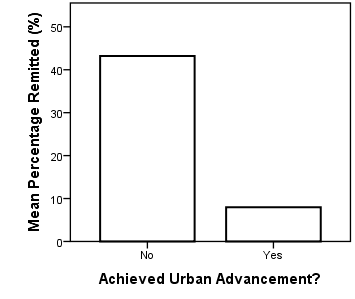
Moreover, it is not only household social networks which appear to influence and be influenced by the migration process. Combined with the percentage of salary remitted, migrants’ own eigenvector centrality produces a model with an r-square value of 0.496 (p eigenvector = 0.005, p remittances = 0.007) suggesting that, as indicated by the qualitative data above, access to networks of information and the extent to which the sender household remains dependent upon the migrant’s urban wages are major factors in the migrant’s urban experience. What remains to be demonstrated, though, is how these economic and informational factors combine to produce differential outcomes in the migration process.

**7. Remittances as a Constraint on Urban Development**

**7.1 Rural household income as a factor in developing urban networks**

As with capital and information flows, the role of migration in structuring social behaviour runs in two directions. Consequently, the relationship between social integration and remittance dependency may be found, in inverted form, in the urban sphere. There, migrants from wealthier households tend to be more central to their urban networks, as evidenced by the relationship between their eigenvector scores and their sender household income shown in figure 3. In light of the testimonies above, this is likely to be due to the reduced burden of remittance payments imposed upon wealthier migrants, who are therefore able to use their salaries to engage in a greater degree of social activity in the city

**Figure 3. Mean remittance Burdens of Advancing and Non-Advancing Migrants (n=50)**

**

Rather than merely improving the experience of migration, however, the social relationships referred to above serve a vital purpose. The linkages they create between individuals who are relatively wealthy, or possess relatively high education and skill levels, are an invaluable resource in the transmission of opportunity and advantage, both for their constituent members and their families. Across networks such as these, apprenticeships are shared, money is invested, and information ‘about business’ (Jan Na, 24/06/13), money, and the urban environment, circulated. Indeed, as the case of one such richer migrant demonstrates, the information they carry often serves to determine the long term trajectory of a migration:

‘I came here to study English and Chinese at Pannasastra [university] where I paid $60 for a three month course. When I was there, though, I met a friend and fellow student who told me about working as a phone renovator. He told me I could learn this skill at the Basae Market near Thom Poon lake. I paid $100 and initially I didn’t get any salary, but after three years I saved enough to open my own shop this year’ (Wiasna, 16/07/13).

Similarly, Chum Simroon, now a *motodop* [motorcycle taxi driver], landlord and group leader [low level political administrator], related the following story:

‘I first came to Phnom Penh to work as a *motodop* in the year 2000, but my old bike was constantly breaking down so I gave it up to become a labourer. Some people there told me about an opportunity in a factory, so I got my wife a job as a garment worker. With us both working, we saved money and I was able to buy a brand new motorbike for $1050…Now we own a rented room and make money that way, but we still work as a motodop and garment worker too’ (Chum Simroon, 01/07/13).

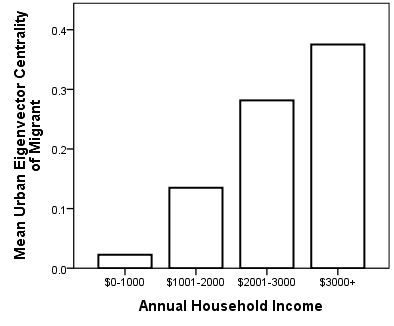
The need to gain access to the information which facilitates these opportunities means that ostensibly consumptive spending on leisure may be as important as money in terms of acquiring both occupational security and opportunity in the urban environment. However, as the qualitative data consistently highlight, the ability to engage in such activities is highly stratified. Only wealthier migrants reported an ability to attend ‘small parties in rented rooms with drinks and food’ (Bun Chi, 21/05/13), ‘visits to the market about once a month to buy clothes, spending about thirty dollars each time’ (Sawodi, 25/06/13), or day trips to local leisure sites ‘whenever we have a holiday’ (Sawodi, 25/06/13). Poorer migrants, or more specifically those burdened by high remittance obligations, reported an opposite story, with each one whose remittances exceeded 50% claiming to undertake no social activities at all. For these migrants, ‘staying alone in [their] rented room’ each evening (Win Bun, 02/07/13) was ubiquitous.

This restriction on social network development is disadvantageous in various ways. Whether the target is to open a business, achieve promotion, or simply find less arduous work, information shared through incidental meetings underpins most stories of advancement in Phnom Penh. Participation in urban networks is therefore a vital means of improving either income or livelihoods more generally, but it cannot take place without capital. Urban networks, like any resource, cost money to maintain. Moreover, even once an opportunity has been identified, it must usually be seized at a price, whether in the form of a bribe to attain a given position, or the start-up cost of an independent business. A heavy remittance burden places both the socio-informational and economic ingredients of advancement out of reach.

* 1. **Advancement**

The drain of high remittance burdens on both financial and social resources means that migrants who send back greater amounts are less able to improve their urban circumstances. This is demonstrated in Figure 4, which divides migrants into those who have significantly improved their circumstances and those who haven’t. Almost all of those deemed to have “advanced” had notably improved their income, but migrants’ self assessment of improvement has also been taken into account, so that progression into jobs deemed more prestigious by their occupiers, such as from working in a shop to work in a microfinance institute in one case, may be deemed an advancement even if the salaries are comparable[[3]](#footnote-3). It demonstrates a robust correlation with the percentage of income remitted to the sender household, as well as a strong correlation (Spearman’s = -0.502, p=0.01) with the rate (advancement/ number of years in the city) at which this improvement was achieved.

**Figure 3. Annual Household Income as a Factor in Migrant Eigenvector Centrality (n=50)**

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From this and other data, then, a cohesive picture of rural-urban social relations begins to emerge whereby migrants from poorer households remit a higher proportion both of their own salary and their household’s income. In turn, potentially in order to mitigate the risk of their greater exposure to the modern sector, rural households appear to cultivate more central network relations within their village. Otherwise put, sender households appear to associate (and thereby become central to networks) in order to mitigate their risk, whereas migrants themselves associate in order to cultivate opportunities for future gains, usually in terms of higher level employment opportunities. Migrants and their households may therefore be divided into those for whom the urban space is a long term opportunity, requiring the setting down of roots and substantial (economic and social) investment, and the many and varied others for whom the duration and type of urban labour is dependent to a much greater degree upon the varying requirements of rural household livelihoods.

For these latter migrants, modern sector labour often appears directionless and unending. Obliged by the needs of their household to ‘work every day without stopping’ (Po, 28/06/13), such workers are vital to their family’s livelihoods security, but envisage ‘no future’ (Po, 28/06/13) for themselves. Unlike their wealthier counterparts, they have neither time nor money to integrate into the city, let alone take advantage of, or invest in the opportunities it offers. In this way, the inequalities of rural life are not mitigated, but magnified by the city, which offers opportunity and accumulation to its wealthier visitors, but only survival to the poorer.

1. **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to contribute to the sparse but growing diaspora-focussed literature on remittances via the presentation of a mixed methodology case study of Krang Youv commune, Cambodia. In addition, it provides an additional perspective on the migration systems literature, helping to elucidate the processes and micro-structures which underpin rural-urban migration systems.

Moreover, it has sought to demonstrate the value of an holistic, multi-methodological approach to remittance research. Indeed, whilst acknowledging the inherent limitations of a case study of a single migration system in terms of generalizability, sample size and the presence of conceptually important groups (such as parents with children in the home village, none of whom appeared in the study frame) the research presented here has adopted an approach characterised by depth rather than breadth, using interviews and complementary methods to support and triangulate the findings of the quantitative data wherever possible.

The additional insight into systematic linkages attainable via this method has been utilised to demonstrate three things about systematic labour migration in Cambodia. First, from a migrant’s perspective, financial inequality is determined both by income and outgoings, but the latter is more important to urban livelihoods in most cases. Indeed, differences in the scale of remittances amongst migrants dwarf not only other urban outgoings – such as the cost of rent or food – but even differences in urban migrant income. Remittance levels, which vary considerably between individuals, may therefore be seen to be one of the key factors in urban migrant livelihoods.

Moreover, this paper has additionally sought to show that remittances are not a discrete financial flow, but are intimately tied to the functioning of urban and rural social networks. In a manner which builds upon observations concerning the role of children in migrant remittance behaviour (Hing, Lun and Phan, 2014; Kheam and Treleaven, 2013), these trends – which appear in both the quantitative and qualitative data – highlight how migrants alter their behaviour according to both the needs and endowments of the household. Their development of urban social networks in particular appears to be partly predicated upon rural household wealth, via the intermediary mechanisms of remittance burden and inter-occupational movement.

As such, remittances engender not only financial inequality amongst migrants but also social inequality, by restricting urban social network construction. The importance attributed to these networks within the qualitative data suggest that the differences in urban “advancement” visible between differently remitting migrants is attributable to the inability of migrants with heavy remittance burdens to build inter- and intra-occupational networks. By contrast, migrants who remit little enjoy the benefits of additional capital and associational networks synergistically, thereby helping to replicate rural inequalities in the urban space.

Future research may be encouraged to build upon these findings in various ways. However, two avenues of enquiry emerge as especially relevant. First, although the dynamic nature of the interrelationship between household and migrant has been acknowledged, longitudinal research is needed to fully elucidate the long term impact on rural areas and the feedbacks to the migrant experience. Fro instance, though alluded to in informant accounts, the extent to which migration enhances inequality is not clear from the quantitative data. Nor, moreover, is it apparent whether the exclusion of wealthier migrants from remittance commitments constitutes a personal endowment, or a strategy to facilitate urban investment in pursuit of higher remittances in the future. In addition to exploring how any such future remittances may be used, investigating the household strategies of wealthier migrants over the longer term constitutes a potentially fruitful topic.

Secondly, there is a need to apply the findings of this paper regarding wealth based stratification of the migrant experience to a more culturally focussed analysis of migration systems in Cambodia and elsewhere. Thus, whilst this paper has focussed primarily on what differential circumstances do in the migration process, an equally important question is what they come to mean. Migration as investment is a very different proposition to migration as substance; the implications of this distinction need to be explored for sending and receiving cultures both in Cambodia and elsewhere.

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1. Further information on the construction and meaning of the eigenvector centrality score may be found in Appendix B. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Assistance here has been self defined by migrants, in response to the question “who helped you most with your migration?” Follow up questions, however, reveal that this assistance always took one of three forms: information about the migrants’ destination or a specific job, accompanying the migrant on their journey, or the provision of accommodation in the migrant destination. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A summary of the migratory histories of those informants seemed to have “advanced” is provided in Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)