

International
Institute of
Social Studies



LEAVING, RETURNING, AND STAYING

Youth Negotiating Gendered and Generational (intra- and inter) Householding within the Plantation Labour Regime in Assam, India

A Research Paper presented by:

Rhondeni Kikon

India

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

SJP

Specialization

Children and Youth Studies

Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr. Rachel Kurian

Dr. Roy, B.C Huijsmans

The Hague, The Netherlands
November 2019

Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: <http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl>
twitter: [@issnl](https://twitter.com/issnl)

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Maps</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Appendices</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>viii</i>
Chapter 1 Situating young people from the tea plantations in the study	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Research Objective and Questions	2
1.2 Contextual Background	2
1.2.0 The plantation regime and the <i>badli</i> system	2
1.2.1 The question of becoming a <i>badli</i>	3
1.2.2 Migration out of Northeast India	4
1.3 Outline of the paper	5
Chapter 2 Relevant theories and concepts on youth migration	6
2.0 Independent migration of young people	6
2.1 Generational (intra- and inter) relations and Householding in migration	7
2.1.0 Generational relations	7
2.1.1 Householding	8
2.2 Circulatory migration and life course	9
2.3 The conceptual framework	11
Chapter 3 Research Methodology	12
3.0 Introduction	12
3.1 Access to the plantation	12
3.1.0 The youth and their households	12
3.2 Methods of Data Collection	13
3.2.0 Mapping and family tree diagram	14
3.2.1 Process of data analysis	14
3.3 Positionality, Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations	15
3.3.0 Obtaining consent	15
Chapter 4 <i>Badli</i> as gendered and generational practice	16
4.0 Introduction	16
4.1 Maintaining the <i>badli</i> status	16
4.2 Household composition and labour force organization	17
4.3 Gendered and generational relations: Who becomes a permanent worker?	18

4.3.0 Household of Rita	18
4.3.1 Household of Lina	19
4.4.3 Household of Raju	20
4.4.4 The retired permanent worker	21
4.5 Conclusion	22
Chapter 5 Leaving, Returning and Staying over the life course	24
5.0 Introduction	24
5.1 <i>Dekhenge</i> “we shall see when the time comes”	24
5.1.0 Marriage as the reason for leaving and staying	27
5.2 Changing aspirations over the course of returning and leaving	28
5.3 Conclusion	30
Chapter 6 Conclusions	32
References	34
Appendices	38

List of Tables

Table 1.0 Generations residing together	13
Table 1.1 Level of education	13

List of Figures

Figure 1.0 Migration timeline and family tree diagram	14
Figure 1.1 Absenteeism Notice	17

List of Maps

Map 1.0 Location of the fieldwork on the Map of Assam, India	42
--	----

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 The <i>badli</i> Matrix	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 2 Profiles of the respondents	380
Appendix 3 Profiles of family members of the youth	41

List of Acronyms

OC	Other Category
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLA	Plantations Labour Act

Acknowledgement

I want to thank my supervisor Rachel Kurian for her constant guidance and encouragement throughout the process of this research, and to my second reader Roy Huijsmans for his insights and contributions in this research process.

I thank Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program (JJ/WBGSP) for making studying at ISS possible, and SJP fieldwork grant for funding my fieldwork.

I am deeply grateful to my colleagues and their families who hosted me and helped me throughout the process of my fieldwork, the youth and their families who opened their homes to me and shared their stories. Without them this research would not have been possible.

I thank my discussants Aditya, Charina and Sujan for their invaluable feedback and support.

I also thank Amod, Lars, Bala, Saba and Sunil Kaul for their invaluable comments and insights on the draft.

To my friends, Yangchi, Monique, Daya, Icha, Laine and to Dorus 5th floormates, thank you for making ISS my home away from home.

Abstract

Studies on young peoples' migration tend to focus more on leaving - a one-time event. This research approaches youth migration as multiple events, a perspective that has received less attention in the current academic discourse. It uses a life course approach in analysing youth circulatory migration out of a tea plantation area in North-east Assam to other parts of India. By looking at the gendered and generational practices involved in householding in the context of the *badli* system, the question is how these practices influence youth migration decisions to leave, to return and to stay. To understand the motivations of migration, an important element is the intra- and inter-generational family moral obligations that help to explain their individual and collective decisions. Using the concept of multilocal householding in analysing the gendered and generational householding practices in the context of *badli* suggests that youth decisions to leave or to stay are shaped not only by their own life course events, but in relation to the life course events of significant others such as siblings, parents, grandparents. This is further influenced by their gender, age, and birth order. Nevertheless, these decisions are not fixed and are anticipated to change in relation to future life events. Staying is not only shaped by *badli*, but the by the moral obligations' youth feel towards their parents even without the prospect of becoming a *badli*. The intra- and inter-generational and everyday practices of multilocal householding are mutually constitutive and shape the migration decisions of youth. This underlines that agency is complex and dynamic. Through an ethnographic approach combined with in-depth interviews and participant observation the research analysed the interviews of 18 youth during their return period on the plantation and included relevant views of other key informants. Data was thematically organized and analysed manually. This research shows that *badli* is constitutive of, but not exclusive in shaping the decisions to stay and leave. Youth agency is closely interwoven within the intra- and inter-generational relations that shape the everyday practices of householding.

Relevance to Development Studies

Studies on young peoples' migration has been the discussion of policy makers, development professionals and academia in recent years. The discussion is focused mainly on one event of migration – the leaving, and the returning and staying has received less attention. More so, the households these young people come from and their intra-- and inter-generational relations in migration are often overlooked. In order to develop policy and development interventions that are inclusive and not only look at young peoples' life in segment – the migration event, considering their migration trajectories during their life course in relation to their households and generational relations can provide understanding as to how these migration decisions are made, shaped and renegotiated.

Keywords

Circulatory migration, life course approach, multilocal-householding, youth, tea plantation, Assam, India

Chapter 1 Situating young people from the tea plantations in the study

1.0 Introduction

Despite the broader process of casualization of labour (see Rosenblum and Sukthankar 2014, Makita 2012) for young people, their prospect and norm for employment has been casual labour within the tea plantation labour regime of Assam, Northeast India. As casual workers during the approximately six-month lean season of the year, youth do not have access to stable employment on the plantation. Youth leave the plantations to find employment outside the estates in order to improve their income¹ and meet the livelihood needs of themselves and their families. Some find a sense of security in their employment outside the estates, many do not and continue to move between the estates and the cities as casual workers and are unable to afford an independent living. However, permanent employment on the estates, even if only by one member of the family, entitles them to residence on the estates that's factored into their wages (Rosenblum and Sukthankar 2014:34), and is an important form of security for all household members. These different pressures mean that decisions of youth to migrate outside the plantations, to remain at the new place or work, or return to the estates are the outcomes of negotiations and agreements between different family members in a household. The motivation for leaving, returning and staying of youth is expressed in terms of seeking better prospects outside the plantations, but also in meeting their familial and emotional obligations to the different generations and genders in the household, and in ensuring that the family retain their residence on the plantation through the *badli* system. I will discuss the *badli* system in section 1.3.

This research focuses upon youth migration as multiple events, an aspect less focused in the academic literature of independent migration of young people. It builds on concepts of householding, generation, circulatory migration and life course. I examine how youth engage in “the multiplicity of here and there” (Korzenvica and Agergaard 2017:135) by leaving, returning and staying in multilocal householding. Adapted from the concept of multilocal living, multilocal householding here is defined “as a way of organizing everyday life in and between different home” (Hilti 2009:145). The maintenance of intra- and inter-generational contracts through the practice of multilocal householding is analyzed from the lens of circulatory migration and life course, and acknowledges the multiple events involved in young peoples' migration. The empirical data in this study draws on perspectives of youth from one of the tea plantations in Assam, Northeast India.

Given that youth migration in the region is primarily viewed through the lens of a trafficking discourse² for policy and development intervention, I situate my study methodologically in the return period of the youth on the plantation, and give privilege to the voice of youth and their families. To study migration trajectories from a life course

¹ Cash remuneration in Tea Estates in Assam is only 40 to 60% of the central government's minimum wage. See VDA Minimum Wage order dated 27/3/2019 < <https://clc.gov.in/clc/node/606> > Workers daily wages on the plantation is @167 rupees (2,12 euro) and after deduction for benefits such as housing, water, provident fund, receives a cash amount of 880 rupees (11, 04 euro) in a week, provided the worker goes to work every day.

² Secondary data analysis on trafficking of women and children in Assam 2014, Government of Assam and UNICEF.

perspective, I included in the study the views of youth between the age of 17 to 30³ something and the perspectives of their significant others such as siblings, parents, grandparents. These methodological choices enabled examining the intra- and inter-generational practices of householding related to circulatory migration (leaving, returning and staying).

1.1 Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this research is to analyse how and why youth's decision of leaving from, returning to, and staying on the plantation changes over the course of their migration trajectories, and how such decisions are shaped by the intra- and inter-generational households relations and in relation to opportunities for work/livelihoods in and outside the tea estate.

The main research question:

Who among the youth gets to leave, return and stay and why? How is this shaped by the intra-- and inter-generational relations within households, under the plantation labour regime and the *badli* system?

Sub-Questions

1. In which ways has the *badli* system, and particularly the generational housing provision, influenced household level decisions regarding the leaving, returning and staying of youth?
2. How does the intersection of gender, age, birth order and intra-- and inter-generational relations shape the negotiations of leaving, returning and staying? Why do youth leave, return or stay back?
3. How does leaving, returning and staying change over the life course of the youth?

1.2 Contextual Background

1.2.0 The plantation regime and the *badli* system

The *badli* system was introduced by the British planters which allows one of the children of permanent workers to be employed in tea plantation work after his/her parent's retirement [or death] (Sharma and Das 2009:81, cited in Makita 2012:95). This labour regime practiced in Assam plantations has its roots in recruiting a migrant labour force from other states in India. The natives of Chotanagpur⁴ region was recruited to work on the plantations to address the scarcity of labour in the area as local people refused to work on the plantation (Bhowmik et al. 1996:16-17, Rosenblum and Sukthankar 2014:24). Supported politically by the colonial government at that time (Bhowmik et al. 1996:4-5), planters encouraged families⁵ to migrate, given that family-based employment allowed them access to cheap labour by reducing the cost of recruitment and housing cost on an individual basis (Bhowmik et al. 1996:8-10; also see Mishra et al. 2008:55). Children and adolescents were employed at half the amount of adult wages (Bhowmik et al. 1996:11). Thus, this suggests that the plantation labour regime operated based on a bulk of labour force of women, children and adolescents, reducing the cost of labour by not having to pay benefits for each worker. Historically, the

³ One of the youth mentioned his age as between 30-35

⁴ Now the states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar

⁵ Women, children and adolescent constituted more than fifty percent of the plantation workers (Bhowmik et al 1996:8-9).

badli status and the housing provision is an adult male centric position within the household of the plantation labour regime.

The *badli* system practiced in the tea plantations differs from the existing literature on the *badli* system observed in other industrial labour regimes in India. For example, a worker in the jute industry in Calcutta, can work as a *badli* for several years to become a permanent worker (De Haan 1999:290). In the Assam tea plantation *badli* is transferred after the retirement or death of the worker to his spouse or children. In cases where there are no spouse or children to transfer the *badli* to, it can be transferred to a willing acquaintance with some amount of cash exchange agreed between the two parties. Such an arrangement is managed and negotiated by workers between the retiring worker and prospective *badli*. Becoming a *badli* means to become a permanent worker and thus becoming eligible for housing provision. According to the Plantation Labour Act (PLA) 1951, workers are entitled to housing provision,

“it shall be the duty of every employer to provide and maintain necessary housing accommodation (a) for every worker (including his family) residing in the plantation (b) for every worker residing outside the plantation, who has put in six months of continuous service in such plantation and who has expressed a desire in writing to reside in the plantation” (Mishra et al. 2014:201).

1.2.1 The question of becoming a *badli*

According to a representative⁶ of the management, “the ratio between permanent worker and temporary worker is 1500 and 1200.” This makes a 5:4 ratio; for every 5 permanent workers there are 4 temporary workers (also see Rosenblum and Sukthankar 2014:65-66). While the plantation no longer employs ‘adolescent’,⁷ young ‘adults’⁸ are likely to continue to form the temporary labour force. This suggests that youth are dependent on adult permanent workers for housing until they become a *badli* themselves or can afford independent housing.

In light of this discussion I will present the significance of *badli* for the youth and their households in three ways. Firstly, the *badli* system offers youth a prospect of becoming a permanent worker one day, making him/her eligible to receive the benefit of the housing provision. The pathway for the youth to become a permanent worker is through his/her parents. Since young people also have their own needs and aspirations and are expected to contribute to the household economy, during the period before their parents’ retirement, young people typically engage in migrating to work away from the plantation, or decide to work at the plantation as temporary workers. Temporary worker is interchangeably used with *faaltu* labour (Literal translation ‘useless’, it denotes temporary).

Secondly, the permanent worker status provides members of households the immediate benefit of housing and therefore the transfer of *badli* is an important household decision. From a household perspective it is important to recognise the collective benefits the *badli* system provides through its housing benefits. Even if only one household member holds a *badli* status an entire household stands to benefit from the housing provision.

Thirdly, households typically have more members than *badli* positions to transfer. This raises the question of how the *badli* position is transferred and shaped by the intra- and inter-generational householding practices. The housing benefit through *badli* is crucial for young

⁶ Informal discussion on 7th and 9th August 2019.

⁷ According to the PLA 1951 Chapter 1 section 2 defines ‘adolescent’ means a person who has completed his [fourteenth] year but has not completed his eighteenth year (Mishra et al. 2014:192).

⁸ And ‘adult’ means a person who has completed his eighteenth year (Mishra et al. 2014:192).

people on the plantations as they do not have access to employment opportunities and resources that can enable them to afford independent land and housing. In the context of the plantation labour force regime youth are situated as labouring to become a permanent worker one day through the *badli* system.

The question of becoming a *badli* is expressed in terms of ambivalence and obligation, often described by the youth as *Lena padega* or *dekhenge* (*Lena padega* denotes “no options” and *Dekhenge* means “we shall see when the time comes”) The ambivalence and obligation are at the same time expressed with an openness to whether one may or may not become a *badli* upon their parents’ retirement. The discussion around the *badli* is often discussed by the youth in relation to their parents’ life course events (eg. old age, sickness), and how they might have to adjust their migration plans accordingly. The negotiations between siblings becomes important in the decision making of who will become a *badli* as parents approach their retirement and old age.

1.2.2 Migration out of Northeast India

The North East Support Centre and Helpline reports outmigration from Northeast India to other states at 414,850, the report cite 12 times increase in migration from 2005-2011 (McDuié-Ra 2012:45). The figures are debatable as data on migration remains problematic (Tienda et al., 2007:5), often lacking data disaggregation of young people in migration (Whitehead and Hashim, 2005: 2 cited in Huijsmans 2011:1309). However, the exodus of “30,000 northeast migrants”⁹ leaving the cities to return home due to fear of violence, reflects the socio-political and cultural gap between the host cities and the migrants from the northeast region (Remesh 2012:39) and underlines the magnitude of outmigration from Northeast India to other parts of India. Most of them migrate through their network of friends or relatives, and those who do not know anyone in the city, recruiting agencies are important contact points for migrants (McDuié-Ra, 2012:58). My fieldwork findings show that females are more likely to migrate through a placement agency than males, owing to the resistance towards female migration by families and communities.

Less is known generally about migration out of the tea plantations and even less about youth leaving the estates to other states of India for work, as much of the academic literature on plantation workers is concerned with the colonial recruitment of indentured labour into the region (see Behal 2006; Bhowmik et al. 1996). Studies on plantation workers lack data disaggregation of young people in the plantation labour force and neglects migration as a way of finding employment outside the estates (see Mishra et al. 2014: 119-121). When the migration of young people receives attention, it is often viewed through the lens of the trafficking discourse in the media¹⁰ or development interventions. Academic scholarship on outmigration from the Northeast frontier of India is almost absent, some of the reasons for this is postcolonial scholars were more inclined to study changing customs and folklore in the region and had little interest in studying mobility (McDuié-Ra 2012:46).

Northeast India is seen mainly as a migrant-receiving region concerned with influx of illegal migrants and socio-political unrest (Remesh 2012:35). The NSS 64th round (2007-08) indicates that “migration for studies and employment” is the main reason in the northeastern states (Remesh 2012:35). Some of the existing studies on youth migrating out of the region have underlined the socio-cultural, geographical and structural constraints faced by youth

⁹ India Today (2012), “Exodus of north easterners subsides in Bangalore. Numbers swell in Pune, Chennai.” 18th August.

¹⁰ The Guardian (2014), “The tea pickers sold into slavery” 2nd March

migrating to work in the cities mainly in retail and hospitality industries, multinational companies and for further education (McDuie-Ra 2012; Kikon 2018, also see T.Brown et al. 2017). Nevertheless, these studies are done on youth belonging to a certain class, economic and education background who have migrated to the cities to further their aspirations professionally and for education.

Outmigration of youth from the tea plantations related to underlying structural factors such as casualization of labour (Rosenblum and Sukthankar 2014:66) demands attention. This research contributes to the literature in studying a group of young people that has been overlooked within existing academic literature. Furthermore, its approach of viewing young peoples' migration as interrelated multiple events has received less attention in the field of independent migration of young people in Northeast India (exception Lynrah 2019).¹¹ The next chapter (2) discusses relevant theories and concepts found in migration literature that is based on the global south in order to strategize a conceptual framework.

1.3 Outline of the paper

The paper is organized into six chapters. This chapter sets the introduction and the contextual background of the plantation labour regime and the *badli* system. Chapter two discusses the relevant theories and concepts used to formulate a research strategy by proposing a conceptual framework. Bringing the field of youth and labour studies together, I propose a conceptual framework in studying youth migration through the lens of multilocal householding in conjunction with generational order, circulatory migration and life course so as to study the multiple events of migration youth engage in when migrating out from the tea plantations of Assam to other parts of India. Chapter 3 elaborates the methodology of the research and its justification on taking an ethnographic approach. Chapter 4 and 5 presents the analysis of fieldwork findings. In Chapter 4 I present the discussion of the gendered and generational householding practice of *badli* and how the intersection of gender, age, birth order influences youths' decision to leave or stay, thereby addressing the first two research sub-questions. Chapter 5 presents the process of leaving, returning and staying from the perspective of youths' individual life course in relation to the life course of significant others (siblings, parents, grandparents) within households. Chapter 6 revisits the conceptual framework and the contribution of this study both theoretically and empirically within the broader debates of youth studies and labour migration.

¹¹ Gender, Domestic Work, and Return Migration: The Ruathis of Bodoland, India. MPhil dissertation, at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Campus 2019.

Chapter 2 Relevant theories and concepts on youth migration

2.0 Independent migration of young people

Studies on young peoples' independent migration and agency in the global south have underlined useful conceptualizations on the issue of agency and its gendered nature (Grabska et al. 2019; Bastia 2005; Punch 2015; Iverson 2002; Camacho 1999). While these studies have significantly contributed academically to the field of young people's independent migration, they focus more on migration as a one-time event and less on it involving interrelated multiple events. Some of these debates emerged as a critique of the dominant trafficking discourse in policy and development interventions that portrays young migrants as lacking agency (Howard 2017; Huijsmans and Baker 2012; Huijsmans 2011; Bastia 2005). Two of the earliest work on young migrants and agency underlined the significance of age, gendered nature of migration and family-based network in facilitating migration for child domestic workers (Iverson 2002; Camacho 1999). Furthermore, these studies have contributed in understanding independent migration of young people methodologically through comparative studies of adolescent girls' migration (Grabska et al. 2019), and 'mobile ethnography' (Hashim and Thorsen 2011:45) by following and studying young people in their host locations. While these studies have underlined useful analytical concepts and methodological approaches, it shows that young people's "[...] agency is a dynamic and highly debated concept [...]" (Esser et al. 2016:12) in migration discourse.

Much of the debate around agency of young people is discussed in relation to their age. Age remains the key focus of analysis (Huijsmans 2011:1311) as well as methodologically, aligned to national and international conventions (Iverson 2002, Camacho 1999), often concluding in dualism of structure and agency (Alanen 2009). Dobson underlined that migration studies depicts "[...] children as things transported by adults [...]" (2009:356). These debates take a reflexive response to the trafficking discourse and migration policies where age is an important indicator. According to Punch (2016:193) the discussion on agency of young people has to move beyond how they are depicted in the adult world. She argues,

"focusing only on children and young people's perspectives regarding agency and participation is no longer sufficient; greater emphasis is needed on the intricacies, complexities, tensions, ambiguities and ambivalences of processes of generationing [...]"

She also underlines that the term "generationing as a structural feature of child-adult interactions" is still an unexplored empirically in an explicit manner (Punch 2016:189). Bastia's study on Bolivian teenage migration to Argentina shows that young migrants' leaving was shaped by their customary practices to care for their parents according to birth order (2005:68). Migration served to support their parents economically as well as returning in time to work on the land (Bastia 2005:70). Although, Bastia's study shows the generationing aspects of young migrants' households, her study's central focus remains unpacking the concept of trafficking which raises an important conceptual issue yet at the same time misses an important analytical discussion on "generational processes" (Punch 2016) between children and parents, and maintaining their households within structural constraints in the context of Bolivia. Additionally, Bastia's study indicates that migration of teenagers as multiple events including returning home according to the household needs, does not receive an explicit analytical focus.

Viewing the agency of young migrants through a generational lens remains less developed. Furthermore, young peoples' migration as multiple events also needs to take into consideration life course. Iverson in his study on child labour in India underlines that return migration is higher among girls as they attain puberty and marriageable age (2002:820). The study emphasizes the agency of children in relation to age and their parents, but the return migration does not receive an explicit focus. Similarly, Howard in his study in Benin underlines how the agency of young migrants is constrained as trafficking discourse problematize "young people work, or mobility [...] largely collaps[ing] as trafficking" (2017:29). He argues that the household is an important part of the lives of young migrants in Benin where families lived together with several generations (Howard 2017:33). However, his analysis of young people's migration is skewed towards how anti-trafficking policies, state and development intervention govern young people's movement, and it misses how household and generational relations influence their migration process.

Young peoples' migration often focusses only on one phase of migration and often overlapping. Independent migration usually focusses on young people who are on the move for labour (but not always explicitly), and studies focused on young peoples' labour takes a static lens on young people work (Yaqub 2009:64). The academic literature on independent migration of young people has dealt with a diverse range of conceptualization and analytical lenses; however, migration studies on young people remains scattered. As underlined by Yaqub,

"Migration process from origins to destination [can be] broken down into four phases: decision-making and organisation of the migration; motives for migration; modes of movement; situations at destinations [...]. Most literature on independent child migration views one or other phase, but not collectively as a whole process. A natural extension is to see the four phases as causally connected" (2009: 54-55).

Agreeing with Alanen that the debates of agency need to go beyond the dualism of structure and agency and look at it through a generational lens and to further explore the framework of analysis underlined by Punch (2016) and Yaqub (2009), I will discuss the concept of householding and generational relations in studying young migrants' agency.

2.1 Generational (intra- and inter) relations and Householding in migration

2.1.0 Generational relations

Childhood and adulthood are relational terms. Youth transition from childhood to youth, to adulthood and to old age. "Generational relations then denote the relationships between individuals located in different life stages (inter-generational relations) or between individuals sharing the life stage (intra-generational relations)" (Alanen 2009:159-160). If we want to understand youth, we need "[...] studies of relationships as youth is not a function of age but a social category constituted in relation to, and indeed in opposition to, the category adult" (Fitz and Hood-Williams 1982:65 cited in Alanen 2009:160). These relations are "produced and reproduced" in the process of interactions in "inter-generational practices" (Alanen 2009:161). This specific organization of social relations can be termed as generational order, which consists of "a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in an act within necessary interactions with each other" (Alanen 2009:161-162). Generational order is the point of departure in this section to discuss the studies that have used generational relations empirically in examining young migrants'

agency. Generational relations is understood as both intra- and inter-generational dimensions in this discussion.

Kabeer's inter-generational contract explores the generational relations between parent-child. The essence of the concept is based on the obligations between parents and children to care for each other during the different life stages of being young and old (Kabeer 2000: 465). The term contract suggests something that is fixed, but these relations are fluid and more so implicit by nature which are negotiated over time (Whitehead et al. 2005:15). The degree of reciprocity or negotiations in generational relations over time opens an important area for analyzing how these relations work (Whitehead et al. 2005:15).

Birth order and sibling composition, besides other categories such as age and gender in household division of labour helps us understand the intricacies (Punch 2001). Heissler's study in Bangladesh on children's migration and intra-household relations confirms how birth order and sibling composition shapes roles and responsibilities of children within households (2012:502). These relations influence decisions about who migrates to work to support the household (Heissler 2012:500-503). The concept of "negotiated and constrained interdependencies is a useful way of understanding the flexible and opportunistic, yet limited, nature of youth transitions in the context of migration" (Punch 2015:262).

As much as youth grow up within "classed and gendered" social and institutional practices (Wyn & White, 1997:117-118) it is also generationed (Alanen 2009). Generational order as an organizing concept of social relations needs a theoretical recognition equally to feminist theories like intersectionality that organizes gender, class, race as social relations of power (Alanen 2009:162-163).

"As if we could subsume them totally under just one form of organising social relations which – paradoxically – would be generational order of relations still waiting to be recognized, investigated and conceptualized" (Alanen 2009:162-163).

2.1.1 Householding

"The household is defined here as a social institution that reproduces itself not only through the physical bearing of children through the generations, but also through daily practices of mutual support, including income pooling and labor-sharing (Douglass 2012:4)."

Douglass' definition of household is useful, yet it implies a harmonious household. These collective practices of household in fact exist within unequal power relations stratified "[...] by gender and generation and stifles the voices of the unempowered – usually females and the young [and the old]" (Wolf 1990:44). The creation and maintenance of household within the interlinked relationships and activities not limited to the physical space of the household (Douglass 2014:314) needs to be examined through the lens of inequality (Hilti 2009:146). There is emerging literature on householding in multiple places on migrant workers and their household in varying geographical and economic contexts (see Nguyen 2014; Douglass 2014; Jolivet 2019; Thieme 2008; Hilti 2009). One such study focus on youth engaged in householding underlines that mobility reinforces and strengthens householding through negotiations "[...] between generations and siblings [...]" (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:124) and therefore the need to examine "[...] cross-dimensional relations of power [...]" towards a more nuanced understanding of householding practices within gendered intra- and inter-generational relations (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:136).

One of the common characteristics across these studies underlines the structural constraints under which migrants and their households operate in diversifying their householding practices. The studies underline householding is taking place across localities, borders, between emerging and developing economies. The motives of householding practices reveals the inequalities that exist between migrants belonging to different socio-economic background.

These practices are not limited to economic returns, but also involve non-economic aspects such as individual and collective aspirations (Douglass 2012:22; Jolivet 2019:12). These studies suggest the gendered nature of householding, and the disparity between source and receiving sites at macro level. Migration movement shows inequality, between the developed and developing countries [and between regions], where the latter ends up investing in the skills required in the industrialised countries (Kurian 2006:155).

Householding practices also show why maintaining households in more than one location is a survival strategy and an aspiration to improve quality of life in the context of poor social protection (Nguyen 2014:1386), and economic hardship or lack of development (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:128). Amongst the unemployed and the aged, women are the most affected due to deficit welfare services related to care and support as a result of economic downturn and reduced public expenditure (Kurian 2017:119 & 129). Shifting care work to women within household gets reinforced in poor and emerging economies and therefore householding in different economic contexts shows underlying structural inequalities.

Shifting household composition in the context of labour migration and broader structural change, the household is a site of gendered and generational negotiations (Nguyen 2014:125, Huijsmans 2014). These negotiations are extended across intra- and inter-generational relations through the performance of gendered age care work (Huijsmans 2013:1907). Unpacking householding practices in relation to intra- and inter-generational dimensions in the social reproduction of household is a useful framework.

This research explores the negotiations of intra- and inter-generational relations in the social reproduction of household, through the “practices of living here and there” (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:125). Building on the concepts of trans- and multilocal householding, I specifically emphasize the multilocal living defined by Hilti “as a way of organizing everyday life in and between different homes” (2009:145) by looking at multilocal living through the lens of inequality (Hilti 2009:146). As householding requires a labor force to keep the household occupied and functioning (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:135). In relation to migration, who gets to leave and stay is an important question to understand the inequality within household, which is negotiated and reconfigured both symbolically as a structure and spatially through gendered and generational relations (Nguyen 2014:1405).

I explore the everydayness of multilocal living (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:126, Hilti 2009), ‘here’ influences ‘there’ in the social reproduction of household through multilocal practices (Korzenevica and Agergaard 2017:126).

2.2 Circulatory migration and life course

Circulatory migration in the literature is adult (male) centric and often assumes the common form of mobility, i.e. adult male or family migration (see Breman 1996, 1985; De Haan 1997; Kurian 1989). This form of migration was observed among the landless caste in rural western India who usually were predominantly engaged in multiple employment as casual workers (Breman 1996:33), and in Industrial labour in Calcutta (De Haan 1997). The casual workers were mostly adult males, but women and children also accompanied and pooled their labour force to maximize their productivity (Breman 1996:45). Young men circulate between village and the cities as casual workers before they marry and settle down (De Haan 1997:939), daily commuting within short distances and semi or permanent settlement away from home (Breman 1996:33). The greater the distance of employment, the period of absence away from home increased (Breman 1996:33). The workers moved horizontally between seasonal farm work and industrial work based on the availability of work (Breman 1996:33, also see Kurian

2015:318). The role of the jobber played an important role to get workers by paying in advance as a form of control over the worker (Bremman 1996:94). Workers also exercised agency by leaving the jobber or finding another employer when they were dissatisfied or cheated (Bremman 2010:53). While all of this is significant in understanding the form of labour circulation, the changes over the multiple events of mobility and employment lacks attention, with labour regime remaining the central focus.

Kurian underlines this form of labour circulation as circulatory migration which was observed during the industrial period in India from mid-19th century “where the industrial worker had a base in the village and typically moved to the towns on a temporary basis, in time returning home” (1989:12). Circulatory migration in this research is defined as “[...] whereby movers do not change their usual place of residence in the village but are absent at an urban destination for periods longer than a single day.” (Hugo 1982:61).

Labour circulation occurs as a result of economic reasons and structural factors such as lack of employment in the locality and is a means for survival which forms an important part of the household income (Bremman 1985:196). The empirical findings suggests the importance of women as stayers while the men are away working (Bremman 1996:87), and children making “[...] a fifth of all migrants” between 10 or 12 age in the labour force, and younger children below this age attending to chores and looking after their siblings to free the adults to work (Bremman 1985:207). However, Bremman’s analysis is less attentive on the generational dynamics of the workers’ household which made labour circulation possible for the workers or even more productive by pooling labour of women and young children within the household.

Circulatory migration was also observed in East Africa where land is a form of social security and social relations (Walter 1967:63), and therefore the availability of land or lack of access to land is important in the practice of this form of migration. The availability of land is intertwined with obligations where the young and able are expected to maintain those in need (Walter 1967:63). On the contrary, in Indonesia the context of land scarcity and limited livelihood opportunities in both rural and urban areas meant migrants (mostly male) moved between villages and the cities to cope with the lean season by looking for better income elsewhere (Hugo 1982:70). Furthermore, Rumbiak (1978), underlined in his study of migration that young men temporarily left the village to accumulate enough to pay bride-price, thereby outmigration often becoming a necessity for young men in some villages (cited in Hugo 1982:68). These observations indicate that circulatory migration was practiced within structural constraints such as lack of employment, lack of access to land.

Literature on circular migration is usually focused on structural factors and socio-cultural aspects. Guo et al., in their study on domestic workers with an age group between 18 to 49 years underlined that a life course approach is required to understand the dynamic practices in circulatory migration (2011:52). Migration decisions are influenced by perceived opportunities at different life phases (Kley and Mulder 2009:73). Additionally, life transitions such as marriage, childbirth and family responsibilities might affect women’s mobility (Guo et al. 2011:53). Notably, age may also affect mobility and thereby resulting in declining mobility in young adulthood and over the years (Geist and McManus 2008:301). Mobility is situated between meeting economic needs and fulfilling assigned gender roles throughout different life phases, and therefore position in life course and gendered family obligations have a great influence on the type of return and circulatory migration (Guo et al. 2011:68). Thus, this shows that the intra- and inter-generational relations within households is an important space where key migrations decisions are considered, planned and realized (Kley and Mulder 2009:73), and this underscores the importance of studying young people’s migration through the lens of circulatory migration and life course. As underlined by Stockdale et al., “the decision to stay (or leave) is likely to be negotiated at subsequent life stages and life events” (2017:6). It suggests that migration trajectories change over time and

are non-linear by nature. Looking at circulatory migration where mobility takes place in relation to multiple events over time, the life course perspective adds a potential of analyzing life in motion. Here, life course is defined as an approach to understand “[...] the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human [youth] agency” (Elder 1998:4).

2.3 The conceptual framework

In this chapter I have tried assessing relevant theories and concepts as an analytical lens to study youth outmigration from the Assam tea plantations to other parts of India within the first two decades of the 21st century. I propose a framework to study young peoples’ migration through the lens of generational order and multilocal householding, circulatory migration and life course. These concepts applied in conjunction for studying migration as a non-linear process can help in understanding the complexities of young people’s interdependent lives and the types of migration they engage in during their life course. The framework will be employed in the empirical context of the *badli* system, the plantation labour regime to answer the main research question: Who among the youth gets to leave, return and stay and why? How is this shaped by the intra- and inter-generational relations within households under the *badli* labour system enacted in the tea plantations of Assam?

Circulatory migration in this research is “[...] whereby movers do not change their usual place of residence in the village but are absent at an urban destination for periods longer than a single day.” (Hugo 1982:61). This definition helps in capturing the highly mobile lives of youth from the plantations who shuttle between the plantation to cities in other parts of India for work. Drawing on the work of global householding, trans- and multilocal householding, I emphasize the concept of multilocal living by Hilti “as a way of organizing everyday life in and between different homes” (Hilti 2009:145) and look at multilocal living through the lens of inequality (Hilti 2009:146). I recognize that householding practices exist within unequal power relations stratified “[...] by gender and generation and stifles the voices of the unempowered – usually females and the young [and the old]” (Wolf 1990:44).

I will use the concept of generational (intra- and inter-generational) relations “[...] between individuals located in different life stages (inter-generational relations) or between individuals sharing the life stage (intra-generational relations)” (Alanen 2009:159-160). The concept of “negotiated and constrained interdependencies [...] within and across generations” (Punch 2015) is found useful in unpacking unequal relations. I work with the assumption that gender and generational (age, birth order) relations influences the everyday practices of householding and migration decisions during the life course of youth.

The youth in this research belong to households from low socioeconomic background as defined by the minimum wage standards in the context (see section 1.0 footnote) and are a homogenous group. Contextually looking at multilocal living through the lens of inequality recognizes the inequality across and between multilocal householding practices. Working in conjunction with relational concepts such as generational order and life course to study the circulatory/non-linear process of migration provides a framework in unpacking the “negotiated and constrained interdependencies” within and across generations (Punch 2015) enacted in everyday practices of householding in the context of the tea plantation labour regime and *badli* system.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

To understand the processes of leaving, returning and staying I situated my research methodologically during the period of return. This approach privileged the voice of youth and allowed inclusion of the perspectives of their significant other relations such as siblings and parents that shaped their migration decision making. Situating myself as a researcher in the return period of youth enabled me to understand migration from a static location by studying preceding and anticipated migration events. This research used an ethnographic orientation as a method but was not based entirely upon on participant observation (Huijsmans 2010:53). This chapter discusses the justification of the methodological choices and their implications. The sections are as follows: access to the plantation, the research approach and methods of data collection, identification of respondents, positionality, reflexivity, ethics and limitations of the research.

3.1 Access to the plantation

The study was conducted in one of the tea plantations in Udalguri district in Assam, Northeast India with an approximate population size of 7000. This tea plantation was chosen considering accessibility both in terms of geographical location and gatekeepers,¹² as the research had to be undertaken within a short timeframe. As a former NGO worker who worked in an anti-trafficking project in the location, my work experience and the gatekeepers' social network on the plantation gave me leverage to obtain permission from the plantation management. I stayed on the tea plantation labour lines from 12th July to August 13th, 2019. Staying on location made it easy for me to meet youth, their families, community members and the plantation management.

3.1.0 The youth and their households

The respondents were identified through “purposive sampling” (Bryman 2012:418). I interviewed¹³ 18 (7 females, 11 males) return¹⁴ youth migrants between the age of 17 to early 30s. The age group was chosen in order to study the multiple events of migration over the life course. Nine of the youth belonged to households sized up to 4 members, and another nine from 8 members and above. The type of household is an important observation here regarding the transfer of *badli* and the intra- and inter-generational dynamics which will be discussed in chapter 4.

Eight youth migrants (6 females, 2 male) worked as domestic workers, and one female in a yoga centre. However, all seven females had their first job as domestic worker. One male worked in an automobile shop, three males worked in restaurants, one male worked in a hospital in preparing food for patients. Four respondents worked as security guards in addition to extra work in construction, a hospital and as a sales boy in a clothing shop. Eleven out of the 18 youth worked in the plantation part-time upon their return. Five of them were full-time workers in the plantation when I interviewed them.

¹² Two former colleagues at an NGO who lives on the tea plantation

¹³ Interview durations ranged between 30 to 90 mins.

¹⁴ Return here means, returning home for a holiday, to attend festival, etc.

Table 1.0
Generations residing together n=18

	Nuclear	2 Gen	3 Gen	4 Gen
Male	6	1	4	
Female	4	2		1

*Generation Source: Fieldwork 2019.

Table 1.1
Level of education n=18

	Primary	Middle school	High school	Sec.school	University
Male	3	1	3	1	3
Female	3	1	3	0	0
Total	6	2	6	1	3

Source: Fieldwork 2019.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

In-depth interviewing was the key method of data collection, complemented with participant observation. I met the respondents in their homes or in neighbors' and relatives' homes. Out of the 18 respondents, 11 youth respondents (7 male, 4 female) invited us to their home, 2 respondents (1 male, 1 female) asked us to come to their relative's¹⁵ house, 3 respondents (3 male, 1 female) met me where I was staying. I carried out participant observation of respondents in their homes during the interviews. I also observed plantation workers during their working hours and daily in their neighborhoods to get acquainted with everyday activities. The decision to use in depth interviews as the main method was influenced by the initial introductory meetings to brief the potential respondents about my research. During these interactions I became aware that several of them were engaged in fulltime paid work in the tea garden or piecework in the locality such as planting paddy, or breaking stones in the river. To meet respondents during their working days, even if only to observe them would have meant distracting them from their work. Workers on the plantation get a per day production target in order to receive the minimum wage. Meeting them at work would have hampered their income. Considering these circumstances, I used in-depth interviews as the main method of data collection but complemented with participant observation.

All in-depth interviews had 2 to 3 follow-up interviews. Based on the in-depth interviews I sampled the key informants. For example, one of the respondents is working in the plantation, so I identified a management staff and labour union representative who could provide more information on the process of inducting migrant workers back into work, their wages, benefits, etc. Another respondent mentioned that she migrated for her elder brother's marriage to earn money, so I met her brother. In this manner key informants were identified based on the information respondents provided. The in-depth interview questions were guided by: The first migration decision, the migration process and types of network respondents accessed, the employment experience in the cities, the decision to return, and

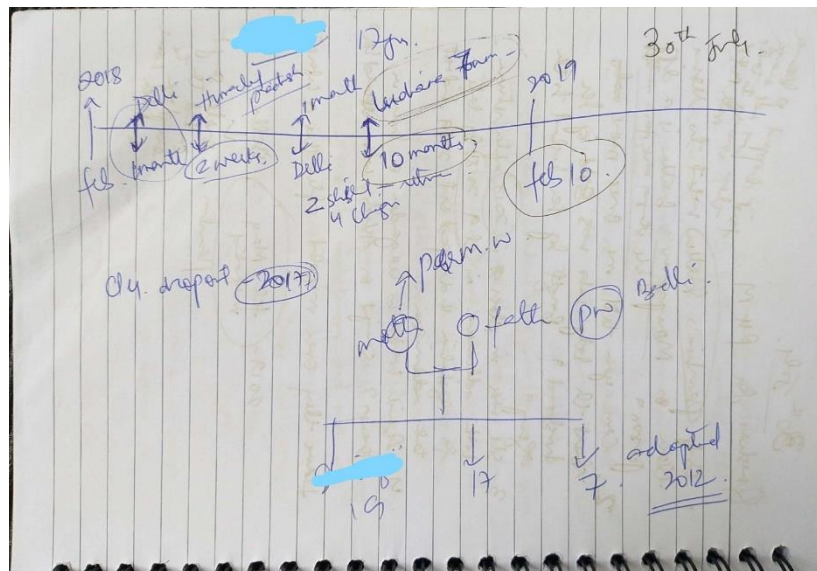
¹⁵ One male youth met us in his uncle's and grandmother's house, the female youth met us in her grandmother's house in both the interviews.

type of employment during the return period in the plantation. Informal discussions were also held with 16 key informants (4 female 12 male) who represented the labour union, the church, a former agent of a placement agency, plantation management staff, parents, extended relatives and siblings of the youth respondents.

3.2.0 Mapping and family tree diagram

In addition to in-depth interview and participant observation, I drew migration timelines and family tree diagrams (see Miller 2000:46) as youth narrated their stories to me. To study the multiple events of leaving and return, the life course approach was used to study the “sequences of events and transitions” Bailey (2009:407). The mapping provided a snapshot view of the multiple events of leaving and return, and migration decisions over the years. The family tree was useful to understand the household composition in terms of gender, birth order, age, generational relations. Both tools were key in making sense of the interconnected life course events of significant others in relation to the life of the youth migrants.

Figure 3.0
Migration timeline and family tree diagram



Source: Fieldwork 2019.

3.2.1 Process of data analysis

I transcribed 17 audio recorded¹⁶ interviews. Informal meetings were not recorded on site to allow a natural conversation. All interviews were conducted in Hindi by me, except for few words or sentences in Orriya and Assamese languages for which I took the help of my gatekeeper to translate on the spot and to simultaneously record. I used thematic analysis and manually organized the data into four broad categories: 1) the decision to leave; 2) employment experience in the cities; 3) decision to return and the intra--inter-generational relations within households; 4) the return period and employment opportunities on the plantations/locality; and 5) their future migration plans. Information generated from informal discussions, in-depth interview, participant observation, migration timeline and family tree were then triangulated.

¹⁶ One of the respondents did not agree to be recorded.

3.3 Positionality, Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

With the awareness that “a researcher’s positioning in a web of power relations shapes how subjects engage with them, and therefore informs all aspects of field research” (Nast, 1994, cited in Crossa 2012:114). My multiple identities as a former NGO worker, studying abroad, and as a single woman not from their community worked to my advantage. My work experience and knowledge, together with my multiple identities helped me to access people across gender, age, and class within the community and plantation regime. Ng (2011:439) argues that “multiple identities could work to a researcher’s advantage in understanding the dynamics of the people within the locale.” My multiple identities gave me the leverage to discuss issues at par with community leaders who were usually men. It also helped me to access the plantation management to get their perspectives on my research. My gatekeepers and my knowledge and experience as an NGO worker in an anti-trafficking project enabled me to access the youth, but at the same time posed a risk of being misunderstood, since my work history in the area involved preventing migration of young people especially under the age of 18. In order to gain trust from the youth, multiple meetings took place before the actual interview took place. This was an effort to “[...] carefully self monitor the impact of [our] biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on [the] research” (Berger 2015:220).

The respondents were identified by my gatekeepers, a very particular sample who were known to them through their previous anti-trafficking work. To address this limitation, we also identified additional respondents using snowballing technique among respondents and key informants. The fieldwork was only for one month and this meant I could only interview youth who have returned home in the particular time that I was there. Ethical considerations involved obtaining consent and maintaining anonymity of respondents and key informants and choices of data collection methods (see section 3.2). This was consciously done in awareness of the power dynamics between the plantation management and the workers in accordance to do no harm principles, achieved through “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation” (Berger 2015:220). The youth respondents in this research have independently migrated and are therefore considered as capable of making their own decisions. As an adult single woman interviewing youth, it was important for me to maintain social and cultural appropriateness. Interviews took place in the presence of another adult, usually my gatekeeper and family members around the house. In one of the interviews, due to unforeseen circumstances my gatekeeper had to leave, and I was left alone with the 18-year-old male respondent as his mother and siblings had gone to the weekly market. I requested for a neighbor to be present which happened to be another young boy, but I went with the principle of two is better than one in that situation of dilemma.

3.3.0 Obtaining consent

Consent was obtained verbally from the respondents by briefing them about the purpose of my research. I had introductory meetings with 16 out of 18 respondents. I met two of the respondents when I was meeting a respondent in their house and therefore consent, and interview took place simultaneously. The introductory meetings were consciously organized to ensure that the respondent felt safe to talk to me. Verbal consent was more contextually suited as using printed paper and documents to sign could make respondents nervous as it is associated with many governmental and NGO activities which could also be misunderstood. The consent process was repeated in every follow-up interview to ensure that respondents were willing to continue the conversations, and if not, they would have the right to refuse to be interviewed further.

Chapter 4 *Badli* as gendered and generational practice

4.0 Introduction

The analysis of this chapter is based on my fieldwork findings. I argue that the *badli* system is a gendered and generational practice transferred from parents to children, within the plantation labour regime. I argue that the everyday householding practices in the context of *badli* provides a nuanced understanding of how gender, age and birth order shape intra- and inter-generational obligations and determines the decision of youth to leave and stay. I discuss this in the following sections: maintaining the *badli* status, household composition and the labour force organization, and the gendered and generational relations involved in becoming a *badli*.

4.1 Maintaining the *badli* status

All the youth I interviewed have at least one family member working as a permanent worker in the tea plantation. The question of who will become the *badli* upon their parent's retirement emerged in the interviews while youth narrated their migration experiences in the cities. Who will become the *badli* of their parents, was usually responded to with a sense of obligation and ambivalence (see section 1.2.1). The decision on who takes the *badli* role after their parents' retirement informs the decision as to who may become a stayer and who will leave again.

There are several determining factors that keeps the *badli* status relevant after one becomes a *badli*. In order to understand this, it is important to understand the labour force organization in the tea plantations. Workers are organized into permanent workers, temporary workers, and other category (OC). For example, Nikhil¹⁷ became a *badli* worker, but was absent from work for almost 9 years as he went *bahar*¹⁸ (literal translation is 'outside'; it denotes going out/migrating out). They lost a part of the house he received as a *badli*. The management divided the house into two family quarters¹⁹ as A & B²⁰ as there was no one working on the plantation from his household. The housing provision is included in the worker's wage (see section 1.0). This shows, to live on the plantation housing workers must work on the plantation regularly. Nikhil's elderly mother is retired, stepfather does not work on the plantation and his 18-year-old niece had also gone out to work. After his return, Nikhil works in the factory and only earns daily wage. His long period of absence has consequences on the housing provision as well his removal from the permanent worker status.

The *badli* system requires that someone from the household needs to be working on the plantation in order to keep the house. This is further underlined in what Lily told me about her leaving, "I went without telling my grandmother. After I left, the company sahib²¹ came to the house and my grandmother told him that she has a girl who will do the [plantation]

¹⁷ Pseudonym

¹⁸ Respondents usually said they went '*bahar*' when they mentioned their outmigration

¹⁹ A typical housing on the plantation is measured at 10.30 ft*11.00 ft. This consists of two bedrooms, a small entrance room and a kitchen area

²⁰ Nikhil's mother mentioned it during an interview on 21st July 2019.

²¹ A term used as a sign for respect after a name. Here Sahib means a management representative.

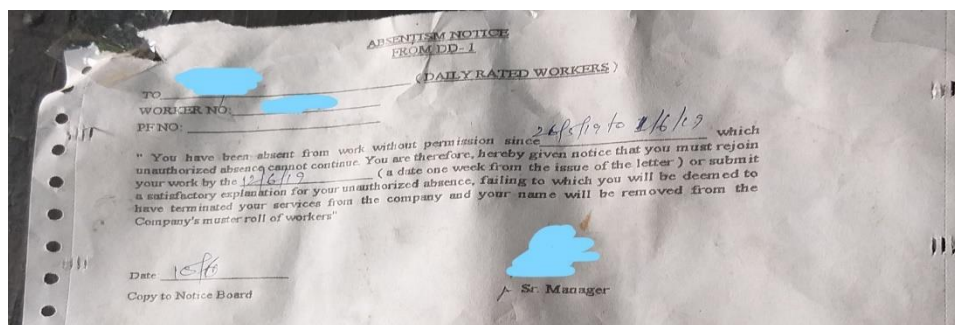
work.” Lily and her uncle’s absence from the plantation work had consequences upon the housing provision. The consequences are especially felt in the physical space of their householding.

“I felt very nice to come home but the one small thing I noticed was that the house has become smaller. When I was here before (before she migrated), my house was all of this [indicating that the part on the right side now occupied by someone else had also belonged to them]”²²

This resonates with Korzenevica and Agergaard’s argument that the “maintenance of intra- and inter-generational relations reinforces the household as a meaningful place” (2017:124) including the physical space. The *badli* system reinforces the generational practice of householding by necessitating a family’s labor on the plantation in order to keep the housing provision.

According to the labour force hierarchy, Nikhil’s absence from work made him an OC worker exempted from all benefits. Workers attendance is monitored using computer software²³ and are accordingly notified see Figure 1.1. The management transfers the permanent worker status to another working member of the household if the worker remains absent for long.²⁴ From the household perspective the housing provision remains the same and only the permanent status changes between household members. In practice, *badli* can also be transferred to a willing acquaintance with some amount of cash exchange agreed between the two parties when there are no kin to become a *badli* worker.²⁵ The management has control over a worker and his household through the housing provision. The benefit of *badli* serves the interest of the workers in having access to land and housing, and for the interest of management as it is a means to control and discipline workers. Thus, the *badli* system is regulated by the plantation management through the labour force regime.

Figure 4.1
Absenteeism Notice



Source: Fieldwork 2019 (A notice on a worker’s door. *not Nikhil’s)

4.2 Household composition and labour force organization

Historically, workers on the Assam tea plantations were brought in from other parts of India as indentured labour, along with women and children (see section 1.2.0). The practice of

²² Interviewed 21st July 2019

²³ A representative from the management reported that despite the increase in wages, absenteeism has increased 40% annually since 2014. the system was introduced to address absenteeism.

²⁴ Informal discussion with representative of labour union 1st August 2019

²⁵ Informal discussion with a worker

labour recruitment for the plantation is linked to housing provision. As we have seen in section 1.2.0, planters were more interested to recruit families as this reduced the cost of labour. The youth in this research belong to households of nuclear and joint families, with up to four generations living together (see section 3.1.1). While joint families is not a new concept of households in this part of Northeast India, the *badli* system shapes the household composition and size to a certain degree, as only a permanent worker receives the housing provision and the benefit is shared amongst household members, including children of marriageable age or those who are married.

Young people are likely to be temporary workers and continue to form the majority labour force as they provide cheap labour for the plantation (see section 1.2.1). This is supported with the argument made in section 1.2.0 in that youth can only become a *badli* after their parents' retirement or death. At the most, two children will become a *badli* if both parents are permanent workers. Therefore, most youth only have the prospect of being temporary workers unless they find employment outside. Furthermore, most of these youth do not work on the plantation on a regular basis, or only doing so when they return from the cities. These irregularities are likely to place them as other category workers within the labour force, a position that is paid only wages without any welfare benefits. Historically, young people have always been casual workers within the plantation labour regime, working at half the wages of adults (see Bhowmik et al. 1996:11). Although, the wage difference between adolescent and adult young people is no longer practiced, their status within the labour force remains as temporary workers and they are dependent on adult workers for housing provisions.

4.3 Gendered and generational relations: Who becomes a permanent worker?

4.3.0 Household of Rita

Rita²⁶ is 25 years old and is the youngest of four siblings. She went to Delhi to work and returned home seven years ago. I asked her, when looking back if she would have liked to go out again?

“She said, yes I wanted to go again but my mother was very sick, and she needed to be given bath and all which others in the family could not do.”

Rita mentioned that her elder brother also went out to work some years ago and that's when her sister-in-law had extra marital affair²⁷. She lives with her mother, unmarried brother, two of her nephews and a niece, the children of her eldest brother who is separated from his wife. Her 17-year-old nephew has gone out to work. In the absence of her sister-in-law Rita is the care giver for the children and her sick mother. She started to work in the tea garden only one year ago. She said, she is training to take the *badli* as her mother became retired. I asked her what about marriage? She laughed and said what marriage? As an unmarried young woman in the household, Rita becoming a *badli* is shaped by her gendered caring role for her sick and ageing mother and her brother's children in the absence of her sister-in-law. The prospective *badli* might have been different if her sister-in-law was there and if Rita was inclined to get married. Rita's caring role extends not only inter-generationally between

²⁶ Interviewed 13th and 22nd July 2019

²⁷ I learnt from my gatekeeper

mother-daughter, but also intra-- and inter-generationally for her brother and to his young children as an aunt. This resonates with Huijsmans argument, the performance of gendered care across generations, extending between grandchildren and grandparents as “doing gendered age” (Huijsmans 2013). Rita’s becoming a *badli* provides the housing need of the household and it frees her elder brothers to engage in other forms of employment outside the plantation.

This shows that Rita’s labour of caring for her mother and the young children is crucial in keeping the house, and it also allows her brothers to pursue employment outside the plantation. Household reproduces through the daily practices of mutual support, including income pooling and labour sharing (Douglass 2012:4). In Rita’s case, these supports were not just mutual but ‘obligatory’ within the generational relations. Rita’s prospect of becoming a *badli* became clearer over time since her return, as the family composition changed due to separation, illness, ageing and the presence of young children. This agrees with what Stockdale et al. observed, “decisions to stay are associated with key events not only in the life of the stayer but in the lives of family members also” (2017:4).

The prospect of *badli* can change over the life course of a family through birth, growing into adulthood, and ageing which shapes the intra-- and inter-generational contract. While Rita and her brother’s migration ended, her nephew’s migration began. Rita’s life course as a young single woman in relation to other members in the household situates her in becoming the *badli* worker.

4.3.1 Household of Lina

17-year-old Lina²⁸ is the youngest of three siblings within a highly mobile household where four of its members are engaged in migration. Both her parents and her two elder brothers periodically go out for different purposes. When I met Lina, she was alone at home. Her father and brother were in *desh*²⁹ to plant rice. Her mother came home for holiday from Kerala but had left about a week ago. Lina has gone out twice, at first to work in Delhi, but her brother who also works in Delhi brought her back home. She then went back to school, but in the middle of her academic year, she went to West Bengal for some work and was late for her class 9 registration, as a result she dropped out of school.

Lina’s staying at home is preferred by her family as they go out to other states to work. She said that her father sent her mother to work in Kerala so that they can build a house in *desh*. When I met her father³⁰ he told me,

“I sent my wife to work because we needed to build house there [in Jharkhand]. I asked him if she was willing to go? He said, she was not willing, but she went. With her earnings we have now built the house. What to do, her mother went out I cannot take care of her [Lina]. My children have not failed in school, but because their mother is out I am not able to take care of them well, so they all dropped out of schooling.”

With her mother away, Lina’s father took on the role of her mother, even though he suggests that he was not able to care for the children like their mother. This example shows the reconfiguration and negotiation of household responsibilities and livelihood opportunities when family members move among different locations (see Nguyen 2014:1386; Thieme 2008:51). Additionally, Lina as a stayer in the absence of her parents and brothers makes her the household head and she is key to maintaining the household. One of

²⁸ In-depth interview 24th July and 5th August 2019

²⁹ During the interviews and conversations, the youth and their families I met mentioned *desh*. *Desh* usually means their native state, currently the Indian states - Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar

³⁰ Informal conversation 5th August 2019

such studies on householding practices among young migrants argues that “[...] intra-household relations need to be appreciated as gendered relations of relative seniority which are in the process of householding [is] constantly made and remade [...] through staying and leaving” (Huijsmans 2014:294).

Lina’s father emphasized that sending his wife to Kerala was a decision to support the householding in *desh*, to which his eldest son also contributed. They plan to continue to keep their households both on the plantation as well as in *desh*. Her father said, “We have a house and land in Jharkhand, so we will leave but some will stay here (the plantation).” This reaffirms that Lina’s staying on the plantation house is important for the rest of the family to maintain both households. The *badli* transfer for Lina’s household seems unclear at this point. According to Korzenevica and Agergaard “[...] multilocality is shaped through roles assigned to and negotiated among young sibling” (2017:135). However, Lina’s household shows that householding practices are transferred and negotiated between parents and children, as well as between siblings in migration.

Similarly, Sonia³¹ (Lina’s aunt) and her husband also live in different places, diversifying their livelihood and education opportunities for their children. Sonia works on the plantation and takes care of her children as her husband stays in Jharkhand most of the time doing farming and taking care of his mother. During the conversation she mentioned that she has moved two of her children to Ranchi (a city in Jharkhand) for schooling and that they eventually plan to shift to Ranchi as a family. Her husband took on the caring role for his ageing mother and doing farming in *desh*, while she cared for their young children by staying on the plantation. This shared role between the spouses allowed householding in different places. Sonia and her husband are engaged in multilocal householding by diversifying their household labour force. Korzenevica and Agergaard underlines this point as “the multiplicity of ‘here and there’ [...] defined by intra- and inter-generational contracts not only contribute to social reproduction of the household but also reinforce its importance as the meaningful place” (2017:135).

Lina’s family’s multilocal householding practice reveals the unequal power relations within the household. On the one hand, Lina’s mother unwillingly went out to earn money to build the house in *desh*. On the other hand, Lina’s attempt to go out and work was stopped by her elder brother when he brought her back home. Lina took the role of her mother to stay at home while her mother earned money to build a house in *desh*, both with a degree of unwillingness, but doing so under the decision-making role of the males in the household. While this may suggest a household strategy, the men in the house are the ones deciding for the women to stay to maintain the household (see Wolf 1990).

4.4.3 Household of Raju

Raju³² is a 25-year-old and is the second born out of five siblings. His mother is a permanent worker on the tea plantation. Raju’s account illustrates that *badli* may not always be the desired choice by young people; it is negotiated amongst siblings to continue the householding.

“Now I need to put in an application. She [his mother] left because of sickness; she couldn’t work. Having thought about the seat [*badli*], someone has to take it (*lena pareka*). He is good in studies [referring to his 22-year-old brother Manoj]. He has done higher secondary, so my thought is we should not give him [the *badli*]. He says that he will take it, but I am not supporting him that he should. It is like that, for one mother there may be two sons, but we

³¹ Informal conversation 30th July 2019

³² Raju Interviewed 10th August 2019

also have our own individual lives. So, for one small mistake, for his whole life he will say he is well [referring to Raju], and me, I am out here [suggesting Manoj's thoughts about working in the tea garden]. That is why I don't pressure him, but now he is working. Mummy is not working, and we need work to eat. That is why he is going for work, but it is not sure that he will take the seat. He must also think about his life like me. It is his life nah, how he wants to live, that is why we don't force him."

Raju's thoughts on his brother Manoj taking the *badli* shows that the decision to become a *badli* might not be a desirable choice if youth have other employment opportunities. Raju has no plans to work in the plantation. He suggests that his brother Manoj is good in studies and should not become a *badli*, but at the same time he stresses that someone must take the *badli*. While Raju shows sensitivity regarding Manoj's decision to take the *badli*, it also reveals the tension between siblings regarding who will become a *badli* and what this means for their future. For Manoj becoming a *badli* will mean he will not go out again. When I asked Raju, if Manoj also went out to work? He responded,

"Yes, but it was nice because he used to send every month 10 thousand rupees (124.99 euros). With his money we built the house, we built a kitchen and also spent for ma's [mother] sickness. He returned because ma was sick. He called and said he will come because it's been long that he has been away. He said "If possible, I will take the seat [*badli*] of my mother." After one week of returning, he has been working in the tea garden."³³

Manoj's income contribution to the household resulting from his migration is significant. It also shows Manoj's conscious decision of returning to fulfil his inter-generational obligation to care for his sick mother by volunteering to take the *badli*. Raju's career plans outside the plantation leaves him out from becoming a *badli*. Besides Raju and Manoj, there are also two sisters in the household. One of them is a divorcee and lives with them. Raju said, "since she is my sister, I will have to take care of her, I cannot leave her so she stays with us." As he emphasizes the importance of education and that his brother is good in studies, It may be that one of the two sisters, especially the divorcee, may become a prospective *badli*.

However, Manoj's display of obligation towards his mother makes him the prospective *badli* now. This might change if Manoj or Raju brings a young wife to become a *badli* in order for them to pursue employment outside the plantation like Rita's brothers did (see section 4.3.0). One of my conversations with an elderly woman who is a permanent worker and is now close to retirement suggests how daughters-in-law can serve the purpose of transferring the *badli* so as to free males in the household to work outside the plantation. She indicated that her future daughter-in-law may be her prospective *badli*.³⁴ This shows that it is not just among siblings, but young sisters-in-law are also anticipated to contribute to householding through the *badli* system.

4.4.4 The retired permanent worker

When I visited 18-year-old Lily at her house, I met her grandmother Deepa³⁵. She spoke in orriya³⁶, narrating how she went out asking around when Lily's uncle (her son) and granddaughter went missing (here it means going out). She said that her son was missing for 9 years. As we sat in the small front room with a bed, I noted the adjacent room door was

³³ Raju Interviewed 10th August 2019

³⁴ Field notes from informal discussions

³⁵ 21st July 2019

³⁶ Native language

open slightly. There were farming tools by the side of a bed, but it looked like a storage room. Later, I came to know Lily and her grandparents sleep in that room. Deepa retired as a permanent worker and her husband works as a wood cutter. As there was no one working on the plantation since her granddaughter and her son went out to work, the house which had been allotted to them was divided into two parts to accommodate one more family (see section 4.1). Lily's³⁷ account here shows how her grandmother, in her parents' absence, took on the caregiving role and she expressed her inter-generational obligation towards her grandmother for doing so.

“My parents live outside, I do not know where my mother lives. When I was this big (she gestured with her hands the size of a little girl) my father left me. Since then I have been with my grandmother. I am the only granddaughter [...]. When I was small, he (father) used to beat me a lot [...] my grandmother, while trying to protect me, underwent difficulty. My grandmother saved me.”

Lily has gone out twice, and this is how she narrated how she went out:

“I told him (the one with whom she migrated) my grandmother will be alone because she does not earn [...]. I said, who will take care of grandmother? Then they said we will take care of her. Later on, I said yes.”

Lily emphasizes that in her parents' absence, her grandmother took care of her. Her grandmother took on the parental role in the absence of her parents. This resonates with Utrata's argument in her study in Russia on young single mothers who were able to gain and retain their “youth privilege” with the support of their retired ageing mothers, further reinforced by the labor market desirability for young workers (Utrata 2011:619). Lily's grandmother continues her gendered care work within the household even after her retirement. Lily mentioned that her grandmother “stays at home and cuts grasses for the goat and the cow.” She also brews alcohol to sell. This illustrates that her grandmother continues to economically contribute in householding. However, Lily sees her grandmother as needing to be cared for, as she has retired. Lily's grandmother's narrative suggests that old retired parents and grandparents play an important role within the gendered and generational householding in the plantation labour regime and *badli* system.

Even though Lily is not able to support her grandmother economically, she does act within the expectation of the implicit inter-generational obligation. Both Lily and her grandmother are performing their gendered inter-generational obligation as their life course intersects. Huijsmans (2013) underlines the gendered care work obligations performed between grandparents and granddaughter as “doing gendered age.” In the context of the plantation labour regime, workers earn a subsistence wage with limited social security, the everyday practices of householding are managed within limited resources. The gendered role of retired workers in householding practices needs to be further explored for nuanced understanding of householding in migration within structural constraints.

4.5 Conclusion

The housing provision that comes along with the *badli* status is important in two ways. 1) It is a means to control and discipline workers by the management. 2) It serves the interest of the workers in having access to housing and land on the plantation, and they further diversify this by engaging in multilocal householding by going out to the cities to work, as well as going to *desh* and working on their land. Keeping the permanent worker status valid

³⁷ Interviewed 5th August 2019

necessitates households provide labour force to work on the plantation regularly. The *badli* system shows that household responsibilities are shared and negotiated both in physical and spatial dimensions of intra- and inter-generational relations by youth and their families in multilocal householding practices on and outside the plantation. The negotiations are nuanced as gender, age, birth order, and the intersecting life events of the youth and significant others – parents, siblings, grandparents situate youth as a prospective *badli* or a stayer in relation to migration.

Chapter 5 Leaving, Returning and Staying over the life course

5.0 Introduction

Studies on young peoples' migration often treats leaving as a one-time event and tends to focus on the leaving and less on the process of returning and staying (see section 2.0). More so, it neglects the link to householding, and generational relations young people have in relation to migration (exception Huijsmans 2014; Korzenevica 2017). Studies that have underlined the circulating nature of labour are focused on adult migrants and on the historiography of the labour regime (see de Haan 1997; Breman 1996, 1985; Kurian 1989). Based on fieldwork, this chapter presents the findings underlying the processes of leaving, returning and staying as interlinked to the life course of youth and their families. I examine how migration aspirations and motives change over the course of returning and leaving and therefore each migration event differs from the preceding. The findings show that the agency of the youth is complex and is connected not just to their life course but also to the life course of others in the family. I argue that the prospect of youth becoming a *badli* is constitutive, but not exclusive in shaping decisions to stay and leave. The extent of choices varies among the youth, and are connected to their migration histories, their present situation in their household but most importantly these choices are anticipated to be renegotiated in the future.

5.1 *Dekhenge* “we shall see when the time comes”

The life course decision process related to youth leaving and their subsequent migration changes over time as they grow older. The interlocking dimensions of their life course with their siblings' and parents' life course events - such as marriage, old age and retirement - have influence on their anticipated future migration and it is likely to be renegotiated as they progress through the life course. Youth's position in the life course and gendered family obligations shapes their migration decisions (Guo et al. 2011:68). In Rishi's³⁸ case, his father's retirement and his responsibilities at home will decide how long he can continue going out to work. As his father's retirement draws near, Rishi is closer to becoming a *badli* and this will determine his future as it relates to migration.

“I will have to take (the *badli*). My father has around 10 years to work until he retires. In the meantime, I plan to continue migrating for another 10 years and after that I cannot. But if I have to take the responsibility of running the household from now on it won't be possible for me to continue migrating for that long. In his words, *ghar chalana pareka* (Literal translation “have to manage the house”). If I cannot continue migrating for 10 years, it is okay, I will at least continue migrating for 5 years and then I will return for good.”

We see here how Rishi's migration plan is changing as he ages, his position in the family and the prospect of becoming *badli* is also changing. Three years back when he first went out to work it was more about leaving home and doing something for himself but the quote above reflects that has changed with the responsibilities he anticipates in the future. The reason he gave when he first went out to work was,

³⁸ Interviewed on 10th August 2019

“I got bored sitting at home, I also didn’t like the things at home...there were problems with money, then sickness...so I thought as times passes, I also need to move up.”

Although he did not mention it, I came to know later that his mother left his father and married another man and had gone out to work. When I asked him what the problem at home was, he only said, “my mother is of different type”. At the time of the interview Rishi had been at home for seven months and was working in the plantation factory. He said, since his mother is returning home, he will meet her and after that he will leave again. Rishi’s anticipated return and stay is shaped by his mother’s absence, the prospect of becoming *badli*, and his obligations towards his siblings as the first born.

“I have my sister and brother, my mother is not at home, my father is also getting old and I have to take care of them and then run the household.”

Rishi’s decision about leaving and returning is shaped by his gendered and generational obligations towards his father as a prospective *badli* and towards his siblings as the first born. Similarly, Himanshu’s³⁹ mother will retire soon as a permanent worker. Although Himanshu is only 17 years old, he will become the *badli* since his elder sister has a disability and his youngest sister is just 7 years old. This makes him the prospective *badli* without having to negotiate.

“My plan is that I will work here, work in my mother's seat. My mother is getting old, so I will take her seat (Mother will retire in 3-4 years). I will stay here (on the plantation). Now I won't go outside. It is difficult. I have gone and come back.”

Himanshu is very clear that he will become a *badli*. However, the question remains if this would have been his desired decision if he had siblings who could take over the *badli* role. He will become a *badli* worker at age 20, unlike Rishi who will become a *badli* in his late 20s. This shows that youth becoming *badli* is linked to the lives of their parents and their sibling’s life course events. It also suggests that his first migration “as a difficult” experience influenced his decision not to go out again. Return is influenced by the experiences in the place of migration (Kuschminder 2017:10).

Youth’s decision to return and stay is not only influenced by the *badli* system, but also by their obligations towards their ageing parents. Ankur’s⁴⁰ case illustrates this. When I met Ankur, it had been just three months since he returned home from Bangalore. He decided to stay and take care of his elderly sick mother.

“I am close to my mother, and I remember how she used to take care of me and provide for me and so I can’t leave her when she is sick and needs care. When I first returned, I thought I will migrate again, but seeing the condition of my mother I decided not to migrate again.”

Ankur’s elder brother is the *badli* for his retired mother and therefore there is no prospect for him to become a *badli*. Being a 30-year-old and youngest among eight siblings he could have migrated again, but he chose to stay to take care of his mother. Ankur’s staying back is more nuanced, as it was not about the *badli* or having siblings to care for in the household. It was the emotional bonding he shared with his mother that was the determinate factor for staying. Similarly, Raju⁴¹ emphasized his obligations towards his ageing parents.

“There was a time, that time mummy and papa were strong, they were able to earn and live. If I depended on them at that time, for example if they bring 100 rupees, they will buy food

³⁹ Interviewed on 30th July and 4th August 2019

⁴⁰ Interviewed on 15th and 22nd July 2019

⁴¹ Interviewed on 10th August 2019

and won't be able to give me...that time I did not depend on them...but then, I had time. That was the biggest (the time). Physically they are weak now, even now if I go, in my thoughts it won't be nice. Yes, you will get more money, but right now my duty is towards my family. Yes, even that time I had duty but it was a time to do something for myself, it's not that it is not there now, it is there now also, but at that time there was more opportunity to do for myself. If I go now "*mere se jyada burbhak koi nahi hoga*" (there won't be any bigger fool than me) because my duty to look after my family, to look after them is mine now. My mummy and papa's *sampatti* (wealth) is me, *mai chota se itna bara huva, main hi hun property* (then I was a child, I am grown-up now, I am the property). I went that time, I did whatever I could, and now it is my duty to look after them. I cannot leave them and go. I am not able to earn, whatever I earn is less, but since we live together we are happy, whatever, we are eating together, there is more happiness."

Raju emphasizes the importance of 'time'. He relates this with his changing responsibilities through his life course compared to his initial years of migration when his parents were physically strong. Raju contrasts his parents age with the word 'strong' when he first migrated, and he describes his parents now as physically 'weak'. He suggests the declining health⁴² and ability of his parents to engage in economically productive work. He compares himself as a "child but now he is grown up" indicating the change over the years and emphasizes that he is his parent's wealth, denoting the inter-generational obligations. As underlined by Ansell, "[...] age/generation are fundamentally temporal, and the nexus of these temporalities is significant" (2016:316). Raju's account shows that the intertwining factors of age and inter-generational dimensions have influence in decision making for migration as both young people and their parents progress through their life course. Age is also related to declining mobility in young adulthood and over the years (Geist and McManus 2008:301).

Raju's emphasis on the emotional support he can offer, by being at home shows even when he cannot support economically shows how poorer households rely on the intra-- and inter-generational relations to provide care for each other. In the absence of material resources, gendered care work is shifted to women in the household, but also to the young (see Kurian 2017, in section 2.1.1, Walter 1967, in section 2.2). Raju's staying back is not related to becoming a *badli* (see section 4.4.3) but shaped by his inter-generational obligation towards his parents. Additionally, section 4.4.3 shows how Raju's younger brother Manoj plays an important role in responding to the immediate householding needs. Manoj returned home to take the responsibility of working on the plantation as their mother was sick and expressed his desire to become a *badli*. The decision who will become a *badli* is still undecided and remains crucial for retaining the housing provision. Nevertheless, the question remains if Manoj's demonstration of responsibility towards his family make him the prospective *badli*?

This leads to the question, if youth are not responding to householding needs, does becoming *badli* diminish for them? We will see this through the example of 19-year-old Jacob⁴³ and his 17-year-old brother Arjun. The prospect of becoming a *badli* is a form of security for youth. This is reflected in Jacob's narration regarding his brother Arjun's migration account and *badli*.

⁴² 52% of female Adivasi population had a BMI below 18.5 while the WHO criteria for "critical situation" of malnutrition stands at 40%, not far from the 38.6% of all 285 women in the study who had a BMI lower than 18.5. A Study of 2-5-Year-Old Rural Children In 4 Districts Of Assam, India (Sunil Kaul and Shelley Dhar 2013).

⁴³ Interviewed on 13th and 16th July 2019

“When Arjun first migrated, he did not send any money back home. It was only enjoy, enjoy (chuckles!). He only spent on clothes and a mobile. I tell him, since you went to earn money, save some money.”

“[...] mummy used to say, after my retirement I will give it (the *badli*) to Arjun, since he doesn't think much. When asked if Arjun will be interested to take the *badli*, he said, no we haven't asked him yet, but what will he do if he returns unless he learns to do business or something. So, mummy says, let him work outside as long as he wants and when he returns let him take the house, somebody has to take the job.”

This account shows that parents might also give *badli* to children whom they think might not find employment outside the plantation. Arjun is seen as the prospective *badli* not because he helps in householding, but because his mother thinks he will need the *badli* to fall back on when he returns home. Jacob also went out to work one year ago and had been home for six months when I interviewed him. He now plans to go to Delhi to take a course on computer hardware and return to start his own computer shop. Arjun's prospect for becoming a *badli* is planned in relation to Jacob's plans, assuming Arjun might need something to return to. Examining the decision of staying in the context of *badli* shows that the agency of youth is complex, as one's life course is intertwined with the life course of siblings and parents.

5.1.0 Marriage as the reason for leaving and staying

Migration is not only reconfigured by *badli*, but also by life course events such as marriage. Sahil⁴⁴ is a 25-year-old and is the second born out of four siblings. He has been going out the past 10 years and periodically returning home in between. He returned six months ago and is waiting for his family to decide on his marriage date, after which he plans to leave again.

“After fixing the marriage date, based on the amount of time the girl's family (*kitna time ladki wale denge*) will give, I will go (out-migrate). To do a good marriage party you need some good amount of money, so based on that I will take time from them (girl's family) and go. After marriage I will not go (outmigrate) again. After marriage I have to take care of my parents.”

When I asked him who will take his mother's permanent work after her retirement he said,

“*Dekhenge* - we shall see because I am there, my brother is also there.”

Sahil mentioned that the first time he migrated was because of money problems at home, as his mother was the only earner. The purpose of his next migration shows the change of motive over his life course. This time he will leave to earn money for his marriage. The need to accumulate bride-price makes migration a necessity for young men, coupled with the lack of employment opportunities (Rumbiak 1978, cited in Hugo 1982:68). His migration is expected to end after marriage. While narrating his marriage plans, Sahil also mentioned about the marriage plans of his brother who works in Chennai.

“He (his brother) is also going to get married, so he is collecting money for that. He will come back and after that he won't go again.”

It is not just about Sahil's and his brother's marriage plans, but also his younger sister's marriage.

“I had this worry how to give for the marriage for my sister, that was the biggest tension but that is over now. I kept some of the earnings for my sister's marriage and some for my expenses.”

⁴⁴ Interviewed on 22nd July 2019

Sahil's purpose for migration included his sister's marriage and not just supporting his mother. His migration trajectory is drawing closer to staying because of his marriage and his obligation to care for his parents. As the individual life course of siblings and parents progresses, the family composition is changing both spatially and physically within the household and this has an influence on leaving and staying (See Heissler 2012; Huijsmans 2014). The prospect of becoming *badli* to replace his mother upon her retirement still remains to be negotiated in the future among the two siblings, as Sahil's says, "his brother is also there."

Marriage as a life course event of one sibling can shape another sibling's migration trajectory. Mili⁴⁵ is 23 years old, and second born out of four siblings. The first time I visited her, she emerged from inside with a young child crying in her arms. Mili had just returned home from Delhi four days prior. She said she went out because her elder brother was getting married and needed money. When I asked about her plans (about going out) she said,

"she doesn't know...and that she will stay at home and look after her brother's child as both parents go out to work on the plantation." (fieldwork notes).

When I met her brother Suresh⁴⁶, he told me,

"Mili returned home planning to go to Bangalore, but she won't go anymore because she has to take care of the (his) child since there is no babysitter".

Mili's father is a permanent worker and the *badli* is likely to go to Suresh and his wife who are working as temporary workers. The other prospective *badli* besides Suresh, is her younger brother who went out to work in Gurgaon. Mili's staying is not shaped by her prospect to become a *badli* worker, but to provide her labour to care for her brother's child. We see that her gender, birth order and age make her available to provide labour in householding Suresh's young family. Suresh's decisions for Mili's outmigration and Mili's response to these decisions shows "the differential power of genders and generations within families" (Wolf 1990:61) and how that relates to leaving and staying.

5.2 Changing aspirations over the course of returning and leaving

As conceptualized in chapter 3, migrants' motives and aspirations change overtime through the practice of leaving and returning within circulatory migration. It is shown in section 5.1 and 5.1.0 that youths' motives for further migration differs from the migration event preceding it. Youths' decision regarding their migration is nuanced. There are youth who have already decided to stay back, and there are those who have plans to leave again and continue their migration for a few more years, but who also expect to renegotiate based on life course events in the future. The stated reasons why youth migrated include underlying structural factors such as financial problems, single parent income household due to death of a parent, or separation. However, looking at the events that triggered their first migration event and those that affect further migration shows the changes in youth's migration trajectory every time they return and leave. Suchitra's⁴⁷ account illustrates this.

⁴⁵ Interviewed on 13th and 16th August 2019

⁴⁶ Informal discussion 1st August 2019

⁴⁷ Interviewed on 20th and 25th July 2019

“My father used to quarrel a lot, it was every day, so I got tired and decided to go out”

The reason for Suchitra’s first migration was because of the quarrels at home. She migrated through a former migrant who took her to a placement agency. Youth mentioned such enablers as being neighbors, a brother, a sister or an agent who helped them migrate. It is a common practice of placement agencies in attracting labour to ask former migrants to recruit others and giving them a commission for doing so. Suchitra got her first job as a domestic worker through a placement agency in Delhi. She said, “[...] these people [agency] ate all my money.” The second time she went out, she took the help of the placement agency in getting work, but she negotiated her wages directly with the employer.

“The next time I went alone. In Delhi there are two to three offices I knew about, so I went there myself after booking a ticket from here. The placement agency wanted to take money but since I stayed there (employer’s) for three years, I had a good relationship with ma’am. I told her I won’t go back to the agency; please book my ticket and I will go back home. My employer fought with the placement agency and broke the deal (the contract). I got all my money from there and then I returned home.”

Suchitra’s ability to negotiate herself with her employment shows the change the difference between the subsequent migration from the one preceding it. Over the last 10 years Suchitra has moved between different cities finding jobs by herself. Six out of seven females reported that they got their employment through a placement agency during their first migration, for males it was only two out of eleven.

Migration decisions are also influenced by youth’s aspirations. The following account demonstrates how Raju⁴⁸ 25-year-old male decided to go out and earn money to pay for his studies. He migrated with a relative who lives in Delhi.

“After matric (class 10th) I should study, I should not leave schooling, but if you have to take admission, you need money. I needed about 3250 rupees (40,95 euros). At that time, working in the tea garden was 94 rupees (1,18 euros) wages per day. So, it was not possible, I knew then, you will eat at home or should give for schooling? So, I thought about it and went to Delhi in 2010.”

Raju’s account resonates what with my gatekeeper mentioned while we were discussing about health and well-being among plantation workers. He mentioned that families often reduce the quality and amount of food they eat to spend the money on other needs such as education for children. Raju is currently enrolled in a part-time masters program and no longer plans to go out again. This shows his migration was shaped not only by his inter-generational obligations (see section 5.1) but also by his educational aspirations.

Householding practices involve pooling of income and labour sharing (Douglass 2012:4) through circulatory migration within economic constraints and employment opportunities (see section 2.2 Breman 1996; Hugo 1982). 18-year-old Rajesh first migrated when he was thirteen. His father passed away, so his mother is the only earning adult. His mother’s response regarding Rajesh’s migration shows how important the additional income was for her, “it helped me a lot when he went out.” Rajesh also aspires to buy his own land and build a house as the house they currently live in belongs to the plantation (see section 4.2). This shows the changing motives of his migration over time as he grows older.

“I need to buy land here, this (indicating the house) belongs to the company. I need to buy land and build my own house...it will at least cost rupees 1-2 lakhs (1265-2530 euros). He said he will need to stay out (migrate to work). Here there is more work but less money, there is more hard work here. I don’t have my own house and so I am worried.”

⁴⁸ Interviewed on 10th August 2019

Rajesh plans to continue migrating and is not sure who will take the *badli* as his mother who is a permanent worker has several years before her retirement. By going out to work, youth also experience a different culture and lifestyle away from the plantations. They learn new languages and communication skills. Food and places often emerged in the discussion. 25-year-old Raju⁴⁹ used the example of *biryani*⁵⁰ to describe how things have changed between his and his father's generations on the plantation.

“[...] they don't know biryani, my father has eaten but there are people in the village even now those in the older generation they have not eaten biryani or seen biryani. It is different, their generation and our generation.”

The youth I interviewed spoke fluent *hindi* which would be unlikely if they had not gone out. For example, Raju said that “After coming from there, my *hindi* is also better, that is my benefit, my *hindi* got better.” Youth aspirations to migrate are influenced by larger wage differentials between the plantation and the labour market outside (see section 1.1 footnote). While the promises of higher wages in the cities are attractive, the experience of youth during their employment also shows that difficult working conditions they face affect their perspective about future migration. 24-year-old Mahesh⁵¹ worked in an automobile shop and often worked overtime.

“I was doing the work of two persons. The work was so much that, I did not know anymore myself when I went to work and came back. Sometimes I had to even wake up at 4am and go and then come home at 11-12 at midnight.”

Similarly, Lily's⁵² account shows the abusive work environment during her employment as a domestic worker.

“She (employer) beat me two-three times with hands, the next time she kicked (*laat mari*) and I fall down from the stairs. That day I got injured a lot and I could not walk. Once she beat me with the floor wiper stick and my hands and feet got so swollen. I was not able to walk up and down the stairs, my feet were so swollen (showing by spreading her hands wider around her legs).”

Mahesh returned home seven months ago from Bangalore when I met him. He was still looking for a job and said the automobile shops in the cities nearby do not have vacancy and was hoping to work in a nearby garage. After her return, Lily has been working in a paddy field earning rupees 120 (1,52 euros) per day. Lily's account shows how young people circulate between the city and the plantation, horizontally between casual work, and labour mobility does not always mean improvement in their working conditions (Kurian 2015:318). Mahesh in the meantime is still looking for work. This shows the lack of employment opportunities for young people is one of the factors influencing their outmigration decision.

5.3 Conclusion

In summary, subsequent migration changes from the one preceding it as the motivations of the youth change. The experiences over the course of their migration trajectories is shaped by their familial relationships between parents and siblings influenced by their life course

⁴⁹ Interviewed on 10th August 2019

⁵⁰ An Indian mix rice dish with different types of meat, spices and nuts

⁵¹ Interviewed on 24th July 2019

⁵² Interviewed on 21st July and 5th August 2019

events and therefore the decisions are also likely to be renegotiated. Additionally, the experiences in the cities also transform them as individuals. Their employment rights and wages are important, but their migration experiences are much more varied and complex. Youth expressed their obligations both with and without the prospect of becoming a *badli*. This shows that *badli* is constitutive of, but not exclusive in shaping the decisions to stay and leave. The decision of who will become a *badli* in the context of gendered and generational householding in youth migration shows the complex web of decision making that are either negotiated or put on hold as anticipated changes in the future as life events unfold. However, the prospect of *badli* still remains an important form of social security as youth are not able to afford housing either in the urban centers or on the estates with the income they earn.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

This research approached youth migration as multiple events, a perspective that has received less attention in the current academic discourse. It contributes to the broader debates of youth migration studies in understanding migration as multiple and interrelated events of leaving, returning and staying that are being influenced by everyday householding practices and obligations towards intra- and inter-generational relations.

This study has empirically demonstrated the usefulness of the concept circulatory migration with a life course approach in studying young peoples' labour mobility in the context of the tea plantation labour regime and *badli* system in Assam, Northeast India. By doing so, this study brought together conceptually the field of youth studies and adult centric labour studies focused on historiography of labour regime and markets. The conceptual framework used in this study (see chapter 2) added an analytical value in studying youth migration by drawing on the concepts of multilocal householding in conjunction with generational order, circulatory migration and life course.

I argue that youth decisions to leave or to stay are shaped not only by their own life course events, but in relation to the life course events of significant others such as siblings, parents, grandparents. The timing of these intersections of life course events between and across generations shape the decisions of leaving and staying and are anticipated to change over time. The anticipated change over time is expressed by the youth as *Dekhenge* means "we shall see when the time comes." This phrase defines their leaving, returning and staying.

Analysing householding practices of youth within and across multiple generations has underlined the complexities and nuances of youth agency in migration. This resonates with Korzenevica and Agergaard argument that we need to move towards "more nuanced understanding of cross-dimensional relations of power" (2017:136). It is not just households are in "flux" (Huijsmans 2014), "staying [and leaving are] in a state of flux" (Stockdale et al. 2017). I argue that the intra- and inter-generational and everyday practices of multilocal householding are mutually constitutive and shapes the decisions of youth in migration.

The housing provision that comes along with the *badli* status is crucial for the youth and their households. For the youth it provides access to housing and land on the plantation, enabling them to diversify their livelihoods, providing fall back security while doing so. The larger wage differentials between the estate and the external labour market is one of the motivating reasons for youth migration in the first instance, but the interplay of householding practices and intra- and inter-generational obligations in the context of *badli* system suggests the complex nature of youth agency in migration. To keep the *badli* status valid (also discussed as permanent work), or in other words for the family to be able to continue living in the housing provided by the estate, it is necessary that someone in the household work on the plantation regularly.

This is where the negotiations in sharing responsibilities within the household plays a key role to keep the *badli* and the housing provision for the collective benefit of the household intact. These decisions are negotiated both in the physical and spatial dimensions of intra- and inter-generational relations that shapes the decision of who will stay to become a *badli*. That decision making is influenced by gender, age, birth order, and the life course events of the youth in relation to the life course of significant others. Nevertheless, these decisions are not fixed and are anticipated to change in relation to future life events. Staying is not only shaped by *badli*, but also by the moral obligations' youth feel towards their parents and siblings even without the prospect of becoming a *badli*. These decisions are interwoven with their parents and sibling's life course events such as marriage, sickness, disability, old

age, and retirement. This underlines that the agency of youth is complex and is linked to the gendered practices of intra- and inter-generational relations in householding.

The changing migration trajectory reveals that the decisions to stay and leave cannot be predetermined and are expected to change over the life course. The first migration event of the youth underlines the difference in the leaving process between females and male. All females reportedly migrated through a placement agency, only two males did so out of the total 18 youth interviewed. Furthermore, it shows the gendered process of leaving which influences the type of employment they have access to and the extent of flexibility they have in leaving a difficult and abusive working environment. These experiences have influence on their future migration trajectories. The changing aspiration and motives of their migration are also intertwined with their experience of engaging different cultures, and lifestyle and identities they develop over time by going out to work. As the findings suggests, I am inclined to argue that *badli* is constitutive of, but not exclusive in shaping the decisions to stay and leave. Nonetheless, the prospect of *badli* still remains an important form of social security when youth are not able to afford housing in the urban centers or on the estates if they have no access to the *badli* provisions.

References

- Ansell, N. (2016) 'Age and Generation in the Service of Development?', 'Age and Generation in the Service of Development?', *Generationing Development*, pp. 315-330. Springer.
- Alanen, L. (2009) 'Generational Order', 'Generational Order', In Qvortrup, J., W.A. Corsaro, M. Honig and G. Valentine (2009) *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, pp. 159-174. Springer.
- Bailey, A.J. (2009) 'Population Geography: Life course Matters', *Progress in Human Geography* 33(3): 407-418.
- Bastia, T. (2005) 'Child Trafficking Or Teenage Migration? Bolivian Migrants in Argentina', *International Migration* 43(4): 58-89.
- Behal, R.P. (2006) 'Power Structure, Discipline, and Labour in Assam Tea Plantations Under Colonial Rule', *International review of social history* 51(S14): 143-172.
- Berger, R. (2015) 'Now I See it, Now I don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research', *Qualitative research* 15(2): 219-234.
- Bhowmik, S., V. Xaxa and M.A. Kalam (1996) *Tea Plantation Labour in India*. Published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (India Office) New Delhi.
- Breman, J. (2010) 'Neo-Bondage: A Fieldwork-Based Account', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 78(1): 48-62.
- Breman, J. (1996) *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*. Vol. 2. Cambridge University Press.
- Breman, J. (1985) *Of Peasants, Migrants, and Paupers*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, T., T.J. Scrase and R. Ganguly-Scrase (2017) 'Globalised Dreams, Local Constraints: Migration and Youth Aspirations in an Indian Regional Town', *Children's Geographies* 15(5): 531-544.
- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford university press.
- Camacho, A.Z.V. (1999) 'Family, Child Labour and Migration: Child Domestic Workers in Metro Manila', *Childhood* 6(1): 57-73.
- Crossa, V. (2012) 'Relational Positionality: Conceptualizing Research, Power, and the Everyday Politics of Neoliberalization in Mexico City.', *ACME: An international E-journal for critical geographies* 11(1).
- De Haan, A. (1999) 'The Badli System in Industrial Labour Recruitment: Managers' and Workers' Strategies in Calcutta's Jute Industry', *Contributions to Indian sociology* 33(1-2): 271-301.
- De Haan, A. (1997) 'Unsettled Settlers: Migrant Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Calcutta', *Modern Asian Studies* 31(4): 919-949.
- Dobson, M.E. (2009) 'Unpacking Children in Migration Research', *Children's Geographies* 7(3): 355-360.
- Douglass, M. (2014) 'Afterword: Global Householding and Social Reproduction in Asia', *Geoforum* 51: 313-316.

- Douglass, M. (2012) 'Global Householding and Social Reproduction: Migration Research, Dynamics and Public Policy in East and Southeast Asia'.
- Elder Jr, G.H. (1998) 'The Life Course as Developmental Theory', *Child development* 69(1): 1-12.
- Elkan, W. (1967) 'Circular Migration and the Growth of Towns in East Africa', *Int'l Lab.Rev.* 96: 581.
- Esser, F., M.S. Baader, T. Betz, and B. Hungerland (2016) 'Introduction.' in Esser et al (eds), *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies*, pp. 1-12. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Geist, C. and P.A. McManus (2008) 'Geographical Mobility Over the Life Course: Motivations and Implications', *Population, space and place* 14(4): 283-303.
- Grabska, K., de Regt, M., & Del Franco, N. (2019). *Adolescent Girls' Migration in the Global South: Transitions into adulthood*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guo, M., N.W. Chow and L.A. Palinkas (2011) 'Circular Migration and Life Course of Female Domestic Workers in Beijing', *Asian Population Studies* 7(1): 51-67.
- Hammersley, M. and P. Atkinson (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Routledge.
- Hashim, I. and D.D. Thorsen (2011) *Child Migration in Africa*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Heissler, K. (2012) 'Children's Migration for Work in Bangladesh: The Policy Implications of Intra--Household Relations', *Development in Practice* 22(4): 498-509.
- Hilti, N. (2009). 'Here, there, and in-between: On the interplay of multilocal living, space, and inequality'. In T. Ohnmacht, H. Maksim, & M. M. Bergman (Eds.), *Mobilities and inequality* (pp. 145–164). Aldershot: Ashgate
- Howard, N. (2017) *Child Trafficking, Youth Labour Mobility and the Politics of Protection*. Springer. First Published by Palgrave Macmillan 2014.
- Hugo, G.J. (1982) 'Circular Migration in Indonesia', *Population and Development Review*: 59-83.
- Huijsmans, R. (2014) 'Becoming a Young Migrant Or Stayer seen through the Lens of 'householding': Households 'in flux' and the Intersection of Relations of Gender and Seniority', *Geoforum* 51: 294-304.
- Huijsmans, R. (2013) 'Doing Gendered Age': Older Mothers and Migrant Daughters Negotiating Care Work in Rural Lao PDR and Thailand', *Third World Quarterly* 34(10): 1896-1910.
- Huijsmans, R. and S. Baker (2012) 'Child Trafficking: 'Worst form' of Child Labour, Or Worst Approach to Young Migrants?', *Development and Change* 43(4): 919-946.
- Huijsmans, R. (2011) 'Child Migration and Questions of Agency', *Development and Change* 42(5): 1307-1321.
- Huijsmans, R. (2010), *Migrating Children, Households, and the Post-Socialist State: An ethnographic study of migration and non-migration by children and youth in an ethnic Lao village*. PhD thesis, Department of Geography, Durham University: Durham. Available from: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/420/>
- Iversen, V. (2002) 'Autonomy in Child Labor Migrants', *World Development* 30(5): 817-834.
- Jayawardena, K. and R. Kurian (2015) *Class, Patriarchy and Ethnicity on Sri Lankan Plantations: Two Centuries of Power and Protest*. Orient BlackSwan. Pvt. Ltd. 2015

- Jolivet, D. (2019) 'Post-2008 Multi-Sited Household Practices: Between Morocco, Spain and Norway', *International Migration*.
- Kabeer, N. (2000) 'Intergenerational Contracts, Demographic Transitions and the 'quantity–quality' tradeoff: Parents, Children and Investing in the Future', *Journal of International Development: The Journal of the Development Studies Association* 12(4): 463-482.
- Kikon, D. (2018) 'Dreams and Desserts: Indigenous Migration, Service, and Mobility in India'.
- Kley, S.A. and C.H. Mulder (2010) 'Considering, Planning, and Realizing Migration in Early Adulthood. the Influence of Life-Course Events and Perceived Opportunities on Leaving the City in Germany', *Journal of housing and the built environment* 25(1): 73-94.
- Korzenevica, M. and J. Agergaard (2017) 'The House Cannot Stay Empty': A Case of Young Rural Nepalis Negotiating Multilocal Householding', *Asian Population Studies* 13(2): 124-139.
- Kurian, R. (1989), *State, Capital and Labour in the Plantation Industry in Sri Lanka*. n.d
- Kurian, R. (2006) 'The Globalisation of Domestic Care.', in T.D. Truong, S.E. Wieringa and A. Chhachhi (eds) *Engendering Human Security: Feminist Perspectives*, pp.147-168 London and New Delhi: Zed Press and Women Unlimited
- Kurian, R. & E. Charkiewicz 'Violence in transition: Reforms and rights in the Western Balkans' (2017) 1 Global Campus Human Rights Journal 119-139
- Kuschminder, K. (2017) 'Reintegration Strategies', *Reconceptualizing how return migrants reintegrate*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 29-56. Springer
- Makita, R. (2012) 'Fair Trade Certification: The Case of Tea Plantation Workers in India', *Development Policy Review* 30(1): 87-107.
- McDuie-Ra, D. (2012) *Northeast Migrants in Delhi: Race, Refuge and Retail*. Vol. 9. Amsterdam University Press.
- Miller, R.L. (2000) *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories*. Sage Publications.
- Mishra, D.K., V. Upadhyay and A. Sarma (2014) *Unfolding Crisis in Assam's Tea Plantations: Employment and Occupational Mobility*. Routledge India.
- Mishra, D.K., V. Upadhyay and A. Sarma (2008) 'Crisis' in the Tea Sector: A Study of Assam Tea Gardens', *The Indian Economic Journal* 56(3): 39-56.
- Ng, I. (2011) 'To Whom does My Voice Belong? (Re) Negotiating Multiple Identities as a Female Ethnographer in Two Hong Kong Rural Villages', *Gender, Technology and Development* 15(3): 437-456.
- Nguyen, M.T. (2014) 'Translocal Householding: Care and Migrant Livelihoods in a Waste-trading Community of Vietnam's Red River Delta', *Development and Change* 45(6): 1385-1408.
- Punch, S. (2016) 'Exploring children's Agency Across Majority and Minority World Contexts', In *Reconceptualising agency and childhood: New perspectives in childhood studies*: 183-196.
- Punch, S. (2015) 'Youth Transitions and Migration: Negotiated and Constrained Interdependencies within and Across Generations', *Journal of Youth Studies* 18(2): 262-276.

- Punch, S. (2001) 'Household Division of Labour: Generation, Gender, Age, Birth Order and Sibling Composition', *Work, employment and society* 15(4): 803-823.
- Remesh, B.P. (2012) 'Strangers in their Own Land: Migrants from the North-East in Delhi', *Economic and Political Weekly*: 35-40.
- Rosenblum, P. and A. Sukthankar (2014) "*the More Things Change...*": *The World Bank, Tata and Enduring Abuses on India's Tea Plantations*. Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute.
- Stockdale, A., N. Theunissen and T. Haartsen (2018) 'Staying in a State of Flux: A Life Course Perspective on the Diverse Staying Processes of Rural Young Adults', *Population, Space and Place* 24(8): e2139.
- Thieme, S. (2008) 'Sustaining Livelihoods in multi-local Settings: Possible Theoretical Linkages between Transnational Migration and Livelihood Studies', *Mobilities* 3(1): 51-71.
- Utrata, J. (2011) 'Youth Privilege: Doing Age and Gender in Russia's Single-Mother Families', *Gender & Society* 25(5): 616-641.
- Whitehead, A., I.M. Hashim and V. Iversen (2005) 'Child migration, child agency and inter-generational relations in Africa and South Asia', international conference, *Childhoods: Children and Youth in Emerging and Transforming Societies*, Oslo, Norway.
- Wolf, D.L. (1990) 'Daughters, Decisions and Domination: An Empirical and Conceptual Critique of Household Strategies', *Development and change* 21(1): 43-74.
- Wyn, J. and R. White (1997). *Rethinking Youth* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publications.
- Yaqub, S. (2009), *Independent child migrants in developing countries: Unexplored links in migration and development*.

Appendices

Appendix 1
The *badli* Matrix

SI No.	Name	Gender	Age	Birth order	Other members within HH	Badli status PW=Permanent worker TW=Temporary worker	Nos. of outmigration Destinations	The prospect of becoming a <i>badli</i>
1	Jacob	M	19	First born out of 3	Lives at his grandmother's place.	Mother is PW and Father is TW.	Two times. First mig. 2018 Returned Jan 2019 Delhi - Bangalore 2019	Younger brother
2	Nina	F	21	First born out of 5	Mother and father	Both parents are PW	Three times. First mig. 2007/09 Returned Dec 2018 Punjab - Gujarat	She will become her mother's <i>badli</i>
3	Lily	F	18	Only child	Grandmother, Step grandfather, Uncle, Father outmigrated	Grand mother retired. Uncle ⁵³ is her grandmother's <i>badli</i> .	Two times. First mig. 2016 Delhi Returned June 2019.	No prospect
4	Rishi	M	20	First born out of 3	Father	Father is PW, mother is also a PW but outmigrated	Three times First mig. 2016 Bangalore Returned Jan 2019.	He will become his father's <i>badli</i>
5	Rita	F	25	Youngest out of 4	His two-elder brothers, mother and two nephews and one niece. The eldest nephew out migrated.	Rita started working as a TW one year ago to become her mother's <i>Badli</i>	One time First mig. 2011 Delhi Returned 2012	She will become a <i>badli</i>
6	Rajesh	M	18	First born out of 3	Mother. Father died	Mother is PW	Two times. First mig. 2012 Delhi-Hyderabad. Returned Jan 2019.	Yet to decide
7	Ankur	M	30	Youngest out of 8	Father died; mother is 60+	Mother retired. One of his elder brother works as a PW, Sister	One time First mig. 2018.	His elder brother is the <i>badli</i>

⁵³ Respondent no.10 in this table

						in-law, sister and he work as TW.	Bangalore Returned April 2019.	
8	Suchitra	F	23	First born out of 3	Mother. Father died.	Mother is PW.	Four times. First mig. 2009. Punjab – Delhi - Gujarat – Chennai Returned 2019.	Her younger brother will become her mother's <i>badli</i>
9	Sahil	M	25	Second born out of 4	Mother, father, younger sister, and brother who outmigrated. Niece, his elder brother's daughter whom he took care of as a child.	Mother is PW. Father stopped working as a TW 2-3 years ago.	Seven times. First mig. 2009 Chennai Returned Nov 2018.	Yet to decide
10	Nikhil	M	30-35	First born out of 3	Mother, stepfather, and a niece ⁵⁴	Mother retired. He is the Badli.	Two times First mig. Around age 7 Chattisgarh Second mig. around 2007 Delhi Returned in 2016.	He is the <i>badli</i> but currently works as temporary worker due to his long period of absence as a result of migration
11	Mahesh	M	24	First born out of 2	Mother, Stepfather. His mother remarried after his father's death	Mother is PW, stepfather retired and his <i>badli</i> is taken by his children.	One time. First mig. 2014 Bangalore Returned Dec 2018.	Sister likely to take the <i>badli</i> as she is already working as a temporary worker.
12	Lina	F	17	Youngest out of 3	Mother, father, two elder brothers.	Father is a permanent worker. Both brother and mother engaged in outmigration.	Two times. First mig. 2017 Delhi, West Bengal Returned in 2018.	Yet to decide. Family plans to keep the house on the plantation as well as they have a house and farming land in <i>desh</i> .
13	Samira	F	18	Only child	Mother and father.	Father is PW, mother TW.	One time First mig. 2017. Delhi Returned March 2017.	<i>Badli</i> will be given to the son of his father's elder brother's son (her cousin brother).

⁵⁴ Respondent no. 3 in this table

14	Mili	F	23	Second born out of 4	Mother, father, grandmother, elder brother, sister-in-law and nephew. Younger brother outmigrated. Youngest sister is studying.	Father is PW, mother is TW	Two times. First mig. 2015 Delhi. Returned on July 2019.	Brother and sister-in-law might be the prospective <i>badli</i> as they are already working in the tea garden.
15	Pramod	M	29	fourth born out of 5	Mother, two elder brothers, a sister-in-law, a nephew.	Mother retired. Father's <i>badli</i> seat is still vacant. Sister-in-law is a TW.	Two times. First mig. 2015 Bangalore. Returned March 2019	Third born brother is the <i>badli</i> of his mother. The <i>badli</i> of his father is still vacant. He thinks his sister-in-law should take.
16	Himanshu	M	17	Second born out of 3	Mother, elder sister and younger sister. Father died.	Mother is PW.	One time. First mig. 2018 Delhi – Himachal – Delhi - Ludhiana. Returned Feb 2019	He will become his mother's <i>badli</i>
17	Vikash ⁵⁵	M	28	fourth order out of 5	Mother, two elder brothers, one younger brother. Elder sister outmigrated and is married in Delhi. Father died.	Information not available	One time. First mig. 2009 Delhi. Returned 2009.	Currently, preparing to migrate to Gulf countries through an international placement agency
18	Raju	M	25	Second born out of 5	Mother, father, two sisters and one younger brother.	Mother is PW and sickly. Father runs a tea stall. Youngest brother has expressed willingness to take the <i>badli</i>	Three times. First mig. 2010. Returned March 2010.	Last born brother is the prospective <i>badli</i>

Source: Fieldwork 2019. *Name = Pseudonym

Appendix 2

⁵⁵ Could not have a follow-up interview as the respondent did not give time and therefore further details on *badli* status is not available

Profiles of the respondents

SI No	*Name	Interview Date	Sex	Age	Education
1	Jacob	13 th & 16 th July	M	19	10 th
2	Nina	13 th , 14 th & 19 th July	F	21	8 th
3	Lily	21 st July 5 th Aug	F	18	2 nd
4	Rishi	13 th & 18 th July	M	20	7 th
5	Rita	13 th & 22 nd July	F	25	9 th
6	Rajesh	13 th & 16 th July	M	18	5 th
7	Ankur	15 th & 22 nd July	M	30	12 th
8	Suchitra	20 th & 25 th July	F	23	2 nd
9	Sahil	17 th & 22 nd July	M	25	9 th
10	Nkhi ⁵⁶	22 nd & and 5 th Aug	M	30-35	1
11	Mahesh	25 th & 29 th July	M	24	9 th
12	Lina	25 th , 30 th July & 5 th Aug	F	17	9 th
13	Samira	25 th , 30 th July & 5 th Aug	F	18	4 th
14	Mili	13 th and 16 th July	F	23	9 th
15	Pramod	31 st July & 6 th Aug	M	29	College drop out
16	Himanshu	30 th July & 4 th Aug	M	17	4 th
17	Vikash	31 st July	M	28	College dropout
18	Raju	10 th Aug	M	25	Pursuing MA

Source: Fieldwork 2019. *Name = Pseudonym

Appendix 3

Family members of the youth

SI no	*Name	Date	Sex	Relation
1	Suresh	01 st Aug	M	Mili's brother
2	Sonia	30 th July	F	Lina's Aunt
3	Gautam	5 th August	M	Lina's father
4	Bimala	30 th July	F	Samira's mother
5	Deepa	21 st July	F	Lily's grandmother

Source: Fieldwork 2019. *Name = Pseudonym

⁵⁶ Respondent mentioned two ages as between 30-35

Map 0.0

Location of the fieldwork on the Map of Assam, India

