



**Interrogating Policy Discourses on International
Migration and Development in the Philippines:
DEMYSTIFYING ‘DIASPORA FOR DEVELOPMENT’**

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Dedication

The journey of writing this research paper can be likened to that of a migrant's sojourn; fraught with uncertainty, unexpected detours, and at times, fear of what one might find at the road's end. I dedicate this work to those who have acted as my guideposts in navigating through the thickets.

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List of Acronyms

ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
AO	-	Administrative Order
CFO	-	Commission on Filipinos Overseas
DFA	-	Department of Foreign Affairs
DFD	-	Diaspora for Development
DOLE	-	Department of Labor and Employment
EO	-	Executive Order
GFMD	-	Global Forum on Migration and Development
MDN	-	Migration-Development Nexus
MFD	-	Migration for Development
MRW	-	Migrants Rights and Welfare
NGO	-	Non-Government Organizations
OCW	-	Overseas Contract Workers
OFW	-	Overseas Filipino Workers
OWWA	-	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
POEA	-	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

Abstract

The Philippines' policy and institutional set-up for labour migration has been a perennial subject of migration studies given nearly four decades of active state involvement in facilitating migrant labour. Amid criticisms of it being hailed as a global model on migration management, this study sets out to examine through frame analysis how labour migration policy discourses are constructed by theoretical perspectives on migration-development nexus (MDN), and what values and goals are embedded in these discourses. This study also takes a critical look at the latest reading of the MDN, the Diaspora for Development discourse, which emphasizes the centrality of migrants as agents of development. The paper suggests that while this latest discursive 'shift' has toned down previous adversarial relations among policy actors involved, the continuing dominance of the government's deployment-oriented strategy raises questions as to whether this 'new kid on the block' is indeed a shift that it purports to be.

Relevance to Development Studies

Despite the pervasiveness of international migration in today's globalizing world, the relationship between migration and development remains unsettled. Early theoretical approaches towards the migration-development nexus are divided between developmentalists who see a positive correlation, and the structuralists who see an inverse relationship. The 'transnational turn' sought to reconcile these conflicting views by offering more nuanced views on migration-development linkages. In recent years, there has been renewed optimism on the benefits of international migration due to the increasing volume of migrant remittance flows. International financial institutions see remittances as the largest source of 'bottom-up' financing for poor countries. Many migration scholars point out that this renewed promotion of labour migration as a development strategy ignores past lessons drawn from research showing that overdependence on labour migration may confine developing countries to being semi-permanent providers of labour to developed economies forgoing their own development in the process.

Keywords

Labor migration, development, diaspora, migrants rights, policy discourse

Chapter 1 International labour migration in the Philippines: a policy controversy?

“There is nothing more permanent than temporary migration.”

- Anonymous

1.1 Introduction

In October 2009, the United Nations Development Programme released the 2009 Human Development Report emphasizing the potential of mobility to enhance human development and calling for improved policies in the national, regional and international level to harness this potential. This is a manifestation of the burgeoning interest on international migration as it affects or is affected by development. For many researchers and scholars who have long examined what is commonly termed as the migration-development nexus (MDN), the 2009 Report is simply the latest re-telling of the old argument that freer international migration may lessen inequalities spawned by today’s globalizing world.

Amid the various policy responses adopted by both origin and destination countries based on how they perceive migration, is the Philippine labor migration policy model – a rich context in which to probe the migration-development nexus. Since mid 1500s, Filipino seafarers have plied the world’s oceans as seafarers servicing the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade under the Spanish crown (Alcid, 2003). Yet it was in early 1900s that systematic waves of Filipino labour migration started with the deployment of thousands of agricultural workers in Hawaii’s sugar plantations. Migrant workers who left between 1900 and 1945 most of whom settled in Hawaii and California, were referred to as the first wave of migrants (Gonzalez, 1998). Alcid (2003) noted that the second wave of migrants (1946-1970) were markedly different from the first wave in that they are largely professionals, usually in the medical field, comprising of nurses and physicians.

Adding to the diversity of Filipino migration experience is the third wave of large-scale deployment which took place in the 1970s when the Middle East market opened up opportunities for foreign labour in the construction industry (Mughal and Padilla, 2005:15). In 1969, Department of Labor statistics show deployment at just over 3,500 overseas workers. By early 1980’s demand for labour in Middle East countries drew almost half a million Filipino workers to West Asia (Alcid, 2003). Labour migration from the Philippines continued to expand every decade as new labour markets emerged in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea from the 1980s well into the 1990s (Findlay et al., 1998). As of 2007, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimated that more than 2 million of Filipino contract workers are working in West Asia, most of whom are found in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

and Kuwait.

Starting in the 1970s, this large scale movement of international migrant labour is characterized by active state involvement with the introduction of the Labor Code and the subsequent creation of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, in 1982 and 1987, respectively (Mughal and Padilla, 2005:19; Alcid, 2003; Tyner,2001). A parallel institution exists for Filipino migrants in the permanent settler stream, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas. Due perhaps to this long established institutional framework tasked to facilitate the migration process, the Philippines today is viewed as a front runner in the supply side of a global care chain, sadly to the disadvantage of its own health system (Yeates, 2009).

Piper (2008) argues that governments commonly take a utilitarian approach to migration, that is, origin countries are often motivated by the desire to increase remittances or address the problem of unemployment. Migration as a governance issue in the Philippines, traces its origins from this perspective. Overseas employment was seen as a “stop-gap” measure to address both shortfalls in foreign currency reserves and the lack of available jobs in the market arising from the economic gloom during the 1970s (Alcid, 2003). However, far from being temporary, migration has become deeply entrenched in Philippine society. Stock estimates indicate that 8.7 million Filipinos live and work overseas as of 2007, disaggregated in three categories: permanent, temporary and irregular¹ (CFO, 2007).

The country’s perceived dependence on migrant remittances is evidenced by the fact that it constitutes the largest source of external financing after exports, eclipsing foreign direct investment by more than four times as a percentage of GDP (Bayangos and Jansen, 2009). It is also probable that this perceived dependence translated into political pressure resulting to the codification of rights and entitlements for migrant workers. For instance, the Philippines is one of few labour sending countries which has enacted a Magna Carta for Migrant Workers in 1995 providing for a number of rights and institutional arrangements which cover pre-departure preparation, regulation of the recruitment industry, legal assistance in cases of labour disputes, insurance benefits and on-site welfare assistance (Mughal and Padilla, 2005:20). Yeates (2009) describes the Philippine institutional set-up as a ‘migration industrial complex’, generated by a cluster of economic interests benefiting from this labour export strategy. Tyner (2000) also provides a discussion about how

¹ The Commission on Filipinos Overseas distinguishes the categories of Filipino migrants as follows: permanent: immigrants or legal permanent residents abroad whose stay do not depend on work contracts; temporary: persons whose stay overseas is employment related and who are expected to return at the end of their contract; and irregular: those not properly documented or without valid residence or work permits, or who are overstaying in a foreign country (CFO, 2007).

Manila assumes a ‘managerial’ role typical of a global city where labour mobility (in lieu of capital) is socially organized.

There are diverging views among government officials, civil society organizations and migrants themselves as to whether decades of international labour migration has done any good for national development. Philippine evidence suggests that remittances cushion the impact of economic shocks to poor households with migrant members, but there is skepticism about its general effects on poverty in times of economic growth (Yang and Martinez, 2006). Several migrant Filipinos may have found economic success in some countries where they settled, but there are concerns that this prosperity may also create a culture of dependency among migrant families and socialize children to envision a future as migrants (Simmons, 2008). Alcid (2003) seems to echo the latter point, asserting that state promotion and mediation of labour migration has given birth to a ‘culture of migration’ further evidenced by a survey showing one out of five Filipinos opting to go abroad if the opportunity arose.

It is in the midst of this debate that the Philippines became the first country from the South to host the largest existing fora on international migration: the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Emerging as a recommendation from the 2006 UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development which took place within the UN General Assembly framework, the GFMD is a non-binding, state-led informal process that seeks to explore migration and development interconnections. The 2008 Manila GFMD chose the theme “Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development” in order to draw attention to the ‘human face’ of migration (2008 GFMD proceedings). Manila’s hosting of the GFMD was hailed by the Philippine government as an acknowledgement of the country’s migration management model as among the best in the world. It is in this context of presumed ‘heightened’ awareness of the MDN in the Philippines that I take a closer look at how these MDN perceptions are represented in policy discourse.

1.2 Defining the Research Problem

This research situates the MDN in the context of the Philippines – the third biggest source of migrant workers in the world after China and India according to the International Organization for Migration.² Widely touted as a model on labour migration through its “life-cycle approach”³ to migration management, the Philippines’ policy model has been subject to critics that question this designation on the basis of shortfalls in service provision based on the findings

² International Organization for Migration website, accessed 18 October 2009.

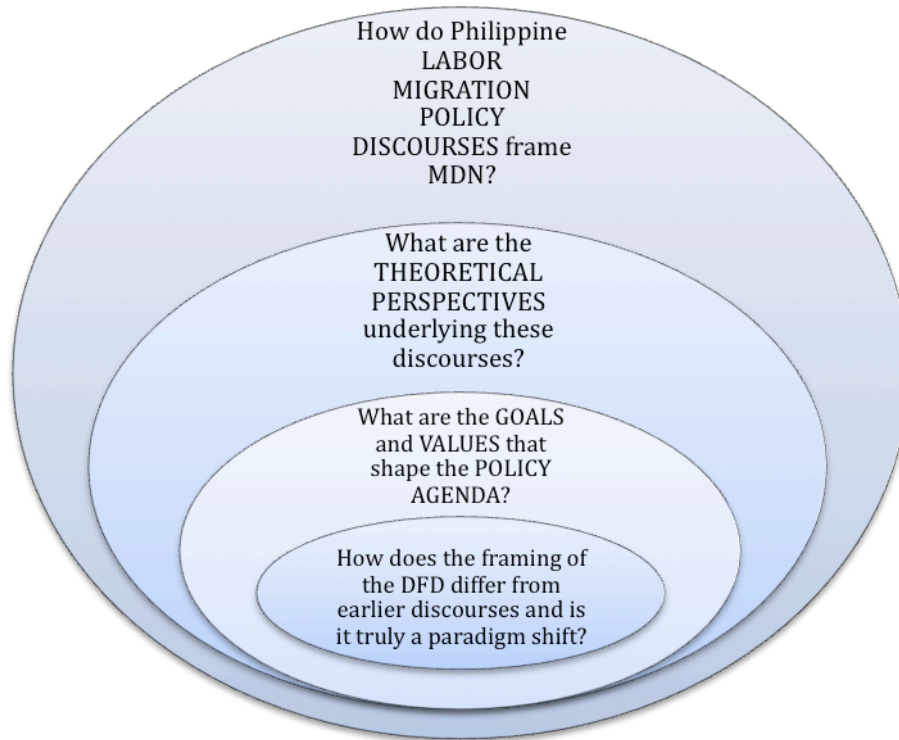
³ A top official from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) describes this life-cycle approach to migration management as that which covers public service provision in all aspects of the migration process starting with pre-employment, pre-departure, on-site, and ending with reintegration.

of the UN Migrant Workers Convention Committee. The research sets out to examine this model by understanding the framing of migration and development; the choice of goals and values by policy actors or interest groups espousing the various policy discourses; and the theoretical perspectives underlying these policy discourses. Built within this research is the assumption that labour migration in the Philippines is a policy controversy, where questions of value cannot be separated from questions of fact because they are constructed through frames which integrates various facts, values, theories and interests 'sponsored' by various policy actors (Rein and Schon, 1993).

In characterizing these policy discourses, I then proceed to take a closer look at predominant readings of the MDN in the Philippines, particularly what I later identify as the Diaspora for Development (DFD) discourse, and evaluate its framing in contrast to earlier discourses, if it is indeed a paradigm shift, that it purports to be. The intention is to draw insights why despite various reinterpretations of the MDN, the Philippines' labour migration policy model remains rooted in its original form. As such, in contrast to renewed optimism in global policy discourses on the potential of migration to contribute to development, this research intends to offer a critical voice in what I perceive as the fervent promotion of labour migration in the South – a development trap which confines sending countries into being semi-permanent providers of labour to 'developed' countries, with remittances acting as a safety valve for social problems and migration becoming a way of life (see Ellerman, 2005; Bracking, 2003). Figure 1 below provides an illustration of the research problem under investigation.

Within globalization studies, there has been increasing emphasis on the role of the state as a determinant of international migration which goes as far as saying that migration governance is an instrumental aspect of states' globalizing strategies (Yeates, 2009). Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003) note that past researches on migration policy nearly always favored receiving countries as the main "players", treating sending countries as passive participants if not spectators in issues of migration management. Yet Yeates' (2009) explorative findings on the role of the state in the development and operation of global care chains shows that sending countries, far from being pawns, also take active and deliberate policy decisions on international migration. Against this backdrop, it is important to place policy analysis on migration in a larger set of political economic forces that constrain policy decisions of sending countries, to uncover the logic, values and assumptions shaping these decisions.

Figure 1
Structure diagram of research problem



1.3 Research Methodology

The use of policy discourse analysis in this research aims to shed light on how policy actors frame the policy agenda through their perceptions of the varied interconnections between migration and development. Rein and Schon (1993:145) defines policy discourse as “interactions of individuals, interest groups, social movements and institutions through which problematic situations are converted to policy problems, agendas are set, decisions are made, and actions are taken.” Yanow (2000) also suggests that policy frames are expressed through language (sometimes metaphoric) which shapes perceptions, understanding, and courses of action related to the issue. Arguing for the use of discourse analysis in migration studies, Griffin (2007) underscores that the socio-cultural investigation of migration requires analysis of the “investedness” of language expressed through discourse. As such, this research looks at policy discourses as the subject of analysis with text and context acting as units of analysis. Consequently, the types of discourse analytic techniques used in this research include frame analysis, text analysis and narrative analysis.⁴

⁴ Narrative analysis refers to various approaches in analyzing different kinds of texts, including personal interviews. The focus is to evaluate how speakers select, organize, connect and evaluate events or concepts to create ‘narratives.’ Thematic analysis

A critical element of undertaking this research involves drawing parallels between the theoretical debate on MDN and Philippine policy discourses. By looking at how local policy discourses draw inspiration from MDN macro-debates, the research uncovers how policy actors borrow language and arguments as part of the process of legitimation and persuasion. Policy actors (government, civil society, international organizations, etc.) in this research are frequently referred to as ‘frame sponsors’ since frames are not self-interpretive and must always be undertaken or ‘sponsored’ by someone (Schon and Rein, 1993).

In undertaking this research, I took into account some limitations and difficulties inherent in frame construction as identified by Schon and Rein (1994:34-35). First, I took careful note of the possibility that public pronouncements may be incoherent with policymakers’ actions (as illustrated in the discussion of the Migrants Rights and Welfare discourse in Chapter 2.4). Second, I paid attention to the fact that the same course of action may be consistent across different policy frames (as shown in the analysis of the DFD discourse in Chapter 4). And lastly, I acknowledge the difficulty in distinguishing between profound and superficial shifts of frame, which partly motivated the decision to subject the DFD discourse to closer scrutiny in Chapter 4. I sought to overcome these limitations by careful analysis of policy utterances vis-à-vis the policy making process (see Chapter 4.2).

In mapping the architecture of the debate surrounding the policy issue, I borrowed Schmidt’s (2006) steps to value critical policy analysis albeit with minor improvisations. First, I described the context of the debate in two levels by: a) focusing on the broader theoretical debates on MDN through a literature review; and b) tracing the historical evolution of policy discourses on labor migration in the Philippines through frame and narrative analysis of speeches, political statements, legislation, organizational publications, and personal interviews. In characterizing the policy discourses, I provided a cursory overview of the organizations (major policy actors) involved in the Philippine migration set-up. Second, I probed the arguments and core values of the various policy discourses through a comparative analysis framework. Third, I examined in Chapter 4 the internal logic of the predominant policy discourse through text analysis of political speeches and statements, and a narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews. Texts selected fulfill two criteria: 1) they provide an argumentation elucidating support for the DFD discourse; and 2) they were spoken or delivered by policy actors well-positioned to represent government views on the discourse. Related to this step, I conducted a text analysis of legislation and agency mandates in order to characterize the effect

belongs to this approach where the emphasis is on ‘what’ is said, rather than ‘how’ it is told (Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods, 2006).

of the predominant policy discourse on government institutions. Table 1 below provides a summary of the research methodology including the sections in which they were covered:

Table 1
Overview of the research methodology

Questions	Methods used	Data used	Sections where covered
What are the theoretical debates on MDN?	Literature review, frame analysis	Peer reviewed journals, articles, books	Chapter 2.1
How did the policy discourses on Philippine labour migration evolve and who are the major policy actors?	Frame analysis, narrative analysis / text analysis	Political speeches and statements, legislation, organizational publications, personal interviews / Legislation, agency mandates, organizational websites	Chapters 2.3 to 2.5
How do labour migration policy discourses in the Philippines differ in terms of values, assumptions and policy proposals?	Frame critical / value critical policy analysis, narrative analysis	Political speeches and statements, legislation, organizational publications, personal interviews	Chapter 3
How have DFD values and goals shaped the policy agenda and how have institutions responded?	Frame critical / text analysis and narrative analysis	Political speeches and statements, legislation, agency mandates and personal interviews	Chapter 4

Appendix A lists the data and information sources reviewed for this research which include legislation, government documents, organizational mandates and websites, speeches, and conference proceedings related to international labour migration from the Philippines. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted among key stakeholders both from government and non-government. A list of the topics and the organizations interviewed may be found in Appendix B. Most of the interviews conducted were person to person with the exception of one respondent who preferred e-mail correspondence. There was nearly an equal mix of respondents from government to non-government, all directly involved in policy advocacy concerning migration at the national level.

1.4 Organization of the paper

Having established the main focus of the research in this chapter, Chapter 2 then delves into a literature review of the MDN in order to provide the context from which the policy issue comes into focus. This is followed by an overview of the evolution and interplay of labor migration policy discourses in the Philippines interspersed with an illustration of the Philippine institutional set-up for labour migration.

In Chapter 3, I will be presenting a comparative analysis of three main discourses on international migration in the Philippines: the migration for development discourse (MFD) primarily supported by government and international institutions; the migrants rights and welfare (MRW) discourse, espoused mostly by migrant-focused non-government organizations; and the emerging diaspora for development (DFD) discourse which has gained wide support both in government and non-government circles. The comparative analysis in Chapter 3 sheds light on the arguments and core values of the policy protagonists, and clarifies their respective assumptions and positions.

In Chapter 4, I subject the DFD discourse to closer scrutiny by examining key texts that reveal the implicit assumptions. The goal is to analyze how the policy agenda has evolved alongside the discourse while at the same time finding clues on how the migration-development nexus has been re-imagined in light of the country's protracted experience in systematic labour migration. This chapter further suggests that while the DFD discourse brings about greater awareness of the potential of migration to contribute to local and national development, much of rhetoric has not translated into institutional changes and reforms. The DFD discourse fails to unsettle the original policy goals of labour migration, hence resulting to the continuing dominance of MFD among policy circles.

Chapter 5 concludes by drawing insights as to how policies fail to achieve their intended outcomes as in the case of labor migration in the Philippines.

Chapter 2

The MDN debate and Philippine labour migration policy discourses

“They say that sometimes we [get to] brag too much but I don’t think it’s bragging because I remember that two years ago, I had 41 visitors from all over the world sponsored by ILO and UN, looking at how we do things in the Philippines. I said, we must be doing it right...”

- interview with Department of Labor and Employment official, 19 August 2009

2.1 The Migration-Development Nexus: aspects of a theoretical debate

A survey of the literature shows that early discourses on MDN are deeply steeped in economic terminology, because they tend to mirror dominant economic development paradigms prevailing in different time periods (Faist, 2008). For instance during the 1960’s, Faist argued that MDN thinking was heavily influenced by economic modernization concepts, an illustration of which assumes that emigration of surplus labour from developing countries leads to a new equilibrium between capital and labour. On the other hand, when dependency and world systems was fashionable during the 70s and 80s, the causality was viewed the other way around with migration being seen as resulting to brain drain thereby causing further poverty and underdevelopment (ibid).

MDN put on a new face in the 1990s characterized by public policy approaches of France, the Netherlands and the UK, where international migration is expected to fuel development not only through remittances and human capital but through knowledge flows and social remittances as well. This idea of co-development (Nair in Faist, 2008) seeks to strengthen remittance channels by involving diaspora knowledge networks and the private sector, particularly banks. Raghuram (2009) sees these as hegemonic interpretations of the MDN, where international organizations position themselves as stakeholders. The principle of co-development espoused by host countries is also conceived in connection with assisted voluntary return. In simple terms, the prospect of migrants returning to their home countries or their “return potential” is seen as the development factor (Sørensen et al, 2002).

While the coining of the word nexus may be attributed to the work of Sørensen et al. (2002), De Haas (2008) offers a more balanced if not broader historical perspective of migration and development from a theoretical standpoint. In his review, De Haas describes the debate on migration and development as that of a pendulum swinging from developmentalist optimism

in the 1950s and 1960s to structuralist pessimism over the 1970s and 1980s (see Table 5 in Appendix C). Unlike Faist, De Haas attributes these discursive shifts to paradigm shifts in social theory, citing that the livelihood approaches and the transnational turn which occurred in the 1990s is a step towards reconciling structure and actor perspectives (ibid.). Indeed, the most significant discursive change in the MDN debate is the emergence of migrants as transnational agents of development with remittances being seen as a “bottom-up” source of financing for development (Piper, 2009; De Haas, 2008). Yet migration scholars caution that this renewed optimism on remittances threatens to ignore decades of prior research on migration, and skirts around the discussion of the complex causes of migration as a result of failing development policies and widening global inequalities.

The purpose of the following literature review is to lay out general paradigmatic positions towards migration not only because these stances influence the analysis and interpretation of empirical data on migration but also because they are discernible in labour migration policy discourses in the Philippines which will be examined closely in sub-chapters 2.3 to 2.5.

2.1.1. Developmentalist approach

Fitting into the neoclassical strand of migration and social theory, the developmentalist approach sees migration as a reallocation of labour and a constituent part of the development process where wage differentials drive people to move to localities where labour is scarce and wages are high (Todaro, 1969). As capital is expected to move in the opposite direction, it is theorised that this will create factor price equalization, resulting to a narrower gap in terms of wage differentials thereby removing the incentives for migrating in the long run. In a micro-perspective, migrants are viewed as self-maximizing, individual rational actors who calculate the costs and benefits of moving (de Haas, 2008). In earlier readings of this approach, factor price equalization is the only developmental role of migration, migrant remittances has yet to capture the spotlight (Taylor, 1999).

Later extensions of neo-classical approach not only highlighted remittances as the obvious benefits of migration, but also hypothesized that migrants bring back ideas, knowledge and entrepreneurial acuity presumably acquired during migration. This largely optimistic view finds inspiration from modernization proponents who theorized that newly decolonized countries will follow the same rural to urban migration experience within Europe and the United States which resulted in rapid economic growth (de Haas, 2008). These views on international migration post World War II translated into welcoming policies from traditional receiving countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia, and to a large extent, Western Europe during the late 1950s (Appleyard, 2001).

Understandably, most empirical studies supporting developmentalist views center on the impact of remittances both on the macroeconomic and household levels but findings can hardly be generalized. For example, literature

on the cyclicity of remittances remain inconclusive, with evidence showing countercyclical correlation in some cases (meaning remittances increases during periods of economic downturn) and procyclical correlation in other studies (Bayangos and Jansen, 2009). On the other hand, a comparative study of remittances received by major sending countries vis-à-vis other sources of capital, indicate that remittances play an important role in financing the imports and / or financing the chronic trade deficit of surveyed countries (Taylor et al., 1996a). At the household level, a study by Yang in 2008 (in Bayangos and Jansen, 2009) on the effect of remittances during the Asian financial crisis concluded that a 10 percent depreciation of the peso corresponded to a 6 percent increase in peso remittances in the Philippines.

General critique of the developmentalist approach assert that it does not take into account constraining factors including government restrictions on migration (De Haas, 2008). Goss and Lindquist (1995) also contest the perceived developmental benefits of migration in the Philippines, citing studies which demonstrate that overseas earnings are chiefly used for consumption and daily subsistence needs than in productive investment. Additionally, statistics show that migration selectivity favor those who are already gainfully employed and appears to have little impact on the unemployment rate (ibid.). Moreover, household service workers constitute the largest group of newly hired deployed contract workers from the Philippines, raising skepticism that their employment abroad would lead to acquisition of new skills (POEA Statistical Compendium, 2007).

2.1.2. Historical-structuralist approach

Emerging as a response to the developmentalist approach, the historical-structuralist approach (or structuralist, for brevity) asserted that migration arises from disruptions and dislocations occurring as capital accumulates (de Haas, 2008). Three other distinct approaches are identified with this school of thought, namely neo-Marxist dependency theory, world systems theory and modes of production theory (Goss and Lindquist, 1995). Not only is migration seen as inimical to development within the dependency school, it is also perceived as an aggravating cause of underdevelopment. Several studies note that the selectivity of migration towards the most productive and educated members of the workforce in origin countries constitute a “transfer of value” incommensurate to individual returns in terms of remittances (Amin, 1974; Papademetriou, 1985).

The term “brain drain” characterizes much of the literature supporting the structuralist approach, claiming that increased migration flows foster unequal distribution of benefits and resources, and deprives poor countries of skilled human resources (Faist, 2008; de Haas, 2008). Remittances are also seen as fostering consumerist, non-productive and overdependent behavior among non-migrants. Furthermore, structuralists see migration as a constrained “choice” subject to pressures by larger structural forces, arguing that people are compelled to move because traditional economic structures break down as they become incorporated into the global political economy (de Haas, 2008).

World systems theory contributes to this point further arguing that the commodification of the means of production, create capital, commodity and ideological flows that further perpetuate migrancy (Goss and Lindquist, 1995).

Gibson and Graham (1986) in (Goss and Lindquist, 1995) provides a reinterpretation of the structuralist approach by attributing migration of Filipino construction workers to the Middle East due to the new international division of labour (NIDL). In said article, authors note that the geographical fixedness of capital translates to the demand for labour at fixed locations. Goss and Lindquist (1995) extend this argument further, gesturing that the dislocation of labour from its own cultural and geographical context immobilize social networks or communities that stifle labour struggle, thereby serving the interests of capital.

As with the developmentalist approach, the structuralist approach has its own critics. While certain countries which have made labour export a central element of their development strategy did not realize their expected gains (as in the case of Morocco and Turkey), some argue that other formerly developing and labour sending countries have achieved sustained economic growth in spite of migration (de Haas, 2008). Examples of these are some Southern European (Spain, Italy and Greece) and East Asian (South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia) countries which have become net labour importers after experiencing outmigration earlier on. Others also refute the structuralist approach using different paradigmatic conceptualizations of development.

2.1.3. The transnational turn and emerging MDN readings

Attempts to find a more tempered approach to migration and development surfaced during the second half of the 1980s, criticizing the rigidities of previous approaches which explain mobility either as an aggregate of individual decision or a structure-motivated behavior. Giddens' structuration theory (1984) influences most attempts to reconcile the gap between earlier approaches where he sees individual and collective agencies using their knowledge of structures to negotiate around constraints and realize their goals. Many perceive this structure-agency problematique as having injected fresh thinking on the migration and development debate given the multi-faceted impact of migration (de Haas, 2008).

The work of Stark (1991) and Stark and Levhari (1982), reconceptualized neo-classical migration theory to expand migration decision-making to households and communities rather than individuals, motivated more by risk minimization than income maximization. Migration is thus seen as a livelihood strategy or an insurance against shocks, corroborating the altruism with which remittance behavior is closely associated with. Also in line with more collective views of migration, Massey (1990) asserts through his network approach, that migration decisions made by households are influenced by local socio-economic factors and these aspects are in turn influenced by socio-political and economic structures at the national and international levels. But then what is lacking in these approaches are perspectives on power relations related to class,

race and gender, which began picking up since the transnational turn on the nexus emerged (see Truong and Gasper, 2008 on embedding a gender perspective in migration studies).

Widely known as the third phase of the MDN, the transnational perspective aims to dislocate the spatio-temporal distance with which migration and development has been conceived in the past. There has been increasing acknowledgment that migrants and member of their families foster and maintain links in their origin countries without sacrificing integration within their host countries (de Haas, 2005). This departure from the binary concept of mobility looks not only at how migration affects developing countries but also how industrialized countries develop through migrant contributions (Faist, 2008). Indeed as Piper (2009) observes, the terminology is becoming less ‘the impact of migration on development’ and more of ‘migrants’ contributions to development. And just as migrants are now “valorized” as the new agents of development, it may be equally important to look not only at transnational linkages but at trans-local ties because it is at the community level that these connections are more tangibly observed (see Taylor et al., 1996b for a review of the impact of international migration on community development).

2.2 Migrant-state relationship in MDN

Before I characterize labor migration discourses in the Philippines in the succeeding sub-chapter, a reflection on the relationship between international migrants and the state as conceptualized by various MDN approaches provides an entry point in examining the policy discourses at hand. In the developmental approach, migrants are viewed as self-interested, rational actors seeking to maximize returns for their labor. The role of the state is to provide an enabling environment to facilitate the movement of surplus labor. Consequently, this instrumental view of migration and migrants themselves as resources to be ‘traded’ provided the platform for historical-structuralist theorists to critique the institutions that foster the commodification of labor. Here the relationship between migrant and state becomes more complex. As migration is theorized as perpetuating underdevelopment, migrants are seen both as hapless victims of oppressive political-economic structures and also as resources that must be encouraged to stay or return in order to foster development at home.

More plural views on MDN sought to find a common ground between the conflicting approaches. With the transnational turn, migrants have become the central agent of development with the state taking on a supporting role to encourage transnational linkages. As Raghuram (2009:110) puts it, “the mobile governable subject of migration-development...is both required to move in order to strategize their human capital, but also act morally for the collective good of a distant place or community.”

Having provided an overview of the the macro-debates on MDN, the succeeding sub-chapters take a closer look at how these debates are reflected in Philippine policy discourses on labor migration.

2.3 The Making of a Lifeline: Origins of the Migration for Development (MFD) Discourse

Policies regulating the outflow of labour from the Philippines date back to 1915 during the American colonial period but it wasn't until 1974 that overseas employment became a concerted national strategy (Gonzalez, 1998; Asis, 1992). Prior to 1970s, the country's labour migration experience was heavily influenced by its close ties with the United States. The enactment of the Labor Code in 1974 marked the country's official foray into overseas employment. No less than then President Marcos elucidated the goal of the labour export policy:

“For us, overseas employment addresses two major problems: unemployment and the balance of payments position. If these problems are met or at least partially solved by contract migration, we also expect an increase in national savings and investment levels.”⁵

An interview with a Department of Labor Employment (DOLE) official corroborates the fact that the country's overseas employment program was focused on finding “alternative gainful employment for surplus labour in the Philippines.”⁶ He further asserted that the policy was not particularly envisioned to contribute to development. Amongst policymakers at that time, it was felt that even without active government participation, the country would have still experienced massive outmigration (Asis, 1992). Furthermore, the DOLE official interviewed posited that the labour export policy then as it is now is a matter of free choice, he says:

“We never forced anyone to go overseas. We were offering overseas employment to people who are employed - not to the unemployed... In other words if you are earning this much, there's an option to earn this much and this is the value of sacrificing distance or separation from the family. Are you willing to take this? If you are willing to take this that means it is really beneficial for you.”

The labour export program was initially conceived as a government-run program with the intention of phasing out private sector participation within four years from its inception (Agunias, 2008). This stance buckled under the increasing demand for overseas workers not only in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) but also in East Asia (Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore), resulting to the increased involvement of the private sector in the recruitment

⁵ Tigno (1990) cited from Agunias (2008).

⁶ Interview with Department of Labor and Employment official, 19 August 2009

and placement of workers. This process of inviting private sector participation into the labour migration industrial complex also transpired as part of a broader policy shift to privatize and deregulate state industries in view of structural adjustment programs.

The economic imperatives under which the overseas employment program was organized eventually translated into more draconian measures to institute systems of control way beyond the policy logic of control and containment elaborated by Sørensen et al. (2002). For instance, the Labor Code sought to make mandatory the remittance of workers' foreign exchange earnings (Article 22). It was obvious that while recruitment was liberalized, the state remains interested in monitoring or maximizing the gains of the program through foreign exchange remittances. However, the persistent use of unofficial channels called "padala" system,⁷ brought forth a number of presidential orders that initially sought to penalize this behavior through non-renewal of passports, suspension from the list of eligible workers and other similar measures (Executive Order[EO] No. 857, 1982). Later observing that punitive measures did not see improved remittance through official channels, the government backtracked and offered a system of incentives (EO No. 1021, 1985).

The collapse of Marcos dictatorship and the resumption of democratic rule under the Aquino administration did little to change the policy rhetoric on overseas employment. Rather, it was during the latter's term that the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) came into being due to bureaucratic reorganization by way of EOs.⁸ It was at this juncture that government institutions catering to migrant workers today have fully settled in their mandates, resulting to a delineation of responsibilities among migrant clientele (see Mughal and Padilla, 2005 for more). The POEA is responsible for the "front-end" of the Philippine migration industrial complex, providing pre-employment to pre-departure services for overseas workers. The OWWA on the other hand, is a single trust fund operated by the government through membership contributions, which provides insurance and other related benefits to member migrants and their families⁹ (Appendix C and D are tables detailing specific functions of both POEA and OWWA, respectively).

Under the MFD discourse, the term overseas contract workers (OCWs) became a catchphrase to refer to Filipino labour migrants, and it was Aquino

⁷ Literally translated, *padala* is "to send", describing the practice of asking migrants returning home to hand carry remittances for their families. Indian migrants have the same practice called *balwa*.

⁸ EO 126 renamed the Welfare Fund into OWWA while EO 247 restructured POEA by expanding its functional structure to encompass market development, employment, welfare, licensing, regulation and adjudication (Asis, 1992).

⁹ See Agunias and Ruiz (2007) for an account of OWWA operations.

who referred to overseas workers as modern-day heroes on account of their contribution to the Philippine economy. It must be noted that this construct of migrants as economic heroes persists today, albeit gender-blind to the fact that as far back as mid-1980s, majority of migrant workers deployed were women. Unsurprisingly, the goal of the overseas employment policy remained the same after the restoration of democracy. Under Aquino's term, Republic Act 7111 was passed creating an Overseas Workers' Investment Fund, the purpose of which provides us a glimpse of the instrumental manner in which labour migration is viewed:

“It is likewise the policy of the State to reduce the foreign debt in order to better achieve sustained economic growth by way of tapping the unofficial and informal remittances of said workers.”¹⁰

2.4 Disavowing the MFD strategy: Emergence of the Migrants Rights and Welfare (MRW) Discourse

With the expansion of the overseas employment program, problems associated with the protection of the welfare of OCWs became a consideration for policymaking. Although welfare protection has been part of the labour export program with the creation of the Welfare and Training Fund in 1980, the MRW discourse has not figured prominently in national level policymaking until the tenure of President Fidel Ramos. It is worthwhile to note however, that non-government organizations catering to the migrant sector have been in existence since the 1970s, organized by concerned individuals and groups out of the need to address migration-specific concerns such as illegal recruitment, contract substitution, underpayment or non-payment of wages and other similar matters (Asis, 1998). Other forms of physical and sexual abuses have likewise been recorded and brought to media attention, especially among domestic workers and entertainers (Asis, 1992 and Gonzalez, 1998).

The turning point which gave the impetus for the MRW discourse to influence the policy agenda came in 1995 when the execution of Filipino domestic worker Flor Contemplacion in Singapore revealed inadequacies on the safety nets provided by government to assist OCWs in distress. Gonzalez (1998) provides a historical account of the Contemplacion affair and the public outcry it generated which resulted in the hasty passage of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act or Republic Act No. 8042 (RA 8042) with migrant NGOs at the forefront of legislative deliberations (Asis, 1998). The passage of RA 8042 was a political triumph for the MRW discourse. NGOs have made their presence felt as a force to reckon with in labour migration discourse. Legislators, at least, recognize this in RA 8042 (Section 2h):

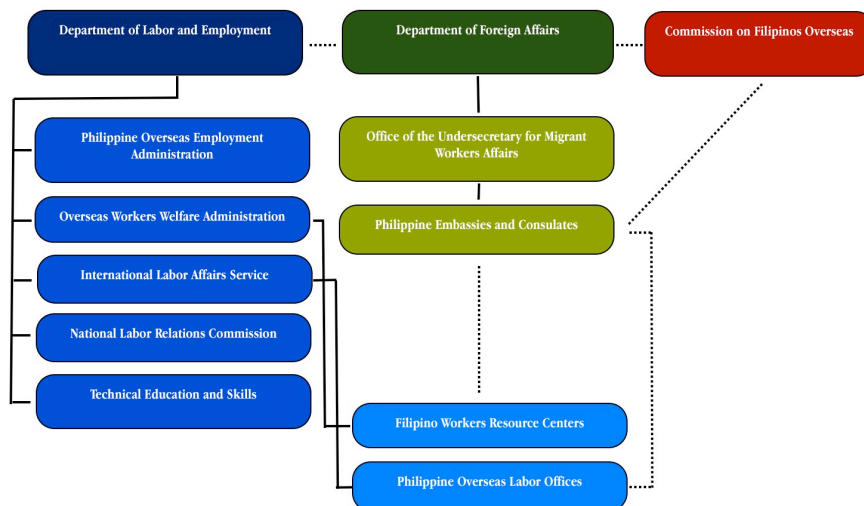
“Non-governmental organizations, duly recognized as legitimate, are partners of the State in the protection of Filipino migrant workers and in

¹⁰ Section 4 of RA 7111.

the promotion of their welfare, the State shall cooperate with them in a spirit of trust and mutual respect.”

The advent of the MRW discourse marked by the passage of RA 8042, further embedded institutions such as POEA and OWWA into their roles as mediators if not gatekeepers of migrant-state interaction. The legislation also ushered in new actors into the policymaking process. If RA 8042 has changed the migration landscape at all, it has reified existing institutions and pulled in more public organizations to share the accountability in addressing issues attendant to international migration. For instance, the law created the Office of the Legal Assistant for Migrant Workers Affairs¹¹ within the Department of Foreign Affairs to provide legal assistance to overseas Filipinos in distress (Section 24). It also expanded the role of the Department of Labor and Employment and its instrumentalities (such as the POEA and OWWA) in regulating the terms and conditions of work, and improving welfare services for migrants (for instance, most programs administered by OWWA were mandated by RA 8042). Figure 2 illustrates the institutional set-up of migration governance in the Philippines as a result of RA 8042. Asis (2008) views this institutionalization of migration as a key factor in shaping migration decisions where migrants find support both from government and private sector to actualize their intentions to migrate.

Figure 2
Philippine international migration institutional set-up



Source: author's own construction based on RA 8042 and agency mandates

¹¹ Now known as the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs.

One fundamental difference between the MFD discourse and the MRW discourse is how the latter views the cause of migration. An interview respondent from the Center for Migrant Advocacy,¹² posits that it is the country's underdevelopment that gives life to mass migration and compels people to move overseas for the sake of improving their livelihoods. She argued further that while migrants may have wanted to return to live and work in the country, the conditions of work and quality of life have not improved sufficiently to entice them to stay for good. She corroborates this with statistical evidence from the POEA showing that more than half of those who are deployed annually are rehired overseas workers.¹³

Institutional change has been felt with the emergence of the MRW discourse but has the goal of the labor export policy changed as well? Ramos' Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for 1993 to 1998 initially reinstated past administrations stance on overseas employment with a caveat that the program will be continued, provided that it shall not result in "undue drain in scientific/technical expertise and locally needed and middle-level skills." This rhetoric changed drastically as may be gleaned from section 2 (c) of RA 8042:

"While recognizing the significant contribution of Filipino migrant workers to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances, **the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development.** The existence of the overseas employment program rests solely on the assurance that the dignity and fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizens shall not, at any time, be compromised or violated." (emphasis added)

In pandering to public resentment, legislators may have been too ambitious in formulating section 2(c) of RA 8042, and underestimated the country's reliance on remittances. Data from the Central Bank illustrate that except for 1999 and 2001, migrant remittances were on an upward trend – its relative size easily eclipsing foreign direct investment or debt service burden at any given year from 1996 to 2007 (Bayangos and Jansen, 2009). Policy rhetoric may have changed but with deployment figures rising year after year, critics view overseas employment as a life buoy that is increasingly becoming a rescue raft.

RA 8042 also ushered in a new label for migrant workers from OCWs to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).¹⁴ This rhetorical shift seems to suggest that the state is owning up to its responsibilities to its overseas citizens, whereas the previous term was more generic in nature and seemingly divested of the migrant's citizenship or identity. Arguably, giving a Filipino face to

¹² A migrant focused NGO based in the Philippines, interviewed 20 August 2009.

¹³ Data corroborated by POEA 2007 Statistical Compendium.

¹⁴ Section 3 (a) of RA 8042.

migration – that is, re-imagining state obligations vis-à-vis migrants rights may have paved the way for the succeeding discourse to take shape.

2.5 Same Song, Different Tune: Diaspora for Development (DFD) Discourse

In administrations after Ramos, migrant NGOs took lead in advocating for policy measures extending political and economic entitlements to overseas Filipinos. While the gaps in terms of service delivery is a constant point of conflict between government and civil society actors, a changing tone was observed in terms of the policy measures being proposed. During her State of the Nation Address in 2002, President Arroyo urged Congress to pass two laws directly affecting overseas Filipinos:

“We must pass a law to give overseas Filipinos the right to vote, consistent with the Constitution. We must pass the bill that will give equal respect and recognition to the overseas Filipino’s (sic) dual citizenship, consistent with our national honor. These are the least returns for the enormous contribution of our overseas Filipinos to the national welfare.”

Espiritu (2004) sees this development as emerging from a policy discourse redefining the concept of citizenship in light of the reality of migration. Both measures were also seen as an acknowledgment of the ‘critical role’ overseas Filipinos play in the country’s economic and social stability (ibid). Both initiatives were signed into law in 2003, enabling overseas nationals to vote in Philippine national elections for the first time in 2004. Criticisms were rife that the new system excluded certain categories of migrants (such as permanent settlers) from exercising their right to vote, and was procedurally cumbersome for a sector so highly mobile (CMA and FES, 2009).¹⁵ Permanent settlers (who still hold Philippine citizenship) were disqualified from voting unless they execute an affidavit stating their intent to return to the Philippines within three years of registering to vote (Section 5d of Republic Act No. 9189).

In a similar vein, renewed interest on remittances gained pace with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) commissioning a study on Filipino migrant remittances, while *diaspora philanthropy* - the donation of financial, material and human resources of migrants to their country of origin (Powers, 2006; Silva, 2006), became the newest catchphrase of the migration-development nexus, again pulling in more stakeholders in the labour migration phenomenon including non-profit foundations and the private sector (banks, mobile phone companies, real estate companies and franchise businesses).

From an organizational standpoint, the Philippine migration machinery

¹⁵ Critics noted that the personal appearance requirement in Philippine embassies and consulates as a precondition for registration and limiting postal voting to pilot areas discouraged people to register and vote.

has created the Commission on Filipinos Overseas for permanent settlers to maintain transnational linkages with them even before the transnational turn on migration studies gained prominence in academic circles (Roma, 2008). As such, its example of fostering linkages with overseas nationals has been the subject of recent studies, especially on diaspora philanthropy (Powers, 2006; Silva, 2006; ADB, 2004). Sørensen et al. (2002) claim that several factors may have led to this reassessment of migrants role in development: 1) the fact that remittances may double the size of aid; 2) that diasporas are continuously engaged in a myriad of transnational practices; and 3) that migrant sending states are now crafting policies to provide migrants with special rights and entitlements. All seem to be true in the case of the Philippines.

What is unique about the DFD discourse is that it seems to be a common ground for both government and migrant NGOs to constructively engage each other. However, within NGOs involved in migration, a somewhat uneasy dichotomy has emerged - those who promote migrants' rights and welfare, and those involved in migration and development. Dizon-Anonuevo (2008:189) differentiates the two groups in terms of perspectives:

“Rights and welfare organizations take and uphold the point of view of **migrants** on various issues, concerns and initiatives. Migration and development organizations take the point of view and uphold the interest of the **community** which includes migrants and their families as key actors, among others.” (emphasis added)

Labels to denote overseas workers have likewise changed as can be gleaned from the Philippine President's speech during the media launch of the 2nd GFMD:

“The government and the people honor our overseas Filipinos, whether you call them OFWs, OCWs, as Dante Ang¹⁶ likes to call them **Overseas Filipino Investors**. And I agree that we should begin to call them **expatriates** rather than OFWs. But in any case, we honor them for their sacrifice and dedication to their work, their family and their nation.” (emphasis added)

The President gives a rather candid reason behind the recent relabeling of migrant workers. In the same speech she reasoned “because expatriates usually get higher pay than if you just call them workers.” I also note that the change in label is followed by rhetoric imploring idealized characteristics of migrant workers, that of industry and a sense of moral obligation to one's family and country.

If I were to adopt the IOM's definition of migration management, then the DFD discourse is undoubtedly subsumed within the MFD discourse. The

¹⁶ Current Chair of the CFO.

decision to characterize it separately at this point stems from the reasoning that while government can institute measures to foster DFD initiatives, it cannot possibly establish a machinery that can successfully regulate these initiatives, in the same manner it has failed to make remittances mandatory. On the surface at least, the tactics and machinery employed by the DFD discourse seems to have a distinct ring to it. Chapter 4 is solely dedicated to testing this further. Meanwhile, I argue in the succeeding comparative analysis, that the evolution of labour migration policy discourses in the Philippines has indeed kept up with the various discursive approaches on MDN.

Chapter 3

Discourses on Labour Mobility: A Comparative Analysis

“I think migration is not for everybody but Filipinos are very resilient in that sense, especially if you’re searching for a better life for yourself to help your family back home. You’re able to endure many deprivations abroad.”

- interview with Department of Foreign Affairs official, 24 August 2009

3.1 Drawing parallels between MDN and migration policy discourses

All policy discourses described above have strong parallelisms with the various approaches on the migration-development nexus. For instance, the overzealous promotion of labour export in the 1970s is in line with developmentalist views on the benefits accruing to sending governments if they export “surplus” labour. As the Philippines continued to experience massive unemployment after two decades of continuous outmigration, migrants rights groups began to see the program in terms of the commodification of labour and the conditions of underdevelopment that force people to move. Moving in to highlight the “human face” of migration, MRW advocates pursued the agenda of securing better entitlements from the state, which in their view has excessively conformed to the new international division of labour. In a sense, MRW does not directly derive its roots from the dependency school of the structural approach but nonetheless utilizes that perspective insofar as policy advocacy is concerned. Lately, with the emergence of community as a principle of development, migrants are now being seen as transnational agents of development and change in their home countries. The policy protagonists involved in all three discourses recognize that migration both has attendant costs and benefits. However, proponents of the three discourses clearly differ in terms of what to them are the root causes of migration, and how best to address what Baggio (2008) calls the migration-development disconnect.

In undertaking a comparative analysis of these approaches several archival documents have been analyzed. For the MFD discourse, the main materials analyzed were legislation, policy documents and political speeches by key figures within the government. Special attention was also given to statements made by the Philippine government delegation during its hosting of the 2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development. In selecting material to analyze for both the MRW and DFD discourses, attention was paid to the mandate and thrusts of the organizations supporting the discourses. Migrant NGOs are prolific publishers. Most often, the reports they publish contain

statements that shed light on their position regarding the issue or policy in question. Whenever relevant, country-specific migration literature published by scholars were also analyzed. Given that the 2nd GFMD held parallel sessions for the civil society, I also analyzed proceedings of the national consultations conducted prior to the Forum. The publication *Moving Out, Back and Up: International Migration and Development Prospects in the Philippines*, by the Scalabrini Migration Center was particularly helpful in analyzing the DFD discourse. This is because the publication reflected views of both government and civil society in harnessing diaspora initiatives for development.

Since the documents analyzed do not have a common format and criteria, I used Schmidt's (2006) guide to critical-value policy analysis to derive my own criteria for my analytical framework: 1) how the problem is framed; 2) the main focus of advocacy/action; 3) the conclusion of policy protagonists; 4) the policy proposals or thrusts; 5) issues left out; and 6) who are the actors that identify with the discourse. Typically, Schmidt recommends that the policy analyst describe how policy actors identify themselves in relation with other actors. I decided against this for two reasons. First, the euphemistic culture and rhetoric of government service do not provide a point of contrast with the positions of other actors. In policy statements or even personal interviews conducted, government officials adopt a diplomatic if not patronizing tone concerning their interaction and partnerships with NGOs. Second, the plurality of actors involved in the DFD discourse (both from government and non-government) blurs the delineation of positions between all three discourses. The results of the analysis synthesized in Table 2 below was further cross-checked with the interviews I conducted during my field research in Manila:

Table 2
Migration policy discourses in the Philippines: A comparison

Questions / Topics	Migration for Development	Migrants Rights and Welfare	Diaspora for Development
1) Framing of the problem	Labour surplus, unemployment and foreign exchange reserves	Vulnerabilities brought about by migration	Untapped development potential of migration
2) Line of advocacy/action focuses on:	Maximizing benefits through market regulation and minimizing costs by providing welfare measures	Demanding accountability concerning shortfalls in government welfare provisioning	Harnessing migration-development channels better
3) The conclusion	Migration is a free choice.	Migration is a forced option.	Migration is there to stay unless we do something about it.
4) Policy proposals	Increased deployment in high skilled jobs where exploitation is least likely to happen; Negotiate improved	Improve enforcement of existing laws and amend inadequate ones; Focus on local job generation;	Capacity-building for migrants; Bridging the migration-development gap; Harnessing other migration-

Questions / Topics	Migration for Development	Migrants Rights and Welfare	Diaspora for Development
	working conditions through bilateral agreements	Increase government spending on welfare services and provisioning	development channels apart from remittances (investment, technology transfer, etc.)
5) Issues left out	Refers to labour migration as a stop-gap measure but does not provide clear mechanisms to ensure its temporary nature	Refers to underdevelopment as a cause of migration but does not advocate a proposal to address underdevelopment per se ¹⁷	Refers to diaspora's potential to contribute to development but seems less concerned about the migrants' own development
6) Policy actors who identify with the discourse	Government, international organizations	Migrant welfare NGOs, human rights groups, trade unions, development NGOs	Development NGOs, migrant cooperatives, government, international organizations
7) How migrants are labeled	Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs)	Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)	Overseas Filipino Investors (OFIs) / expatriates

3.2 Framing of the problem

At the onset there are value disagreements about how labour migration is perceived. The MFD discourse sees unemployment as the immediate cause to be addressed and perceives migration as an instrument to utilize surplus labour in an economy that has low absorptive capacity. In this sense, labour migration is regarded as a way of hitting two birds with one stone: addressing unemployment and augmenting foreign exchange reserves.

On the other hand, the MRW discourse looks at labour migration through a political economy lens, seeing labour migration as an outcome of underdevelopment and state failure. Implicit in this assumption is that the state, as the primary agent of development, has failed to provide its citizens the opportunity to earn a decent living at home. This could be gleaned from one of the publications of an MRW group:

“...the crippling poverty and apparent government inaction to improve the economy continue to push many Filipinos over and above official

¹⁷ The failure of the MRW discourse to advocate for a proposal to address underdevelopment, which is viewed as the root cause of migration, arises from the fact that the causes and context of such are varied.

government figures to risk working abroad...”¹⁸

The DFD discourse starts from the perspective of migration as a reality and that the problem lies not on labour migration per se, but the fact that its gains remain unrealized due to incoherence between migration policy and development policy. Baggio (2008) noted that in a roundtable discussion with Philippine government officials conducted by the Scalabrini Migration Center in 2007, majority of the participants admitted that migration policies and development policies are often drafted and implemented separately. Hence, in contrast with the previous two discourses, the DFD discourse seems to portray a more nuanced view of migration-development; while it recognizes that the benefits of labour migration are yet to be harnessed, they also imply that migration policy alone should not be the panacea to underdevelopment.

3.3 Focus of action and advocacy

Embodied within the organizational mandates of both POEA and OWWA, the MFD discourse’s approach in managing migration is rooted in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs¹⁹ of migration. POEA at the front end serves to regulate the market with the intention of ensuring adherence of the private sector to minimum labour standards. Some controversial policy decisions have been made in the past to ensure this, including setting a minimum wage for the hiring of household domestic workers.²⁰ Also in line with RA 8042, there were instances where POEA imposed a deployment ban in countries deemed hazardous to the general safety and welfare of OFWs.²¹ OWWA serves to reinforce this by providing for a system of benefits as illustrated in Appendix D. With the introduction of RA 8042, a system of legal assistance has been attached as a function of most Philippine consular establishments for Filipinos in distress through the Department of Foreign Affairs. An obvious weakness in this focus is that safety nets are bound to be inadequate given that the Philippine government’s ability to minimize the costs

¹⁸ CMA and FES (2009) *The Philippines: A Global Model on Labor and Migration?* 2nd edition.

¹⁹ A common mantra within POEA and OWWA, maximizing the benefits of migration usually implies ensuring better terms and conditions of work, pursuing ways to lower the cost of sending remittances, etc. Minimizing costs on the other hand, usually refers to how OWWA welfare services mitigate the social costs brought about by migration through scholarships, organizing migrant families for livelihood opportunities.

²⁰ Source: POEA website. <http://www.poea.gov.ph/hsw/hsw.html>

²¹ Since 2007, the POEA banned deployment to Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Lebanon for safety reasons. A deployment ban means no contract for workers bound to such countries will be processed by POEA. A system of exit control in international airports serves to ensure that this ban is enforced. Critics argue that the ban merely compels people to migrate through irregular channels by going through transit countries.

of migration (especially, the social and welfare costs) lies beyond its sphere of influence and control when migrants land in their host countries.

Notwithstanding this so-called life-cycle approach to migration management, the MRW discourse focuses on demanding greater accountability concerning shortfalls in welfare provisioning. MRW advocates claim that adequate on-site services to OFWs in distress are severely hampered by the lack of embassy personnel (Center for Migrant Advocacy and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009). Furthermore, they criticize that the OWWA Omnibus Policies promulgated in 2003, created a dichotomy between registered and unregistered migrants when it limited the beneficiaries of the welfare fund to paying members – a move which they deemed discriminatory. What is strikingly noticeable about the MRW discourse is the obvious disconnect between its perception of the issue (migration as an outcome of underdevelopment) and its focus of action and advocacy (ensuring the rights and welfare of migrants are protected). This is discussed more in detail below (see Chapter 3.4 and 3.5).

Motivated to take advantage of the “diasporic dividend”, DFD proponents emphasize ways to harness migration-development channels by taking stock of practices and empirical work on MDN. For example, Aldaba and Opiniano (2008) identified how certain sectors in the Philippines (such as agriculture, education and health, infrastructure, financial markets, tourism and social development) can take advantage of the benefits brought about by labour mobility (remittances, human capital, productive investment, diaspora philanthropy, skills and technology transfer, etc.). The DFD discourse recognizes that labour migration is not a sustainable economic development strategy in the long-run. But it is also important to note that despite the plurality of this discourse, many still privilege the government as an “arbiter” of development practice (Raghuram, 2009). Aldaba and Opiniano (2008:153), both of whom are DFD proponents assert:

“Many stakeholders and sectors are keen to tap the benefits from overseas migration. The key is **how the government** will be able to lead and coordinate these various sectors in maximizing the potential contributions of our diaspora.” (emphasis added)

3.4 Views on the migration phenomenon

Is migration a career choice or is it a constrained choice? Here the two earlier discourses clash directly. As the quote at the beginning of Chapter 3 suggests, migration has been normalized to the extent that Filipino migrants are perceived as inherently and culturally predisposed to endure hardships attendant to migration. In my initial overview of the MFD discourse, an interview with a DOLE official illustrated the view of labour migration as a career move with trade-offs. Where the financial compensation in exchange for the physical distance from the family is deemed acceptable enough then people migrate. This view is consistent with neo-classical conceptions of migration theory which sees individuals as **income** maximizing rational actors.

The MRW discourse disagrees with the career choice argument. Alcid (2003) in her critique of the Philippine labour export program argued that labour migration is symptomatic of the failings of the domestic economy which has remained stagnant and indebted after implementing structural adjustment programmes. She furthers that the perpetuation of poverty and underemployment not only created increasing dependence on migration but also instilled a culture of migration among the youth (ibid.).

Where the two discourses diverge in views, the DFD discourse takes a rather pragmatic and solution-oriented stance. Strongly influenced by pluralist views on migration which goes beyond the usual push-pull framework, the DFD assumes that migration can only be dealt with more effectively if migrants themselves are empowered to contribute to development. This has been a prevailing theme within more recent discussions of the MDN. During the 2008 Global Forum on Migration and Development, Undersecretary Esteban Conejos of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said:

“The Philippine Government chose the theme ‘**Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development**’ to shift the debate away from the usual rational arguments about economic benefits of migration, and back to the migrants and their families. The greatest wealth of any country is its people, and the development benefits they can bring to their communities and countries are only possible when they are properly protected and supported.”²²

As the analysis of the DFD discourse will show later, this view is far from being untainted. The text above seems to have a limited notion of rationality based solely on the economic returns of migration. Civil society participants further lament that the above theme does not depart from the utilitarian view in which migration has been viewed in the past as the imperative to protect migrants rights seem only necessary to make them more productive.

3.5 Thrusts of policy proposals

The contrast between MFD and DFD discourse intensifies when viewed in terms of policy thrusts. Focusing its efforts in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs of migration, the MFD discourse sees increased deployment in high skilled occupations as a way of lowering the welfare costs associated with migration. As such, MFD can be viewed as an outward oriented (or deployment-based) approach. This can be gleaned from Section 2(g) of RA 8042:

²² Conejos, as the designated Chair of the 2nd GFMD, delivered the speech during the closing ceremony of the Forum held in Manila in October 2008.

“The State recognizes that the ultimate protection to all migrant workers is the possession of skills. Pursuant to this and as soon as practicable, the government shall deploy and/or allow the deployment only to skilled Filipino workers.”

This policy statement remains highly contested for a number of reasons. First, what constitutes as “skilled” remains undefined by policy. Second, while the policy implies a shift towards focusing deployment in certified or professional occupations, deployment figures remain heavily skewed towards household service workers, a very vulnerable sector within the migrant population.²³ Perhaps realizing that the nature/type of migration flow is more dependent on the demands of the global labour market than the government’s policy to limit migration to the highly skilled, the Philippine government adopted a different tone in the 2008 GFMD, proclaiming that the protection of migrants’ rights is a “shared responsibility” between origin and destination countries.

The DFD discourse is distinct from the MFD discourse in the sense that its policy thrusts barely touches on the issue of deployment and remains focused on efforts to build the capacity of migrants for eventual return into the home country. Bagasao (2008) in proposing migrant economic empowerment as a means to rights awareness and human development, outlines various civil society interventions in the Philippines directed at savings mobilization and enterprise development among migrants. An interview with a capacity-building organization for migrants seemed to echo the point that a migrant’s vulnerability is associated with one’s work and nature of stay in the destination country. Hence, she asserts, the sooner a migrant breaks out of this dependence at work by saving her earnings for productive investment back home, the sooner she breaks away from the cycle of migration.²⁴ The centrality of migrants as actors of community and self-development distinguishes the DFD from the other two discourses.

However, the plurality of actors involved in the DFD discourse means that there are also alternative readings of how development can be realized through diaspora initiatives. Among international organizations and some government organizations supportive of this discourse, remittances remain the main channel for development and thus, initiatives to reduce the cost of remitting have been forwarded as one policy proposal among a host of ways to leverage²⁵ remittances for development (ADB, 2004). Other policy proposals

²³ A study conducted by Human Rights Watch (2008) among household workers in Saudi Arabia reveal that these migrant workers from mostly Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines, endure a range of abuses including non-payment of salaries, forced confinement, food deprivation, sexual and other forms of physical and verbal assault.

²⁴ Interview with Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation, 12 August 2009.

²⁵ Sørensen et al. (2002) noted that sending governments are developing new practices to entice migrants to channel remittances towards development financing.

to harness diaspora resources in the Philippines include channelling remittances to infrastructure development (building schools, farm to market roads, health facilities), financial instruments (issuance of bonds), as well as enticing migrants to promote tourism and retirement in the homeland (Aldaba and Opiniano, 2008).

Since the passage of the overseas absentee voting act and dual citizenship act in 2003, the MRW discourse, which prominently influenced the policy agenda in previous decades, may have taken the backseat in policymaking for the meantime. Its advocates remain active in calling for improved transparency and accountability in the provision of welfare services for migrants. However, it carries little weight when it comes to proposing measures to address what it sees as the root cause of migration – the persistent underdevelopment within the country. In most of the documents and interviews analyzed by those identified with the MRW discourse, their engagement with government has always been directed at migration organizations (DFA, DOLE, POEA and OWWA) instead of development organizations (National Economic Development Authority or Department of Trade and Industry). So it seems that the separation between migration and development policy is likewise apparent within the MRW discourse.

3.6 What issues are left out?

This section does not exhaust the myriad of issues each of the discourses have left out. Rather, the intention is to interrogate the main premise of the three discourses as they stand. The MFD discourse for instance, has always asserted that labour migration is merely an ad hoc measure to address surplus labour and augment foreign exchange reserves. Clearly, far from becoming a temporary measure, it has embedded itself in the Philippine political economy so much so that career choices of its citizens are patterned after the likelihood of getting a job abroad (Yeates, 2009; Lorenzo, et al., 2007; Asis, 2008). But despite policy pronouncements denying labour migration as a permanent strategy, there is no doubt within the policy framework that it is anything but permanent. For instance, the Labor Code and RA 8042 is silent as to how labour migration will fade out to invisibility much like the Korean model it was patterned after. The closest indication in policy that labour migration was envisioned to figure less prominently in the future was the eventual phase out of POEA regulatory functions enshrined under Section 29 and 30 of RA 8042. But these provisions were eventually repealed through Republic Act No. 9422 passed in 2006.

The MRW discourse on the other hand, approaches the problem from the perspective of underdevelopment but focuses its line of work / advocacy on securing better treatment for migrants. This paradigm is problematic in three ways. First, securing better rights for migrants may translate to better rights at home but the sending government's ability to secure those rights outside its territories is limited. Even with the institutional set-up as complex as the Philippines, which operates welfare services beyond the usual purview of

consular and diplomatic establishments, cases of abuse can only be minimized at best. Second, securing rights from the sending state does not address what the MRW discourse perceives as the main problem, it simply institutionalizes a set of arrangements which further embeds the migration bureaucratic complex. The presence of migration organizations, which facilitates the flow of information acts as an incentive for people to view migration as a rational career option (Asis, 2008). Lastly, the problem-focused approach of the MRW discourse ignores more nuanced views of migration. In doing so, the MRW discourse falls into the same trap it accuses the MFD discourse of doing, providing band-aid solutions to a permanent problem.

Perhaps the advantage that the DFD discourse enjoys over both discourses is that it depoliticizes the debate on labour migration by adopting a more pragmatic view of the phenomenon, thereby enabling a confluence of interests to rally around differentiated solutions. But as the debate moves to explore how migration can contribute more effectively to the development, some scholars propose that the subject of migration – the migrant – is increasingly becoming invisible from the discourse itself. I do not completely agree with this view. For instance, Briones (2009) provides an account of how migrant domestic workers in Paris negotiate the MDN link, seen through the capabilities and livelihood approaches. Nevertheless, Raghuram (2009:112) provides an interesting critique of the discourse. She says,

“...migrants are invited to participate in development when they can affirm the legitimacy of the discourse of development...secondly, we see an individualisation of the moral responsibility to care for the other, but these others are territorially located in particular lands. Migrants are asked to enact particular attachments and perform a form of localised responsibility to specific locations and groups.”

3.7 Conclusion

The comparative analysis above endeavoured to shed light on the prevailing policy discourses on international labour migration in the Philippines by characterizing the perceptions of policy actors on the MDN. It described how the various stakeholders of the MDN debate problematize the policy agenda and explained how the prevailing discourses in MDN are alive and well represented in the case of the Philippines. What must be underscored at this point is that these discourses are not time bound, and that they criss-cross and interact in a changing environment. As recent experience in the Philippines shows, the emergence of DFD as a discourse did not dislodge or unsettle the prevailing MFD discourse, espoused by government. In fact, as of this writing, the President through AO No. 247, directed POEA to refocus its shift from market regulation to “full-blast” market development by identifying “Code Green” areas, countries that are aggressively recruiting foreign workers. This signifies an official policy shift towards aggressively promoting outmigration of Filipino workers, a clear sign that the disavowal of the MFD discourse (in rhetoric) has ended.

The next chapter takes a closer look at the DFD discourse and seeks to answer the following questions: 1) What are the underlying assumptions behind the DFD discourse's framing of the MDN? 2) How have institutions responded under the DFD's policy agenda? 3) Why has it failed to unsettle the deployment oriented thrust of the MFD discourse? The intention of the chapter is to unearth clues about the future role of migration in the country's development policy, and at the same time offer a critique of how certain migration development linkages are favored over others.

Chapter 4

Demystifying the DFD discourse

“The greatest wealth of any country is its people, and the development benefits they can bring to their communities and countries are only possible when they are properly protected and supported.”

- Concluding remarks of the Chair of the 2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development, October 2008

4.1 MDN through the DFD lens

Although preceded by the passage of twin laws providing voting and dual citizenship rights to overseas Filipinos, the Philippine hosting of the 2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development in October 2008 is perhaps the clearest indication that the DFD discourse has reached an unprecedented level of awareness in policymaking circles. Due to the Philippines’ system of entitlements for migrants, elements of the MRW discourse found their way to the theme of the forum, “Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development”. From the theme alone, a number of assumptions can be gleaned. One is that migrants are recognized as agents of development, but they must be protected and empowered in order to realize this objective. In an interview with an MRW advocate, she noted that this conceptualization of MDN does not depart from the utilitarian view of migrants under the MFD discourse.²⁶ This leads me to ask how different is the DFD from the MFD discourse, and who ‘sponsors’ it?

In order to probe further the way MDN is perceived through the DFD lens, some key texts taken from various speeches and personal interviews²⁷ were coded in Table 3 below. The criteria used in selecting the texts is: 1) they provide an argumentation why the diaspora should be tapped for development and, 2) they were spoken or delivered by policy actors well-positioned to represent government views on the said discourse. This is not to say that civil society has less influence in defining the DFD agenda. The focus on texts produced by government policy actors simply serves to uncover how the government claims or sponsors the DFD discourse. Moreover, it has been established in the preceding chapter (Chapter 3.3 in particular) how the civil society views government as playing a central role in steering this discourse.

²⁶ Interview with CMA, 20 August 2009.

²⁷ Answers to interview questions are typically a mixture of English and Filipino. For the reader’s convenience, I took the liberty of removing speech fillers spoken in Filipino and took extra care to rephrase in English without losing the original meaning of the sentence.

Highlighting NGO mobilization in the Manila GFMD, Rother (2009) further confirms the division within the civil society as to how approach the question of migration-development. The fact that the civil society is divided in this issue (as also shown in sub-chapter 2.5) partly explains why government seems to be the primary sponsor of the DFD discourse.

The selected texts were organized by three main themes: 1) how DFD is rationalized; 2) who is expected to contribute to development; and 3) what policy thrusts are being proposed in line with DFD. Elements of ethos, pathos and logos were also identified in the selected texts.

Table 3
Analysis of selected DFD texts

Author / Source of Text	Key Text	Comments / Rewording / Coding Stated Assumption (SA) Stated Conclusion (SC) Unstated Assumption (UA) Unstated Suggestion (US) Unstated Conclusion (UC)
Theme 1: Rationale for tapping the diaspora for development		
<p>President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's speech during the signing of the Dual Citizenship Law, 29 August 2003</p>	<p>“The international trend is clearly towards increasing the number of dual citizens. And we know that the majority of the Filipinos who migrated abroad did so for better opportunities, but they continue their allegiance to the Philippines. This continued allegiance is demonstrated by their maintaining contacts and interests in their homeland, and by their intention to retire, own properties and invest their hard-earned money in the country.</p> <p>Our overseas workers have become a powerful force, not only in the economies in which they work and live, but in our economy. In fact, it is to them once again that we call on. We call on the families of our overseas workers to exchange their dollars in the banks so that we can all help to strengthen the peso.”</p>	<p>SA: Filipinos migrate for better opportunities but do not abandon their ties with the homeland.</p> <p>SC: These ties are evident with their continued links with people back home and their wish to settle back and invest to the Philippines.</p> <p>US: This law is meant to entice the diaspora to invest and retire in the Philippines.</p> <p>Underscores the importance of remittances in keeping the value of the peso against foreign currencies. This call for assistance is preceded by emotive language that emphasizes ‘the ties that bind.’</p> <p>Ethos: The speaker shows that she has the ‘pulse’ on the aspirations and motivations of overseas Filipinos.</p> <p>Pathos: Migrants are made to feel that they are ‘powerful’ and in control of the country’s prospects for development.</p> <p>Logos: Migrants and their families have resources to assist development and they must do so</p>

Author / Source of Text	Key Text	Comments / Rewording / Coding Stated Assumption (SA) Stated Conclusion (SC) Unstated Assumption (UA) Unstated Suggestion (US) Unstated Conclusion (UC)
		because they are patriotic.
President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in a meeting with the Filipino community in Jersey City, 26 September 2003	“The passage of the Dual Citizenship Law is part of our country's response to globalization but also it serves the strong homing instinct of every Filipino of there (sic) long stay in a foreign land. We know that you continue to love the Philippines even if you're already American citizens. You demonstrate this because you've maintained your contacts and your interest in your homeland, and many of you when you retire, you retire in the Philippines. And many of you want to own properties and invest your hard-earned money in our country giving a further boost to the Philippine economy. Now, with the Dual Citizenship Act you can buy all the land you want and you can invest it in any business in the Philippines.”	<p>Consistent with Yeates (2009) claim that migration governance is part of the state’s globalizing strategy.</p> <p>SA: Your ties to the Philippines are still important to you despite changing your citizenship.</p> <p>UA: Because you have resources at your disposal, SC: you want to own properties and invest in the Philippines without prejudice to your foreign citizenship under the dual citizenship law.</p> <p>Ethos: The speaker conveys that the passage of the law is a deliberate, conscious effort of her government in light of globalization.</p> <p>Pathos: The audience is made to feel yearning for their homeland, appealing to their ‘homing’ instinct, with the Philippines as the ‘beacon.’</p> <p>Logos: Dual citizenship erases limitations former Filipinos have in terms of land and business ownership.</p>
Theme 2: Who contributes to development?		
Interview with DFA official, 24 August 2009	“I wanted a one-on-one if possible correlationship between protection and development. And protection and the ability of our migrants to send back home remittances and even including their skills acquisition which later on contribute to development.”	<p>SA: It is not always the case but protection should ideally accompany development.</p> <p>SC: Development is related to the ability of migrants to send remittances back and their return potential.</p> <p>Logos: Protecting migrants is important because it enhances their ability to contribute to development.</p>

Author / Source of Text	Key Text	Comments / Rewording / Coding Stated Assumption (SA) Stated Conclusion (SC) Unstated Assumption (UA) Unstated Suggestion (US) Unstated Conclusion (UC)
Philippine Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Esteban Conejos, Chair of 2 nd GFMD Final Conclusions and Recommendations, 30 October 2008	“We also identified elements of an enabling environment for empowering migrants and diaspora to mobilize their resources more effectively for development.”	US: Migrants are willing to mobilize their resources for development if the environment is conducive. UC: Therefore, states must provide that environment to harness migrant resources.
Theme 3: Policy thrusts related to DFD		
Philippine Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Esteban Conejos, Chair of 2 nd GFMD Final Conclusions and Recommendations, 30 October 2008	“The GFMD could likewise promote partnership between source and destination countries in facilitating diaspora’s financial, technological, and social contributions to both countries. The GFMD could consider other suggestions made to empower migrants, such as ensuring greater exercise of political rights by migrants...and the feasibility of issuing diaspora bonds in order to harness diaspora assets beyond merely their income flows.	SA: GFMD can provide the platform for states or governments to encourage diaspora’s development contributions other than remittances including providing incentives such as political rights. US: political rights = voting, dual citizenship, parity in ownership rights Paradox in terms of harnessing remittances through diaspora bonds. What else could these bonds be bought with but by remittances? Logos: Providing concessions to migrants in the form of political rights increases their likelihood of contributing to development.
Philippine Labor Secretary Marianito D. Roque, speech during the launching of plenary debate 2 nd GFMD, 27 October 2008	“In this regard, receiving countries may wish to consider incentives for migrants to pursue development projects in their respective sending countries, through social entrepreneurship, technical exchanges and outreach missions. For example, migrant workers can be tapped in official development cooperation programs, in diaspora and corporate philanthropy activities, and in private trade and investment opportunities.”	UA: Migrants want to assist in development efforts in their home countries. SC: Migrants are more likely to assist in home country development if receiving countries provide incentives. US: Migrants are willing to be tapped in development cooperation, trade and investment and philanthropic activities. “Tapping” migrant workers – seeing migrants as a resource that can be utilized / maximized.

Some interesting points can be observed from the texts evaluated above. The first is that migrants are perceived as the central agents of development and the state passes this responsibility by emphasizing their existing linkages with the homeland. The appeal originates from a sense of duty or commitment that migrants are expected to foster with their families back home. The language used is likewise couched on the assumption of the migrant's benevolence and generosity and enunciated as if there is a homogenous form of obligation emanating from the polity, or as if the sector itself is a homogenous group. This is hardly the case.

The stock estimate of overseas Filipinos alone classifies migrants into three categories, permanent, temporary and irregular, each of which falls within the purview of a different government agency depending on the migrant's status.²⁸ RA 8042 for instance, is completely silent on permanent settlers which is an implicit recognition that they are not envisioned as a vulnerable group unlike migrant workers who are commonly found in low to medium-skilled occupations and countries who do not allow permanent settlement. Likewise, 'unregistered' migrants are purposely excluded from receiving benefits from the OWWA (see Appendix D) since they migrated through unofficial channels. This differential treatment of migrants implies that they are likewise differently abled in terms of contributing to this development project. Their willingness to do so as part of their patriotic duty (note the term economic heroes in Chapter 3), while assumed to be natural in the texts above, are romanticized notions at best. Outside the rhetoric of the GFMD, even a Department of Labor official admits that remittances remain to be private transfers, where the purview of utilizing it rests with the migrant household.²⁹ This practice of appealing to the diaspora's linkages with the homeland is what one interview respondent identifies as 'sweet talk' or a ploy to 'court' remittance or influence.³⁰

Secondly, the DFD discourse's framing by government proponents above, glosses over if not totally omits mention of why migrants are in their situation in the first place. As such, the call for them to respond to the need for development back home rests in dubious logic. If development was possible at home, would they have left in the first place? For Ellerman (2005), this scenario is symptomatic of how labor migration helps to create a stratified society. Individual success through labor migration is seen as a way 'out of the ghetto', where the best and brightest of the South seek their success in the North. The determining factor in this equation is the migrants potential to return, which is largely dependent on the conditions at home. An interview respondent from the Scalabrini Migration Center is sceptical of this prospect, citing that while policy is clear in terms of tapping into the resources of migrants for development, government institutions and programs are more

²⁸ Interview with DFA official, 24 August 2009.

²⁹ Interview with DOLE Official, 19 August 2009.

³⁰ Interview with the Institute for Migration and Development Issues, 11 August 2009.

developed on the deployment side, rather than return and reintegration.³¹ Interview respondents from government admit this. I examine this claim further in the succeeding sub-chapter.

Thirdly, it is interesting to note how the government has become the dominant frame sponsor of the DFD discourse by: 1) retaining its discretion in deciding how development could be achieved through diaspora resources (i.e. bonds, investment, foreign exchange) and 2) by privileging certain channels from which MDN is viewed. The texts examined above suggests that government favors remittances or financial flows over other forms of migrant contributions. While other channels of the MDN particularly technology transfer and social remittances were mentioned, they are rarely given the same attention as migrant remittances. Even from the viewpoint of one interview respondent from the National Economic Development Authority, the government's policy to tap overseas nationals for technology and knowledge transfer gets the least attention.³² Finally, the affirmation that government indeed dominates the DFD discourse despite the multitude of stakeholders involved in it, comes from MRW advocates and other migration-development NGOs who underscore the crucial role of government in scaling up migrant entrepreneurial initiatives at home to break the cycle of migration.³³

While the text examined above cannot claim representativeness of all the actors involved in the DFD discourse, they still provide useful clues about how government officials perceive the MDN from the DFD lens. What became apparent is that the DFD discourse does not constitute a fundamental paradigm shift from the MFD discourse. In fact, the only difference that separates the two discourses is the centrality of the migrant as the agent of development in the former's viewpoint. Even then, the migrant's ability to contribute to development is constrained by modalities envisioned by the state. Hence, whether or not the DFD discourse remains 'remittance-centric' (without necessarily closing other avenues for diaspora contribution), can be further tested by how government institutions have responded to the DFD policy agenda as will be shown below.

4.2 The DFD policy agenda: an institutional orphan?

The preceding sub-chapter revealed that the values and perceptions embedded within the DFD policy agenda do not depart from those of the MFD discourse, thereby offering an explanation why this seemingly latest discursive 'shift' has not altered the deployment-based thrust of the labor migration policy. This sub-chapter intends to further test whether the DFD was a paradigmatic shift from the MFD at the level of institutional change.

³¹ Interview with Scalabrini Migration Center, 13 August 2009.

³² Interview with the NEDA via e-mail, 27 August 2009

³³ Aldaba and Opiniano (2008) and interview with Center for Migrant Advocacy, 20 August 2009

If migrants have captured the spotlight as principal agents of development through policy instruments that aim to foster closer ties between the diaspora and the homeland (i.e. overseas absentee voting and dual citizenship), then institutional change should have kept abreast with policy change. This assumption seems to be a reasonable expectation given the track record of Philippine migration institutions in responding to policy changes. For instance, POEA and OWWA have been repeatedly reorganized over the years by executive issuances alone across the Marcos and Aquino administrations (Asis, 1992). Majority of the changes brought about by RA 8042 have likewise been integrated within the migration industrial complex, giving rise to the life-cycle approach to migration management that the Philippine government showcased during the 2nd GFMD.³⁴

Here we take a closer look at policy implementation³⁵, that is, how have DFD-oriented policies transformed government institutions. The intention is also to map out whether the institutional changes brought about by these policies have the potential to realize expected outcomes. Table 4 below cross-referenced the absentee voting law and dual citizenship law with Philippine government institutions and their respective mandates. These two legislations were chosen because they are the latest measures providing additional entitlements to Filipino migrants and the rationale behind their enactment was legitimized using DFD-oriented arguments as illustrated earlier. The last column on the right indicates agencies which were not mentioned in the law but upon whose examination of mandates were shown to have a direct bearing on the perceived outcomes of the legislation as indicated in the second column.

Table 4
Comparative analysis of DFD legislation and government mandates

Legislation and direct outcome	Expected Outcomes	Government agencies mentioned and role	Government agencies not mentioned and perceived role
Overseas Absentee Voting Law - to enable overseas Filipinos (except permanent residents) to exercise their right	Participation of Filipinos overseas in national elections Increased participation in	Commission on Elections – all aspects of the voting exercise DFA – logistical support and information	Not applicable

³⁴ Among the provisions outlined in RA 8042, the Shared Government Information System on Migration remains on paper despite numerous failed attempts to operationalize it (interview with Center for Migrant Advocacy, 20 August 2009).

³⁵ Taken from Dunn's (2004) stages approach to policy analysis.

Legislation and direct outcome	Expected Outcomes	Government agencies mentioned and role	Government agencies not mentioned and perceived role
to vote	political affairs of the homeland	dissemination POEA, OWWA, CFO – support in voter registration and education	
Dual Citizenship Law - enabling former Filipinos to reacquire their Filipino citizenship which they lost upon acquiring foreign citizenship by naturalization in another country	Enable reacquisition of Filipino citizenship Increased investment through property ownership, retirement Enable practice of profession Increased tourism	Bureau of Immigration and DFA – implement the law and act on applications	CFO – information dissemination Department of Trade and Industry – investment promotion Philippine Retirement Authority – promotion of retirement programs Department of Tourism – tourism promotion Department of Science and Technology – incentive program for expatriate scientists

What can be derived from this brief overview of DFD-oriented legislation is that there is a disconnect between the expected outcomes of the policy and the enabling mechanisms in place to realize these outcomes. This could also partly explain why the availment of these measures have been relatively lackluster. For instance, as of July 2009, barely 150,000 overseas Filipinos have registered to vote for the 2010 national elections, which pales in comparison with the projected number of overseas Filipinos eligible to vote (estimated more than 4 million based on 2007 figures).³⁶ Migration researchers also lament the lack of data on return migration (Asis, 2008), which brings to question the ability and seriousness of the state to fully harness migration-development linkages envisioned under the DFD discourse.

³⁶ Data from Commission on Elections website, www.comelec.gov.ph and 2007 Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos.

Rein (2006) argues that this frequent perceived ‘disconnect’ between policy goals and the degree of institutional change is characteristic of policies where the ends or goals being sought are problematic. When government organizations find themselves pursuing goals or values that go beyond their mandated scope or that do not fit well with their core mission, a problem of ‘distributive responsibility’ arises (Miller, 2001 in Rein, 2006). The natural tendency of public organizations in these instances, Rein (2006) furthers, is to ‘offload’ responsibility by ‘shedding’ or ‘diversion.’ By this he means that organizations start reframing the problem in order to shirk responsibility from addressing the issue at hand. Policy actors are seen as taking advantage of the overlap in the domain to justify offloading.

In the case of labour migration policy in the Philippines, where it overlaps with the domain of development policy, should the lack of commensurate institutional change in spite of the DFD policy agenda be construed as a case of offloading? Previous evidence presented show that this may be the case, although it could not be inferred that the manner of offloading is either deliberate nor consequential. For instance, while the rationale forwarded in support of absentee voting and dual citizenship was obvious in the texts evaluated in Table 3, the legislation was silent on how to realize the expected outcomes or the real ends of the policies. Direct outcomes (voting and citizenship reacquisition) were realized as the two laws intended, but the link between the means (absentee voting and dual citizenship) and ends (increased technology transfer, investment, among others) is missing. An interview with an official from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas confirms this. She asserts that based on her recent interface with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Science and Technology, both organizations claim that no institutional directives were issued to refocus related programs in light of the passage of the absentee voting and dual citizenship laws.³⁷

4.3 Back to Square One?

This chapter sought to interrogate why the prevailing DFD discourse seem to have little impact on the deployment-oriented thrust of the government’s labor migration policy. Two interrelated explanations have been forwarded. The first is that the underlying values and assumptions from which the DFD discourse draws its logic are not fundamentally in opposition with those of the MFD discourse. Policy goals have not changed under the DFD. In fact, there is reason to infer that the ‘re-packaging’ of the MFD into the DFD is nothing short of a savvy strategy to win the allegiance of a cross-section of the civil society fatigued by the MRW discourse’s seemingly unending battle to exact government accountability. The DFD as a frame has come to be the persuasive portrait a larger number of stakeholders tacitly agree to (Stone in Schon and

³⁷ Interview with an official of the CFO, 21 August 2009.

Rein, 1994:32). Moreover, the remittance-centric reading of the nexus under the DFD may have encouraged further the outward oriented strategy of the government.

The second explanation approached the question by looking at the extent to which institutions were transformed or changed as a result of the DFD policy agenda. Findings indicate that the DFD policy agenda did very little to transform the organizational mandates of these institutions. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the formulation of the legislation itself did not make explicit the links between MDN and how the goals can be actualized into viable institutional arrangements. True, additional entitlements for migrants were granted, but the logic behind why these measures were granted got lost in translation.

More reasons can be proposed for the recent intensified thrust of the Philippine government to find new markets for labor migrants, especially in the context of the current global economic crisis. From a policy stages perspective, perhaps the permanence of labor migration as a structural feature of the Philippine economy arises from the fact that there was no deliberate state effort in the form of legislation or operational plan (policy termination) to wean the country from the business of exporting human resources even though the initial intention was for the program to be a stop-gap measure. Over time, this island of efficiency in Philippine governance has come to be regarded as the country's only bright hope. Combined with what Hamilton (1985) terms as the institutionalization of migrants' motives, the state has transformed into a 'service hatch' that fulfills social demands (Knoepfel et al., 2007:5). In this case, the demand for a better source of income, even if the job entails making a career out of sojourn (Ellerman, 2005). Ultimately, how the state frames the role of migrants in development has a tremendous influence in future policy direction. The way the wind blows at the moment may be deduced from the viewpoint of this interview respondent from the DFA when he said:

"The future of our country is in our services, our OFWs. That is our comparative advantage. We are not a great power, we are not a manufacturing giant. We don't have oil. Our resources are our people. The greatest asset of a nation is its people, let us focus on that."

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

“A ‘ghetto’ will never find collective success as long as the internalised definition of ‘success’ is individual exit.”

- David Ellerman (2005:621)

I borrowed Ellerman’s words above because they encapsulate my motivation in undertaking this research as well as my value position concerning the role of international labor migration in Philippine development. Situating myself as a policy analyst, I portrayed the role of labour migration in national development as a policy controversy that cannot be resolved by referring to evidence alone, because policy actors construct the problem through frames where facts, values, theories and interests are incorporated.

Taking policy discourses as my subject of analysis, I examined the nested contexts in which these discourses are played out by first looking at the theoretical debates on the migration-development nexus from academic literature and global policy discourses, then by contrasting these macro-debates with policy discourses on labour migration and development in the Philippines. From this exercise, I identified three separate discourses which evolved from the Philippines’ nearly four decade long experience in labour migration: the Migration for Development (MFD) discourse which takes a developmentalist approach of the MDN, portraying a positive relationship between migration and development; the Migrant Rights and Welfare (MRW) discourse which derives inspiration from a structuralist approach to the MDN, connoting an inverse relationship between migration and development; and the Diaspora for Development (DFD) discourse, the latest reading of the MDN which emphasizes the potential of migrants to contribute to development.

I then used a comparative analysis framework to identify the distinguishing elements that differentiate the framing of these discourses from one another. Specifically, I looked into how these discourses problematize migration and in turn how these frames decide the action to be taken. The MFD discourse, for example, emerged from a point in history where labor export was seen as a solution to address unemployment and foreign exchange shortages, a strategy sponsored by the Philippine government. Two decades later, the social costs borne by the migrant workers and their families gave birth to the MRW discourse espoused strongly by the civil society which was responsible for securing migrants rights and entitlements from the state. Quite recently, and in line with the re-emergence of community as a principle of development, the DFD discourse took the center stage stressing the potential of migrants to contribute to development in their home countries. What is unique with the emergence of DFD as a discourse is it provided a channel in which previous adversarial relations between government and civil society can

be reconciled. Despite its predominance, however, criticisms are rife that it failed to unsettle the archaic goals embedded in MFD.

This provided a jump-off point to the second part of my inquiry: subjecting the DFD discourse to closer scrutiny. Looking at selected political speeches and statements combined with personal interviews, I first examined the values, logic and assumptions of the DFD discourse. Second, I looked into how institutions responded to the DFD policy agenda on the assumption that its historical precedents have been translated into concrete form of institutional arrangements. This analysis revealed several conclusions which point to the continued reliance of the Philippines on labour export as a development strategy:

- 1) The DFD discourse does not represent a fundamental shift in policy insofar as labour migration concerned. Rather, it merely allocates the responsibility of development to migrants who are expected to move elsewhere in order to develop and yet remain duty-bound to the development of their homeland;
- 2) The internal logic of the DFD discourse fails because it ignores the root cause of the migrants' sojourn while at the same time inviting the same migrants to help arrest the very same causes which propelled them to migrate out of their homeland;
- 3) In becoming the primary 'frame sponsor' of the DFD discourse, the state tries to dictate the terms in which migrants can contribute to development, including the channels which the state chooses to privilege over others;
- 4) The benefits of migration can only be maximized if it is linked to a development policy that is not forever tied to the prospect of sending more people in order to obtain foreign exchange reserves. As such, a viable labour export strategy must have a clear beginning and an envisioned end; and
- 5) Broad economic and structural reforms are required in order to prevent migrants from making a permanent career out of temporary sojourn and to break away from the cycle of migration. At the same time, state migration and development institutions should keep up with policy change in order to realize the least emphasized channels of MDN such as technology transfer and enterprise development, those which according to evidence have generated long-term returns to both migrants and developing countries (Faist, 2008).

Undoubtedly, further research on this area is needed in view of the difficulties posed by frame construction. I tried as much as possible to take into account various dimensions of reflexivity but the limits to information, as well as space take their toll. Having explored in this study how the state

became the predominant frame sponsor of DFD, it would be equally interesting to explore how civil society or migrants themselves negotiate their way around this fact, both in their countries of origin and destination. The literature could also be enriched by evaluating closely to what extent have DFD-oriented policies redefined the concept of citizenship and state obligations.

The reflections here endeavor to contribute to a growing body of literature critical of the overenthusiastic promotion of labour migration in the South as a central element of a country's development strategy. It does so by using interpretive policy analysis and frame reflection as a way of unearthing the motivations, interests and perceptions of policy actors with the view of making sense why labour migration remains to be a policy controversy behind the dubbing of the Philippines as a global model on labor migration. The immediate goal was to portray a balanced representation of the interpretive frameworks of the policy protagonists with the hopes of finding better ways to achieve collective success without having to resort to individual exit. Whether or not this effort contributes to the reframing of the policy question that leads to the resolution of the policy controversy is another matter.

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Appendix A List of Texts Reviewed

Legislation (listed in order of enactment)

1. 1974 Labor Code of the Philippines
2. Republic Act No. 7111 – Overseas Workers’ Investment (OWI) Fund Act
3. Republic Act No. 8042 – Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995
4. Republic Act No. 9189 – The Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003
5. Republic Act No. 9208 – The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003
6. Republic Act No. 9225 – The Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003
7. Republic Act No. 9422 – An Act to Strengthen the Regulatory Functions of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Amending For This Purpose Republic Act No. 8042, Otherwise Known As the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995

Executive Orders / Administrative Orders (listed in order of enactment)

1. Executive Order No. 857 – Governing the remittance to the Philippines of foreign exchange earnings of Filipino workers abroad and for other purposes, dated 13 December 1982
2. Executive Order No. 1021 – On encouraging the inward remittances of contract workers earnings through official channels, 1 May 1985
3. Administrative Order No. 247 – On directing a paradigm shift for POEA to intensify deployment, 4 December 2008

Speeches (listed in order of delivery)

Occasion / Title of Speech	Author / Speaker	Date
Opening of the 2 nd Regular Session of the 12 th Congress / State of the Nation Address	President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo	22 July 2002
Signing of the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act	President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo	29 August 2003
Meeting with the Filipino community in Jersey City, USA	President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo	26 September 2003
Media Launch of the 2 nd GFMD	President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo	7 October 2008
Launching of the Plenary Debate	DOLE Secretary	27 October

Occasion / Title of Speech	Author / Speaker	Date
of the 2 nd GFMD	Marianito D. Roque	2008
Closing Session of the 2008 Global Forum on Migration and Development / Final Conclusions and Recommendations of the Chair	DFA Undersecretary Esteban Conejos	30 October 2008

Organizational websites and mandates reviewed (listed alphabetically)

Organization	Website
Commission on Elections	www.comelec.gov.ph
Commission on Filipinos Overseas	www.cfo.gov.ph
Department of Foreign Affairs	www.dfa.gov.ph
Department of Labor and Employment	www.dole.gov.ph
Department of Science and Technology	www.dost.gov.ph
Department of Tourism	www.tourism.gov.ph
Department of Trade and Industry	www.dti.gov.ph
Overseas Workers Welfare Administration	www.owwa.gov.ph
Philippine Overseas Employment Administration	www.poea.gov.ph
Philippine Retirement Authority	www.pra.gov.ph

Appendix B Interviews

**List of interview respondents in order of the interview date
(from earliest to recent)**

Organization	Nature of Organization	Date of Interview
Institute for Migration and Development Issues	Non-government	11 August 2009
Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation, Inc.	Non-government	12 August 2009
Scalabrini Migration Center	Non-government	13 August 2009
Migrant Forum in Asia	Non-government	14 August 2009
Philippine Overseas Employment Administration	Government	14 August 2009
Episcopal Commission on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People	Non-government	18 August 2009
Department of Labor and Employment	Government	19 August 2009
Center for Migrant Advocacy	Non-government	20 August 2009
Commission on Filipinos Overseas	Government	21 August 2009
Department of Foreign Affairs	Government	24 August 2009
National Economic Development Authority*	Government	27 August 2009

* via email

List of topics covered during the interview

1. Perceptions on migration-development interconnections
2. Organizational involvement in policy formulation concerning migration/development
3. Linkage between migration and country's development plan
4. Problems and issues migration policies seek to address

5. Perceived shortfalls on Philippine migration governance
6. Policy directives pursued by the organization related to migration
7. Differences between NGO and government perceptions on the migration question
8. Significance of the Philippine hosting of the 2nd Global Forum on Migration Development

Appendix C Phases in MDN research

Table 5
Main phases in migration and development research and policies

Period	Research community	Policy field
Until 1973	Development and migration optimism	Developmentalist optimism; capital and knowledge transfers by migrants would help developing countries in development take-off
1973-1990	Development and migration pessimism (dependency, brain drain)	Growing scepticism; concerns on brain drain; after experiments with return migration policies focused on integration in receiving countries. Migration largely out of sight in development field.
1990-2001	Readjustment to more subtle views under influence of increasing empirical work (NELM, livelihood approaches, transnationalism)	Persistent scepticism; tightening of immigration policies.
>2001	Boom in publications; mixed, but generally positive views.	Resurgence of migration and development optimism under influence of remittance boom, and a sudden turnaround of views: brain gain, diaspora involvement.

Source: De Haas (2008). Migration and development: a theoretical perspective.

Appendix D Overview of POEA Functions

Core Functions	Examples of Activities
Industry Regulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Licensing of private recruitment agencies and ship manning companies 2. Adjudication and arbitration of cases against private recruitment agencies 3. Setting of minimum labour standards 4. Supervision of anti-illegal recruitment activities 5. Imposes penalties on erring employers and workers
Employment Facilitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducts market research and market promotion 2. Evaluates and processes employment contracts 3. Accredits and registers foreign principals 4. Enters into memorandum of understanding with labour receiving countries 5. Provides a system of worker's registry
Worker's Protection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducts pre-departure and pre-employment seminars to inform workers of their rights and prospects for overseas employment 2. Provides legal assistance to illegally recruited workers

Source: own representation from POEA website. www.poea.gov.ph

Appendix E Overview of OWWA member services and benefits

Services	Types of Benefits
Insurance and Health Care Program Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Life / accident insurance 2. Permanent / partial disability benefit 3. Burial benefit
Education and Training Programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baccalaureate scholarship for dependents of overseas workers 2. Technical and vocational training scholarship for returning overseas workers or dependents 3. Job-related training for seafarers 4. Computer skills training for workers and dependents 5. Scholarship for needy children of former overseas workers
Family Welfare and Assistance Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repatriation for workers who are incapacitated, in distress or stranded in armed conflict 2. On-site services through welfare centers, halfway houses or shelter for runaways 3. Reintegration in terms of counseling, livelihood support (through loans for small businesses), community organizing.

Source: own representation from the OWWA website. www.owwa.gov.ph