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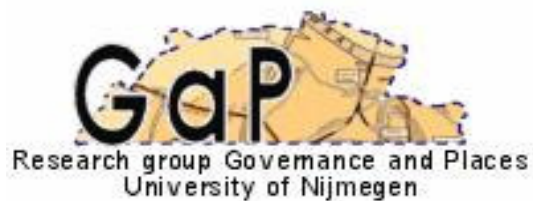
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The community life of Filipino migrants in the Netherlands

**An exploration of their organizations and community
building processes**



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The community life of Filipino migrants in the Netherlands

An exploration of their organizations and community building processes

Work in progress

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Introductory note

This paper is an elaborated version of an “input paper”¹ prepared for the expert meeting “International migration and national development: Viewpoints and policy initiatives in the countries of origin”, organized by the Research Group ‘Migration and Development’ (Department of Human Geography, Radboud University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands) in collaboration with the Human Resources Development Centre (Lagos, Nigeria), held 23 and 24 August 2006 in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. This meeting is part of a research project that focuses on achieving a better understanding of the implications of international migration from the perspective of the sending countries. The session to which the original paper was delivered specifically focused on engaging diasporas and migrant organizations as potential “agents for development” (International Organization for Migration, 2005) for the origin countries.

For the present occasion, I have broadened the perspective of this input paper, meaning this paper explores not merely the potential developmental significance of migrant organizations for the country of origin, but also inquires their role in the migrants’ personal reembedding in the newly adopted country. So far, in discussions and studies on international migration, the immigrants’ adaptation into the host nation and their enduring involvement in, and (potential) contribution to, the former home nation are often treated as separate issues. This paper addresses and attempts to bridge both sides of the migration debate. It hopes to challenge the often allegedly contradictory trends of transnationalism and the presumed need to enforce integration. This study explores how people, through collective activity, build up a home outside their country of origin; how they cope with the challenges of life in a different socio-economic, political and cultural setting; and in cases hook on or create global linkages which keep them connected them simultaneously to the country they left. Such insights may lead to a better, more founded understanding of immigrants’ multiple belonging and the consequences of this for their adaptation to the new country as well as its potential for development in their former country.

It must be stressed though that the following discussion is of very premature and exploratory nature. The findings and thoughts proposed in this paper ensue from my PhD research, which centers on another important theme within the contemporary migration debate, that is, migrant entrepreneurship. More specifically, this PhD study focuses on entrepreneurial activity among the group of Filipinos in the Netherlands. The community building efforts of this migrant population form part of the wider context in which this particular activity must be understood, yet, since the focus of the research/fieldwork is elsewhere and secondary sources on Filipino migrants in the Netherlands are scarce (Spaan, Naerssen & Tillaart, 2005:251), the empirical material presented only gives a broad conception of the features of Filipinos’ associational or community life in the Netherlands and the dynamics underpinning this aspect of their existence in this particular host country.

The paper falls apart in two sections. The first section provides a general sketch of Filipinos’ self-organization in the Netherlands, such as the extent, nature and scope of their joint activities. However,

¹ Input paper meaning the author has not participated in the meeting itself.

rather than enumerating and classifying these migrants' collective pursuits, the main objective of this paper is to highlight some of the factors and conditions that seem to have played, and possibly still play, a role in the development of social capital and in the community building efforts of this group of migrants (section 2). These factors and conditions may hence be important to reckon with when trying to understand the significance that migrants' joint initiatives may have for, as said, both their own incorporation into the host country and for the well-being of their compatriots in the former home country.

Section 1: Filipino associational life in the Netherlands

Considering a tremendous body of migrant NGOs, cooperatives and other self help organizations in both the homeland and abroad (the Philippine government itself has on record some 12.000 formally registered overseas Filipino organizations (Montañez, 2003:25)), clearly, wherever they are, Filipinos come together and collectively engage in a wide range of activities. The Netherlands is no exception to that. Different sources speak of "quite an active social life" (Muijzenberg, 2003:364) and even of an "overorganization" of the community (Tambuli²)³. Since the first arrival in the 1960s, Filipinos have put up numerous organizations, foundations, clubs, and self-help groups, which together reflect a bewildering array of interest groups and activities, missions and operations. Like among any other migrant group, their collective activities range from social-cultural, spiritual, or educational ones to more political and service oriented projects. Few organizations or associations operate on the national level, while most are active in the provinces or municipalities. Yet, despite the fact that the Filipino community undeniably accommodates a large and varied set of collective activities, Muijzenberg (2003) claims it is difficult to estimate the level of self-organization. The actual number of organizations is not known as many collectivities would "simply not bother to get themselves registered" (interview community leader) and therefore operate in (semi-) informal manner, often on an occasional basis. While in 1996, 26 Filipino organizations were officially known at the Philippine Embassy (in Tambuli), it is common knowledge within the community that this number is a strong underestimate.

Such also became obvious from the own fieldwork, especially from a personal attempt to get a more complete and updated overview on the Filipinos' collective activities and community life in the Netherlands. Mid 2004, I, together with the chair of a Filipino migrant NGO in the Netherlands, put up a small survey consisting of rather general questions on missions and targets, actual activities and projects, scope of activities, membership features and few other organizational characteristics. Through personal acquaintance and consultation of our own network and browsing newsletters and the internet, we collected the names and/or addresses of some 90 groupings. Still, we were quite sure that this list was by far incomplete, considering that these were the relatively more publicly known groups. Composing the list by itself substantiated the high associational inclination of this population and great diversity of the

² Magazine on societal developments in the Philippines, published by the Filippijnen Groep Nederland (FGN) and the Filippijnen Informatie- en Documentatie Centrum (FIDOC), appears five times a year.

³ As of 2004, the registered Filipino population numbered some 12.400 persons (Central Bureau of Statistics); undocumented Filipinos are estimated on 3.000 (Spaan et al, 2005:251).

collective initiatives among its members. In the end, we sent out 48 questionnaires to organizations of which we reasonably expected a basic level of institutionalization and continuity. Response turned out rather disappointing though, with only nine organizations sending back only partially filled in questionnaires. The survey by itself thus furnished little more profound knowledge on the internal operations and impacts/effectiveness of the Filipino collective initiatives.

Nonetheless, while not yielding the targeted more complete overview of Filipino self organization, in indirect ways, this research attempt produced some unexpected in-depth insight into the more hidden dynamics and bedrocks of the associational life of this particular migrant community. Personal observations and casual conversations I since then had with a number of community leaders and other Filipino migrants confirmed and strengthened these insights, as well as did some written sources, such as community newsletters and letters sent in to a Filipino magazine. Within a context of lack of secondary sources on the Filipinos' way of life in the Netherlands (Muijzenberg, 2004:140; Spaan et al, 2005), the thoughts and propositions put forward by these community sources, while unavoidably influenced by their personal experiences and positions, are valuable as they draw attention to so far neglected or hidden issues and circumstances and illustrate the limited explaining power of the generic Filipino label as "a homogenizing national identifier and predictor of the migrants' performance" (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998:14). Before elaborating on this, the following first continues to give some idea of the actual joint endeavours of the Filipinos in the Netherlands.

Targeting integration and reviving the own culture

As the founder of a Filipino organization said, most of the "small Filipino groupings, they gather just for fun, to be together with other Filipinos, talk, eat, just to get out of the house and meet each other, not so much to it." In addition, every month, the community newsletter *Munting Nayon*⁴ (Filipino for "little village") announces weekly masses with Filipino priests and displays flashy adverts, usually of the bigger and formal organisations, for sports tournaments, beauty queen contests, dances and performances of "great Filipino artists." Filipino migrants celebrate their ethnic traditions, share experiences and ease their loneliness with each other's company and home country entertainment. They promote their common ancestry as a means to reproduce their identity and sense of belonging, and display their cultural customs not only to pass these over to their growing off-spring, but also a means of self-assertiveness and to cultivate appreciation among the Dutch public.

Next to the numerous formal and informal groupings that primarily target to bridge the socio-cultural gap that Filipinos may experience in the Netherlands, the Filipino community also accommodates more policy and service oriented organizations which have a more practical role in the migrants' adaptation to the Netherlands. These institutions provide social assistance, counseling, education or training programs, and answer up to the specific needs of the migrants in other concrete ways. Many

⁴ News magazine on societal developments within the Philippines and within the Filipino community in the Netherlands, published monthly; distributed to some 1100 addresses, also to a number of other European countries and the United States.

Filipino self-help organizations explicitly mention as one of their primary concerns the integration of their target group into Dutch society. This may signal a more troublesome incorporation than the invisibility of this population among the general public and in “The Hague” and the often assumed smooth merge into the mainstream suggests. At the very least, considering the relatively many institutions that offer language courses and practical workshops, there is an apparent need to express and address adaptation difficulties.

Various subgroups within the Filipino community such as the seafarers, health workers, undocumented and refugees have their own self-help organizations⁵, yet, particularly the women movement is rather well-developed in the Netherlands. Such is a logical consequence of their strong overrepresentation within the Filipino community.⁶ In general, these organizations seek to “bring forth the empowerment and integration of Filipina migrant women in the Netherlands and to their becoming active participants in the Dutch and European society”⁷. Thereto, they set up informative theme meetings and workshops on issues such as “omgaan met geld” (dealing with money) and “op weg naar de arbeidsmarkt” (entering the labour market)⁸. Furthermore, au pairs and women in intercultural marriages form a specific focus of several Filipino organizations as these are considered groups most vulnerable to problems and distress. While community sources mention limited chances for upward social mobility as Philippine diplomas would often be undervalued on the labor market (personal interviews; Bayanihan 2003; Palpallatoc, 1997), rather than in the employment sphere, anecdotal evidence suggests that adaptation problems are more pronounced within the context of intercultural relationships, both in marriage as well as in the au pair-host family interaction. Aside from organizing socio-cultural activities to celebrate and revive the ethnic identity, the (women) organizations often deliberately aim to introduce Filipino culture to Dutch partners, family and friends, and to encourage mutual respect between the newcomers and natives by explicating the “cultural peculiarities of both populations”, as one brochure put it.

Hence, at the same time as Filipino self-help groups aim to assist with the integration through emancipation and the cultivation of a cadre that deliberately seeks to link with Dutch society, they are also often strongly inclined to keep homeland traditions alive. As such, they may forge what Anderson calls an imagined and “essentialized national identity” (Anderson, 2001: 11/21) in the newly adopted country.

⁵ E.g. CASCO (seafarers), Filipino Refugees in the Netherlands (FREN), Friends of United Filipino Seafarers (UFS), Network of Filipino Health Workers in the Netherlands, Philippine Seaman Assistance Program (PSAP) and Philippine Seaman Centre, Samahan (Filippijnse Arbeidersvereniging Nederland); as for the women, some of the more known organizations are Bayanihan, Diwang Pilipina (Diwa), Kapitbahayan, Kapitbisig, Pinay sa Holland-Gabriela, Princess Urduja.

⁶ In 2004, 67.3 per cent of the total of 12.401 registered Filipinos in the Netherlands were women (8.350 persons); of the first generation, they made up an even larger share: 78.3 per cent (6.270 of 8.012 persons) (CBS data).

⁷ Mission statement of Foundation *Bayanihan*, Philippine Women’s Center in the Netherlands, see www.bayanihan.tk. Bayanihan is a Filipino term taken from the word *bayan*, referring to a nation, town or community. The whole term *bayanihan* refers to a spirit of communal unity or effort to achieve a particular objective.

⁸ These workshops were organized by the Filipina organisation *Kapit-Bisig* -, see <http://members.lycos.nl/kapitbisig/>. Kapit-Bisig is Tagalog for “arm in arm”.

National and international lobbies

In addition to the socio-cultural events and practical activities that mostly take place on the grassroots, the Filipinos in the Netherlands also show collective engagement on national and international policy levels. Every so often, their organizations set up advocacy campaigns, conduct discussion forums and expert meetings with national and international guests, or send delegations, both to the Dutch and to the Philippine government. To add power to their demands, Filipino groupings increasingly join forces and cooperate more closely, especially in case of homeland calamities or recurring community events such as the yearly Independence Day. Next to such ad hoc cooperation between all kinds of organizations and associations, a number of organizations in the Netherlands has formally joined into two alliances, i.e. the Federation of Filipino Organizations (FFON) and The Coalition, whose combined memberships would account for a large part of the organized Filipinos in the country⁹.

The past couple of years have so witnessed the development and expansion of institutional linkages between the manifold Filipino organizations; not only on the national but also on an international level. An important action point shared by several Filipino organizations and addressed at the *host* government concerns, for instance, the detachment of the permanent residence permit for Filipinas from the three years these women are nowadays required to stay married to their native husband before they can obtain an independent staying permit; a situation that exposes the women to risks of exploitation and abuse within the isolated private realm against which they can hardly undertake public action as divorce from the wrongdoer endangers their stay in the country.

One of the most striking examples of collective *overseas* political activism was the lobby for the Philippine Absentee Voting Bill, signed into law in 2003. While Filipino organizations worldwide had pressured for this law for already over 15 years, the Dutch-based Filipino civil society is widely acknowledged for its prominent part in this achievement (Estopace, 2004; Muijzenberg, 2004). More particularly, the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW), based in Amsterdam, has had a primary role in this as it facilitates and coordinates the activities of the Platform of Filipino Migrant Organizations, which led the campaign within Europe¹⁰.

⁹ FFO is composed of 10 organizations, whose members are often Filipinas in bi-cultural marriages. For more information, see www.ffon.org. The Coalition consists of the four older and larger Filipino associations in the western part of the Netherlands, whose membership if combined would already account for half of the organized Filipinos in the Netherlands (according to one of the organization's leaders; however, how many Filipinos in the Netherlands are (formally) member of or attached to an association is not known). The four associations of the Coalition have a largely homogenous Filipino composition; its most important activity is the yearly organization of Independence Day. Both groupings seem to remain more or less balanced in terms of actual influence or clout within the community; clearly though, a large portion of Filipino self-help organisations operates independently from either one of these alliances.

¹⁰ This platform was formed in 1997, and is a network consisting of some 75 Filipino organizations in 14 European countries. It was the off-spring of the Europe-wide Conference of Filipino migrants in Athens, Greece, held the same year. On that occasion, the 120 conference delegates developed the so-called "Migrant Agenda" which identifies the priority concerns of Filipino migrants in Europe, primarily of the more vulnerable groups like the women, youth, seafarers and undocumented migrants. Envisaging the overseas nationals as key actors and participants in the development of both Europe and the Philippines, the

In general, the Filipino community in the Netherlands has proven “an organizational hub for European-scale political activism, feminist organizing and NGO-related mobilizing of the host society” (Muijzenberg, 2004:147). To give another example of this, also the Philippine European Solidarity Centre (PESC-KSP), involved in supporting “Philippine NGOs and other organizations in their efforts to build a just and sustainable society in the Philippines”, is based in the Netherlands (www.philsol.nl). A final example of the increasing and leading cross-bordering alignments of the Dutch-based Filipino community is Diwang Pilipina, which operates as a network of Filipina organizations and individuals in the Netherlands. In turn, this body is member of Babaylan (<http://www.philsol.nl/pir/Babaylan-99a.htm>), together with some 50 Filipina women’s organizations established in nine European countries. Although the main lobby is for more attention to the vulnerable situation of Filipina domestic workers in countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain, where this particular group of workers is larger, the Philippine network in the Netherlands has been acknowledged to be one of the most active participants.

On balance, Muijzenberg asserts, Filipino collective activities in the Northern countries of Europe are more directed to political goals than to work related issues. According to him (2004:139), within Europe, the Netherlands stands out for its politicized Filipino community; while “in the beginning, associations and clubs were for friendship and social purposes only” (*Munting Nayon*, 1999:55), nowadays, the Filipino population in the Netherlands would feature itself by a fairly high level of “political activism” (Muijzenberg, 2004:147). Likely, this can be attributed to the particular migration experience of the Filipinos in this destination country, which is featured by relatively little contractual labour and more sizeable family-related migration (family reunion and for family formation). Such migration context implies a more prolonged settlement, which in turn may encourage political awareness and commitment. Moreover, this political orientation is presumably also a consequence of the presence of a community of political refugees, members and supporters of controversial communist NDF (National Democratic Front), who came here in the late seventies- early eighties. As of today, this group consists of about 100 families, who are living in or near the city of Utrecht, where also the office in Exile of the NDF is located. Several sources point out this group to be a “significant” or particularly “vocal” actor with its specific “revolutionary agenda” (Fernandez, n.d; Spaan et al, 2005:251; own fieldwork).

Contributing to the homeland

The collective activities as described above clearly show the international as well as transnational engagement of the Filipino migrants; while striving for “equality of rights in Europe”, they also still wish to intervene in homeland affairs through “participative development in the Philippines” (quoted from the mission statement of the Platform). Obviously, even though the majority of the Filipinos in the Netherlands

Migrant Agenda is addressed to both these regions and a good sign of the institutionalization of transnationalism enforced “from below” (see www.platformweb.org and www.cfmw.org; Platform/CFMW, 1997).

has taken up permanent residence and many have naturalized in the Netherlands, they still feel belonging towards their former home nation and want to “contribute towards the progress of Philippine society” (Munting Nayan, 1999) While on the individual level, Filipinos in the Netherlands, like Filipinos everywhere, remit money, send goods back home to support family and friends, and do private donations to charity projects, the establishment of the Platform of Filipino organizations in Europe shows that the transnational connections increasingly have a more developed institutional base and a scope that goes beyond the level of the individual and/or family interest. Moreover, the nature of the homeland involvement seems to have changed. Initially, in the early seventies, the transnational endeavours were primarily founded in the concern about human rights violations caused by the Marcos regime. Gradually however, the scope has widened to poverty reduction strategies (Muijzenberg, 2003) and more sustainable developmental efforts.

Below follow three examples to illustrate in greater detail how Filipino migrants in the Netherlands strive to be agents of development in their home country by establishing cross-bordering and cross-sectoral linkages.

ERCMOVE: mediating in transnational engagement

1999, Filipino migrants put up the non-profit Economic Resource Center for Overseas Filipinos (ERCOF) in Geneva. The principal objective of this organization is “to provide programs and services that will enable overseas Filipinos to utilize and maximize their resources, skills, technologies, talents, human capital and other resources for more productive use in the migrants’ communities in the Philippines and overseas.” One of the main achievements of ERCOF is the role it played in putting the developmental capacity of the overseas Filipinos on the agenda of a variety of actors in all sectors of Philippine society – at home and abroad. In 2002 and 2003, it co-organized epoch-making conferences in the Philippines which resulted in the commitment of all participants to design concrete programs and mechanisms to tap the development potential of migration (see Maas, 2003). Representatives from civil society, the profit and the government sector, in consultation with the migrants themselves, advanced various alternative savings and investment mechanisms geared to produce a multiplier effect of remittances on countryside development in the home region. In 2003, the organization was also registered in the Philippines. Since then, it has engaged in a variety of activities and established cooperative linkages with a considerable number of NGOs, in the homeland and a variety of destination countries, to better serve the migrant communities and identify investment opportunities and possible partners in development.¹¹

In 2005, the Economic Resource Centre for Migrants and Overseas Employees, ERCMOVE, was established as the Dutch-based branch of ERCOF (also see www.ercmove.nl). In line with ERCOF, this affiliate NGO aims to “conduct gender sensitive advocacy, education and networking campaigns for increased awareness and support of migrants and overseas workers, Dutch organizations, the

¹¹ See www.ercof.org for an elaborate description of this organization’s background, services and supported projects. This website also contains a number of interesting papers on the migration-development nexus, giving examples of the political and economic participation of overseas Filipinos, and formulating recommendations to tap Filipino migrant remittances for development of the local economy.

government and the private sector in the Netherlands on the sustainable development of local economies in their countries of origin". As such, it advocates micro savings by individual Filipinos as well as merged micro savings through associations; it facilitates remittances through the formal banking system and encourages investments in micro-finance and alternative schemes in the country of origin. Moreover, it identifies and links up with organizations in the Netherlands that maintain ties with socio-economic projects in the countries of origin; it offers capacity building interventions and other technical assistance to migrant NGOs, and monitors and evaluates the accomplishments of the mobilized savings. It is worthwhile stressing that ERCMOVE, while originally an initiative of Filipino immigrants, does not exclusively connect with or cater to co-ethnic organizations alone, but also serves and links up with migrant organizations from other nationalities.

Pasali: a migrant group goes cross-sectoral and transnational

Early 1994, a group of former Filipino seafarers in the Netherlands set up the Philippine Association of Seabased Workers for Savings, Loans and Initiatives, shortly *Pasali* (which, in Filipino language, means "may I join?"). This co-operative aims "to advance the economic empowerment of its members in particular, and of the overseas Filipinos in general to promote the general welfare of its members and the rest of the overseas Filipinos, and that of their families, both in the Netherlands and in the Philippines" (also see www.pasali.nl). It does so by savings mobilisation among its members and individually or jointly investing these resources abroad. After four years of saving, part of the group decided to collectively invest their money in the Philippines. In an effort to stimulate investments in socially- and economically viable businesses in the Philippines, these members sought the assistance of a professional non-profit organisation in the Philippines – Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation, Inc. (hereafter *Unlad*; also see www.unladkabayan.org). Founded in 1996, the latter has pioneered in the economic reintegration and empowerment of return migrants and families with still a member abroad. Hereto, it employs the strategy SEEDS - Social Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development Services, which aims to develop sustainable enterprises, create jobs and stimulate economic transactions in the community, so that "migrant workers can come home with dignity." Especially its so-called innovative Migrants Savings and Alternative Investment (MSAI) program has attracted attention from different sectors of society. Through this program, Unlad pools and channels migrant savings into sustainable investment opportunities in the home region. The NGO thereby provides skills training, logistical assistance and social support to organise the migrants on-site and, simultaneously, their families back home. While Unlad itself offers a number of viable investment sites that interested migrant groups can choose from, sometimes, overseas Filipinos can also approach the organisation for assistance in the implementation of their own project proposals. Over the past few years, the NGO has increasingly linked up with Philippine government agencies, commercial and rural banks and other profit-based businesses, as well as with migrant organisations in several destination countries all over the world - among which, thus, also the Filipinos' seafarers collective *Pasali* in the Netherlands.

The "story" of this latter group is of interest as it clearly shows how individual interests turn to collective interests, and narrow family networks expand to cover the wider home region, once the migrants

have acquired confidence that their overseas earnings can have a surplus value. As one member put it: “sure, we want to be rich. But [with this investment] also the community as a whole would be helped. It would create jobs and change the mentality, you know. The green pastures are not only abroad, they are also inside the country. That is the idea, that is our dream” (Maas, 2003b); another one said: “it is infectious; once we saw that our money did make some difference, we could not stop thinking and dreaming on what we could do more and more.” With some support, dreams become reality – and small but tangible achievements encourage migrants to set increasingly higher goals, actively reach out and build up their expertise to strive for more durably improved living conditions in the former home region. The first partnership between *Pasali* and *Unlad* can be seen as some kind of try out as it concerned a rather straightforward investment of the seafarers’ savings in a project already identified and supported by the Philippine NGO (see Maas 2003 and 2003b for some more elaboration on this particular project). Stimulated by the success of this project, this initial overseas investment laid the foundation for more transnational teamwork between the Dutch-based Filipino association and the Philippine organization – from now on however under the “command” of the seafarers themselves. During personal fieldwork in the Philippines, in 2003, the niece of one of the Dutch-based seafarers explicated how both institutions had put together their respective resources and talents to initiate and support a variety of durable activities in the former home region of the migrants (this young well-educated woman was assigned a central role in managing the Philippine-side of the seafarers subsequent projects). For one, part of the seafarers’ savings had, on suggestion by themselves, been allocated for the restart of a vendors’ co-operative in Cotabato City, the former home town of several *Pasali*-members. While *Pasali* provided the needed financial back up to breathe new life into the organization, *Unlad* committed itself to watch over the operations of the cooperative. In addition, the migrant group had designed and initiated a project aimed at integral development of their home region’s economy, a rural/coastal area in the South of Mindanao. This project entailed the build up of local infrastructure to improve the farmers’ and fishermen’s access to the regional market, as well as provision of micro-credits against a much favourable interest rate compared to the so-called *loan sharks* that had until then been the only external source of finance in the agrarian community. The seafarers, while on visit in their home town community, had furthermore mobilised a group of fishermen with whom they intended to put up a modern fishing business. Finally, they also planned to establish a machine shop where equipment, partly to be collected in the Netherlands by the seafarers themselves, could be fixed and cheaply rented out to both fishermen and farmers.

In order to meet all these various ends, over the past years, the Dutch-based migrant association has vigorously strengthened, expanded and diversified its network, both in the host and in the home country. Next to their ongoing partnership with *Unlad*, who mainly provides technical and management assistance to the Philippine-based counterparts of the seafarers, also the University of General Santos City, nearby the hometown, gives cheap trainings to the (aspiring) project participants. In the Netherlands, the co-operative works with fishing companies and development institutions to exchange knowledge and experiences and obtain material and financial support to channel towards the former home region to help their compatriots –often their own kin and personal acquaintances- left behind, yet, for some of the seafarers also with an eye on their own return.

The efforts of this migrant group did not go unnoticed; in 2003 their project proposal, which targeted expansion of their activities, won the second price in the so-called “Contest of ideas for migrants and development cooperation” (www.ideeenwedstrijd.nl). This contest is the joint initiative of Oikos, Cordaid and Stichting Mondiale Samenwerking (SMS – Foundation Global Cooperation), three Dutch institutions working in the fields of migration and international development, and since 2003 a recurrent occasion to highlight migrants as the best source of ideas on ways of developing their country of origin and to stimulate them to turn their dreams to give back to the homeland into concrete activity. The fact that two years later, in 2005, another Filipino organization won the first price¹² signals the strong transnational involvement of this particular migrant population as well as the apparently quite professional way in which they set up their cross-bordering activities.

Kapatiran Netherlands and Kapatiran Philippines

Kapatiran Foundation (www.kapatiran.nl; *kapatiran* is Filipino for fraternity) provides the third example of how migrants, on their own accord and all by themselves, initiate and forge collaborative relationships with local groups in the former home region to deliver developmental projects and in the process professionalize and institutionalize their transnational engagement. This organization was founded in 1990 and is managed by both Dutch and Filipino volunteers. Its primary objective is to extend solidarity with other overseas Filipinos and with local communities in the Philippines and to improve the social and economic conditions in these latter. Thereto, *Kapatiran* supports initiatives which harness the development potential of overseas Filipinos. In the first twelve years of its existence, it provided assistance to scattered community based initiatives in the Philippines; in 2003, however, *Kapatiran* Philippines was officially registered in as the local partner of the foundation in the Netherlands. This Philippine organization is in fact an umbrella organization composed of eight people’s organizations that are implementing community projects in the southern island of Mindanao on a voluntary basis. While *Kapatiran* Netherlands is primarily charged with awareness and fundraising activities in the host country and is backed up by the large Dutch development organizations Novib Oxfam and Cordaid, the *Kapatiran* consortium in the Philippines has ventured into, among other things, a livelihood support project which benefits the women members by providing equipment for a sewing project; it has embarked on a Basic Literacy program which provides for the education of about two hundred elementary and secondary school children; and it has supported various microfinance programs and a holistic child service center. Through all these efforts, *Kapatiran* Philippines has mobilized the support not only of the local people but also of local governments in several areas. The organization gets enthusiastic encouragement from leaders of the church, academe and local

¹² This organisation is Damayang Pilipino sa Holland, an association that exists already for 20 years. Alongside advocacy for migrant rights, it has long asserted the importance of encouraging the migrants’ role in development cooperation initiatives in the Philippines. By combining development funds with migrant investment, Damayan’s so-called “social entrepreneurship model” assures a more sustained development in rural areas. Their winning project idea comprises the building of a market facility specifically for female entrepreneurs; in addition, it foresees in credit loans and in a marketing and transport facility to the nearby city. Unique is that the project is exclusively carried by Filipina women; the investors are at least 30 migrant Filipina women who came from this village and at present, remarkably, not only live in the Netherlands, but also elsewhere in Europe, in the US and in Australia (see mentioned website and Munting Nayon, 2005).

government units in their areas of operation. It is also important to take note of the fact that the majority of the beneficiaries and volunteers of the projects are women who have made considerable contributions by offering their time and skills for the project. Because of this wide support and popular acceptance, the small scale efforts of *Kapatiran* Philippines have encouraged and spurred more community action.

Next to professional and established organizations that primarily target to support the fatherland, like the ones described above, also almost every local Filipino association, sports club or religious grouping in the Netherlands runs some fundraising activity on the side, occasionally or as a fixed part of their repertoire. In addition, a considerable number of smaller (and presumably (semi) informal) foundations carry out charity activities, often put up and supported by close groups of relatives or friends or by mixed couples. These grassroots initiatives pass aid directly to schools, hospitals or orphanages; or they maintain links with Philippine-based organizations, which either use the money to finance their own projects or funnel the funds to selected projects or areas. Some of these efforts, which actually started as some kind of leisure activity of the –mostly female- Filipino migrants, expanded into rather comprehensive and professional endeavours with sister-organizations in the Philippines that implement and monitor the development projects which were initiated with money from the Netherlands. Usually, these smaller collectivities in the host country function as Home Town Associations, as they are narrowly oriented towards the birthplace or even the so-called *barangay* (neighbourhood) of the founders/members. Personal fieldwork established how in several cases, the migrants are responsible for the management and material support of their charity or development projects, while the migrants' close kin or former neighbours take care of the daily affairs. Recall for instance the *Pasali* case; another example is a mixed couple that put up a street children's shelter early nineties. Over the years, while not yet entirely independent, this home surely has become less dependent from the donations from out of the Netherlands as the couple invested the financial gifts in a variety of small scale commercial activities, such as a bakery, a fishing nursery and a fruit garden (see www.streetchildrenphilippines.eu, and Maas 2003c) – various family members of the migrated woman look after the care for the children and the shelter as well as put their energy into the income-generating projects (income thus in money but more importantly in kind). Even people from the rural village voluntarily help out with food donations or when things need to be done in and around the house. As such, the project of this Dutch-Filipina couple has not only vital importance for the orphans but also fulfils a social role in the wider home community.

Another interesting way in which Filipinos have conjointly engaged in transnational philanthropy is by means of their own business. In particular, the door-to-door business¹³ has been used as a convenient

¹³ Door-to-door services are transport companies which I found to be a quite popular business type among the Filipino migrants in the Netherlands. These entrepreneurs have business in so-called *balikbayan boxes* (literally homecomer), cardboard boxes that they distribute among their migrated compatriots who fill them with personal goods and gifts destined for the loved ones left behind; the entrepreneurs then pick the boxes up again and ship them to the Philippines where they finally are delivered at the front door of the addressees – hence, the naming door-to-door service. Fieldwork has proven how in addition to these commercial services, this transnational connection thus more than once simultaneously functions as a channel for humanitarian aid – see Maas 2003d, 2003e, 2004 and 2005 for more empirical illustration.

and practical way to ship second-hand goods, collected among business clients and Dutch institutions, to selected regions, organizations or projects in the homeland – in some cases, the migrant entrepreneurs have organized a rather extensive club of loyal friends, co-ethnics as well as Dutchmen, who help them obtain material donations.

Hence, it is important to emphasize that the diaspora's resources not merely consist of financial support, yet also of knowledge and technology transfer; and, not to neglect, the cross-bordering relations and activities of those who left the country also carry important emotional value to the ones who stayed in the homeland – which may have a productive outcome as well. When asked how they felt life had changed by the migration of their sister, several of the migrants' family members in the Philippines emphasized that the mere fact that they now together worked on a project had in fact improved the bonds within the family as well as increased their confidence in their capabilities and so their self-esteem (Maas 2005). Clearly, the benefits of these transnational collective endeavours are not only in absolute or economic terms. Human capital stocks are increased, and relations are maintained and sometimes even strengthened despite the great distance between movers and stayers.

In sum, the Filipino community in the Netherlands has put up a variety of forms of “diaspora philanthropy” (Opiniano, 2004, 2005) or, in case of more sustainable support, transnational development aid. In fact, we can speak of development cooperation on the grassroots level where migrants and stayers work together for a common goal. While hard data is lacking, a “quick scan” of the available information suggests that the majority of these cross-bordering activities are directed at the rural, underserved areas, which, likely, are often the origin communities of the migrants. Such connections show both the desire among migrants to “give back” as well as a possible anticipation on their own return. Surely, transnational engagement is not specific for Filipino migrants; this is in fact a common phenomenon among diasporic communities all over the world. Yet, even though the impact of the migrants' collective transnational philanthropic and developmental activities is a relatively new area of academic inquiry and therefore not clearly established (Opiniano, 2005), recent publications on transnationalism repeatedly cite the scattered Filipino nation among other countries that have an active diaspora supporting development initiatives in the homeland as a prime example of a population that through their overseas efforts benefits many millions of households and helps the ailing Philippine economy afloat in times of crisis.¹⁴ As the cross-bordering relations are often highly peer-to-peer, it seems that those in the motherland who have no personal connections with overseas nationals have fewer chances to solicit support for them. Still, as show organizations like ERCMOVE in the Netherlands, some migrants develop initiatives with a broader or more general scope, as they function as intermediaries between groupings in the settlement country and local people's organizations, NGOs and profit-based as well as governmental actors in the homeland. Appointed as the

¹⁴ The Philippines has been in the leading top of remittances-receiving countries for years; in 2004, the country was fourth among the top recipients, after China, India and Mexico. Estimated remittances in 2005 totaled US\$13 billion (WorldBank 2006). Between 1990 and 2003, remittances, as a percentage of GNP, grew from 2.7 per cent to 10.2 percent; data show that at least six per cent of Filipino families receive income from abroad, and that six out of ten of these families are located in urban areas and are relatively better off than their counterparts, who make a living from local resources (IOM, 2005:240).

“missing civil society” for the Philippines (Opiniano, 2004)¹⁵, overseas Filipino associations seem to bear great significance for their homeland.

¹⁵ The Institute for Migration and Development Issues (IMDI), based in Manila, the Philippines, is a civil society organization formed to analyze migration and development issues in the Philippines; see their website www.filipinodiasporagiving.org, a very valuable online repository of identified initiatives of Filipino migrant groups and homeland organizations involved in development activities. Aside of listing Filipino migrant organizations, it also gives examples of diaspora giving efforts of other nationalities. Moreover, it provides a considerable number of papers on migration and development studies (which can be downloaded), as well as statistics on development indicators and migration issues.

Section 2: Building an associational life

A maturing migrant community with a bipolar view

Over the years, the number of Filipino organizations in the Netherlands has increased rapidly and their relations and activities have expanded across political and sectoral borders. As such, the Filipino community has widened its scope of action and influence. Their social infrastructure has gained importance beyond the self-interests of the individual Filipinos in the host nation and beyond the stimulation of collective remittances directed at the homeland. In short, Filipinos have achieved greater institutional outreach to effect change in both host and home society. Their collective efforts effectuate the gradual growth of a social formation that sits astride political borders and that is composed of a broad array of activities with potential for social and economic transformation, both within the host as well as within the home society.

This process undeniably signals the maturing of the Filipino community in the Netherlands. Next to the development of a second generation, which has reached such a level that the growth of the community nowadays is the result more of natural increase than of new inflow (Muijzenberg, 2004:150), especially its institutionalization is evidence of a population that is here to stay. Not only the manifold ethnic organizations and the increasing linkages between them and with organizations in other countries, but also the existence of various ethnic media channels (monthly magazines such as the *Munting Nasyon* and Philippine Digests; regular newsletters from organizations; as well as, recently, the provision of ABC-Network), the “incipient entrepreneurial activity” (Spaan, et al., 2005:254), and the catholic masses specifically by and for Filipinos, all testify a durable settlement and “ripening” of the Dutch-based community.

As shown above, whilst striving for better living conditions in the host society, at the same time, much of their collective activities are directed towards the former homeland. As such, many migrated Filipinos have a “bipolar, translocal or transnational view on their existence” (Muijzenberg, 2004:131). With their self-organizations targeting both the migrant members’ participation in the adopted society as well as better living conditions in the country of origin, this migrant group shows a simultaneous sense of belonging or attachment to the host and home society. Hence, Filipinos in the Netherlands have one foot in the new social context and kept the other in their homeland. They wish to remain indispensable to their former home communities as well as articulate with the country of settlement - Filipinos are not so much “in between” nor are they “neither here nor there”; they are “both here and there”.

So far, this paper provided a more general sketch of the associational life of the Filipinos in the Netherlands. There are however still a number of interesting issues or observations to be made, which appoint various mechanisms and conditions that appear to have informed, at least to some degree, the emergence and development of Filipino self-organization in the Netherlands. These mechanisms and conditions may hence be relevant to consider when analysing –more thoroughly than the present study has done- the roles or meanings of these migrants’ collective activities – for the movers as well as for the stayers.

Forces dividing the community – between solidarity and autonomy

While often portraying themselves to the public as a rather harmonious community sharing a single set of characteristics and values and bending their mind on common goals, my own fieldwork experiences and observations in fact suggested the existence of a migrant population that was rather strongly divided along various lines of identification and that featured itself by quite strong competitive and segregative tendencies. As a matter of fact, it was the failure of the survey that I had put up with a founder of a Filipino NGO in the Netherlands that made me particularly aware of this. As said, only a minor part of the some 50 organizations to which the questionnaire was sent out returned some answers, as such forestalling a more complete and updated view on the level, functions and outcomes of Filipino self-organization. Yet, telling of the state of Filipino associational life in the Netherlands were some reactions that were directed personally to me. These reactions divulged some of the so far concealed internal dynamics within the Filipino community. While some of the board members explicated they did not want to participate in our study because they did not want their club to become more publicly known than they were now, which by itself indicated a rather closed membership of their organizations, several others explained to me they would have cooperated with me on the matter if I had worked on my own. Clearly, my position as a researcher had been jeopardized by my cooperation with the chair of another Filipino organization, and had caused unwillingness to participate among some of the addressed persons. In fact, these reactions signalled the existence of distrust between the Filipino organizations and their leaders. While it would be exaggerated to call the community dissipated, from this moment on I, more alerted as I now was and determined to understand this percipience, more than once observed rather strong dislike or even resentment among the interviewees on particular conducts and associative manners within the community. The question emerged what explained these sentiments, and what consequences they might have for the unity of this migrant population – and their associational life.

Articles in newsletters and more informal conversations with community leaders gave some clues as to what seemingly divided the community. More so than practical considerations to start a new association, such as physical distance between members, several interlocutors for instance explained the existence of the relatively numerous Filipino organisations in the Netherlands to ensue from intern disputes on goal setting. These were, according to them, a rather common reason for the abolition of groupings or their splintering into several smaller units. More specifically, an important source of friction within the community turned out to be the debate whether the collective initiatives should pursue a more social mission or express a certain political conviction. As such, the present-day Filipino community has been observed to be rather strongly polarized between political and more socially oriented organizations (Fernandez, n.d; Tambuli; own fieldwork).

Moreover, in addition to diverging opinions on targets and ideologies both between and within the organizations, my informants repeatedly brought up jealousy, suspicion and slander as to contaminate and impede the joint efforts. The existence of so many groupings would by itself fuel the competition on “who has the most members or is most widely known”, as the founder of one of the bigger organizations

put it. As Pertierra (in Fernandez, n.d.:48) found in another destination country, Filipino migrant organizations have “surprisingly become engrossed with organizing as many activities as possible...[...] the measure of success lies in the mobilization of as many Filipinos as well as the money raised or the pageantry offered”. However, rather than a straight contest for financial resources, various research participants appointed social status within the community to be the main stake and with that the most important source for competition and, in its wake, distrust. Their accounts so strongly suggested that the quest for prestige, both on the level of the organizations as well as of the individual community leaders themselves, sometimes heavily stood in the way of the collective interest and contributed to discord and splitting among the Filipinos. Such is not specific for the Filipino population in the Netherlands. Reiterer (2004) for instance notes how community leaders of Philippine associations in Austria tried to monopolize the organization of the celebration Philippine’s hundred years of independence from Spain in 1998 to enhance their own profile in the community and improve their career prospects; instead of unifying, the centennial festivities “left the Philippine community more divided than ever.”

In addition, a considerable number of my interviewees – associational leaders as well as entrepreneurs- appointed the occurrence of some hidden, yet sometimes also quite open, disdain between the various migrant groups within the population, closely connected to what they called the “show off culture” of the Filipinos. Within Philippine culture, prestige or status is closely attached to material wealth and labour career; consequently, some groups are attributed a higher or lower status. As several informants literally attested, some people or groups in the community would “feel better” than others; or they explicated that association with people of lower status would automatically affect one’s own face and would make others look down on them. While such sentiments and fractionalizing tendencies are hard to substantiate and their consequences are difficult to fathom, again, similar observations have been made by other scholars in other destination countries. Aguilar (2003) for instance describes how fellow Filipinos sometimes dissociate when abroad; he encountered, in some countries, Filipinos who distanced themselves from co-nationals whom they perceived to have a lower status on base of their professional occupation (such as higher-status migrant workers exerting every effort not to associate with low-status migrant workers, like domestic workers or nannies), leading to fragmented overseas Filipino communities. De Vera (1993) identified such mechanism within the context of France, where the naturalized citizens occupy the highest positions, followed by residents, semi-permanent and undocumented migrants at the bottom. Anderson shows how a London-based Filipino workers association declared that it was “not prepared to work with the undocumented”; this group was “no longer to be given access to the social space controlled by a sector of the organized, settled community” (2004:10). In short, this study as well as other studies elsewhere have found diverse instances of “Philippine factionalism” (Reiterer, 2004:15), which can be deduced to matters of standing and different categories of belonging. This evidently plays out, perhaps even most obviously, in the associational life of the Filipinos. Apparently, at the same time as organizations are significant sites of identity building that provide some sense of stability or safety to their members and function as a “protected social space”, they are also spaces of status formation that provoke rivalry and conflict.

Yet, aside of the migrants' personal searches for recognition and status, fieldwork findings suggested that also another, more "externally induced", mechanism has directed the collective initiatives (and identity reconstruction) of the Filipino migrants in the Netherlands, viz. their diverging migration backgrounds and contexts of reception. To this influence in their alignment, the discussion now turns.

Chain migration: closed and more purely Filipino organizations

Although in recent years, manifestations of ethnic bonding such as community events and the establishment of associations also emerge in other parts of the country, from the beginning of the Filipinos' migration history early 1960s, most activity has taken place in the larger cities in the Western part of the country. Here, all bigger organisations are founded, while, by contrast, the smaller organizations and associations mushroom all over the country. In addition to their size, these latter organizations seem to distinct themselves in several other ways more from those in the western part of the country, which is at least partially an outcome of the particular contexts in which Filipinos have come to the Netherlands.

Initially, most Filipino migrants –primarily women - were headed to the Randstad urban area, in the west of the country; once settled down, these Filipinas hived over family and friends who usually established nearby. Nowadays, this mechanism of chain migration is reflected in the fairly closely knit Filipino communities based on kinship that exist in this region of the country. Not only are socio-ethnic activities more numerous here, they are also strongly administered by a few clans, groupings based on familial affiliation. Even though to outsiders Filipinos tend to refer to their group culture, studies time after time have shown that it is family, kin and extended family that counts most to them (Reiterer, 2004), in as well as outside the homeland. Apparently, consanguinity –and also of old friendships- also forms a base for formal organization when the social network in the host country expands through the migrants' living in strategies. Again, studies in other destination countries confirm such mechanism to underpin the community building efforts of the Filipinos. Next to Reiterer's study on the Filipinos' community life in Austria (2004), do for example both Salazar (1987) and Beer (1996) mention the central role of relatives and close friends within the ethnic social structures of Filipinos in Germany. While Salazar finds the family network (*kamag-anakan* in Tagalog) to be less locality bound and to primarily function in the first care for the newcomers, the relationships within the close-knit core group of old friends (called *barkada*) are more important in the subsequent incorporation process and are "continuously reinforced by calendric festivities, religious rites, ritual co-parenthood", as well as "...private events like gambling sessions, excursions, games and the like" (Salazar, 1987:478). Both family and friends are, in short, the "two core survival institutions" for the newly arrived Filipinos; in a later stage, these informal and pre-existing relations also undergrid the emergence of more formal institutional arrangements within the community.

Along with kinship and friendship relations, also the migrants' regional origin forms an important ground for collective arrangements in the adopted country. Filipinos are commonly known for their strong affinity with other Filipinos from the same ethnic or linguistic group or region in the Philippines (Gonzales, 1998:84). In fact, their "regionalism" has been cited as a deterrent to the development of nationalism

among Filipinos. Names given to their gatherings, such as “the community of Dordrecht”, “Filipino Catholic Community Drechtsteden” and “Filipino sa Flevoland”, may attest to this regional identification, then imprinted onto their new environment. Hence, as various cities and municipalities in the Netherlands have their “own Filipino community”; also outside the home nation, Filipinos give evidence of a “persistent pull of ‘locality’ as a social space of identity formation” (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998:22). Although such a regional sense of belonging may not be exclusive for the Filipinos residing in the western part of the country, the possibilities for its manifestation in collectivities are obviously facilitated by the geographical concentration of co-ethnics in this area. The following letter, written by a Dutch-based Filipina and published in *Filipino Ties* (a quarterly of the Philippine governmental agency Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) distributed worldwide), testifies how such regional orientation may in fact lead to social exclusion in the newly adopted country:

I am a Filipina married to a Dutch national and had been staying in Den Haag since December 2003. I always have that longing to find people from our country to socially connect with. I am lucky to have found Munting Nayon, a duly established organization here which publishes a monthly newsletter. There are also some Filipinas who render choir service at St. Lourdes Church in Scheveningen. However, not all Filipinos here are members of organizations because they connect to people within their area only. It would be a significant endeavour if CFO organizes programs that would gather overseas Filipinos in one place or event, and conduct conferences to enhance their social and civic awareness. ...

(Agnes Pavia Van De Beek, Den Haag)

(CFO, 2004)

At the same time as chain migration has resulted in fairly homogeneous and apparently rather closed Filipino membership compositions of these groupings, several community sources also contend these would, as a logical consequence, often be set up in a more traditional Filipino politico-cultural way, organized upon the traditional *barangay* form (the basic unit of political organization in the Philippines which traditionally consists mainly of members of the same family). This seems a rather common occurrence among Filipinos, wherever they reside; also in Italy, informal support groups of Filipinos are found to be based on clan or town affiliations – as Estopace claims, “emphatically not on their national origin” (2004:15). In Hong Kong, the same author observed the congregation of *barangay* associations instead of “All-Filipino” organizations (*ibid.* 14). Compared to the Netherlands, Yaun (in Fernandez n.d.) posits that the situation is “more dramatic in Belgium where many Filipinos organize themselves according to towns or *barangays* in the Philippines” and where in some cases these organizations are “so inward looking and closed that it would be impossible even for a fellow Filipino to know about their finances or activities” – which by itself likely also explains some of the limited response and reserved reactions to the questionnaires we sent out to the Filipino groupings in the Netherlands. Hence, also in the Netherlands, this largely local/kin structured political culture of the homeland has demonstrably been copied in part of the Filipinos’ reorganization or regrouping, which, as Fernandez explicates, would show itself especially in the particular social and power exchanges in these older associations. In this way, the pre-existing

personal relations that fuel(ed) the migration to the western region of the Netherlands are reproduced, perhaps even fortified, in the adopted country of settlement, including the traditional Philippine hierarchic relations. Put simple, the Filipinos' previous social capital is reconstituted –and institutionalized- in the adopted country. Evidently, while the current thinking and findings on transnational migration tend to emphasize that “identities based on such macro-societal paradigms as nation, ethnicity, and/or race may become ambivalent, partial, multiple, hybrid, and contradictory [...] *they may also be reinvented as primordial certainties*” (Aguilar, 1996: 6).

Marriage migration: mixed and open reembedding

The significance of the migration biography for the migrants' reembedding and incorporation process and, as part of that, the formation of migrant collectivities becomes even more apparent when we compare the above process of social capital development and identity (re)construction with that of the more autonomously migrated Filipinos, mostly Filipinas who came here to marry a Dutchman. By and large, the community building efforts of these migrants –and the mechanisms or conditions underlying these efforts- seem to rather sharply contrast with those observed among the relatively more *clustered* Filipinos in the western cities of the Netherlands – precisely as these efforts are affected by these women's spatial *dispersion* all over the country.

Generally, the Filipina brides and fiancées lack the built-in connections or linkages that go with arriving in batches as had the nurses and seamstresses who came here in the 1960s/70s, or when one migrates for family reunion or with the help of co-ethnics (although it is common knowledge within the Filipino community that already established relatives also play a significant role in contracting “instrumental marriages” for aspiring migrants). Without kinship or pre-migratory acquaintances in the immediate surrounding, feelings of isolation or alienation are found to be one of the most severe difficulties the Filipina migrants have to deal with in their new environment, forming a direct incentive for these women in bicultural marriages to seek contact with other Filipinos. However, as a community leader explicated, precisely because of the absence of such pre-existing intimacy and fewer opportunities to find Filipinos in the direct neighbourhood, in the more peripheral areas of the Netherlands a more formal organization of meetings and social activity was needed. Hence, at the same time as spatial dispersal and isolation has fed the desire to meet with compatriots, it also has complicated the formation of the groupings to do so - as well as affected the nature of their organization. A female board member of an association in an Eastern province of the Netherlands explained it in the following way:

“In the Philippines, you can just jump in with one another, any time of the day, whenever you want. That is okay, you can just do that; it is our culture. But here, it is all different. For one, I myself have a sister living nearby. But most women I know here [in this part of the country] , they only have their husbands, and their children. And if we want to see each other, we really have to arrange our meetings. Because here we really live our own lives here, just like the Dutchmen do. We are always so busy. And you see, our husbands, they do not like.. well, they are not used to

people just coming by without any call or so in advance. They want to know on time. That is typical Dutch you know. Besides, we also live too far from each other to just pass by. For me, the one nearest by is already like half an hour drive.. So you have to call before you can see each other. And if you really want to do something together, with some more people, you really have to organize it. Because she comes from this place, and then she has to come from there, and then... So it takes organisation here, to meet and have fun, or do whatever other thing."

This woman was not alone in her observation; various more women living outside the west-Dutch urban area recounted some difficulties in socializing with their fellows, both due to the different way of life in their bicultural marriage as well as due to practical constraints caused by their scattered settlement. While on the one hand such settlement context apparently required a more formal organization, especially in the first period of this type of Filipino migration to the Netherlands, at the same time, it seems these organizations also have another political culture compared to the bigger, family-based organisations in the west of the country. Even though also the smaller and more scattered Filipino associations may –just as the clan-based organizations- have been put up to share experiences and celebrate or even revive the Filipino spirit, these ethnic organizations tend to be more mixed in membership. Often, also the Dutch spouses of the Filipinas participate in them, and this, inevitably, implies a less strictly Filipino reconstruction of identity and built up of social capital as takes place within and through the more exclusive organizations in the western part of the country. In this respect, the complementing remark of the Dutch husband of the woman quoted above is telling:

"Those clubs in The Hague, you should know, they are really something different. First, we did visit some of their parties, because you know, she [my wife] really longed for some Filipino friends. But, really I did not feel at ease there. Because there were hardly any other Dutchmen neither. So they all talked in their own language, and, actually, even my wife could hardly follow because she is from another region [and speaking a different tongue]. So they do have this way of shutting you out, you see. With their specific habits and manners. That is why I said to her, you should begin your own group, just close to home. Besides, in this way, I also get to meet some other Dutchmen. Because many Filipinas here are married to a Dutchman you know. Then, it is not only about this "us being Filipino", you see. It is just about spending some time together, whether or not we are Dutch or Filipino."

In view of repeated comments like these, it then seems likely that within the context of the "dispersed bicultural marriages", the Filipino identity of these women –both their individual as well as their collective ethnic identity- undergoes a stronger process of hybridization than that of those who arrived within the confines of pre-existing networks and who are, as a consequence, geographically more concentrated (in the western part of the Netherlands). Next to their direct exposure to Dutch culture within the private realm of the household, also the wider social reembedding of these Filipina marriage migrants seems more open and mixed, in contrast with a more purely ethnic bonding and homogenous or traditional-kept Filipino identity among those Filipinos who migrated and settled within an ethnical framework. It remains to be

seen how these different settlement trajectories and social capital development processes play out in their transnational conducts and, hence, what they may mean for the home country.

Conclusion and Discussion

Filipinos in the Netherlands are a rather invisible migrant population. Generally, they are believed to have merged into mainstream society rather silently, which is often presumed a direct consequence of the intercultural marriages in which a considerable part of this group is engaged in (Spaan et al, 2005). Political and academic interest in this group has been little. The arguments and findings presented in this paper ensue from research that focuses on the entrepreneurial activity within this group of migrants, which is, to my knowledge, the first research that exclusively and comprehensively deals with this topic within the context of the Netherlands. This research focus also implies that the Filipinos' civic engagements and collective endeavours were at most laterally included in the empirical data gathering. As the Filipinos' social networks and transnational relations have not been thoroughly examined before and secondary sources on their ways of life are scarce, the empirical evidence presented in this paper is based on the statements and impressions of a selected sample of community sources as well as on my personal observations and impressions. As such, the argument made must be seen as a preliminary paradigm and an onset for further research on the role that the self-organization of Filipinos play or can play, either for their own adaptation in the host society or for development of their former home region.

Clearly, immigrants interact with their social environment as part of their identity (re)construction and as they (re)interpret their position within the host society, seizing existing opportunities to cope with the unfamiliar yet also creating such opportunities themselves. Joining with whom they feel at ease and with whom they share certain features, developing and executing activities together with other people, within the framework of one's personal aspirations and means, are a vital part of building a new life in the alien environment. This process can take place on a variety of geographical scales, from the local up to the global. This explorative study identified a rather dense web of political and socio-cultural relations among Filipinos in the host nation and between them and the former home country. On first sight, this migrant population may appear a closely-knitted unity. However, upon closer examination, an apparently harmonious community turned out to be rather divided. Hence, at the same time as Filipinos in the Netherlands have developed a rich associational life and show a strong community spirit, the Filipino population in the Netherlands appeared to consist of subgroups with their own identities and interests. Of course, the existence of subgroups by itself is nothing exceptional. However, these different identities and interests within the Filipino population have seemingly put up some social barriers between the migrants. Undoubtedly, the manifold collective activities and engagements of the Filipinos by and large ensue from ideological beliefs and genuine commitment with the faith of their *kababayans* (fellow countrymen) - in host and/or home society. However, they also partly stem from self-interest and personal career aspirations, likely a consequence of the high value that Philippine culture puts on social status. Idealism and political convictions apparently intermingle –or collide- with expediency and ambition.

In addition, the Filipinos' individual migration biographies and contexts of reception seem to have their own particular and rather far-reaching influence in the subsequent settlement and adaptation process of the migrants, evoking particular needs while simultaneously offering dissimilar opportunities to access or build social networks and avail of the resources available within that. Acknowledging the richer diversity of individual migration experiences yet put simplified for the sake of the argument, the differences are most pronounced between those who came within an ethnic framework and those who arrived independently for marriage with a native. These different migration contexts, and, related to that, the spatial distribution of the migrants across the country (respectively more clustered in the western region and more dispersed and isolated) are put forward as explanatory factors for different trajectories of social reembedding and different types of associational life that the Filipinos in the Netherlands are engaged in, and so for the existence of a fragmented community. Roughly we may distinguish a rather closed or closely-knitted and homogeneous Filipino versus a more open or mixed type of social networks and collective life. Bespeaking the social boundaries between these two, several "members" of either type I personally spoke with expressed some reservation regarding the other: while the first would have "their own cultural manners" and be rather inhospitable to outsiders (that is, compatriots not from the own kin or from other regional origin), the second would forget too much about the ethnic roots as they "lived by the rules" or "behaved too much like the Dutchmen" that these clubs included as members.

While in general, social meetings, joint lobbies, workshops and other activities serve as a coping mechanism to the immigrants and may be functional on their path to integration, empowerment and participation in Dutch society, the distinguished two types of associational life within the Filipino community in the Netherlands likely do so in different ways and may have somewhat diverging roles or meanings to the members. The closed groupings in the west of the country may form a protected social space in which they experience the "of old closeness", whereas the clubs and social gatherings of the dispersed women likely function (even) more as a site to reconstruct the (ethnic) identity they lost –or fear to lose- within their bicultural marriages, as well as serve as a means to ease their feelings of disconnection and to build anew a circle of friends. Moreover, these latter organizations seem to act more particularly as a cadre to link up with Dutch society, as they more naturally as well as more intentionally bring the two cultures together and explicate each others peculiarities.

In short, fieldwork suggested that the social capital that Filipinos in the Netherlands can rely on is contingent on place of origin, social standing, migration circumstances and living conditions. With internal and external forces conjointly putting up barriers between the Filipinos, social resources as solidarity and reciprocity seem to be limited to rather tightly bound social networks and membership features. While their respective gatherings may bear different significance to the migrants' adaptation process, they may also comprise different types of transnational actor and, hence, have different (potential) development impacts on the former home region. In other words, it can be reasoned, and in fact seems highly likely, that different trajectories of social reembedding –and collective identity reconstruction- among migrants in the host country also result in other cross-bordering relations and developmental initiatives. In the specific case of the Filipinos in the Netherlands, we could for instance expect that chain migration may have stronger regional developmental effects (or development potential) in the homeland, as the migrant groupings that are based on this migration context likely more often (can) function as home town

associations that support projects in a shared origin of the members. On the other hand, as the more dispersed organizations in the Netherlands are composed of migrants that do mostly not come from the same region in the Philippines and, moreover, also include their Dutch spouses, eventual transnational/development initiatives that these organizations may engage in perhaps are more often directed at a common cause that all members can relate to. Because of practical limitations, this supposition could not be substantiated by the present study. Within the current heated academic and political debates on migrants' integration into the host and the often assumed tense relation with their continuous homeland belonging, as well as within the present-day reassessment of migrants as partners in development, this comprises a particularly challenging and relevant issue to further explore.

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