

The 'returns' of educational migration: claiming citizenship in transnational contexts

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“I want to change the education system also, [to be the] same as here in DK. I want to gain some influence from here [Denmark]. I say [to co-villagers in Nepal], take some good things what I have, the knowledge I paid for being here. When I tell them that for one lecture, one hour, I am paying 550 DKK ... when they convert it, they say Uuuh. I say, get something from me! **What I am getting, I know, you guys cannot afford to be there, but at least I am there. I am getting education there, I am getting the lectures, but we can transfer the knowledge.** It is transferable, get some good knowledge, try to change, make the change. “

Aim of presentation

- To explore how transnational educational migrants envision their contribution to building up 'New Nepal'
- and how this is linked to their particular status as educational migrants

Ethnographic background: the increase in Nepali educational migration

- Post-conflict situation: collapse of state institutions and structures, prolonged constitutional process and poverty
- The expanding commercialized, international education market
- Demand for unskilled labour in certain sectors

Analytical framework: 'social remittances' and 'civic engagement'

Social remittances:

- "Ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital flowing from host- to sending communities" (Levitt 2001, p. 54)
- collective social remittances being exchanged by individuals in their role as political actors and organisational members (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010)

Civic engagement:

- "the process by which individuals enter into and act within civic spaces to address issues of public concern (Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2011, p. 3)
- Formal vs. informal civic engagement → participation in political processes and participation in other spheres
- Related to the notion of citizenship – legal, social and cultural



What is being remitted?

Economic remittances:

- regular economic support limited
- but a flow of material wealth

Social remittances:

- academic skills and diplomas
- 'social and civic' skills → individually and collectively, partly through migrant organisations

Bridging Denmark and Nepal

Inf. 1: “When you learn it is not for the work, **it is for the knowledge and now in the present context of global view I think Nepal needs people like us** so it is not that we become graduated in Denmark and work here.

[.....] Continues saying that most of them go other countries afterwards, but that the organisation functions as a bridge between Denmark and Nepal

Inf. 2: “We have for example been working with Scandinavian Help. I was one of the founding members. **We collected money through donation boxes and gave scholarship to 10-11 children in Nepal.**”

Maintaining connections

“Students organisations only focus on students. But we as a democratic forum, as *loktantrik samaj*, we try to focus on all the people. Some people who have been living here for 10 years, they are not students, they have residence permit. **But they are concerned about the nation and you know they want to help the nation and they want to do something about democracy.** We just want **to work as a bridge**, like a social organisation in Denmark [....]”

“That is a good question. **Some people have direct relations with politicians, some political leaders.** The Maoist organisation is also here, they have relations with people like Prachanda. And we have connection with somebody, you know... We are like an umbrella organization - Nepal Communist Party UML. And we have some connection with the leaders there and if they are in power then we can say directly to them that they do. Like Rajendra, if I say something to Rajendra, and Rajendra say it [to higher level people], then we can do something very easily.”

Education, citizenship and transnational civic engagement

- students as political actors in South Asian context
- Legitimation of other aspects of migrant life