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INTRODUCTION



Globalising Thailand through gendered ‘both-ways’ migration pathways with ‘the West’: cross-border connections between people, states, and places

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ABSTRACT

This article explains why significant Thai-Western ‘both-ways’ migration pathways have evolved, grown and sustained over the last decades. It introduces a set of research contributions on transnational social relationships and cross-border connections between people that arise from the increasingly large-scale mobilities and migrations between Thailand and ‘the West’ – countries from Europe, North America and Australia. While Thai and Western people’s social relationships are usually studied as personal stories within a cross-border marriage migration perspective, we consider it necessary to see them as *more than marriage migration*. Specifically, we argue that the growing ‘both-ways’ Thai-Western migration pathways can only be understood by reference to three features of globalisation processes specific to Thailand: first, cross-border connections and social networks generated by massive West-to-Thailand tourist mobilities that incentivise Western men to see living permanently with a Thai partner as ‘realistic’; second, the radical transformations of Thai rural societies under conditions of economic development that produces ‘surplus’ mobile women; and third, the restrictive state immigration and citizenship regimes in the West and Thailand that leaves few pathways open for migration, other than by ‘marriage’. In sum, Thailand’s specific experience of globalisation is the explanatory backstory to the extraordinary prevalence of Thai-Western ‘both-ways’ migrations.

KEYWORDS

Marriage migration; ‘both-ways’ migration pathways; Thailand; tourism; globalisation

Introduction

This Special Issue brings together research on the increasingly large-scale mobilities and ‘both-ways’ migration pathways of people between Thailand and ‘the West’, i.e. countries from Europe, North America and Australia. Thailand has long been a preferred destination for Western tourists. Thailand received 38 Million foreign tourists in 2018, ranking 9th highest in the world (UNTWO 2019). This underlines the massive scale of foreigners moving in and out of Thailand each year supported by a powerful tourist industry. At the same time, significant Thai-Western ‘both-ways’ migration pathways have emerged over

the last thirty years. To a large degree these have been driven by cross-border marriage migration, so that it is now common to see Thai-Western couples at airports in European and North American cities, as well as rural regions and tourist cities in Thailand.

Today, Thais moving 'West' are principally women, and to a much lesser extent gay men, who set up life with their Western male partners after marriage or civil partnerships. Conversely, many Westerners moving to settle in Thailand, permanently or for significant parts of the year, are retirees, primarily men, looking for Thais, as casual sexual partners, or for more established relationships as wives and carers. The 'both-ways' migration pathways are highly gendered, so that about 80%–90% of Thai emigrants to Europe and North America are women, and 80%–90% of Westerners settling in Thailand are men. Age in the life-course is also specifically relevant to couples of Thai-Western marriage migrants. Western men are usually middle-aged to old, and significantly older than the Thais with whom they form intimate and care relations. As a result, perspectives on gender, patriarchy and ageing are prominent features of the growing literature on Thai-Western cross-border marriage migrants, located in Thailand and Western countries.¹

At first glance, the migration pathways presented in this literature are seemingly the result of 'bottom-up' decisions by the participants and occur outside the framework of formal labour migration policies. This perspective is reinforced by case studies that focus on the 'personal stories' and life experiences of marriage migrants, an approach that is typical for cross-border marriage migration research.² While a focus on the 'personal life stories' of marriage migrants provides valuable insights, it can also mask consideration of the structural context of socially embedded cross-border connections and exchanges, as well as state restrictions, that, first, make people's decisions to move a possibility in the first place, and second, shape a migrant's post-migration life-trajectory and experiences, relative to others in the origin and settlement societies. Notwithstanding its limitations, one relevant insight of Guarnizo's (2003) innovative formulation for 'transnational living', was precisely the need to link personal subjective experiences within the deeper structural socio-economic context of transnational connections that underpin them.³ We argue that the Thai-Western social relationships discussed in this volume are forms of 'transnational living' that produce, and are reproduced by, the specific globalisation processes linked to Thailand's rapid economic development, of which mobility and migration are important drivers. They could not exist without the many (often invisible) cross-border connections that are relatively accessible and common in contemporary life -affordable long-distance travel, mobile phones, chat apps, internet dating, and easy international money transfers- that are supported by an international tourist industry that serves Thailand's mobile short-stay foreign population. At the same time, the growing internal rural to urban female migration that has been core to Thailand's economic boom, has produced a generation of women willing to move to support their families back in the village. Meanwhile Western societies have produced significant numbers of older single men, often divorced or alienated from their own families. Some of these men from the 'baby boomer' generation -with disposable incomes in later-life that go much further in Thailand- have made their 'holiday romances' into more permanent living arrangements. Finally, all this potential mobility and migration is strongly limited and channelled by the political reactions of nation-states to increasing globalisation, that has in effect produced an international system of highly selective and restrictive immigration and citizenship regimes. Today Western states and the Thai state place significant

conditions and life-shaping restrictions on foreigners who aim to make their short-term visits a more permanent stay.

This introduction aims to provide an explanatory backstory for why Thai-Western 'both-ways' migration pathways have emerged, grown, and been sustained, by referring to specific relevant globalisation processes. We focus on the radical social and economic transformations of Thailand, an upper middle-income developing country⁴, that has built the stage and 'opportunity structures' for the increasing 'both-ways' migration pathways with the West. This background context makes life stories, like a Thai woman in her forties from the rural Northeast who discovers she has a life-threatening illness getting together with a retired low-income bus driver from Finland (Statham 2020), and a Swedish female later-life 'life-style' migrant to a remote Thai village, who sports a supposedly 'Buddhist' tattoo as a self-proclamation of the 'authenticity' her Thai life (see Scuzzarello 2020), appear normal features of social life rather than exceptional novelties. The individual choices that shaped these lives, and the surprising prevalence of lives like these in Thailand and abroad, needs to be understood within context as an outcome of the specific globalisation processes that have shaped Thailand through transnational links to other parts of the world over the last decades. Globalisation and penetration by foreign capital, cultures, and people is key to this explanatory backstory as well as the internal rural/urban cleavages that drive Thailand's economic development.

The volume aims to advance knowledge, by studying a case of interrelated 'both-ways' migration pathways between the Global North and South. By contrast, most studies of transnationalism focus on people moving from less advanced Global South regions to places in the Global North. In addition, by examining the specific factors within the globalisation of Thailand that explain the migration processes, we aim to move beyond existing cross-border marriage migration perspectives.

In the following, we critically discuss cross-border marriage migration perspectives, outlining the significant contributions, but also important limitations. We argue that the growing 'both-ways' Thai-Western migration pathways can only be understood by reference to three features of globalisation processes specific to Thailand: first, the cross-border connections and social networks generated by massive West-to-Thailand tourist mobilities that incentivise Western men to see a permanent life with a Thai partner back home or in Thailand as 'realistic'; second, the transformation of the Thai rural under conditions of economic development that has produced 'surplus' mobile women; and third, the restrictive state immigration and citizenship regimes in the West and Thailand that leave few pathways open for migration, other than by 'marriage'. In subsequent sections, we detail our arguments on these three points, as explanatory background context, before presenting our cases of personal life stories of 'Thai meets West' transnational social relationships. First, we critique cross-border marriage migration perspectives, by arguing that Thai-Western 'both-ways' migration pathways need to be understood as *more than marriage migration*.

More than cross-border marriage migration?

The growing research on cross-border marriages in Asia has importantly advanced knowledge on the gendered basis of power and exchanges that take form in transnational partnerships (see e.g. contributions to Constable ed. 2005b; Yang and Lu eds. 2010; Yeung and

Mu eds. 2019). Cross-border marriages connect people through mobility across nation-state borders and produce new intercultural and interethnic familial relations. However, these new transnational forms of social relationships are deeply inscribed by the social conditions of inequality and gender relations that produce them. Stated simply, *patriarchy* refers to sets of social relationships that privilege and empower men relative to women. Feminist and gender perspectives have importantly unpacked how patriarchy is enforced and reproduced in marital and family relations between women and men in transnational partnerships (Kim 2010). Initially, cross-border marriage was studied as sex work, trafficking and 'mail-order brides'. Research depicted women as disempowered 'victims' in absolute dependency, exploited by husbands (Suzuki 2003). Over time, female researchers studying women's lived experiences increasingly challenged such assumptions. Their findings demonstrated a heterogeneity of women's desires, emotions, motives and experiences in embarking on this journey (Mohanty 2003). They were not all desperate 'victims' but many exercised a degree of agency, albeit within highly constrained structural contexts (Mix and Piper 2003). Studies increasingly focussed on intimate and personal relations, especially in the household, the primary unit associated with reproductive labour. There was also an appreciation of the 'blurredness' between domestic work, care-giving, sex work and marriage, as forms of female migrant lives.

Among general theories, Constable's (2005a; 2009) is influential. Constable argues that the spatial distribution of cross-border marriages is not random, but clearly structured by inequalities of gender, nationality, ethnicity and class, between the partners, and their respective nation-states. The global intersections of gender, class, ethnic and national inequalities lead to individual aspirations that produce emergent marriage migration streams linking richer and poorer regions of the globe. Constable (2005a, 5) draws from feminist insights that 'gendered geographies of power' (Mahler and Pessar 2001) underlie all migrations, to depict cross-border marriages as 'global marriage-scapes' shaped by cultural, social, historical and political-economic factors within globalisation processes. Like many, she moves away from earlier explanations of economic motivations, to emphasise intimacy, emotions and culture, as reasons why individuals move and marry: 'Recent marriage-scapes both reflect and are propelled by fantasies and imaginings about gender, sexuality, tradition, and modernity' (Constable 2005a, 7). She also goes on to emphasise the 'commodification' of intimacy and care-giving by women in marital and family relations (Constable 2009). Working in this framework, there are a large number of case studies on a heterogenous variety of transnational partnerships (see e.g. contributions to Constable ed. 2005b; Yang and Lu eds. 2010). Typically, these examine, first, the gendered power, material, emotional, intimate and care *exchanges* between individual women and men who constitute a partnership, in relation to the intersecting inequalities in which it is socially embedded; and second, the *lived experiences*, wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes for a female partner from a poorer background.

Generally, there is much to praise about the advances of this cross-border marriage perspective. However, we argue that Thai-Western 'both-ways' migration pathways need to be understood *methodologically* in a way that moves beyond this cross-border marriage migration perspective, by unpacking mechanisms that in some cases lead to migration pathways and in others do not. Cross-border marriage migration is almost exclusively studied by case studies focussing on personal stories, backed by general and vague explanations that people from richer and poorer regions 'get together' and move because of

socio-economic inequalities between the Global South and North. In our view, this focus on personal stories is often at the expense of reference to the structural socio-economic conditions, connecting regions of in- and out- migration, that define specific 'opportunity structures' that make emigration (and thereby immigration to a different country) a plausible aspiration. In particular, the specific contextual processes of migration and development in poorer regions that occur within globalisation and dependency are structural factors that can underpin the emergence of a marriage migration pathway from North to South, or South to North, or 'both-ways'.

The cross-border marriage migration perspective has the methodological flaw of *selecting on the dependent variable*. This is problematic because it tries to explain the phenomenon by looking only at cases of marriage migration that have happened and already exist in the social world. This means it is unable to explain why some regional North/South inequalities generate significant marriage migration pathways that start and persist, while very many other ostensibly similar ones that could do so, do not. By contrast, we consider that it is necessary to examine the specific globalisation processes (driving and driven by mobilities/migration) that connect less and more advanced regions and facilitate a specific 'opportunity structure' for specific (marriage) migration pathways between them. In particular, we consider the specific forms of social and economic inequalities faced by a less advantaged partner, embedded in the societal transformations of their respective region of origin and familial relations, matters a great deal in shaping specific opportunity structures that lead people to perceive chances for a better life by moving and marrying a foreigner. We can find general inequalities everywhere between the Global North and South, but to explain why some marriage migration pathways start, and then persist, while others do not, we need to examine the specific development context of the sending region that leads to the possibilities for female emigration and the cross-border connections that allow the mechanisms for a migration pathway.

Another gap in cross-border marriage perspectives that we bring to attention is the need to focus on the development of the less advanced region. In this case, we refer to the globalisation and social transformation of rural Thailand during the period of rapid economic development that has occurred within a generation. Without reference to the social transformations that have generated a 'surplus' of mobile young women, narratives that make emigration the norm, and villages that are sustained largely by migrants' remittances, it is impossible to account for the sizeable 'both-ways' Thai-Western migration pathways that exist. While such factors are common to migration and development perspectives on the transformation of the rural countryside in the context of economic development (e.g. Skeldon 1997; Rigg 2019), they tend not to be included systematically as structural factors in discussions of cross-border marriage migration in South Asia, and if they appear at all, tend to be relegated to personal background or individual characteristics of a spouse.

A further limitation of cross-border marriage perspectives comes from an understanding of the influential role of states' immigration controls in shaping the opportunities for migration pathways. Highly restrictive immigration and citizenship regimes in Western countries for Thais, and in Thailand for Westerners with lower incomes, are political reactions to globalisation processes. This discussion is surprisingly absent from cross-border marriage studies, generally, and studies on Thailand (e.g. Lapanun 2019), that fail to account for the important limiting and channelling effects of restrictive state immigration

and citizenship regimes on migration pathways. Many Thai-Western social relationships seemingly occur ‘bottom-up’, outside the domain of state authority, as a result of individual decisions. This viewpoint is reinforced by perspectives that focus study on individual personal stories of people who move. If two individuals from different parts of the globe meet by internet dating, or by casual sexual encounters in ‘holiday romances’, there appears to be no state regulation. After all, liberal states do not tell people who they can have intimate relations with or marry. However, as soon as people try to live in the same place and settle together, it is very clear that their opportunities are strongly limited by the immigration and long-term settlement requirements of the receiving state. This is especially clear for female Thai marriage migrants to the West, who have to prove the ‘validity’ of their marriage to be able to enter in the first place.⁵ But it also applies to Western retirees confronted by the Thai state’s restrictions on foreigners who try to live semi-permanently in Thailand, and who fail to meet the relatively high resource threshold for a retirement visa. How receiving states’ grant rights to entry, residence, property, and access to social welfare, matters a great deal for the life chances, security and well-being for Thais in the West, and Westerners in Thailand.

A by-product of restrictive state immigration controls that leave ‘marriage migration’ as one of the few open pathways is that in the social world, marriage migration, retirement migration, lifestyle migration, care migration are not distinct fields, but are inter-related as variants on a continuum of the same processes of transnational movement. For example, a Thai woman moving West is often legally a marriage migrant, but her life may *de facto* consist of domestic care work, or labour migration, to remit to her family back home. While a Western man moving to Thailand, may have retired, seek to live a lifestyle he can’t afford back home, find a partner who can care for him in his advancing years, or want to take advantage of the excellent (but expensive) private health facilities in Thailand. Again, starting out from an assumption of ‘marriage migration’ runs the risk of applying an overly rigid analytic definition and thereby reifying the phenomenon under study *avant la lettre*, while obscuring how the social relationships, connections and structural conditions that produce them play out in the social world.

In short, our critique can be summarised by three main points:

- (1). ‘Both-ways’ Thai-Western migration pathways can only really be understood by referring back to the frequent large-scale West-to-Thailand short-term mobility inflows generated by mass tourism, and the social transformation of people and places, as well as cross-border connections, and feedbacks, these specific globalisation processes bring to Thailand.
- (2). It is not possible to account for the large-scale gendered ‘both-ways’ migration pathways between Thailand and the West, and their continued vitality and sustenance, without referring back to the specific transformations of the Thai rural countryside under conditions of (dependent) economic development.
- (3). One can understand the predominance of a ‘marriage migration’ pathway, only by referring to the restrictiveness of the receiving state’s immigration and citizenship regimes, which restrict other pathways to entry and settlement, and in some cases ‘hide’ what in the social world are other forms of migration, by bringing all under the state categorisation of legal ‘marriage’.

It is impossible to understand the remarkable growth of Thai-Western partnerships, women's and men's aspirations to seek them, and the lives they sustain, without referring directly to the specific radical social transformations generated by Thailand's mutually reinforcing processes of rural emigration and urban economic development. At the same time, the hypermobility of mass inflows of wealthier foreign (single middle-aged male) tourists and the structural dependency of Thailand's economic development on related foreign capital inflows, provides many chances for Thai women and Western men to meet in person, that would otherwise be unavailable to both partners. In short, Thailand's specific experience of globalisation processes is the explanatory backstory to the extraordinary prevalence of 'both-ways' Thai-Western migration pathways.

Thailand meets 'the West': a history of cultural exchanges

Thailand has a long historical tradition for independence, but cultural openness to and engagement with 'the West'. Although never formally colonised, the political institutions and socio-economic development of the Kingdom of Thailand (Siam) were strongly shaped by dependency on powerful Western states, especially the British and French. In a context, where 'old' enemies (Burma, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) were too weak to fight, and the 'new' colonial powers too strong, Thailand was: 'more selective and open to Western and European influence than her colonized neighbours whose exposure to the West was structured and controlled through colonial institutions' (Van Esterik 2000, 96). As a nation-state, Thailand presents itself by referring to a continuity of social, political economic and cultural structures that are deemed uniquely 'Thai'. As an 'informally colonized' nation, Thai national identity and nationalism is distinctive in South East Asia. It retains the myth of openness and exchange with 'the West' rather than subordination. For its part, the West maintains a superior, if rather benevolent and favourable image of Thailand in popular culture, not least captured by Rogers and Hammerstein's long-running musical 'The King and I'. Given the Hollywood treatment, the subsequent film (1956) starring Yul Brynner is about the relationship between King Mongkut of Siam and a Welsh governess in the 1870s. In the film, which has strong neo-colonialist overtones, Anna, the governess undertakes a 'civilizing project' to teach the royal family about English language, customs and etiquette while clashing personally with the proud King. The film is still banned in Thailand because of its insulting depiction of the Thai Royal Family (Van Esterik 2000, 108), who remain a core pillar of 'Thai' national identity and political institutions to this day.

From a Thai perspective, Europe and the West has always signified modernity, wealth, and progress. Western things (*khong nork*) are highly valued and countries (*muang nork*) seen as developed, beautiful, and prosperous (Kitiarsa 2010). Historically, only the Thai elite had the opportunity for cultural engagement by travelling to the West, studying in Western elite schools and universities, and speaking European languages. However, mass tourism and cultural globalisation processes importing Western ideas and values mean that access and connections to the West have been 'democratized' in the sense that today they are no longer the privilege of the elite but open to all classes. The evolution of large-scale Thai-Western marriage migration pathways since the 1970s onwards has significantly contributed to an increasing openness for social interaction and cultural exchanges. Notwithstanding Thailand's globalisation, however, very strong differences

remain between Thai and Western cultures on core norms and values, gender relations, religion, family obligations, sexual mores and relations between individuals and community (Van Esterik 2000; Jeffrey 2002). With regard to Thai-Western marriages Lapanun (2019, 12) recounts: 'While love and money are considered to be mutually exclusive in Western societies, these two somewhat overlap in Thai society. The intermingling of sex, mutual affection and material resources is embedded in Thai cultural norms, manifested through various marriage customs and practices.' Nonetheless, their experiences of international migration and engagement with Western tourists in Thailand have made women from peasant origins more 'Western' and 'cosmopolitans' (Keyes 2014). The ruling Thai elite and upper classes distinguish their own privileged Western connections from these mass developments that they look down on. This follows the same path through which the urban Bangkokian elite traditionally looked down on rural peasants (Rigg 2019). The upper echelons of Thai society dismiss *mia farang*, women from rural backgrounds who hang out with foreign men, as 'prostitutes' and 'gold diggers' who marry their *farang* men for money (Sunanta 2013). This is despite the fact that many are university educated and work in public sector jobs (see Statham 2020). Likewise, Western men *farang* in relationships with these women are viewed by the Thai upper-classes as *farang khi-nok* – low-quality, lower class sex tourists (Thompson, Kitiarsa, and Smutkupt 2016; Lafferty and Hill Maher 2020). Such processes of stigmatisation and discrimination by status and gender have social consequences. They place barriers and 'a glass ceiling' on social mobility for Thai rural women, independently of how wealthy they may become. This cultural downgrading of the status of the vast majority of Thai-Western relationships by the Thai class system effectively consigns them to subordinate and segregated enclaves in the rural Northeast, or in Westernised tourist cities, rather than considering them to be part of Thai society. This stands in marked contrast to how Thai Bangkokian elites view their own Western connections and dependent enterprises, as drivers of economic development.

People on the move: mass tourist mobilities supporting 'both-ways' migration pathways

Relations with the West were key to Thailand's early move to mass tourism. From providing 'rest and recreation' hotels for US servicemen in the late 60's Vietnam War onwards, the country opened up to become a pioneer sex tourism destination for Western men (Cohen 2001). Mass tourism of the family and sex variety has transformed numerous cities and regions, that have grown to cater for foreign tastes and tourists, for more than forty years. Some cities, including Pattaya and Phuket have developed as enclaves geared almost exclusively to serving foreigners, and over years have built up significant Western expatriate populations. The notion of appearing deferential to Westerners has even been commodified by the Thai government's official sponsorship of tourism that promotes the 'land of smiles' and provides guidelines for how ordinary Thai people (i.e. lower classes) should behave in a benevolent way towards tourists.⁶ Nowadays, Thailand also hosts growing numbers of foreign retirees (mostly single males) with pensions and disposable incomes, and is a favoured 'second home' and 'holiday home' location, for people from wealthier countries across the world. All this history for deeply structured cross-border mobilities, connections and commerce, a specific globalisation through which

‘the West’ penetrates and influences a dependent development in Thailand, continues to shape the opportunity structure for Thai-Western ‘both-ways’ migrations.

As an important, popular and long-standing destination for mass tourism, Thailand has many infrastructural facilities to promote cross-border connections and networks that support large inflows of mobile foreign people and capital. Thailand’s development is increasingly dependent on tourism and service sectors providing for foreigners from wealthier countries (see Sunanta 2020). In 2018, Thailand registered more than 38 million international tourist arrivals. In other words, foreigners entering Thailand were roughly equivalent to 60% of the national population. With 63 billion USD international tourist receipts in 2018, Thailand is currently the fourth highest tourism earner worldwide (UNWTO 2019). This gives an idea of the scale of penetration by foreign people and capital and the numerous opportunities faced by ordinary Thais for social interaction and cultural engagement with foreigners. The last decade has witnessed a rapid growth of tourists from China, India and Russia, while Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and South Korea have supplied significant numbers of tourists from the region for longer. However, Western countries are a longstanding source and continue to provide significant tourists to Thailand, especially from the US, UK, Germany, Austria and France (roughly between 1M and 750,000 per annum each), but also from Canada, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland (between 200,000 and 300,000 p.a.).⁷ This matters because it means that for most Thais, the foreign is familiar and a normalised part of the cultural and social fabric of everyday life. Among Thai people there is also a hierarchy of *preferred tourists*, where ‘Westerners’ rank highest, especially in contrast to the *nouveau riche* newcomers from China, India and Russia. The behaviour and attitudes of Western tourists are more familiar, deemed preferable, and less culturally challenging than the newcomers from Asia (Jaisuekun 2019).⁸

It is impossible to understand the evolution of the significant ‘both-ways’ migration pathways between Thailand and Western countries, that continue to grow, without directly referring to the massive-scale longstanding ‘West-to-Thai’ mobilities generated by decades of mass tourism. A continuous significant one-way mobility pathway of people moving for short periods from ‘the West’ to Thailand as tourists, has importantly built a social fabric of cross-border connections, networks and social relations between people that provides incentives for others to follow in their path.

Western men experimenting with sex tourism or other tastes for Thailand, can do so in the comfort of peers like them, and social settings which make behaviour that is not allowed back home ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’, not least regarding their treatment of women. Thai women who seek financial gain from short-term informal or formal sex-work, or who want to establish longer term partnerships with wealthier foreign men, know there will be a constant and renewable supply of candidates, if they move to tourist cities, and work with women like them. Such brief encounters between Western men and Thai women are encouraged by the transformation of Thai tourist hot spots into places geared entirely to serving foreign tastes for the ‘Thai’. Mass tourist cities have all the infrastructures designed explicitly to support this form of Thai-Western engagement. They exist to serve ‘West-to-Thai’ inflows of foreign people and capital, whereby the Thai state stands by impassively while poorer rural Thai women become *de facto* service providers in this system. Of course, intimate engagements between Thai women and Western men can remain sojourns or short-term encounters, ‘holiday

romances', perhaps repeated annually, while sustained by communication via email and chat-apps. However, for us the important point is that this dependent form of tourism-driven Thai development, backed by a supportive economic and social fabric of 'West-to-Thai' cross-border connections, has generated mutually re-enforcing *transnational social fields* that support 'both-ways' Thai-Western migration pathways.

Transnational social fields are an important contribution of transnational migration perspectives. For example, Peggy Levitt's version in her seminal classic work 'The Transnational Villagers', sees (2001, 8–9): '(the) many social connections and organisations that tie these individuals to one another create a border-spanning arena that enables migrants, if they choose, to remain active in both worlds ... The transnational social fields that migration engenders encompass all aspects of social life. Though they generally emerge from economic relations between migrants and nonmigrants, social, religious, and political connections also constitute these arenas.' While others dispute this formulation and the claim that migrants can live 'here' and 'there' relatively easily (see especially, Waldinger 2015, 2017), all transnational perspectives keep this basic tenet of the centrality of a *transnational social field* even when they define it differently. Leaving aside definitional disputes, for us the key point is that mass tourist mobilities laid the foundations for transnational social fields to evolve, that subsequently mobilised and sustained 'West-to Thai' and 'Thai-to-West' migrations, while having mutually reinforcing dynamic impacts on one another.

First, the continuous movement of 'Westerners' in and out of Thailand has led to positive feedbacks, whereby some have sought to turn their favourite holiday destination into a more permanent sojourn, often when they retire from work. The backstory here is the existence of sizeable numbers of single divorcee middle-aged men in Western societies, who have (modest) disposable incomes that go further in Thailand, where their prospects for sexual encounters and partnering are significantly higher than back home. In this way, a large continuous mobility pathway of male tourists generates and sustains a smaller but significant migration stream of older, mostly single men (often divorced), who settle in Thailand for part of the year, or permanently. Many legally marry a Thai partner, who they may have known intimately for years, while others seek affordable care, better weather, and a happy retirement. The tourist infrastructure and endless supply of compatriots provides incentives for Western elder emigrants to seek a better life in retirement abroad, but in familiar cultural settings, as part of an expatriate community. In this way, male sex tourists transition to become husbands of Thai wives and settle in Thailand (see Lafferty and Hill Maher 2020). They often start running businesses -bars, guest houses, restaurants, internet cafés- that cater for the needs and cultural tastes of other Western tourists, thereby encouraging others to make the leap, and settle in Thailand.

Second, a growing number of Thai women have emigrated to 'the West' over the last 30 years, the primary route being when their holiday partner decided to marry them and take them back home. This vanguard of female emigrants were pioneers: their actions helped build the early cross-border connections and transnational social fields, by remitting, returning, and bringing new values and life-styles back home. Many provided opportunities for female friends and kin to follow suit and meet and marry a man in their Western destination. Over time these feedbacks produced distinctive but increasing numbers of Thai women who married and moved to specific locations to join their family, friends and co-villagers in Western countries.

In some cases, the increasing cross-border connections and transnational social fields generated by ‘both-ways’ migration pathways become mutually reinforcing and add an extra dynamic. They produce ‘migrant bi-localism’ (Waldinger 2015, 33) and significant societal transformations in both origin and destination locations. This is visible on the landscape in the form of the surprising presence of a Buddhist temple in a remote village of 200 people in rural Sweden, and modern Western houses with all-mod-cons in Northeastern Thai villages.⁹ At the same time, Thai women and their Western husbands establish new forms of transnational living, whereby they settle for times in one location, or the other, and sometimes move between ‘here’ and ‘there’ in annual circular migration patterns. What is common is that the feedbacks from the men’s and women’s respective migration pathways, become mutually reinforcing, so that people like them follow suit and see marriage and migration as a plausible future. The impact is dynamic and leads to specific localities defined by high numbers of Thai-Western couples, who know each other, socialise, and often help each other out, as they face the challenges of transnational living, and moving internationally as part of a new cross-border social network. The trailer to the anthropologist Sine Plambech’s latest brilliant documentary ‘Heartbound: a different type of love story’ (2008), recounts this evolutionary dynamic resulting from the exponential growth of cross-border unions:

In the small northern region of Jutland, Denmark, over 900 Thai women are married to Danish men, a trend that started 25 years ago when a former sex worker from Northeastern Thailand married a Jutland native and has since helped lonely local men and impoverished women from her village find someone to marry and share life with.

In Thailand, 2010 statistics from the National Statistical Office showed 27,357 Westerners living in Isan, 90% were men married to local women, and 80% from Europe, and the rest from North America and Australia (Lapanun 2019, 2).¹⁰

Such forms of ‘both-ways’ migrant bi-localism connect localities in distant parts of the globe, and generate cross-border connections, networks and transnational social fields that stimulate new migrants, by reducing the social, psychological and sometimes economic costs of migration. Once underway such positive feedbacks and sustained connections, lead to the social processes that Douglas S. Massey (1999, 46) calls ‘cumulative causation’ that explain why once established specific migration pathways are difficult to stop:

(O)nce the number of network connections in an origin area reaches a critical threshold, migration tends to become self-perpetuating because each act of migration creates the social structure needed to sustain it. Every new migrant reduces the costs and risks of subsequent migration for a set of friends and relatives, and some of these people are thereby induced to migrate, thus further expanding the set of people with ties abroad and, in turn, reducing the costs for a new set of people, some of whom are now more likely to decide to migrate, and so on.

This is especially the case when the factors that stimulated their emergence in the first place are, if anything, stronger than before, and when established ‘both-ways’ migration pathways, have dynamic re-enforcing impacts on each other.

Over time the evolution and foundation of ‘both-ways’ Thai-Western migration pathways has led to ‘marriage migration’ becoming a general aspiration for Thai women from rural regions and other sections of society. For example, among newer generations there are increasing cases of younger educated single women from urban wealthier backgrounds

who see marriage to a foreigner as a route to their life-style aspirations to join the Bangkokian consumer society. Likewise, there has been a diffusion among types of Western men willing to engage in cross-border partnerships with Thai women as Thai-Western marriages have become relatively more normalised and acceptable in Western societies.

Overall, the evolution and continuing growth of the 'both-ways' migration pathways can only really be understood by reference to the ongoing mass mobility stream of Western tourists to Thailand, on one side, and the transformation of Thailand, socially and as a place, as a destination for large-scale mass international tourism, on the other. This specific form of cross-border connections provides support for, incentivises and nourishes the migration pathways that increasingly occur in both directions.

People on the move: the globalising of the 'Thai rural' as a source of female emigration

While Thailand's globalisation is self-evident in Westernised expat enclaves and tourist hotspots, it is arguably even more evident in the social transformations that Jonathan Rigg conceptualises as the 'Thai rural' in his brilliant study on agrarian transformation in Northeast regions, principally Isan (2019, 14):

The intention ... is, certainly, to explore the processes of change in the countryside – in rural Thailand. But.. (it) is also intended to show how a view of (as well as from) the rural provides an insight into Thailand's wider transformation processes and vice versa.

In 1962, 88% of Thais and virtually all the rural population lived beneath the poverty line, but by 2013, extreme poverty was eradicated, and only 11% lived below the national poverty line (Rigg 2019, 3). People from Isan have played a leading role in propelling the key currents of the social transformation processes, including elevated needs, new household forms, changing gender roles, altered aspirations and new personal and political identities, all experienced within a single generation, that have globalised Thailand. The radical transformation of (former) peasants' ways of living, rural villages, and the agrarian economy, has importantly driven, and been driven by, an extraordinary phase of economic development, whereby Thailand moved from a low-income to an upper-middle income developing country. Nonetheless, after 50 years of unprecedented growth among the world's economies, a rural/urban cleavage remains, and the rural population remains just as poor, *relatively*, compared to the urban population of Bangkok, as it did before (Rigg 2019, 219; see also Keyes 2014, 144).

People from Isan, 'peasants' who speak a Lao dialect and typically have darker skin, remain largely on the outside and looked down upon socially by the urban elite Bangkokian classes. However, theirs is a story of globalisation *par excellence* importantly driven by migration. The younger generation moved for work *en masse*, to cities in Thailand and to an important degree abroad, while retaining strong identifications located and placed within their rural origins. This created the connections, networks and feedbacks (via cyclical return and social and financial remittances) that fed further emigrations of friends and kin, and further transformations of the agrarian economy and way of life, as well as driving national development. Today, farming in rural Thailand is largely for subsistence: the economy and social fabric of village life depends on income generated by repeated mobilities and emigrations for work, as well as continued remittance flows from emigrant family

members. In this way, the increasing and large-scale mobilities and migrations of rural ‘peasants’, generated by Thailand’s globalised economic development, has also socially transformed Isan into a region of ‘globalised villages’ populated by people who are *de facto* ‘village cosmopolitans’. Anthropologist, Charles Keyes, documented this process by charting the changes in community and village life over several decades (2014, 182–183):

(L)iterally millions of people born in rural communities in northeastern Thailand in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries joined the global labour force working not only in Bangkok, but in the Gulf States, Israel, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and even in Europe and North America ... Because Isan villagers have become workers in a global labour system, they can be seen as cosmopolitans (*khon mi khwam ru kiaokap lok*), not simply as traditional rice farmers, even though most still retain their identity as ‘villagers’. (*chao ban*)

Rigg makes a similar point about the radical impact of migration on the self-identification and worldviews of rural people, who are still often depicted as static, backward and unchanging peasants by the urban classes, government and sometimes academics: (2019, 2)

There is no discrete population of peasants with their feet in the paddy fields and their minds in the village. Millions of ‘farmers’ have worked in urban contexts and industrial employment, often overseas. They have engaged with the wider world, often for many years, and have knowledge of that world.

Isan is a primary birthplace of Thai women who partner foreigners. This is not by chance. What seem at first glance to be surprising Thai-Western relations are in reality produced and reproduced by the same specific social processes, especially emigration and return migration, circular mobilities, and cross-border connections of financial and social remittances, that have transformed and now sustain rural village communities. How else could we explain the increase, scale and prevalence of these partnerships over the last decades, and the continuing ‘both-ways’ migration pathways? They are not exceptional. On the contrary, Thai-Western partnerships directly fit, and are centrally embedded in, the specific transformations of the ‘globalised’ Thai rural societies that ‘both-ways’ migration pathways have helped sustain and reproduce. Thai marriage migrants abroad send remittances to support their natal family, kin and community, enabling agrarian communities in Thailand to connect to the world, and bypassing the state agencies who have failed to address economic inequality. Thai-Western marriages have important economic and development impacts on rural Isan villages. Remittances are used for home construction and renovation, household consumption, education, medical fees, life passage ceremonies, farmland purchase, support for local politics and developmental projects and investment in business entrepreneurship (Angeles and Sunanta 2009; Suksomboon 2009; Lapanun 2019).

In addition to an open opportunity structure for meeting foreign men presented by the onset of mass tourism, there are several factors located within the ‘Thai rural’ setting that have made opportunities for Thai-foreigner unions more open for women. First, rural to urban migration by younger daughters became a socially acceptable and normal way for rural families to address shortfalls in household income. A 1996 government report documented massive large-scale internal migrations and that female migrants outnumbered males in the 15–24 years age cohort (Keyes 2014, 151). Mary Beth Mills’ (1999) path-breaking study of Thai female migrants’ experiences shows how their migration goals were shaped by a desire to be ‘modern’ (*than samai*), but their social roles, including remitting back home, remained within the traditional cultural obligations of familial

piety and being a ‘dutiful daughter’. Second, the dramatic onset of birth control in rural Thailand meant that women were significantly less bound to child rearing than they had been in the past, so that they were able to seek work away from their home villages. Keyes found that while in 1963 there was no birth control in the village he studied, by 1980 two-thirds of households (64.5%) were using birth control (2014, 144). Of course, female migration and birth control has led to rural societies being characterised by ageing grandparents who care for ‘left behind children’, but this has also placed further obligations on emigrant mothers to finance ‘care’ back home by continuing to work away. Third, compulsory state education that was initiated by the government as part of its economic development programme, raised aspirations for rural people and women in particular. Subsequently, aspirations to educate the next generation, to facilitate future skilled emigrations and gain more resources for the household, became a new rationale for women to make the sacrifices as ‘dutiful daughters’ and migrate and stay away for prolonged periods. As Keyes recounts (2014, 148):

By restricting family size village women sought to ensure that their children would have better lives because family resources could then be deployed to pay for higher education and thereby ensure that an adult child would be able to get a well-paying non-farm job, including those overseas. More education was especially valued as a prerequisite for better jobs, and more education required more resources.

Finally, once established, this feminisation of rural to urban migration, including international migration through marriage, continued through dynamics of ‘cumulative causation’ (Massey 1999), whereby the social capital, networks and connections built through migrations, sending remittances, and periodic returns, created feedbacks and incentivised other women to follow this pathway as part of a household strategy.

At times of economic downturn, for example, the crash of the Thai economy in 1997–8, when an estimated two million migrants returned to their rural homes (Rigg 2019, 102), and when facing highly restrictive barriers to international labour migration, female emigration through marriage to foreigners becomes an even more plausible ‘cultural script’¹¹ for rural households to try and meet their ever growing aspirations. From the limited options available, a woman’s search for a better life by moving and marrying a foreigner might present the best chances for a rural household to address its perceived hardships, despite the risks and stigmatisation this migration pathway entails. If international migration is the objective, then marriage migration can provide the most sustained form of opportunity for a family over generations (see Turner and Michaud 2020). The key point here is that Thai-foreigner cross-border marriage migration is not simply a response to global structural inequalities, but is decided and strategized in relation to a woman’s family’s aspirations, that are structurally embedded in, and reproduced by, transformations and social change at the place of origin – in the case of Thailand, this is the ‘globalised villages’ of the rural North.

Reactions to globalisation: states’ restrictive immigration and citizenship regimes that limit migration pathways and post-migration experiences

Given the prominence of perspectives on how states control immigration (e.g. Hollifield 2004; Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005) and grant access to citizenship (e.g. Brubaker

1992; Koopmans et al. 2005) and how this shapes migration pathways and post-migration life-chances, there is surprisingly little discussion about states in the influential cross-border marriage migration perspectives we have discussed.¹²

In a world dominated by restrictive and highly selective immigration and citizenship regimes enforced by nation-states, a migrant's ability to enter and live with ease in a society of settlement is strongly shaped by the receiving state's stratification processes, i.e. by the way that it grants them access to entry and rights, or not, and enforces legitimating public discourses that depict them as relatively more or less deserving. Such stratification processes that receiving states impose importantly restrict migrants' life opportunities, experiences, and wellbeing in their societies of settlement. For the most part they are barriers that states erect in response to their own majority population's perceived unease with immigration and cultural diversity, and in this sense are *political* reactions to advancing globalisation processes. Thai-Western social relations and cultural interactions are clearly generated by transnational social fields of cross-border connections and exchanges between people from different countries. Nonetheless, 'political' opportunities derived from nation-states' restrictive immigration and citizenship regimes remain fundamental in shaping directions and flows of migration pathways, and the life chances of migrants, and their family and kin back in the origin country, after migration. For many people, especially from the Global South, opportunities to move internationally are highly restricted, and, typically, on arrival access to rights is strongly stratified and highly unequal for newcomers compared to native citizens, so they do not have equal chances to join society in a social and cultural sense of full participation.

The structuring impact of states' restrictiveness is demonstrated by the fact that (what receiving states categorise as) 'marriage migration' is by far the most predominant migration pathway from Thailand to the West, leading to highly gendered outcomes, whereby 80%–90% of Thai emigrants to the West are women, and 80%–90% of Western emigrants to Thailand are men. This is not because Thai women are uniquely attracted to Western men, or vice versa, but because virtually all other forms of emigration to the West, and labour migration in particular (with the partial exception of temporary berry picking to Scandinavia), are blocked by restrictive measures. This means that in the real terms of the social world, 'marriage migration' actually includes other types of migration, including labour and care-work provision. Also, Thai female student emigration is sometimes a pathway towards 'marriage' and settlement in the West. In this sense, it is the restrictive immigration controls of Western states that makes 'marriage migrants' out of the many Thai women who seek a better life by working and living abroad.

The legal-political infrastructure between Thailand and Western nation-states is a determining factor on decisions to marry and move internationally together. Access to rights from receiving and sending states matter a great deal in shaping how each partner decides to proceed in a partnership (see Statham 2020; [forthcoming](#)). Restrictive visa and long-term residence restrictions, as well as limitations on property ownership, and access to social health and welfare rights, in Western states and Thailand, for foreigners, creates high barriers for Thai-Western couples to live together in the same country. After establishing personal relations and maintaining them socially across borders, through email, internet, chat apps, and serial 'holiday' encounters, the couple may decide that they wish to live together permanently in a shared home. This is when the strong restrictions on access to rights that accrue from each other's nation-state kicks in.

Legal marriage is a game-changer for partnerships, because it not only makes possible the mobility and settlement that facilitates transnational living together, but it simultaneously increases the relative access of each individual to the property, social and health rights that derive from the other partner's national citizenship status. This makes the decision to move, marry and live together an almost 'all or nothing' package of interdependent rights, that bind a couple together, legally, socially and physically in place, from one day to another, much more so than for decisions between co-nationals in the same country (Statham 2019). As a result, a couple's decision to 'marry' is less a free choice based on personal intentions or 'love', but more a contextual requirement placed on them by restrictive state immigration and citizenship policies.

Through marriage women gain access to rights that provide at least some degree of material resources, security and potential empowerment. A woman whose marriage is recognised by a Western state gains rights for international mobility, work and residence abroad, and, as a spouse, potentially access to long-term social welfare, pension, inheritance and health rights. If she naturalises to a Western state, she gains access to full citizenship, welfare and protections, that hold if she divorces or resides in Thailand. In addition, this increase in status and recognition by a foreign state, can allow women who bring their children into a relationship, to move with their children, and sometimes children gain individual access to full citizenship rights through naturalisation. In this way, a woman achieves better life opportunities, that can be transferred on to children.

Although legal 'marriage' potentially empowers the relatively poorer partner in a union to a greater degree, it can still be beneficial in enhancing the status and access to rights of the wealthier foreign partner in a society of settlement. For Westerners in Thailand arguably the main issue regards access to property ownership rights. Foreigners are not allowed to own land in Thailand by law. Apartments can be purchased by foreigners as long as at least 51% of the building is owned by Thais. Effectively, this means that Western men usually purchase or build a house in co-operation with their spouse, by putting up all the capital and using the spouse's family name. In this case, she is a legal owner of the property and he has to trust her not to take possession or sell it. In this way, the decision to buy a house and live together in Thailand, actually transfers material resources to her. However, it is not a one-way street. He could not build a meaningful foothold in Thailand through ownership of property, or set up a business, without co-operation with a Thai national. There are also other potential gains, such as access to a one-year marriage visa, and in some cases the Thai health system, but these are relatively marginal gains and matter mostly only for relatively poor Westerners. More determinant is whether a Westerner meets the high financial requirements to qualify for a retirement or long-stay visa that the Thai state grants to specific nationalities (Western countries plus Japan).¹³ But even in such cases, a wealthier Westerner, who must be 50 years or older, is still likely to need a formal co-operative relationship with a Thai, to build a sustainable life, legally and socially.

In sum, we can only understand the remarkable evolution of Thai-Western 'both-ways' migration pathways by reference to the state immigration controls that largely restrict South to North movement, but provide small windows of opportunity, for example, through 'marriage'. In addition, receiving states' policies for foreigners who wish to settle long-term, strongly influence the post-migration life opportunities for Thais abroad, and Westerners in Thailand, and this shapes the perceived incentives for others to follow suit.

Thais meet Westerners: gendered social relationships and transnational living – the contributions

Our contributions study cases of how Thai and Western people negotiate their social relationships and interactions, arising from the specific mobilities and migration pathways, embedded in the globalisation processes that are transforming Thailand.

Sirijit Sunanta's (2020) contribution provides an important contextual foundation for this volume. She demonstrates that the specific globalisation processes shaping Thai-Western transnational mobilities and gendered social relations can be traced back to the Thai state's longstanding policies for economic development by openness to foreign capital and people. Specifically, the Thai state's promotion of tourism and service provision targeting foreigners generates pathways of transnational gendered mobilities centred on intimate and care services that have significant social costs, especially for low-income Thai families. Behind a large-scale mass tourist industry financed by foreign investment lies the assumption (implicit and sometimes explicit) that there is a large surplus of Thai women on low wages, mainly from rural regions, who can provide care services for foreigners. In this way, relative inequalities between Global North countries and Thailand become a basis for Thailand to be a *de facto* exporter of care and bodily services, provided by women, to people from wealthier countries. Simply put, consciously or not, Thailand's economic development strategy through tourism is premised on the *export* of care work by women on low wages. Rural women bear the burdens, but sometimes also small opportunities, presented by this strategy for economic development. Nonetheless, 'global care chains' have an end, and though this may be relatively invisible, Sunanta argues it is time for the Thai state to consider the social impacts and costs borne by rural families, whose women provide care services for foreigners, while parents may be ageing and children left behind.¹⁴ Thailand is one of the most rapidly ageing societies in the world. The state needs to recognise the structural implications of 'exporting' care services beyond its narrow aim of generating tourist revenues.

Sirijit Sunanta unpacks the Thai state's cultural ideologies used to support tourist development, and the human consequences for women who engage in this 'body work' for foreigners. She outlines how the state explicitly promotes and commodifies 'Thai-ness' within its national strategy for development through expanding tourism. Importantly, this culturally constructs Thailand as a destination for bodily and spiritual fulfilment for wealthier foreigners, while legitimating Thailand as a nation that services foreign capital and serves foreign people. This state-sponsored goal to provide for foreign 'others' importantly shapes resultant mobilities, social relationships, and everyday interactions between Thais and foreigners. It constructs 'Thais' and 'women' in a culturally dependent subservient status, i.e. as 'commodities', relative to the foreigners (especially men) they come into social and intimate contact with. In this way, state ideologies and marketing impacts on the life opportunities of ordinary people, especially women and their families, whose lives become increasingly dependent on their engagement with foreign men.

Sunanta embeds her mobilities perspective within the 'global care chain' concept. She outlines the human consequences of 'selling Thai-ness' through three related cases: transnational marriage; health and medical tourism; and retirement migration. Overall, she argues the cases demonstrate a pattern whereby care and bodily labour is extracted

from poorer to wealthier places, and from poorer to wealthier people. This creates a matrix of global interdependencies that link people, and their families, across the world. Thailand stands as the 'high touch industry' exporter *par excellence* that provides commodified and gendered care and bodily services. Inequalities within Thailand mean there is a ready supply of women care-workers especially from poorer rural regions.

Foreign tourists (mostly men) come to experience spas, massage, wellbeing, nursing and eldercare services provided (mostly) by Thai women. At the face-to-face level of exchanges this means women have to cater to their clients' or partners' expectations, that are often based on foreign men's racialised patriarchal tropes of 'Thai-ness' and Thai women. Foreigners' cultural expectations based on neo-colonial attitudes and stereotypes primed by the Thai state, shape their interactions with Thai women, so that, men frequently request sexual favours in health spas. In the same way, Thai women living in Europe find their labour opportunities restricted to ethnic niches as masseuses, even if they possess higher qualifications and skills. In short, the outcomes for female Thai care-workers can be relatively demeaning working-life experiences. In some cases, this leads to lower life-chances and social mobility than could have been reasonably expected from this life strategy. Women's opportunities are structured within dependency on an *ethnic enclave* of work caring for and servicing foreigners, while the costs, especially in time, mean they face difficulties to support their own children and parents. Caring for 'foreign others' can make it hard to provide care for ones' own, even though this is usually the primary motivation for starting this type of mobile working life.

Thailand's care 'gap' can be traced back partly to the state's limited effectiveness to deliver on its strategy for development through 'Thai' service provision. The state's intended transformation to wealthier, family-based, healthy life-style tourism from lower end male sex-tourism, has not yet materialised to the degree intended. While 'selling Thai-ness' provides commercial opportunities, there are also risks, not least for care-workers, whose life opportunities can be structured within a dependency on foreign tourists and their tastes for 'Thai-ness'. Thai women providing care effectively become 'commodified' as a Western man's idea of 'Thai services', while being left to deal with the social costs and realities of this work alone.

Paul Statham's contribution follows this idea of individual social costs for Thai women in their gendered relations with Western men by focussing on Thai-Western partnerships. He asks what happens to Thai women who stay in relationships with Western men over the long term? He tries to identify the factors that shape her experiences of living this life and its perceived social outcomes. The study draws on biographical interviews with twenty women, almost all born in rural Northern Thailand, in partnerships with Western men for between seven and thirty years, and who have histories of internal mobility and international migration, though they currently reside in Thailand.

Cross-border marriage migration research often studies partnerships in a *static* way by evaluating social outcomes and individual consequences at a fixed-point in time. By contrast, Statham tries to study the distinct stages in the life-cycle or 'narrative arc' of a partnership as it evolves over years, by focussing on how the gendered negotiated exchanges (material, emotional and intimate) between a couple transforms. Such gendered negotiated exchanges constitute new forms of transnational patriarchy, where a woman submits to a man in particular with regard to rights over her reproductive capacity and sexuality, and more generally his authority, in exchange for protection, subsistence,

goods, material wealth or other resources (Jongwilaiwan and Thompson 2013). Working from a women's perspective, Statham studies individual life experiences, comparatively, within the context of six distinct narrative phases of their respective partnerships: her individual background life history; the stimulus – a critical juncture in her life-course; initiating encounters; starting out – establishing bonds; getting together – building a partnership; and living together, formalisation and social embedding of the partnership. By studying women's own perceptions of their life experiences in relation to the distinct phases of their partnership, it is possible to unveil the degree to which the women's lives have been radically transformed – for good and bad – by their search for a better life through 'marrying' a foreign (older) Western man, from a different culture and religion.

Specifically, Statham examines three factors that can shape her relative autonomy in her partnership in ways that potentially result in her achieving greater individual security, wellbeing and status over time: rights, differential ageing, and family pressures. First, he looks at *access to rights*, following the perspective advanced earlier, that states matter a great deal in defining the opportunities and constraints for transnational living and intercultural marriages between Thais and Westerners. Restrictive immigration, visa and residence requirements apply for Western husbands wanting to settle long term in Thailand, but restrictions imposed on Thai women by Western states place even stronger restrictions on entry, residence, and access to welfare. This means that Thai-Western couples need to legally marry to be able to move around and live together and share a home 'here' and/or 'there'. As a legally recognised wife, a woman gains individual rights for international mobility, work and residence abroad, and potentially access to social welfare, pension and health rights. Over time abroad she may even gain access to full national citizenship and individual rights and protections from her husband's homeland state.

Drawing on life-course perspectives, a second transformative factor is *differential ageing*. Given that Western men are typically 15 years older than their Thai partners and initiate partnerships when they are fifty years old, a couple that stays together will experience ageing, and enter stages of their individual life-course, differentially. Interpersonal relations and emotional bonds in the couple are likely to change as they age differentially, while their lives remain interdependent. This leads to a transformation of intimacy in their negotiated exchanges. More concretely, as his mental and physical health deteriorates, he may no longer be able to exert social control over her reproductive capacity and sexuality. This potentially increases her relative autonomy in the relationship, but can also add new burdens, such as becoming a permanent carer for her partner. Also, his relative loss of efficacy as an elder, or illness, may lead to increased health costs, and financial difficulties for the household.

Statham's third transformative factor considers a woman's changing set of *obligations to her natal family*. Given that as 'dutiful daughters' rural women have traditional cultural obligations of familial piety to care for and support their parents and extended kin network, this role is a primary motivation for the decision to find a foreign husband in the first place. However, this role comes under pressure and transforms once a woman is in a partnership as time advances. Pressures to provide for her family importantly influence how she negotiates life with her partner, and the degree to which she is prepared to sacrifice her own wellbeing to support her family. At the same time, she can face increasingly unrealistic demands from her family. Often a woman sits in the unenviable position of mediating competing demands between her partner, and her family, while

her own wellbeing is placed on one side. Some men are unwilling to support extended Thai families, preferring to assert a Western individualistic understanding of family responsibilities, i.e. that 'he married the wife not the family', while others are willing to pay the costs to become a 'son-in-law' to her parents and family. Such elder 'son-in-laws' usually relocate to her village where they become an accepted, if novel, part of the social fabric (Thompson, Kitiarsa, and Smutkupt 2016). Regarding her relationship to her own family, as the years advance, a woman may experience an emotional distance from her natal family, as their demands increase, while her physical distance, even from her own children, can be reinforced. Women strongly identify with their natal family 'home' and rural village (Rigg 2019), but the pressures of being a '*mia farang*' can build a barrier to emotional relationships with her family, and negatively impact on her individual wellbeing.

Statham's most striking finding is the radical degree to which almost every aspect of a woman's life is transformed. Socio-economic understandings of individual social mobility, hypergamy (marrying up or down), or 'status exchange' theories, do little to capture the scale and depth of her individual life-transformation. A woman is literally a different person when she reaches the other side of her personal 'narrative arc'. Many women have life changing experiences, they move and live abroad for several years, speak new languages, wear new clothes, have healthier bodies than their stay-at-home peers, and live in modern houses that tower over traditional ones in the village. They become 'village cosmopolitans' (Keyes 2014). In short, they experience radical transitions, that do not refer to the same social categories as their earlier lives. All women who achieved an increased formalisation of their partnership through legal marriage -most of the sample- thought that their individual lives had improved substantially by taking this life route. This contrasted starkly with a woman unmarried after many years, who still lived in a situation of precarity, poverty and abuse, and with no future access to tangible assets for her, or her children.

In sum, most considered partnering a Westerner a worthwhile strategy to achieve a better life. However, many women, including 'success' stories, also experienced deep psychological anxieties and feelings of isolation. This was due to pressures they face on a daily basis to mediate and manage between the high competing demands of their family and Western partner. Most women had domestic conflicts with their husbands due to cultural misunderstandings. These social pressures and emotional uncertainties accumulate over years, even for resilient and resourceful individuals. Living this life of 'unintended transnationalism' -how could she have anticipated the resultant life transformations of the initial decision to partner a *farang*?- presents significant challenges for an individual's identity and psychological security.

Manasigan Kanchanachitra's and Pattaporn Chuenglersiri's contribution extends the perspective by looking at how partners in Thai-European transnational marriages see their adaption to their respective settlement societies. It is novel within cross-border marriage migration research to study cases of 'both-ways' migrations, and compare the viewpoints of respective partners, by looking at how Thai women adapt to Europe, and European men to Thailand. They draw on Mahler and Pessar's (2001) influential gendered 'power geometry' concept, that individuals are placed in distinct social locations that shape their relative and gendered access to power. Their article compares how European husbands in Thailand and Thai wives in European countries experience post-migration living and

being 'foreigners' in their respective settlement societies, across four dimensions: structural, social, cultural and emotional. They trace the distinctive experiences of male European migrants to Thailand and female Thai migrants to Europe, back to the gendered, racial and power inequalities, that derive from their respective locations, status, and positions, as 'European men' and 'Thai women', within a global hierarchy that privileges the Global North over the Global South. Ultimately, Kanchanachitra and Chuenglersiri depict both migrant groups as relatively vulnerable in their respective settlement societies, which underlines the high challenges of socio-cultural adaptation even for more privileged (European male) migrants. However, the experiences and life-journeys of European husbands and Thai wives that they unpack could not be more different.

European husbands who settle in Thailand are typically retirees, moving from homeland countries, sometimes with their Thai wives, with the intention of maximising their limited pension incomes in a relatively poorer country. In the short term, they experience a 'bounce' upwards in status and privilege, because Thai people generally see all Western male immigrants as wealthy, though this is factually not true. The men's self-perceptions of privilege and entitlement shape their social behaviour in Thailand. They often impose explicitly neo-colonial 'Eurocentric', and sometimes racist and highly patriarchal, values of superiority over their social relations to people in the settlement society. They usually do not try to learn Thai and retain a strictly European life-style, even after years in Thailand. Over the long term, however, they face exclusion from important resources, such as healthcare, provided privately and by the Thai state, whose policies encourage only high-income long-term immigrants. Many men cannot afford private health insurance, a problem that becomes increasingly life-shaping as they are relatively old and ageing. Over time men see that their initial 'bounce' in status and privilege declines, but at that stage they may have lost the personal efficacy or wealth to return. Some re-assert their status by being a 'provider' for their wife's family, and, of course, by applying their own 'Eurocentric' terms and conditions. However, as the years advance, a lack of language skills and meaningful social engagement with Thai people, leads to feelings of social isolation. Men have no sense of belonging to Thailand, and dwindling ties, if any, to their home country. Even a man's self-perception as a benevolent 'provider' for their wife and her family can sour, and he can become cynical about these relations with one describing himself as a 'walking ATM machine'. This can lead to loneliness, isolation, and emotional distance.

The wives are returnees to Thailand who recount their experiences in European countries. In contrast to European men, Thai women experienced direct benefits from their rights -as wives to European men- to access state resources in their respective European settlement societies. Especially important is free access to quality health care which is a life-enhancing asset. Beyond this factor, their experiences were less positive. Most made efforts to learn the language of their host society, however they tended to live relatively isolated, and in a dependent position on their husband in the home, and for making social relations beyond the home. Many suffered from discrimination and stigmatising Western perspectives on Thai women, being pushed into a Thai ethnic enclave of working in restaurants and massage parlours, with little recognition of their qualifications or labour skills. Overall, socialisation with 'natives' was limited and most friendship bonds were with other Thai women married to European men. In the end, most women felt little emotional attachment or belonging to their European country of settlement beyond the

functional benefits of state provision. Some used their 'European' experiences as a way to enhance their status among fellow Thais once they returned, but it is clear that 'home' for them in an emotional sense remained Thailand.

Sarah Scuzzarello's contribution studies a form of transnational living that is an increasingly prevalent manifestation of Thai-Western relations, later-life Westerners who settle permanently, or for at least five months per annum, in Thailand. Thailand has become an important destination for Western retirees. This is partly an autonomous development and partly due to the state's efforts to promote the country as open to elder immigrants with high disposable incomes, and 'welcoming' towards foreigners, the so-called 'Land of Smiles'. This is supported by Thailand's high-quality medical services, tailored for foreigners able to afford private health insurance (Husa et al. 2014; Bender, Hollstein, and Schweppe 2018). Thailand's potential to generate economic development by providing a 'retirement industry' (Toyota and Xiang 2012) to wealthy people from more advanced countries is part of the state's efforts to move away from low-end mass (sex) tourism. Increasingly, Westerners from the 'baby boomer' generation take the radical step, as individuals, or in some cases as couples, to set up their life in Thailand for reasons well-documented in 'retirement' and 'lifestyle' migration literatures: better quality of life in retirement; self-discovery; lifestyle aspirations; making pensions go further; living in a warmer climate; sexual opportunities; and better or more affordable quality of care (see e.g. Oliver 2008; Benson and O'Reilly 2018).

Scuzzarello studies how elder Western men and women perceive their experiences living in Thailand. She interprets their lived experiences and interactions, including intimate and care relations, and dealings with local people and places, by relating back to the intersections of embedded gendered, ethnic, economic, status and power inequalities between Thailand and the West. The concept of *privilege* is core. Life-style migration perspectives commonly deconstruct the global power asymmetries that underpin how 'lifestyle migrants' experience transnational living. However, Scuzzarello demonstrates how Western elders 'enact' or 'practise' *privilege* in their daily interactions. She examines how they perceive and justify their new lives, built around social relationships: with Thais with whom they have intimate relations (partners and carers); local Thai people; other Westerners in Thailand; and family and friends in origin countries. While most research is on heterosexual men, Scuzzarello includes women in her sample. This allows her to show how gender shapes individual life-experiences of self-discovery and unpack the different ways that Westerners enact and reproduce 'privilege' in their new social relations with Thais in Thailand.

A striking finding is that women and men have very distinct experiences of this form of transnational living. Some women are almost evangelical in their expressions of self-commitment to this way of life that they depict as spiritual and authentic. In Western couples it is often the woman who has initiated the move and remains more committed to living in Thailand. Elder women present themselves as individually empowered, stimulated and re-born at this stage of their life-course through their engagement with Thai people and Thailand. However, their understandings of Thai culture and people remain mostly highly superficial, or simply inaccurate. Ultimately, they prefer the comfort of a simplistic ethno-centric trope of 'Thai-ness', Thai people, and Thailand, to engaging with the real evident hardships of people around them, who serve them. This myopic view of 'Thai-ness' serves to justify their individual projects for self-gratification, while at the same

time allowing them to see themselves as morally superior to local people's values, but also to the 'bad' mass of Western lumpen-tourists. They construct themselves as the 'good settlers'. In this way, they consume their own appropriated constructions of 'Thailand' as a personal search for an 'authentic' life in Thailand, while remaining relatively ignorant of Thai culture, practices and customs. Scuzzarello describes how they have Thai religious symbols they do not understand tattooed on their bodies and use Buddha statues for interior decoration. By contrast, Thai culture demands respect for the religious symbols of Buddha, a state request that appears in English on massive billboards on the roads to all major airports. Women retirees maintain distant instrumental relationships with the local community. When locals act in a way that challenges the 'passivity' and subordination attributed to them, they are depicted as money grabbing and untrustworthy. This stands in stark contrast to women's constructions of Thailand as a place inhabited by near-to-nature farmers, 'noble savages', who live according to the seasons. Irritated when realities of everyday life contradict this image of 'primitive' Thailand, they initiate 'civilizing' projects in the locality, saving stray dogs (from local people), and teaching local children 'how to use a knife and fork' should they be lucky enough to be invited to dinner by a Westerner.

By contrast, for men their later-life 'practising privilege' experiences come in the form of a new-found masculinity, sexuality and status that ageing has deprived them in Western societies and culture. This holds for gay and straight men. Many straight men are single divorcees who enter relationships with much younger Thai women initially through sex tourism. They depict Thai women as all sexually available and 'for sale', but also as exotic, oriental and more appreciative of older people than Westerners. Some see themselves as 'saving' Thai women from drunken and irresponsible Thai men and present themselves as 'providers'. Like their female counterparts, actual understanding of Thai-ness and Thai people is eschewed for an ethno-cultural trope of superiority, in this case underpinned by stereotypes of patriarchal and ethnic supremacy. In this way, their Thai partner becomes a woman who they saved from being a 'whore', while they advocate the benefits of what they depict as Thai women's docility, obedience and sub-servient relations in the household, something they regret has been eroded by feminism in the West.

Megan Lafferty's and Kristin Hill Maher's contribution digs deeper into how Western older men experience their settlement in Thailand. They make a detailed study of the daily lives of Western men, who end up living in rural regions, after a later-life shaped by intimate relationships with Thai women, and regular mobility to Thailand. Most men started out as sex-tourists, who at retirement, or due to other life-course decisions, including divorce, or being single and middle-aged, decided to settle in Thailand. They often have relatively low incomes in their origin countries. Their initial mobilities are facilitated by Thailand's infrastructure for promoting mass tourism and resorts strongly geared to single male (sex) tourism. Moving in and out through easily available short-term tourist visas, becoming instantly relatively wealthier, and certainly gaining higher status in the partnership market than back home, Thailand offers these men the promise of escape from a mundane and often low status life. Crucially, many men build their hopes for a better life on moving to Thailand permanently, where they think they might have a second chance to have a partner, build a family, or aspire to a more desirable life in a warmer climate.

However, living the dream of turning enjoyable holidays and romances into a permanent sustainable way of life is deeply challenging. Lafferty's and Hill Mayer's study offers a counterbalance to the idea of Western male privilege being permanent. Over time the men can face economic precarity as their assets dwindle, are inaccessible, or tied up in property in their spouse's name. Meanwhile life in a remote village where you don't speak the language or understand the culture can lead to isolation and diminish wellbeing. To some degree this study challenges 'life style migration' perspectives on the enduring 'white' and 'class' privileges of Western migrants to the Global South (e.g. Benson 2019). The men's self-perceptions of 'white privilege' and status superiority, however, are only relatively broken by their hardships and failures. This underlines the depth, reach and resilience of Westerners' neo-colonial patriarchal cultural tropes that they construct against the 'Thai other' and which shape their social behaviour towards Thais and Thailand.

Often men live off modest pensions, work as English language teachers, or run small businesses catering for other Western tourists, such as bars. Over time their chances of return are limited, because they lack savings, and cannot earn enough in Thailand to finance a future back in a more expensive country. The relative economic benefits between Western countries and Thailand that led them to re-locate, become a barrier to return. The men complain and sound disillusioned with their lives in Thailand, but lack the agency and resources to move on. Some live in relative precarity, which often combines with a decline in empowerment relative to their wife, and leads to self-perceptions of emasculation. In short, the 'holiday romance' is over. It is replaced by sharing a home, located in a place where he becomes dependent on her resources of social capital, language, contacts and know how, for the simple basics of everyday life. The men's ability to perform 'white male privilege', based on the economic, gendered and racial inequalities between Thailand and the West, declines over time, as their relative dominance withers away. Many men come across as naïve and psychologically unprepared for the rigours of living in a foreign country, where they have little knowledge of the culture and language. They become socially dependent on a woman, with whom they may have relatively little in common, or on other Western men, who hang around expat enclaves. The overriding sense is of a group of men who feel 'trapped' in their lives, which after a short honeymoon period, appears to have little in common with the individual aspirations of (sexual) self-discovery normally associated with life-style migration. There can be significant costs for individual wellbeing, though it is, of course, impossible to compare their existence with that they would have had in the West, which they left due to dissatisfaction in the first place. In the end, their increasing precarity, often compounded by ageing and infirmity, can become an important issue, for the Thai state, or wife, or her family, who have to pick up the bills for healthcare and support.

Sarah Turner's and Jean Michaud's contribution plays an important role in the collection by demonstrating the embeddedness of Thai-foreign mobilities, and 'both-ways' migrations, in the social transformation and development of the Thai rural. In short, they find Thai rural families and communities in Northern villages bear the imprints of globalisation processes, driven by multiple related migrations, to a remarkable degree. Their study details how individual decisions to migrate abroad are part of family livelihood strategy, and how over generations, that can become an emigration, and circular migration, pathway to support and sustain an extended family in a rural community.

Turner's and Michaud's case study focuses on the migration decisions, experiences and perceived outcomes, of members of a single extended family from a village in Chiang Rai province in Northern Thailand. They draw on twenty-seven years of research, knowledge and engagement with this village. Specifically, their unique study follows the migration stories of three generations of family members. They show how decision-making over international migration is negotiated, 'brokered', interlinked, and interdependent within the unit of an extended family, and evolves over years, types and destinations of emigration, and across generations. Drawing on fieldwork including repeat in-depth interviews with a Thai-Western couple, Tik and Pierre from the second generation, they chart the migration histories of Tik's eight siblings and five half-siblings, and their offspring in the next generation. The degree, depth and number of 'global' experiences for a family that still sees itself emotionally rooted in a rural village is truly remarkable. From this single family-lineage, comprising forty-five people, sixteen have migrated internationally (sometimes more than once) for work, before returning, while one has remained long-term in Japan. Destinations include Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Australia. Such cosmopolitan experiences and cross-border connections stand in stark contrast to the remote village accessible only by a dirt track that the authors describe from their early encounters. It needs underlining that the migration experiences of this extended family are neither unique, nor exceptional. Turner and Michaud report that their key informants confirmed a third of 180 households in the village had at least one member who worked abroad over the last three decades. Other long-term studies of migration from Thai villages show similar trends (Rigg and Salamanca 2011; Keyes 2014). Remittances have sustained the family's location in the village, as well as transforming livelihoods and aspirations, and the village itself. Overall, however, the study finds that migration experiences and outcomes have been varied in the family's own perceptions of relative 'success'.

Although with the exception of Australia, the cross-border linkages Turner and Michaud find to their rural family through migration pathways are to non-Western destinations, it is worth noting that the most 'successful' migrant in the family history is a female marriage migrant to Japan, who becomes a key node and patron for the emigrations of future generations. Nonetheless, this case study also highlights the significance of 'more than marriage migration' and how both men and women from this family have contributed to shaping the social transformations and possibilities for migration-driven development in rural settings in specific ways. Turner and Michaud's contribution demonstrates that seen from the village, Thai-foreigner marriage migration is only a subset, albeit a significant one, of the social forces transforming what Rigg (2019) calls the 'Thai rural'.

Virtually all the mobilities, 'both-ways' migrations, and cross-border connections we discuss in this volume are by or with people (mostly women) who originate from the poor rural regions of the North and Northeast. These women retain an attachment through family and self-identification with 'the village', regardless of the radical individual transformations that have been part of their life-journeys. Even if they are not always aware of it, Western foreigners (mostly men) who move to Thailand for marriage, retirement, or lifestyle, have a relationship to the Thai countryside *by proxy*, when they engage with their wives and carers, who keep strong emotional and material bonds rooted in the village. Some men relocate to their partner's family's village defining themselves as

‘providers’ in a journey from ‘sex tourist to son-in-law’ (Thompson, Kitiarsa, and Smutkupt 2016), while others resist obligations towards extended families, and prefer to remain in tourist cities, while their partners remit back ‘home’ (see Kanchanachitra and Chuen-glertsiri 2020). Life-style retirees inventing their personal new age ‘paradise’ by appropriating ‘Thai-ness’ for their individual gratification (see Scuzzarello), have few qualms about living in gated-communities that are plonked willy-nilly in the middle of (and thereby transforming) rural village communities. And how much thought is given by foreigners to those people living at the end of their carer’s care-chain (see Sunanta), the children-left-behind, or ageing parents’ looking after them in the traditional family home? The remarkable resilience of Thai agrarian societies and their people’s aspirations, as well as their transformations, through Thailand’s rapid and deep economic development, is the contextual backcloth for understanding the gendered mobilities, ‘both-ways’ migration pathways, sometimes surprising and counterintuitive outcomes, discussed in this volume.

Notes

1. Studies of Thai-Western partnerships focus on experiences in Thailand, including Tosakul (2010), Plambech (2008), Sunanta and Angeles (2013), Angeles and Sunanta (2009), and Lapanun (2019), and on experiences in more developed countries, including Jongwilaiwan and Thompson (2013), Suksomboon (2009), and Chuenglertsiri (2019). Our general depiction of Thai-Western migrations and their gendering draws from this literature. It is difficult to give meaningful absolute figures on Thai-Western marriages based on official data sources, especially in Thailand, due the informal and undocumented nature of many of these relationships, as well as their mobility. However, there is consensus in the literature that the scale of growth has been exponential.
2. Among many, see especially the influential perspective advanced by (Constable 2003, 2005a, 2009).
3. Guarnizo (2003) coined ‘transnational living’ in an influential article arguing for a holist appreciation of the global economic impact of migrant transnational agency in contrast to the narrow viewpoint of ‘economic studies’, e.g. on financial remittances. However, his insights are limited. First, he focuses exclusively on ‘economic’ and refrains from discussing ‘social’ transnational flows of ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital (2003, 671, footnote 7). While economic structure and inequalities matter, as most research on transnational migration underlines, an actor’s decisions and behaviours are shaped by social, political, cultural and emotional considerations. Second, his argument remains highly general and abstract, so provides few clues of what ‘transnational living’ substantively means for people and places.
4. According to the World Bank, Thailand became designated an ‘upper-middle income’ developing country in 2011, after four decades of remarkable social and economic development that saw the country move from a ‘low-income’ to an ‘upper-middle-income’ in less than a generation (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand> accessed 5/11/2019).
5. For an advanced discussion on how European states categorise ‘marriage migrants’ in restrictive ways, see Moret, Andrikopoulos, and Dahinden (2019).
6. The Second National Development Tourism Plan (2017-2021). The Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, 2017. (<https://www.rolandberger.com/en/Publications/Taking-Thailand%27s-tourism-to-the-next-level.html> accessed 17/12/19).
7. Although the overall trend on tourist arrivals to increases year on year, the numbers per country fluctuate. The estimates given here are drawn from the official figures per annum on tourist arrivals by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.
8. People from Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong would be seen as equivalent to ‘Westerners’ in this sense as longstanding familiar, known and welcome tourists.

9. The Buddharama Temple is traditional with a large statue and is located in Fredrika, a locality situated in Åsele Municipality, Västerbotten County, Sweden, with 215 inhabitants. It features in the excellent Swedish documentary film 'Drottninglandet' 'The Land of Queens' (2015) by Elin and Lars Berge <http://www.elinberge.com/film> (accessed 17/12/19) about how marriages between men from remote rural Sweden and Thais have transformed social life in traditional Swedish dairy-farming communities and Thai villages.
10. Such official statistics are most likely underestimates as many Westerners reside by renewing temporary short-term visas and are mobile within Thailand moving backwards and forwards to expat areas.
11. On marriage migration as a common 'cultural script' for Thai women to address perceived financial need and poverty, see Jongwilaiwan and Thompson (2013, 370).
12. Roger Waldinger (2017, 5/6) makes a similar but more general point in his forceful critique of others' transnational perspectives, which he argues have focussed too much on the 'social' cross-border dimension of migration, while relatively omitting the 'political' impact of states' restrictive immigration and citizenship regimes that shape migration outcomes. For a recent attempt to unpack how states restrict and shape the life chances for domestic care workers, from a human geography 'im/mobility' perspective, see Bélanger and Silvey (2019).
13. The financial requirement for a retirement visa in Thailand is either a monthly income of at least 65,000 baht (about \$2,000) or a bank account balance of at least 800,000 baht (about \$25,000) – or some combination of income and money in the bank that equals 800,000 baht.
14. See Bryceson (2019) for a detailed exposition on transnational families, care and the state.

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