



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

Migrant Labour and Social Reproduction Between the Gulf
and India

verfasst von / submitted by

Marek Fenners

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Dr. Rolf Bauer

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

Migrant Labour and Social Reproduction Between the
Gulf and India

verfasst von / submitted by

Marek Fenners

angestrebter akademischer Grad / academic degree aspired

Master (MA)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna, 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt/ degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

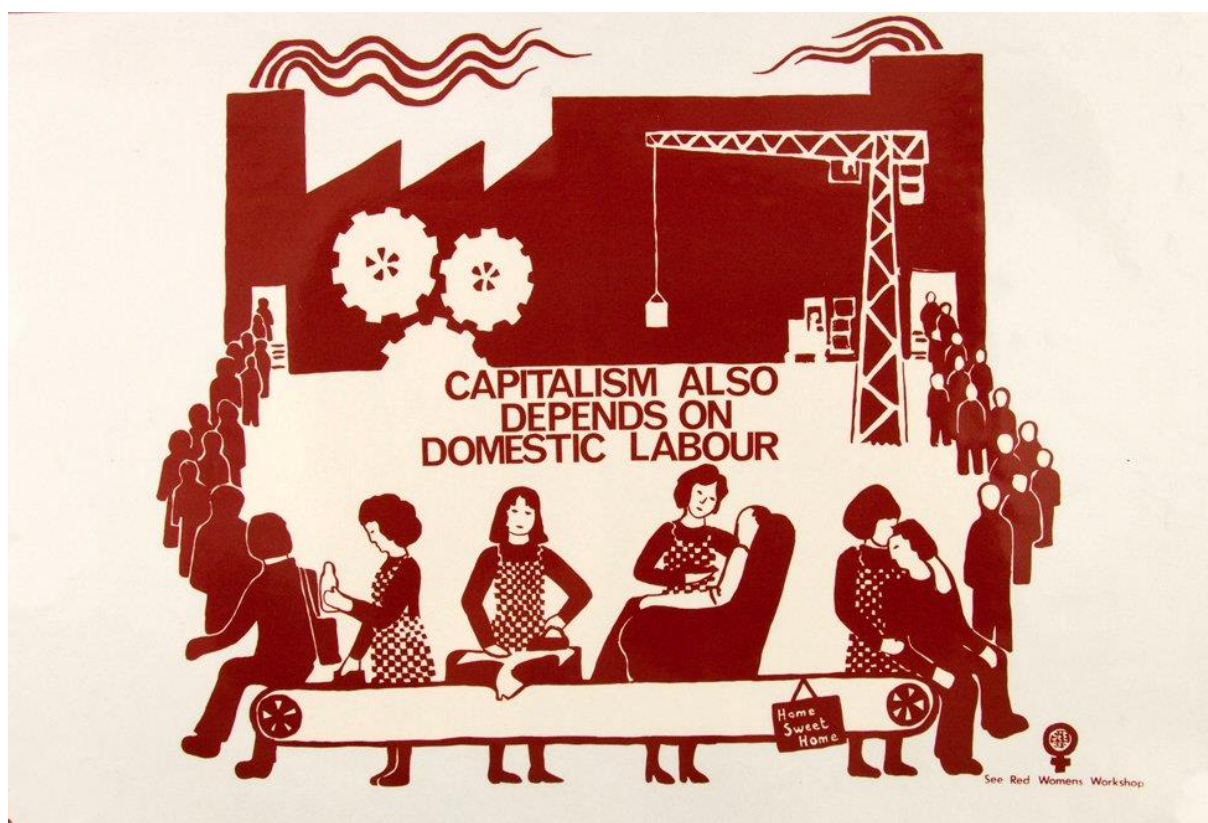
UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt/ degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von/Supervisor:

Dr. Rolf Bauer



Poster 'Capitalism Also Depends on Domestic Labour' by See Red Women's Workshop, London ca. 1975.

Abstract

International labour migration streams to the Gulf are one of the largest in the world and, as a result, the Gulf region has the highest proportion of non-citizens in any country or region in the world. This thesis contributes to recent literature researching the systemic role of this migrant labour regime to the political economy of the Gulf. Drawing on feminist political economy, this thesis researches the social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour, which mostly takes place at the home site in the countries of origin. Our analysis focuses specifically on India, the most important origin country in the Gulf's migrant population. This research is based in part on primary fieldwork conducted in Sultanpur district in eastern Uttar Pradesh, India. This fieldwork consists of twelve semi-structured interviews with Gulf migrants and their families. Our research shows that Gulf migrant labour is sustained by the labours of social reproduction performed by wives and kin at the home site. Social reproduction also contributes directly to the exploitation of migrant labour by allowing Gulf capital and state to spatially externalise the costs of social reproduction onto the families back home.

Die internationalen Arbeitsmigrationsströme in die Golfregion gehören zu den größten der Welt, und infolgedessen hat die Golfregion den höchsten Anteil an Nicht-Staatsbürgern in allen Ländern und Regionen der Welt. Diese Arbeit ist ein Beitrag zur neueren Literatur, die sich mit der systemischen Rolle dieses Arbeitsmigrationsregimes für die politische Ökonomie der Golfregion befasst. Auf der Grundlage der feministischen politischen Ökonomie wird in dieser Arbeit die soziale Reproduktion der Arbeitsmigranten in den Golfstaaten untersucht, die hauptsächlich in den Herkunftsländern stattfindet. Unsere Analyse konzentriert sich speziell auf Indien, das wichtigste Herkunftsland der Arbeitsmigranten in der Golfregion. Diese Untersuchung basiert zum Teil auf primären Feldstudien, die im Bezirk Sultanpur im

östlichen Uttar Pradesh, Indien, durchgeführt wurden. Diese Feldforschung besteht aus zwölf halbstrukturierten Interviews mit Migranten aus der Golfregion und ihren Familien. Unsere Forschung zeigt, dass die Arbeit der Golfmigranten durch die Arbeit der sozialen Reproduktion von Ehefrauen und Verwandten am Heimatort aufrechterhalten wird. Die soziale Reproduktion trägt auch direkt zur Ausbeutung der Arbeitsmigranten bei, indem sie es dem Kapital und dem Staat der Golfstaaten ermöglicht, die Kosten der sozialen Reproduktion räumlich auf die Familien in der Heimat zu externalisieren.

Acknowledgements

This master thesis was a long time in the making. It was written over a year and a half in three different countries. Although there were many difficult moments, I am very grateful that this thesis allowed me to deepen my interests in many topics and parts of the world that I have long been fascinated by. This thesis is a coming together of many different interests: labour, migration, social reproduction, space, colonial legacies, but also India and the Middle East.

I could have not completed this thesis without the help of many people. I want to thank Adam Hanieh, Andrea Wright, V.J. Varghese and Praveena Kodoth for kindly taking the time to provide feedback on my initial proposal and fieldwork plans. I am grateful to the University of Vienna for funding my fieldtrip. I would like to thank the Bhawan Nirman Karmakar Mazdoor Union (BNKMU) whose help was indispensable in successfully completing the fieldwork. The help of others was also crucial for the fieldwork: Chitra Joshi, Avinash Kumar, Praveena Kodoth, V.J. Varghese, Lokesh of the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) in Delhi, and Subhash Bhatnagar of the National Campaign Committee - Construction Workers (NCC-CL). I would like to thank the following people for transcribing and translating the interviews: Sagar Roy, Navya, Anushka Martolia, Ravikant Verma, Prabhakar Kumar, Pooja and Kushal. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Gulf migrants and their families for participating in my research.

I am deeply indebted to Ravikant Verma and Yash Meshram, who left Delhi with me to embark on this adventure together in UP. My greatest thanks go to my supervisor Rolf Bauer who was constantly ready with support and feedback and who inspired me with his fascinating and engaging classes on India and labour. I would like to express

my thanks for the continued support of my friends, fellow students, comrades, family and above-all my partner Elie.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Gulf, Migrant Labour, and Political Economy.....	11
1.1. Introducing the Gulf	11
1.2. Political Economy: Oil, Capitalism and Autocracy.....	13
1.3. Migrant Labour.....	19
1.3.1. Key Characteristics	19
1.3.2. Countries of Origin	25
1.3.3. Kafala and Methods of Control	28
1.3.4. History	30
1.4. Migrant Labour in Political Economy.....	33
Chapter 2: India, Gulf Migration, and Internal Migration.....	38
2.1. India-Gulf Migration.....	39
2.1.1. General Out-Migration From India	39
2.1.2. Characteristics and Evolution Over the Last Decades.....	42
2.1.3. Destination Countries.....	47
2.2. Geography of Gulf Migration.....	50
2.2.1. The Shift from South India to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar	50
2.2.2. Clustering of Source Areas within States	54
2.2.3. Gulf Migration as an Extension of Internal Migration.....	58
Chapter 3: Between India and the Gulf: The Social Reproduction of Gulf Migrant Labour.....	63
3.1. Fieldwork Methods	64
3.1.1. Outline.....	64
3.1.2. Methodology	72
3.1.3. Research Participants	78
3.2. Gulf Migration.....	79
3.2.1. Motivations.....	79
3.2.2. Working and Living Conditions	81

3.2.3. Pathways to a Job.....	84
3.3. Internal Migration and Gulf Migration	87
3.4. Migrant Families Back Home in India.....	87
3.5. Social Reproduction of Gulf Migrant Labour	91
3.5.1. Social Reproduction in the Global South	91
3.5.2. Labours of Social Reproduction of Gulf Migrant Labour.....	93
3.5.3. Social Reproduction at Home and the Exploitation of Migrant Labour in the Gulf	101
Conclusion	103
List of References	106
Appendix A. Tables on Gulf migration	120
Appendix B. Interview Guide.....	126

Introduction

Based on the exploitation of petroleum and natural gas, the countries of the Gulf – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar – experienced massive economic growth and drastic structural societal changes. Since the Second World War, the Gulf has been transformed from being on the margins to a major hub of global capitalism and a central player in world politics. This spectacular transformation is underpinned by a massive and continuous deployment of migrant labour from other parts of the world.

The Gulf has the highest proportion of non-citizens in any country or region in the world. Non-citizens constitute a substantial 52 percent of the total population of 58 million. In the labour force, the share of migrant workers for Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman ranges from 76 to 85 percent of the total employed population. Meanwhile, in Qatar and the UAE, non-citizens make up an even larger share of 93 to 95 percent of the workforce. (Hanieh, 2021b)

When only considering migration flows between Global South countries, the Gulf makes up the largest destination for migration. The India – UAE and India – Saudi Arabia migration corridors are respectively the third and ninth largest globally. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are ranked as the second- and third-largest sources of remittances in the world, after the US. (Hanieh, 2021b; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021)

The overwhelming majority of migrant labourers is active in the private sector, while the public sector is reserved for the small civilian population. Migrant labour in the Gulf does not originate from a single country, but workers come mainly from different Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

It is clear that migrant labour is extremely important to Gulf capitalism. This is however not reflected in the standard accounts of the Gulf's political economy, in which labour is often omitted or marginalized (Hanieh, 2021b; Khalaf et al., 2015). Meanwhile, the literature on migration often disconnects the issue of migrant labour from the wider political economy. In the preface to Khalaf et al. (2015) the editors write the following: "This literature typically highlights sociological and anthropological themes (...) it often suffers from being overly descriptive and narrow in focus – failing to adequately situate the question of labour migration within the broader political, economic and social developments in the Gulf" (p. ix). Hanieh (2021b) adds the following: "Much of the discussion around migration to the Gulf emphasizes human rights abuses and mistreatment of migrants. It locates the reasons for these in poor policy making, lack of awareness of international norms, actions of unregulated labour recruitment agencies, or weak legislative oversight. This discussion misses the essential *systemic* role that this labour structure plays in the reproduction of Gulf capitalism" (p. 118).

This absence of the interconnection between the issue of migrant labour and the wider political economy has recently driven a number of scholars to explore this "systemic role" of migrant labour – most notably the work by Adam Hanieh and the volume *Transit States* (Khalaf et al., 2015). This thesis explicitly wants to add on to this literature by investigating the systemic role of migrant labour in Gulf capitalism. This central objective will be further defined and nuanced after the following discussion of the theoretical framework that will be employed throughout this thesis. This framework consists of three points.

Firstly, following Hanieh (2015), we conceptualize Gulf migration as a process of spatialized class formation. In his theoretical contribution to the volume *Transit States*, Hanieh analyses the dominant theoretical frameworks within the literature on the political economy of Gulf migration and argues that they suffer from methodological

nationalism, i.e. “a privileging of the national space as the vantage point from which to interpret social phenomena” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 62) or a “focus upon individual nation-states as self-contained, enclosed sets of social relations, separate from the wider region and world market” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 58). Citing Wimmer & Schiller (2003), Hanieh (2015) states that methodological nationalism has led to “a territorialization of the social science imaginary and the reduction of the analytical focus to the boundaries of the nation-state. The social sciences have become obsessed with describing processes within nation-state boundaries as those outside, and have correspondingly lost sight of the connection between such nationally-defined territories” (Wimmer & Schiller, 2003, p. 307). Hanieh (2015) continues: “The problem with methodological nationalism is that social relations are not neatly bounded within national borders – flows of capital and labour, and the various policy frameworks that mediate them, act to tie different spaces to one another” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 62).

Drawing on critical geography (especially the work of Doreen Massey), Hanieh (2015) presents an alternative framework, in which he conceptualizes Gulf migration as “a process of class formation that is necessarily spatialised” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 66). He argues that: “moving beyond methodological nationalism means taking seriously the fact that class relations in the Gulf extend across the borders of the Gulf nation-state” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 66). Employing a term coined by Massey (1984), the Gulf’s class formation is understood as a ‘spatial structure’ “that involves the emergence of social relations intertwined across different geographical spaces” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 66).

In general, however, migration, as pointed out by Hanieh in a more recent text (Hanieh, 2022, p. 38), is often not understood in class-terms and, as a result, migrants are often not included within political-economy conceptualizations of the working class. Due to a persistent, much-prevailing methodological nationalism within political economy scholarship, the working class tends to be framed through the lens of citizenship, national identity, and state borders. In contrast, Hanieh (2022) argues that

“class is not simply an abstract category describing a certain relationship to the reproduction of capital and surplus value within national spaces; at a concrete level, it comes into being through the interlinking of geographical spaces and is continually forged through the flows (and displacement) of human beings across borders” (p. 38). In the case of the Gulf region with its heavy reliance on migrant labour, the working class that is formed and continuously reproduced, is spatially structured like no other.

This approach brings into view more explicitly the position of the sending countries in addition to the Gulf region. This brings us to the second theoretical point. This spatial understanding of class, as Hanieh (2015, p. 67; 2022, p. 40) argues, forces us to think of the Gulf’s working class as not only consisting of the actual migrant workers residing within the borders of the Gulf states, but also of the millions of people from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia who constitute a potential pool of migrant labour that can be drawn upon by capital when needed. Hanieh (2022) puts it succinctly: “just because these workers happen to exist outside the borders of where they may be seeking work, makes them no less essential to the constitution of the category of class” (p. 40). These potential migrant workers within the countries of origin form a ‘reserve army of labour’ that acts to further depress the wage levels that migrant workers receive in the Gulf itself. Moreover, the institution of citizenship, consisting of a “highly complex system of border controls, work visas and sponsor systems” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 67), acts to mediate this spatial structuring of class. What is clearly evident from this spatial class approach is that understanding Gulf migrant labour requires us to look into the labour structures of the origin countries and how they interact with the labour structure of the Gulf states. This is one of the aims of this thesis, that looks specifically into India, the most important sending country in terms of absolute numbers.

However, including potential workers in the sending countries in our analysis of Gulf capitalism and migrant labour is not sufficient. We contend that it is crucial to include another section of the population of the sending countries, that is the wives and family members of migrant workers who stay in their home countries and perform all kinds of domestic and care work that enable the migrant workers to go and work in the Gulf. This work can be understood as “social reproductive labour”, that sustains and reproduces the migrant labour force in the Gulf.

For this purpose, we employ the concept of ‘social reproduction’ from Marxist feminist political economy. Social reproduction refers to the daily and intergenerational reproduction of productive labour. Social reproduction is broader than only biological reproduction (or the production of children), but also includes care, cooking, cleaning, laundry, child care, education, et cetera. A wide variety of approaches and definitions exist within studies and theorizations of social reproduction. In this study, we focus specifically on the social reproduction of (‘productive’) labour in capitalist commodity production. This social reproduction largely consists of labour performed by women and is often unwaged, devalued, naturalized and invisibilized.

A good way of understanding the relevancy of social reproduction to capital accumulation is provided by Vertommen (2021, pp. 193-195). Within his analysis of the capitalist mode of production, Marx centres the role of labour. Marx’s *Capital* was meant as a critique of bourgeois political economy “that viewed market-based exchange between buyers and sellers of commodities as the central motor of capitalist value creation” (Vertommen, 2021, p. 193). Instead, Marx shifts the locus of the analysis from market-based exchange to production:

“Let us therefore, in company with the owner of money and the owner of labour power, leave this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in full view of everyone, and follow them into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there hangs the notice ‘No admittance except on business’. Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. The secret of profit-making must at last be laid bare” (Marx, 2013, pp. 118-119, as cited in Vertommen, 2021, p. 193).

While Marx shifted focus from the sphere of exchange to the ‘hidden abode’ of production, he remains largely silent on the crucial question of how the special commodity labour power itself is produced (Mezzadri, 2019, p. 36; Conroy, 2023, p. 1093). Since the 1970s, autonomist and Marxist feminists have picked up this question. These scholars and activists have argued that the production and reproduction of the labour power requires all kinds of “nurturing, caring, emotional, reproductive labour” (Vertommen, 2021, p. 194). This labour is moreover mostly performed in unwaged and uncommodified capacity by women at home or in the community. Vertommen (2021, p. 194) writes that “these feminists have pushed the analysis of capitalist modes of production from the factory to the kitchen and the bedrooms, revealing a whole realm of gendered exploitation and oppression that remained invisible in Marx(ism): domestic work, mothering, sex and reproduction”. Recently, this analysis has enjoyed a revival as ‘social reproduction theory’ (see especially, Bhattacharya, 2017b).¹

¹ In recent year, a debate is taking place on the question whether or not reproductive labour generates value. Recent social reproduction analyses such as Bhattacharya (2017b) have theorised social reproduction as composed of circuits lying outside processes of value generation. Social reproduction is conceived as not producing value, but it does enable its creation. Within many such analyses, social reproduction is understood not to produce surplus value, but it does produce use value. In line with early social reproduction analyses of the 1970s and 1980s, Mezzadri (2019, 2021a) however argues that social reproduction should be seen as central to value generation. She outlines three channels in which social reproductive realms and labour directly contribute to value generation. Also see Varela (2021) on this debate.

Coinciding with the general renewed interest in social reproduction in the last decades, there is also a rising engagement with the concept in migration studies (Farris, 2015); see among others: Kofman & Raghuram, 2015; Ferguson & McNally, 2014; Bohrer, 2022; Farris, 2017). One prominent focus in this literature are international migrants, often women, who migrate to perform commodified socially reproductive labour in their countries of destination (often the Global North) such as domestic work, child care or elder care (for example, nurses, nannies, maids, cleaners) (Bohrer, 2022, p. 84; Shah & Lerche, 2020, p. 721). In these studies, migrant labour figures as a contribution to the ‘social reproduction’ of ‘people’ in the countries of destination. Much rarer are studies regarding social reproduction and migration that focus on the social reproduction of migrant labour itself.²

An important exception to this is Shah and Lerche’s article ‘Migration and the invisible economies of care’ (Shah & Lerche, 2020), which researches the social reproduction (or ‘invisible economies of care’) that sustain Adivasi and Dalit workers who migrate seasonally within India for work.³ In this article, they argue that in order to understand the exploitation of migrant labour we need to “place centre-stage the analysis of invisible economies of care which take place across spatiotemporally divided households, both in the place of migration and in the home regions” (Shah & Lerche, 2020, p. 719). The article therefore also forms one of the key inspiration sources behind this study.

In the very limited research on Gulf migration streams invoking social reproduction, the observation made above also seems to apply. The domestic sector is a prominent sector of employment for, mostly female, migrant workers within the Gulf

² Related to this are comments by Shah & Lerche (2020): “Nevertheless, analytically and spatially, this research [on migrant workers performing socially reproductive labour in their countries of destination] predominantly focuses on the place of destination for international migrants. Consideration of the role of production and reproduction in the home region at the same time is rare, as pointed out by Gidwani and Ramamurthy (2018)” (p. 727).

³ In this regard, see also Mezzadri (2021a).

countries.⁴ Investigations of the social reproduction of migrant labour itself in Gulf migration streams are limited to a few comments in a handful of texts. For instance, Fernandez (2020, p. 139-141) writes about concerns related to the social reproduction of Ethiopian women migrating to work in the domestic sector of the Middle East. Another example is Hamadah (2022, p. 184), which, while it focuses mainly on the social reproduction of *khaleeji* (Gulf) society, does as well have some comments about the social reproduction of migrant labour. In this, he writes that social reproduction is essentially split between the country of employment and the country of origin. Therefore, Gulf societies and employers are largely exempt from social reproduction related costs such as for the intergenerational social reproduction (biological reproduction) and for the retirement of migrant workers.

Drawing on the feminist political economy tradition of social reproduction, we argue in this thesis that for a full understanding of Gulf capitalism and migrant labour we need to include the women and kin at home in the countries of origin performing socially reproductive labour. One of the central aims of the thesis is to investigate this social reproduction. Moving beyond the hidden abode of production in Gulf capitalism means moving our focus to the countries of origin.

This brings us to our final phrasing of our central research question. Our central research question is as follows: How is Gulf migrant labour socially reproduced by wives and kin staying at the home site in the sending countries?

This topic is analysed using mostly secondary research, including scientific literature, reports and surveys by governments, NGOs, the ILO, and other organisations. This is supplemented by a small amount of primary research. For this purpose, two

⁴ For studies on the topic of domestic work in the Gulf, see especially: Kodoth (2020), Kodoth & Vargese (2012), and other studies by Praveena Kodoth.

fellow students and I departed for five days in December 2022 to the district of Sultanpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh in North India. Together with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh is the Indian state where most Gulf migrants come from. Research on Gulf migration from these parts of India remains limited however.⁵ This fieldwork consisted of twelve interviews of roughly thirty minutes with recent Gulf migrants and their family members.

Before the results of this fieldwork are discussed in chapter three, there are two chapters providing a broader analysis of Gulf migrant labour from the perspectives of the Gulf and the sending countries. The first chapter provides the insights of the recent critical political economic literature on how Gulf migrant labour is to be situated within the Gulf's political economy. In this same chapter, the political and economic conditions of the Gulf region will be discussed, as well as the key characteristics and history of the migrant labour regime. In the second chapter, we investigate the Gulf migrant labour regime from the perspective of the sending countries. We specifically focus on India. In the first section, the main characteristics of Gulf-India migration, its evolution over time and the shifting fortunes of individual Gulf destination countries are described. In the second section, we delve into the sub-national geography of Gulf migration. We connect Gulf migration from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to decades-old internal migration streams from these areas to other parts of India. In the third and last chapter, we arrive at the issue of social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour. Sections 3.2. until 3.4. also discuss issues such as the motivations behind Gulf migration, the working and living conditions in the Gulf, how migrants found a job in the Gulf, Gulf migrants' prior experiences with migrating inside of India and remittances and the evolution of the economic situation of the family back home. In

⁵ Existing empirical studies on Gulf migration from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are of varying quality. They include: Ahmad (2017, 2018, 2019), Ahmad (2023), Ali et al. (2017), Buckley et al. (2023), Chambers (2018), Fazli & Faridi (2020), Kumar (2020), Majumder & Taukeer (2019), Mustaqeem (2020), Raj & Rahman (2023), Sasikumar (2019), Taukeer (2020, 2021, 2023), Kumar (2018), Santhya et al. (2022), Singh (2018), and Wright (2021).

the last section, by drawing on the fieldwork and social reproduction literature from a Global South perspective, we find that labour performed by wives and kin is crucial to the social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour and by extension the broader political economy of the Gulf.

Chapter 1: The Gulf, Migrant Labour, and Political Economy

In this first chapter, the following question stands central: how is migrant labour to be understood in relation to the broader political economy of the Gulf. By trying to answer this question, I also provide the broad contours of the topic of this thesis; this chapter is therefore largely contextual. The most important characteristics of the Gulf migrant labour regime are outlined, as well as its historical genesis is discussed. However, first, the crucial political and economic conditions of the Gulf region, or the (inter)actions of state and capital, are described. In the last section of this chapter, we return to the central question.

1.1. Introducing the Gulf

In table 1, the population, the GDP and GDP per capita of the six Gulf countries are provided. Saudi Arabia has by far the largest population – 36 million. The UAE follows with 9.4 million inhabitants. The other Gulf states have smaller populations ranging between 1.5 and 4.6 million people. Saudi Arabia and the UAE also have the largest economies with a GDP of 1,108 and 508 billion US\$ respectively. In terms of GDP per capita, Qatar and the UAE top the list with respectively 88 and 53.8 thousand – making them 3rd and 5th in the world. The other Gulf states range between 25.1 and 43.2 thousand – placing them between 43rd and 31st positions globally.

Table 1*Population, GDP, and GDP per capita of the Gulf countries in 2022*

Countries	Population (in millions)	GDP (current US\$, billions)	GDP per capita (current US\$, thousands)
Bahrain	1.5	44	30.2
Kuwait	4.3	185	43.2
Oman	4.6	115	25.1
Qatar	2.7	237	88
Saudi Arabia	36.4	1,108	30.4
UAE	9.4	508	53.8
Total	58.9	2,197	

Note. Data compiled from The World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/>).

There is an important episode of British imperialism in the history of the Gulf. From the end of the nineteenth century, before the advent of the oil industry, the Gulf region was firmly embedded in the British empire (with the exception of the areas known as Najd and Hijaz – modern day Saudi Arabia). Hanieh (2011) writes that British colonialism in the Gulf was “subordinate to a broader colonial framework centered upon enduring control over India” (p. 5). Britain’s major concern in the region was the continued profitable engagement with pearling and other trade, and the exclusion of other colonial and regional powers from the region. The British also encouraged the concentration of power within the hands of individual rulers, who were attached to a wider ruling family. (Hanieh, 2011, pp. 5-9)

Especially in the Trucial States (the modern-day UAE) and Oman, British colonial involvement was of great significance. In comparison, the Najd and Hijaz areas had a much greater degree of independence. While in the nineteenth century, the status of

these territories alternated between a somewhat loose Ottoman suzerainty and the claims of rival tribes originating from within the Najd interior, in 1932 the Al-Saud family eventually gained control over the whole territory. Due to a slow decline in British hegemony from 1930 to 1970, the sheikhdoms along the Gulf coast were able to negotiate an independent status with the British. Firstly, in 1951, Oman's independence was recognized. Thereafter, Kuwait followed in 1961 and the remaining Gulf states – Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States – in 1971. (Hanieh, 2011, pp. 5-9, 57)

1.2. Political Economy: Oil, Capitalism and Autocracy

From the first decades after World War II, the Gulf underwent a powerful and dramatic transformation: “from an economy based largely on pearling, entrepot trade, and some agriculture, into a core zone of the global political economy” (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 357). This transformation is based on the region's abundant supplies of oil and gas and is be situated in the post-war global energy shift from coal to hydrocarbons. However, enormous amounts of capital are also accumulated within other economic sectors and activities, and control of the hydrocarbon sector is surely no longer the sole basis of the autocratic, political power of the ruling families. Nevertheless, the discovery of oil and gas in the Gulf have put the GCC states into the limelight of Middle Eastern and global politics, especially in its role as a key partner in US imperialism.

Hanieh (2021a, pp. 356-357) writes that, between the first decades of the twentieth century and after the Second World War, oil and gas began to replace coal as the principal fuels underpinning industry, manufacturing, transport, and war. Hydrocarbons also became the basis of dynamic new chemical industries producing synthetic and organic commodities – “petro-chemicals” – such as: plastics, detergents, fertilizers, synthetic fibres, etc. While initially most hydrocarbons were sourced from the

United States and Europe, by the mid-1960s the world's principal supplies of cheap and accessible oil and gas were located in the Middle East, more precisely the GCC states but also Iran and Iraq. By the mid-1970s, the Middle East's oil production grew to the combined total of Europe and North America's. Today, the region retains its central position in the world energy markets and has more than half of proven oil reserves and nearly one-third of oil production, and 47 percent of proven gas reserves. (Hanieh, 2021a, pp. 356-357)

Politically, the GCC states are dominated by hereditary ruling families, who can be traced back to the pre-oil period. Nevertheless, competition between different royal lineages have led to numerous coups and widespread factional intrigues. Elected legislatures exist only in Bahrain and Kuwait. Voting rights are however restricted to a small portion of the population and the monarchs have the ability to dissolve parliament. (Hanieh, 2018, pp. 18-21)

Given the Gulf's position as the most important source of oil and gas globally, Hanieh (2021a, p. 357) argues that "political domination of the Gulf and the wider Middle East was an essential element to how the postwar international states system developed" and that "US-dominated global capitalism was to a great extent premised on Western control of the region." In his earlier monograph (Hanieh, 2018, p. 23), Hanieh adds that the Gulf monarchies have been and continue to be a principal partner in American ambitions in the Middle East and elsewhere. Illustrative, is the fact that in the Middle East the GCC is one of the key locations where US military complexes and personnel are located. Hanieh (2018) concludes that:

"The GCC remains one of the three central poles on which US policy in the Middle East has historically rested (the others being Israel and a range of Arab client states) - this idiosyncratic position within the architecture of US power gives the bloc, as a whole, a character distinct from other neighboring states in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula (such as Iraq, Iran, or Yemen)"(p. 23).

This close cooperation between the GCC states and the United States has reinforced the political position of the Gulf's ruling families (Hanieh, 2018, p. 23). The autocratic rule of the monarchies is, however, not only dependent on political coercion, but, as Hanieh (2021b, p. 111) argues, as well on the close entanglement between state and capital. To go further into this, we look firstly into the prominent economic activities which characterize the Gulf's position as a core zone of the capitalist world system. As noted before, the Gulf's economy is for a large part defined by the extraction and production of oil and gas. Hanieh (2018, p. 67) writes that since the nationalization of oil and gas resources in the 1970s, large state-owned oil companies – like, for example, Saudi Aramco from Saudi Arabia – have held absolute dominance in the upstream sector of crude exploration and extraction. As a result, private corporations have been largely excluded of participation, especially in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait where the national oil companies hold a monopoly position. In the other GCC states, however, foreign oil and gas firms have some presence.

Besides upstream hydrocarbon production, other economic activities are crucial. In order to understand Gulf capitalism, Hanieh (2021b, p. 111) identifies three “sites of capital accumulation” in the Gulf: 1) industry, manufacturing, and transport; 2) the urban built environment; and 3) financial markets. In manufacturing, four commodities especially stand out: aluminium, steel, cement, and petrochemicals – all depending on primary raw materials produced in the hydrocarbon sector (namely, chemical feedstocks and cheap energy). In addition to these hydrocarbon-related commodities, another important industrial activity is the agro-industry (producing, for example, agro-commodities and processed food items).

Transport and logistics are vital to capital accumulation in the Gulf. The region, particularly the emirate of Dubai, is of central importance for the circulation of goods and people throughout the global economy, both through air as well as the sea. Other Gulf states are in the process of developing maritime and airport capacities. Jebel Ali

Port in Dubai is the fourth-largest container port in the world and its operator, DP World (owned by the Dubaite government), is the third-largest container terminal operator globally. Hence, the port forms a critical transshipment hub between the Middle East and Africa and between the East and the West. Concerning the aviation sector, the busiest airport globally is located in the Gulf, Dubai International Airport, and the Gulf has some of the world's major airlines (for example, Dubai-based Emirates Airlines and Qatar Airways). Besides this transport infrastructure, we note the role of several large Gulf logistics firms in goods transportation throughout the Gulf and neighbouring regions. (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 112)

The second major site of accumulation, Hanieh (2021b, p. 112) identified, is the urban built environment. Especially in recent years, the urban built environment has been foundational for capitalist development in the Gulf. The Gulf's urban landscapes are dominated by ever new, ever taller, and ever more extravagant malls, towers, and residential blocks. These projects provide a constant stream of construction work.

In addition, the ever-growing built environment in Gulf cities, of course, also provides an important and ever-growing stimulus to retail and other commercial activities (also an important locale of migrant employment). Hanieh (2021b, p. 112) points in this respect to the import and distribution of foreign commodities, which are assumed to be essential to the reproduction of urban social life but are also an essential element in Gulf capital accumulation processes. A state-mediated agency and franchise system organizes this import trade by providing exclusive licensing rights – which in some cases even extend to neighbouring countries. Hanieh (2021b, p. 112) gives the example of the Carrefour brand that has given exclusive rights to the UAE conglomerate Majid Al-Futtaim across the Middle East and Central Asia.

Lastly, financial markets and their related institutions as a site of capital accumulation “play a critical part in shifting capital surpluses within and between different corporate groups and economic activities” (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 113). By

providing companies with surplus capital, financial markets have been essential for industry and the built environment. While the financial market is predominantly characterized by domestically owned banks, new financial institutions such as Islamic finance, private equity companies, and other types of asset management firms have increased in prominence. These banks and other financial institutions are mixed public-private. (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 113)

Hanieh (2021b, p. 114) writes that all these sites of accumulation are dominated by a small number of large, diversified conglomerates. These are characteristically structured as holding companies, “with a complex network of subsidiaries and interlocking ownership structures that simultaneously span industrial and manufacturing activities, real estate, commerce, retail, finance, and so forth” (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 114). Members of the ruling families or influential families (often from the merchant class) usually control these conglomerates. Although in some sectors state-owned firms may play a dominant role, privately held conglomerates are often still present. They are usually represented on the boards of these state-owned firms or are involved in joint ventures or subsidiary activities down the value chain. In all cases, the growth of these conglomerates has been crucially supported by state investment and other forms of state support. (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 114)

Moreover, Hanieh (2021b, pp. 115-116) notes that since the 2000s these conglomerates have expanded internationally, within the GCC as well as in the wider Middle East. Within the Gulf region, this process is visible in increasing cross-border or pan-Gulf investments and the increasing involvement within share-ownership and boards of directors by firms from different Gulf states. According to Hanieh (2021b, p. 115), circuits of capital unfold more and more at a pan-GCC scale. Nevertheless, the internationalization of Gulf capital is “a sharply hierarchical process largely dominated by a Saudi-UAE axis” (Hanieh, 2021b, pp. 115-116).

In the wider Middle East, neoliberalization (structural adjustment packages and subsequent investment liberalization and privatization) since the 1980s laid the basis for regional expansion of Gulf capital. As a result, key economic sectors of other Arab countries were increasingly subsumed by Gulf capital flows, as well as the class structures became increasingly entangled by Gulf capital groups – especially in banking and finance. As a result, profits from outside the Gulf, both in the Middle East and traditional Western markets, are of considerable importance to many of the largest GCC conglomerates. (Hanieh, 2021b, pp. 115-116)

This process of capital internationalization within the Gulf region as well as the wider Middle East illustrates the powerful capital accumulation dynamic in Gulf society that has been described throughout these last pages. The question of the specific mechanisms of capital accumulation in the Gulf requires us to discuss the role of (migrant) labour within Gulf capitalism – and it is to this discussion we turn in the last section. First, however, the characteristics of the migrant labour regime, including its historical genesis, is discussed.

1.3. Migrant Labour

In this subchapter, I aim to describe the labour structure of the Gulf states and the place of migrant workers within. As way of introduction, in the first two sections, statistical data is presented on key characteristics such as numerical significance, sectorial distribution, gender distribution, countries of origin, etc. Thereafter, the globally unique work visa system known as *kafala* is discussed. In this same section, a brief description of other labour control methods is also provided. Finally, I look for the historical origins of the labour migration flows to the Gulf region – highlighting among other things important legacies of the British colonial era.

1.3.1. Key Characteristics ⁶

The significance of the migrant population in both the overall population and labour force of the Gulf region is enormous and globally unique. The numbers are shown in table 2. Roughly half of the Gulf's total population is non-citizen – or 30,1 million people. Qatar and the UAE are the countries with the highest percentages of non-citizens (88 and 87 percent), while Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain range between 41 and 70 percent. Saudi Arabia, with its significantly larger total population, has the lowest proportion of foreigners at 39 percent. If one looks at the labour force, the presence of non-citizens is even higher. All Gulf states range between 70 and 95 percent. The UAE and Qatar rank on the topic again at 95 and 93 percent.

⁶ Most of the data in this section is based on the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) programme supported by the Gulf Research Centre, a privately funded, non-partisan think tank. Abbreviated from here on out as GLMM.

These striking numbers reveal that the Gulf region has the largest proportion of migrant workers compared to any other country or region in the world (Hanieh, 2021, pp. 116-117). Cammett et al. (2015) writes that this has “no parallel in modern economic history” (p. 337). In terms of absolute numbers, the Gulf region is the third most important region of destination in the world (behind the US and the European Union) and the most important region of destination in the Global South (Hanieh, 2021b, pp. 116-117; De Bel-Air, 2018, pp. 7-8).⁷

⁷ Since the 1990s, all GCC states have started nationalization or “Gulfization” programmes. They became especially aggressive since the early 2010s, especially in Saudi Arabia. Trying to tackle significant (youth) unemployment facing the citizen population in the Gulf, these programmes aim to reduce the proportion of migrant workers and to increase citizen employment in the private sector by setting quotas. An increasing number of professions are also barred to non-citizens. Hanieh (2021b, p. 120) writes that these policies have largely not succeeded, because citizens do not want to accept the low wages and bad working conditions of the private sector. The data provided here confirm the inefficacy of these programmes. (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 120; De Bel-Air, 2018, p. 12)

Table 2

Total population and total employed population and the share of non-citizens in 2020

Countries	Total population (in thousands)	% non-citizens in total population	Total employed population (in thousands)	% non-citizens in employed population
Bahrain	1,472	51.6	688	77.8
Kuwait	4,817	70.1	2,662	84.7
Oman	4,578	40.6	1,860	76.8
Qatar	2,834	88.2 ^a	2,129	94.8
Saudi Arabia	35,013	38.8	13,319	75.6
UAE	9,282	86.9 ^a	3,317 ^b	92.9 ^b
Total	57,996	52.0 ^a		

Note. Data compiled from GLMM (<https://gulfmigration.grc.net/>). Totals not provided for labour force because the UAE data are from 2009.

^a Percentage is calculated on the basis of population estimates by GLMM, based on data published by National Statistical Institutes

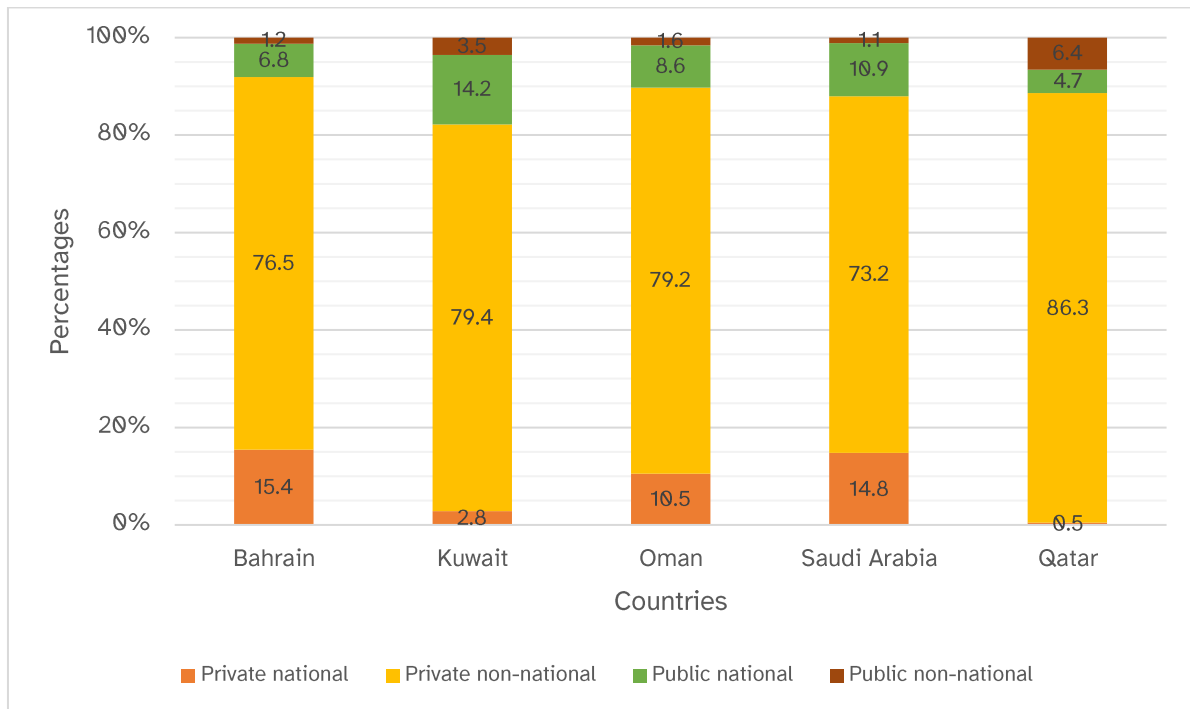
^b Data is from 2009, the latest available data on the GLMM website.

Migrant employment is not evenly distributed (figure 1); it is mostly concentrated in the private sector. In contrast, the small public sector is predominantly occupied by citizens. Citizens working in the public sector comprise on average 9 percent of the total employed population, while non-citizens in the public sector only average 2.7 percent. The dominance of migrant workers within the private sector is even bigger than figure 1 shows. AlShehabi (2015) writes that:

“Even in countries where at first glance there might appear to be a sizeable amount of locals in the private sector (Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia), this is actually misleading, as the overwhelming majority of citizen classified as working in the private sector are in reality employed in state-owned or mixed enterprises, such as the national oil or airline companies” (p. 33).

Figure 1

Employed population by nationality and sector of employment (private/public) in mid-2022



Note. Data compiled from GLMM (<https://gulfmigration.grc.net/>). No data was available for the UAE. The data for Qatar also contained the sectors ‘mixed,’ ‘diplomatic/international/regional’ and ‘non-profit.’ Because of their negligible size, these sectors were left out of this figure.

Moving on to gender and family-related characteristics, it is striking that the overwhelming majority of the migrant population is male. As a consequence, the overall gender distribution of the Gulf societies leans heavily towards male. In total, GLMM estimates that 65.3 percent of the total population of the GCC is male. In the UAE and Qatar, this even reaches to 78 and 80 percent.

The Gulf migrant population is mostly single, male, and temporary. However, the handful of studies that exist on the duration of stay and the demography of the migrant population do indicate that the long-term settlement of migrants and their families is not a negligible phenomenon (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 30; Baldwin-Edwards, 2011, pp. 28-33). A study about the UAE in 2005, for example, shows that 28.5 percent of the migrant population resided in the country for more than ten years (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011, p. 32). Moreover, Baldwin-Edwards (2011, p. 32) states that it is likely that these long-term migrants mainly come from nearby Arab countries and that family settlement from South and Southeast Asia is rather a more recent occurrence.

After having discerned that migrant workers are predominantly employed in the private sector, more detailed information on economic sectors will be now considered. Looking at data of 2008-9 in Baldwin-Edwards (2011, p. 23)⁸, migrant workers dominate most economic sectors. In addition to public administration, the only sectors with a migrant presence under 50 percent are agriculture and financial services in Bahrain (46.5 and 41 percent) and the utilities sector (electricity, gas, and water) and mining and quarrying in Kuwait (17 percent). Saudi Arabia is somewhat an outlier with several sectors under 50 percent. However, this should be somewhat nuanced, because the

⁸ Baldwin-Edwards (2011) is the only information on economic sectors that we have found in the literature. Baldwin-Edwards (2011) writes that obtaining detailed data on the employment of citizens and non-citizens has been difficult. Furthermore, the data he was able to obtain for the years 2008-2009 is riddled with major deficits, manipulations, and inconsistencies. This data should therefore be used with caution.

migrant labour force has increased significantly from 2008-9 until today – from 53.1 to 75.6 percent of the total employed population in 2020.

In absolute numbers, the most important sectors for migrant employment in the Gulf are the domestic, construction and wholesale and retail sectors. In Bahrain, the manufacturing sector is also of significant importance with the sector comprising 17.2 percent of total employment and its labour force consisting of 75.1 percent migrant workers.

The comparably small proportion of female migrant workers is mostly situated in only a few sectors and predominantly in the domestic sector. Male employment spans the entire range of economic sectors. (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011, p. 35) Regarding the domestic sector it is interesting to note that statistics indicate that absolutely zero citizens (male or female) are working in the sector (Irudaya Rajan, 2018).

Before moving on to the countries of origin of khaleeji migrant workers, let us first look into a few further characteristics of migrant employment. The migrant labour force in the private sector is characterized by relatively low levels of education and schooling and extremely low levels of productivity by international standards. (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 34)

The working and living conditions of migrant workers are characterised by low wages, hazardous, bad working conditions, poor housing quality, and extremely long working hours (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 334). The private sector is unregulated and minimum wages do not exist there. Wage differences between citizen and non-citizen labour are enormous. (Hanieh, 2015, p. 66) For example, according to Cammett et al. (2015, p. 339), wages in the public sector compared to those in the private sector are two to four times as much in Saudi Arabia (four times as much for the lowest skills) and about two times as much in Bahrain. In Qatar, AlShehabi (2015, p. 34) writes, the average 2009 monthly wages in the private sector were less than half of that in the public sector.

When we include non-wage benefits (health, education, and housing), these differences are even greater. In the domestic sector and some other sectors, wages are even tied to the nationality of the migrant worker. (Hanieh, 2015, p. 66; Cammett et al., 2015, p. 339)

Not all migrant labour is employed in large conglomerates. According to AlShehabi (2015, p. 35), there is a sizeable proportion of migrant workers employed in small and medium-sized enterprises. Statistics indicate that domestic work and small- and medium-sized enterprises cover a significant share of migrant employment, often exceeding half (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 35).

1.3.2. Countries of Origin

Because information on the nationality of migrant communities in the GCC is considered to be sensitive and has a security dimension in some states, accurate data on the countries of origin remains absent (AlShehabi, 2015, pp. 21-22). In the following table and figure, estimates have been compiled from GLMM, who has in turn gathered them from various sources. When the first table is considered, it becomes clear that in all states migrant workers predominantly come from Asia – ranging between 45.6 and 92.4 percent. In Qatar and especially Saudi Arabia, the proportion of workers coming from the Arab world is not too far removed. Moreover, in most Gulf countries there is a tiny percentage of European and American employees. According to AlShehabi (2015, p. 23), these Western migrants are concentrated in the administrative and skilled sectors. That is why, despite their minimal number, they have a disproportionate influence in Gulf society. In this way, there is a certain continuity with the British colonial period, during which Westerners were employed to oversee, design, and execute the plans and policies of political and economic elites.

Table 3

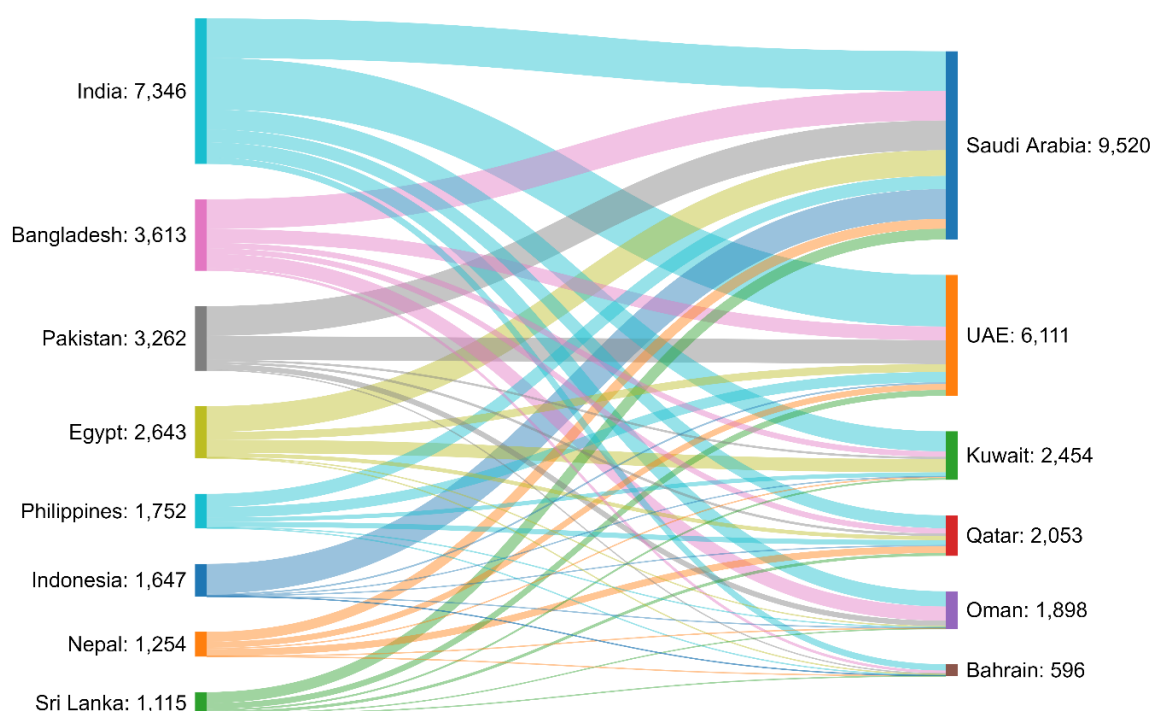
Percentages of migrants in the labour force by world region of origin in 2005

Sending world regions	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Arab World	12.4	31	5.6	40.1	31.2	8.7
Asia	80.1	65.4	92.4	45.6	59.3	87.1
Europe	2	0.3	0	2	3.3	1.5
The Americas	2	0.2	0	N/A	2.1	0.5
Others	3.6	3.2	2	12.3	4.2	2.1

Note. Adapted from AlShehabi (2015, p. 22), who has compiled the data from International Labour Office and Arab Employment Forum (2009, p. 19).

Figure 2

Graph showing estimates for selected countries of foreign residents in GCC states by country of citizenship (in thousands), 2012-2018



Note. Data compiled from GLMM (<https://gulfmigration.grc.net/>) and De Bel-Air (2018). Only a selected number of countries with a significant number of residents in the Gulf were included. The data are from different years between 2012 and 2018. Consult the table in the appendix A for the exact years.

When the actual countries where migrants come from are considered, the great diversity of origin countries stand out; the set of origin countries include various countries from all important regions (South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and also Africa) (figure 2 and table A1 in the appendices). AlShehabi (2015, pp. 22-23) writes that this is the result of a deliberate policy of the GCC states to avoid particular groups developing a solidarity bloc based on linguistic and national bonds in order to strengthen discipline and control over the migrant workforce.

The Indian subcontinent (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal) is the most important sending region. India tops the charts for all Gulf states – even crossing the 1 million mark in Kuwait (one million), Saudi Arabia (two million) and the UAE (2,6 million). Next to South Asia, the Philippines, Egypt, and Indonesia in the case of Saudi Arabia are important origin countries.⁹ The top five sending countries for each Gulf state consistently consists of: India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Egypt. In the case of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, it also made up of Nepal and Indonesia, respectively. AlShehabi (2015, p. 23) writes that South and Southeast Asian workers constitute the bulk of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the Gulf. Furthermore, De Bel-Air (2018, p. 18) states that Filipino and Indonesian (especially female) migrant workers often perform domestic labour within the Gulf. According to AlShehabi (2015, p. 23), Arabs can mainly be found in “middle-class technocratic and professional occupations” – in the public as well as in the private sector.

If we dwell for a moment on India as an origin country given the focus of this thesis. Indians are the largest migrant nationality in all Gulf countries. The share of Indians in the overall population in most countries is situated between 30 and 40 percent. The highest proportion is in Bahrain with 48.8 percent. The Indian population

⁹ The large number of Syrians in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia is likely a more recent phenomenon due to the Civil War in Syria, which started in 2011. Estimates by Kapiszewski (2006) for 2002-2004 show a significantly smaller number of Syrians – hundred thousand in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia each.

even significantly outnumbers the citizen population in Qatar and the UAE. In the next last section of this first chapter, the rise of (South) Asian labour within the Gulf region is discussed.

Before moving to the discussion of *kafala* and measures of control, it is important to note that heavily racialized discourses surrounding migrant labour are commonplace. Central to these discourses are different kinds of “threats” (security, demographic, sexual, or sexual) that migrants allegedly represent for Gulf societies. (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 118)

1.3.3. *Kafala* and Methods of Control

The recruitment and management of all migrant labour in the Gulf region takes place through the *kafala* system. *Kafala* can be described as a work permit sponsorship system, in which the migrant is in essence bound to a citizen acting as a sponsor (known as a *kafil*), that could be an individual employer, private or public institution/firm, or a labour outsourcing firm. In this system, migrant workers can only work and reside in the Gulf as long as they are sponsored. Moreover, workers are not allowed from leaving the country without the permission of the sponsoring employer and are forbidden from changing jobs. The employer thus has legal authority essentially over the entire life cycle of a migrant's stay and employment in the Gulf: entry-exit via work permit, renewal of stay, cancellation of the work permit, and control of the migrant's ability to move to another employer. The *kafala* system find its origins in the British colonial period when it was introduced in order to control labour migration in the pearling industry in Bahrain in the early twentieth century. Later, the sponsorship system spread to the other Gulf countries. (Dito, 2015, pp. 82-83; Hanieh, 2021b; AlShehabi, 2021)

In practice, the employer first applies for a work permit from the Ministry of Labour. The work permit then allows entry of the migrant to the country and their employment by the sponsor. Despite some slight variations in procedural requirements between GCC countries, the general outline is the same for all of them. Both the ownership of the work permit and its regulations give the employer the right to cancel the work permit or request its renewal. Indeed, the employer is who is granted the work visa, not the worker. (Dito, 2015, pp. 85-86)

Rather than being a simple labour admission tool, the *kafala* system also has an important legal dimension: the *kafil* not only employs the migrant worker, but he or she also assumes legal responsibility and representation over the sponsored migrant worker within the Gulf country's geographic jurisdiction. In other words, the migrant's worker right to act as a judicial person is restricted and, instead, the state delegates this right to his or her sponsor. Longva (1997) writes that: "Before the law, therefore, the sponsor represents not only himself but also the state (vis-à-vis the migrant worker) and the migrant worker (vis-à-vis the state)" (p.101). Compared to other work-permit systems throughout the world, Dito (2015, p. 82) writes that this characteristic is unique to *kafala*. (AlShehabi, 2021, p. 292; Longva, 1997, p. 82; Dito, 2015, p. 82)

Many scholars have identified significant elements of coercion within this system: workers are basically bound to a particular citizen employer, forbidden switching between jobs, frequently have their passport taken by their employer, and often get stuck in forms of 'debt slavery' as a result of purchasing work permits. As a result, designations as a form of bonded or unfree labour are commonplace in the literature. (Hanieh, 2021b, pp. 117-118)

The movement and residence of migrant workers within the country are also restricted in various ways. Labour camps have been deliberately designed to house low-paid migrant workers in order to segregate them from the rest of the population living in cities. In general, movement restrictions also emerge because of economic

barriers and are highly racialized. Workers' housing is by design located far away from citizen or tourist spaces. The mobility of female domestic workers in particular is highly restricted. Because female domestic workers typically live within the same residence as their employers, employers may forbid them from leaving the house and subjugate them to psychological, sexual, and physical abuse. (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 118)

The legal system prevents collective organizing by migrant workers and systematically excludes them from the limited civil and political rights that the citizen population does have (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 333). In all Gulf states, migrant workers are prohibited from striking, forming unions, or engaging in any kind of political activism (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 118).¹⁰ In case of any labour protest, there is always the legally sanctioned possibility of arrest and even deportation (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 334). Moreover, de jure there is no systematic and clear route for migrants to obtain citizenship (AlShehabi, 2015, pp. 30,37).¹¹ In fact, "even children born to non-citizens who have been long-term residents in the Gulf lack any institutional route to citizenship or residency rights, and must depart if their parents lose their employment (Hanieh, 2015, p. 67)."

1.3.4. History

The contemporary population structure and migrant labour regime in the Gulf is to be situated within the region's economic transformation into oil economies with global importance. With the start of oil exploitation, from the 1930s onwards, significant labour migration streams started to develop. When most Gulf states began exporting

¹⁰ In Bahrain and Kuwait, while migrant workers are allowed to join already existing unions, they are not permitted to form their own. In reality, however, these unions are reluctant to recruit or ally with migrant workers (Hanieh, 2021b, p. 265).

¹¹ Bahrain is an exception, as its laws theoretically provide a systematic path for obtaining citizenship, but which often do not seem to be applied in practice (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 37).

oil commercially, in the first decades after the Second World War, the number of incoming migrants increased massively. In 1950, the number of migrants grew from a few tens of thousands to circa one million in 1975 and ten years later, by 1985, to six million. In 1985, non-citizens comprised 37 percent of the region's population and in Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar they formed the majority. The size of the migrant population continued to grow in the following decades – until 52 percent in 2020. By the end of the second oil boom in the early 1980s, the migrant labour regime took on most of its defining features that characterise it to this day. (AlShehabi, 2015)

Initially the majority of migrants hailed from nearby countries in the Arab world (Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Palestine, etc.) (Babar & Vora, 2022, p. 502; AlShehabi, 2015). From the 1970s onwards, the migrant labour force in all Gulf countries, however, was increasingly sourced from South Asia (AlShehabi, 2015). Kapiszewski (2006, p. 9) estimates that the share of Arabs in the foreign population declined from 72 percent in 1975 to 56 percent in 1985 and even further to 31 percent in 1996. From the 1980s on, the countries of origin diversified and people from other Asian countries (Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Indonesia) started migrating to the Gulf (De Bel-Air, 2018, p. 16).

According to AlShehabi (2015, p. 21), South Asian workers were seen to be relatively less expensive than Arab workers. The employment of South Asians also meant a significant increase in the available labour pool in which Gulf employers could source workers from. He, moreover, argues that investors, political elites, and Western powers with influence in the region (mostly, the UK and the US) were worried about Arab workers, who were seen as the primary instigators of Nasserism, Arab nationalism, and leftism in the Gulf region. At that time, these ideologies and their movements were particularly strong throughout the Middle East, especially in Egypt and Syria.

Migration from the Indian subcontinent to the Gulf was, however, surely not without precedent. Arab labour migration during the first decades after the Second

World War was itself mostly concentrated in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia – 80 and 90 percent respectively in 1975. In the other Gulf states, still under British colonial rule, there was already a preference for migrants from other parts of the British Empire, particularly the Indian subcontinent. In 1975, Arab migrants in Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE only comprised between 16 and 33 percent of the foreign population (Kapiszewski, 2006, p. 7). In the following decades, the share of Arabs in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia declined significantly. The preference for Arab migrants in the case of Saudi Arabia can be explained by the fact that the country was never under direct British colonial control. In Kuwait, Arabs were preferred because of the popularity of Arab nationalism in the country back then and also the specific policies of the ruler Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 8).

But also, before the first oil boom between the 1950s and 1970s South Asians were working in the Gulf. In the nascent oil industry between the 1930s and 1950s of the British controlled Gulf states, clerks and semi-skilled workers were mostly sourced from the colonised Indian subcontinent. Administrative and skilled labourers hailed from Western countries, in accordance with the preferences of the American and British oil companies. In the British controlled Gulf states, most skilled workers came from the UK. At this time, in all Gulf states, unskilled workers were predominantly found among the local population. (AlShehabi, 2015, pp. 6-7)

Also in the British colonial administrative apparatus were South Asians employed. In the nineteenth century, the British began to systematically import foreign labour.¹² The colonial administration was made up of migrants, predominantly from the United Kingdom or British India. This mainly took place in the Trucial States (the

¹² Another pre-existing form of the systematic import of people for labour in the Gulf region was slavery. According to AlShehabi (2015, p. 36), slave labour was mostly used as domestic labour. In the nineteenth century, a large number of African slaves, primarily from East Africa, was working in the Gulf in the pearling and date cultivation (Hopper, 2015, p. 8-10). Globally, the Gulf states were relatively late to abolish legal slavery – for example, Qatar in 1952, Saudi Arabia in 1963 and Oman in 1970. Because of the relatively limited number of studies, much remains unknown about slavery in the Arabian Peninsula.

modern day UAE), where British presence was strongest. Foreigners were also present acting as mercenaries in the British security forces responsible for maintaining British colonial control. This type of labour migration, however, remained limited in number.¹³ (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 6)

1.4. Migrant Labour in Political Economy

The contributors to the volume *Transit States* (Khalaf et al., 2015) and political economist Adam Hanieh in various other writings have emphasized the systemic importance of the migrant labour regime to the functioning of Gulf capitalism. Here, I mostly iterate their insights. Migrants represent a highly controlled, cheap, and precarious labour force which has directly underpinned the various processes of capital accumulation described in the first section of this chapter (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 367).

One explanative factor behind the unique, enormous size of the migrant population in the Gulf states is the relatively small size of the domestic population (Cammett et al., 2015, p. 336; Hanieh, 2011, p. 61). Domestic labour supply has, according to Cammett et al. (2015, p. 336), been constrained by demography and sociopolitical factors (such as low female labour participation). Low-skilled workers and professionals were thus needed to enable the economic transformation of the region. Scholars, however, argue that this explanation is far from sufficient.

¹³ In the pre-oil era, there was a small number of Indian merchant communities living in the Gulf (Onley, 2014, p. 231). While before the start of the exploitation of oil in the 1930s there were only a few thousands, Onley (2014, p. 231) writes that many of them were wealthy and influential, elite members of society.

The labour market segmentation of citizens in the public sector and migrants in the private sector requires further explanation. According to AlShehabi (2015, p. 8), this segmentation started to develop during the 1970s and 1980s. A number of scholars argue that this was the result of the evolving relationship between the state and the citizenry during the first decades of the oil boom. Hanieh (2011) writes that there were strong anti-colonial and left-wing movements in the Gulf states in the 1950s and 1960s. While the political authorities responded to these movements with a wave of repression, Hanieh (2011, p. 60) argues, that all Gulf states at the time of their independence also advanced a particular spatial strategy by importing massive amounts of migrant labour, while at the same time restricting citizenship to a tiny minority of the population. The productive role of average citizens was furthermore confined to employment in the public sector. Via this public sector employment, citizens were provided with varying levels of access to “the benefits of an increasingly generous welfare state, providing free or subsidised services” and “opportunities for mass consumerism” (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 4). This welfare state was based on massive, rising oil revenues. The benefits citizens received also included cheap housing and education (Hanieh, 2011, p. 60). AlShehabi (2015) continues that: “These benefits were obtained through a notion of citizenship founded on loyalty to the state, which came to be largely identified with the ruling families, by now firmly embedded as the apex of the local political system” (p. 4). It is thus clear that this labour market segmentation was and is crucial to the consolidation of allegiance to the ruling monarchs.

A number of scholars have moreover argued that kafala plays a crucial role in this regard (Babar and Vora, 2022; Hanieh, 2021a; Hanieh, 2021b; Dito, 2015). Because the control over migrant labour in vital aspects is for a large part subcontracted to citizen employers, the Gulf citizenry becomes “an integral part of the state’s disciplining of labor (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 366)”. Hanieh (2021b) adds that kafala “also diffuses and internalizes a securitizing logic throughout the citizenry” (p. 117). He

continues that “competition between citizens over access to kafil rights generates vertical social segmentation and encourages the profession of loyalty and allegiance to the ruling family” (p. 117).

In various works Hanieh has argued for an understanding of the Gulf migrant labour regime as a spatial structure that extends beyond the boundaries of the national state. In his contribution to the *Transit States* volume (Hanieh, 2015), he argues that this spatial perspective brings unto the fore three functions of migrant labour within the Gulf’s political economy. Firstly, this spatial structure enables Gulf states to institutionalise extremely high rates of exploitation. The enormous wage differentials between citizens and migrants owe to the fact that “the value of labour power in the Gulf is not measured by the costs of reproduction in the Gulf itself, but relative to the cost of labour power in the home countries” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 66). Another factor is the immense size of the labour pool of potential workers in the sending countries that acts as a ‘reserve army of labour,’ that acts to further depress migrant worker wages in the Gulf. Furthermore, the institution of citizenship – “a highly complex system of border controls, work visas and sponsor systems” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 67) – is vital to migrant labour exploitation.

Second, the spatial nature of the Gulf’s working-class acts as a “powerful disciplining instrument over labour.” As noted earlier, the kafala system implies that individual citizen employers have full power over the residence and employment of migrant workers in the Gulf. Without approval of a kafil, migrant workers do not have any legal right to reside within the territory of the GCC states. (Hanieh, 2015) Hanieh (2015) writes that this leads to a “permanent precarity of status, fully dependent upon employment” (p. 67). This also means that “any attempt to organise collectively can be met with the threat of deportation” (Hanieh, 2015, p. 67).

This brings us to the third way in which the migrant labour regime is vital to capital accumulation in the Gulf region. The spatial structuring of class in the Gulf places significant barriers to collective struggle and longer-term political organising of both migrants and citizens (Hanieh, 2015, pp. 67-68). As noted earlier, Hanieh (2011, p. 63) has argued that the import of migrant labour to the Gulf was an important strategy of Gulf states to circumvent nationalist and left-wing movements in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, “this class structure has acted to block the emergence of any significant indigenous labor movements that could challenge the obduracy of the Gulf monarchies and state system” (Hanieh, 2021a, p. 367). It also plays a role today: employers are legally allowed to respond to any attempt at collective action by workers with deportation.

In relation to this, Hanieh (2015, pp. 68-70) advances as well the argument that this spatialised nature of the Gulf’s working class allows the Gulf states a unique means of dealing with crises and economic downturns – a ‘spatial fix’ (lending a term from David Harvey). The Gulf states are able to displace significant effects of crises (most notably, large-scale unemployment) away from the Gulf onto peripheral sending countries by deporting migrant workers in times of crises. Hanieh illustrates this for the 2008 crisis for some states and the 2014 global oil price decline specifically for Saudi Arabia (Hanieh, 2015; Hanieh, 2021a; Hanieh, 2021b).

Lastly, Hanieh has also argued that Gulf migration flows not only play a role within the Gulf’s political economy, but also have to be situated within capitalism on a global scale. Because of the Gulf states’ crucial position within post-war US dominated global capitalism (see before), the Gulf’s migrant labour regime is not only vital to capital accumulation on a regional scale, but as well to capital accumulation on a global one. Hanieh (2015) writes as follows: “The hierarchies of the contemporary world market – and the position of US power within these – mean that the nature of class formation in the Gulf bears not only upon the position of local elites, but on the entire architecture

of global capitalism” (p. 71). Hanieh (2021a) adds that: “the trajectory of global capitalism would likely have taken a radically different path if the Gulf has not rested on the exploitation of a temporary, transit work force” (p. 368).

In the next chapter, we leave the Gulf for the Asian continent where most migrant workers come from. We specifically investigate India and its outflows to the Gulf.

Chapter 2: India, Gulf Migration, and Internal Migration

In this chapter, we investigate the Gulf migrant labour regime from the perspective of the sending countries. We specifically focus upon India, which is in terms of the number of migrants the most important sending country. In the first section, we find that the Gulf is the premier destination for low-skilled labour migration from the country, followed at a great distance by the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Singapore. We also describe the main characteristics of Gulf-India migration, its evolution over time, and, lastly, the shifting fortunes of individual Gulf destination countries. There is a strong parallel in the Gulf migration from India and the economic state of the Gulf and its individual countries. Notably, the Third Oil Boom between 2000 and 2014 causes a tremendous upsurge in Indian out-migration. This illustrates the crucial importance of migrant labour to the Gulf's economies, which we highlighted earlier in the first chapter.

In the second section of this chapter, we delve into the sub-national geography of Gulf migration. We observe an interesting shift in Gulf migration from South India to the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last two decades. Given the exact chronology of this shift, we argue that is likely due to an new and increased search of Gulf capital and their recruitment agencies for cheaper sources of labour. Furthermore, there is also a spatial clustering of migrant source areas within states. Lastly, based on arguments presented by Chinmay Tumbe (2012), we argue that the renewed surge of Gulf migration from eastern UP and Bihar is anchored on already established, decades-old international migration patterns to the urban areas of Delhi, Mumbai, and Gujarat, driven by population density and land inequality.

2.1. India-Gulf Migration

2.1.1. General Out-Migration From India

India has the largest migrant population of any country in the world. An estimated 18 million Indians are estimated to live outside of their birth country. Where do Indians migrate to? Tables 4 and 5 show UNDESA's 2019 estimates of the regions and countries where Indians are living.¹⁴ The vast majority of India's non-resident population lives in other Asian countries (67.9 percent). Northern America (19.3 percent), Europe (8.5 percent) and Oceania (3.7 percent) also have a significant population.

Zooming in on specific countries, it becomes clear that non-resident Indians mainly live in the Gulf region, the Anglophone countries of the Global North, neighbouring countries (most importantly, Pakistan and Nepal) and the Southeast Asian countries Singapore and Malaysia. The Gulf region is the most important destination region with 8,6 million Indians or 49 percent of all Indians living abroad. The UAE and Saudi Arabia rank first and third with 3,4 and 2,6 million Indians. The other Gulf states have a slightly smaller number: Oman 1,3 million, Kuwait 1,1 million, Qatar 698 thousand and Bahrain 319 thousand. The US, Canada, the UK, and Australia are the place of residence for 4,8 million Indians or 28 percent. The US stands out in particular, ranking second with 2,6 million or 15 percent.

¹⁴ The Ministry of External Affairs occasionally publishes a list of the countries where non-resident Indians and persons of Indian origin are living. These lists are found to not be reliable. For example, according to the list for 2018, zero non-resident Indians were living in Pakistan. However, according to UNDESA estimates, Pakistan is one of the most important destination countries for Indians.

Table 4

Estimates of UNDESA of the number of Indians residing abroad in geographic regions in 2019

Geographic regions	Indians (in thousands)	Percentage of total number of Indians residing abroad
Africa	99	0.6
Asia	11,889	67.9
Europe	1,489	8.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	20	0.1
Northern America	3,374	19.3
Oceania	642	3.7
Total	17,514	

Note. Data compiled from UNDESA (2019) (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>).

Table 5

Estimates of UNDESA of the number of Indians residing abroad in 2019

Rank	Countries	Indians (in thousands)	Percentage of total number of Indians residing abroad
1	UAE	3,420	19.5
2	United States	2,661	15.2
3	Saudi Arabia	2,440	13.9
4	Pakistan	1,588	9.1
5	Oman	1,325	7.6
6	Kuwait	1,124	6.4

7	United Kingdom	918	5.2
8	Canada	712	4.1
9	Qatar	698	4
10	Australia	569	3.2
11	Nepal	430	2.5
12	Bahrain	319	1.8
13	Malaysia	146	0.8
14	Singapore	127	0.7
	GCC	8,628	49
	Total	17,514	

Note. Data compiled from UNDESA (2019) (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>). Only countries with number higher than 100,000 are provided.

These migration streams are largely paralleled in neighbouring South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. A 2018 ILO report on international migration from South Asia (ILO, 2018, pp. 46-47) discerns three important labour migration streams: the Gulf region, the Global North, and Southeast Asia. The Gulf region has been the primary destination for temporary contract unskilled and semi-skilled workers from South Asia since the 1970s. Southeast Asia, mostly Singapore and Malaysia, represents a second prominent destination for temporary lower-skilled migrant workers. In the case of India, they account for 273 thousand people or 1.5 percent of the total number of Indians living abroad. Between 2015 and 2019, 92 percent of all Indian unskilled and semi-skilled migrant workers migrated to the Gulf region. Malaysia in comparison comprised only 3 percent.¹⁵ The third destination, the

¹⁵ This data is based on the ECR data of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. See chapter 2.2. for a discussion of this data source.; Kumar & Irudaya Rajan (2015, p. 65) write that emigration to Singapore and Malaysia is only significant within India from the state of Tamil Nadu.

Global North (Western Europe, Australia, and North America), is characterized mostly by permanent migration of skilled and professional workers. Intraregional labour migration within South Asia is also significant. Thus, the migration corridor between South Asia and the Gulf is the most important migration corridor not only for the Gulf region, but also for South Asia.

2.1.2. Characteristics and Evolution Over the Last Decades

India is by far the most important sending country for the Gulf migrant labour regime. According to GLMM estimates for 2018 (see table A1), Indians accounted for 7.3 million people and comprised 44.7 percent of the total migrant population in the Gulf region. Moreover, in every individual Gulf country India ranks first as well. It leaves the second (Bangladesh 3,6 million), third (Pakistan 3,2 million), fourth (Egypt 2,6 million) and fifth (Philippines 1,8 million) far behind.

Labour migration from India to the Gulf is similar to migration from Asia in general. As noted earlier in the first chapter, Asian migration to the Gulf is overwhelmingly male, temporary, individual, of working age and in terms of skill levels unskilled and semi-skilled (Jain, 2016, pp. 130-132; Chanda & Gupta, 2018, p. 197; Kumar & Irudaya Rajan, 2015, pp. 29-30).

However, it is important to note that the size of Indian skilled workers and professionals in the Gulf is not negligent. De Bel-Air (2018) writes that “because Asians are by far the largest nationality group, they also make up the largest share among the highly skilled in the Gulf” (p. 24). In Bahrain (2010) and Dubai (2012), Asians made up

respectively 73 and 80 percent of all highly skilled workers. In Kuwait (2016), 42 percent of the upper occupation category was Asian.¹⁶ (De Bel-Air, 2018, p. 24)

As shown earlier in the first chapter, the modern-day import of cheap migrant labour in the Gulf should be traced back to the start of oil exploitation in the region from 1930s onwards. Large-scale migration streams from India and other countries started to develop mainly from the 1970s onwards. Further, we will discuss the evolution of Indian migration to the Gulf in the twenty-first century.

Statistical material on international labour emigration from India is seriously lacking. The only available nation-wide data concerns the annual outflows of unskilled and semi-skilled migrants from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs (as of 2016). Only ‘Emigration Check Required’ (or ECR) migrants are recorded. This category encompasses Indian citizens who are required to obtain emigration clearance, by applying to the Indian Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices. If an emigrant meets two conditions, he or she must apply for emigration clearance. First, the emigrant is migrating to a specific list of ECR-designated countries, mainly situated within the Arab World, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.¹⁷ Second, the emigrant has a low level of education; more precisely, they have not passed Class 10 or they do not have an educational level of higher education or above.¹⁸ It is unknown how well ECR data captures actual migration streams. Kodoth (2020, p. 12) writes that they are an underestimation, because they omit irregular migration, which, according to her, is believed to be considerable.

¹⁶ For more information on professional, managerial and highly-skilled Indians working in the Gulf see: De Bel-Air (2018) and Parween (2013).

¹⁷ The ECR destination countries are: United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Malaysia, Libya, Jordan, Yemen, Sudan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Thailand and Iraq (emigration banned). (ILO, 2018, p. 54)

¹⁸ Other individuals who do not require emigration clearance include “holders of diplomatic/official passports, persons holding permanent immigration visas, nurses possessing two years’ diploma recognized under the Indian Nursing Council Act of 1947, taxpayers, or all persons over the age of 50 (ILO, 2018, p. 54).” For more information on ECR emigration data, see: ILO (2018).

The Indian population in the Gulf has experienced a significant and consistent increase over the past few decades. According to UNDESA estimates, it has grown from 0.5 million in 1979 to 1.96 million in 1990, 2.7 million in 2000, 6.4 million in 2010 and 8.6 million in 2019 (Sasikumar, 2019, p. 113). Nevertheless, annual outflows of ECR migrants to the Gulf do not show a uniform upward trajectory (see figure 3). Four distinct phases can be identified within this migration pattern.

The 1980s are a first phase, in which annual outflows remained relatively constant, falling between 100 and 200 thousand individuals per year. This is followed by a second phase in the 1990s characterized by a sudden surge, resulting in an approximate figure of 400 thousand migrants per year. This was, however, limited to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Regarding the two former countries, a plausible explanation is the replacement of Arab workers with their South Asian counterparts, which was previously discussed in the first chapter. Estimates show a substantial decline in the Arab population's share within the broader foreign populace of the region. Between 1985 and 1996 Kuwait's proportion plummeted from 69 to 33 percent, and Saudi Arabia's from 79 to 30 percent (Kapiszewski, 2006, p. 9). This second phase ends in a substantial decline during the late 1990s. Figures decreased from 387 thousand in 1997 to 157 thousand in 1999. This could potentially be attributed to nationalisation programmes initiated by the Gulf states during the 1990s (De Bel-Air, 2018, p. 12; Chanda and Gupta, 2018, p. 195).

The subsequent third phase witnesses a steady upsurge in the 2000s. Outflows culminate in an unforeseen peak in 2008 when they soared to 818 thousand. This phase aligns with the Third Oil Boom in the Gulf between 2000 and 2014, characterized by sharply increasing oil prices and the accumulation of large oil revenues (AlShehabi, 2015, p. 31). Additionally, Chanda & Gupta (2018, p. 195) highlight efforts of the Indian government to promote international emigration through state level facilitation measures during this time.

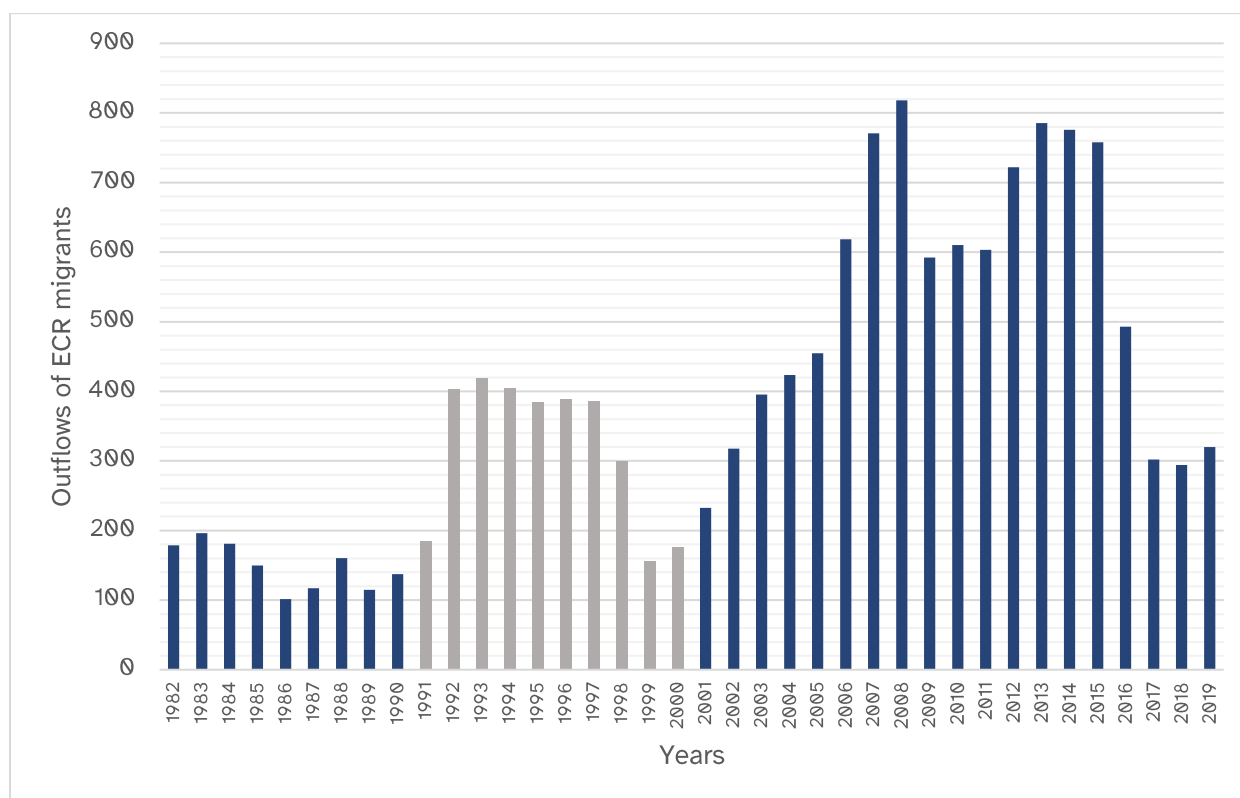
The period after 2008 represents a fourth phase, marked by shifting fortunes: a three-year slump (2009-2011), followed by a four-year recovery (2012-2015), and ultimately culminating in a collapse from 2015 onwards. The years 2017, 2018 and 2019 witness fluctuations around 300 thousand migrants. The post-2008 slump was most likely a result of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. The 2014-2015 global oil price slump is the probable cause of the downturn after 2015.¹⁹ As noted earlier in chapter one, the GCC states have responded to both crises with large-scale deportation programmes (Hanieh, 2015; 2021a; 2021b).

At the time of writing, the long-term effects of the 2020-2023 COVID-19 pandemic on Indian migration to the Gulf are unknown. It is unsure whether outflows will recover to the levels seen in the period from 2012 to 2015. In the short-term, the pandemic has led to a large-scale return emigration from the Gulf to India (Sasikumar 2021).

¹⁹ Sasikumar (2019, p. 113) and Oommen (2017, p. 124) have made the same observation regarding the post-2015 decline.; Calabrese (2020) provides other factors that may explain the downturn.

Figure 3

Annual outflows of ECR migrants from India to the GCC (in thousands), 1982-2019



Note. Data compiled from Jain (2016), MOIA (2015), Ministry of Labour and Employment (2002), and Calabrese (2020). For the years between 1991 and 2000 (grey), there is no data available for Qatar. The data for these years thus exclude Qatar.²⁰

²⁰ To give an indication of the relative importance of Qatar, we provide the percentages of Qatar in total India-GCC outflows for 1990 (2.7 percent) and for 2001 (5.9 percent). In the original, annual report of the Ministry of Labour of 2002 (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2002), Qatar is put under the category of 'Others'. This category does not contain the countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Singapore, Malaysia, Libya and includes other ECR countries not mentioned in the report. Qatar is most likely the most important country within this category. Between 1990 and 1994, this category accounted for a proportion ranging between 3.4 and 4.8 percent of total ECR outflows. This share increases in 1995 to 7 percent and in 2000 further to 11.2 percent. This suggests an increased in outflows to Qatar during the second half of the 1990s.

2.1.3. Destination Countries

These overall trends conceal large differences between the destination countries. Therefore, the outflows to individual Gulf countries are discussed in this section. In general, there is a strong parallel evolution of labour flows to the Gulf and the overall fortunes of the Gulf economies. This reveals the importance of migrant labour within Gulf capitalism, which we highlighted earlier in subchapter 1.4.

Figure 4 shows annual outflows for each Gulf country. To mitigate the impact of year-to-year variations, we also present figure 5 which depicts cumulative totals spanning five-year intervals. A table with the exact numbers is provided in the appendices.

Throughout the period under consideration, Indian migration to Saudi Arabia and the UAE since the 1990s has been of a significantly larger scale than that to other Gulf countries. These two countries have encompassed approximately 60 to 70 percent of the total outflows to the GCC, with the exception of the 1990s when their contribution reached approximately 80 percent. As such, these countries largely determine the pattern of the overall Gulf outflows we observed above.

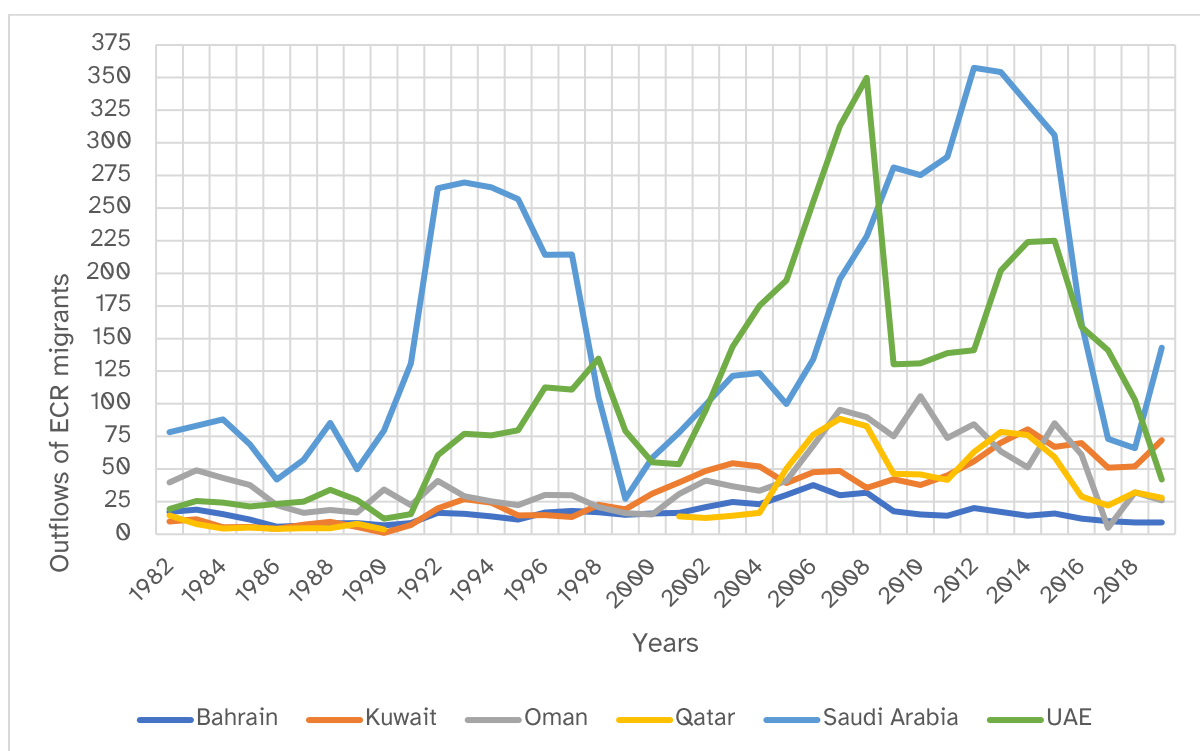
Hence, the outflows to Saudi Arabia largely adhere to the overall pattern. The sole exception is a three-year stagnation after the 2008 crisis, instead of a significant downturn seen in the overall pattern. Interestingly, this downturn can be attributed primarily to a sharp decline in the UAE outflows (from 350 in 2008 to 130 thousand in 2009) and, to a lesser extent, those of Qatar (83 to 46 thousand) and Bahrain (32 to 18 thousand). The effects of the 2008 crisis seem to have been much worse in these countries, perhaps owing to their larger dependence on and integration into the world economy. Broadly speaking, the UAE and Qatar align with the overall pattern.

Comparatively, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain follow this pattern much less. While outflows to Oman largely mirror the total Gulf outflows since the 2000s, they undergo

significant fluctuations during the 1980s and 1990s. Kuwait is the opposite. While it initially adheres to the aggregate numbers during the earlier decades, a marked divergence emerges after 2003. Outflows demonstrate significant fluctuations between 2003 and 2010 and an increase thereafter until 2014. The decline after 2015 seen in other countries is less pronounced, and it is even followed by a recovery in 2019. Lastly, Bahrain increases steadily during the 1990s, culminating in a peak in 2006 of 30 thousand. Subsequently, a gradual decline ensues, resulting in a figure of 9 thousand in 2019.

Figure 4

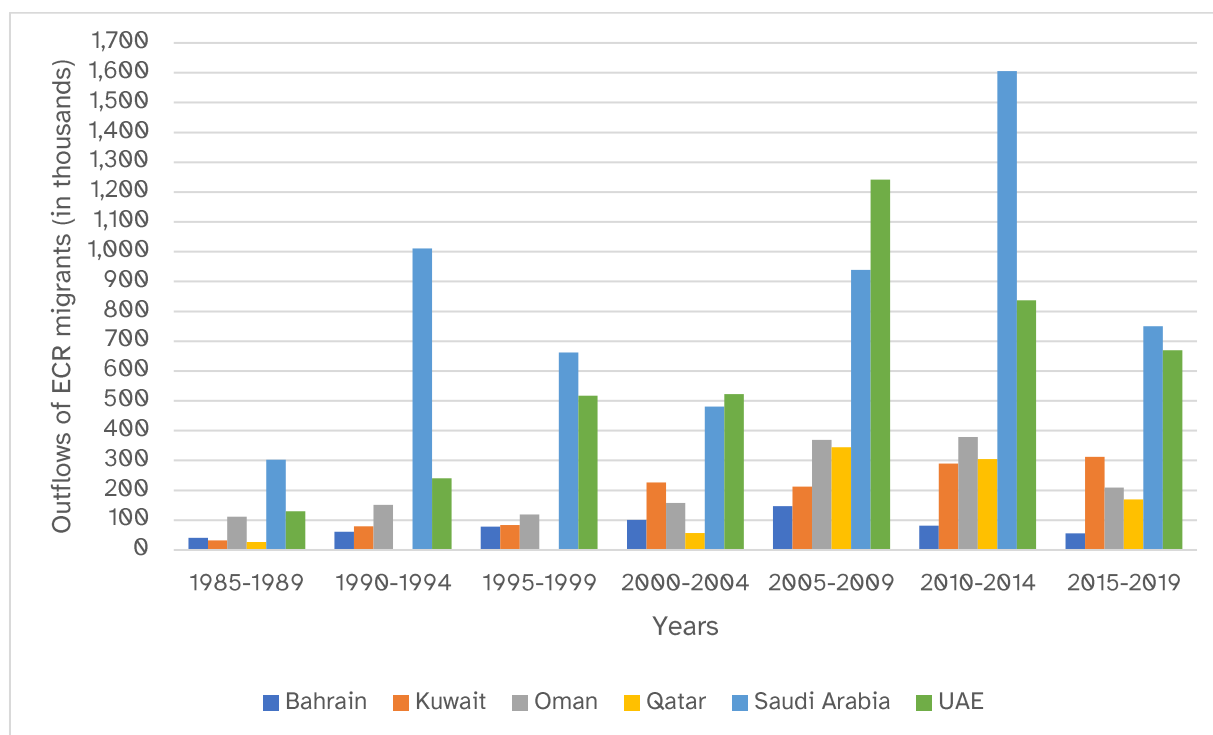
Annual outflows of ECR migrants from India to Gulf countries for each Gulf country (in thousands), 1982-2019.



Note. Data compiled from Jain (2016), MOIA (2015), Ministry of Labour and Employment (2002) and Calabrese (2020). For the years between 1991 and 2000, there is no data available for Qatar.

Figure 5

Five-year totals of annual outflows of ECR migrants from India to Gulf countries for each Gulf country (in thousands), 1985-2019



Note. Data compiled from Jain (2016), MOIA (2015) and Calabrese (2020). For the years between 1991 and 2000, there is no data available for Qatar.

2.2. Geography of Gulf Migration

2.2.1. The Shift from South India to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

Unskilled labour migration to the Gulf is not evenly spatially distributed throughout India. Out-migration to the Gulf is only significant in a few states. This is similar to other South Asian sending countries like Pakistan and Nepal (Oommen, 2017, pp. 125-126). When we consider data on the source states of annual outflows of ECR migrants of the period 2015-2019²¹, it is clear that the North Indian states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar are by far the largest contributors to ECR migration. Respectively, these states contribute 29 and 16 percent, collectively accounting for nearly half (45 percent). Other important sending states include a mix of North and South Indian states (in order): West Bengal (8.6 percent), Tamil Nadu (7.9 percent), Rajasthan (7.5 percent), Punjab (5.9 percent), Andhra Pradesh (5.3 percent), and Kerala (5.1 percent). The overwhelming majority of ECR migrants (92.4 percent) during this period is headed to the Gulf. Unfortunately, cross-tabulated data on destination countries and source states is not publicly available. However, Kumar & Irudaya Rajan (2015, p. 65), write that labour migration to Malaysia, the only other important ECR country, is only significant in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, it can be generally assumed that most ECR migration from the other states is directed towards the Gulf region.

The current prominence of UP and Bihar represents a relatively recent development. It is widely noted in the literature that while, in the last few decades, the South Indian states, especially Kerala, have witnessed a significant decline in Gulf emigration, there has been a significant upsurge in outflows from UP and Bihar.²² In the twentieth century, Tamil Nadu and especially Kerala held the status of being the

²¹ Other national data on the source states of Indian international outward migrants is not publicly available. For some states comprehensive migration surveys for some years do exist. See Irudaya Rajan (2020) for more information on these surveys and other useful data sources.

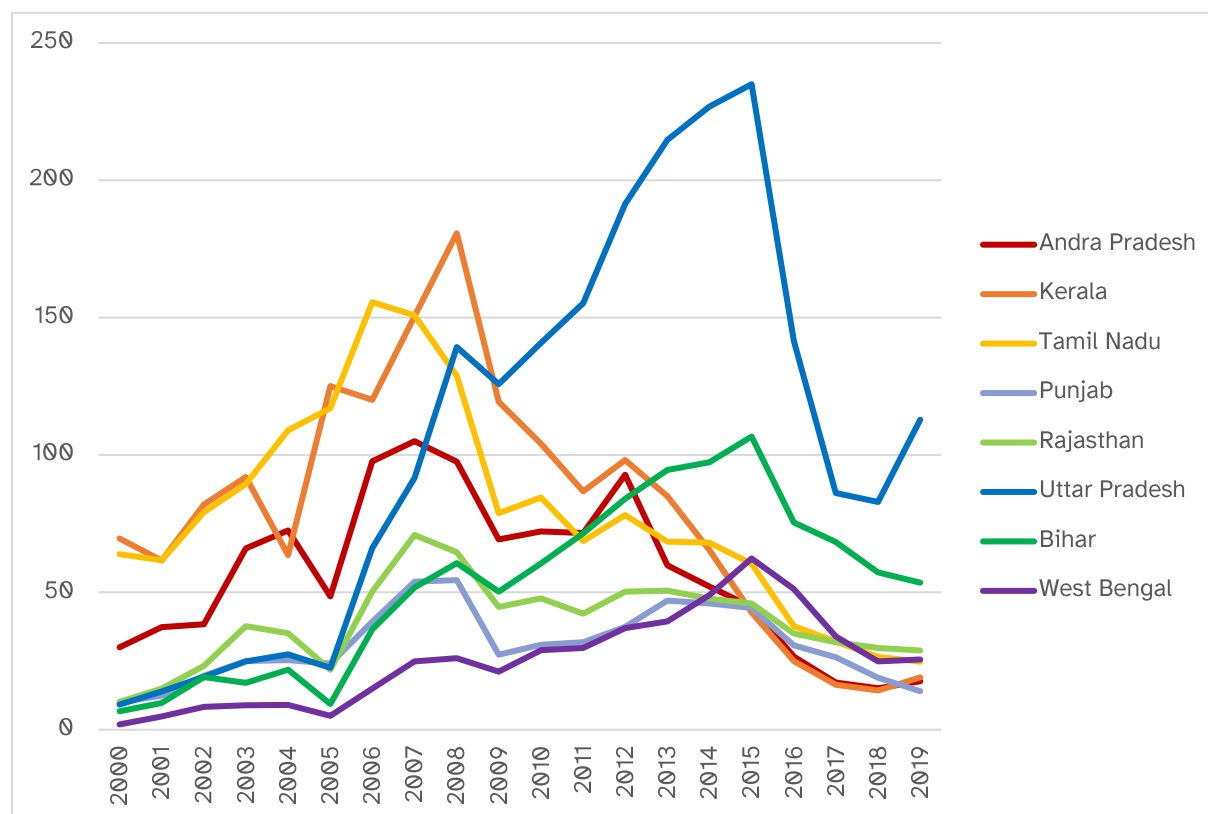
²² Sasikumar (2019, p. 113) writes that this shift is clearer in migration flows to Saudi Arabia. According to him, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar account for more than half of the ECR migrants to this country. His source for this statement is unknown.

primary source states for Gulf migration (Jain, 2016, p. 128; Kumar & Rajan, 2015, p. 2; Zachariah et al., 2002). For example, in the year 2000, these states still accounted together for 54.9 percent of total ECR outflows. Further, we delve into the shifting fortunes of source states since the last two decades. The numbers for the most important states are shown in figure 6, while a table covering a larger set of states is provided in the appendices.

Three distinct patterns can be identified in this figure. The outflows of the South Indian states Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu show an upward trajectory until the years 2006-2008. Subsequently, all three states undergo substantial declines. Kerala, for example, reached a peak in 2008 with 181 thousand emigrants, after which outflows declined until 98 thousand in 2012, 43 thousand in 2015 and 19 thousand in 2019.

Figure 6

Annual outflows of ECR migrants from a few Indian states to all ECR countries (in thousands), 2000-2019



Note. Data compiled from Kumar & Irudaya Rajan (2015), Calabrese (2020) and MOIA (2015). During this period, the Gulf region comprised the following percentages of total ECR out-ward migration: in 2000-4 84.4 percent, in 2005-9 93 percent, in 2010-4 96.2 percent and in 2015-2019 92.4 percent. Together these states account for around 70 percent of total ECR migration during the whole period under consideration. In 2014, Telangana was separated from Andhra Pradesh.

A second pattern is present in the trajectories of UP, Bihar and West Bengal. Commencing with relatively modest outflows between 2000 and 2005, outflows skyrocketed during the second half of the 2000s and the first half of the 2010s. In 2015, outflows from all three states reached their peak: 235 thousand migrants from UP, 107 thousand from Bihar and 62 thousand from West Bengal. During this period, there was a small but noticeable fall in outflows after the 2008 global economic crisis which lasted for a few years. Furthermore, following this period of rapid increase, the

global oil price decline of 2014-2015 results in a sharp reduction in out-migration. Outflows from UP, for example, plummeted from 235 thousand in 2015 to a mere 86 thousand in 2017.

Thirdly, migration from the lesser important, northwestern source states, namely Rajasthan and Punjab, have a distinct pattern of growth until 2007-2008 and steady decline thereafter.

How should the shift from South India to UP and Bihar be explained? Scholars have pointed to various explanations. Sasikumar & Timothy (2015, pp. 5-6) highlight the large difference in wage rates between UP and Bihar on the one hand, and Kerala on the other. Calabrese (2020) and Chanda & Gupta (2018, p. 198) also emphasize the prevalence of poverty and diminishing employment opportunities within these North Indian states. Furthermore, Buckley et al. (2023, p. 93) argues that severe drought and the subsequent demise of agricultural livelihoods also factor in this transition.

Commenting on the overall decline in emigration from Kerala (not only ECR unskilled and semi-skilled migration), Irudaya Rajan & Zachariah (2019, p. 60) argue for a series of contributing factors: 1. a reduction in the size of the migration-prone age group (15-29 years) in the state's population, 2. the narrowing wage differential between Kerala and the Gulf (because of declining wages in the Gulf and increasing wages in Kerala), 3. a global oil price decline since 2010 and a decline in economic growth of the Gulf as a consequence thereof, 4. nationalization programmes, and 5. an increasing skill level of the Malayali labour force; this is relevant since, according to them, "highly skilled people migrate to other parts of the world (mainly the developed economies of the West)" (Irudaya Rajan & Zachariah, 2019, p. 60).

However, these explanations fall short in considering the exact chronological evolution of outflows we outlined earlier. The 2008 global economic crisis marked a pivotal juncture in the changing landscape of Gulf out-migration in India. While

outflows of the South Indian states of Kerala, Andra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have witnessed a large decline since then, outflows from Bihar and UP have skyrocketed. This is why, we concur with the argument put forward by Buckley et al. (2023), who argue that “the growth of construction-related emigration from the state [UP] reflects the accelerating search by recruiters for cheaper sources of migrant labour for Gulf construction markets, especially since the 2008 financial crisis when construction markets experienced among the largest fiscal losses of any sector” (p. 23). In our eyes, this is not limited to the construction sector. We contend that the post-2008 shift seems to be a part of a renewed offensive of khaleeji capital and their recruiters for even cheaper sources of labour. More research is needed in order to ascertain whether this process has similarly played out in other countries.²³

2.2.2. Clustering of Source Areas within States

Within states itself, there are also notable geographical differences in outward migration to the Gulf. Based on estimates from the Kerala Migration Survey for 2018, most international emigrants from Kerala are from the northern districts of Malappuram (19.1 percent) and Kannur (11.8 percent), as well as from the southern district of Kollam (11.3 percent) (Irudaya Rajan & Zachariah, 2019).²⁴ According to Wadhawan (2018), other states such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Andra Pradesh, and West Bengal are also characterized by out-migration from specific zones. In West Bengal, the top sending districts are from the southeastern side of the state (the districts Murshidabad and Nadia especially) (Wadhawan, 2018).

²³ In an article in the Indian newspaper *The Economic Times* (Dutttagupta (2019)) it is written that Keralite workers have been replaced with their counterparts from Nepal and Bangladesh.

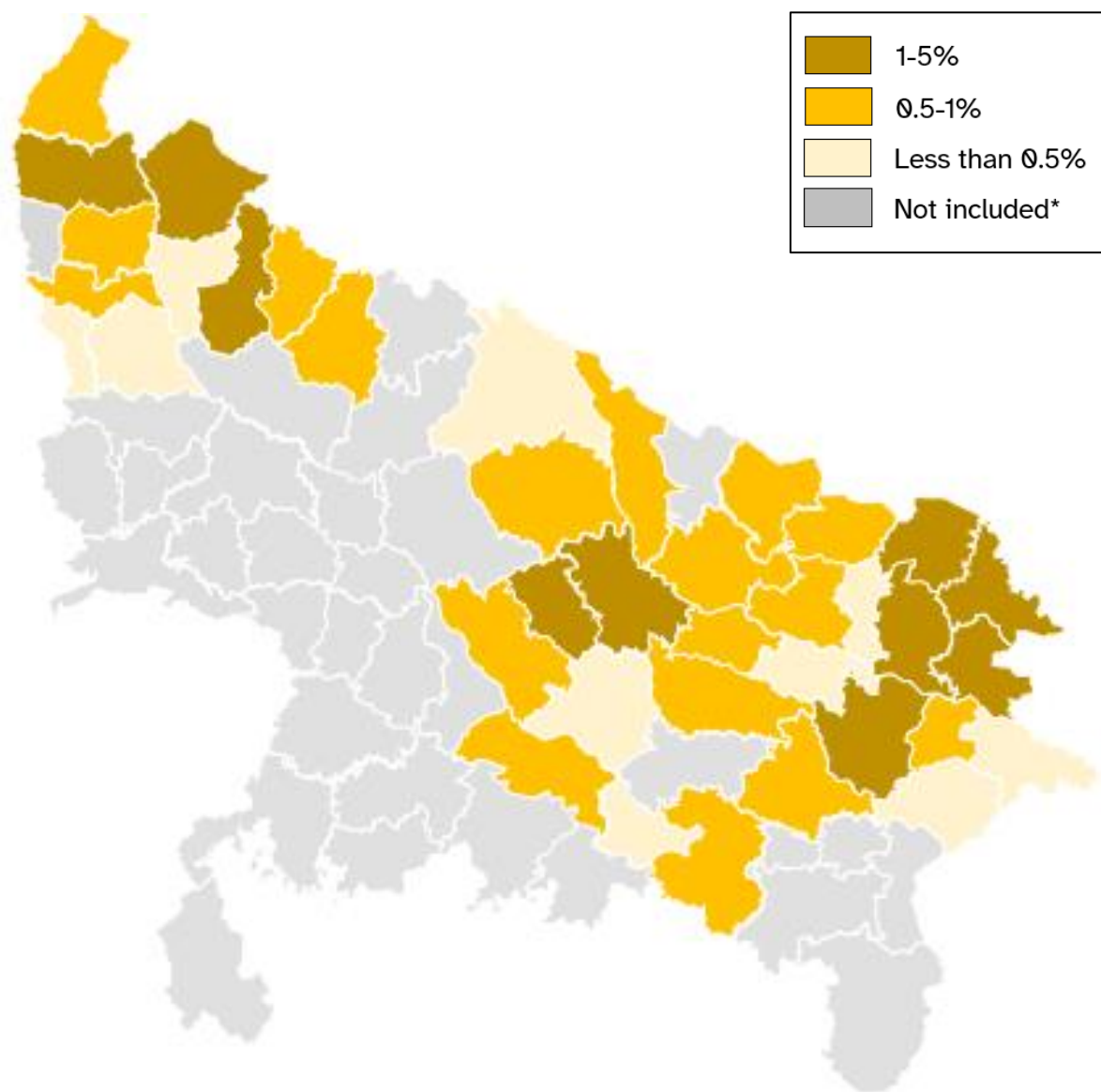
²⁴ 89.2 percent of Keralite international emigrants are residing in the Gulf countries. (Irudaya Rajan & Zachariah, 2019)

This geographic clustering is especially true for UP and Bihar. Figures 7 and 8 show the percentages for each district of total Gulf migration for 2019 (based on ECR data). Three zones stand out: 1) a zone in the north-west corner of UP bordering Haryana and Uttarakhand (especially district Bijnor 2.1 percent, Muzaffarnagar 1.3 percent and Moradabad 1.1 percent) and 2) a zone around the capital of Lucknow in the centre of UP (Lucknow: 2.3 percent and Bara Banki 1.3 percent) and 3) the most significant zone in the northeastern corner of UP and the northwestern corner of Bihar, bordering Nepal. This zone includes eight districts reaching above 1 percent of total ECR Gulf out-migration; the districts Siwan (3.5), Gopalganj (3.5) in Bihar and Kushinagar (2.5) in UP have especially high shares. This last zone may even extend into Nepal. Iskander (2021, p. 245) writes how recruitment agencies initially active in Nepal expand their activities over the border into Bihar and UP. Highest source regions of Nepal (provinces 1 and 2) border Bihar to the north (see ILO, 2018, p. 75 for the statistics).

Considering ECR data from 2015 until 2018, these last two zones are especially durable. Except for the first two zones, the results on these maps are surprisingly similar to those of the map created by Kumar & Irudaya Rajan (2015, p. 149) based on NSSO data of 2007-08 on international emigration, even though Gulf migration from Bihar and UP back then was considerably smaller than it is now.

Figure 7

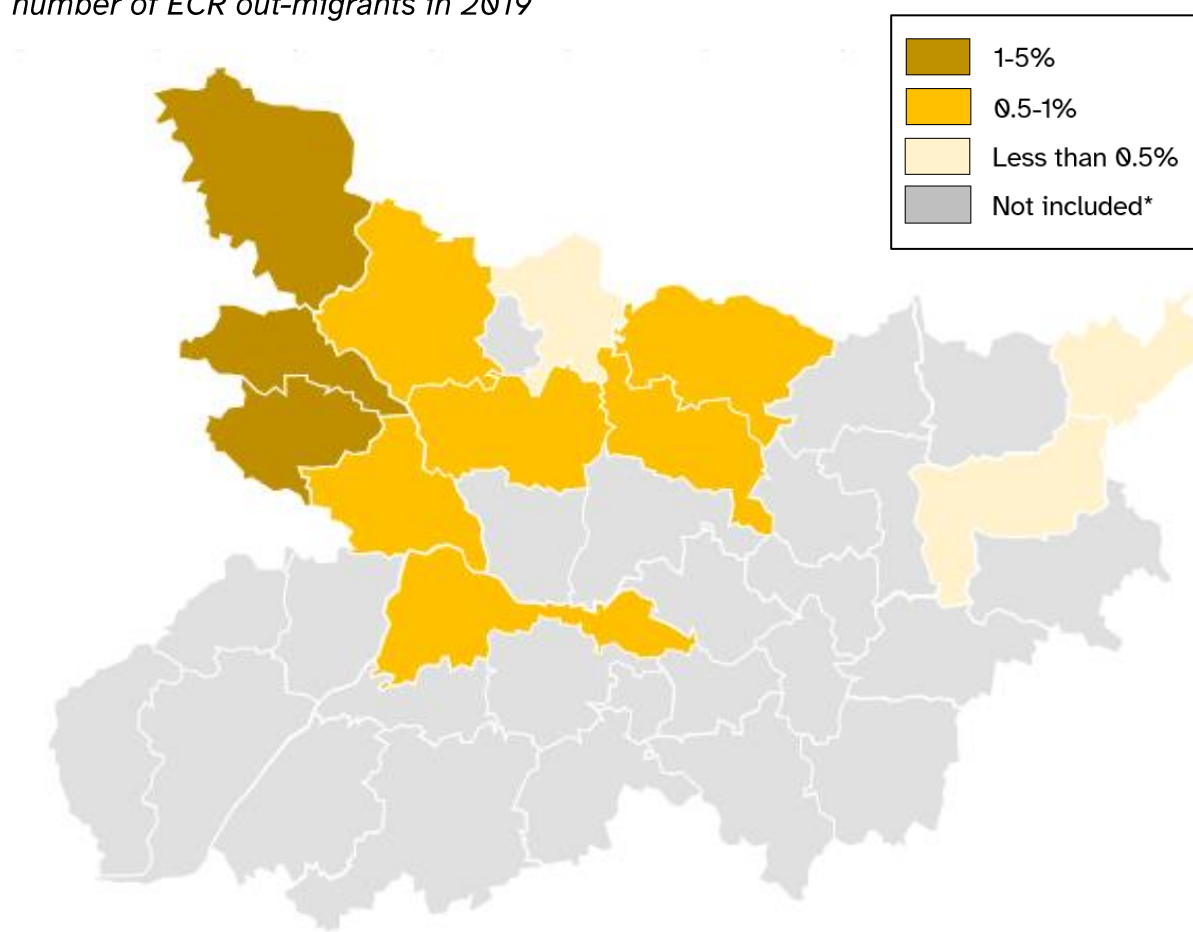
Map of Uttar Pradesh showing the districts within the top 100 of districts with the highest number of ECR out-migrants in 2019



Note. Data compiled from emigrate.gov.in. The only data is available for top 100 ECR migration districts in India. The ones in grey were thus not included in the top 100. The number of ECR emigrants thus remains unknown, but it is certainly not higher than 1082, since that is the number of ECR out-migrants of the hundredth district.

Figure 8

Map of Bihar showing the districts within the top 100 of districts with the highest number of ECR out-migrants in 2019



Note. Data compiled from emigrate.gov.in. The only data is available for top 100 ECR migration districts in India. The ones in grey were thus not included in the top 100. The number of ECR emigrants thus remains unknown, but it is certainly not higher than 1082, since that is the number of ECR out-migrants of the hundredth district.

2.2.3. Gulf Migration as an Extension of Internal Migration

Gulf migration from eastern UP and Bihar should be seen as an extension of intra-national migration patterns from these regions to other parts of India, notably the urban areas of Delhi, Mumbai, and Gujarat and, Punjab. UNDESA estimates that in 2019 there were 17.5 million international migrants from India, of which 8.6 million were situated in the Gulf. Internal migration however far outnumbers international migration, which is estimated to be around 100 million (Shah & Lerche, 2020, p. 720). Eastern UP and Bihar are the hot spots of internal migration within India (Tumbe, 2012, p. 103). We argue that Gulf migration from these regions is anchored on established, already existing internal migration patterns.

According to Tumbe (2012), Gulf migration can be seen as a ‘remittance-based migration’, similar to some internal migrations. Tumbe (2012) argues that remittance-based migrations are distinct from other common migration patterns in India such as marriage migrations, seasonal migrations, short-term migrations, or permanent migrations. Remittance-based migrations are circular, usually semi-permanent and largely male-dominated. The household usually remains at home during the duration of migration. Remittance-based migration differs from seasonal and permanent migration because migrants spend a large part of their working lives away from home, but they do not settle in the host region and eventually return home. Remittances are key to these migrations. Substantial parts of migrant earnings are almost always sent back home periodically during the year to support families. Internal remittance-based migration is mostly oriented towards urban areas and includes occupations such as industrial labourers and the wide range of service professions in the urban informal sectors (e.g., security guards, drivers, cooks and waiters, domestic workers, etc.). Tumbe (2012) estimates that 17 percent of Indian households are affected by remittance-based migration (Gulf and internal migration).

Eastern UP and Bihar are one of the key sites of remittance-based migrations in India. In fact, Tumbe (2012) argues that large-scale out-migration from these areas has persisted for over a century. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, large numbers of people from eastern UP and Bihar have migrated on indenture contracts and otherwise to other parts of the British Empire such as Fiji, Mauritius, Suriname, Natal, and the West Indies. Within British India, migrants were headed for Calcutta, Bengal, Assam, and Burma. During the twentieth century, migration shifted first towards the Bombay urban agglomeration and later towards Delhi, Punjab, and Surat (also see World Bank, 2010, pp. 44-47). In Bihar especially, migration to Calcutta and the mining and industrial belts of Jharkhand is also significant. Tumbe (2012) argues that this persistence of migration over such a long period is partly to be explained by a deep-rooted 'culture of migration'. In eastern UP and Bihar, migration is normalized and accepted as a part of life. Tumbe (2012) writes that: "Over a long period of time, these migrations have been institutionalized in the local psyche such that migration is now 'normative' in these regions. Common references are made to migration traditions and the culture of migration from these regions" (p.106).

We argue that Gulf migration from eastern UP and Bihar that started to develop since the early 2000s builds upon on these centuries-old much larger internal migration patterns. In their search for cheaper sources of labour, Gulf capital and recruiters tapped into these already existing and well-established streams. A picture emerges in which national boundaries are blurred and both Gulf and Indian capital (as well as multinational Global Northern capital) skim the Indian subcontinent in search of cheap exploitable labour.

Gulf migration and internal migration are thus interrelated and driven by similar forces and conditions at home.²⁵ Tumbe (2012) finds mainly three factors in the literature leading to the migratory tendencies of the region. UP and Bihar are characterised by a very high population density. In fact, “population density on cultivable land is over double the all-India average and substantially higher than its immediate surroundings. The region is one of the densest places of human habitation in the world” (Tumbe, 2012, p. 103). Another factor is the flood-proneness of the region, because of river discharges and excessive rainfall. This makes agriculture “a risky proposition and migration is often a means to a relatively more secure source of income” (Tumbe, 2012, p. 103). Lastly, inequality in land ownership may necessitate migration. Tumbe (2012) writes that “inequality as measured by land ownership has been historically high due to the infamous *zamindari* land tenure system that came under the Permanent Settlements system during colonial rule” (p. 103). Land inequality continues to this day. According to Agricultural Census of 2015-16, 95.8 percent of land holdings in eastern UP and 96.9 percent in Bihar are marginal or small (smaller than 2 ha). (Jose et al., 2022; Hoda et al., 2021)²⁶

Our own fieldwork confirms the interrelatedness of internal and Gulf migration. In our own fieldwork, which was conducted in Sultanpur district in eastern UP in December 2022, we found that all interviewed Gulf migrants also have experiences of

²⁵ The socio-economic profiles of Gulf and internal remittance-based migrants may differ given the higher financial barrier to Gulf migration. However, migration costs are also present in internal migration. These could even include fees by labour contractors.

²⁶ In his discussion on recruitment agencies in Nepal expanding their activities over the border into Bihar and UP, Iskander (2021) makes interesting comments on the importance of land-holding patterns in finding workers for recruitment agencies: “The owner of the Horizons recruitment agency explained why he had recently started recruiting in border areas of Bihar. The landholding patterns there were similar to those in Nepal, if somewhat more precarious, with the vast majority of farmers (90 percent) holding less than an acre of land. “We have had success [in Bihar]. It’s very rural, and very similar in economic structure to rural areas here in Nepal. It’s an open border; people have been going back and forth for a long time,” he explained. (p. 245)”

migrating inside of India, most notably to Gujarat, Delhi, and Mumbai. We discuss this in further detail in subchapter 3.3.

Essential in this anchoring of Gulf migration on internal migration, we believe, is the dual position of the cities of Delhi and especially Mumbai as destinations for internal migrants from UP and Bihar and as well-established nodes and recruitment centres in Gulf migration.²⁷ It is likely that internal migration to these two cities was for some migrants a stepping stone for Gulf migration (Majumder & Taukeer, 2019).

Interestingly, a few anthropological studies have shown how the Gulf and India start to blur together in the geographic and cultural imaginations of migrants. Osella & Osella (2012) and Percot (2006) argue that especially in Kerala that is marked by decades old migration to the Gulf, migrants do not perceive the Gulf any longer as a foreign country. Wright (2021) writes: “As Indians travel to the Gulf and the Gulf is represented increasingly in popular media, more Indians imagine the Gulf as a space that is part of India” (p. 126). It is unsure whether similar developments are taking place in the more recent, two decades-old migration from UP and Bihar. In his ethnographic study of Gulf migration from Saharanpur city (northwestern corner of UP), Chambers (2018, p. 1448) writes that migration to the Gulf is increasingly being normalized and de-exceptionalized, but that it had not yet led to a blurring of national boundaries as observed in Kerala. Conversely, Gidwani & Ramamurthy (2018, p. 1002) found in their ethnographical research that internal migrants commonly describe their destinations Delhi or Hyderabad in conversations as ‘bidesh’ (a foreign country) and ‘pardesh’ (another country).

²⁷ The position of Mumbai as an important node and recruitment centre is well-established in the literature (see for example, Varghese, 2023, p. 2 or Wright, 2021). However, the position of Delhi is likely to be more recent, as Gulf migration from North India increased since the last two decades (Kumar, 2018, p. 12).

This connection between internal and Gulf migration seems to be absent for the establishment of Gulf migration streams from Kerala from the 1970s on. Before the advent of Gulf migration, Keralites migrated primarily to the cities of Chennai, Mumbai, Calcutta, and Delhi. Skeldon (2006, p. 23), however, argues that these internal migration flows were of an entirely different character than later Gulf migrations. The earlier internal migration consisted of highly educated Hindus and Syrian Christians from southern Kerala, while the later Gulf migration comprises lower skilled workers and is mostly concentrated in northern part of the state.

In the next chapter, we investigate the social reproduction of Gulf migrant workers, which mostly takes place at home. We zoom into the district of Sultanpur in the eastern part of UP, where we conducted fieldwork on this topic.

Chapter 3: Between India and the Gulf: The Social Reproduction of Gulf Migrant Labour

In the first chapter of this thesis, we highlighted how the massive migrant labour regime in the Gulf is crucial for the political economy of and capital accumulation in the Gulf. Recognizing this essential position of migrant labour, the question arises as to where and how this labour itself is continually produced. What enables countless Asians workers to go and work in the Gulf? In this third chapter, we will argue that the home site and the labours performed by wives and kin in this space are crucial for the social reproduction for the khaleeji migrant workers. Moreover, a consideration of the sphere of social reproduction is crucial for a full understanding of the mechanisms of exploitation in the migrant labour regime.

To empirically study this, two fellow students and I conducted a fieldtrip to Sultanpur district in eastern UP in December 2022. Section 3.1. discusses the methodology of this fieldwork. First, however, an outline of the preparation and execution of the fieldwork is provided. The results of the fieldwork are the topic of the sections 3.2. until 3.4., which discusses the motivations behind Gulf migration, the working and living conditions of migrant workers in the Gulf, how migrants found a job in the Gulf, the relationship between Gulf migration and internal migration, remittances, and the evolution of the economic situation of the family remaining in India. The chapter ends with a discussion of the social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour. By combining theoretical insights of the social reproduction literature and the results of our fieldwork, we find that wives and family members at home socially reproduce Gulf migrant labour in various ways.

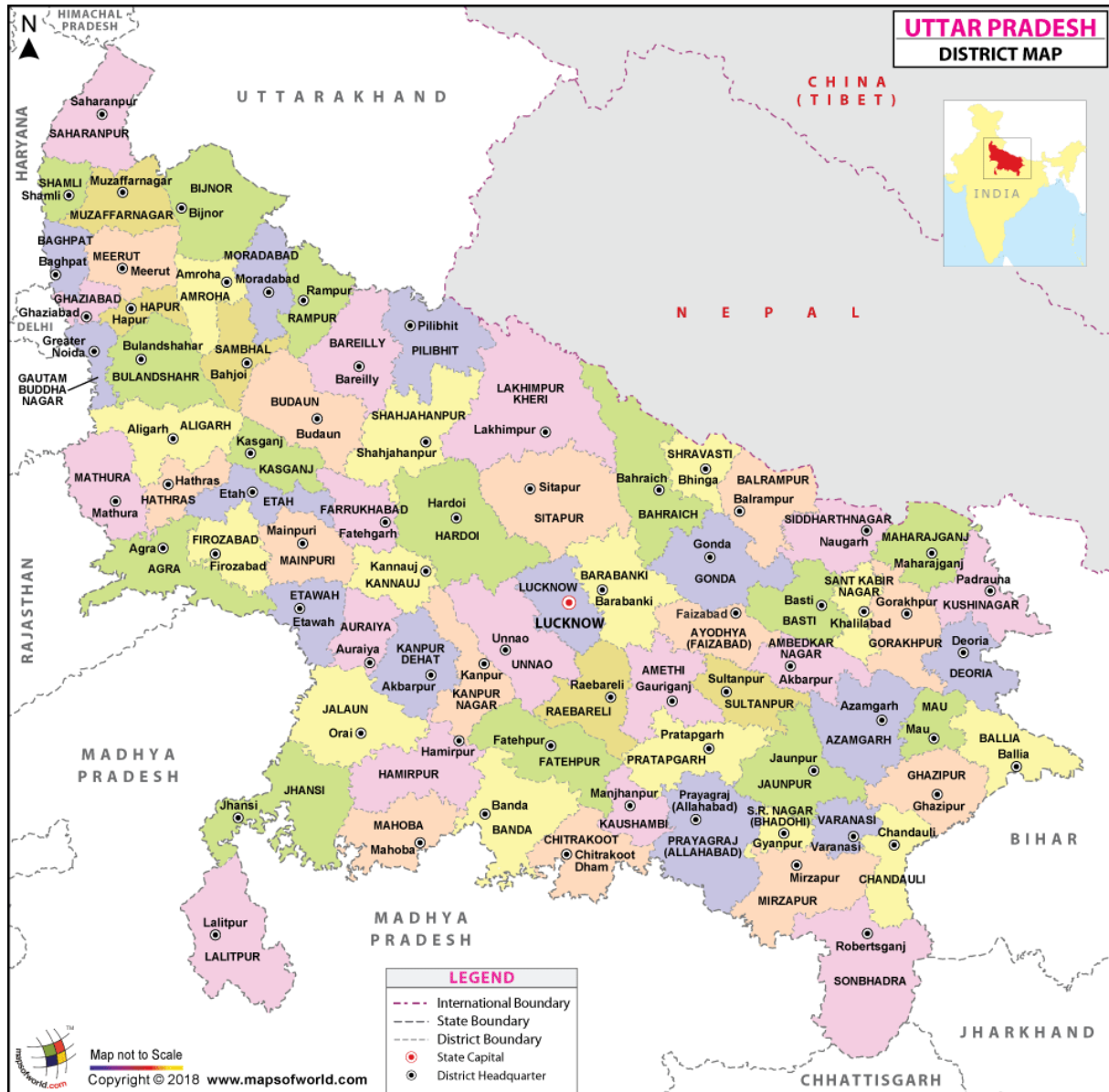
3.1. Fieldwork Methods

3.1.1. Outline

From May 2022 to February 2023, I was living, studying, and travelling in India. As part of my Erasmus Mundus Master in Global Studies, I studied at the Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in the capital city Delhi from May to December. The fieldwork was carried out over five days in December. The planning and preparation however began from spring 2022. In short, with the help of a state-level construction workers union and funding provided by the University of Vienna, I conducted twelve interviews of roughly thirty minutes in Sultanpur district in eastern UP (see figure 9). The research participants are people with a recent Gulf migration experience and their family members, especially parents, wives, and siblings.

Figure 9

Map of the state of UP and its districts. Sultanpur district lies in the central-eastern side of the state and to the southeast from the state capital Lucknow



Note. Adapted from <https://www.mapsofworld.com/india/uttar-pradesh/>

In the proposal stage in spring 2022, this thesis was designed with the intention of supplementing secondary literature with a limited amount of primary material. At that time, another topic was still being considered for this thesis besides the current one –

that is, the recruitment mechanisms in Gulf labour migration.²⁸ For both subjects, two types of primary research were conceived: qualitative interviews with migrant workers and their families and/or recruitment agents, or discourse analyses of recruitment advertisements in newspapers or on social media. The second option was already soon abandoned. The geographical delineation of the study was also still open. In order to find recruitment agents or migrant families to interview, a handful of scholars and four non-governmental organizations were contacted to inquire about concrete leads and/or further contacts. Only in November, because of the higher chances of success, it was decided to focus on social reproduction in northern India. Ultimately, two field visits were made: a one-day visit to a neighbourhood in north-eastern Delhi and a one week visit to the Uttar Pradesh state capital Lucknow and Sultanpur district. The former was not incorporated in this study due to several problems, and was rather used as a pilot to test our methods.²⁹

Having said this, I left Delhi towards Lucknow along with two research assistants. The field trip consisted of attending a conference in Lucknow on 18 December and two days of intensive interviewing in the city of Sultanpur and two nearby villages.³⁰ The conference covered the topic of Gulf labour migration from UP and was organized by Bhawan Nirman Karmakar Mazdoor Union (BNKMU), the Building and Wood Workers'

²⁸ In more detail, this research subject refers to the ways in which private Indian recruitment companies commissioned by Gulf companies search for migrant workers using advertisements on social media and in newspapers, sub-agents and local, social networks. The actual practices of recruitment as well as the surrounding discourses would have been considered.

²⁹ The National Campaign Committee for Construction Workers (NCC-CL) provided us with a contact of an elderly return migrant who told me many people in his community are currently working in the Gulf. In the end, we mostly talked to elderly return migrants who had migrated a few decades ago. They told us there were only a few people in the neighbourhood that can be linked to a recent Gulf migration experience.

³⁰ During the conference in Lucknow, we also interviewed one Gulf migrant who was living in Lucknow at the time and who hailed from Siddharthnagar district in the north-eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, near the border with Nepal. To maintain consistency in our study area, it was decided to not incorporate this interview into our research.

International (BWI) (a global union federation of trade unions in the building, building materials, wood, forestry and allied industries), and Trade Union Coordination Centre (TUCC) (a national trade union federation) (see figure 10).

Figure 10

Photo of the conference on Gulf labour migration from Uttar Pradesh on 18 December 2022



At this conference, we attended two presentations and were provided with some documents. Most importantly, we requested the help of BNKMU in searching for Gulf migrant families. They accepted and on their advice we travelled to Sultanpur city.³¹ From this new base, union members brought us to the homes of Gulf migrant families in the city itself and in two surrounding villages. At the sites, we also conducted what one could term as ‘participant observation’. With the interviewees and other

³¹ Another fieldwork destination that was suggested by BNKMU is Gorakhpur district.

inhabitants, we had general conversations and shared a meal. They also showed us their houses and other buildings, fields, and livestock. Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14 show photos of our field visit in Sultanpur district.

Figure 11

Photo of the rural landscape in Sultanpur district. 21 December 2022



Figure 12

Photo of the house of an interviewed Gulf migrant family. 21 December 2022



Figure 13

Photo of a road in Sultanpur city. 20 December 2022



Figure 14

Photo of cow excrement drying in order to be later used as manure in one of the villages. 21 December 2022



Before moving on to the methodology of this primary research, a few remarks about our research partner and the research assistants are in order. BNKMU (or Bhawan Nirman Karmakar Mazdoor Union) is a state-level construction workers union of UP and an affiliate of the global union federation Building and Wood Workers International (BWI). This union seems to be rather active on the issue of migrant labour. In the past, they have launched and participated in several initiatives related to Uttar Pradesh construction workers migrating to the Gulf.³²

The two research assistants are both male, fellow JNU students and friends of mine studying in the master programme organized by the Centre for Informal Sector

³² This webpage on the website of BWI shows an example of the involvement of BNKMU in this matter: <https://www.bwint.org/cms/india-union-reaches-out-to-thousands-of-outbound-migrants-in-indias-most-populous-state-389>. They have also supported the research project of Buckley et al. (2023) on Indian emigration governance.

and Labour Studies at JNU. They come from the city of Nagpur (Maharashtra) and a village in Gaya district (Bihar). The latter place is in social and economic terms rather similar to eastern UP. This proved to be rather useful in establishing connections with the BNKMU members, Gulf families and other Uttar Pradeshis.

Because of my limited knowledge of Hindustani, the research assistants actually conducted the interviews in this primary research. While almost all interviewees spoke Hindustani, there was one interview conducted in the regional language Awadhi. The local BNKMU member translated for us. Both assistants have attended a course in social research methodology within their master programme and have experience conducting interviews with working-class people. In some interviews I participated by asking the research assistants to translate the questions into English. Additional questions were asked both by me and the research assistants.

Lastly, I want to mention that throughout my stay in India I had other experiences and conversations relating to Gulf labour migration. It was an occasional topic of conversation with fellow JNU students who had relatives and acquaintances working in the Gulf and with local people I met during a one-month solo tourist trip in Kerala (historically the most important sending state).³³

³³ For inspiration for other researchers, it is worthwhile to shortly discuss the other possible avenues for research that were open to us. I had a meeting with the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) located in New Delhi. They informed us about another possible partner in Uttar Pradesh, the NGO Manav Seva Sansthan “Seva”, headquartered in Gorakhpur, that has worked with them on the topic of Gulf migration in the past. Secondly, fellow students at JNU hailing from Kerala, Bihar and West Bengal knew family or contacts who migrated to the Gulf and offered to help me out. Thirdly, I visited the office of the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) of the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, which oversees local Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices. I approached the PGE office hoping to gain contacts of any North Indian organisations working with Gulf migrants, recruitment agencies or Gulf migrants themselves. The officials present at that time were not able to help me. They told me it was also not feasible approaching prospective Gulf migrants visiting the office, since almost all emigration permit applications are held online. Another option was to contact the POE offices in Rae Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) and Patna (Bihar); however, I did not pursue this avenue further. Lastly, it was also suggested to me that several recruitment agencies are present in Delhi, notably in the Okhla neighbourhood.

3.1.2. Methodology

The interviews were qualitative and semi-structured and were conducted with the help of an interview guide. The research design of this primary research can be characterized as exploratory. Given the limited amount of scholarship on social reproduction in Gulf-India labour migration and the practical and logistical challenges in data collection, this research does not claim representativeness of the data for the wider research population. It rather seeks to provide us with a 'lay of the land', to explore new questions and to ultimately open up new avenues of research. Semi-structured interviews using an interview guide were chosen over unstructured interviews because of the fact that I had to delegate the interviewing to the assistants and because I preferred to have some more consistency and comparability in the research findings. In the following text, I discuss how the interview guide was drafted and just how we conducted the interviews. Next, ethical issues and how I dealt with them during the research process are discussed. I conclude by discussing two limitations of the research findings.

3.1.2.1. Interview Guide and Interview Process

The interview guide which can be consulted by the reader in the appendices, was drafted in advance. My fellow JNU students also provided feedback on the guide. The fieldtrip to north-eastern Delhi mentioned above was used as a pilot for the first version of the guide. The guide was then thoroughly modified. After our first interviews in UP, a handful of questions were added and the most important questions were highlighted.

In general, we tried to isolate the interviewees from their family members and others to improve audio quality and to assure privacy. This often proved to be

unsuccessful. Moreover, the assistants were instructed to put the interviewees at ease and give them space to answer the questions at their own pace. The interview process was planned to be dynamic. Not all questions were necessarily asked and, depending on the unique experiences of the interviewee, different topics of conversation were pursued. The interviews were later transcribed and translated into English by friends and fellow JNU students of mine.

The interview guide consists of four sections. The already mentioned first section 'basic information' contains questions about key characteristics of the interviewee, such as: age, place of birth and residence, education level, caste, religion, etc. In the second and third sections, there are questions about the interviewee's experience with Gulf migration and internal migration. The second section includes questions asking about their experiences working in the Gulf (including, wage, working conditions, regularity of employment, and working hours), about their reasons for migrating and about their aspirations for potential future return to the region. The third section was rather limited in scope and it was decided to only include general questions such as where they migrated to inside India, when and how many times. Additionally, we also asked participants how their experience of migrating to the Gulf compared to those of internal migration within India.

The fourth section is the most important one and concerns the topic of social reproduction and care. Questions are formulated concerning remittances, family support during the migration process, and the evolution of the general economic situation throughout the migration process. There is a set of questions concerning 'crisis': "What if anything went wrong with the Gulf migrant. Did you prepare for this financially? What would you do in this case financially? Were you scared of this?". Another set asked if the interviewee based on their experience with Gulf migration would encourage relatives, children, or community members to migrate to the Gulf.

The first set of questions in section four hold particular significance, despite not immediately appearing so. These questions read as follows: “Can you describe what you did yesterday? Which activities? How much time did you spend on these?” and “Can you describe what you did last week”. The rationale behind these leads us to a few essential theoretical considerations that lie at the basis of the entire interview guide. These will now be discussed.

Overall, the interview guide was inspired by several theoretical insights. One of the main theoretical ideas behind the guide is an established theory within feminist political economy: the structural undervaluation and invisibilization of women’s work in many societies. While women often engage in unpaid and paid labour that is equal in quantity to or even surpasses that of men, their activities are frequently not recognized and valued in the same way as men’s work. This even applies to women’s labour that is paid and that produces exchange value.

This has famously been shown by Maria Mies (1982) in her study on female lacemakers in Narsapur (Andhra Pradesh). She has coined the concept of ‘housewifisation’, by which she denotes processes by which the exploitation of women’s paid labour by capital is premised on the societal and self-identification of women as housewives, rather than as workers. In her case study on Narsapur, the lace makers did not see themselves as workers producing lace for a global market, but they are instead defined as nonworking housewives and their work as leisure activity. As a consequence, it was justifiable that they were paid less than their husbands even though they often worked longer hours.

Undoubtedly, this undervaluation of women’s work presents major methodological challenges for our empirical research. The question emerges how women’s economic activities can be effectively studied in a context of ideological undervaluation. To tackle this issue, the first set of questions in section four were added to the interview guide. This set of questions were partially inspired by the time-use

survey, a method that documents how people use their time (Antonopoulos & Hirway, 2009; Jain, 1996). This method enables researchers to construct an image of the unpaid, domestic work mainly performed by women, which are often not captured or even recognized in mainstream economic and labour surveys.

Given the limited scope of this empirical research, we opted to employ the first set of questions in section four as an alternative to the time-use survey method. By making this choice, we aim to gain meaningful insights while working within the confines of our study's limitations. Crafted in a neutral manner and deliberately absent of vocabulary influenced by dominant ideas about (economic) value and productive labour, these questions are designed to circumvent the ideological undervaluation of women's work. In this way, the unpaid and/or undervalued work of women becomes more visible. While it may be impossible to get around this undervaluation completely, these questions offer a superior alternative to merely asking the wives and female family members of Gulf migrants what kind of work or job they do or perform.

A second source of inspiration was the method of workers' inquiries (Vertommen, 2021; Haider & Mohandes, 2013). The method which is used to examine the conditions of the working classes, holds on to the idea that "workers are not passive subjects to be researched, but the most pivotal and best situated actors in describing and thus transforming their own conditions" (Vertommen, 2021, p. 192). Although my primary research is definitely not a workers' inquiry of the reproductive work performed by wife and kin, I draw from this foundational idea that the questions have to be in their lifeworld and that they should speak really about their own experiences. A careful balancing act was thus sought between letting the interviewees speak on their own terms, as well my own information requirements. That is also why interviewees were encouraged to answer freely, they can talk as much as they want.

The third source of inspiration was one of the guiding articles of this thesis, Shah & Lerche (2020). Their exploration of internal labour migration India has

illuminated the pivotal role played by older kin, beyond just the wife, in carrying out reproductive labour. Their description of the various economic activities undertaken by wives and kin at the home site also was important to us in order to understand all dimensions of the household economy.

3.1.2.2. Ethical Considerations and Limitations of the Findings

Since the researched population can be characterized as vulnerable and since some of the questions touch on sensitive subjects, a discussion of the ethical considerations and issues that mark this research is in order.³⁴ Research has shown that abuse and exploitation at different stages of migration to the Gulf are widespread. Therefore, we have taken a number of measures to protect interviewees from future harm as a result of their participation in this study. These include: the use of pseudonyms³⁵, not showing any photographs that would allow easy identification of interviewees and not mentioning the exact names of the villages where interviewing took place. In addition, we have decided to not add the transcripts of the interviews to this thesis. Interested parties can contact the author via e-mail if they wish to consult them.³⁶ Furthermore, to avoid potential harm to the research participants during the interview process itself, no follow-up questions were asked about abuse or harm suffered by Gulf migrants and their families and sensitive questions (for example, about caste) were asked in a particular, non-confronting way. Regarding caste, it is useful to note that the research assistants are both from lower castes. This is advantageous because it reduces the

³⁴ Ethical guidance was sought in Clark et al. (2001), Social Research Association (2003), and the *Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings*.

³⁵ For persons of the Hindu religion, the surname was however retained as it often reflects the caste background of the person.

³⁶ The author's email address is: fennessm@outlook.com.

difference between interviewer and interviewee and contributes to putting the interviewee at ease.

There are some important limitations to the research methods described above. In the case of interviews with wives and female relatives of migrants, there was obviously an important gender difference between interviewer and interviewee. In general women were hesitant to talk to us. There was one case in which a male relative barred us from having an interview with his female relative. In the two interviews we conducted with women, they were generally hesitant to talk to us. It was also difficult to assure privacy in these interviews. In both cases, a male relative was present. This possibility was considered beforehand. It was tried unsuccessfully to have one woman as a research assistant. The need to include a woman in the research team was recognized beforehand. I was, however, unsuccessful in finding a female research assistant.

In general, it proved to be difficult to isolate the interviewees from family members. Hence, privacy during interviewing was in many cases not assured. There could have been a certain hesitancy from migrants and kin to answer certain more sensitive questions. Lastly, even with the help of BNKMU, it was difficult to find and reach Gulf migrants and their families. The research participants were dispersed over a large geographical area, so it proved to be difficult logistically and timewise to reach them.

3.1.3. Research Participants

The interview group consists of persons who have migrated to the Gulf within the past few years and their immediate family members. Among the interviewees, six persons were migrants. They were either on temporary leave from their work in the Gulf or had returned to their home in India indefinitely because their visa was expired and their employment ended. The other six interviewees, the family members of Gulf migrants, include three fathers, one mother, one wife and one brother. In total, members of eight families were interviewed. The interviewed migrants worked in various Gulf countries: Saudi Arabia, Dubai (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar. Bahrain and Oman were not represented in our study. Almost all migrants fell within the age range of late twenties to early thirties. However, one interviewee stood out due their significantly older age, being fifty years old. In terms of their occupations in the Gulf, our interviewees held various roles, including storekeepers, air-conditioning technicians, construction workers, plumbers, car denting and painting workers, painters, and furniture polishers. Our interviewee group included both Muslims and Hindus. In terms of caste, all interviewees fell into the OBC ('Other Backward Castes') and SC ('Scheduled Castes') categories. Additionally, all interviewed migrants had attained educational levels no higher than high school.

3.2. Gulf Migration

3.2.1. Motivations

The interviewed migrants told us they migrated to the Gulf mainly because of the higher wages present in the Gulf countries. Two other interviewees also pointed to the scarcity of jobs within their home place. For example, one Gulf migrant told us the following: “Where would I find work [in India]? I didn’t earn that much money. I am still thinking of going back [to the Gulf], but due to the medical exam failure, I am unable to go.” When we asked father Mukhtar Ansari³⁷ if he is ever worried about his son staying in the Gulf so far from home, he promptly replied: “What to do, it’s compulsion, no service job is available here. (...) And if one stays here, brother, he won’t get a job. (...)”

Gulf migrants’ decision to migrate was made in the context of the family and was also motivated by family concerns. The potential economic gains from Gulf migration were intended for family members at home: constructing houses, facilitating the marriage of daughters or sisters, or funding the education of siblings or children. For instance, consider the case of Narendra Yadav, who expressed that his only motivation for migrating to the Gulf was to “fulfil the dream of my family and to fulfil all the stuff for home and future with money.” Similarly, Babar Ahmad told us his decision to migrate was driven by family-related issues: “I had to get my sister married here and set up a home. I also had to settle my brother, who is in the medical field. After that, he wanted to pursue further studies”. Moreover, a significant portion of the wages earned by these migrants is sent back home as remittances. Many interviewed migrants also indicated that if their familial responsibilities were met, they would consider returning to India permanently. This sentiment is exemplified by Narendra Yadav who, at the time of the interview was on temporary leave from his job in the Gulf, contemplated permanently returning from Qatar:

³⁷ The names of interviewees used in this chapter are not their real names but are pseudonyms.

“Yes, I thought of that. Still I have a lot of burdens to teach my brother and money problems in my house. My younger brother is preparing for a medical diploma and a bachelor in pharmacy, so I am helping him financially. To get married to my cousin’s sisters. So I am planning to return after 4-5 years”.

In addition, as we will explore in greater detail later in this study, the interviewed migrants also heavily rely on networks of friends and family before departing for the Gulf and once they arrive there.³⁸

When we inquired about the overall experiences of migrants working in the Gulf, the majority responded favourably. Despite low wages, long working hours and occasional employer misconduct, the interviewees were positive and said to want to work again in the Gulf in the future. However, asking Gulf migrants and their family members whether they would encourage community members, family or even their own children to go the Gulf, the responses were mixed. In terms of disadvantages, they highlighted homesickness and the emotional strain of being separated from their homes and families. For instance, Bhagwan Yadav gave the following reasons he would not advise anyone to migrate: “you need to leave your family, you work so hard, wake up in the morning, go to work, you can only talk to your family when you are in the room, that too for a few minutes. So I don’t advise anyone.”

Regarding their children, the majority of interviewees would not like them to migrate to the Gulf. Instead, they preferred that their children work in India, pursue education, or start own businesses. Asking about the future of her grandchildren, the elderly Phoolkumari Yadav answered as follows: “We think that they should study, get

³⁸ The Qatari migrant Abbas Mirza gave as additional reasons the fact that the Gulf countries are Islamic and the political-economic conditions in these countries. He explained the latter reason as follows: “the companies and the government are good and efficient, they do not overlook matters, and companies have to pay, otherwise the government questions them. (...) the companies there are efficient, it is good, fixed work hours and salary on time, if you have any issues you can complain as well.”

some decent job here only, or they can do some business, whatever they want to do, but they should do it here in our own country.” Similarly, Abbas Mirza echoed this sentiment when discussing his future children. He said:

“No, I would not send my children to the Gulf. Firstly, I will ensure their education, whatever I will be capable of, and if they find a job after studies they will stay here or else they have to go outside, if they settle then it is fine, I don’t want them to leave their family just like me.”

However, an alternative perspective was offered by 72-year-old Shivnath Baksh:

“Depends on their mind and circumstances... better if they go and earn money... Without earning money, nothing can happen, right? If they earn money, then they can provide for all of us, and we can live comfortably and happily. That’s all there is, nothing more.”

3.2.2. Working and Living Conditions

The wages earned by the younger interviewed migrants ranged generally between 22,500 and 45,000 rupees (270 and 540 US dollars) per month. In Qatar, 33-year-old Babar Ahmad secured an exceptionally relatively high wage of around 68,000 rupees per month (396 US dollars). Meanwhile, in Kuwait, the 50-year-old Mangal Sajivan earned approximately 10,700 rupees per day for commission work (129 US dollars). These wages significantly exceed what unskilled and semi-skilled workers could earn in India. The average monthly wages for casual workers in UP in 2021-22 are 7,313 rupees (88 US dollars). Regular workers and self-employed workers have an average monthly remuneration of 16,110 (194 US dollars) and 9,422 rupees (113 US dollars) respectively. (Basole et al., 2023)

All interviewed migrants worked six out of seven days, with their off day on Friday. However, Kanahaiya Kumar who worked in Dubai, did not consistently have Fridays off; it depended on the employer. Although working hours were generally fixed for most interviewees, they frequently performed unpaid overtime. Actual working hours varied between eight and twelve hours. The working hours for Babar Ahmad in Saudi Arabia were exceptionally high: eleven to twelve hours consistently. Leave periods were mostly one full month per year. Bhagwan Yadav working in Dubai, had a leave period of 40 days per two years.

Housing was provided to the interviewed migrant workers. This typically consisted of only one room shared with several other migrant workers from various countries. Five out of six interviewees were responsible for providing their own food. An extreme example is Bhagwan Yadav, who during his five-year stay in Dubai shared a room with fifteen other people. When we asked him if he faced any problems staying with such a large number of people who were also of a different nationality, Bhagwan responded as follows: "There were no problems, I didn't have any conversation with them, we just focused on our respective roles, go to work in the morning, come back in the evening, cook for yourself, eat and sleep." Mangal Sajivan gave the following description of his living space:

"In big companies there, they take a whole flat, so they accommodate six people in one room. It's about 6 by 4 meters, depending on the available space, but space is very limited in these companies."

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, migrant workers are often housed in specially designed labour camps, located far away from citizen and tourist spaces. However, it is unclear whether this applies to our research participants, as we did not specifically ask the interviewees if their accommodations could be characterized as 'labour camps'. Nevertheless, Kanahaiya Kumar's accommodation in Dubai does seem

to be a labour camp. When asking about his activities on his occasional day off on Friday, he provided the following answer:

“We used to live 200-300 kms away from the city, there was no tour from the company. On Jummah holidays they never really sent any buses for us to get out. We would also need an official permit from the company to go anywhere around. There would be army men at the company gate, if you don’t have a gate pass you won’t be allowed to go anywhere.”

Lastly, some interviewees reported instances of abuse or misconduct by employers. Two out of six interviewees experienced late salary payments. In Qatar, Narendra Yadav faced delays of two to three months in wage payments at his first company. Babar Ahmad, who worked in both Qatar and Saudi Arabia, experienced payment delays only in Saudi Arabia. He also mentioned that some of his friends received lower wages than what they were promised before leaving for the Gulf. Additionally, the passport of Mangal Sajivan was illegally withheld by his employers when he was in Kuwait on a work permit. Moreover, Narendra Yadav, who stayed in Qatar, recounted the experience of a friend who was told he would work as a private driver, but, once arrived, was instead assigned to cut up raw chicken and feed it to a hawk in the middle of the night.

Despite these instances, the interviewees generally reported few incidents during their time working in the Gulf. When we asked about any bad experiences with his kafil or employer during his time in Qatar, Abbas Mirza responded: “No, no, work is the only thing that matters, we work on time so there are no issues.”

3.2.3. Pathways to a Job

Indian migrant labourers reside and work in the Gulf on a work visa or a 'free visa'. A work visa entails the employment of the migrant by one citizen, which can be a company or private person. The expiration of the visa means that the migrant must return to his country of citizenship. As noted earlier in chapter one, migrant labour in the Gulf is managed through the *kafala* system, a work permit sponsorship system, in which the migrant is in essence bound to a citizen acting as a sponsor, that could be an individual employer, private or public institution/firm, or a labour outsourcing firm. In this system, migrant workers can only work and reside in the Gulf as long as they are sponsored. Moreover, workers are forbidden from switching jobs and prevented from leaving the country without the permission of the sponsoring employer.

'Free visas', or also known as *azad visas* or private visas, are obtained as a result of visa trading. Sponsors who are entitled to more visas than they need typically sell the extra ones on the black market, where they are bought by migrant workers or recruitment agencies. Workers on "free visas" are free in finding their own employment. In this case, the sponsor is only a legal provider, but not an actual employer. (Kodoth, 2020, p. 49)

Three of our six interviewed Gulf migrants had experiences of working in the Gulf with a free visa. Their experiences, however, varied significantly. One such example is Narendra Yadav, who resided in Qatar for three years. After an initial four months of job searching, he managed to secure a job as retail worker in a mall. Later on, he obtained a work visa, which, according to him, only required a phone call. These three interviewees migrating on a free visa did not report any significant difficulties during their stay and employment.

Another example is Babar Ahmad who migrated several times to Saudi Arabia and Qatar with both a work and free visa. The fifty-year old painter, Mangal Sajivan, who migrated several times to Kuwait, was rather positive about his one-time experience migrating on a non-work visa:

“When I was on a free visa, things were good. There were no restrictions. We could work when we wanted, sleep when we wanted. We could work for anyone or not work at all if we wished. We were our own masters.”

Regardless of a free or work visa, all interviewed Gulf migrants learned about the opportunity to work in the Gulf through friends or relatives. Relatives and friends also played a significant role in providing support both before departure as well as during the first months after arrival in the Gulf. Narendra Yadav emphasized the importance of having relatives in the Gulf, stating: “If you have any relative [in the Gulf], then only you should go, otherwise it will be more difficult.”

In the case of most interviewees, the migration process involved a recruitment agent, even in instances of free visas. Data from the Ministry of External Affairs suggest that almost all ‘Emigration Check Required’ (ECR) migrants migrate through a recruitment agency. In 2016, this method constituted 95 percent of all ECR migration, whereas only 5 percent of migrants were directly recruited by a Gulf company (ILO, 2018). Agents charged extremely high fees for their services, typically ranging between 55,000 and 80,000 rupees (661 and 961 US dollars). Babar Ahmad paid an especially high fee of 150,000 rupees for his first migration to Qatar on a free visa (1802 US dollars). In contrast, Mangal Sajivan who migrated to Kuwait in 2014 on a free visa, paid his agent only 5,000 rupees (60 US dollars). With prior experience in Gulf migration, he managed most affairs himself and only required an agent to get his passport stamped by the Kuwaiti embassy. Similarly, Abbas Mirza only paid between 10,000 and 20,000 rupees (120 and 240 US dollars) to his agent. There is thus a large degree of individual variation within agent fees.

These agent fees, along with flight tickets and other associated costs, pose a significant financial barrier for migrants. To overcome this, all interviewed migrants borrowed from family, friends, and sometimes even fellow villagers. Consequently, for a considerably long period after their arrival – ranging from three months to one year– migrants use a significant portion of their wages to pay off these debts.

One case of fraud by an agent was observed. Kanahaiya Kumar, who had previously worked in Dubai, attempted to move to the Gulf for a second time, this time to Kuwait. He recounted the experience as follows:

“After my father’s death, there were financial problems so I could never plan to go. The agent asked me to pay him for going to Kuwait and within 15 days everything will be sorted, but I said I won’t give money first but he insisted and ensured us and later delayed the ticket booking and is not even returning money. I paid him 70,000, he is been stalling for nine months. I haven’t filed any case because then I might not be able to go to the Gulf for legal reasons. I have lost all hope, he did the same to a lot more people, but he kept on giving excuses. It is an entirely Muslim area where he comes from, so nobody really takes any action against the agent.”

In the exact ways in which migrants found employment in the Gulf, we observed a large amount of individual variation. To illustrate this diversity, we show the individual journey of the 26-year-old Bhagwan Yadav who worked in Dubai for 5 years. Bhagwan found his job through his friend’s brother who had worked in Dubai before. This friend informed him about job interviews for the position of plumber taking place in Gorakhpur (a city in northeastern UP). After he was selected, Bhagwan waited for 40 days for his work visa. The agents asked for 60,000 rupees (721 US dollars) as a fee, but he was able to negotiate this down to 55,000 rupees (661 US dollars). To secure such a large sum of money, Bhagwan borrowed from his brother-in-law and some other people in his family. After this, he left for Dubai. Only in Dubai itself did he found out his exact salary.

3.3. Internal Migration and Gulf Migration

In subchapter 2.2. of this thesis, we showed how Gulf migration from eastern UP and Bihar is an extension of prior existing internal labour migration patterns from these states. Our interviews confirm this. All interviewed Gulf migrants had prior experiences of migrating to other parts of India for work. Destination cities and region include Odisha, Gujarat, Chandigarh, Kachchh (Gujarat), and Mumbai. Especially Delhi is popular. Four out of six interviewees had worked in the city. One interviewee, Mangal Sajivan, has also migrated to Malaysia for fourteen months. He preferred Kuwait much more compared to Malaysia, pointing to false promises by agents, high fees of agents, living conditions and environmental factors. The interviewees preferred to migrate to the Gulf, because of the higher wages. Abbas put it in the following way: “here the pay is less, there it is slightly more, there is no big difference it is just that we are able to save money there and send it home.” Kanahaiya Kumar forms an exception. He does not prefer the Gulf because of higher wages, but because of the higher regularity of employment and the absence of ancillary costs of things like transportation, food, rent, utility costs.

3.4. Migrant Families Back Home in India

Migrants sent a substantial part of their wages back home to their family on a regular basis, most often monthly. The interviewed migrants sent most often between 15,000 and 20,000 rupees (180 and 240 US dollars) back home each month. Remittances accounted most often for a percentage between 40 and 70 percent of the wages earned in the Gulf. For example, Abbas Mirza, who worked in Qatar, remitted each month between 18 and 23 thousand (216 and 276 US dollars) out of a wage of around 39,000 rupees (468 US dollars), accounting for approximately 47 to 59 percent.

Kanahaiya Kumar, who worked in Dubai, sent home a remarkable 82 percent of his 23,000-rupee monthly income (276 US dollars). He explained that his earnings were only retained for essential expenses, such as mobile costs and small emergencies.

The families of Gulf migrants are particularly dependent on these remittances. In fact, six out of eight interviewed migrant families told us they were fully reliant on remittances; other sources of income were non-existent or minimal (except for subsistence agriculture). Among the other two families, one said that while remittances were the largest and most importance source of income, the brothers and father also contributed to the household budget. No information was available for the second family. These remittances served diverse purposes within the families, spanning from covering day-to-day expenses to addressing exceptional financial needs, such as housing construction, marrying off siblings, children or cousins, education of siblings and children and debt repayment. Remittances were also used to purchase food, medicine, fertilizers, seeds, etc... That is why, all families said they would face problems if this crucial financial lifeline would be disrupted.

Seven out of eight interviewees reported that their own and their family's economic situation improved considerably after migration. The interviewed migrants described their changing fortunes in varying ways. For example, Babar Ahmad gave the following description: "The situation at home has become much better than before. We have opened a shop, yes, there is one sister left, she will also go after two years, so slowly, even these costs will decrease, God willing." Afroz Mirza told us the following:

"Are you asking before my son went to Qatar? Before he went to Qatar the household's financial situation was dire and really bad. I could only build just one room for us to live. There were a lot of troubles because of our bad financial situation, it was a struggle. There was no income to get the people in the family married, or to build a proper house for all of us. I had to live through deep poverty."

Mangal Sajivan's experiences are very similar:

"Earlier, I had a mud house, now it's a proper house. I built a house for my brother too, he lives near the railway line. I turned my field into a house, so these are the changes. Earlier, we had thatched roofs, now they are all gone. Earlier, we used to walk, now we go by car."

The only exception to this is the case of the Ansari family, of which the son, Nadeem, migrated approximately one year ago to Saudi Arabia. Father Mukhtar told us that his family's financial situation did not yet improve as a result of his son's migration. He was, however, hopeful that now that the debts incurred to facilitate the migration had recently been settled. Given that Nadeem only migrated recently to the Gulf, it is clear that generally Gulf migration represents a significant improvement of the economic situation of the families remaining at home.

However, this improvement does not seem to be enduring and resilient. Given that the interviewed Gulf migrants were predominantly in their late twenties and early thirties, it is challenging to ascertain substantial social mobility at this stage. The two interviewed families with a longer experience of Gulf migration, the Sajivan and Baksh families, offer insight into the sustainability of economic gains. Regarding the first family, the fifty-year old Mangal Sajivan migrated surprisingly early to the Gulf, more specifically to Kuwait from 1999 to 2003. In this time, a relatively small number of people migrated to the Gulf from UP. In 2000, for example, only 9,000 ECR migrants left UP. Mangal returned again to Kuwait between 2014/15 and 2020/21. Although the conditions of the Sajivan family did improve significantly, the benefits from Gulf migration were however not long-lasting. His wife, Sarla Devi, said the following about this:

"There was a short-lived change, for example the house was built, the children were married. After spending it all, it was all back to before. (...) I used the money

which he sent, to do the necessary work, but now we have returned to similar conditions as before.”

This is why, Mangal expressed his wishes to return to Kuwait for another time. The second family, Baksh, knows a similar fate. Their son, Ranjit, is of an age between 45 and 50 years and migrated to Kuwait 15 years ago, around 2010. Although conditions at home have certainly improved, the 72-year-old father Shivrath told us his family still lives in poor conditions. Ranjit’s brother, Binod, told us the following:

“When my brother went there, he would send money back. He told us to build two or three rooms for living, to have something to eat and accommodate anyone who would come to visit... So, we built a small house, and that’s all we have now.”

Additionally, for the Kumar family, whose son, the 28-year-old Kanahaiya, migrated to Dubai in 2016-17, the benefits were not durable. Although the family’s situation improved significantly after Kanahaiya’s return, their situation deteriorated quickly again, exacerbated by his father’s death and fraud by an agent when he tried to go to the Gulf for a second time.

3.5. Social Reproduction of Gulf Migrant Labour

3.5.1. Social Reproduction in the Global South

In recent years, several critiques of the recent wave of social reproduction literature, most notably the *Social Reproduction Theory* volume (Bhattacharya, 2017b), have been raised from a Global South perspective (Mezzadri, 2021b; Naidu, 2023; Rao, 2021; Arslan, 2023). Recent social reproduction analyses have predominantly centred on Europe and North America, addressing issues such as the privatization of public services and crises of social reproduction as a result of neoliberal capitalism. Here, we discuss two significant contributions from a Global South standpoint highly relevant for our analysis of social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour.

In her 2023 journal article *Circuits of Social Reproduction: Nature, Labor, and Capitalism*, Sirisha Naidu outlines an alternative circuit of social reproduction appropriate for the Global South. With this alternative circuit, she reacts to Bhattacharya (2017a)'s earlier formulation of a circuit of social reproduction of labour power. With this circuit, Bhattacharya (2017a) explains how wage labour that crucial for capitalist production is reproduced based on earned wages and on domestic and care work ('reproductive labour'). However, Naidu (2023) raises the critique that this circuit is not appropriate for the condition of the working classes in the Global South. The circuit is focused on wage labour and presumes complete or near complete proletarianization. In contrast to the countries of the Global North, the Global South is characterized by semi-proletarianization. Workers are only partially dispossessed, not fully and thus remain connected to the land. In addition to wage labour, the majority of workers in the Global South are engaged in alternative labour processes such as simple commodity production and subsistence agriculture. Numerous studies have shown that semi-proletarianization is not transient, but rather a dominant and persistent feature of capitalism in the Global South.

Based on this, Naidu (2023) proposes an alternative circuit of social reproduction appropriate for the reality of the Global South. In this new circuit, noncapitalist commodity production (including simple commodity production, home-based work, various forms of self-employment, and forms of disguised wage labour), and subsistence production and agriculture is included in addition to reproductive labour and wage labour. All these different types of labour are understood as ‘labours of social reproduction’ – all contributing to the social reproduction of wage labour.

Shah & Lerche (2020) study the social reproduction, which they term ‘invisible economies of care’, of Adivasi and Dalit men who seasonally migrate for work to other parts of India. Inspired by insights from Social Reproduction Theory and anthropological research from the 1970s on migrant labour in Sub-Saharan Africa, their study illuminates how economies of care at the home site sustain the entire system of migrant exploitation at the sites of production. Ethnographic fieldwork in the northeastern state of Jharkhand show that these economies of care at the home site can include: “the land that provides grain for some of the year for the migrant household, the forests that provide firewood and timber for building houses, and the cows, buffalos, and goats that provide a livelihood and a safety net back at home” (Shah & Lerche, 2020, p. 727). These economies of care further encompass subsistence production (agriculture or hunting and gathering) and simple commodity production. Additionally, uncommodified labour is also of importance: “tend the fields, keep the household functioning, look after livestock, and help ensure that the migrant has something to come back to, is looked after in old age when he/she gets no pension, and becomes part of generating the next generation of the labour force” (Shah & Lerche, 2020, p. 727). Moreover, Shah & Lerche (2020) also argue that is not solely the wives but also extended kin networks, including older generations (grandparents and uncles and aunts) and children who are instrumental in sustaining these economies of care.

3.5.2. Labours of Social Reproduction of Gulf Migrant Labour

The social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour is spatially separated between the Gulf and the country of origin. Before moving on to the discussion of the socially reproductive activities at home, we shortly discuss socially reproductive activities of migrant labour that occur in the Gulf.

Social reproduction in the Gulf

The daily social reproduction of migrant labour occurs in the Gulf. In migrations with a work visa, a large part of daily social reproduction is realized by the employer by providing accommodation. However, 5 out of 6 interviewed migrant workers were themselves responsible for buying their own ingredients and cooking their own food. Sometimes workers cooked collectively together with their roommates. The wages earned in the Gulf were thus partially used up for the workers' social reproduction. As discussed earlier, large parts were sent home – in our interviews, most often between 40 and 70 percent of monthly wages. Interestingly, one of the interviewed migrants, Kanahaiya Kumar, pointed to the absence of ancillary costs like housing, transportation, utility costs, and food (a canteen was provided by the employer) as one of the benefits of Gulf migration over his experiences migrating within India (specifically to Chandigarh). He told us the following: “In India you have to worry about room rent, electricity, water, gas connection on your own, there you go work, eat and sleep without much charges at all.”³⁹

³⁹ Mezzadri (2021a) argues that industrial hotels and dormitories in Asia and Eastern Europe allow employers to extend labour control beyond the worktime. In this way, the reproductive realm of the home contributes to the surplus value extraction by employers. Studies specifically focused on labour camps in the Gulf should investigate whether similar mechanisms are present.

Social reproduction at Home

A large share of the costs of social reproduction of migrant labour in the Gulf are spatially externalised by state and capital to families and home regions in the countries of origin. This is similar to exploitation of Adivasi and Dalit seasonal labour migrants within India studied by Shah & Lerche (2020) and to internal labour migration in India in general. Labour and economic activities of women and kin at home sustain the whole system of migrant labour exploitation in the Gulf.

In most times the home site is responsible for the intergenerational and long-term social reproduction. Exceptionally, in times of leave and periods in-between employment, workers are reproduced daily at home.⁴⁰ Crucially, this social reproduction consists of childcare (creating the next generation of workers) and elder care (caring for workers in old age). The Gulf state and capital are not contributing to these expenses and are thus exempted from a large part of the social reproduction costs of their labour force.

Furthermore, kin at the home site contribute to social reproduction by lending money to the migrant for migration costs such as flight tickets and agent fees. As shown earlier, all six interviewed Gulf migrants financed these costs by borrowing from family members. Family members also sustain migrant labour by ensuring the continuity of the household and the maintenance of fields, housing, and livestock. Asking about how his family supported him during his time migrating to Kuwait, 50-year-old Mangal Sajivan responded as follows: "They took care of everything at home, looked after the sick children, managed the farming and other things. I used to see all

⁴⁰ As discussed earlier in chapter 1.4., the millions of potential workers in the sending countries constitute a reserve army of labour. The daily social reproduction of this part of the Gulf's working class occurs in the home sites in the sending countries.

that when I was there.” Wives and kin also provide psycho-social support for Gulf migrants through regular video and voice call.

The ethnographical fieldwork on Indian workers migrating to the Gulf by Wright (2021) also underscores the importance of the family in facilitating migration. She writes: “Amit⁴¹’s story demonstrates a common one in which joint families and shared responsibilities both motivate and facilitate migration” (p. 110). Wright (2021)’s ethnography adds another contribution by wives and kin to social reproduction, which was not mentioned by our interviewees. Wives of Gulf migrants often care for the migrant’s parents.

Social reproduction in India typically takes place in a type of family organization called a joint family which is based on patrilocality, i.e. married couples and their children living together with the husband’s family (Wright, 2021, pp. 94-95). Moreover, the north Indian states of Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, and Haryana Raj are highly patriarchal. North Indian patriarchy is characterised by “patrilineal, patrilocal, village exogamous, caste hypergamous marriage, restrictions on female mobility, the association of higher group status with female modesty (symbolized by covering heads with a sari, ghunghat, or burka), and prohibitions on women’s ‘outside’ activities, including labour” (Gidwani & Ramamurthy, 2018, p. 1002). The strength of proscriptions against female mobility and participation in the public domain also increase according to caste status (Gidwani & Ramamurthy, 2018, p. 1002).

The social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour consists of several types of labour processes including Gulf migrant wage labour, intra-national migrant wage labour, wage labour in the place of origin, simple commodity production, subsistence agriculture and uncommodified domestic and care work. Commercial agriculture was absent among our eight interviewed Gulf families.

⁴¹ Amit is one of Wright (2021)’s research participants.

Before moving on to a discussion of these different labours of social reproduction, we provide two examples of the labour processes among our interviewed families. The Ansari family consists of two parents living together with their three sons and two daughters; one daughter is married and has moved out of the family home. Father Mukhtar Ansari works as a farmer cultivating crops for the family's own consumption on a small plot of land of 0.63 ha. His son Nadeem has worked since 2022 in Saudi Arabia as a personal driver. His two brothers are an electronic rickshaw driver in Sultanpur city and a student. The mother and the two resident daughters are performing care and domestic work. The Ahmad family consists of the mother and seven children. Three out of four daughters have moved in with their husbands' families. Two sons work in the Gulf and one son runs a medical store in Sultanpur. The resident daughters and mother are engaged in domestic and care work.

Paid labour

Wage labour in the Gulf and in other sites in India such as Gujarat, Delhi and Mumbai by the migrant and family members are remunerated with wages. Remittances from these wages represent a significant contribution to household income. As discussed earlier, six out of eight interviewed migrant families told us they were fully reliant on Gulf remittances for monetary income. Interviewees often noted that these remittances were especially used for "exceptional expenses" such as housing construction, marrying off siblings, children or cousins, and education of siblings and children. Although the social reproduction scholarship does not often consider wage labour itself being essential for social reproduction, our research shows that wages sent back home are crucial for household economies and by extension the social reproduction of wage labour itself.

Paid labour also includes wage labour in the home region, simple commodity production and exchange by fathers and brothers at home. This includes occupations such as teacher, self-employed tailor, mason, electrical rickshaw driver, medical store owner and home guard (volunteer force tasked to be an auxiliary to the police). Surprisingly, no wives or other female family members in the eight interviewed migrant families were engaged in paid labour (wage labour or simple commodity production). The zero participation of women in paid labour in our interview group is surprising, even given the low levels of female labour participation rate in the whole of India.

Official data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) of 2011-12 for the eastern region of UP shows that 80.9 percent of men and 33.2 percent of women between 15 and 59 years of age participate in the labour force (thus perform paid or self-employed labour). With this female labour force participation rate, eastern UP is similar to the all-India rate of 32.5 percent. (Mamgain & Verick, 2017) The question arises whether Gulf migration leads to a change in labour patterns within families at home, most notable a shift from paid labour by women to subsistence agriculture and reproductive labour.

Workers in eastern UP perform mostly self-employed labour (68 percent of all workers), largely in agriculture and allied activities.⁴² Self-employment in eastern UP is significantly more dominant compared to other regions of the state – for example, 57.3 percent in the western region and 58.8 percent in the southern region – and to the whole of India (49 percent). Mamgain & Verick (2017) argue that this is due to “the overdependence of workers (...) on farm-based livelihood options” (p. 17). Self-employed workers in eastern UP are thus mostly independent farmers. Despite decreasing numbers, agriculture continues to be the most important sector of

⁴² This also includes subsistence agriculture next to forms of paid, commercialized labour.

employment within India – accounting for 46.2 percent of all employment. (Mamgain & Verick, 2017)

In the eastern region, wage labour thus comprises a smaller share of 32 percent. The quality of wage employment is low. 22.6 percent of all wage labourers perform casual labour, while only 9.4 percent are in regular salaried jobs. (Mamgain & Verick, 2017) It is important to note that these data do not take into account the fact that many working people in India combine different labour processes at the same time to fulfil their livelihood needs (e.g., agriculture, wage labour, and self-employed labour).

Subsistence agriculture

Most interviewed migrant families – six out of eight - owned agricultural land and engaged in subsistence agriculture. Cultivation of crops to sell on the market was not present. In terms of size, three out of six agricultural plots could be seen as marginal holdings (less than 1 ha) and one out of six is considered to be a small holding (between 1 and 2 ha). No information was unfortunately recorded for the remaining two families. These figures correspond to the overall figures of the Agricultural Census of 2015-16, which show that 86.5 percent of holdings in the eastern UP are marginal (less than 1 ha) and 9.2 percent are small (1-2 ha). Agricultural holdings in the eastern region are therefore significantly smaller compared to other regions of UP. Eastern UP is situated in the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains in the north of India. Predominantly food grains are grown – around 83.1 percent of the cropped area in the region is cereal and millets. (Jose et al., 2022, p. 27)

None of these six ‘agricultural’ families reported to be full-time engaged in agriculture. Members of these families were also engaged in simple commodity production and wage labour. Moreover, in only two families there is at least one adult male engaged full-time in agriculture. However, all families told us that everyone in the

family participated in the family's agriculture in one way or another. It is unsure from our interviews whether Gulf migration increased the participation by female family members in agriculture, as has been often observed by other studies on male out-migration (Tata-Cornell Institute, 2020; Tumbe, 2015). Only in one interviewed family, it is clear that the wife of the Gulf migrant took over all agricultural tasks: "Yes, my wife looks after farming. Since it is farming work, it has to be done. We don't hire labourers from outside. She takes care of all the work."⁴³

Subsistence agriculture appears here next to uncommodified domestic and care work as crucial to social reproduction. Semi-proletarianization has been a predominant feature in the countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Naidu, 2023, p. 97). Similar to domestic and care work, subsistence agriculture allows for an externalisation of the costs of social reproduction to spheres outside of capitalist production. In this sense, "partial dispossession is handy for capital" (Mezzadri, 2021b, p. 72). This is however not unique to Gulf migrant labour but is a feature of all capitalist accumulation sustained on semi-proletarian wage labour. (Naidu, 2023, p. 95; Deere, 1976) However, unlike domestic and care work, it is unsure whether it is similarly gendered.

Domestic and care work

Wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers of Gulf migrants were mostly engaged in domestic and care work within the home. Participation of women in paid employment is low in eastern UP and in India in general because of the low quality and lower salaries of female employment, patriarchal norms, and the gendered burden of domestic and care work (see also Naidu & Rao, 2018). Moreover, female labour force participation has been declining in India since the 1990s, especially in rural areas (Ghosh, 2021). A

⁴³ The wife of the Gulf migrant in this case, Sarla Devi Sajivan, told us that for some agricultural tasks during harvesting season she did hire labourers.

time-use survey of the NSSO for 2019 shows that 94 percent of women in India engage in unpaid activities compared to around one-fifth of men. Women also spend significantly more time on these activities than men. (Ghosh, 2021, pp. 346-348)

Returning to the question of non-existent engagement of female kin of Gulf migrants in self-employed and wage labour, this is likely to be attributed to an increasing burden of social reproduction because of the absence of the Gulf migrant and the continuity of labour needs in subsistence agriculture. An increase of household income due to Gulf remittances that lessen the necessity of female paid labour may also play a role. However, our interviews showed that while remittances improved the economic situation of the family significantly, the economic benefits were not long-lasting and did not cause a decrease in livelihood needs. Perhaps changing norms about women's work due to migration to the Gulf, infamously known as highly patriarchal, could also be a factor.

In the welfare states of the Global North, the state is very active in the provision of goods and services relevant for social reproduction. However, this is not the case in much of the Global South, including India. The involvement of the Indian government in social reproduction is minimal (Rao, 2021, pp. 47-48; Naidu & Ossome, 2016, pp. 58-61; also see Harris-White, 2003, pp. 35-38). One of the interviewed migrant families told us they received wheat, rice, and other foodstuffs each month through the Public Distribution System of the government. The father, however, told us that the amount was far from sufficient. According to him, it barely lasts him and his family even ten days. Hence, it is not the Indian state and capital that are carrying the costs of social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour and by extension capital accumulation, but rather the families back home, especially women.

3.5.3. Social Reproduction at Home and the Exploitation of Migrant Labour in the Gulf

In subchapter 1.4. of this thesis, we outlined Adam Hanieh's perspective on the Gulf's class formation as a spatial structure extending beyond the boundaries of the national state. According to Hanieh (2015), the distinct spatiality of the Gulf's migratory working class is vital to the Gulf's political economy because it heightens exploitation, contributes to labour control, and impedes collective struggle. We believe that a consideration of the social reproduction is crucial within these three functions. Firstly, the social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour and its features contributes to increasing levels of exploitation. Because of the spatiality of social reproduction, the costs of social reproduction are largely spatially externalised to the wives and families back home. Labours of social reproduction performed by wives and kin at home provide a direct subsidy to Gulf capital. Crucial within these labours of social reproduction is gendered domestic and care work and subsistence agriculture. The semi-proletarian condition of the Gulf's working class therefore contributes to surplus value extraction.

Feminist scholarship on India has shown how women's paid and unpaid labour often remains unrecognized and is not even considered as work (Ghosh, 2021; Mies, 1982). In many societies, including India's, women's work is structurally undervalued and invisibilized. Therefore, Gulf migrant labour is cheapened even further, since the value produced by women's unpaid domestic and care work sustaining Gulf labour migration is unrecognized and invisibilized. Patriarchy at home in India thus contributes to the exploitation of migrant labour in the Gulf.

Secondly, social reproductive realms at home contribute to labour exploitation, labour control and barriers to collective struggle, because of the separation of the male migrant from their families remaining in India. According to Ferguson & McNally (2014), the hyper-precarious condition of migrants contributes to their exploitation.

This precarity is moreover a deliberate social policy by the countries of destination and is heightened by the institution of citizenship, borders, and processes of racialization. We argue that the separation of male migrants from their families contributes to this precarity. This separation is a deliberate policy by Gulf states. The interviewed Gulf migrants highlighted that they suffered from homesickness and the emotional strain of being separated from their homes and families. Moreover, the familial separation also contributes to the desired transiency of the labour force. Many interviewed migrants indicated that if their familial responsibilities were met, they would consider returning to India permanently. Therefore, the specific spatial configuration of the household of the Gulf's working class contributes to the social reproduction of a labour force that is transient and precarious.

The separation of the family also acts to impede collective struggle. The interviewed Gulf migrants are oriented towards their family and home in India. The families back home are also dependent on remittances from the migrant. This dependency and lack of belonging in Gulf society decreases the potentiality and desirability of long-term collective action and political organising.

Conclusion

In the decades after the Second World War, The Gulf transformed from being on the margins to a core zone of the global political economy. Although this transformation is fundamentally based on the exploitation of oil and gas, other economic sectors and activities are vital. The economy is dominated by a small number of large, diversified conglomerates. The Gulf appears as a key site of global capital accumulation. Khaleeji capital flows from the Gulf to all over the world.

In parallel, millions of migrant workers from Asia, Africa and the wider Middle East move to the Gulf each year. The Gulf's political economy depends on an enormous migrant labour regime. This labour regime can be traced back to the start of the exploitation of oil and gas in the region in the 1930s and increased massively in size after the Second World War. This migrant labour regime is of systemic importance to the functioning of Gulf capitalism. Through a distinct labour market segmentation of migrants into the private sector and citizens into the public, citizens are provided with the benefits of a welfare state funded by oil revenues. In return, allegiance to the state and the monarchy is secured.

Moreover, as Hanieh argues in various works, the distinct spatiality of the Gulf's migrant working class adds to the Gulf's political economy by enabling extremely high rates of exploitation, acting as a powerful disciplining instrument over labour and by placing significant barriers to collective struggle and long-term political organising of both migrants and citizens. The spatialised nature of the Gulf's working class also allows a unique type of spatial fix, by which the worst effects of crises and economic downturns are displaced away from the Gulf onto the sending countries by deporting migrant workers.

The role of the sending countries needs to be considered. In this thesis, we focused on India, the country with the largest migrant population in the Gulf. The Gulf is the premier destination for Indian migrants in general and low-skilled migrant workers in particular. There is a strong correlation between outflows from India to the Gulf and the shifting fortunes of the Gulf economies. While outflows soared during the Third Oil Boom period between 2000 and 2008, migration declined significantly in the following years, especially after the 2014-2015 global oil price decline. Within India itself, Gulf migration has shifted during the last two decades, especially after 2008, from Kerala and other South Indian states to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. We argue that this shift is a part of a renewed offensive of khaleeji capital and their recruiters for even cheaper sources of labour. This new wave of migration is anchored on well-established internal migration streams from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to other parts of India. These internal migration streams are driven at the supply-side by land inequality and a high population density.

In the third chapter, we shift our focus from the migrant workers to the wives and kin performing socially reproductive labour at the home sites in India. Based on semi-structured interviews conducted with migrants and their families in Sultanpur district in eastern Uttar Pradesh, we find that Gulf migrants are crucially motivated by higher wages, the lack of jobs and family concerns. Remittances sent back home are crucial for the survival of the families back home. The family's economic situation has generally improved because of Gulf migration. On the other side, Gulf migration is only possible with the help of the family back home. Families back home are crucial to the social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour in various ways. Social reproduction at the home site consists of various labours of social reproduction performed in a patrilocal joint family. We especially highlight subsistence agriculture and, domestic and care work which is overwhelmingly performed by women. Social reproduction does not only sustain the Gulf's migrant labour regime, but also crucially contributes to the

exploitation of migrant labour. Because of the spatiality of social reproduction, the costs of social reproduction are largely spatially externalised to the wives and families back home. Labours of social reproduction performed by wives and kin at home provide a direct subsidy to Gulf capital. The Gulf state and capital are not contributing to these expenses and are thus exempted from a large part of the social reproduction costs of their labour force.

Both quantitatively and qualitatively, this research can be developed more. We agree with Irudaya Rajan (2021) that large-scale quantitative surveys should be conducted on Gulf migration from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, given that ECR data likely exclude large parts of the migrating population and that we in fact still lack a comprehensive understanding of these flows. The issue of social reproduction of Gulf migrant labour at the home site could be further explored by a in-depth ethnographic study. For example, the role of the commons in the social reproduction in the Indian countryside could be explored more. Moreover, the analysis of the post-2008 crisis shift to cheaper regions of labour can be expanded to include other sending countries, especially in Africa.

List of References

- Ahmad, M. (2017). Pattern and Determinants of Urban Male Out-Migrants from Bijnor District, Uttar Pradesh. *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies*, 11(2), 74–97.
- Ahmad, M. (2018). Characteristics of Urban Male Out-migrants from Bijnor District, Uttar Pradesh. *Asian Man (The) - An International Journal*, 12(2), 247–255.
<https://doi.org/10.5958/0975-6884.2018.00039.7>
- Ahmad, M. (2019). Emigration from Uttar Pradesh to the Middle East. In S. Irudaya Rajan & P. Saxena (Eds.), *India's Low-Skilled Migration to the Middle East: Policies, Politics and Challenges* (pp. 319–338). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ahmad, M. N. (2023). Structural Exploitation of Migrant Labourers in Gulf countries: A Case Study of Migrants from Eastern Uttar Pradesh. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 7(2), 309–316. <https://doi.org/10.26855/jhass.2023.02.012>
- Ali, I., Bhagat, R. B., & Mahboob, S. (2017). Emigration, remittances and emerging family structure: Findings from a household survey in eight selected villages in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India. *Remittances Review*, 2, 137–155.
- AlShehabi, O. (2015). Histories of Migration to the Gulf. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh (Eds.), *Transit States. Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 3–38). Pluto Press.

- AlShehabi, O. H. (2021). Policing labour in empire: The modern origins of the Kafala sponsorship system in the Gulf Arab States. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 48(2), 291–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2019.1580183>
- Antonopoulos, R., & Hirway, I. (Eds.). (2009). *Unpaid work and the economy: Gender, time use and poverty in developing countries*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Arslan, A. (2023). *Women's Productive and Reproductive Labour: Class and Gender Inequalities in Turkey* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003149002>
- Babar, Z., & Vora, N. (2022). The 2022 World Cup and Migrants' Rights in Qatar: Racialised Labour Hierarchies and the Influence of Racial Capitalism. *The Political Quarterly*, 93(3), 498–507. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13154>
- Baldwin-Edwards, M. (2011). *Labour immigration and labour markets in the GCC countries: National patterns and trends* (Research Paper 15). Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States.
- Basole, A., Abraham, R., Rakshit, A., Vijayamba, R., Shrivastava, A., & Halder, T. (2023). *State of Working India 2023. Social Identities and Labour Market Outcomes*. Azim Premji University.
- Bhattacharya, T. (2017a). How Not to Skip Class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping class, recentering oppression* (pp. 68–93). Pluto Press.

- Bhattacharya, T. (2017b). *Social reproduction theory. Remapping class, recentering oppression*. Pluto Press.
- Bohrer, A. J. (2022). Wages for Immigration! Labour and Social Reproduction Under Contemporary Capitalism. In G. Ritchie, S. Carpenter, & S. Mojab (Eds.), *Marxism and Migration* (pp. 83–104). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buckley, M., Chakravartty, P., & Gill, S. (2023). From Indenture to “Good Governance”: EMIGRATE and the Politics of Reforming Global Labour Supply Chains. *Antipode*, 55(1), 90–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12876>
- Cammett, M. C., Diwan, I., Richards, A., & Richards, A. (2015). *A political economy of the Middle East* (Fourth edition). Westview Press.
- Chambers, T. (2018). Continuity in Mind: Imagination and migration in India and the Gulf. *Modern Asian Studies*, 52(4), 1420–1456.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X1700049X>
- Chanda, R., & Gupta, P. (2018). Indian Migration to the Gulf: Overview of Trends and Policy Initiatives by India. In P. Fargues & N. M. Shah (Eds.), *Migration to the Gulf. Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries* (pp. 179–197). Gulf Research Center.
- Clark, T., Foster, L., Sloan, L., Bryman, A., & Bryman, A. (2021). *Bryman’s social research methods* (Sixth edition). Oxford University Press.

- Conroy, W. (2023). Background check: Spatiality and relationality in Nancy Fraser's expanded conception of capitalism. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 55(5), 1091–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221143118>
- De Bel-Air, F. (2018). Asian Migration to the Gulf States in the Twenty-first Century. In M. Chowdhury & S. Irudaya Rajan (Eds.), *South Asian Migration in the Gulf. Causes and consequences* (pp. 7–34). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dito, M. (2015). Kafala: Foundations of Migrant Exclusion in GCC Labour Markets. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh (Eds.), *Transit States. Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 79–100). Pluto Press.
- Duttagupta, I. (2019, January 27). *Rise of blue-collar workers from Uttar Pradesh in Gulf countries* [Newspaper]. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/rise-of-blue-collar-workers-from-uttar-pradesh-in-gulf-countries/articleshow/67704104.cms?from=mdr>
- Farris, S. R. (2017). *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Duke University Press.
- Farris, S. R. (2015, November 1). *Social Reproduction, Surplus Populations and the Role of Migrant Women*. Viewpoint Magazine. <https://viewpointmag.com/2015/11/01/social-reproduction-and-surplus-populations/#f+5606+1+2>

- Fazli, R., & Faridi, R. A. (2020). Economic Reintegration of Return Migrants from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries to India: A Case of Uttar Pradesh. *Journal of West Asian Studies*, 32, 37–47.
- Ferguson, S., & McNally, D. (2015). Precarious Migrants: Gender, Race and the Social Reproduction of A Global Working Class. *Socialist Register*, 51, 1–23.
- Fernandez, B. (2020). *Ethiopian Migrant Domestic Workers: Migrant Agency and Social Change*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24055-4>
- Ghosh, J. (2021). The Interlinkages Between Paid and Unpaid Labour: A Homage to Krishna Bharadwaj. *The Indian Economic Journal*, 69(2), 338–351.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00194662211019835>
- Gidwani, V., & Ramamurthy, P. (2018). Agrarian questions of labor in urban India: Middle migrants, translocal householding and the intersectional politics of social reproduction. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45(5–6), 994–1017.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2018.1503172>
- Haider, A., & Mohandesi, S. (2013). *Workers' Inquiry: A Genealogy*. Viewpoint Magazine.
<https://viewpointmag.com/2013/09/27/workers-inquiry-a-genealogy/>
- Hamadah, F. (2022). Kafala and Social Reproduction: Migration Governance Regimes and Labour Relations in the Gulf. In C. A. Ennis & N. Blarel (Eds.), *The South Asia to Gulf migration governance complex* (pp. 173–189). Bristol University Press.

- Hanieh, A. (2011). *Capitalism and class in the Gulf Arab states* (1st ed). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hanieh, A. (2015). *Overcoming Methodological Nationalism: Spatial Perspectives on Migration to the Gulf Arab States* (pp. 57–78).
- Hanieh, A. (2018). *Money, Markets, and Monarchies. The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hanieh, A. (2021a). Capital, Labor, and State. Rethinking the Political Economy of Oil in the Gulf. In A. Ghazal & J. Hanssen (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Middle Eastern and North African History* (pp. 323–341). Oxford University Press.
- Hanieh, A. (2021b). *Rethinking Class and State in the Gulf Cooperation Council: Vol. A Critical Political Economy of the Middle East and North Africa* (J. Beinin, B. Haddad, & S. Seikaly, Eds.; pp. 105–122). Stanford University Press.
- Hanieh, A. (2022). Migration, Borders, and Capital Accumulation. In G. Ritchie, S. Carpenter, & S. Mojab (Eds.), *Marxism and Migration* (pp. 35–56). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harriss-White, B. (2003). *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hoda, A., Gulati, A., Jose, S., & Rajkhowa, P. (2021). Sources and Drivers of Agricultural Growth in Bihar. In A. Gulati, R. Roy, & S. Saini (Eds.), *Revitalizing Indian Agriculture and Boosting Farmer Incomes* (pp. 211–246). Springer.

Hopper, M. S. (2015). *Slaves of one master: Globalization and slavery in Arabia in the age of empire*. Yale University Press.

ILO. (2018). *International labour migration statistics in South Asia. Establishing a subregional database and improving data collection for evidence-based policy-making*. International Labour Organization.

International Labour Office, & Arab Employment Forum. (2009). *International Labour Migration and Employment in the Arab Region. Origins, Consequences and the Way Forward*.

Irudaya Rajan, S. (2018). Demography of the Gulf Region. In M. Chowdhury & S. Irudaya Rajan (Eds.), *South Asian Migration in the Gulf. Causes and consequences* (pp. 35–59). Palgrave Macmillan.

Irudaya Rajan, S. (2021). Large-scale migration surveys. Replication of the Kerala model of migration surveys to India Migration Survey 2024. In S. Irudaya Rajan (Ed.), *India Migration Report 2020. Kerala Model of Migration Surveys*. Routledge.

Irudaya Rajan, S., & Zachariah, K. C. (2019). *Emigration and Remittances: New Evidences from The Kerala Migration Survey, 2018* (Working Paper 483). Centre for Development Studies.

Iskander, N. N. (2021). *Does skill make us human? Migrant workers in 21st-century Qatar and beyond*. Princeton University Press.

Jain, D. (1996). Valuing Work: Time as a Measure. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(43), WS46–WS57. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9789353287672>

Jain, P. C. (2016). In search of El Dorado. Indian labour migration to Gulf countries. In *South Asian Migration to Gulf Countries: History, Policies, Development* (pp. 123–140). Routledge.

Jose, S., Hussain, S., & Gulati, A. (2022). *Performance of Agriculture in Uttar Pradesh. Region-wise analysis*. Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).

Kapiszewski, A. (2006). *Arab versus Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Khalaf, A., AlShehabi, O., & Hanieh, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Transit States. Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf*. Pluto Press.

Kodoth, P. (2020). *In the Shadow of the State: Recruitment and Migration of South Indian Women as Domestic Workers to the Middle East*. International Labour Organization.

Kodoth, P., & Varghese, V. J. (2012). Emigration of Female Domestic Workers from Kerala. In B. Kalir & M. Sur (Eds.), *Transnational Flows and Permissive Politics. Ethnographies of Human Mobilities in Asia* (pp. 169–187). Amsterdam University Press.

Kofman, E., & Raghuram, P. (2015). *Gendered Migrations and Global Social Reproduction*. Palgrave.

- Kumar, A. (2018). *Economic Re-Integration of Returning Migrants in the Construction Sector in India*. International Labour Organization.
- Kumar, R. (2020). Aspects of Returnee Emigrant Workers from the Gulf: An Empirical Study. *Business Analyst*, 41(1), 181–210.
- Kumar, S. K., & Irudaya Rajan, S. (2015). *Emigration in 21st-Century India*. Routledge.
- Longva, A. N. (1997). *Walls built on sand: Migration, exclusion, and society in Kuwait*. WestviewPress.
- Majumder, B., & Taukeer, Md. (2019). Dual-Step Migration from a Village in Uttar Pradesh: Causes, Processes and Consequences. *PRODUCTIVITY*, 60(2), 162–174.
<https://doi.org/10.32381/PROD.2019.60.02.6>
- Mamgain, R. P., & Verick, S. (2017). *The state of employment in Uttar Pradesh: Unleashing the potential for inclusive growth*. International Labour Organization.
- Massey, D. (1984). *Spatial Divisions of Labour. Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. MacMillan.
- Mcauliffe, M., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2021). *World Migration Report 2022*. International Organization for Migration.
- Mezzadri, A. (2019). On the value of social reproduction. *Radical Philosophy*.

Mezzadri, A. (2021a). A Value Theory of Inclusion: Informal Labour, the Homeworker, and the Social Reproduction of Value. *Antipode*, 53(4), 1186–1205.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12701>

Mezzadri, A. (2021b). Marx in the Sweatshop. Exploitation and Social Reproduction in a Garment Factory Called India. In *Marx in the Field* (pp. 63–76). Anthem Press.

Mies, M. (1982). *Lace Makers of Narsapur*. Zed Books.

Ministry of Labour and Employment. (2002). *Annual Report*. Government of India.

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. (2015). *Annual Report 2014–15*.

Mustaqeem, M. (2020). Working Abroad while Families at Home: Negotiating Patriarchal Role for Women in South Asia: A Case Study of Gopalganj District of Bihar, India. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 8(3), 135–145.

<https://doi.org/10.33687/jsas.008.03.3745>

Naidu, S. C. (2023). Circuits of Social Reproduction: Nature, Labor, and Capitalism. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 55(1), 93–111.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/04866134221099316>

Naidu, S. C., & Ossome, L. (2016). Social Reproduction and the Agrarian Question of Women's Labour in India. *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*, 5(1), 50–76.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2277976016658737>

- Naidu, S. C., & Rao, S. (2018). *Reproductive work and female labor force participation in rural India* (Working Paper 458; Working Paper Series). Political Economy Research Institute.
- Onley, J. (2014). Indian Communities in the Persian Gulf, c. 1500-1947. In L. G. Potter (Ed.), *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times* (pp. 231-266). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oommen, G. Z. (2017). South Asia-Gulf Migratory Corridor. Emerging patterns, prospects and challenges. In S. Irudaya Rajan (Ed.), *South Asia Migration Report 2017. Recruitment, remittances and reintegration* (pp. 120-146). Routledge.
- Osella, C., & Osella, F. (2012). Migration, Networks and Connectedness across the Indian Ocean. In M. Kamrava & Z. Babar (Eds.), *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf* (pp. 21-40). Columbia University Press.
- Parween. (2013). *"Invisible" White-Collar Indians in the Gulf*. Middle East Institute.
<https://www.mei.edu/publications/invisible-white-collar-indians-gulf>
- Percot, M. (2006). Indian Nurses in the Gulf: Two Generation of Female Migration. *South Asia Research*, 26(1), 41-62.
- Raj, P., & Rahman, M. M. (2023). Migration, debt, and transnational livelihood: Indian labour diasporas in the GCC states amid the pandemic. *South Asian Diaspora*, 1-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2023.2226423>

Rao, S. (2021). Beyond the Coronavirus: Understanding Crises of Social Reproduction.

Global Labour Journal, 12(1), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.15173/glj.v12i1.4307>

Santhya, K. G., Banerjee, S., Panda, B. K., Xavier, A. J. F., Hazra, A., & Rampal, S. (2022).

Role of debt in overseas labour migration in India. Population Council.

<https://doi.org/10.31899/sbsr2022.1035>

Sasikumar, S. K. (2019). Indian Labour Migration to the Gulf: Recent Trends, the

Regulatory Environment and New Evidences on Migration Costs. *PRODUCTIVITY*,

60(2), 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.32381/PROD.2019.60.02.1>

Sasikumar, S. K. (2021). India-Gulf labour migration in the aftermath of the COVID-19

pandemic. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 56(34), 22–26.

Sasikumar, S. K., & Timothy, R. (2015). *From India to the Gulf region: Exploring links*

between labour markets, skills and the migration cycle. GDC Country Office Nepal,

GIZ.

Shah, A., & Lerche, J. (2020). Migration and the invisible economies of care: Production,

social reproduction and seasonal migrant labour in India. *Transactions of the*

Institute of British Geographers, 45(4), 719–734. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12401>

Singh, R. (2018). Impact of Male Out-Migration on Women Left Behind: A Study of Two

Villages in Uttar Pradesh. *Remittances Review*, 3(1), 75–92.

<https://doi.org/10.33182/rr.v3i1.427>

- Skeldon, R. (2006). Interlinkages between internal and international migration and development in the Asian region. *Population, Space and Place*, 12(1), 15–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.385>
- Social Research Association. (2003). *Ethical guidelines*.
- Tata-Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition. (2020). *Tata-Cornell Institute Annual Report 2019-20*. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Cornell University.
- Taukeer, M. (2020). Process and Determinants of Labour Migration from Selected Rural Areas of Uttar Pradesh to Gulf Countries. *Man & Development*, 42(4), 123–138.
- Taukeer, M. (2021). An Analysis of Impact of Occupation on Income, Remittances and Expenditure of International Return Migrant Labourers of Uttar Pradesh in Gulf Countries. *Productivity*, 62(3), 313–329. <https://doi.org/10.32381/PROD.2021.62.03.9>
- Taukeer, M. (2023). Nature, Process, and Consequences of Migration. A Case Study of Migration from India to the Gulf. In A. Rahman, S. Babu M, & A. Pa (Eds.), *Indian Migration to the Gulf: Issues, Perspectives and Opportunities* (pp. 45–58). Routledge.
- Tumbe, C. (2012). Migration persistence across twentieth century India. *Migration and Development*, 1(1), 87–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2012.716225>
- Tumbe, C. (2015). Missing men, migration and labour markets: Evidence from India. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 58(2), 245–267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-016-0017-4>

- Varela, P. (2021). *Social Reproduction in Dispute. A Debate Between Autonomists and Marxists*. Spectre Journal. <https://spectrejournal.com/social-reproduction-in-dispute/>
- Varghese, V. J. (2023). Labour Migration to the Gulf and India's Emigration Governance: Expanding Bounds of Protection. *Millennial Asia*, 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09763996231177584>
- Vertommen, S. (2021). Marx in Utero. A Worker's Inquiry on the In/Visible Labours of Reproduction in the Surrogacy Industry. In A. Mezzadri (Ed.), *Marx in the field* (pp. 189–201).
- Wadhawan, N. (2018). *Mapping state interventions for international labour migration from India*. International Labour Organization.
- Wimmer, A., & Schiller, N. G. (2003). Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology. *International Migration Review*, 37(3), 576–610. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2003.tb00151.x>
- Wright, A. (2021). *Between Dreams and Ghosts. Indian Migration and Middle Eastern Oil*. Stanford University Press.
- Zachariah, K. C., Mathew, E. T., & Irudaya Rajan, S. (2002). *Dynamics of migration in Kerala: Dimensions, determinants and consequences*. Orient Longman.

Appendix A. Tables on Gulf migration

Table A1

Estimates for selected countries of foreign residents in GCC states by country of citizenship (in thousands) in 2012-2018

Countries of Origin	Bahrain (mid-2018)	Kuwait (end 2018)	Oman (mid-2017)	Qatar (c. 2016)	Saudi Arabia (2013)	UAE (c. 2015)	Total ^a
South and Southeast Asia							
India	317	1,012	767	650	2,000	2,600	7,346
Pakistan	59	109	269	125	1,500	1,200	3,262
Bangladesh	133	281	719	280	1,500	700	3,613
Philippines	37	214	45	260	670	526	1,752
Sri Lanka	6	94	20	145	550	300	1,115
Nepal	17	70	17	350	500	300	1,254
Indonesia	1	3	14	43	1,500	85	1,646
West Asia							
Egypt	25	671	47	200	1,300	400 ^e	2,642
Yemen	5	11 ^b	N/A	40 ^c	800	90	946
Jordan	8	55 ^b	N/A	40 ^c	250	40	393
Syria	4	160	N/A	54	1,000	N/A	1,218
Palestine	N/A	8 ^b	N/A	20	500	150	678
Lebanon	2	43	N/A	25	160	100 ^e	330
Africa							
Sudan	1	5 ^b	N/A	50	500	75	631
Ethiopia	1	19	14	22	150	90	296

Other/Unclassified	11	N/A	106	N/A	N/A	N/A	117
Total	649	3,219	2,055 ^c	1,986	9,700-13,000 ^d	7,800 ^f	16,417

Note. Data compiled from GLMM (<https://gulfmigration.grc.net/>). Blank cells mean data was not available. Not all available countries were taken up in this table. Only a selected number of countries with a significant number of residents in the Gulf countries.

^a Data were computed by the author based on the data of the nationalities for each Gulf country.

^b Data are from end 2012 (latest available).

^c Data are from 2013-2014 (latest available).

^d Data was not available from GLMM, so it was instead compiled from De Bel-Air (2018).

^e Data are from 2013 (latest available).

^f Data are from 2013-2014 (latest available).

Table A2*ECR Migration from India to Gulf countries, 1982-2019. (in thousands)*

Years	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE	GCC	Total
1982	17	10	40	14	78	19	179	240
1983	19	11	49	8	83	26	196	220
1984	16	5	43	4	88	24	181	206
1985	11	6	38	5	69	21	150	163
1986	6	4	22	4	42	23	102	114
1987	7	7	16	5	57	25	117	125
1988	8	10	19	5	85	34	161	170
1989	9	6	17	8	50	26	115	126
1985-89	40	32	112	27	303	130	644	698
1990	7	1	34	4	79	12	137	144
1991	9	7	22	N/A	131	15	184	198
1992	16	20	41	N/A	265	60	403	417
1993	16	27	29	N/A	270	77	418	438
1994	14	24	25	N/A	266	76	405	425
1990-94	61	79	152	N/A	1,011	241	1,544	1,616
1995	11	14	22	N/A	257	80	385	415
1996	17	15	30	N/A	214	113	388	414
1997	18	13	30	N/A	214	111	386	416
1998	17	22	21	N/A	105	135	300	355
1999	15	19	16	N/A	27	79	157	200
1995-99	78	84	119	N/A	662	517	1,460	1,671
2000	16	31	15	N/A	59	55	176	243
2001	16	40	31	14	78	54	233	279
2002	21	49	41	13	99	95	318	368

2003	25	54	37	14	121	144	396	466
2004	23	52	33	16	124	175	423	475
2000-4	101	226	157	57	481	523	1,545	1,831
2005	30	39	41	50	100	194	455	549
2006	38	47	68	76	134	255	618	677
2007	30	48	95	88	195	313	771	809
2008	32	36	90	83	228	350	818	849
2009	18	42	75	46	281	130	592	610
2005-9	147	213	369	344	939	1,242	3,254	3,494
2010	15	38	106	46	275	131	610	641
2011	14	45	74	42	289	139	603	627
2012	20	56	84	63	358	141	722	747
2013	17	70	63	78	354	202	785	817
2014	14	80	51	76	330	224	776	805
2010-14	81	289	379	305	1,606	837	3,497	3,637
2015	16	67	85	59	306	225	758	864
2016	12	70	61	29	162	159	493	518
2017	10	51	5	22	73	141	302	317
2018	9	52	32	32	66	103	294	312
2019	9	72	26	28	143	42	320	334
2015-19	56	312	209	170	750	670	2,167	2,345

Note. Data compiled from Jain (2016), MOIA (2015), Ministry of Labour and Employment (2002) and Calabrese (2020). For the years between 1991 and 2000, there is no data available for Qatar.

Table A3*ECR migration outflows from Indian states to all ECR countries, 2000-2019. (in thousands)*

Years	AP	KL	TN	MH	PJ	RN	UP	BR	WB	TG	GJ	KA	Others	Total
2000	30	70	64	13	10	10	9	7	2	N/A	6	11	12	243
2001	37	62	62	23	12	15	14	10	5	N/A	10	10	19	279
2002	38	82	79	25	20	23	19	19	8	N/A	12	14	27	368
2003	66	92	89	29	25	38	25	17	9	N/A	17	23	37	467
2004	73	64	109	29	25	35	27	22	9	N/A	22	19	41	475
2000-4	244	369	403	120	92	121	95	75	33	N/A	67	77	135	1,831
2005	49	125	117	29	24	22	23	9	5	N/A	50	75	21	549
2006	98	120	156	15	39	50	66	36	15	N/A	13	24	43	677
2007	105	150	151	22	54	71	92	52	25	N/A	20	27	41	810
2008	98	181	129	25	54	65	139	61	26	N/A	25	22	25	849
2009	69	119	79	19	27	45	126	50	21	N/A	19	19	17	610
2005-9	418	696	631	110	199	252	445	209	92	N/A	127	168	147	3,494
2010	72	104	85	18	31	48	141	61	29	N/A	8	17	28	641
2011	72	87	69	17	32	42	155	71	30	N/A	8	16	24	623
2012	93	98	78	19	37	50	191	84	37	N/A	7	18	36	750
2013	60	85	68	19	47	51	215	95	39	38	8	18	74	817
2014	52	65	68	19	46	48	227	97	49	36	8	15	75	805
2010-14	349	440	368	92	193	239	929	408	184	N/A	40	83	238	3,635

2015	45	43	60	15	44	46	235	107	62	25	7	12	80	781
2016	27	25	38	10	31	35	141	75	51	17	4	6	44	506
2017	17	16	32	8	26	32	86	68	34	13	4	5	19	361
2018	15	14	26	7	19	30	83	57	25	13	N/A	N/A	22	312
2019	18	19	25	8	14	29	113	54	26	3	N/A	N/A	27	334
2015-19	121	117	182	48	135	171	658	361	198	71	N/A	N/A	192	2,294

Note: Data compiled from Kumar & Irudaya Rajan (2015), Calabrese (2020), Ministry of Labour and Employment Affairs (2002) and MOIA (2015). During this period, the Gulf region comprised the following percentages of total ECR out-ward migration: in 2000-4 84.4 percent, in 2005-9 93 percent, in 2010-4 96.2 percent and in 2015-2019 92.4 percent. Together these states account for around 70 percent of total ECR migration during the whole period under consideration. In 2014, Telangana was separated from Andhra Pradesh. The abbreviations refer to these states: AP is Andhra Pradesh, KL is Kerala, TN is Tamil Nadu, MH is Maharashtra, PJ is Punjab, RN is Rajasthan, UP is Uttar Pradesh, BR is Bihar, WB is West Bengal, TG is Telangana, GJ is Gujarat, and KA is Karnataka.

Appendix B. Interview Guide

1. Basic information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Place of birth
4. Place of residence
5. Gender
6. Education level
7. Current occupation
8. Family background ((un)married, children (age), members of household)
9. Caste
10. Religion
11. Gulf migration (age, where and how many times)
12. Relatives who are Gulf migrant (return/current)
13. Relatives who are prospective Gulf migrants

2. Gulf migration

- How was your experience working in the Gulf?
 - Working conditions
 - Wage
 - Regularity of employment
 - Working hours per day and week
- Decision to migrate:
 - What was your motivation? Why did you go?
 - Why was the Gulf preferred instead of other places in India?
 - How did you find a job in the Gulf? (family, networks, recruiting agents, Gulf companies, local companies)?

- Did recruiting agents ask for a fee? How were you able to pay this fee?
Did you rely financially on family members? Did you save on expenses?
- How important is the fact that family or community members already went or were in the Gulf at the time of your decision?
 - Ask about why it was important? Knowledge, safety net, friendship, housing, help with finding jobs
- Return:
 - Do you have concrete plans to return?
 - Do you wish to return?

3. Migration inside India

Only general questions:

- When, where, how many times
- How was your experience compared to that of the Gulf?

4. Economic situation

- Can you describe what you did yesterday? Which economic activities? How much time did you spend on these? (wage labour, agriculture, self-employment, domestic and care work)
- Can you describe what you did last week?
- If yes, go further into these activities. Ask about:
 - Wage labour (timing, regularity, location, wage, working conditions)
 - Agriculture (owned/leased/sharecropping, livestock, animal husbandry, subsistence/commercial, how important)
 - Self-employment (shop, selling things, making things)
 - Domestic and care work (caring for children and family members, cooking, cleaning, repairing house)
- Remittances:

- Did you send money back home during your time in the Gulf?
 - How much?
 - How reliant was your family back home on this money?
- How did your family support you in the process of preparation to go to the Gulf?
 - Did they help with working more or asking family for credit to pay the initial fees?
 - Ask about individual members
- How did your family support you when you came back from the Gulf?
 - Ask about individual members
- How did your family support you during your time in the Gulf?
- What were you hoping to get out of the Gulf migration? (Savings? Paying off debts? Invest in children?)
- How would you say your economic situation changed during the time of migration? (Changes in wage labour, other activities?)
- How would you say your economic situation changed after the migrant arrived home? (Changes in wage labour, other activities?)
- What if anything went wrong with the Gulf migrant. Did you prepare for this financially? What would you do in this case financially? Were you scared of this?

- Would you encourage family or community members to go to the Gulf?
- Would you encourage your children to go to the Gulf?
- Why or why not?
- Would you prefer to send them to other places inside of India?

5. Do you want to add anything?