The Consequences and Meanings of Enclaves and Migrant Networks for Origin Communities in Nang Rong

[DRAFT September 21]

Daniel Parker[1,2] Sara R. Curran[3]
1Population Research Institute, 2Department of Anthropology, Penn State University, 3Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology, University of Washington

Introduction:

Social networks play an important role in migration. They provide a means for the diffusion of information concerning where to find work, the relative safety of an occupation, quality of work-place environment, wages, and living arrangements among other things. Additionally, networks provide a comfort and safety mechanism, perhaps in the form of familiar acquaintances, foods, or room-mates for those who are living away from their place of origin. In some cases a physical enclave, here considered a manifestation of migration networks, is formed.

Enclaves are generally thought of as geographic units, inside of larger geographic units, within which migrants dwell. Oftentimes, though not always, they are composed of people from a common region, nation, village, or ethnicity. Much of the literature on enclaves is focused on the U.S.A and concerns, for example, economic systems in ethnic enclaves. The majority of the literature is concerned with the actual geographic unit, rather than the encompassing migration network of which it is a component. Additionally, the significance of the enclave (as well as the network) for and to the place of origin with which they are tied are generally not investigated.

During the summer of 2007 members of the Nang Rong team conducted interviews in each of 40 different study villages in the Nang Rong district (Buriram Province) of Northeastern Thailand. The resulting transcripts from those interviews reveal a wide range of discourse concerning enclave formation. Whereas most villages ($\geq$ 65%) did engage in enclave formation when they migrate, several did/do not. Our primary question, therefore, was: Why do some villages form enclaves when others do not? Additionally, there appeared to be a less diverse range of migration network sources in the villages that did not form enclaves. For example while in villages that did form enclaves it was common for people to access jobs through other villagers, employment recruiters, friends, and family members. Alternatively, in the villages that did not form enclaves migrants tended to rely on either recruiters or family. Therefore an overarching question is why are there more networks available in some villages? And how does this variation in migration network diversity influence enclave formation?

This question was further framed by a common fear, expressed in most villages, of being cheated while abroad. Some of the villager had actually been cheated out of their wages in the past while working away from their home villages. Others had heard stories of such occurrences and were therefore leery of the possibility of it occurring to them. Additionally, Nang Rong is a mostly rural region and the large cities that some villagers migrate to can seem overwhelming. Migration, even in the context of intra-national migration, carries with it a burden of (real or perceived) danger. Regardless of the situation, migration is a stressful event for migrants.

One way to alleviate some of this stress is to take away some of the unknowns inherently tied to the process. These unknowns may include the state of the economy and labor force in the destination, the political climate, and even more basic primal needs such as the availability and/or acquisition of shelter, food, and water. In many ways, migration networks, and perhaps even more-so the availability of an enclave, offers at least some assurance against these fears.

Realizing that migration is relatively prevalent throughout the study villages, it would seem that the availability of multiple networks (the choice of whom to trust and where to go) and of an enclave would be preferable, even desirable. Taking this into consideration makes the question (of why some villages do versus why some villages don't create enclaves) even more compelling. Furthermore, assuming that most people would prefer having an enclave, what are the factors (or even barriers) that prevent them from forming enclaves?

Methods:

Interviews were conducted in 40 different villages in Nang Rong district during the summer of 2007. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then translated to English. A set of key terms (codes) was created from the field survey questions, and the transcripts were coded in NVIVO. For example, during the interviews villagers were asked how they learned about jobs in other places. In the transcripts, the ensuing discussion would be coded *Migration Networks*. After each transcript was coded in this way, a query could be executed that would pull out all of the sections from each village that had been coded *Migration Networks* and present them in one document.

Next, entire villages were categorized according to whether or not they created or lived in enclaves when they worked away from the home village. During the interviews each village group was asked whether or not they stayed together when they migrate. If they answered yes the village was coded *Cohesive*, if they answered no they were coded *Noncohesive*, and if there was a mixed answer (some villagers do and some villagers don't) the village was coded *Mixed*. With the *Mixed* category included, these categories are mutually exclusive.

The villages were then further categorized according to the type of social network that they mentioned in relation to migration. Four main types of migration network were discussed in the transcripts: *occupational*, *village-based*, *relative-based*, and *friend-based*. For example, *occupational* could be a situation where people are recruited by an employer and they stay at the work site rather than with fellow villagers. *Village-based* would mean that the villagers tell each other about jobs (regardless of whether they are friends or family) and they may even stay together when they reach their destination. Each village was therefore coded according to these four codes. This coding system was not mutually exclusive; one village could have several different types of migration network. Using these four codes, a comparison was made between the types of migration network available to each of the previously mentioned types of village (*Cohesive*, *Noncohesive*, or *Mixed*).

In order to compare discussions concerning migration networks between *Cohesive*, *Noncohesive*, and *Mixed* villages, a query (in NVIVO) was executed for the code "Migration Networks." The resulting document was a single, large collection of all passages coded "Migration Networks" in

every village. Three separate documents were created from this one, one composed of "Migration Networks" passages from villages labeled *Cohesive*, one from passages from villages labeled solely as *Non-Cohesive*, and one from *Mixed* villages. The resulting 3 documents were read to look for qualitative differences in Migration Networks.

Likewise, two other queries were run in NVIVO: one for the code *Migration History* and one for the code *Village History*. The resulting documents were then divided into the previously mentioned three categories: *Cohesive*, *Non-Cohesive*, and *Mixed*. All of the resulting documents were read to look for qualitative differences.

Results:

Several patterns appeared in the analyses. The most common type of migration network, regardless of the village type (cohesiveness) was occupational. However, *village-based* networks were much more prevalent in *Cohesive* villages when compared to villages labeled *Noncohesive*. In general, there was a relative lack of dependence, within *Noncohesive* villages, on migration networks outside of networks based on family and occupation. In these *Noncohesive* villages, villagers don't appear to be following other villagers (other than family members) when they go out for work. They tend to go out on their own, go with recruiters, or follow family members. While family-based migration networks were mentioned in the *Cohesive* and *Mixed* categories too, there appear to be more types of migration networks available, especially in the "Cohesive" villages.

In consideration of the "Migration History" and "Village History" analyses, a major discrepancy between the *Cohesive* and *Noncohesive* categories was the lack of discussion concerning these two topics in the *Noncohesive* villages. While the same questions were asked about the history of the village or migration, people in the *NonCohesive* villages had less collective memory to draw from – resulting in less discussion. Another interesting finding was that many of the *Non-Cohesive* villages were the result of recent "pioneering" (where people moved to the village in search of abundant natural resources) and/or the village is one that has been split from another village (superficially, not geographically.)

While there are several villages in the *Cohesive* category that also fit this description, many of the villagers in the *Cohesive* villages speak about having social ties prior to the village foundation. Often a group of several families would move together to pioneer a village, and these families would retain their ties (both within the village and from their original village) over time.

Discussion:

The fear of being cheated is mentioned frequently, and across village categories, within the 40 village transcripts. Taking this into consideration, it would seem that having more types of migration network (that is more choices of where to go and who to stay with) would be desirable. Additionally it would seem that the presence of an enclave, with familiar faces, friends, family, villagers etc., would be even more desirable. So given that migration within all villages is relatively common, why would some villages have more desirable options than others?

One answer may be that there is a lack of social fabric within some villages. The lack of discourse in transcripts from *Noncohesive* villages concerning social ties (outside of family members), migration history, and village history suggest that there is a lack of social capital, in the form of migration networks and collective memory, within villages that do not form enclaves.

This may be the result of pioneering initiatives where villages were thrown together regardless of the relationships (or lack thereof) of the new villagers. One villager (from a *Mixed* village) even mentioned that he/she had been cheated by fellow villagers. This would obviously create discordance within the community, where villagers are likely to need to find work but they don't know who to trust in doing so. This type of situation would most likely not lead to a village-based enclave formation, even though it seems that an enclave would in general be desireable.

General thoughts concerning enclaves:

A review of Nang Rong migration prevalence data from 1984 to 2000 shows that while migration prevalence has increased among all villages over time, the difference between male and female prevalence is greater in non-cohesive villages. This suggests that enclave formation influences whether female villagers decide to migrate, with the availability of an enclave in the destination city being associated with greater female migration.

Enclave formation also appears to influence the choice of migration destination. A migrant from one of the cohesive villages is likely to choose that enclave as a destination. Migrants in non-cohesive villages don't have an established "safe" location to go to, making their choice of destination stochastic in comparison to the cohesive villages. While family members may follow the primary migrant, it appears that the network stops before extending to other non-related villagers.

The influence of an enclave on destination choice can also extend beyond the village unit into a greater geographical space. For example, within the Nang Rong data there is some clustering in destination choice with regards to enclaves. Migrants from villages that are within close proximity of each other may stay together in the same enclave. This is especially the case when those villages are geographically combined but have been superficially divided by governmental agencies.