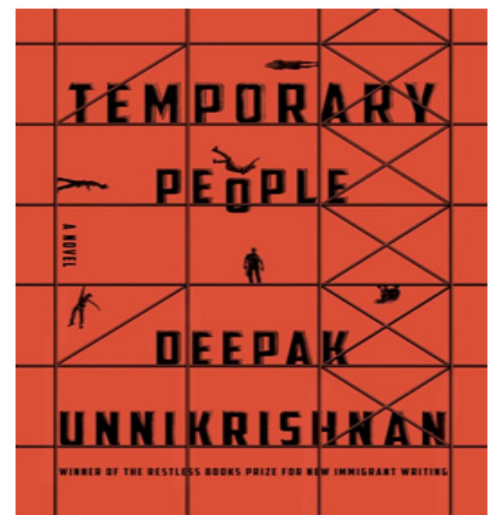


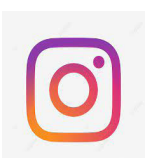
ROOTS & ROUTES

Vol 10, No. 11, November, 2021



Source: <https://psbt.org/awards-and-festivals/press/>

www.grfdt.com



Editor's Note



Contents

GRFDT Events

Articles

Book Reviews

Movie Review

Editorial Information

©GRFDT. Roots and Routes is printed,
designed & circulated by
GRFDT

Editor

Feroz Khan

Editorial Committee

Abhishek Yadav

Ani Yeremyan

Arsala Nizami

Feroz Khan

Felix Tombindo

Manjima Anjana

Michal Tengeri

Monika Bisht Ranjan

Rakesh Ranjan

Sadananda Sahoo

Smita Tiwary

Snehal Mutha

Unnikrishnan V

Design and Production:

Abisha Vishnu, Rakesh Ranjan &

Feroz Khan

Email: editorinchief@grfdt.com

Website: www.grfdt.org

Dear Readers

Greetings!

November appears to be one more potential month for the GRFDT. In the month, the organisation conducted 13 webinars covering GCM objectives and migration topics. The first section of the issue has covered some of the glimpses from the events.

The current issue also focuses on Filipino workers through two articles written by Patricia Miraflores. In the first article, “Filipino diaspora voting beyond (and within) borders during the pandemic,” the author analyses the trend in the registration and participation of overseas migrants in the election. In addition, the article attempts to explain the role and expectation from the overseas migrants in the upcoming presidential election.

The second article, “Repatriation and reintegration during the pandemic: The case of Overseas Filipino Workers”, focuses on reverse migration. The article not only emphasises the ongoing efforts of the government to bring back the migrant workers during the pandemic but also highlights the plight of the return workers. The article raises concerns about the precarious condition and situation of unemployment among the return migrants.

The current issue carries two book reviews: “Elites and Ilustrados in Philippine Culture” reviewed by Patricia Miraflores and “Temporary People”, reviewed by Piyali Bhowmick. In the end a movie review titled “Leaving home: The pain of separation and loss of identity of migrants,” has been reviewed by Piyali Bhowmick, that focuses on the inner world of migrant workers who are involved in building cities.

To have a meaningful engagement, we invite readers to participate and share their experiences with us. You can communicate with us through email at editorinchief@grfdt.com. We wish you happy reading and look forward to your suggestions and comments.

Happy Reading!

Feroz Khan

GRFDT Events

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) and other reputed organizations including Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM), International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD) and Metropolis Asia-Pacific jointly conducted more than thirteen webinars and lecture series in the area of migration and diaspora.

On 2nd November 2021, webinar was conducted on GCM 4th Objective – “Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity.”

The 5th GCM Objective – “Enhance Availability and Flexibility of Pathways for Regular Migration,” took place on 9 November 2021. The lecture on “Demographic Imperatives” was delivered by Prof. S. Irudaya Rajan on 13th November. The address was a part

of GRFDT’s special lecture series on Global Compact for Migration.

On 16 November 2021, the 5th round of the People’s Migration Challenges discussion was organized with the first theme titled “Migration, COVID-19 and New Social Contract.” On a similar day, the organization also conducted the seminar on GCM Objective 6 – “Facilitate Fair and Ethical Recruitment and Safeguard Conditions that Ensure Decent Work.”

On 17 November 2021, GRFDT conducted a special lecture by Dr Kunal Keshri on “Type and Characteristics of Migration”.

On 20th November, a special lecture was delivered by Prof. Binod Khadria on “Economic Impact,” as a part of special lecture series on Global Compact for Migration.

3 DETENTION AND RETURN

Tuesday, 30 November 2021, 2PM CET
Simultaneous Interpretation in
ARABIC, ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH

SPEAKERS

- José Luis Pardo**
Ambassador for Migratory Affairs Office for Migratory Affairs, Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation
- Layla Razavi**
Co-Interim Executive Director at Freedom for Immigrants
- Helena Olea**
Associate Director for Programs, Alianza Americas.

MODERATOR

REGISTER HERE
<https://bit.ly/r5pmc>

QR Code

Logos: AMERICA, GRFDT, IIMAD, MFA, CCRM, METROPOLIS ASIA-PACIFIC

The “Race and Ethnicity in Migration” programme was held on 23 November 2021. On the same day, the GRFDT conducted the webinar on GCM Objective 7, that is, “Address and Rescue Vulnerabilities in Migration”.

Stephen Addawenhas given the special lecture on “Social Costs,” as a part of special lecture series on Global Compact for Migration on 27 November 2021. The Programme on Detention and Return and GCM 8 Objective – “Save Lives and Establish Coordinated international Efforts on Missing Migrants” was held on

30 November 2021.

The entire month of November witnessed several seminars and special lecture series. Readers can check the programme’s videos on GRFDT YouTube Channel titled “Diaspora Transnationalism”. Details of the upcoming programmes are also available on the GRFDT website.

Date: 20 November 2021
1PM-2:30 PM Geneva time | 8PM-9:30 PM Manila time |
3PM-4:30 PM Doha Time | 5:30PM-7 PM India time

Special Lecture Series on Global Compact for Migration

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Prof. Binod Khadria
Former Professor of Economics, JNU
President, GRFDT

zoom URL: <https://bit.ly/gcmsd>

Date: 13 November 2021
1PM-2:30 PM Geneva time | 8PM-9:30 PM Manila time |
3PM-4:30 PM Doha Time | 5:30PM-7 PM India time

Special Lecture Series on Global Compact for Migration

DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVES

Prof. S. Irudaya Rajan
International Institute of Migration
and Development

zoom URL: <https://bit.ly/gcmsd>

Date: 06 November 2021
1PM-2:30 PM Geneva time | 8PM-9:30 PM Manila time |
3PM-4:30 PM Doha Time | 5:30PM-7 PM India time

Special Lecture Series on Global Compact for Migration

TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRATION

Dr. Kunal Keshri
Assistant Professor G. B. Pant Social
Science Institute, India

zoom URL: <https://bit.ly/gcmsd>

SAVE THE DATE

PEOPLE'S MIGRATION CHALLENGE

ROUND 5

EVERY TUESDAY
FROM 16 NOV. - 14 DEC. 2021



Filipino diaspora voting beyond (and within) borders during the pandemic

What can we expect from Overseas Absentee Voting in the upcoming 2022 Philippine elections?

Patricia Miraflores*

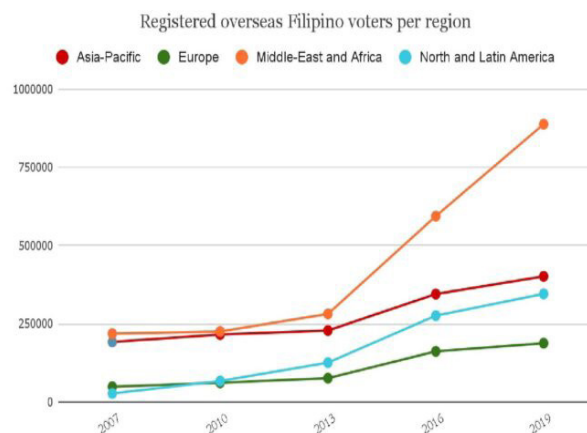
Some speculate that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are beginning to shed their so-called “voter apathy” when they proved to be [game-changers in the 2016 and 2019 Philippine elections](#). On one hand, the Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC) made huge strides at improving voter registration abroad to accommodate the Filipino diaspora which comprises [10% of the total Philippine population](#). For instance, their launching of iREHISTRO, an online application form during the registration period for the 2016 presidential elections, eased some aspects of this process.

On the other hand, actual voter turnouts have remained low among overseas Filipinos for the past decade. With several OFWs repatriated during the COVID-19 pandemic, COMELEC had to extend the deadline for returning migrants to transfer their [voter registration records from overseas to local voting](#) for the upcoming 2022 presidential elections. Given the [unprecedented repatriation of more than 300,000 OFWs](#) during the pandemic, can these voting patterns change or will they only be exacerbated?

Recent history of overseas Filipino voting

In the Philippines, exercising the right to vote is a fundamental political right that has come to transcend national boundaries because of its significant diaspora population. The bureaucratic process of voting — from registration to election day — has evolved to accommodate overseas Filipino workers residing outside the Philippines. This has been the case since the [Overseas Absentee Voting \(OAV\) Act or R.A. 9189 was passed](#) in 2003 which mandated the participation of overseas “absentee” voters (OAV) during Philippine elections. This law enables eligible land-based and seafaring Filipino voters working or residing outside the Philippines to cast their ballots abroad.

Since the OAV Act was mandated, there has been [a steady increase](#) in the number of newly registered overseas Filipino voters. This was especially noticeable in the Middle East where Filipino voter registration significantly [overtook Asia Pacific](#) since 2016. Most of this could be attributed to high voter registration and turnouts in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, the [top two preferred destinations](#) for OFWs as of 2019. In the Asia Pacific, voter registration and turnouts have been consistently highest in Hong Kong, the third top destination for OFWs, and in Singapore. The United States is also in the top five countries with the highest registration of OAVs for the past five election cycles.

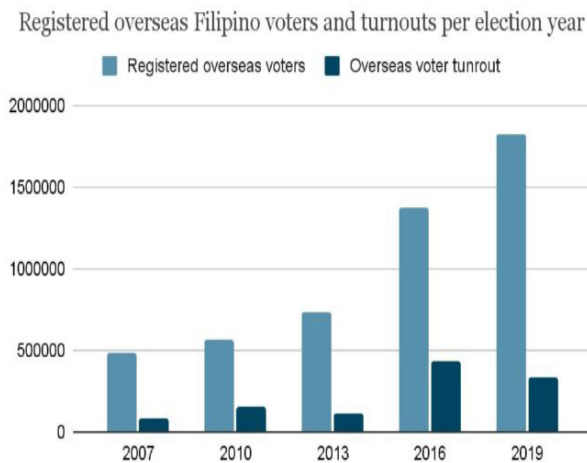


Source: [Registered overseas Filipino voters per region recorded by the Commission on Elections](#)

On one hand, there is [an upward trend](#) in the number of OAVs who registered and actually cast their ballots from 2007 to 2019, with the number peaking in 2016. Based on this pattern, registered OAVs are also more likely to go out and vote [when presidential and vice presidential positions](#) are at stake. As illustrated below, OAV registration [increased by more than 100%](#) during the presidential elections of 2016 compared to the

midterm elections of 2013. Turnout also increased among registered OAVs by 32.4%, favoring then-candidate President Rodrigo Duterte. Subsequently, turnouts decreased in the midterm elections of 2019 in the absence of a presidential electoral process despite OAV registration reaching an all-time high that same year. This pattern was also observed in the 2007-2010-2013 cycles in which the actual turnout peaked during the 2010 presidential elections despite the increase in registered voters in the 2013 midterm elections. As such, one would expect a moderate spike in OAV turnouts for the upcoming 2022 presidential elections under normal circumstances.

However, in the context of the pandemic, there are special factors to consider. For instance, [COMELEC expects that OAV turnouts will be even lower](#) in the 2022 elections because of OFW repatriation during the pandemic. This is especially relevant to the Middle East where [228,893 OFWs have been repatriated](#) as of January 2021, comprising nearly 10% of the total number of OFWs in the region.



Source: [Overall count of registered and actual overseas Filipino voters recorded by the Commission on Elections](#)

No-shows and low turnouts despite increasing registration rates

Before the pandemic, actual turnouts among registered OAVs have already been a crucial issue regardless of destination and type of election. During the midterm elections in 2007, only 16.22% of registered OAVs cast

their votes due to poor voter education, misinformation, and pre-requirements for voting. [These problems still carried over](#) in the 2010 presidential and 2013 midterm elections which, as some argued, reflects not only the perils of overseas registration, but also the [growing apathy](#) of OAVs towards homeland politics.

Even during the 2016 presidential elections, when [overall interest in national politics was relatively higher among OAVs](#), there was a huge gap in turnouts between them and local voters. Whereas [81.95% of registered voters](#) in the Philippines casted their ballots, only 42.21% of registered OAVs abroad did. As illustrated below, OAVs still tend to exhibit low turnouts despite the increasing number of registered voters across all regions. Despite the huge strides made at improving OAV registration, turnouts are still comparably low, showing that “liberalizing” absentee voting alone may [not be enough to increase actual turnout](#).

This is best illustrated by the two recent election turnouts in the Middle East, which had the [highest increase in registration among OAVs](#) in the past five years. Regardless of these increased registration rates, turnouts in the 2016 and 2019 elections in the region were only 27.33% and 13.64%, respectively. Taking the recent repatriations into account, this is expected to decline in the upcoming elections.

Actual turnouts among registered overseas Filipino voters per region



Sources: [Registered and actual overseas Filipino voters per region recorded by the Commission on Elections](#)

From overseas to local and vice versa: Repatriated and re-migrating OFWs

The upcoming 2022 presidential elections would be a remarkable test for COMELEC in addressing the complex issues of OAVs that emerged in the context of a mid-pandemic Philippines. First, the repatriation of several OFWs would test COMELEC's capacity to curb the potential disenfranchisement of registered overseas voters who would now have to vote in their local registries. [With half of recently repatriated OFWs already considering re-migrating](#), the hesitation to register at a local poll is understandable.

One silver lining is the pressure for COMELEC to innovate the voting registration processes. For instance, [Virtual Frontline Services](#) have been offered to enable online registration for overseas voting by booking an appointment via email or Facebook. Although this has yet to address low OAV turnouts, the gradual digitalization of these processes and the use of social media tools are potential avenues for improvement. As the pandemic revealed, elections should accommodate repatriated OFWs as well as those considering re-migration. These voting processes should strive to become accessible and flexible because mobility between the source and host countries is part of the Filipino diaspora experience.

Lastly, one must remember that the power of the Filipino

diaspora as election game-changers transcends their individual capacity to vote. As was the case in the 2016 and 2019 elections, [OFWs are breadwinners who can shape their families' and relatives' votes](#). The pandemic is a double-edged sword which could either exacerbate or mitigate the voter apathy and low turnouts among OAVs. Given the heightened role of OFW communities in coping with the pandemic, there is a lot of potential to foster political will among OAVs to vote. On the other hand, disillusionment is also a possible tertiary effect since some Philippine institutions struggled to address OFWs' precarity during the pandemic. To encourage the collective participation of OAVs in the upcoming elections, the COMELEC ought to harness the power of OFW networks which some predict could lead to [an OFW voting bloc](#) in the upcoming 2022 elections.

Patricia Miraflores* is a graduate student pursuing a joint Master's degree in M.A. Euroculture at the University of Groningen and Uppsala University. She is a recipient of the 2020 Erasmus Mundus scholarship award from the European Commission.

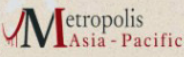
Email: p.e.c.miraflores@student.rug.nl

Roots and Routes
The Newsletter of GRFDT
Invites

- Short Articles (1000-1500 words)
- Book Reviews
- Interviews
- Seminar/ Conference Reports

Area covers: International Migration, Diaspora, Refugee
E-mail: convenor@grfdt.com

www.grfdt.com



02 November 2021
06:30 PM Indian Time
(GMT + 05:30)



GCM OBJECTIVE 4: ENSURE THAT ALL MIGRANTS HAVE PROOF OF LEGAL IDENTITY AND ADEQUATE DOCUMENTATION

- Speakers**
- Nicole Constable**
Professor and Chair of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh
 - Nana Gyamfi**
Executive Director, Black Alliance for Just Immigration
 - Niall McCann**
UN Legal Identity Agenda taskforce, UNDP
- Moderator**
- Paddy Siyanga Knudsen**
Vice President, Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism



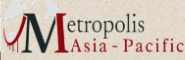
Scan QR Code

Register here:

<https://bit.ly/gcmcertificate>

Medium of Instruction: English

Visit <http://www.globalcompactmigration.com> to know more
 Email: academy@grfdt.com



09 November 2021
07:30 PM Indian Time
(GMT + 05:30)



GCM OBJECTIVE 5: "ENHANCE AVAILABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY OF PATHWAYS FOR REGULAR MIGRATION"

Speakers



Emmerentia Erasmus
 Migration Specialist



Claudia Masferrer
 Coordinator, Seminar Migration, Inequality and Public Policies, El Colegio de Mexico

Moderator



Ms Paddy Siyanga Knudsen
 Vice President, Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism.



Scan QR Code

Register here:

<https://bit.ly/gcmcertificate>

Medium of Instruction: English

Visit <http://www.globalcompactmigration.com> to know more
 Email: academy@grfdt.com

Repatriation and reintegration during the pandemic: The case of Overseas Filipino Workers

Patricia Miraflores*

The ongoing repatriation of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) due to COVID-19 was named the [biggest in Philippine history](#) by Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. who speculates it may even be the [largest ever mass repatriation of citizens from a single country](#). During the pandemic, a one-billion peso fund was allocated to the Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) Policy in aiding stranded OFWs who lost their jobs abroad, among other precarious situations. However, the ATN fund was quickly depleted due to the unprecedented number of OFW repatriations in 2020 and [additional funding worth 820 million pesos](#) was requested.

These nationally-funded repatriation schemes enabled the safe return of Filipino migrants who faced vulnerable conditions in their host countries. However, some criticized these policies for being counterproductive, having [trapped aspiring OFWs and newly repatriated migrants in the Philippines](#). Returnees face even more precarious conditions at home than abroad, with [83% of OFWs having remained unemployed three months after returning](#). While predictive models have been proposed on the personal, economic, social, and political factors that influence Filipinos' decisions to work overseas, most were based on the pre-pandemic context. Given the continuous developments in Filipino migration patterns during the pandemic, further studies are needed to evaluate the medium- to long-term effectiveness of repatriation policies. As such, evolving conditions and emerging factors from the time OFWs contemplate repatriation up to their actual reintegration in the Philippines should be considered.

Considering and reconsidering repatriation

OFWs are not unfamiliar with global health crises, having been exposed to epidemics and outbreaks of viral diseases such as SARS, Ebola, and MERS-CoV. However, none have impacted OFWs with the [same magnitude as the COVID-19 pandemic](#) in terms of unemployment, displacement, and other forms of precarity while based abroad. The infographic below depicts some key findings among the 8,332 repatriated

OFWs interviewed by the International Organization of Migration as of March 16, 2020. While 67% of all respondents reported that their decision to return was [primarily influenced by the pandemic](#), 23% intended to return regardless of the situation. Among those who answered the former, the most common reason cited was employment contract termination or non-renewal due to the economic downturn and escalating situation in the host country. Others were requested by their employer to leave due to the pandemic, whereas some were fired and/or unable to find employment. A smaller percentage reported that their family convinced them to return home for their safety.



Source: [International Organization of Migration](#)

Beyond economic reasons, it is important to remember that pandemic conditions and the corresponding policy responses of nation-states are highly dynamic. In the case of OFWs, the decision to repatriate will be further influenced and complexified by new developments in both their host and home countries. For example, half of the 80,000 unemployed OFWs who signed up for repatriation as of March 2021 [withdrew their application after they were vaccinated](#) against the COVID-19 virus. Indeed, the process of vaccinating non-citizens in traditional host countries such as the United States tends to be [slower due to extra impediments](#). However, we can expect OFWs to factor these new options into their decision-making as vaccines, testing kits, and isolation facilities are becoming [less and less inaccessible](#) to refugees and migrants in many countries. As national

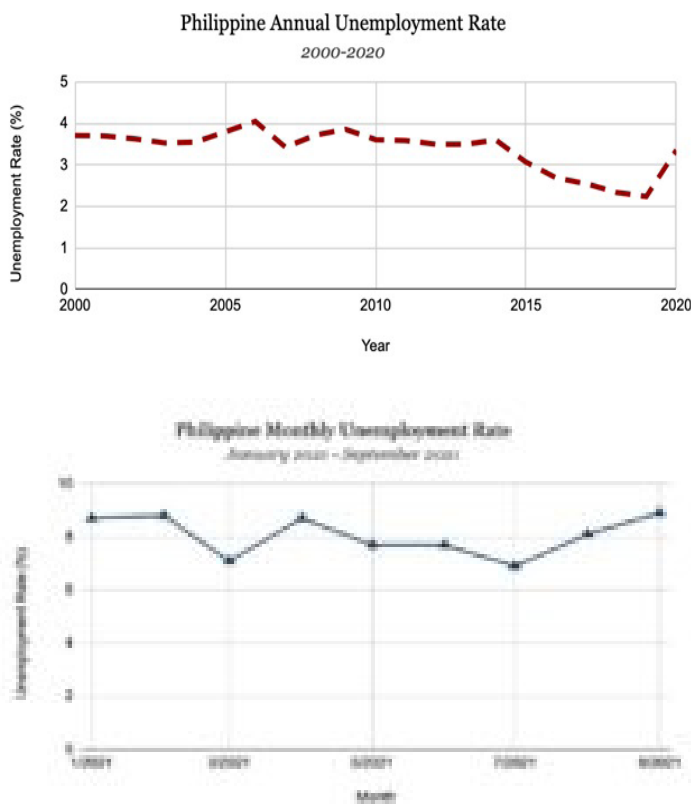
policies evolve and become more inclusive of non-citizens, such changes may expand OFWs' options and compel them to reconsider staying in their host countries.

Re-migration and the precarity of reintegration

Many OFWs who followed through with repatriation as of the second quarter of 2020 embarked on rather tedious reintegration processes in the Philippines. Upon arrival, the first step was to wait for their turn to get tested for COVID-19. Due to the overwhelming number of returning OFWs, the international airport in Manila faced [backlogs in releasing test results](#). Only after receiving a negative test result can returnees proceed with a [maze of government requirements](#) before they are permitted to travel from Manila to their provinces. Some local government units denied the entry of returnees based on the [stigma that they are potential carriers of the virus](#). Three months after their return, the majority of returnees' situations remained precarious as they [struggled to secure jobs and repay debts](#), and the crisis persisted into 2021 as unemployment rates remained high.

Re-migration abroad remains the most attractive option for several returnees, as 48% of the IOM survey participants responded that they still intend to work overseas. Majority of them preferred to re-migrate to the same destination country they previously worked in. Meanwhile, only 34% expressed their plan to stay in the Philippines, whereas 2% intended to migrate locally and 15% were undecided. Despite funding [three nationwide livelihood program](#) geared towards reintegration, only 26% of the respondents were reported to have applied and received any type of government support. [Low registration rates](#) for repatriation aid were also recorded, reflecting the limitations of these national reintegration policies in meeting returnees' needs and anticipating their precarious situations.

Common types of reintegration aid offered by the government include a [one-time financial assistance](#) funding of 10,000 pesos, [starter loans for small businesses](#), and [reskilling programs](#) to enter new careers. Upon arrival, the initial funding of 10,000 pesos was quickly depleted as recent returnees faced unprecedented expenses due to [delays in the repatriation process](#), on top of the fact that some were [not compensated properly](#) by their foreign employers before they returned. For those who planned to start a small business, concerns with capital and capacity-building became major obstacles. Although there are loan programs to support income-generating ventures, only 30% of returnees are able to apply for them since most are still recuperating from huge financial losses from repatriation. Lastly, some returnees experienced a huge mismatch between the supply and demand for their skills, leading to unemployment at home. This is especially pertinent for seafarers whose skill sets were developed to meet demands abroad. Although reskilling programs were implemented, shifting to a completely new career path at home demanded [more expenses and capacities that returnees cannot afford](#). For instance, most jobs with decent pay were found in the call center industry. Newly hired call center agents in the Philippines are required to have adequate equipment and internet connection. They were also expected to have perfect grammar when speaking in English and, in most cases, an American accent. Since most seafarers worked in multicultural settings, they are less likely to develop such skills intended to meet the niche demands of the telecommunications market. Hence, remaining in



Source: [Philippine Statistics Authority](#)

the Philippines during the pandemic more often led to unemployment for many returnees.

On the permanence of return and reintegration

Although national programs were implemented to increase prospects for repatriation, the process of reintegration presents several challenges for already-precarious OFWs. On one hand, this exposed the limitations of reintegration efforts in countries reliant on export-oriented economic strategies. The lack of dignified labor and sustainable livelihood at home for repatriated OFWs reflects the [human and social costs](#) of designing a labor supply-and-demand system built around remittances. On the other hand, this also attests to the integral role of overseas migration to Filipinos' survival, security, and identity, given the nation's [long history of international mobility](#). While the notion of permanent repatriation is fundamental to diasporic communities, "return" is often fluid in practice. This is especially true in the context of circular migration among precarious OFWs with a high tendency for re-

migration.

When weighing the risks and rewards of circular migration during the pandemic, OFWs have to consider their economic realities and circumstances both at home and abroad. To strengthen reintegration policies in the Philippines, sharper focus is needed on creating self-sustainable means of livelihood for recent returnees. However, successful reintegration cannot work without a holistic restructuring of the export-oriented economic system. This entails confronting the deep-seated flaws of remittance dependency and the implementation of long-overdue economic reforms that will create a robust local job market.

*Patricia Miraflores** is a graduate student pursuing a joint Master's degree in M.A. Euroculture at the University of Groningen and Uppsala University. She is a recipient of the 2020 Erasmus Mundus scholarship award from the European Commission. Email: p.e.c.miraflores@student.rug.nl

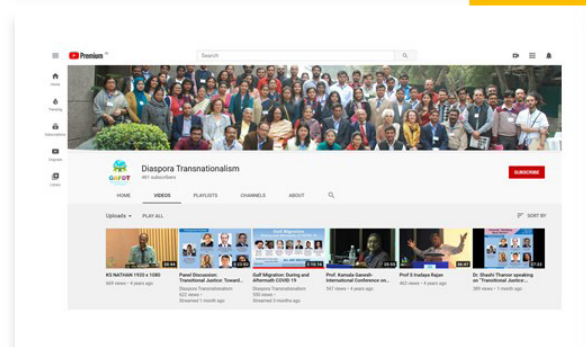
Subscribe to our YouTube channel



Diaspora Transnationalism



Visit www.grfdt.com for more information.



Caroline S. Hau (2017), *Elites and Ilustrados in Philippine Culture*, Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 978-971-550-779-0, 398 pages.

Caroline S. Hau's *Elites and Ilustrados in Philippine Culture* reflects on the long-established yet evolving roles of Filipino elite in nation-building and world-making. In the introductory chapter, Hau opens with the key thesis that the Filipino imagined community can no longer be imagined in terms of "a strict separation between inside and outside, between foreign and Filipino" (19). In lieu of defining who is included or excluded from this national community, the book explores the perceived otherness, hybridity, and privileges of historical and contemporary Filipinos constituting the "upper" class. Central to this approach is the exploration of conceptual linkages between wealth, education, geographical location, and mobility. Strong emphasis is placed on the "elites" juxtaposed against "masses" whose shifting capacities and intentions for travelling abroad (and returning to the motherland) attest to the changing signifiers of both elitism and nationalism throughout Philippine history. The subsequent chapters are organized thematically, each one exploring Filipino figures who are emblematic of the large-scale transformations in Philippine society across its colonial and post-colonial eras.

On the concept of Philippine patriotism and its "fraught relationship" with the self-interests of the Filipino elite during and after the colonial periods, Hau grounds her analysis of *ilustrados* and *mestizos* in the literary works of prominent Filipino writers in the second, third, and fourth chapters. The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters explore the "converging as well as conflicting (self-)interests of the middle classes and elites" (11) constituting the "upper" Filipino class during the era of globalization using a different approach from the first half of the book. In these chapters, Hau dissects the concepts of crony capitalism (the tight-knit yet antagonistic class of political and business elites),



transnational elite alliances (politico-business alliances forged between Filipino elites and their foreign counterparts), and diasporic identities (Fil-foreigners and overseas Filipino intellectuals) by analyzing actual historical and contemporary events.

As a literature expert, Hau deftly analyzes the fictional depictions of the complex roles embodied by historical and contemporary elite actors haunted by their self-contradicting, broken identities as they attempt to invoke nationalism while embodying privileged positions in Philippine society. Discussions of the sociopolitical contexts of these works were interspersed with close-readings of the *Gun Dealers' Daughter* by Gina Apostol (Chapter 2), *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* by Nick Joaquin (Chapter 3), and *Ilustrado* by Miguel Syjuco (Chapter 4).

The strongest points of the book emerge in the first half when Hau delves into transnational Philippine literature centered on Chinese-Filipino linkages. Hau's expertise in the subject allowed for a nuanced analysis of the transnational identities of the Filipino elite whose notions of patriotism were forged in sites of nationalism outside the Philippines and its former colonizers. This is best exemplified by her discussion of Hong Kong's significance in Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, providing a much-needed contextualization of the port city as a now-forgotten site for Filipino nationalism. This deviates from "the familiar cultural circuit linking the Philippines, Europe, and America" (85) which are often the backdrops of fictional depictions of the Philippine diaspora. In the second half of the book, Hau discusses the notions of "elitism" and "Chineseness" in the context of more recent events in the Philippines. Particularly, Chapter 6 examines the racial politics of "Chinese corruption" in the NBN-

ZTE scandal in 2007 which arrived at compelling conclusions about the continuities and discontinuities of the *Chinese mestizo* concept throughout Philippine history.

On the other hand, this selection of works also feeds into notions of elitism, as the authors of these books come from privileged backgrounds themselves. Hau foresees this and elects to ground her literary analyses with discussions of their authors' positionalities in Philippine society and the Filipino imagined community. This is best exemplified in Chapter 4 where Hau appraises the internationally acclaimed *Ilustrado* (2010) by Miguel Syjuco, whose privileged international background became the target of local critique when he remarked that his distance away from the Philippines allowed him to "really see" its problems. Hau links this to the blurring dichotomy between the "contribution" versus "betrayal" of Filipinos who left and returned to the motherland. The example of modern day Overseas Filipino Workers was used whose return is automatically perceived to be a virtuous act – heroic, even – when their return cannot be "simplistically coded as active contribution to the nation" (154).

In Chapter 7, these themes were revisited on the topic of overseas Filipino intellectuals and the politics of location and its "bearing on the (postcolonial) intellectual's fraught relationship to power and knowledge" (246). This chapter provides a close-reading of Reynaldo Ileto's 1999 essay entitled "Orientalism in the Study of Philippine Politics" and the responses it elicited from scholars based in the Philippines and abroad. Reflecting on these debates, Hau investigates the complex positionalities of migrant scholars, specifically those from Third World countries who claim to speak (implicitly or explicitly) on behalf of their native countries while also embodying their roles as members of the First World academe. In this sense, Hau sees overseas Filipino intellectuals as "neither an insider

nor an outsider" to the Philippine imagined community (256). Moreso, Hau argues that the differences in power between Third World intellectuals now based in the First World academe versus those who remained in their native land are still reinforced by Othering concepts of "inside" and "outside". That is, even within Third World nation-states, there are differences in power between intellectuals based in "metropolitan" universities versus those in "non-metropolitan" ones.

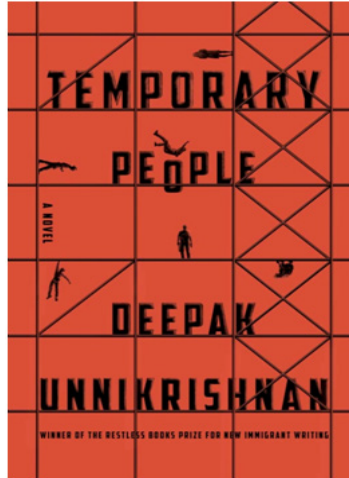
Interestingly, one crucial dimension that was not explicitly discussed in the book is Hau's own position as an overseas Filipino intellectual herself, having pursued her graduate studies at Cornell University before holding her current professorship at Kyoto University. Insofar as positionality is concerned, this book could be dismissed as yet another product of "elitist" intellectualism by those who ascribe overseas Filipino intellectuals' "distance" from the nation to their peripherality in the Filipino imagined community. Hence, it could remain subject to the very same divisiveness between Third World intellectuals at home versus abroad that it seeks to critique. Regardless of these limitations, the insights in *Elites and Ilustrados* effectively moves the conversation forward by interrogating and unpacking the assumptions and connotations assigned to the key concepts at the crux of these debates.

Patricia Miraflores is a graduate student pursuing a joint Master's degree in M.A. Euroculture at the University of Groningen and Uppsala University. She is a recipient of the 2020 Erasmus Mundus scholarship award from the European Commission.

Email: p.e.c.miraflores@student.rug.nl

Temporary People, Deepak Unnikrishnan (2017), Brooklyn: Restless Books, 9781632061423, 243 pages.

Deepak Unnikrishnan is the author of the fiction novel- 'Temporary People', published in 2017 by Restless Books. The author compiled twenty-eight short stories and divided them in three parts titled Limbs; Tongue. Flesh and Veed. The author was born to migrant labourers in the Gulf. In 2016, Deepak Unnikrishnan won the inaugural Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing, with his then-unpublished manuscript, *Temporary People*. He grew up in Abu Dhabi, but his parents are pravasis.[1]



Deepak Unnikrishnan's debut novel *Temporary People* takes the readers through migrants' the journey to the United Arab Emirates. *Temporary People* is about a set of experiences unique to the Gulf and to its system of migrant labour. The novel explores the lives and experiences of immigrants in a succinct way despite the context of chaotic, fragile lives of migrant labourers living in foreign countries. The author captures the hopes; desires and sufferings of an immigrant who flees his country in search of work. The novel is accentuated by the fact that such life histories are often not heard by the common man, or it is not published in public eye. The tone of the story is set by the statement of an anonymous person that serves as an epigraph for 'Limbs': "There exists this city built by labour, mostly men, who disappear after their respective buildings are made" (p. 12).

The revolving theme of the novel is on the lives of immigrants. The word pravasi is used regularly throughout the novel. Unnikrishnan the lived experiences of the immigrants as he focuses on their dreams and expectations when they go to work in the Gulf countries. They dream of making money and returning home with rich status to live a luxurious life. These dreams are broken eventually when they face cruelty of their host country.

The first story in the novel is about a woman who glues together and fixes broken, dying people. These people are primarily on-site labourers responsible for the construction of buildings for the city skylines. Basically, they are the invisible, non-citizens of a global enterprise which pumps the productivity out of them. For anyone who has spent a considerable amount of time in a foreign country be it out of necessity, loneliness becomes is a constant companion. According to Unnikrishnan, foreign nationals make up to 80 per cent of the population in UAE countries. They contribute significantly to the economy but still they feel alienated.

Unnikrishnan explains in the introduction that as a son of pravasis, his departure from Abu Dhabi was inevitable: '**The UAE does not grant citizenship to its foreign labour force or their children.**' The novel uses short stories which incorporate a variety of forms such as official reports; transcripts of interviews; lists-to build up a kaleidoscopic portrait of migrant workers working in the UAE. These include a girl who has been sexually abused in an elevator. What does it mean to be a pravasi? Unnikrishnan does not provide a definitive answer. While he did not provide a definition, he tried to use language to define and illustrate the typical lived experiences of a pravasi. Unnikrishnan suggests one way where pravasis hang onto their own selves by conjuring a language so lively that it defies the numbing effects of being belittled and dishonoured.

In another story *Nalinakshi*, the author further explores these sentiments by using the word Pravasi which in Malayalam means foreigner or outsider. But more than anything else, pravasi is about the forgotten ones and the absent in this novel.

Temporary People digs into the lives; imaginaries;

myths and vocabularies of the Southeast Asian nations and Filipinos who make up the UAE's subaltern class. Unnikrishnan creates a vivid bottom-up vernacular history of the modern Gulf oil state. The strength of Unnikrishnan's writing is in his ability to take readers to another place. The stories linger into the mind for long. Many of Unnikrishnan's stories allegorically depict what life is like for the temporary workers within the UAE.

Unnikrishnan puts emphasis on the use and importance of language throughout the novel. There is a mix of the mother tongue of the immigrants with that of English which makes this novel more interesting to read. In the story *Monseepalty*, the author writes about a group of Indian migrants playing soccer together in empty parking lots. '*For a few hours we were all temporary inhabitants of Monseepalty*,' the narrator explains. The vision of community and unity, however, is eventually shattered once the police arrive to break and stop the games. It is interesting to read when the Indian migrants scatter and hide while a shirtless boy from a group of Arab players walks boldly towards the patrol car. The kid and the police then shake hands, share a joke and then the Arab boys return to playing soccer. The Arab boys not only have cultural status but also a command over Arabic signifies their belonging in the community.

The characters in the novel do not reappear from one chapter to the next. Each chapter in the novel conveys the experience of temporariness and shows the fragmentation of the community. The voices in the novel are rich and varied. The range of bonds are fragile where it was shown that friends betray friends; brothers betray brothers; mothers abandon children and children leave parents behind; pravasi, the foreigner, outsider or an immigrant who forsakes his own culture for another and thus can never be trusted. The stories of Temporary People render an invisible community visible. These stories help understanding about home and as well as past and future. Yet the novel simultaneously details the effect "temporary" status which has on cultural as well as familial bonds.

Through storytelling, Unnikrishnan reveals to the reader what has been left behind by migrants and as well as what they have created. These stories introduce readers to Malayalee labourers who eventually rebel against their masters. Unnikrishnan uses his own cultural experiences and adds Malayalam diction (his mother-tongue). The novel is a refreshing read as it beautifully captures the unique experiences of immigrant workers.

However, despite being a fantastic read, there are two notable weaknesses in the novel. Firstly, the stories deserve more than one read to fully grasp all the complexities. Secondly, some of the stories are long and feel like they take too long to finish. Nevertheless, the stories are powerful and challenging and will remain in the mind long after it is finished. Deepak Unnikrishnan rightfully titled the novel where the stories are interconnected with one another and fits the entire theme about people who are temporary. Unnikrishnan was the right choice to win the first New Immigrant Writing prize where his voice amplified the experiences of immigrants. The powerful yet unique narrative is the main highlight of the novel and provides with excellent information about the immigrants. Accordingly, it makes it an in-depth source of information for students; researchers, policy makers or anyone who has interest in understanding narratives and life-stories from the lens of immigrants.

[1]Pravasi is the Malayalam word for migrants and temporary workers.

Source: Deepak Unnikrishnan (2017), *Temporary People*, Brooklyn: Restless Books, 9781632061423, 243 pages.

Piyali Bhowmick is a PhD scholar at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Off Campus, India. She obtained MPhil degree in 2016 in Social Sciences from TISS Guwahati campus. She has done MA in Sociology in 2014 from Ambedkar University Delhi, New Delhi. Her areas of interest include- Labour Process, Manufacturing Industry, Sociology of everyday lives, Migration, Family and Kinship, Migration.

Leaving home: The pain of separation and loss of identity of migrants

Gumnam din (Missing Days) is a short movie of 27 minutes directed, written and researched by Ekta Mittal. The movie was shot in Hindi language and released in the year 2019. The film was funded by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT) and edited by Abhiro Banerjee. The soulful music was given by Mrithunjay Sharma and Veecheet Dhakal. Gumnaam Din is a part of a longer film and multimedia project called Behind the Tinsheets which looks at the inner worlds of migrant workers who are involved in building cities. This movie made a big mark at the Berlin Film Festival that took place from February 20 to March 1, 2020. The movie celebrates artistic freedom which delves into the pain of separation that is faced by many migrant workers who see no other choice but to work far away from their homes.

The movie Gumnam Din was inspired by Shiv Kumar Batalvi's birha poetry which explores migrant labourers' non-migrant family members' yearnings and pain of waiting for their loved ones to return. When a migrant leaves what happens to him/her? Do they want to return? Will they be found ever? What are their mental conditions? How does the non-migrant family cope with the separation? These are questions which are difficult to answer but the expressions of the people in the movie with their pain come to the fore, leaving the audience in awe. This movie is a journey of silence, acceptance of alienation and separation from the world at large along with several symbolic meanings.

The movie begins by showing several intertwined railway lines and a man doing his chores on the platform alone. There are visuals of electric wires which are typically seen on Indian roads also symbolically reflecting the complexity of human relationships. Like the electric wires, the human connection too is difficult to be separated. The first few seconds of the movie showcase pictures of two

different men (see pictures 1 and 2). It is clear that these are the men who migrated and went missing.



Source: <https://psbt.org/awards-and-festivals/press/>



Picture 1



Picture 2

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHIVpPXcdIg>

Symbolic expressions

The movie depicts separation being an inevitable everyday practice. In one of the scenes a rural setting is shown where an old woman was working in the kitchen making rotis[2]. She utters, ***“I do not know if he is there anymore or not, if we knew, then we could have found out. I wonder what happened.”*** The pain and grief of separation can be seen on her face while she utters only a few words in front of her family members. It is clear from these few words that this movie surrounds the grief and pain of the family members whose near and dear ones migrated and never returned.

In the next scene, there is a woman staring at herself in the mirror. Probably she is a young bride. The silence continues as there are no dialogues in the scene. The silence of the movie is broken when we see an old man and woman reading or staring at a piece of paper. At first, one may mistake it for a simple unimportant piece of paper, but the next scene clarifies it when a young man with torn clothes looks at the paper and says ***“I couldn’t recognize.”*** This is when the piece of paper turns to be a small photograph (see picture 3). With every scene emotions flow and viewers’ can well connect with it.



(Picture 3) Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHIVpPXcdIg>

In the very next scene, there are villagers gathering around (see picture 4) the same picture and trying to identify the person in the picture and his whereabouts. The search for missing persons is done by traveling across different villages and asking respective villagers whether they have seen the missing person(s) in question.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHIVpPXcdIg>

Expressing with symbols

The scene of the young woman staring at herself in the mirror appears multiple times. This, however, does not reveal who she is getting ready for. This is left open for the audience to speculate. But the woman is waiting for someone. She does not say a word. She gets dressed, puts vermilion, and wears red bangles but still does not express what she is feeling or expecting. On several occasions in the movie, there are symbols where the camera zooms in on ants, pigeons and other birds flying away, a person walking through the fog and disappears. All these are shown, and it feels everyone is working together, flying together with family. Except for the scene of disappearance into the unknown where one can connect the separation. Along with symbols and expressions with no spoken words there is a song sung by a woman in the background of sunset around the riverbed which is the first song of the movie expressing pain.

Narratives from the city

The next scene is from the bridge construction work in the city where workers talk about being homesick. One of the workers says-

“No one is in trouble at home. I am in more trouble, nobody at home knows that. They must be thinking, who knows if he is dead or alive, rotting or surviving? Nights are sleepless. There is no motivation to work.”

The migrant worker goes on to express that he pretends to know nothing despite knowing everything.

Gumnam Din thus is not a typical literal expression but

a poetic take on migrant workers and their families. The audience will see the people in the movie dreaming, leaving, disappearing, wailing, and waiting endlessly. Ekta brought the viewers closer to the experience of loss through this movie. Ekta Mittal expressed her work through a lens where family members of the migrants have no choice but to wait for their separated and missing dear ones. In-between, the lives of the family members become difficult. Although the movie leaves an impact, the only concern I felt is why the migrant worker hides his identity even when he is alive. I highly recommend this movie to everyone to understand the perspective of the missing migrant worker and those who wait for them in the villages endlessly. It is a well-researched and produced film to understand the pain and grief from both sides.

[1] Birha is separation

[2] bread, especially a flat round bread cooked on a griddle

Bhowmick Piyali is a PhD scholar at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Off Campus, India. She obtained MPhil degree in 2016 in Social Sciences from TISS Guwahati campus. She has done MA in Sociology in 2014 from Ambedkar University Delhi, New Delhi. Her areas of interest include- Labour Process, Manufacturing Industry, Sociology of everyday lives, Migration, Family and Kinship, Migration and Social networks.

GRFDT Publications

