

## **Mediated diasporas: material translations of the Philippines in a globalised world.**

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This volume has three aims. First, it brings new work on Filipinos and the Philippines from an emerging generation of scholars into dialogue with contributions from more established UK-based scholars. Our contributors thus include Filipinist academics partly trained in the UK and UK scholars who have recently begun to work on Filipino themes. Second, though not exclusively focused on that country, the volume highlights the increasing importance of the UK as a destination for a variety of Filipinos. Doing so foregrounds the diversity of a global diaspora that has come to be associated with particular host countries and regions and with migrants stereotypically identified as impoverished and hyper exploited domestic and care workers. Contributors to this volume draw on research and encounters with Filipinos who are variously living, working, studying or passing through the United Kingdom as immigrants, migrant workers, students, and sailors, and with contacts in their wider Filipino networks. Though one of the essays concerns Filipinos in Israel, it is about a shared culture of faith and celebrity that links the Philippines to the diaspora - as familiar among Filipinos in East London as it is in Tel Aviv or Manila. Third and more substantively, as part of an attempt to move beyond an exclusive focus on labour relations that characterize much of the recent writing about Filipino migration, the volume attends to the important ways that media shapes a variety of migrant experiences and diasporic situations.

The essays in this volume range from an investigation of whether or not and to what extent different forms of media consumption facilitate or foreclose public engagement and connection among elite students at home and abroad in London to an analysis of migrant participation in and production of Christian celebrities in diaspora, and beyond that, to a historical exploration of the material cultures of long distance parenting prior to the emergence of the internet and mobile telephony. But we juxtapose these media-focussed contributions with other essays that disclose the way that 'nation' is materialized in a putatively liminal culture-less space of seafarers, reveal the production of new forms of on-line indigeneity by migrants forming connectivities both above and below national identities (both home and adopted) and, finally, show how body modification practices of apparently waning cultural worlds are taken up and revived through their appropriations in virtual and diasporic spaces.

In what follows, we provide some of the broader context of Filipino migration within which the individual contributions are situated and set out our approach to thinking about mediated diasporas. Recent work demonstrates the ways that new media and ICTs both in the Philippines and among Filipino diasporans have become central to contemporary processes of identity formation, altering and enabling the articulation of alternative selves and expanding spatially Filipino national identifications and definitions of 'home' (Pertierra 2002, 2006, 2010 Tyner and Kuhlke 2000, Ignacio 2005). While attending to media in the specific sense of particular social technologies of mass communication, we extend that work here drawing together new empirical studies both to demonstrate the various ways that a wide range of differently situated migrants make use of those media and by considering processes of

mediation in a much broader sense (Mazzarella 2004), an approach that draws together both an analysis of the ‘materialities of migration’ (Basu and Coleman 2008) and ‘the technics of translation’ (Rafael 2005).

### **Situating the UK within the global Filipino diaspora.**

The present volume highlights a renewed interest in Philippine Studies, outside of the Philippines and beyond the United States. The UK has generally been mapped well outside the locus of scholarly activity in Philippines Studies, a situation that may be at least partly explained by different and only briefly intersecting histories of colonialism.<sup>1</sup> Today the United Kingdom is no longer insignificant on the ‘mental map’ of the Filipino diaspora. The UK is now home to the largest number of diasporic Filipinos in Europe, with numbers estimated to be over 250,000.<sup>2</sup> That figure places the UK among the top destinations of overseas Filipinos. Dispersed globally across every continent there are an estimated 8 million overseas Filipinos who account annually for some 10% of Philippine GDP.<sup>3</sup> Britain ranks 5<sup>th</sup> (behind the USA, Canada, Australia and Japan) in terms of numbers of Filipinos who reside here on a permanent basis and 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of remittances (behind the USA, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and Japan in total value remitted between January and September 2010)<sup>4</sup>.

Recent work on migrant and diasporic Filipinos has primarily focused on temporary domestic and care worker migrants and their situations within a global system of economic inequality (e.g. Anderson 2000, Bakan and Stasiulis 1997, Constable 2007, Parreñas 2001, 2008, Tyner 2004). The exception to that is work on Filipinos in the USA, the country with the largest, longest established and most diverse population of permanently settled diasporan population of Filipinos outside of the Philippines that dates back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century corresponding to the American colonial period (e.g. Choy 2003, Espritu 2003, Manalansan 2003, Mendoza 2002, Ignacio 2005, Isaac 2006). It is important, however, to remember that the majority of the more than 8 million diasporan Filipinos, roughly half of whom are settled on a permanent basis, reside *outside* of the USA, work in a wide variety of occupations and occupy a much broader range of class positions than is either popularly imagined or

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<sup>1</sup> That does not mean to say that there has not been important work on the Philippines done by scholars trained and/or based in the UK (see, for example, the following books and edited volumes: Alejo 2000, Bankoff 2003, Cannell 1999, Chant and McIlwaine 1995, Clarke 1998, Hedman 2006, Hedman and Sidel 2000, Johnson 1997, Johnson and Werbner 2010, McKay 2011, Putzel 1992, 2002, Reyes 2008, Sidel 1999). Like the growing Filipino diaspora in the UK, scholars working on the Philippines have been geographically dispersed and housed in a variety of social science and humanities departments.

<sup>2</sup> Figures based on latest (December 2008) of so called ‘stock estimates’ of overseas Filipinos available via the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) web site, see [http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/stock\\_est\\_2008.pdf](http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/stock_est_2008.pdf) (accessed 3 Jan, 2011). The POEA gives a figure of 203,407 Filipinos in the UK as of December, 2008: the estimated 250,000 Filipinos in the UK is based on figures from the Philippine Embassy in London ([http://philembassy-uk.org/rpRelations\\_RPUKcommunityProfile.html](http://philembassy-uk.org/rpRelations_RPUKcommunityProfile.html), accessed 24 March, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency Annual report (<http://www.poea.gov.ph/ar/ar2009.pdf>, accessed 3 Jan, 2011) variously cites remittance figures of 9.5% and 10.8% of Philippine GDP in 2009.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/keystat/ofw.htm> (accessed 3 Jan, 2011). The exact origins of remittances is sometimes hard to determine and the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency routinely notes that because many remittances go through banks based in the USA, that country may appear to be a disproportionate source of remittances that may actually originate elsewhere.

academically investigated (see Johnson 2010, Amrith 2010 on middle class aspirations and migrant experiences in Saudi Arabia and Singapore respectively).

The UK, for example, demonstrates a recent history of ‘professional’ Filipino settlement. As elsewhere, recent Filipino migrants to the UK have been workers able and willing to fill the demands of a particular economic niche. In the UK the ‘Filipino niche’ in the labour market is predominantly in work in the health and care sectors. In the care sector, the line between domestic and care work may often be forcibly blurred by employers, so those who seek caring employment abroad may find it comes with a diminished social status. The UK, however, has been and continues to be an important destination for those who seek technical and professional careers in the caring professions that offer prospects of achieving a more middle class life. This goal of establishing a secure life is especially important for those working as nurses and senior carers in residential care homes who come to the UK in hopes of permanent settlement.

The ability of Filipino temporary migrants to find work and settle in the UK has recently been curtailed by the introduction of the UK Border Agency’s Points-Based System, which will deny migrants from outside the European Union visas for care giving work. Nevertheless, there remain a significant number of Filipinos entitled to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain on the basis of years of residency completed on temporary work visas. Meanwhile, the UK’s Filipino community continues to grow, largely through marriage migration, other forms of family reunification, and a wide variety of student arrivals, as well as points-earning professionals.

The contributors to this volume thus do not focus exclusively on care workers, but on a much broader range of overseas and diasporan Filipinos connected to the UK, from highly skilled and professional seamen and ship engineers to elite students. More importantly, those contributions that do concern care workers move the discussion of migrant Filipinos forward by attending to substantive social, cultural and material processes and relationships that are not singularly limited to or defined by migrants’ working relationships. It is those issues and concerns beyond labour conditions that articulate with the primary aim of this volume: to extend our understanding and theorizing of the Filipino diaspora - in particular the mediated nature of their translocal social relations - more generally.

### **Celebrity Connections and Elite Disconnections in a Mediatized Diaspora**

Studies of media and diaspora often examine ‘ethnic media’ within larger multi ethnic nation states. Much of this work has explored the experiences of post-colonial migrants who have relocated to the heartlands of their former colonizers. This literature concerns itself with issues of migrants’ integration within and the broader social cohesion possible for majority national cultures (for a recent summary see Karim 2010). Tracing the development of different types of media - from the first ethnic newspapers to radio, terrestrial and satellite television, the internet and other forms of e-communication – media and diaspora research has problematized the idea of ethnic media as being simply an attempt to resolve shared questions of identity and belonging. Instead, it has turned to explore new media forms, such

as satellite television and internet sites— forms fuelled by demand from migrant and diasporic groups – to document how ‘the media’ involve an increasingly fragmented but also a spatially expansive and actively engaged audience that frequently blurs the boundaries between creators and consumers of digital information. By attending to the diversity of meanings and participants enervated by these new media forms, current media and diasporas research troubles any simplistic understanding of ethnic media as being solely about questions of identity and belonging attendant on movement and relocation from homeland to new host society (Brinkerhoff 2009, Bailey, Georgiou and Harindranath 2007).

In their investigations of elite Filipino students in London, Jonathan Ong and Jason Cabañes further complicate our understanding of mediated diasporas by highlighting the sometimes unexpected ways that class is materialized. It is not just their relatively privileged background that differentiates elite Filipino students from their working compatriots, but also the different expectations attached to their travels and travails abroad. Migrant workers are valued because of remittances earned by the sweat of their brow. By contrast, elite students are routinely construed as the next generation of Filipino leaders. Like the 19<sup>th</sup> century elites (*ilustrados*) who studied in metropolitan centres of Europe with, and against, whom present day Filipino students are sometimes compared, it is the corporeal remittance of knowledge and learning that is the expected return. What Ong and Cabañes disclose is a situation where prolific media connectivity enables constant monitoring of homeland events that reaffirm elite student’s personal affiliation and identification as informed Filipinos. At the same time, and despite the moral weight of public expectation, that very connectivity also enables, and to some extent conceals, both the increasing privatization of knowledge and their carefully managed and selective participation in, and on occasions withdrawal from, civic arenas at home and abroad.

While Ong and Cabañes focus on a particular elite group of temporary migrants whose concerns and social position are oriented towards and dependent on their ability to use a variety of new media to create and sustain political relations and involvement back home, Claudia Liebelt’s paper reminds us that for many migrants their hopes and ambitions are often oriented towards and may be partially realized in diaspora through association with and ritual participation in globally mediatised Christianity. In the Philippines, as elsewhere among contemporary forms of charismatic Christianity, Filipinos experience ‘blessing’ by becoming a fleeting part of a mass televised spectacle (Wiegele 2005). The stars and celebrities who depend on their constituting audience remain and indeed derive their power and mystique by their perceived distance from them. For migrant workers in the Holy Land, however, Liebelt shows, it is not just the fact that they are actually physically present in the Holy Land and are able to literally and metaphorically walk in the footsteps of Jesus but also that in that place they no longer perceive or experience themselves as peripheral performers. They become nodal points through which divine blessings flow rather than simply recipients of blessings from elsewhere. In this theatre of spirituality that emerges in the space of diaspora, migrants move from constituting audience to centre stage performers, becoming instruments, rather than merely indices of spiritual power and blessing (Johnson and Werbner 2010, Tadiar 2009).

## **Materiality and Mediation in Migrant and Diasporic Lives**

Mass media and mobility seem to go hand in glove – each facilitating and making possible ever more complex forms of transnational ethnic and national relations. However, the essays in this volume respectively illustrate the point that the media is only ever one nexus of social, cultural and material relationships, one sort of mediation. Despite the commonly repeated axiom that globalization is increasing a globalised circulation of people, goods and ideas, what has too often been unexplored and taken for granted is what Basu and Coleman (2008) have referred to as the materiality of mobility. Though, against the narrative of circulation and flows, materiality might seem an impediment, Basu and Coleman draw our attention to the important ways in which movement is material, the effects it produces in peoples' lives are materialized, and material objects play a key role in the cultural and linguistic processes of translation. They conceptualize the materiality of movement as variously referring to material things and to relations that constrain and enable different sorts of mobility. People on the move take things, literally and metaphorically, from one place to another, whether these are objects they take or leave behind, acquire, dispose of and distribute. But, and perhaps more importantly, it is through this movement of material objects that people create and extend relationships with people they meet and places they move to and inhabit as well as leave behind and/or stay connected with. Thus material objects and embodied practices of inscription and exchange also mediate lives lived in the diaspora. To extend Miller, our contributors show how 'the things that people make [and take], make [and take] people' (Miller, 2005: 38)

In this volume, Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller hone in on the way that the materiality of historically specific forms of communication shape the long distance relationship between migrant parents, generally women but also men, and their children back in the Philippines. Preceding the widespread emergence of the mobile phone and the internet and associated technologies that was rapidly taken up among Filipinos both at home and abroad (Perteira, et. al. 2002), the generation of migrants that first came to the UK in the 1970s and 1980s relied on two primary forms of communication, the letter and the cassette tape. Madianou and Miller's research demonstrates the way that migrants systematically distinguished between the two mediums in terms of the different sorts of things they felt able to convey and the various sentiments each evoked in the process of writing and recording, reading and listening. Their research also reveals the different temporalities of the two mediums of exchange shape relations between home and abroad. A letter is relatively succinct, compared to the length of a 90 minute tape and the brevity – or loquacity – of the form of communication, as much as the time taken between sending and receiving a reply by post or through person exacerbated the inherent asymmetry of parent child relationships. Among family members living apart, parents, more so than children, might be not only reassured by ritualized salutations of the letter but also tormented by perceived sadness and distance in a child's voice on tape.

Madianou's and Miller's essay draws attention to and discloses the ramifying significance of the seemingly prosaic material forms of everyday mediums of communication. Swift's essay focuses on the materiality of mobility in its most literal sense, the ship. Löfgren (2008) has made the point that we too often gloss over the question of how one gets from one place to

another, the processes involved and the meaning of the things that physically convey us to our destinations. Thus, for example, while the thrill and glamour of flying has for many people worn thin if not disappeared altogether, for others it is the embodied experience of travel itself, the process of coming and going. In Liebelt's (2008) terms, this process of 'moving on and on' becomes objectified in and associated with different modes of transport – be it jumbo jet or steam railway – that often defines and enervates migrant and diasporic experience. Thus the space of the plane mediates connections between sites of sojourning and home. During recent field work with Filipinos in Saudi Arabia, Johnson asked respondents what the best thing about working abroad was. One Filipino Muslim woman succinctly replied, 'flying' making the now universally recognized hand motion of a plane taking off. Swift (this volume), however, shows us how, for those, such as seafarers, whose working lives are spent in perpetual transit from one place to another, the austere and regimented materiality of a car-carrier ship and its organizational cultures creates an almost ascetic like existence. This 'ship space' self consciously attempts to break down social and cultural divisions between crew members from a variety of backgrounds so as to ensure well ordered and efficient operation of the ship. The apparent 'lack of culture' in the space of the ship is, however, interrupted - one might say made human by - forms of sociality and conviviality. Filipino crew create their moments of consociality and become *barkada*, shipmates, through various forms of material exchange and shared consumption events. These exchanges and events not only transform the liminal space of the ship into a particular place and social locale, they forge alliances and establish enmities. These events and exchanges takes place in ways that make public and visible the usually hidden yet nevertheless persistent forms of racial categorization and national identifications that structure social relations on board. It is the material effects of these actions among Filipino crew that mediate 'ship space' as a place of diaspora and, at the same time, allow them to negotiate some of the conditions under which they work as labour migrants.

Swift's paper thus challenges the notion of the sea as a necessarily heterotopic or cosmopolitan space identified either with nostalgic seafaring cultures or of enforced corporate capitalism. In a similar way, while the world wide web is often taken as both facilitating and representing the increasing fluidity and mobility of people as a supra- or non-national space of communication - an open ocean for unlimited virtual voyages of discovery - it is often the case that the internet is used for reterritorializing identities so that homeland – or hometown - has, in some cases, quite literally become homepage (Basu 2007, Bernal 2005, Ignacio 2005, Tyner and Kohlke 2000).

### **Diverse Mediations and Technics of Translation**

Transnational and diasporic connections are established and maintained through the mediation of both modes of communication and the materialized symbols and material objects that migrants transport, give, exchange and appropriate. That mediation is what Basu and Coleman (2008:328) describe as the work of translation performed within and through migration. Material objects carried and transmitted by migrants not only enable a sense of continuity and recreation of home in a new locale but also entail transformations of people's relationships with and through things.

Basu's and Coleman's work on translation and the materialities of migration may be further developed by drawing on what Rafael refers to as the 'technics of translation'. Rafael's work also enables us to further theorize and historicize the particular paradoxes and dilemmas of the Philippine's mediated diasporas. Writing about the emergence of nationalist in 19th century Spanish Philippines, Rafael argues that Filipino nationalism was characterized by two things. The first is that, 'the experience of nationhood was – and arguably continues to be – inseparable from the hosting of a foreign presence to which one invariably finds oneself held hostage' (Rafael 2005: xviii). The second is the extent to which Filipino nationalism made use of and was enabled by various 'technics of translation'.

The Philippine nation was not only articulated in the language of the colonizer but also emerged and was developed among nationalist in diaspora. Both the nation and its nationalism have then been subsequently transposed onto a much more recent global migration phenomenon that first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Both the national and Filipino national are sustained – symbolically and economically – by the many people who – whether permanently or temporarily – live and work outside of the Philippines and who claim, or are claimed by others to have, affective ties with the nation. Thus experiences of migration and diaspora were central to the making of a national Filipino consciousness in the 19th century and remain so today and nationalism as a 'technic of translation' might best be thought about as both the art of being hosted by, as much as the hosting of, multiple foreign presence.

By 'technics of translation' Rafael refers to the double movement of appropriating and keeping distant that which is foreign: the technics to which he refers are not simply the various material practices and discursive media that people employ to translate the foreign. Rather technics lie at the very heart of translation or mediation: people's embodied encounters with and mastery of different 'ways of doing and making do' (14-15) simultaneously transform the doer and afford new possibilities for what might be done. In that approach, echoed in Basu and Coleman, translation is necessarily a creative process, never exact but always spawning new nuances of meaning and problematics of consociality. In the case of *ilustrados*, their mastery of Castilian, their use of the printed newspaper, the novel and telegraphy enabled them both to imagine and articulate a new basis of Filipino national filiations constructed with and through, but exceeding and hence distinctive from, the affective (and dis-affective) technologies of Spanish colonialism and catholic conversion.

While the 19th century diaspora of Spanish-speaking Filipino elites became the foundational moment of Filipino nationalism, the contemporary diaspora is both much more diverse and geographically dispersed and – importantly for our purposes here – increasingly segmented in terms of both class and ethnicity. Hence, there has been an exponential proliferation of 'technics of translation' attendant on the multiplicity of their subject positions and the variability of their alien encounters. As the contributions in this volume demonstrate, the everyday lived realities and social imaginings of the many different sorts of Filipino diasporans simultaneously extend particular ties to specific places, reaffirm identifications with linguistically marked ethnic communities and reproduce class based distinctions even while they may affirm and experience a positive sense of national affiliation. These

component distinctions of the nation are made and marked not just by different sorts of mobility, but also by the varied communications, receptions, encounters and relationships forged with and among people and places in the various host societies of the diaspora – including and perhaps especially fellow Filipinos – many of whom are encountered anew and indeed often for the first time as both equally foreign and familiar.

That offers possibilities for the kind of spatial expansion of ‘pan-national identifications’ identified by Tyner and Kohlke. In this pan-nation, Filipino diasporans from across the globe create a shared sense of national identification that may be counterpoised both to the political nationalism of the elite (Anderson 1988) and to the everyday ‘localisms’ that often define people’s sense of belonging in the Philippines. This is, to adapt Werbner (1999), a demotic nationalism-as-diaspora that enables them to feel at ‘home’ wherever in the world they might actually happen to be residing either as temporary settlers or permanent residents at a particular moment in time. However, this nationalism also simultaneously offers new opportunities for recreating place and locality and translating intra-national difference in materially mediated ways within and under that pan national umbrella.

Salvador-Amores’ study of the reinvention of Kalinga tattoos as an element of a new diasporic-nationalistic aesthetic exemplifies this point. Salvador-Amores connects the revival of traditional tattooing in a Kalinga village – and the life history of its leading practitioner - to the surge in diasporic visitors seeking out their Filipino roots. The new significance of the Kalinga tattoo designs is being created by the circulation – and translation – of both persons and images in conventional and new social media. Images of Kalinga tattoos pervade a variety of diasporic media – websites, photographs of celebrity band members, travelogues and travel blogs among them. The tattoos are both material – inscribed on flesh - and non-material objects – designs circulating on screen- and are carried from one context to the next by diasporans. The tattoos inscribed on flesh mediate diaspora by marking exchanges, people and relations, most importantly ongoing affective ties not just to individuals, but to a more abstract but no less potent idea of a ‘real place.’ Translated into digital imagery these quasi-objects move through the media and are creatively appropriated and re-appropriated by diasporans to signify a newly-imagined kind of global nation. Not only do diasporic Filipinos seek out tattoos by making trips to the remote, rural Philippines, they have also inaugurated a group in the United States where members’ tattoos signify recognition of their demonstrated proficiency in the study of broader Philippine history.

In a similar way, Longboan’s exploration of E-gorots traces the ways that diasporic Filipino indigenes maintain village ties and negotiate more abstract regional and national identities on-line, through a discussion group, Bibaknets. The virtual space of the internet is at once intimately part of their contested accounts of village, region and nation space, while also allowing group members to reconfigure their relations and identifications in ways that have material consequences for localities in the UK and the Philippines and elsewhere. The group has become a distinct meeting place where village politics – and kin relations – are discussed in the context of global economic issues, along with celebrity gossip and traditional medicines. Not only identities are mediated here, but also cultural norms, kin and community relations, gifts and ritual events and – most importantly – new, trans-ethnic community

connections attached to a loosely-conceived 'co-residence' on-line. Participating in the group enables members to mark themselves to other members as proudly ethnic as well as proudly Filipino.

What Longboan and Salvador-Amores show us is how localisms of various kinds are neither diminished in nor antithetical to the pan national consciousness created in 'real' and 'virtual' diasporic worlds. Rather both are reworked in the creation of a version of Filipino consciousness that is not elite, but emerges out of and demonstrates solidarity with the everyday concerns of common people. Though sometimes nostalgic for a pre-colonial past that can be located in the rural idyll, those multiple translations of 'self' and 'other' draw on, cultivate and forge substantive connections with a foreign presence with which they claim and create a family resemblance.

### **Summary**

Drawing together what these contributions tell us about migration, the media and the mediation of spaces, places and material objects in diaspora does not reveal a general typology for mediating diaspora. Instead, the contributions illustrate the potential of nuanced ethnographic investigations to connect the particular concerns of groups of migrants with the wider social processes of globalization. These connections are established and maintained through the mediation of both modes of communication and the materialized symbols and material objects that migrants transport, give, exchange and appropriate. These symbols and objects in turn inform media commentary and diasporic aesthetics, being key aspects of travelling culture (Clifford 1992).

More specifically, as Mazzerella (2004:259, see also Miller and Slater 2000) contends and as the essays in the volume attest, 'Ethnographic approaches to mediation are potentially powerful because they do not have to rely primarily on speculative abstraction to render visible those potentialities that are constitutive of, and yet disavowed in, any social order.' Thus Liebelt's paper disrupts the usual narrative that imprisons migrant workers in cycles of labour migration by taking seriously the aesthetic power of ritual performances whose effects circulate through but also beyond mainstream media. In a different way, Madianou and Miller forego the usual linguistically oriented focus of ethnographic translation, to reveal the largely ignored but fundamental ways that affective relations are shaped and facilitated by the materiality of different mediums of exchange and communication. Similarly, Swift's embodied presence on board ship reveals how the space itself and the crew's access to media from within it shape their experience of seafaring. Swift accomplishes this by showing up the taken-for-granted aspects of shipboard life both in her differences from, and the claims of solidarity pressed upon her by, interlocutors among the Filipino crew.

In these ethnographic investigations of the nation-as-diaspora, researchers themselves are involved in performing another kind of mediation that simultaneously discloses the processes that endow material objects and communicative acts with their indexical qualities and that translates those constitutive mediations into another statement that says 'that, too is a way of being and becoming Filipino.' Ong and Cabañes role as both researchers and fellow student

sojourners calls attention to and translates the alienation and anxiety expressed by their politically-engaged elite respondents into a focussed narrative of competition and distress, showing up one of the long running dilemmas of Filipino nationalism and the continuing contradictions of those who live and struggle with the legacies of cacique democracy (Anderson 1988). Salvador-Amores and Longboan similarly enter into, forge links with and become participants in the 'real' and 'virtual' village, region and nation that they ethnographically explore. As with the material processes they document, they too become conduits through which objects, symbols, images, songs, rituals, messages of various kinds are transmitted, recreated and reappropriated.

Together, our contributors show how this work of research translation only becomes possible when scholars are able to draw together the materialities and spaces, localities and identities of migrant experiences with the broader diasporic media contexts through which they variously connect with, disconnect from and reconceptualize 'home.' Moreover, as our contributors disclose there is a much wider variety of spaces, relations, and modes of expression than the easily recognized 'media' form connecting links or stages between a sphere of cultural action that is 'the Philippines' and a sphere that is, for them, 'the UK' or another version of 'abroad.' Particular symbols and relationships with specific places and people in the Philippines are materialized in objects that are shared and exchanged, enabling those abroad to negotiate new relationships and identities and affording them the strength to persevere in their overseas sojourns, settle, or, plan for an eventual return home. Thus, while diasporic Filipinos may use news stories and websites to ameliorate their experiences of dislocation and regrouping of selves and community, they also materially modify their workspaces, make and give gifts, participate in shared public rituals and inscribe their bodies in ways that differentially connect, blend and influence the multiple social spheres and physical localities that comprise both 'home' and 'abroad'. Within and through those acts of mediation what 'the media' and material objects index is the way a migrant imagines herself or himself as always already 'at home' somewhere in a place where these channels and things that speak to them variously - of national and local identity, of parental attachment, religious transcendence, comradeship and political affiliation - have widely recognized meanings and assure them of social status and distinction.

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