

# DISCUSSION

by **Melissa Lao**

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We see two different types of migration from the Philippines to South Korea (typified by EPS and Marriage Migration) and South Korea to the Philippines (Students and Retirees, or as the author's interviewees describe themselves, "half retirees" along with those who run businesses and are part of corporations in Manila or other areas such as Clark, Subic, Cebu and Baguio). The two papers presented today capture the realities of each group as they navigate the Philippine and Korean societies for work, school and retirement.

Notable as well are the differences between the Philippines and South Korea as "Host Countries" and the cultural and bureaucratic structures that shape the stay of Filipino workers in South Korea, and Korean Half-retirees in the Philippines. We find that in the South Korean context that Filipino EPS workers find themselves in, the State is a prevalent entity and many of the issues that confront workers are marked by the requirements of the State.

On the other hand, we have the context of South Koreans retirees in the Philippines who were drawn to our shores by the Special Resident Retirees visas but worry about crime and corruption – features in a weak State set up, where citizens resort to "make do" solutions.

Both papers write about these "transnationals" – one foot in their home country and another in their host country and

the lives that they have built around their unique circumstances.

- (1) For the EPS worker, they benefit from the government to government approach, which means that there are no middlemen to increase the cost on either side and, as the author has said, to decrease illegal recruitment. However, the additional regulation also serves sometimes as “incentive” for potential workers to opt for illegal status because it allows them more ease in moving from job to job, and the tedious process and requirements of getting an EPS visa in the first place. My question is *what will make it more beneficial to the potential workers to opt for the EPS system rather than as an undocumented worker? How do you improve the process?*
- (2) For the “half retirees,” what is most interesting to me is the differentiation between the “new” arrivals and “old” timers and the life adjustments that they have had to go through in the Philippines and the decisions that they have made and how they have continued to, for lack of a better term, “reinvent” themselves. For the author, I have two questions :
  - a. In your narratives, it seems their clientele base is still mainly Korean. There are many “Korean towns” in the Philippines now. How about the broader Philippine society? How have they established themselves as a group in

civic activities, for example? In participation in cultural exchanges and engaging in local politics?

- b. How do they engage their home country? Have they engaged South Korea in their new role as “half retirees”? How about the next generation? What of their families?

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