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SIRC-NF Fellows Newsletter

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Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III receiving the
'Outstanding Young Man of the Philippines' award
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Special points of interest:

- SIRC-NF
Fellows'
Research
Findings
Dissemination
activities
- Nelson Turgo's
Reflections on
his PhD
Experience



Iris Acejo Disseminates Research Findings to an International Audience

Last November, an International Conference on Migration, Citizenship and Intercultural Relations was hosted by Deakin University in Melbourne. The initiative highlighted the various aspects surrounding multicultural relationships. Ms. Iris Acejo from the 3rd Cohort for SIRC – Nippon Fellowship Program was invited to present her paper entitled “Transnational Crews and their Ways of Belongingness.” The paper raised issues on nature and quality of social participation and inclusion of seafarers. The conference, with its diverse topics, was attended by participants from different parts of the world such as Europe, Asia and America. Presenting under the Transnational Work stream, Ms. Acejo was introduced to ascendant scholars of similar interests. Her participation was received in a very substantive way by researchers and academicians including those affiliated to the broadcast media.

A reporter for a local radio in Melbourne requested for an interview about the precarious nature of temporary work. The sole objective is to provide information to other temporary Filipino migrants in Australia.

valuable efforts of Dr. Victor Gekara, one of the pioneering batch of the SIRC – Nippon Fellows, made the event a well – organised and successful endeavour. The discussion raised by the audience highlighted the interests on the study’s methodology. It also stimulated a lively, broader discussion on shipping’s core concerns such as training and safety.



The various interests at stake and the multitude of intersecting topics made the conference a fruitful venue for academics, including postgraduate students and new professionals, to disseminate findings of the study. The multidisciplinary mix of the sessions enabled a wider intellectual discourse on intersecting topics such as economics, social science, policy matters and practical application of the study. As a young research scholar, Ms. Acejo’s attendance to the conference signalled her commitment to research and a lifelong career in the academia.

She was also invited to present at a research seminar in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology’s School of Management and the Centre of Management Research. The

Selected SIRC-NF Fellows Research Disseminating Activities in 2009

Akamangwa, N. (2009) **‘Beyond Graphs and Numbers: Reinventing Maritime Research’**, 17th IMLA Conference on Maritime Education and Training, Regional Maritime University, Accra, Ghana, 7-10 September.

Acejo, I. (2009) **‘Maintaining Transnational Connections’**, *Maritime matters in the 21st Century, The 1st SIRC-Nippon Fellow Maritime Conference*, Cardiff, 22 January,

Gekara, V. (2009) **‘Navigating Uncertain Seas: Maritime Sector Unions in the Fight against Decline through Cross-border Alliances - the Nautilus Project’**, 27th International Labour Process Conference, University of Strathclyde, Edinburgh, UK, 6-8 April.

Ghanem, M. (2009) **‘Investigating and Reporting Accidents at Sea’**, *SIRC Symposium 2009*, Cardiff, 8-9 July,

Kitada, M. (2009) **‘Women seafarers in the gales of a man’s world – the political strategies for their gender**

identity management’, The Personal is Still Political: Gendered Identities in the 21st Century, Women’s and Gender Studies Conference, Memphis, Tennessee, USA, 6-7 March.

Kitada, M. (2009) **‘Finding Self between Ship and Home: Women Seafarers’ Identities’**, 7th European Feminist Research Conference, Gender Studies Program (Utrecht University), Utrecht, Netherlands, 4-7 June.

Kitada, M. (2009) **‘Risking marriage and family: maintaining seafarers’ gender identities’**, *Maritime Matters in the 21st Century*, SIRC-Nippon Fellow Maritime Conference, 22 January,

Li, L. (2009) **‘Faith and Seafarers: Religion and Spirituality Manifested by Chinese Seafarers’**, Graduate Research and Presentation Day, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK, 15 May.

Mazhari, S. (2009) **‘Certification and Competence in Global Shipping**

Labour Market: Employers’ Perception of Fitness for Purpose’, Graduate Research and Presentation Day, Cardiff University, 15 May.

Tang, L. (2009) **‘Training and technology: potential issues for shipping’**, *SIRC Symposium 2009*, Cardiff, 8-9 July,

Turgo, N. (2009) **‘Of “Housebonds” and Wives: Negotiating Gender Identities in a Fishing Community in the Philippines’**, Why Gender? an International Conference, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, 9-10 October.

Turgo, N. (2009) **“‘Laway lang ang Kapital’”: Surviving Capitalism in the Age of Neoliberalism’**, 9th Asia-Pacific Sociological Association (APSA), Bali, Indonesia, 13-15 June.

Zhao, Z. (2009) **‘The Dependence of Chinese seafarers on their crewing agencies’**, Graduate Research and Presentation Day, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK, 15 May.

I now know how it feels to be finally told (via email) that “your PhD thesis is ready for defense (with some minor tweaking here and there)”: I wanted to hug the nearest person in front of me and if occasion permits, would even plant a kiss on her cheek. That’s how glorious it feels! How sweet! How fantastic! How frabjous!

Now, let me tell you why I particularly felt this way. Any PhD researcher labouring all calendar days (including bank holidays and boxing days) to finish his “magnum opus” would surely sympathize with me. Those who already had their vivas and those wanting to have theirs would tell me “been there, done that” and “want to be there, do that.”



Sometimes Wondering?

I came to Cardiff University’s SIRC with a particular interest in the interface between literature and the social sciences, and how these two disciplines could come together and produce a text that instantiates a postmodernist research imaginary. I was, to use that famous line in a song “I Dreamed a Dream”, “young and unafraid.” I remember seeing Dr. Tom Hall, one of my supervisors, for the first time. I gave him a copy of my research proposal. It was a one-page statement of what I wanted to set out for my research; it was my road map to the future. Taking stock of what I wrote there, I could only blush in shame. Too much hubris! Too much chutzpah! Actually, I said there that I would want to write “a different PhD thesis, an unconventional one, a thesis that is both literary and sociological, something that is unheard of.” Now, tell me, was I not plain stupid? What a jabberwocky goal! Luckily, Tom was pleasant and tolerant of fools like me. He must have sensed that I was just too excited and yes, a little bit too much of myself. Prof. Helen Sampson, our director and my another supervisor, was more straightforward, and for that, I credit her for bringing me back to earth. In one of my meetings with her, she made me explain what I knew about postmodernism and the analytic import of the fusion between literature and sociology. So assured of

myself, I explained my bit and found myself faltering along the way. I then realized that it was gloriously easy to say what you want and yet not knowing how to do it! Then came the series of supervisions.

As all PhD students know, every supervision is a “life-threatening experience”. First, it tell you that more is needed (with regard to the quality of writing, the logic of arguments, etc.) and hard labour is inevitable (wasn’t it Karl Marx who once said that “there is no royal road to science and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summit?”) and second, it throws you out of your comfort zone. But all supervisions are (well, at least to me) an honest evaluation of one’s analytic abilities, an exciting evaluation of what the future holds, and a most frank exchange of ideas. Thus, while I was on tenterhooks every meeting with my supervisors, I was also looking forward to its promise of new nuggets of knowledge, of fast improving my fast improving analytic self, of some laughter here and there concerning some of my naïve ideas over something and a long list of new books and journal articles which could only come from people (read: my supervisors) who could tell me that I did not read enough and

Before the anticipated viva, Nelson Turgo reflects upon his PhD experience

therefore, here’s a shopping list (of reading materials)! At the end of every supervision, I remember conferring with my friends, describing my supervision as either “madugo” (bloody) or “nakakatuyo ng utak” (squeezing my brain dry). I don’t remember describing any of my numerous supervisions “enjoyable”, “fun” and “relaxing.” If they were, I should have been to Disneyland, instead. Remembering my past supervisions though, I should say that they were not really nerve-wracking as I portrayed them to be. Oftentimes, in my case, our supervisions were conducted in a very friendly, encouraging manner; supervisions were the times wherein I could ask questions and expect swift answers! Maybe, I described them as such to highlight their importance in my life, to treat them as a serious enterprise that requires my keen attention and unrelenting cerebral work. (And to top that, I was and still am predisposed to colorful words!) Supervisions were the times wherein I was the ‘centre of attraction’ and (my) questions, however banal they were, were treated as legitimate and intelligent. To say the least, while I should confess that I was always anxious every supervision, I also felt very much privileged to be having the undivided attention of people far more intellectually superior than me. It was pure

bliss. Having said that, supervisions, I think, are made not to be ‘enjoyable’, or pure fun. They were invited by some university technocrats to provide students a contingent window into the complex workings of the academe. They are meant to teach a lesson or two and instill a sense of realization among academic- and researcher-wannabees that academic life is not that easy. No, I am not saying that going to a supervision means visiting a torture chamber although sometimes it does (primarily when the draft in question and to be critiqued is slovenly written!). Supervisions are very important to every PhD researcher’s life. It is a series of rite of passage. It is our baptism of fire of what (academic) life is: contentious, critical, frustrating, exciting, disappointing, enlightening, enjoyable and yes, “life-threatening.” Every supervision is a new experience and supervisors differ from one another: one loves to edit like there’s no tomorrow while another fancies telling you “read this, read this, read this”. Going over my previous drafts, I could only shudder in disbelief at the amount of brain work put in by my supervisors to bring out the PhD quality of my thesis. To be a supervisor requires not just an excellent quality of mind but also the patience of a monk. Helen and Tom were intelligent, hardworking, gracious

and patient enough to see me through. They made the present form of my research possible. They shaped my thinking in so many different ways. Now that I am almost done with my thesis (hopefully!), I look forward to a life that has been enriched so much by Helen and Tom’s “life-threatening” supervisions.

*Nelson hopes to have his viva voce in June. He is crossing his fingers.



Sometimes Blossoming!



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Feature Story: SIRC-NF Fellow Won the Most Prestigious Award of the Philippines

Don Eliseo Lucero-Priso III, a Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC)- Nippon Foundation Fellow, was named one of The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) of the Philippines, the most prestigious award of the country for young professionals. He was awarded with a medallion and a trophy by the President of the Republic of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, at the Malacañang Presidential Palace on 8 December 2009 together with five other awardees from different fields.



Don with the TOYM Trophy

The TOYM is the premier program of Junior Chamber International (JCI) Philippines since 1959. Previous recipients have included a former President and other prominent citizens of the Philippines. The board of Judges for 2009 was chaired by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines with prominent members from academia, the media and the private sector. The theme of 2009 TOYM is 'outstanding contribution, new inspiration and excellence'.

Don was recognized for his work in the fields of maritime health, global health, science promotion and his work with the organization, Building Alliances and Leaders for Understanding and Development—BALUD. His work in these areas has made a significant impact in the Philippines. He established the volunteer organization BALUD which has projects to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals, and has brought university student volunteers from Cardiff University, Imperial, UCL and the University of Sheffield to teach science in rural

schools in the Philippines. Don has been working in the area of maritime health for almost a decade now conducting research and providing services to global seafarers.



BALUD-Imperial College London teaching world class science

Don is currently undertaking doctoral research at SIRC as part of The Nippon Foundation postgraduate fellowship programme. His thesis examines seafarers' interactions with sex workers with a focus on the risk of HIV/AIDS, and is based on an ethnographic study undertaken in the red light district of a port city in Brazil. During his PhD, Don was recognised with a number of awards including winning in the World Science Forum Research Competition in 2005 and being one of British Council's SHINE International Student Awardees in 2008. After PhD he wants to be a university-based researcher in maritime health and global health. He also wants to teach public global health to postgraduate students.



Presiding the BALUD-Imperial Blue Cube Youth Leadership Conference