Book Review

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (2010) *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN: 978-0816665280

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Robyn Magalit Rodriquez's central research question as presented in the book, is to investigate how and why citizens from the Philippines have come to be the most globalised workforce on the planet. She then unpacks the answers to the questions through each chapter, with the conclusion that it is through a particular form of engagement between the Philippine state and processes of globalisation that has allowed the state to become one that deliberately exports and markets its citizens as preferred labour to a global labour market.

The introduction to the book provides the context for her arguments and is particularly cogent in demonstrating that the Philippine state's labour brokerage policy is a neo liberal state policy that speaks to a neo liberal form of global capitalism. Chapters one through six demonstrate empirically her more theoretical claims that are set out in her introduction. The empirical chapters show how the Filipino state is a purveyor of neo liberal globalisation whilst simultaneously managing globalising processes.

Rodriguez argues (particularly in chapters two and three) that the Filipino state has a unique transnational migration bureaucracy. The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) is one example of the mechanisms of this bureaucracy. The POEA is instrumental in researching and developing overseas labour markets for Filipino workers. The agency is an outcome of a larger Philippine state project to export Filipino labour into global labour markets. It is through a state labour export policy of both land-based and sea-based workers (seafarers) that the Philippine state through the POEA has managed to influence the nature of a range of global labour markets for its citizens. Filipinos have a significant presence in the global labour market for domestics, nurses and seafarers for example. The agency's (and hence the state's) goal for its migrant workers is to ensure the comparative advantage and competitive edge that Filipino migrant workers currently enjoy over other nationalities. This advantage or edge often comes at great costs to the actual workers themselves.

Chapter four demonstrates how the state mobilizes identity and nationalism as a discursive practice to maintain, control and even discipline its global labour force. The state recognises that there is a need globally for what Rodriguez refers to as 'gendered and racialised flexible labourers'. She demonstrates how global capital prefers to hire workers of specific nationalities, based on racial or national stereotypes of these workers. These stereotypes are often reinforced by the Filipino state in the way it markets its workforce to potential workers. For example certain Filipino workers are perceived by employers as

providing more value for money due to perceived characteristics such as obedience, passivity and ability to integrate into host countries. In response to this need for 'value for money labour' by global capital, the Philippine state, for a range of economic and political reasons, has situated itself (however problematically) to be a global labour broker of flexible workers.

In chapter 5 Rodriguez focuses on the gendered dimension of the labour export policy of the Philippines. She demonstrates that claims about what it means to be a 'good' Filipino citizen are often entwined with fixed patriarchal ideas of what it means to be a woman. Given that the majority of Filipino migrant workers are female, this is an especially important chapter. It interrogates the implications of mass female migration on concepts of motherhood, womens' work and family life.

How then does one organise a global and mobile workforce? Is it even possible to unionize or service Filipino migrant workers, and what are the responsibilities of the state to its worker-citizens when abroad? Rodriguez, engages with these and other similar questions in chapter six. This chapter examines through specific cases, the answers to these questions. The conclusion of the book, summaries her arguments but also suggests that new ways of organising these workers are needed. This idea is explored through an analysis of the activities of *Migrante International.*

In sum this book is a significant contribution to the scholarship on labour studies, globalisation, gender studies and political science. It demonstrates that as much as states are shaped by trajectories of globalisation, states also produce globalisation in very specific ways. This is a key text that lecturers, researcher, undergraduates, graduates and labour activists will find essential to their work. It is already a prescribed text for my labour studies students. Rodriguez has made an important empirical, theoretical and methodological contribution to labour studies specifically and the social sciences in general.

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