

The Philippine State Management of Emigrant Citizenship

Abstract

This talk explores how sending states cultivate the citizenship, that is, the rights and obligations, of temporary labour migrants (or in other words transient citizens) outside its territorial jurisdiction. It relies on six months of participant observation at the Department of Migrant Workers in the Philippines.

Examining how the Philippines manages migration, Professor Rhacel Salazar Parreñas identifies how emigrant citizenship is constituted for temporary migrants. Whereas sending states, according to the literature, cultivate the obligations of migrants to the homeland, Professor Parreñas's observations indicate that they also focus on the provision of rights. The latter is not merely symbolic despite the limits imposed by the "asymmetric interdependence" assumed between sending and receiving states.

States engage in what Professor Parreñas calls "extraterritorial protection", meaning the application of laws and provision of rights beyond a nation's physical borders. Extraterritorial jurisdiction towards migrant protection occurs through denationalisation, first of the law through bilateral labour agreements, second of workplace liability by extending accountability for employer abuse to labour brokers in the Philippines, and third of state recognition through the provision of welfare benefits.

This talk gives nuance to our understanding of migrant citizenship by recognising and foregrounding how states extend rights extraterritorially.