

## An Outline of a Theory of the Labor-Sending State: The State and Migration Global Economy

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### INTRODUCTION

The Philippines as a source of cheap labor for developed and developing countries abroad cannot be taken for granted as a “natural” aspect of the country’s relative underdevelopment. Labor is produced, it is disciplined; it is ethnicized and gendered and the state is a critical agent in producing Filipino labor. The state’s role in “managing” (as Philippine bureaucrats describe their work) labor migration raises critical questions. First, in what ways does the state intervene in producing Filipino and Filipina workers for a global labor market and what are the politics of this production? Second, what are the consequences of the state’s role in “migration management” for capital-state-labor relations with regard to foreign employers, the Philippine state and Filipino workers? Indeed, to what extent are other labor-exporting states similarly engaged in managing migration? What will findings from the Philippines, then, suggest about how we can understand globalization for labor-exporting states, positioned as they are in the global economic order? Finally, how do workers negotiate with these new processes of disciplining? What new kinds of identities are produced and how do workers politically mobilize

around these subjectivities? To begin to grapple with these questions, this paper discusses the ideas of Saskia Sassen which are the point of departure and basis of theoretical development for my current research on the role of what I call “labor brokering”, or labor-sending, states like the Philippines in the global economy. In the process of discussing Sassen, I incorporate data from the first three months of my field research (including interviews with bureaucrats and ethnographic work) that supplement my secondary research on Philippine migration as well present the critical areas my study hopes to address.

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

#### SASSEN

Saskia Sassen is an important theorist for my study because she brings together several key issues in her analysis of globalization. Her central theoretical and analytical project is to understand the underlying organizing principles of contemporary economic globalization. For her, increased and new flows of direct foreign investment, the expansion of finance and the expansion of producer services characterize the form and

composition of the global economy since the 1980s (1991). International migration from developing to developed, industrialized countries is critically linked to the dynamics of contemporary globalization. Flows of direct foreign investment from the First World to the Third World have radically altered the economic (and cultural) bases of both labor sending and labor receiving countries, providing the inducement for people to leave developing countries to fill new kinds of labor demand in industrialized nations (1988, 1991, 1998d). In addition, Sassen is concerned with how these changes are altering the roles of states as regulatory institutions. Flows of capital and people across borders prove to destabilize conventional notions of sovereignty and territoriality that have resulted in the reconstitution of the state's regulatory functions (1996a, 1999).

In my study, the state's role in labor migration is of central importance. Specifically, labor-sending states like the Philippines have emerged as kinds of "labor brokers," having developed a globalized state apparatus for dealing with various aspects of migration. The state, for instance, promotes overseas employment with both government and private employees; it processes workers prior to their departure by providing different kinds of training and certifying their employment contracts; it offers services to them even as they are abroad.

Hence, labor migration from the Philippines, goes beyond simply the issue of supply and demand. Sassen's work, then, raises critical issues for my study.

First, the scope and the scale of Philippine labor migration raises questions about how the global economy is taking shape. Why, for instance, are Filipinos working in 181 destinations throughout the world (*Philippine Star* 6/99)? In 1996, the Survey of Overseas Filipino Workers conducted by the Philippine National Statistics Office showed that, during the six-month period covered by the survey, the majority of "OFWs"—709,000 or 78.8 percent of the total number of migrant laborers—worked in Asia and the Middle East. In 1994, the top ten importers of Philippine labor included (in order) Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Singapore, Brunei, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman (*IBON* 1995). Further, according to the 1996 NSO Survey, service, production and transport workers constituted 80 percent of the total overseas laborers with the majority employed in the service sector (40 percent of the total). In turn, of the service sector workers, domestic helpers comprised the majority. The others were employed as transport equipment operators and construction, production and assembly workers and related occupations. How then can Sassen account for the export of these kinds of workers? Further, what kinds of labor demand does Filipino labor fill and how is that demand linked to critical changes in the global economy?

Second, how can we make sense of Filipino contract labor migration to various parts of the world as opposed to the more permanent, Third World-First World emigration that Sassen considers in her work? Again, what kinds of transformations are happening in the global economy that require the migration of

contract labor? What is the Philippine state's role in negotiating with that kind of labor demand? Finally, how can Sassen's theory of the state—that the state's regulatory role is changing as the global economy changes—inform an understanding of the changing role of the Philippine state in relation to labor migration?

I review Sassen's arguments in more detail below and attempt to grapple with these questions in the process. I divide her work into two main areas: first, the global economy and labor im/migration and second, the state. While these issues are critically linked in her writings, for organizational purposes, I consider them separately. And although I do not consider all of her ideas here, I will argue that these possess consistency and follow a certain theoretical trajectory which are captured in the books and articles I examine here.

#### **THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND LABOR IM/MIGRATION**

Migration theory is useful in understanding migration from the Philippines, but it cannot adequately address the questions I want to consider. Microstructural studies of migration, for instance, focus on migrants as agents who make decisions about migrating. These decisions are constrained by both local and global processes. Many migrants are members of families and households who may (or may not) influence their decisions to leave and who may (or may not) depend on migrants' wages in the form of remittances (Massey et al., 1993). Further, migrants, processes (both on the "micro" and "macro level") of migration, and experiences of migration

are gendered (Phizacklea 1983, Fawcett, Khoo and Smith 1984, Margold 1995, Pedraza 1991). My research, however, is less concerned with migrants' decision making processes—why they decide to leave, how these decisions are structured are not central areas of inquiry. Hence, while microstructural theories of migration are important in bringing migrants as agents to the center of analytical focus, they are not my project here.

While migrants are agents when it comes to deciding to migrate, the fact of opting to migrate is not "natural". As Sassen states quite aptly, "Migrations do not just happen; they are produced" (p. 56). It is the production of migration and its consequences for workers that I focus on in this project. Macrostructural causes, both global demand for cheap labor as well as economic dislocations in labor sending countries, do explain how migration like that from the Philippines is "produced" (Cheng and Bonacich 1983, Sassen 1988, Massey et al. 1993).

In the *Mobility of Labor and Capital* (1988) Sassen outlines her theory of how immigration functions within the global economy. She focuses on three aspects of the globalization of production: 1) the rise of export-led development in less developed countries and the off-shoring of production from developed to less developed countries, 2) the rise of global cities usually located in developed countries as critical nodes for the management and control of the global economy, and 3) the United States as a recipient of foreign direct investment. Export-led development in less developed countries, according to Sassen, is linked to less-developed states' reorientation from

import-substitution industrialization (ISI) to industrialization for export production. Further, the off-shoring of production from the developed to less developed countries is a result of the increased mobility of capital in the form of foreign direct investment. Indeed, offshore production is important for U.S. firms seeking to maximize profits by lowering labor costs. While FDI makes it possible for U.S. firms to offshore production and take advantage of cheaper labor abroad, the need for firms to find cheaper labor in the first place arises from the scarcity of cheap labor in the United States. FDI and the introduction of modern forms of production and the generalization of market relations that results from FDI are of particular importance for labor migration. Sassen argues that when objective and ideological linkages between less developed and developed countries are made, it is possible for people to migrate.

The economic growth accompanying the introduction of modern forms of production and the generalization of market relations in less developed countries have negative consequences for traditional work and subsistence structures. The resulting displacement of people creates a larger pool of waged labor. The particular requirements of export-production and the disruption of traditional subsistence structures, however, results in the feminization of the labor force as women become the preferred form of cheap labor. The increased objective linkages with developed countries that come with employment in export-production provide the ideological conditions for both women and men workers to consider migration as

an option for a "better life" overseas. While the introduction of modern forms of production and the generalization of market relations become important "push" factors for international migration from less-developed countries, there are accompanying "pull" factors, especially economic restructuring in the United States, that make migration possible.

As industrial production declined in the U.S. and offshore production increased, there arose a need for the management and control of global production. This management came to be centralized in what Sassen's calls "global cities", centers of advanced corporate services and information technology that could effectively control the global economy. In *The Global City: New York, London and Tokyo*, Sassen explores the transnationalization of the phenomenon of global cities in more detail, going beyond U.S. cities like New York and Los Angeles to examine similar processes in London and Tokyo. For Sassen, the rise of global cities not only results from the necessity for better coordinating global production, an argument she initially elaborated in *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*. Indeed, the rise of global cities also marks a new development in the global economy since the 1980s, namely, transformations in and the internationalization of the producer services and finance, facilitated in part by new flows of direct foreign investment enabled by innovations in communications technologies. No longer is direct foreign investment limited to the expansion of manufacturing in developing countries, but in the service industries in the U.S. The expansion and internationalization of

producer services and finance require geographies of agglomeration which have resulted in the concentration of these industries in "global cities" like New York, London and Tokyo that possess the kind of technological infrastructure to manage this growth. These new forms of growth, however, have transformed the social geographies of these cities, altering structures of employment and earnings as well as giving rise to sharp lines of residential segregation. For instance, while producer services and finance have been sources of massive growth in these global cities, they have also been sources of decline. Sassen identifies three trends, "1) an increase in the inequality between professional and clerical workers and for this inequality to be sharper in the new service industries than in older manufacturing and transportation sectors, 2) a reproduction of the earnings gap between men and women; and 3) an increase in the share of part-time jobs and in the share of women in the labor force" (p. 244).

Both the decline of manufacture and the rise of new kinds of services associated with "global cities" necessitate cheap labor. Declining industries in the United States reorganized the labor process in order to cope with competition with more cheaply produced imports. Further, the development of the advanced services required low-wage jobs as well as cheap workers in the emergent industries catering to the consumption habits of high-paid professionals in the upper echelons of the producer services and finance industries. While Sassen argues that casualization and informalization have taken specific forms

in different global cities (i.e. informalization in New York City, casualization in London, and day labor in Tokyo), it is clear that "[t]he expansion in the supply of low-wage jobs generated by major growth sectors is one of the key factors in the continuation of ever-higher levels of the current immigration" (p. 316, *Global City*).

#### GLOBALIZATION AND LABOR MIGRATION FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Sassen's discussion of the global economy is important in understanding some aspects of Philippine migration. Foreign direct investment and the long-standing economic, political, military and cultural ties between the United States and the Philippines certainly account for the massive immigration of Filipinos to the United States since 1965, facilitated by liberalized immigration laws and specific kinds of labor demand (1988). Increasing Filipino immigration to Japan, too, can be traced to foreign direct investment from Japan to the Philippines (1998c). Further, the rapid growth of the producer services and finance in the global cities of New York, London and Tokyo can account for the immigration of Filipinos to those places to work in numerous low-wage, service occupations (1991). New trends in globalization as manifested in the rise of global cities in industrialized countries, then, can account for Filipino immigration to these places. However, they cannot account for the fact that Filipinos are working in increasingly multiple destinations, including developing and less-developed countries on every continent throughout the world.

Sassen excellently locates the dynamics of internationalization and globalization in the producer services and finance industries of New York, London and Tokyo (1988, 1991) and the institutional mechanisms for facilitating globalization, namely, state engagements in supranational organizations like the WTO (1996a, 1999). Her account of immigration flows, however, lacks the same kind of empirical and theoretical rigor and contains a certain functionalist logic. As a result of foreign direct investment and the rise of export-processing zones, she argues, workers become externally-oriented creating a pool of potential migrants. Objectively, pre-existing labor structures are altered as more traditional arrangements are replaced with modern forms of production and wage-earning jobs. Ideologically, with employment in more modern settings, workers become imaginatively linked with developed countries. These two factors together make immigration possible. Meanwhile, changes in industrialized countries, notably the rise of low-end, low-wage jobs creates a demand for these Third World workers in "global cities". Sassen does not discuss how these flows are facilitated in *structured, institutionalized* ways. She merely cites certain historical and ideological linkages as part of what induces Third World workers to immigrate on one hand, and the relative openness of immigration laws and job opportunities in labor-importing countries on the other. I argue, however, that critical *institutional* actors like labor exporting states such as the Philippines are involved in, as active managers and producers of, migration flows.

Further, migration flows are taking a very different shape from the one analyzed by Sassen—from immigrants (individuals who work and live abroad with the prospect of staying permanently overseas) to labor migrants (individuals who work abroad for short periods of time). Indeed, while she does argue that since the 1980s casualization and informalization of employment have expanded in global cities, how those phenomena have affected the structure of work and employment in other parts of the world remains unclear. This phenomenon of contract labor may be related to the rise of "flexibility" as a critical organizing principle of global capital (Harvey 1990) or may be a consequence of differing and uneven processes of globalization in different parts of the world. For instance, while Sassen can account for the new immigration flows from Asia to the United States since the 1970s, she cannot account for the fact that some of those labor-sending countries (i.e. South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong) are now labor-importing countries. Among the objectives of my project is to attempt to situate Philippine labor migration within these broader changes in the global economy.

There are other issues that Sassen fails to problematize such as that of global labor demand. Global labor demand as it is understood in dual market or world systems theory like hers does not account for demand for specific kinds of workers. For example, although it is clear that the demand for cheap labor does contribute to migration, the reasons for the specific demand for *Filipino* labor (e.g. in Singapore

labor recruiters advertise specifically *Filipina* domestic workers to potential employers ostensibly seeking specifically *Filipina* domestics) remain unclear. Why do employers seek to fill *Filipino* men and women in particular kinds of occupations? All markets, including labor markets, are not arenas where supply and demand are simply neutrally negotiated. Questions of power always come into play and, in the case of the Philippines, the state (both the Philippines and labor-importing countries) appears to be an increasingly critical actor in shaping the market for labor.

### THE STATE

Sassen's analysis of the state can be divided into two areas. In the first, she focuses on its changing role in the global economy, the transformation of its regulatory functions, and questions of sovereignty and territoriality. In the second, she examines its role specifically in regulating the flow of migration. I will discuss each in turn, including, in the process, the case of the Philippine state.

### THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE STATE: SOVEREIGNTY, TERRITORIALITY, AND REGULATION

In *Losing Control*, Sassen is centrally concerned with the notions of sovereignty and territoriality which, she argues, are undergoing reconceptualization as a result of economic globalization. She demonstrates how this is happening by examining transformations of nation-states and global regimes. Sovereignty and territoriality are being reconstituted and partly displaced with economic globalization. Sovereignty, she argues, is being

decentered, located in "a multiplicity of institutional arenas" (p. 29), including new international regimes, supranational organizations (i.e. WTO) and in global human rights codes. Territoriality, on the other hand, is being denationalized through corporate practices and new legal regimes.

It is perhaps in her article "Making the global economy run: the role of national states and private agents" where Sassen's understanding of the state and its changing dynamics become much clearer. While she does not make it explicit, for Sassen states are primarily sites of regulation. Hence, when she discusses the questions of sovereignty and territoriality in *Losing Control*, she is ultimately concerned with the question of the reconstitution and embodiment in new institutional arrangements of the regulatory powers of the state. In both works, Sassen attempts to problematize, on one hand, a pervasive notion in the theoretical literature that the state has been reduced "to the condition of mere victim of the forces of globalization" (1999). Instead, she argues, states participate in "setting up new frameworks through which globalization is furthered". On the other hand, she is wary of more optimistic accounts of the state, such as that of Evan's, arguing that "embedded autonomy" can become important for developing states in constructing comparative advantage in the international division of labor.

I agree with Sassen that the role of the state is being reconfigured under contemporary conditions of economic globalization. States like the Philippines which are developing highly organized transnational institutional structures for the management of labor migration, then,

become critical areas of study. It signals something new about the ways in which states are managing and disciplining labor in a globalized labor market. Questions that emerge that are of interest for me include: (a) How can we make sense of the state's role, as in the Philippines, as a producer (and not simply a reproducer) of labor? (b) What are the consequences of the transnationalization of this kind of role amongst other labor-exporting states? and (c) What are its implications for understanding the global economy?

### THE STATE AND IM/MIGRATION

In *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, Sassen acknowledges the indirect role states in less-developed countries play in facilitating the migration of low-wage workers (i.e. the reorientation from ISI to export-production). However, she focuses primarily on the role of states in developed countries such as the US in maintaining foreign, immigrant labor as cheap labor. According to her, the enforcement of borders becomes a means by which the US maintains foreign labor as cheap labor: foreign labor is cheap precisely because it is *foreign*. Thus, the enforcement and regulation of borders is not so much to keep foreign labor out, but to keep it cheap. Further, by liberalizing immigration laws to an extent, the United States allows for the unhampered flow of cheap immigrant labor. Finally, Sassen discusses how it is in the labor-importing states' best interest to continue to have access to immigrant labor. First, the state is able to save on the costs of reproducing the labor force as the cost of education and training is provided by overseas governments. Second, immigrant labor becomes important in the organ-

ization of the labor process as employers gain increased control of workers because of their tenuous legal status.

As noted earlier, while Sassen's discussion of the state and immigration policy is limited to an analysis of labor-importing countries, she does make several points that I find useful. For instance, in *Mobility of Labor and Capital*, she argues that it is important for First World states to maintain borders since it is by maintaining borders that they separate nationals from foreigners and, in turn, keep immigrants as cheap laborers. She states that "Border enforcement is a mechanism facilitating the extraction of cheap labor by assigning status to a criminal segment of the working class—illegal immigrants" (p. 36). This is a significant point and while Sassen refers to illegal immigrants here, I suggest that the same is true for legal immigrants. In a similar way, I attempt to understand the ways in which the Philippine state attempts to discipline migrant laborers as nationals in order to maintain them as cheap workers—something which becomes critical for a state dependent on the foreign exchange earnings labor migrants bring in to the country.

A discussion of Third World states is lacking throughout Sassen's work as they may not be central to her intellectual project. However, Third World labor-exporting states in particular are important in attempting to link together the changes in the global economy and new kinds of labor flows that Sassen theorizes about. Developing states only play an indirect role in immigration for Sassen. By instituting export-led development, she argues, Third



World states open up the way for foreign direct investment which ultimately gives rise to the possibility of immigration (1988). It is in this regard that my work can both complement and move beyond Sassen's analysis. By identifying the ways in which labor exporting states like the Philippines produce migrant labor for the global market, I can better identify how migration is structured by multiple institutional actors. Further, my research raises questions about how we can understand the place of labor-exporting, developing states in the global economy. How can we, by examining the Philippine state's "management of migration", understand how labor-sending states are differently inserted into the global economic order? How do our understandings of the organization of the global labor market, then, change if we consider "labor brokering" states like the Philippines? How does it change our understanding of labor-capital relations and the organization of work? Or relations between states and their national subjects?

While Sassen focuses on immigration policy in labor importing countries, it is clear that she is invested in a particular political project—one that emerges out of her concern over the tendency for immigration policy to translate into policing. Policing as a practice, she argues, is "too costly both for the immigrants themselves but also especially for the receiving societies in terms of violations of civil and human rights and the threats to the fabric of civil society" (1998d). According to her, however, the transformations in the state's regulatory functions lead to specific consequences for the state's ability to control immigration.

The first constraint is the rise of supranational organizations which have taken over aspects of the state's authority. The second is the emergence of global, privatized legal regimes that impact aspects of migration.

There are various factors that are limiting the ability of the state to regulate the flow of people into their countries. First is the expansion of global agreements (both UN and ILO) which protect migrant workers rights. Second, and as a result of the first, state judiciaries are constrained to uphold these rights. Further, immigration policy is increasingly being debated in the public arena resulting in immigration struggles even within countries as specific states (such as California in the US) have a greater stake in immigration debates and sometimes challenge national policies. Even as a globalized human rights regime is investing individuals with greater power to contest the authority of the state, it is in these alternative global institutional structures where less powerful states and actors can exercise their agency. Economic globalization has resulted in new challenges for (particularly labor-importing) states as they deal with the "problem" of immigration. Sassen argues that "it is the increased circulation of capital, goods, and information under the impact of globalization, deregulation, and privatization that has forced the question of the circulation of people onto the agenda" (p. 16). NAFTA, for instance, not only facilitated trade discussions between Mexico and the United States, but indeed, also included discussions of migration, a new kind of engagement on the part of the Mexican government. This bilateralism, Sassen argues, may become a source of tension in

the legislating of immigration policy as the state, transformed by its engagements in the global economy and becoming less homogenous, is unable to assert consistent immigration policies.

It is here where my findings both confirm and differ significantly from Sassen's and where research on the role of labor-sending states in migration proves to be critical. First of all, I have found in my interviews with Philippine officials that the expansion of global conventions on migrant workers rights appear to be largely ineffective in protecting Filipino workers. This disputes Sassen's claims that these globalized regimes can offer protection for migrants or agency to labor-sending states. For example, I interviewed the officer in charge of the Office of Legal Assistance for Migrant Worker's Affairs (OLAMWA) in the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) which is tasked to provide legal assistance and counseling to workers involved in labor disputes, and to care for workers who are in detention. I learned that while the Philippine government attempts to intervene in protecting workers in these kinds of situations, it is often hard-pressed to do so. On one hand, host governments sometimes accuse the Philippines of overstepping its diplomatic immunity. The Philippines can attempt to assert the UN Vienna Convention on Consular Matters, but more often must rely on the goodwill of host governments. Further, while the Philippines is a signatory of UN conventions on migrant workers' rights, it can prove meaningless if the host government is not itself a signatory. This problem was reiterated by the Undersecretary for International Economic

Relations, also of the DFA, and by the officer in charge of the International Labor Affairs Service, a staff office of the Department of Labor and Employment.

Second, while migration becomes a topic of public debate in both sending and receiving countries, whether it can alter migration policy (particularly in labor-sending states) significantly is debatable. Flor Contemplacion is a case in point. While the Philippines attempted to extend certain rights and protections to workers with R.A. 8042, they are limited. Further, the bilateralism that Sassen is concerned about is even more problematic than she suggests. While she is concerned with how labor-receiving states like the U.S. can implement uniform immigration policies as immigration debates become the subject of bilateral talks and agreements, my concern, from the perspective of the Philippines, is the negative impact these bilateral agreements have for workers. While, based on my interviews with Philippines officials, bilateralism appears to be the optimal strategy in promoting overseas employment while also ensuring migrants' rights, I worry that because these discussions happen at that level, workers are shut out of public debate. Bilateral agreements between the labor ministries of the Philippines and foreign states, for instance, do not necessarily need to be ratified by the Philippine congress or senate, yet they still significantly influence the government's policies and programs which ultimately impact workers directly. Through bilateral agreements, the minimum requirements for labor contracts are secured and workers' legal statuses are determined, all of which impacts the organization of work.

## THEORIES OF TRANSNATIONALISM

The more recent developments in theories of transnationalism become important in my project, providing useful analytic tools that can productively engage with Sassen. Basch, Schiller and Blanc share Sassen's basic theoretical premises about how migration operates in the global economy. However, they focus their analytical lens on Third World states in particular as being critical agents in shaping the sustained relations between Third World and First World states and nations. Particularly, their discussion of the "deterritorialized nation" helps me to elaborate upon the idea of a "deterritorialized state". Further, Aiwaha Ong offers ideas about governmentality and labor discipline in Southeast Asian states that also prove useful.

### THE "DETTERRITORIZED NATION"

In *Nations Unbound*, Basch, Schiller and Blanc use the term "transnationalism" to capture the "processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement... simultaneously to two or more nation-states" (p. 7). They offer four critical theoretical premises in studying transnationalism. First, they situate transnational migration in contemporary global capitalism. Second, transnationalism is constituted by transnational practices. Third, conventional social scientific categories as such are inadequate in understanding immigrants' practice and identities because of the pervasive duality that characterizes research (i.e. distinguishing between "home" and "host"

country as if they are discrete, bounded categories; the idea of "nation" being bounded by territorial division, etc.). Finally, they argue that the identities of immigrants are linked simultaneously to both their "home" countries and the United States.

The authors find that transnationalism characterizes the kinds of social relations West Indian, Haitian and Filipino immigrants in the United States have engaged in across and beyond national borders. Transnationalism is characterized by familial, economic and organizational social relations that simultaneously connect them to their "home" countries, while, paradoxically, their sustained linkages overseas allows them to be better integrated economically and politically in the United States.

Transnationalism, however, is not only constituted by immigrants' practices. Indeed, immigrants' transnational practices are also shaped by the deterritorialized nationalist projects being projected by their "home" countries. The Haitian, Trinidadian, St. Vincentian and Philippine governments have all made appeals to their immigrants in the United States to participate in these. These immigrants, despite their permanent settlement in the United States or their U.S. citizenship, are called upon to invest in their "home" countries through their remittances. They are also rallied to support particular candidates. In some cases, they are encouraged to pressure the United States government for specific economic or political projects.

## THE PHILIPPINES' "DETERRITORIALIZED STATE"

Basch, Schiller and Blanc's notion of the "deterritorialized nation" is important. However, my research indicates that the Philippine state does more than simply rally immigrants and migrants around nationalist projects. Indeed, it has developed a global institutional apparatus to ensure that particular Filipino migrants continue to be closely linked to the state. Indeed, what is striking about the Philippines is the ways in which it has developed a "deterritorialized state" in order to consolidate its "deterritorialized nation". While in its relations with immigrants the state attempts to rally its erstwhile nationals around particular projects, I would argue that the states' relation with labor migrants may serve a different purpose. My aim here is to understand the consequences of the "deterritorialized state" for capital, labor and state relations.

## GOVERNMENTALITY AND POST-DEVELOPMENTALISM

Aihwa Ong also offers important contributions in the area of transnationalism theory. She theorizes on the cultural logics that regulate the flows of capital, information and people that characterize globalization. She uses the term "transnationalism" to capture what she means by "cultural logics" which refers to the cultural practices embedded in different regimes of power which span borders. Further, she attempts to foreground human agency and "flexible citizenship" which refers to both the

flexible deployments of human agents negotiating with the transformations and dislocations associated with globalization. What is even more important is Ong's argument that the state (along with family and the economy) is a critical regime of power shaping transnational flows. This is consistent with an earlier argument she makes that as labor markets are made flexible as workers are made mobile through migration, "modes of labor regulation extend beyond the capitalist workplace per se to domestic units and to capitalist nation-states—the latter engaging in forms of discursive inscription and control" (Ong 1997:10). This is a critical intervention in understanding developing states in Southeast Asia that informs my own understanding of the Philippines as a "labor broker".

Further, Ong offers an alternative theoretical perspective on new configurations of sovereignty, territoriality and nationalism under late capitalism which are more useful than Sassen's. Ong's concept of "zones of sovereignty" in *Flexible Citizenship* attempts to capture how the state is "taking an active role in refashioning sovereignty to meet the challenges of global markets and supranational organizations" (p. 215). For Ong, the state, while constrained by transnational processes, continues to be a critical social institution mediating between its eagerness to meet the needs of global capital (a strategy she calls "post-developmental"), while protecting itself against potential political instability. Hence, the state is engaged in new kinds of both state-capital and state-society relations.

Post-developmentalism is a two pronged strategy that involves the state in 1) attracting foreign capital (in the form of investments and technology) and 2) providing sites linked to global production "commodity chains". These new state-capital alliances have necessitated new kinds of state-society relations, "as the state focuses on producing and managing populations that are attractive to global capital" (p. 216).

The state's governmentality over its population is marked by flexibility and diversity as it makes "different kinds of investments in different subject populations, privileging one gender over the other, and in certain kinds of human skills, talents, and ethnicities; it thus subjects different sectors of the population to different regimes of valuation and control" (p. 217). In the case of groups deemed "less desirable", the state is willing to grant concessions to capital in regulating and disciplining those populations.

Even while the state's sovereignty is fragmented both in its relations with capital and different social groups, it attempts to "assert its ideological power to build up national legitimacy" (p. 225). Different states have articulated specific nationalist discourses for this purpose.

#### **GOVERNMENTALITY, "POST-DEVELOPMENTALISM" AND PHILIPPINE LABOR MIGRATION**

Ong's discussion here of the role of nationalist discourse in consolidating national populations in the face of new relationships between the state and capital and its impact of capital-labor relations is critical in understanding Philippine

migration. The Philippines state's discourse around migrant labor as the "new national heroes" serves as a means of legitimating an economic policy that has put many Filipinos at great risk. Migrants are faced with abusive employers and often left unprotected by foreign governments. Ong suggests that the state's engagement in national discourse is partly due to the fact that it has conceded sovereignty over segments of the population deemed "Other" or undesirable, including foreign migrants like Filipinos. While Ong offers a useful theoretical framework that can be applied to the Philippine case, in many ways, migration from the Philippines complicates Ong's argument. One critical question is, how do particular state-capital relations (and hence, capital-labor relations) require specific state-state relations? That is, as particular states (like Singapore, Indonesia or Taiwan) increasingly rely on migrant labor (in part as an inducement to capital), how is labor (both national and foreign) disciplined in the process of negotiating with labor-exporting states (like the Philippines)? When countries like South Korea turn to the Philippines for their labor needs, on what terms do they hire Filipino workers? How are Filipino workers brokered and in what ways are their rights and privileges as workers negotiated away? In what ways is this labor demand ethnicized and gendered?

#### **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, I have discussed at length my engagement with Saskia Sassen's work raising questions about her arguments based on my own field research. My critique of Sassen can be summed up as follows:

- 1) While I find Sassen's discussion of immigration within the context of changes in the global economy useful for understanding some aspects of Philippine labor migration (specifically labor migration to "global cities"), her work is limited in helping me to understand the complexity of Philippine labor. Further, while she argues that the informalization and casualization of employment as well as "[t]he expansion in the supply of low-wage jobs generated by major growth sectors is one of the key factors in the continuation of ever-higher levels of the current immigration" (p. 316, *Global City*), it is not clear how the processes leading to the rise of "global cities" is transforming cities in developing countries—cities where Filipinos increasingly find themselves working as contract labor.
- 2) Sassen's treatment of labor migration has a kind of functionalist logic. While she is able to locate the processes that are reshaping the global economy, particularly communications technologies in "global cities", her theory is inadequate in understanding the institutional mechanisms that are important to the mobility of labor. While the exchange of financial instruments globally requires localized technologies, the global deployment of labor too, I would argue, requires localized institutions where the state plays a key role.
- 3) While I agree with Sassen's assessment that sovereignty and territoriality for states are changing with their engagements in the global economy and global human rights conventions, I disagree with her assessment of what that transformation constitutes. She is optimistic about the protections of migrants' rights guaranteed by global human rights and migrants rights conventions. I am more wary. In part, it is perhaps because her work focuses so centrally on First World states that she is able to be optimistic about these kinds of protections. For states like the Philippines, their role as suppliers of labor often leaves them powerless to assert these protections. Further, her theory on how sovereignty and territoriality are changing the state as an institution is fraught with inadequacies. While she cites the emergence of the WTO and global corporate practices as the "new institutionalized intermediary space for governing the global economy" (1999), for example, she does not discuss the kinds of strategies states engage in to cope with the decline of some of their functions. The emergence of global institutional apparatuses tasked to deal with a massive overseas population like that of the Philippines challenges us to examine what is changing about the state.
- 4) Finally, while I share Sassen's concern about the implementation of

immigration laws and policies in their tendency (particularly in labor-receiving countries) to demonize migrant and immigrant workers, I believe there is an additional problem with the ways in how immigration policy is being negotiated. As bilateralism becomes the preferred strategy for labor-exporting states in attempting to secure protections for its nationals, it seems that, in fact, these agreements require the compromising of workers who do not even have the opportunity to shape and contest these negotiations.

Even as I critique Sassen's work, it is important to note that her work continues to be important in understanding the contemporary dynamics of globalization and labor. I have explored developments in theories of transnationalism, particularly the ideas of the "deterritorialized nation" (Basch, Schiller and Blanc) and notions of governmentality and post-development-ism in the Southeast Asian context (Ong). These theories offer important analytic tools that can allow me to work productively with and against Sassen's theoretical formulations on the state, migration and globalization as I continue my research.

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