

# **Contesting Transnational Public Policies: The Politics of Transnational Administration of Labour Migration Policies**

## **Abstract**

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Large labor sending countries such as the Philippines have slowly extended their reach at the destination countries to provide support to their migrant workers and mitigate the impact of shocks and crises on the local economy. This paper explores this expansion of the reach of the state at the transnational level in the administration of a broad set of policies – from health, welfare, social protection – to support temporary migrant workers. Building on the idea of transnational migrants, we advance the concept of a transnational public policy as a conscious strategy to arrest the consequences of transnational policy problems caused by governmental failures. In contrast to domestic policy failures, transnational policy failures are problematic conditions too consequential both ‘here’ (in the sending country) and ‘there’ (in the host country) to be left unaddressed. We analyze two cases from the Philippines, a source of ‘best practices’ in labor migration policies that have long sought to provide services through their embassy premises, so they have diplomatic immunity. The first case refers to the deployment of a government social assistance program for all Philippine citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a successful case where the government addresses the precarity of displaced OFWs, albeit shortsightedly, while mitigating the effects on the household by the negative income shocks. The second case is about the move to cover migrant workers in the universal health system in the Philippines even while they are abroad. Since the health insurance is not portable or transferable, such transnational public policy was bound to fail. Through the two cases, we establish that transnational public policies are increasingly introduced by exploiting the administrative system previously laid out by the Philippine government through its consular offices and embassies. Successful transnational policies need to align the often-conflicting interests between the government and its transnational political constituency – migrant workers.

## **Authors’ Bios**

**Kidjie Saguin** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Amsterdam. He completed his Ph.D. in Public Policy from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. He researches comparative public policy with an empirical focus on social policies in emerging economies (Brazil, India, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines). He has published extensively on a wide range of topics, including policy capacity, citizen participation, and governance, in various peer-reviewed journals, including *World Development*, *Policy Studies* and *Journal of Asian Public Policy*.

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