



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

ELENA LOPEZ

BA (University of Victoria, 2014)

**“Migrant Construction Workers and Global Union Federations:
the Malaysian Context”**

Department of Political Science

Wednesday, May 8, 2019

8:30 A.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Feng Xu, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Marlea Clarke, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Prof. Supriya Routh, Faculty of Law, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Annalee Lepp, Department of Gender Studies, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

As increased mobility of workers challenges the ability of the traditional labour movement to protect workers' rights, global union federations such as Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) attempt to organize migrant workers across borders. The construction sector in Malaysia is one example of a domestic industry reliant upon the labour of migrant workers. Through surveys with migrant construction workers and interviews conducted at BWI's Asia-Pacific office, the exploitation of migrant construction workers and the effectiveness of BWI's migrant workers organizing is examined. Factors identified as facilitating the exploitation of migrant workers include the historic legacy of colonialism and post-colonial transformation, and the obstructive impact of Malaysia's contemporary laws and policies. As a global actor, BWI's strategies for incorporating migrant workers within transnational solidarity initiatives include the development of migrant support groups, SMS helplines, and local capacity for migrant worker organizing.