

Incursions

*Migration industries
in the Mediterranean*

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Migration industries around the nexus of mobility, immobility and settlement. An overview

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Abstract: This introduction aims to give a brief overview of research on the migration industries, based on our definition of the migration industry as all those economic and financial activities developing between people on the move and the border, we categorise the literature that focuses on this topic around the nexus of mobility, immobility and settlement. We suggest reading and interpreting the research along three main dimensions, depending on where migration industry actors intervene in the relationship between people on the move and the border: a migration industry that facilitates mobility and border crossing and involves actors ranging from smuggling networks to *global* recruitment agencies; an immobility migration industry that involves state and private actors aiming to regulate and/or control the movement of people; and a migration industry that is not concerned with the journey itself, but with the settlement of migrants. Various migration industry actors are present in all these stages, reconfiguring their roles, shifting their activities, and responding to new and distinct opportunities for/of the commodification and commercialisation of migration. For these reasons, as will be argued in the introduction to this monograph issue, the notion of *industries* rather than a single industry better reflects the variety of actors and activities operating between migrant agency and border along the different stages of migration projects.

Keywords: migration industries; mobility; immobility; border; field.

Le industrie della migrazione nel nesso tra mobilità, immobilità e insediamento. Una panoramica

Riassunto: Questa introduzione si propone di fornire una breve panoramica della ricerca sulle industrie della migrazione, come tutte quelle attività economiche e

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finanziarie che si sviluppano tra le persone in movimento e il confine, e di classificare la letteratura che si concentra su questo argomento intorno al nesso tra mobilità, immobilità e insediamento. In questa introduzione proponiamo di interpretare la ricerca secondo tre dimensioni principali, a seconda di dove gli attori dell'industria migratoria intervengono nella relazione tra le persone in movimento e il confine: un'industria migratoria che facilita la mobilità e l'attraversamento dei confini e coinvolge attori che vanno dalle reti di contrabbando alle agenzie di reclutamento globale; un'industria migratoria dell'immobilità che coinvolge attori statali e privati che mirano a regolare e/o controllare il movimento delle persone; e un'industria migratoria che non si occupa del viaggio in sé, ma dell'insediamento dei migranti. Diversi attori dell'industria migratoria sono presenti in tutte queste fasi, riconfigurando i loro ruoli, spostando le loro attività e rispondendo a nuove e distinte opportunità di mercificazione e commercializzazione della migrazione. Per queste ragioni, riteniamo che la nozione di *industrie* piuttosto che di *industria* rifletta meglio la varietà di attori e attività che operano tra l'*agency* dei migranti e il confine lungo le diverse fasi dei progetti migratori.

Parole chiave: industrie migratorie; mobilità; immobilità; frontiera; campo.

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Introduction

Migration is generally viewed by policymakers and the public alike as a one-way journey from the country of departure to the country of destination, encouraged by economic calculations or forced by persecution. This representation tends to result in restrictive migration policies that do not consider the variety and complexity of human mobility. Against this unidimensional view, migration studies has provided an alternative perspective that considers international migration as a movement along time and across borders that is characterised by discontinuities, breaks, forced displacements, further acceleration, changes in routes, periods of settlement and further movement; it involves a myriad of actors, including people on the move, their families and communities, migrant rights' supporters, and policymakers; and is influenced by individual factors, such as the migrants' aspirations, their social and cultural capital, and external dynamics such as globalisation processes, supranational agreements, international relations, and labour market regulations. These studies have also emphasised the coexistence not only of different types of migration – labour, family, forced, student – often overlapping with each other, but also of different types of transnational mobility – onward, temporary, circular, and return (Montagna *et al.*, 2021).

A widespread and diversified industry has grown up alongside and in relation to this complex of mobility. Although its contours are vague, it

consists of all those activities involving some form of economic exchange and are developed in encounters between people on the move and the border as a physical, organizational or cultural space that – among others – demarcates entry to and membership of a community. This industry involves a wide range of actors working to shape mobility, immobility, and settlement patterns through the services they offer – before migrants move, during their journeys, and once they have arrived (Cranston *et al.*, 2018). Because of its indeterminacy, it is not possible to delineate with certainty its economic size. However, given that it thrives on the increasing global demand for migration and the multiplication of borders, its weight is certainly relevant and likely increasing (de Haas *et al.*, 2020): new actors enter the scene, a variety of activities and services are created to aid migration or to counter it, local economies benefit from becoming new places of transit or of destination.

Scholarly interest in the migration industry highlighting the role of the cross-border facilitators and intermediaries of migrant labour in destination societies emerged briefly in the 1970s with Harney's (1977) study of the «commerce of migration» in the case of historical Italian migration to the US, then reappeared in the late 1990s e.g. with Salt and Stein's (2002) analysis of «migration as business» to understand human trafficking, and Kyle's (2000) research on the role of «migration merchants» in transnational migrations from the Ecuadorian Andes. In the meanwhile, the term migration industry itself was first introduced by Cohen (1997: 163) in his comprehensive book on globalization and diaspora, while shortly after, Castles and Miller's (1998: 26) also acknowledged it in the second edition of their seminal volume *'The age of migration'*. However, despite sometimes embarking from broader definitions, early works mainly narrowed their analysis to informal and/or illicit practices of intermediation and brokerage activities facilitating movement and border-crossings (Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013).

More recently, the concept of the migration industry has developed into new strands of research that show how more complex realities can be recognised depending on where they intervene in people's movements and aims (Andersson, 2014; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen, 2013; Cranston, Schapendonk and Spaan, 2018; Collins, 2021). For example, Hernandez-Leon (2005: 1) defined it as «the ensemble of entrepreneurs, firms and services which, chiefly motivated by financial gain, facilitate international mobility, settlement and adaptation and communication and resource transfers across borders». Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013: 25-26), redefined the industry as «the array of non-state actors who provide services that facilitate, constrain or assist international migration», widening the perspective to also include control providers working «in very close

connection with governments actively outsourcing migration management functions», as well as actors involved «for reasons other than (solely) financial gain» referring to NGOs, humanitarian organizations and migrant associations. Cranston *et al.* (2018: 544) pointed out that civil society but also the State and public sector actors are also to be included in the conceptualization of the migration industry, further proposing that «it is the labour involved in managing, facilitating and controlling migration that makes this an industry». Collins (2021: 5, 7) related the migration industry to recent infrastructural approaches that do «not tease apart commercial from regulatory, humanitarian and social as separate domains», arguing that both industries and infrastructures «act as platforms for enabling and shaping» migration.

In our brief review of work on the topic, based on our definition of the migration industry as all those economic and financial activities developing between people on the move and the border, we categorise the literature that focuses on this topic around the nexus of mobility, immobility and settlement (Della Puppa and Sanò, 2021; Sanò and Della Puppa, 2021). We suggest reading and interpreting the research along three main dimensions, depending on where migration industry actors intervene in the relationship between people on the move and the border: a migration industry that facilitates mobility and border crossing and involves actors ranging from smuggling networks to global recruitment agencies; an immobility migration industry that involves state and private actors aiming to regulate and/or control the movement of people; and a migration industry that is not concerned with the journey itself, but with the settlement of migrants. Various migration industry actors are present in all these stages, reconfiguring their roles, shifting their activities, and responding to new and distinct opportunities for/of the commodification and commercialisation of migration (Hernandez-Leon, 2013; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sorensen, 2013). These dimensions are not bounded neither linked to supposedly well-defined “stages” of migrant trajectories; rather, they are often intertwined, cross-cut through various sectors of economic activity and operate at overlapping scales from the local to the global, which complicates the picture of the migration industry. The same can be applied to the literature and research investigating this phenomenon. As it will be argued in the second section, it is rather better to refer to migration industries instead of a single industry, because we are referring to different scales of action, each involving different actors and practices.

1. *Migration industry or migration industries? The different dimensions of the migration industry in the literature*

1.1. Facilitating border crossings, or the migration industry of mobility

Although migration is not a one-way journey from the place of departure to a place of destination, it still involves crossing national borders. In an age characterised not only by the migration of millions for various reasons, but also by tightening border control and restrictive policies, migrants increasingly have to rely on facilitators and intermediaries to move to other countries. The industry of mobility is, therefore, crucial in migratory processes. This includes a diverse array of actors involved in facilitating both documented and undocumented mobility; we hereby briefly review works on global recruitment agencies, formal and informal transportation companies, and smuggling networks involved in facilitating both documented and undocumented mobility.

Recruitment agencies and other labour market mediators operating transnationally belong to the first category. According to Cranston *et al.* (2018: 547), research in this area highlights «the role that these industries play in the structuring and experiences of contemporary labour markets», as well as «the role that labour market ‘brokers’, ‘intermediaries’ or ‘agents’ play in ‘channelling’ labour migration decision». This category has also been referred to as the «infrastructure» of migration (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014), since, through activities of intermediation between labour supply and demand, and by creating different entry points for skilled and unskilled workers, recruitment agencies «oil the wheels» (McCollum and Findlay, 2018) of migratory flows. Several studies have regarded employment agencies as agents facilitating labour migration (McDowell *et al.*, 2008; Fiałkowska and Napierała, 2013; McCollum *et al.*, 2013; Van den Broek *et al.*, 2016), but only a few have addressed these agencies within the analytical framework of the migration industry (McCollum and Findlay, 2018). When they have done so, their focus has been on agencies as individual actors with no or little reference to the broader policy context and from a systemic perspective in relation to other actors.

Some exceptions include Hernández-León (2005), who proposes a comprehensive concept of the migration industry as an increasingly complex infrastructure of licit and illicit entrepreneurial actors, including intermediaries, smugglers, and formal transportation firms, that facilitates and sustains population movements between two or more countries; Garapich (2008), who investigates how the intersection of migrants, labour recruitment

agencies and migration policies affected labour migration to the UK from Eastern Europe after EU enlargement in 2004, and the role of market forces in immigrants' pathways to inclusion in the social and economic system of the host society; Zabko *et al.* (2018), who explore how intermediaries respond to fluctuations in labour supply and demand, as well as to changing regulations; Span and Van Naerssen (2018), who analyse how changes in government policies in the Malaysia-Indonesia corridor have generated new niches for labour intermediaries and how these are taken up by formal and informal recruitment agencies; and Debonneville (2021), who highlights how private and governmental organisations frame migration trajectories in terms of directionality and spatiality. These studies share a systemic approach wherein the variety of actors involved in the migration industry interact rather than acting in isolation, and market forces, policies, and the migration industry actors intersect and impact transnational flows and societies of destination.

International migration is also facilitated by logistic support. This is a key component of the migration industry involving both legal transportation and human smuggling and where formal and informal dimensions often blur and shift from the legitimate to the illegitimate dimension. Regarding the former and considering the US-Mexico border, Leon-Hernandez (2013) shows how a legal transportation industry has developed since the 1970s, when settled immigrants began offering occasional and then regular transportation services in their cars and station wagons. In border places, Mexican migrant transportation has moved from informal, personal means of mobility to formal, corporate-based services (i.e., bus lines owned by small and large firms). Realising the commercial potential of an untapped demand, these emerging migration entrepreneurs began using vans that could accommodate up to a dozen travellers, as well as offering courier services, and remittance and parcel shipping.

Regarding the latter, several studies have shown the relevance of the human smuggling industry in facilitating mobility and its complexity. Often framed and investigated from a criminological perspective (Aziani, 2022; Frank-Vitale, 2023; Sanchez and Antonopoulos, 2023), this industry refers to a diversified set of individuals and organised networks facilitating border crossing in a multiplicity of spaces and at different stages (Godin and Donà, 2021; Salt and Stein, 2002). More structured organised criminal networks operate alongside independent entities that may undertake one-off operations or make temporary alliances with legal or illegal entrepreneurs.

These can provide either «full-package» or «pay-as-you-go» services (Reitano, 2018: 207), depending on the migrant's purchasing power or the stage of their journey. In the «full package» service, migrants pay to have

smugglers facilitate every aspect of their trip, including transportation, accommodation, and fraudulent or illegally procured documentation. In these cases, journeys are customised to specific migrants, but with prices in the tens of thousands of dollars per person, it is an option only open to the few who can afford it. The vast majority of unauthorised migrants rely on a «pay-as-you-go» service, aiming to cover shorter distances and cross specific borders (*Ibidem*). Here, the market incentives for smugglers depend on transporting as many people as possible, recruited through as wide a network of brokers as can feasibly be mobilised (Reitano, 2018). Typically, those who crossed the sea from Turkey, Tunisia and Libya, or the Balkans – to name just a few countries of departure/transit over the last decade – have used this latter method (Montagna *et al.*, 2024).

While public discourse tends to view human smuggling as a kind of trafficking in which relationships are characterised by violence and coercion, much of the scholarly research shows the complexity of the human smuggling industry, emphasising the existence of horizontal rather than vertical relationships between smugglers and people on the move (Achilli, 2018; Aziani, 2023; Frank-Vitale, 2023; Pastore *et al.*, 2004; Reitano, 2018; Sanchez and Antonopoulos, 2023: 5). With reference to migrants from Senegal on the move to Europe through the Mediterranean, Maher (2018) frames the smuggling industry as a social enterprise and smugglers as handlers. He shows how migrants are often familiar with the former and are more likely to call them a friend (*ami*) than a criminal, while they do not regard themselves as “smuggled.” He argues that negotiations between handlers and people on the move are not always driven by exploitation, and that prices and services are proportional and relational, rather than tied to notions of equivalence.

1.2. The political economy of border controls and the migration industry of immobility

Policies of immobility and border securitisation, meanwhile, are a mirror double but in direct contrast to mobility facilitation practices (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen, 2013). The migration industry of immobility refers to those activities involving large investments of capital and ranging from building, maintaining and operating electronic border surveillance systems, walls and fences to the migrant detention and deportation industry (Andersson, 2014; De Haas, 2023). Its purpose is to securitise borders in an attempt to control unauthorised mobility. The role of the State is crucial here, in that it actively produces markets through the privatisation and outsourcing of functions of migration management while it often partly provides funds

e.g. to private contractors undertaking such functions. The immobility industry thus flourishes at the conjunction between tightening migration policies and the neoliberal governance paradigm (Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013: 33).

Much of research in this field is not necessarily in dialogue with the migration industry literature, but instead builds on alternative concepts and theoretical frameworks. Among others, Golash-Boza (2009: 295) referred to the «migration industrial complex» as «the confluence of public and private sector interests in the criminalization of undocumented migration». Andersson's (2014: 15) influential analysis of the «illegality industry» took stock of the various actors, as well as the money, funding, investments and overall market logics involved in the management of migrant illegality, foregrounding its productivity and «allowing for the consideration of a dispersed 'value chain' or the distinct domains in which migrant illegality is processed, 'packaged', presented, and ultimately rendered profitable». Darling's (2016) study of the privatisation of asylum accommodation and services showed how this resulted in producing an «asylum market» based on the framing of asylum seekers as a «burden», governed by neoliberal norms of market competition and economic efficiency, and ultimately leading to depoliticization. Codrington *et al.* (2020: 1425) further argued that there are «specific circuits of exchange and value constituted by migration control practices» of encampment, forced im/mobilities, and enforcement or incentivization of return rendering material profits, which they term «destitution economies of migration control». Martin (2021: 742-743) proposed an understanding of the «carceral economies of migration control» as assemblages (of actors, practices, relationships and infrastructure), rather than coherent industries, focusing on the «socio-technical practices of valuation specific to migration control» that «translate, commensurate and circulate migrant life as a marketizable entity». López-Sala and Godenau (2022) delved deeper into the structure of migration control markets, noting the high demand by states (and supranational entities such as the EU) outsourcing migration management (monopsony), and the diversified supply by a handful of private actors (oligopoly) specialising in security services, surveillance technologies etc., but also rescue and care in the case of non-profit organisations. We may thus broadly label interdisciplinary work in this area as the political economy of migration controls.

The security industry, in particular, consisting of state and private actors whose action contributes to shaping and reshaping borders in multifaceted ways (Jeandesboz, 2021; Lemberg-Pedersen, 2018; Lemberg-Pedersen *et al.*, 2020), is protected by crises, even at times of economic downturn or cuts in public spending. Some recent estimates predict an annual global growth

in the border security market of between 7.2% and 8.6%, reaching a total of \$ 65-68 billion globally by 2025 (Akkerman, 2021). Driven by investment from countries facing the Mediterranean, such as France, Italy, Spain, and from the United Kingdom, Europe's border security market accounts for the second-largest market share, and the EU plans to increase the border security budget: by 131% to €6.2 billion for the Integrated Border Management Fund -Border and Visa, and by 129% to €9.6 billion for funds being made available to agencies such as Frontex and Europol. Although rising by 43% in percentage terms, the Asylum and Migration Fund will still receive a substantial €9.9 billion (Jones *et al.*, 2022).

While governments are responsible for implementing these policies, it is private companies such as Leonardo, 4GS, Thales, Airbus etc. that profit from the growth of the border and surveillance industry through the development of increasingly sophisticated technologies, some of which are so-called dual use – employable for both civil and military purposes (Jones *et al.*, 2022). Satellites can identify people, vehicles that may be carrying migrants or be engaged in other trafficking and illegal activities, and movements of troops. In addition, the immobility industry moves beyond its boundaries to affect the financial markets. In fact, the border and surveillance industry is now so profitable that it has become a key commodity for major investment companies such as the Vanguard Group, BlackRock, and Capital Research Management, who invest on behalf of pension funds, insurance companies, university endowments and individuals' savings (Godin, 2021). According to de Haas (2023), the interests of the multibillion-dollar military-industrial complex engaged in border controls, rather than human smuggling, is the real migration industry.

This is an area that will grow not so much because of increased flows, although this can be one reason, but mainly for two other reasons. First, migration is one of the most politicised issues in contemporary societies and border securitisation and the delegation of their control to the security industry is a political choice. Rather than choosing safe routes for people on the move, governments prioritise border control (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2018). There is a correlation between the alarming framing of migration as a threat to "our" economic prosperity, welfare systems, cultural identity and 'values', and the dramatic growth of the border and surveillance industry over the last decade. Industry, as well as the military, have a vested interest in making the public believe that we are facing an impending migration invasion and that we therefore need to be "fighting" and "combatting" smugglers, as if we are indeed waging a war (De Haas, 2023; Godin, 2021). Second, the emergence and development of a migration industry aiming at immobility results also from the multiplication of bordering policy measures within, outside, and

along official state borders. As part of this multiplication, which also involves border externalisation and security outsourcing practices, the management of migration has been partly delegated to a network of interlinked private and public actors that constitute a complex migration governance structure (Pacciardi and Berndtsson, 2022).

1.3. The industry of migrant arrival and settlement

It is possible to identify a third strand of research that focuses on migrant settlement: the set of services, infrastructures and practices that unfold upon arrival, respond to migrants' initial needs and may set the basis for their economic incorporation and social integration, or may foster/support onward migrations. If we accept that the migration industry is defined on the basis of economic activities that develop in the encounter between people on the move and the border, then this third category refers to the actors, transactions, finances and markets related to migrants' arrival, i.e. after the border is crossed, serving their navigation of invisible borders within the localities of their initial settlement, even if temporary. Arrival may be understood as a «temporary territorialisation» (Meeus *et al.*, 2018: 15), since it is «no longer a short step preceding settlement but, in many cases, has turned into a long wait ... that occurs several times along the migratory trajectory» (Bovo, 2020: 23-24). The focus on arrival does not necessarily suggest that (forced) immobilisation is no more, as migrants' presence may still be mediated by the State and migration policies. We would therefore hereby include the economies relating to migration governance of specific local settings, as well as those developing in response to diversified and shifting migrant needs.

Research on this category thus encompasses a far more diverse and fragmented body of work largely beyond migration industry conceptualisations. According to Bernt *et al.* (2022; 2021), «the needs and choices of migrants create a demand for services at the local level», which «gives rise to individuals and organisations that provide these infrastructures». To some extent, these may involve specialized actors and professions, for instance lawyers who defend refugees in asylum cases, as well as translators (Schapendonk, 2018). But we can also detect various kinds of “brokers” who sell services to migrants (see Bonizzoni *et al.* in this issue), as well as individuals and communities that derive livelihoods from people on the move (Ikizoglu Erensu and Kaşli, 2016; see also Calabretta and Della Puppa, as well as Hatziprokopiou and Vlastou-Dimopoulou in this issue). This later issue is well evinced in contexts of the Global South, where some studies have focused on the economies that emerge refugee camps as a result of interactions and

transactions within and surrounding the camps (Werker, 2007; Aloush *et al.*, 2017; Jansen, 2020; but see also Hatziprokopiou and Vlastou-Dimopoulou in this issue).

Focusing on places in Southern Europe in the context and aftermath of the so-called refugee “crisis”, Bartolini *et al.* (2020: 167) have noted the economies of reception that emerge upon arrival – or better, in relation to «how national and local stakeholders *manage the arrival* of asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants; how they distribute new arrivals in different territories; and how they build material and human resource infrastructures» (emphasis ours). Accordingly, they map a whole industry «around reception thus serves to restore the orderly management and control of arrivals through irregular migration channels», and may hence be conceived as a complementary and interlinked aspect to the economies of border controls and other migration industries (*Ibidem*). They trace «the impact of significant funding in a relatively short period of time, in response to an emergency which has protracted for several years» (*Ibidem*) to explore the reception economies’ qualitative features: the emergence of reception infrastructures as well as new or expanding services such as accommodation, food, healthcare, but also legal and administrative support, the variety of stakeholders providing those services «from local cooperatives and third-sector organizations to national and international NGOs as well as international and UN organizations and European agencies» (Ivi: 176), the various professions employed but also the employment of asylum seekers themselves either informally and casually, or within the reception system (e.g. as translators, interpreters, cultural mediators).

Importantly, «the work that migration industries do actively moulds not only the tenor of cross-border mobility but also the character of cities and urban systems» (Cohen *et al.*, 2022: 2166). Part of the interplay between cities and the migration industry stems from the prevailing modes of migration management, hence relate to the extension of reception economies to cities. Colon and Hiemstra (2022), for example, studied how the urbanisation of the control industry in the US fosters rentier behaviours by municipal authorities who seek to host detention facilities for they provide additional revenue but also create jobs and generate value for businesses, including local and regional. Juul (2022: 2375) analysed the role of «caregiving and rescue-oriented NGOs» in Copenhagen, which, «despite producing no direct profit... through knowledge accumulated on the ground, [they] tend to become professionalised; as access to funding improves, they also become providers of jobs and careers», yet in many cases failing to assist destitute migrants.

Beyond those produced by migration policies, however, there are (migration) industries that develop within urban economies and profit from the

arrival and/or settlement needs of newcomers. In this vein, Bernt *et al.* (2022) analysed specific migration industries within urban housing markets, showing how housing provision to refugees in Germany has turned into a business opportunity, involving housing companies specialising in renting homes to refugees as well as brokers charging illegal fees to facilitate access. Moreover, migrants' reliance on social networks in getting access to housing but also jobs and other resources may well take commercial forms in urban contexts with established migrant communities and economies. In diverse as well as deprived urban settings, such as those in Birmingham and Leicester examined by Hall *et al.* (2017: 1313), the transaction economies developed by variegated migrant groups at the street level – entailing, among others, the trade of goods and services such as welfare forms, language tests, or preparations for visa applications – constitute valuable infrastructures which allow newcomers to settle their status and start making a living. In first destination cities, too, the trajectories of newcomers are in many cases entangled with migrant businesses which provide information and other resources for temporary settlement or onward migration, as for instance explored in the case of Lisbon (McGarrigle and Ascensão, 2017; Jung and Buhr, 2022).

This aspect of the migration industry, which grows around the flows and aims to meet migrant settlement needs is a result of governments outsourcing some functions related to labour recruitment, visa regulation, and reception to non-state actors (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013; Kaur, 2015; Spaana and van Naerssen, 2018), thus externalising the costs of migration management and migrants' incorporation into destination or transit societies. Nevertheless, the boundaries between facilitation/control or even rescue are never clear-cut, the roles of relevant actors may shift and their activities may sometimes overlap along migrant trajectories in time and space (Schapendonk, 2018: 565). Moreover, migration industry activities interact and intersect with local, regional and national economies, and to some extent they become intermingled and embedded.

2. Migration industries between migration agency and border as a field of struggle

This brief literature on the migration industry shows that it is not a homogeneous field of action in which similar agents share common goals. Alongside licit and illicit actors who «oil the wheels» (McCollum and Findlay, 2018) of migration processes by facilitating mobility, there are others who invest resources in controlling mobility. The migration industry emerges as a diversified universe of actors and entities, including smugglers, recruitment

agencies, private companies involved in border control technologies, as well as humanitarian and civil society organisations, which operate at different scales and often with opposing and contradictory objectives, and which are mediated by the State and migration regimes. This diversity in terms of scale of actions, actors, practices and interests involved is, therefore, better highlighted by the concept of *industries* than industry. At this point, the question is what unites this multiplicity and variety of actors and differentiates them from others operating in the migration dimension? The answer is that it is the presence of forms of economic transaction in the relationship between migratory movements and the border that unites such a diverse range of actors and actions. These industries consist of actors who stand between the encounter between two other forces: migration agency and the border as a field. It has often been pointed out that migration flows have grown dramatically and globally over the past two decades; the notion of “mass migration” has often been used to describe these movements and their size. Hansen (2023), for example, talks about staggering and unprecedented numbers of people on the move. By contrast, other scholars, while not disputing the numbers, disagree with the idea that people are moving more often than expected (De Haas, 2023); if we compare the percentages, we can see a stable trend from the postwar period to the present. Regardless of the point of view, the migration movements observed in recent decades are not made up of impersonal forces, but of real people with goals and aspirations. The movements are the result of migrant agency – making choices, devising tactics, activating networks, and using a variety of tools, including those provided by the migration industries, to circumvent barriers erected by government policies and adopt settlement strategies. However, migrants’ agency does not operate in a vacuum in which it can float unrestricted. On the contrary, it is in the encounter with international borders that people on the move are turned into migrants. Borders are not neutral sites, but the result of relationships between forces that sometimes cooperate and sometimes come into conflict, depending on their position, interests, resources, and dispositions (Ambrosini, 2020; Campomori and Ambrosini, 2020). To use one of the most defining terms in Bourdieu’s category, borders are “fields of struggle” (Bourdieu, 2023) or distinct microcosms endowed with their own rules, regularities and forms of authority, in which agents such as migrants, migration industry actors and institutions enter in relation with one another and seek to preserve or overturn the existing distribution of capital. There is now a wide literature on the multiplication of borders and bordering practices and the shift from their previous location at the outer limits of territories, to being «dispersed a little bit everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people and things takes

place and is controlled» (Balibar, 2004: 1; see also Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Yuval-Davis *et al.*, 2019; Timothy and Gelman, 2023).

It is within these relationships and their proliferation, caused by increasing flows and multiplying borders, that migration industries and those who mobilise economic and financial resources can diversify and prosper. These economies, which operate at any scale of migrant journeys and wherever people on the move transit, also involve those who operate tertiary activities in the interstices of people's mobility. Migration entrepreneurs, therefore, include the economic chain of services and activities activated by the transit or presence of migrants, and thrive through border enforcement (see Calabretta and Della Puppa, and Bonnin, Fravega, and Queirolo Palmas in this special issue). All actors involved in these industries are interested in challenging, preserving, or adapting to the constraints and opportunities offered by the border and, in doing so, making profit.

3. Outline of the Special Issue

This monographic issue intends to use the migration industry as an analytical category to identify a multiplicity of different, sometimes contradictory, empirical phenomena in which actors may be involved in resource-mobilising and income-generating activities related to migrant mobility, immobility, and settlement. The aim is to contribute to the broader international debate and scholarly literature (see, for example, two special issues for other academic journals such as JEMS and Urban Studies) on migration industries, situating them at the intersection of migrant agency and the multiple external and internal borders in the central and eastern Mediterranean area over the past decade. This period has been affected by multiple crises, such as the crisis of the border regime and the reception system in the EU, a number of policy measures taken to address them, including the bilateral agreements between the EU and Turkey and between Italy and Libya, in the context of continuing flows and changes in migration routes. Following the classification provided in this introduction, this special issue can be divided into two main parts. In the contributions by Lindberg-Pedersen, Montagna, Papadouka and Serrantino, and Bonizzoni, Caroselli, De Blasis, Hajer, it focuses on migration entrepreneurs of mobility and immobility. In the articles by Calabretta and Della Puppa, Bonnin, Fravega, and Queirolo Palmas, and by Hatziprokopiou and Vlastou-Dimopoulou the special issue moves to the migration industries that develop from local economies.

Martin Lindberg-Pedersen opens the special issue with a reflection on the border control industry and how it reconfigures itself. More specifically, his

article focuses on how Frontex has moved in recent years towards a functionality of deportations and information infrastructures, such as the Integrated Return Management Application (IRMA) and the Joint Operations Reporting Application (JORA 2), and the different scales of tenders and contracts involved. The article shows how this development in Frontex's functionality moves between hierarchies of mobile persons who are the subject of increasingly generalised forms of immigration control and the perceived gaps in member states' border control, and how it has facilitated collaboration on border control between the EU and Greece and Turkey. In this context, the article identifies a series of issues concerning Serious Incident Reports, transparency and human rights monitoring, exemplified through several investigations into Frontex's operational aspects and its management by, respectively, the European Parliament, the Commission, Frontex itself, and the EU's anti-corruption Agency, OLAF. It concludes with more general observations on the trajectory of Frontex and the implications it has for human rights, transparency and border control markets.

In their article on the relationship between bilateral deals in the Mediterranean to stop migration and the smuggling industry, and regain control of borders, Nicola Montagna, Myrna Papadouka, and Giuseppe Serrantino consider the impact of border enforcement measures on a specific sector of migration industries and observe through a postfunctionalist perspective how organisational levels change in response to migration policies. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 22 professionals involved in undocumented migration, this contribution assesses the impacts of bilateral policy changes between 2016 and 2021 on the smuggling industry in the Mediterranean using a post-functionalism theoretical perspective. Specifically, by using the basic elements of post-functionalism as the starting point, the authors' deductive approach investigates how policies such as the 2016 EU-Turkey deal and the agreements between Italy and Libya have been seen to influence this industry. The authors show that increasingly restrictive policies such as the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding and the EU-Turkey agreement have prompted changes in migrant routes to Greece and Italy, leading to a shift in demand for smuggling services from certain countries to others. As the findings suggest, the Italy-Libya agreement increased the demand for smugglers operating in Tunisia, while the EU-Turkey agreement reinforced traditional methods of unauthorised movement relying on smuggling networks.

In their contribution, Paola Bonizzoni, Serena Caroselli, Fabio De Blasis, and Minke Hajer look at the migration industry that has developed out of bureaucratic bordering. Focusing on a little-researched area, the bureaucratic management of the legal and administrative statuses of migrants, their article investigates the field of intermediation services for migrants, with a

particular focus on legal and bureaucratic support. The authors use the regularisation of irregular migrant workers by the Italian government during the first phase of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 as a case study to show that actors related to the mobility industry are not only concerned with facilitating migrants' physical border crossing, but also that intermediation services involve the crossing of internal borders. By describing the field of status-intermediation services, Bonizzoni *et al.* show how an emergency situation, such as the pandemic and the measures adopted to address it, increased the space for the migration industry in which both legal and illegal, formal and informal service-providers operate, and, at the same time, saw a combination of legal uncertainty and increasing forms of competition and tension between non-profit and for-profit actors in the field.

In Andrea Calabretta's and Francesco Della Puppa's article, our monographic issue shifts to the impact of the relationship between migrant agency and the border on local economies. It focuses on Lampedusa as an exemplary case study of economic transformation enacted by migration and the creation of a real "migratory industry". On the basis of interviews with key informants and a reconstruction of "secondary literature", it shows how – starting with the first arrivals of emigrants on the island in the 1980s, up to the intensification of landings during the so-called "Arab Springs" and during recent years – migration has given the island international visibility, triggering processes converting an economy based on fishing and, in part, agriculture, to an economy built around a relatively recent tourist vocation. Furthermore, the article highlights how the national and international policies of migration governance have contributed to creating an economic industry consisting of consumption, and the stimulus that military, army, police, health and humanitarian personnel present on the island give to the local service sector.

Panos Hatziprokopiou's and Filyra Vlastou-Dimopoulou's also explore economic interactions and interdependencies between displaced people, local societies, and spatial dimensions of migration management and border control. With a focus on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios, they investigate the diverse economic practices, transactions and relations developing in and around migrant camps, the variety of key economic actors involved, directly or indirectly, and the multiple spatialities operating at different scales. By zooming in on the local level, the paper intends to highlight broader economic dimensions of migration management and border controls, and their socio-spatial repercussions, which have not so far attracted much attention in relevant research in Greece and Europe. Rather than providing a crude analysis of finances and costs, Hatziprokopiou and Vlastou-Dimopoulou emphasise subjective experiences and views of key economic actors and aim to show how reception policies create value and mobilise resources in

ways that may deepen existing inequalities or even produce new ones, capitalising on the very presence of the migrants themselves.

Ivan Bonnin, Enrico Fravega, Luca Queirolo Palmas conclude the special issue by reflecting on the role of micro-economic transactions and exchanges as spurious forms of cooperation and mutual aid within different contexts that, notwithstanding their diversity, are inexplicable without taking the migrant condition and presence into account. Based on a long ethnographic experience gained over the years, the article explores two agricultural districts characterised by different forms of settlement in South and North Italy and the Sicilian channel, assessed through the lens of fishery and its intersection with the production of unauthorised migratory movements. It shows how the circulation of objects, documents and people are inscribed within a dense, porous space of social relations that develops as a counterpoint to the economy and migration policy, giving shape to multiple, and overlapping, forms of reciprocity, distribution, and market exchange. In both cases, at sea and on land, these circulations reflect and delineate the contours of a migration industry from below (both of labour and mobility), which can be interpreted as a rhizomatic space in which economic and non-economic exchanges are shaped by what we propose to call an ambivalent logic of “self-interested (self-)solidarity”.

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