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Logistics of migrant labour: rethinking how workers 'fit' transnational economies

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ABSTRACT
New approaches to understanding the mediation of migration have emerged from literature on migration industries, migration infrastructures and migration brokerage. These studies point out the importance of economic processes in migration by studying how recruiters and brokers negotiate im/mobilities, within and outside the state. This article argues that there is a need to develop a complementing theorisation of the economies of migration, since the centrality of migrant labour, the role of employers, and the extraction of value from the transnational situation of migrants' lives remain vague. Emerging scholarship around a logistics of migration that accounts for supply chain organisations and the quest for transnational interoperability is suggested for this purpose. The article utilises ethnographic data from Sweden on labour recruiters and employers in two sectors: the wild berry industry and the ICT industry. Logistics, the art and science of coordinating supply chains [Cowen, Deborah. 2014. *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade*. University of Minnesota Press.], produces a commodification of im/mobility in specific contexts of labour and social reproduction. Migration, therefore, represents one, more or less integrated, aspect of extracting value. Critical perspectives on logistics have the potential to link the emerging frameworks on mediation with observations of how globalising markets affect migrant workers and their lives.

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Introduction

In recent years, a growing body of research has explored how migration is shaped by systems, actors and interests en route, beyond individual migrant decisions and integration at the destination. Academic interest in this topic, which I will refer to as migration mediation, is sparked by theoretical aspirations to conceptualise a 'black box' (Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012) in migration studies as well as observations of a new political, social and economic landscape of management, control and the extraction of value from people's migration. Authors in these fields study mediation in all its assorted composition of labour recruiters, smugglers, consultant agencies, security corporations and other stakeholders, conceptually framed as migration industries, migration infrastructures or migration

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brokerage. In this article, I suggest a logistics of migration (Altenried et al. 2018; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013b) as a complementing analytical figure that can be used to make sense of the mediation process and to discuss how people's mobility is caught up in economic processes of transnational coordination.

Recruiters and agents, for instance, channel migrants to labour markets, but they also engage other mobilities of management, knowledge and money that determine how a particular migration process is understood. Management literature describes logistics as differentiation strategies that aim 'at providing services which offer the consumer or customer additional benefits apart from the actual product' (Gleissner and Femerling 2013, 11). Logistics as art and science (Cowen 2014) deconstructs different flows to evaluate not only labour costs and efficiency, but also how spatiality and location can add value to these services and products. Logistics, therefore, refers to the art of constructing a seamless administration of circulation across space and the science of calculating profitable efficiency; in other words, referencing a system that is not limited to the logistical sector of shipping and transportation. Rather than replacing other frameworks that explain the mediation of migration, logistics specifies some of the processes that have been raised in previous literature and link these to social theories of global labour.

To illustrate these points, I discuss interview data from Sweden in two industries: the wild/forest berry industry and the ICT industry. These industries represent the sectors of the Swedish labour market to which the majority of migrant workers from non-European countries are recruited. The workforce in both industries is transnationally organised between Sweden and Thailand, for the wild berry pickers, and India, for the computer specialists. These case studies highlight commercial interests in migration and the outsourcing of state-led migration governance, which are important themes in the migration industry literature. A diversity of important financial, technological, social and cultural infrastructures facilitates transnational mobility in both sectors and different levels of migration brokers affect how migrants experience work in Sweden.

Recent introductions to conceptualisations of mediation show a correspondence and complementarity between migration industries, migration brokers and migration infrastructures (Lin et al. 2017; Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018; Deshingkar 2019), however thus far there are no systematic reviews of its overlaps and differences. In this article the literature is discussed from the perspective of how it frames economic dimensions of migration. Migration infrastructure, for instance, inspired by science and technology studies (Pelizza 2016), explores technology and digitalisation that structure transnational economies. Literature on brokers is relevant to economic mediation because it discusses legitimacy and resources (Faist 2014; Tshabalala 2017) as well as the representation of brokers as moral or immoral in relation to profit (James 2011; Lindquist 2015). Research on migration industries, an emerging field of research through which scholars explain migration systems in terms of a meso-structure (Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2013), represents the most ambitious contribution to exploring the economic processes of migration in new ways. This field examines ensembles of actors (Hernández-León 2013) and operations spanning from regulated to unregulated arenas of mobility (Spaan and Hillmann 2013) in the commercialisation of migration (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013).

The field currently debates the boundaries of migration industries, including the types of actors and practices that should be covered in its definitions and delimitations. Xiang

and Lindquist (2014) argue that a focus on migration infrastructure, rather than industry, better represents the diversity of practices involved in the mediation of migration, which cannot be understood as 'business'. Addressing this, the authors of a JEMS special issue assert that the migration industry is a figure of speech that parallels the meaning of infrastructures (Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018, 544). Recent studies that refer to migration industries certainly do encompass a broad range of actors and interests, which has resulted in an inclusive definition that refrains from narrow understandings of commercial relationships. However, studies of migration industries, for the most part, study organisations and agents where an economic relationship constitutes some dimension of their practices and interaction. This is different from the wider scope of the migration infrastructures, which emphasises the importance of 'material, political, social, cultural and technological assemblages that steer mobilities and produce migrant categories' (Lin et al. 2017, 168). For the purposes of discussing the dominant economic processes of migration, however, it matters that essentially anything can constitute a migration infrastructure, depending on its use or enactment. Therefore, infrastructure provides less conceptual guidance to theorise economic dimensions of migration, such as trends of commercialisation and outsourcing, which studies of migration industries have undertaken as important themes.

I make the case that, within their broader scope, migration industries, infrastructures and brokerage as analytical concepts contribute important observations of the diverse economic dimensions of people's mobility. These insights could however be more fruitfully linked to socio-economic research fields and theories by specifying (1) the role of labour in the commercialisation of migration, (2) dominant organisational formations of private actors and global business, and (3) the constitution of transnational markets.

The intersections between migration and other mobilities of capital (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013a) offer additional insights into how markets for migrant workers are constituted, and a logistical 'gaze' allows migration to be articulated with other forms of mobility (Altenried et al. 2018, 295). Logistics of migration explores the priority of different mobilities, with a specific focus on the economic circulation of labour, money, technologies of production and commodities, without losing sight of the social, economic and cultural underpinnings of transnational migrant lives. Logistics, I argue, can advance the de-migranticisation (Dahinden 2016) of studies on im/mobilities and the migranticisation (Dahinden 2016) of global business and labour research. This article therefore contributes with a logistical perspective that highlights how calculations of labour costs are central to the commercialisation of migration, how the recognition of supply chains as important formations of transnational economies includes employers in the theorisation of complex migration processes, and how migration is affected by the search for interoperability, concerning labour and social reproduction, across different markets.

Bringing the economy back: boundaries of state governance and labour in migration

Studies of migration industries, infrastructures and brokerage establish the importance of studying intermediary actors and 'bring back' an economy of migration through these analyses. I argue that a logistical framework, in contrast to other recent strategies for

framing mediation conceptually, supports a further theorisation of the role of migrant labour and how intermediaries, besides mediating state policy on migration, also negotiate the plans of employers and capital.

Much of the literature around migration industries is established from observations of how migration today is managed, in particular how neoliberal governance has changed state practices of control (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013). The migration industry literature has produced studies that bring to the fore how private actors are involved in the governance of migration and how this has become big business (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013). This is an important contribution since planning for migration, either through increased border control or through the recruitment of a valuable workforce, has previously been analysed primarily as state policy. Previous migration industry biases towards investigating activities in 'a legal grey zone, as well as irregular or illegal operations' (Surak 2018, 491), which leaves out the majority of legal involvements in migration flows (McCollum and Findlay 2018, 559), are also increasingly being addressed. The literature shows how private actors can act on behalf of a state, but also in informal compliance with or in opposition to its intentions, which makes a divide between private and state governance problematic (Surak 2013). Analysing the dis/alignment of migration industries and states, however, needs to account for how state policies and incentives for migration, prone to failure as they are (Castles 2010; Anderson 2017), must be understood as fragmented and contradictory. In the Swedish example of labour migration that this article explores, the intentions of the state concerning migration issues have historically been merged by both its compromises with trade unions concerning labour market interests (Hammar 1985) and the transnational aspects of migrant citizenship (Soysal 1994). Sweden established a very liberal labour immigration system in 2008 compared to other high-income countries (Calleman and Herzfeld Olsson 2015) and state agencies have been accused of weak oversight of employers (Frank 2017). A decentralisation of migration management indicated in the literature (Surak 2018) bear a resemblance to the increasingly flexible and indirect forms of governance that characterise state approaches to global supply chains (Berndt and Boeckler 2009, 564). By making connections between these observations, economic processes in seemingly different arenas can be studied in tandem and cross-fertilize the further theorisation of mediation.

Besides analysing how policy is mediated, a logistical perspective can also address the complex formation of 'planning migration'. The migration industry framework captures how private actors mediate state intentions by bending, interpreting and negotiating regulations and recommendations, but these actors are also engaged in the design of policy. However, their entrepreneurial rationalities may be unrecognised as targeting migration specifically. Many of today's economic actors are engaged in intricate collaborations or competition for the circulation of goods, workers, information or management. Although transnational circulation is often at the heart of these strategies, many of these actors would fall outside a conceptual delimitation of migration industries. When analysing, in this article, the two sectors that 'produce' the largest numbers of workers on permits as foreign labour in Sweden, the question arises: aren't the wild berry industry and the IT industry 'migration industries'? Thinking about them as such, however, disorients the analytical power of the migration industry framework that represents mediation as a sphere outside traditional sectors and industries.

The migration industry literature has empirically explored different ways in which mobility adds value. Several studies represent the migration industry as labour market intermediaries that channel migrants to jobs (Van den Broek, Harvey, and Groutsis 2016) by mediating the flexibility of labour markets (McCollum and Findlay 2018; Findlay et al. 2013), navigating temporary employment regulations (Žabko, Aasland, and Endresen 2018) and linking migrants and markets through access and knowledge (Cranston 2018). It is argued that, for migrants, these institutions that structure labour markets and labour market outcomes can be called the migration industry (Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018, 548). The conceptual framework however may be a cause of theoretical ambiguity because the composition of what is referred to as the migration industry does not resemble the general definition of an industry as a business or a particular type of production or trade (c.f. Spener 2009). Although this indicates that the migration industry is a complex metaphor, this does not disqualify its analytical power per se. In examinations of the growing industry around border security and detention (Andersson 2014), for instance, the notion of a migration industry links to features of other industries, such as the prison or military industrial complex (Golash-Boza 2009) and make visible important connections in the global political economy (Lemberg-Pedersen 2013).

In other migration contexts, however, references to an industry risk curbing the communication of important results on how economies of migration work. This is particularly so, I argue, in terms of understanding the role and mediation of migrant labour. Addressing the definition of a migration industry, Cranston et al. argue that 'it is the labour involved in managing, facilitating and controlling migration that makes this an industry (Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018, 544)'. Yet, such a definition of labour differs from established conceptualisations in socio-economic frameworks that analyse labour power and workers' bodies as central to production of global economic value (Harvey 2000, 103) or increasingly theorise the socio-economic effects on workers in order to understand global production networks (Coe, Dicken, and Hess 2008; Bair 2005). As it stands, in many examples from the migration industry literature, the mediation of migration is instead representative of the *management* and *commodification* of migrant labour. Logistics, maintaining a separation towards the labour performed by migrant workers and practices of social reproduction that these transnational set-ups require, can address this theoretical asymmetry in the analyses of value-adding practices of mobility.

The logistical 'gaze' draws our attention to the *plans* for logistical processes that may exist outside the state; the calculations by which different actors, including formal employers and companies that have outsourced this role but where migrants actually work, measure and speculate on the social, legal and cultural costs and benefits of moving labour around or employing migrant workers in particular segments of the labour market. In business and management literature, logistics is often paired with or replaced by supply chain management, which is understood as collaborative specialisation with a higher and more sophisticated degree of integration (Jones et al. 2014), and hint at different levels of 'systems thinking' among logisticians. I use logistics in a broader sense, without limiting the concept to specific strategies of management, but want to point at the processes of linking employers and workers. A wide definition of logistics, where economic efficiency and calculation are important elements (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013a, 206), allows the analysis to include *unintended* consequences and *lack* of

management. Because bringing the economy 'back' also needs to avoid reductionist theorisations of its impact on migration, as a way to 'migrantacize' (Dahinden 2016) studies on transforming labour markets. Transnational perspectives on the complexities of migration have challenged previously dominant perspectives that reduced migration to the circulation of labour power (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992). The enduring influence of migrant agency is essential in terms of understanding mobilities (De Genova 2017) and the majority of studies of migration industries account for this dynamic. Similarly, the logistics of migration does not imply that corporate practices always make sense as rational and calculated aspects of capitalist desires, or that migrant decision-making is subordinated to these. Understanding logistics beyond managerial science instead highlights how logistics contains a myriad of different value-adding practices of mobility and migrant labour.

Deborah Cowen describes '[t]he paradigmatic space of logistics' as the supply chain (Cowen 2014, 8), a spatial network that is dedicated to flows through different types of infrastructures. There are consequently apparent links between logistics and migration infrastructure. Social media and smartphones, when used by migrants, have been studied by Ennaji and Bignami (2019) as logistical tools that facilitate specific flows of money and shapes local labour markets. Similar to other concepts in the mediation of migration literature logistics has been applied in different ways. Pollozek and Passoth (2019), in a study of border and registration tools, discuss logistics *as infrastructuring*. In this paper, however, I aim to maintain logistics as a link to theories on economic dimensions of circulation (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013b; Rossiter 2016) for the specific purpose of the argument on migrant labour, supply chains and interoperability.

Supply chains and the interoperability of transnational economies

Despite the exploration of a wide range of actors in the mediation literature, there is a notable lack of attention paid to the role of employers in migration processes (for example that includes employers see Anderson and Franck 2019). As migration researchers reveal the diverse operations of mobility, however, the role of those who employ migrant workers, also needs to be re-thought. Empirical observations constitute strong arguments for the emergence of new forms of capitalisation on mobility, for instance how 'over the last few decades a host of new opportunities have emerged that capitalize on migrants' desire to move' (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013, 2). Yet, the attention on new actors over employers in the literature on mediation risks obscuring links to migrant exploitation in the past. During the post-war era, for instance, the importation of deportable labour dominated notions of migration in Europe and North America (Hahamovitch 2013) and certainly engaged actors in ways to capitalise on this mobility. The current influence of supply-chain capitalism (Tsing 2009) changes the composition of employers and make these themes worth revisiting in the context of migration mediation. State outsourcing of migration management, which the migration industry literature explores (Menz 2013), can therefore be paired with a logistical perspective on employers as increasingly decentralised in their management of workers.

The transnational character of migrants' socio-economic lives, which is an important theme in the case studies presented below, affects how standards and expectations are negotiated between migrants and employers (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). The

constitution of such dual (Piore 1979) or multiple frames of reference (Clibborn 2018), deserve further attention. Literature on migration industries illustrates how migrant identities are produced and marketed through labour market intermediaries, which also contribute to maintaining a dual frame of reference that legitimises lower salaries for migrant workers (McCollum and Findlay 2018). Logistics adds to this focus by including how different levels of private actors are involved in the manufacture of perceptions of what is fair, feasible and sustainable. Circular and temporary migrant labour, which is the focus of the empirical parts of this article, is always at risk of hyper-exploitation (Vertovec 2008). Workers' experiences of such exploitation are however affected by how migration is mediated and the fragmentation of management and actual supervision of workers along supply chains. The links between different levels of brokers is still underdeveloped in the literature (Deshingkar 2019) and would benefit from engaging with the moral aspects of labour in supply chains (Wise 2013). A focus on supply chains allows researchers to analyse not only the importance of brokers but also their dispensability. Logistics may therefore offer a pertinent conceptual approach to the moral implications of brokerage on understandings of responsibility, in particular concerning notions of national or transnational labour markets and the consistent impact of dual or multiple frames of reference. A focus on supply chains also offers an opportunity to decentralise the notion of employers and understand their investments in migration and other mobilities, as well as their detachments from it, in new ways.

Migration logistics ties into what Bélanger and Silvey (2019) discuss as an immobility turn in migration studies, where immobility is thought of as produced, rather than represented as the opposite of mobility or a natural state of things. In business literature, logistics is understood as the art of maximising efficiency and comparative advantages (Hugos 2018) through spatial calculation. This critical, analytical attention to the mundane practices of logistics, therefore, reveals how immobility, as well as sedentariness, can be calculated as value when we analyse migration. Migration, as described in the interviews for this study, is not an end in itself. The calculation of mobility in supply chains includes, for instance, questions of migration costs, which are often related to social reproduction, or '[w]hat kinds of processes enable the worker to arrive at the doors of her place of work every day so that she can produce the wealth of society?' (Bhattacharya 2017, 1). The im/mobility of different types of labour, including the representation of different workers as im/mobile, is important to how migration can be understood in the two case studies that this article builds on. Im/mobilities are aspects of logistical fantasies of seamless interoperability (Rossiter 2016) in which cultural difference, transnational social inequalities, and the costs of travelling can be coordinated to add value. A recently emerging body of research critically discusses logistics as a central process of late capitalism in which the logic of efficient mobility across time and space governs increasingly larger aspects of the economy, but where counter-practices and oppositions are also central to its consequences (Chua et al. 2018). Rather than being the blueprints for real flows, these plans can be understood as fantasies of the opportunities to realise coordination across extended spaces in a logistical world (Rossiter 2014) and includes translations between different suppliers (Tsing 2009). In order to unveil the fragmented and disorderly character of logistics beyond these fantasies, I focus on the mundane economic and ideological practices (Higgins and Larner 2017) of coordination that connect different actors and make circulation possible.

Managers and recruiters in the ICT and wild berry industries: notes on method

The material presented in this article was collected through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with recruitment companies and employers in the IT industry and the wild berry industry in Sweden between 2011 and 2016. These industries mobilise labour transnationally, which also positions the mobility of labour as central to their strategies of efficient production. Migrants from Thailand who are temporarily employed in the wild berry industry dominate the annual statistics on Swedish work permits issued to third country nationals, amounting to 4882 in 2018, whilst Indian computer specialists who also often obtain short-term contracts represent the second largest group, amounting to 4415 in 2018 (Migrationsverket 2018). Indian computer specialists have received relatively little public attention as migrants in Sweden but represent a global phenomenon that has been analysed as a field of research on high-skilled migration. In contrast, the more internationally unique situation of berry pickers from Thailand has been the topic of many Swedish news reports and political debates. The berry pickers work in Sweden during the relatively short summer season to pick blueberries, lingonberries and cloudberries in remote northern forests, and issues of vulnerability and poor labour standards have dominated debates.

Both these industries are structured through supply chains. In the IT industry, large Swedish companies, as well as the Swedish branches of multinational companies, increasingly outsource and offshore IT services to offices in India. This development is similar to transformations that have already occurred in the IT industries of other high-income countries. Furthermore, this increased international outsourcing is used as an explanation for why a large number of Indian computer specialists are temporarily based in Sweden (Emilsson and Magnusson 2015). Computer specialists often work in projects that 'integrate' processes across Sweden and India, or have teams of workers in both countries. Over the last two decades, wild berry production in Sweden and its supply chains have been affected by several shifts in policy: tax reforms and the implementation of migration regulation. Today, the industry is dominated by a few large distributing companies who sell berries to the food industry and the international beauty industry. Supplying companies in Sweden organise housing and arrange other aspects of working conditions and salaries, but workers are formally employed and recruited by Thai recruitment companies.

I have interviewed and observed the work of 27 managers who work for supplying companies, 17 in the IT industry and 10 in the wild berry industry. Ethnographic observations were carried out in sets that lasted between three weeks and a few hours, and approximately 50 interviews of 1.5–2 h were carried out (with some managers interviewed two or three times) during this period. In the IT industry, the managers sometimes represent the formal employers of Indian computer specialists in Sweden, although these workers were often based at other companies. At other times the supply chain was more complex and the role of managers was to 'book' Indian workers from other companies and place them with a client. Informants from Thai recruitment companies represent the formal employers of berry pickers, whilst managers in the Swedish wild berry industry who supply Thai berry pickers are neither their formal employers nor the final buyers of their products. These companies administer transportation, housing and locations in which to pick wild forest berries, which are available on all land under the liberal

Swedish right of public access. When the managers describe their business strategies within a supply chain, they indirectly speak of logistics as professional expertise in promoting/maximising profit and efficiency, but I mainly use logistics as an analytical concept that allows me to see how the mobility of workers relates to other flows in this supply chain. Studies of logistical flows would benefit from being multi-sited, and although representing Swedish, Thai and Indian employers, clients and mediators, the interviews in this project have been performed in Sweden. As an analytical strategy, I pay attention to the links between these actors instead of contributing concepts to define their separate qualities.

How mobility is managed in two case industries: niched labour and market strategies

The Swedish wild berry industry and IT industry are far apart concerning production and labour conditions, but the centrality of migrant workers, or transnational labour circulation, is notably similar. In the following sections, I will illustrate aspects of logistics through these disparate cases by pairing a focus on the mediation of migration and supply chain economies. The theorisation of migration mediation that emerges out of attention to migration industries, infrastructures and brokerage contributes to research on the global(ising) economies of both high-tech services and forestry/agriculture by making visible how people's labour and movements are fundamental to the design of its profits and markets. As shown by Xiang (2007), the labour of Indian workers conditions the political economy of global IT, although its importance is consistently downplayed in narratives on technological and financial advancements. Swedish managers who supply Indian workers, however, recognise them as a condition for the industry to prosper:

> Perhaps they think that India is just about cheap maintenance around the clock, many companies work like that. When it comes to delivering services with more quality they feel that they want control of the processes. But we tell them that if they want the best from our colleagues in India they need to put in some trust. That is what we can show them when [the Indian colleagues] are here in Sweden. Louise, manager at ICT staffing company

> I teach colleagues from our different offices about how we can convince customers that there is nothing dangerous about India. Nowadays I think that we are starting to get it, there is more of a flow to it. But I have had to work hard to make India work in Sweden. I still travel there and take our largest customers there, but for a couple of years it felt like I lived in airports, like Frankfurt, always between Stockholm and somewhere in India. Karl, manager at ICT staffing company

Indian workers are recruited, 'branded' and marketed within corporate relationships across national borders and large distances. These flows are partly facilitated by mediators such as Louise, but are inherently integrated in the desires of a global industry that has already offshored services from the US, Canada, Australia and large parts of the EU. Louise's work produces mobility for Indian workers, but also affects profits and organisational relationships between Swedish firms/managers/employees and what Karl, in the second quote, refers to in general terms as 'India'. Mobilities of trust, profit, skills and – described through Karl's recollections of 'living in airports' – also management, are important to how the migration of Indian computer specialists is mediated. The logistics of moving labour affects how these organisations in Sweden and India are linked. Labour mobilities eventually

become more seamless, with 'more of a flow to it' as Karl puts it. The successful integration of labour mobility, then, is not understood as migration at all. One example is how mobilities of the highly skilled are often referred to as expatriation (Derudder et al. 2012). Labour that is considered low-skilled, such as berry picking, is associated with more precarious socio-economic circumstances (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). The travelling and the work of Thai berry pickers in Sweden, in contrast to the Indian computer specialists, is a distinct aspect of the wild berry industry's logistics and dominates much of the work that different levels of mediators engage in. From the 1980s onwards, the wild berry harvest in Sweden was organised by a Thai diaspora that recruited workers through social networks. Today, the supply chains are made up of wholesale companies who cater for food and beauty industries in Europe and Asia and companies who deliver berries, manage labour and collaborate with recruitment agencies in Thailand.

> We have cooperated with the same recruitment agency in Thailand over several years because they always want to learn more about what we need from pickers. Their reputation is important, or else the best pickers could choose to go work for someone else. Anette, manager at a berry company

> Nature here in Norrland has always been worked by people with entrepreneurial spirits and the people from Thailand know how to make money from the land. We have been working towards establishing the wild berry industry as an expanding and profitable industry for this region. In order to do that we need people. Lars, berry distributor

The wild berry industry is organised around 'what we need from the pickers', or what the pickers want from different actors, according to Anette, which makes the workers and their mobility central to the supply chain. The quotes also illustrate a capitalisation on difference, or a sense of discovery concerning how Thai workers with 'entrepreneurial spirits', as Lars puts it, which solves local labour shortage. The construction of such 'niches' for labour, for instance exploiting ethnicized traits or 'spirits', is an essential feature of today's supply chain capitalism (Ong 2006). Mediators, such as Anette, describe the management that goes into controlling and administrating these differences in a way that makes it profitable to move workers across the globe. Recruitment is dependent on knowledge about migrants, which the migration industry literature is beginning to unpack, for instance in Cranston's article on the Global Mobility Industry as part of the knowledge economy (2018). Yet, in the cases of the IT and the wild berry industries, efficient and to-the-point recruitment is also dependent on the organisation of distribution and production. Despite specialisation among the different suppliers, where the successful recruitment or management of Indian or Thai workers is indeed talked about as an expertise, migration is not a separate industry or economy. In fact, this expertise is legitimised by its integration in a market system of specific commodities and labour processes. Markets can be understood as complex assemblages that are continuously under construction (Berndt and Boeckler 2009). Markets are often taken as given and treated as abstract structures, which differs from the perspective on concrete movements of people referred to as migration. Yet, fast financial flows and distributions across commodity chains are restricted and facilitated in different ways by the im/mobilities of workers. Migration researchers can contribute insights into the difference between the mobilities of material things, financial inventions or organisational cultures, and that of people. Logistics of migration assists the communication between these areas of research.

Planning for interoperability across transnational space: outsourcing responsibility

As the emerging literature on mediation shows, facilitating and controlling migration is far more complex than a univocal quest for cheap labour. Cutting the costs of labour is, however, undeniably a dominant theme in discussions about labour migration. Through the lens of logistics, it is possible to revisit the notion of migration as the provision of cheap labour to high-income countries and deconstruct its compilation by asking, as Burawoy did in his study on guest workers in South Africa: Cheap for whom? Under which circumstances? (Burawoy 1976, 1055). Because although migrant workers represent cheap(er) labour, this valuation depends on how the market is understood.

> Our business plan is to develop internationalisation through more hubs to be less dependent on financial developments in specific regions. India, for instance, has a high inflation. Internationalisation, to us, doesn't necessarily equal India and we are looking at a range of different opportunities. Jessica, manager at large IT company

> What we do could cost jobs here in Sweden. I think about that sometimes. These transformations at a workplace are not always easy and some may blame the Indian colleagues. But in the end, our clients want the job done at a low price and if we can give that to them that is all that matters. Chris, manager at IT staffing agency

Chris's statement represents his specialisation in Indian labour in new markets, yet expresses that the managerial practices of branding and managing labour is, at the end of the day, bounded by a desire for cheaper services. The logistics of this and the plans that involve new hubs, financial predictions and calculations of labour, are illustrated by how Jessica dismisses the notion that Indian labour would be irreplaceable to global IT. Chris and Jessica represent different types of firms in the supply chain. Chris works for a smaller firm that is currently dependent on 'selling India', as he puts it, whilst Jessica works in a multinational organisation that strives to optimise flows of workers and services between its different offices. This also reflects the level of responsibility that they accept and avoid in relation to migration, such as dealing with attitudes among Swedish staff, or managing the working conditions and identities of Indian workers.

Logistics incorporates calculations and plans that permeate the main arrangements of migration and directs attention towards the power relations between different levels of brokerage. Deshingkar (2019) points out how local smugglers in the Global South are often characterised as immoral brokers who profit from migrants, which parallels discussions of responsibility for working conditions of Thai berry pickers. There is evidence that recruitment agencies in Thailand overcharge migrant workers and fail to give them their rights (Hedberg, Axelsson, and Abella 2019), but the small margins and the precarity of the business is designed by distributing and manufacturing firms that are not immediately engaged in Thai labour mobility. Distanced from the management of labour, the entrepreneurial logics of actors further up the supply chain are often detached from any understanding of migration as a dimension of their businesses. Berndt, the manager of a larger berry company, explained how a group of firms in the industry had come together to address the rising costs that formal employments of berry pickers, required by new regulations on work permits to Sweden, would cause:

> The Swedish Tax Agency helped us work around it that time. If the recruitment company is not based here in Sweden, but in Thailand, they will be exempted from taxes. This is how the system was then set up. So that was a great cooperation with the authorities really. Berndt, manager of a berry company

The implementation of recruitment agencies in Thailand, which raises migration costs for workers, is also a dimension of a logistical design to increase profits for companies in Sweden. The efficiency of a well-trodden transnational migration corridor is valuable and calculated in relation to the costs of salaries and taxes. Through a logistical lens, we can pay attention to how a diversity of private actors negotiate the mobility of workers, but also how these actors cooperate around marking the boundaries of how much this labour can cost. The managers and recruiters are active agents in the deregulation of labour markets or in the construction of new markets for selling labour (Peck, Theodore, and Ward 2005). Yet, establishing or challenging the boundaries of these markets for migrant workers often requires more resources than sub-contracted recruitment agencies have at their disposal, and requires the different levels of brokerage to be recognised. Attention to practices of linking different supply chain actors makes the power dynamics visible, as the provision of flexible labour also tends to lead to increasingly client-driven and price-sensitive markets (Peck, Theodore, and Ward 2005, 22).

The collaborations in the supply chain, between actors who 'know' India and Thailand and those who know the Swedish market, allow the informants to describe their ambitions to practise a just-in-time adaptation of far-between spaces: an interoperability. The interoperability between labour demands in Sweden and supply in Thailand and India is manufactured through the strategies of berry distributers who have received a large contract with producers, or Swedish firms who need new software development in their computer systems, as well as the strategies of actors who mediate migration and see commercial opportunities in these specific transnational links. The non-integration of Thai berry pickers in remote areas of Sweden, which allows seasonal work and circular migration to be uncontested and appear natural, is an example of how 'the right migrant identity' is produced. The many training programmes on different national work cultures that IT managers organise to smooth the path for the recruitment of Indian workers provides an additional example of how this interoperability is manufactured. By connecting the findings on how identities of 'the good migrant' are produced in migration industries (Findlay et al. 2013; Cranston 2016) with literature on how supply chains and global capitalism exploit diversity among workers, the specificities of migration in these economies can be identified.

Analyses of how im/mobilities are produced in these supply chains, however, risk neglecting migrant agency. This discussion is recognised in the emerging frameworks of migration industries because of its firm anchoring in migration studies. Spener (2009), for instance, observed how a focus on migration business (Salt and Stein 1997) risked reducing migrants to passive commodities. The conceptualisation of migration logistics carries a similar risk. Thinking critically about logistics as art and science reveals an underlying violence that is hidden behind a language of calculation and rationality (Cowen 2014). A focus on counter-logistics (Chua et al. 2018) and migrants' own plans about work and mobility is therefore central.

Ambiguous migration: dual frame of reference and the costs of social reproduction

The logistics of migration can shed light on how migrants consent to the conditions under which they work, if they do. Logistics includes transnational lives where migrants may carry with them calculations of the level of salary in Thailand or India, which is generally lower than in Sweden, but where the social reproduction that may or may not support labour circulation is also important to their frame of reference. Manufacturing interoperability in the ICT industry included doing research and evaluations, giving courses in intercultural communication and facilitating the management of Indian workers in Sweden by translating differences. One example was the long hours that Indian computer specialists worked compared to their Swedish counterparts.

> They have different holidays than we do, but they also have a culture of always staying long hours. […] That can be difficult sometimes when we have mixed teams [across Sweden and India] and can create tensions if we are not attentive to these feelings. Simon, manager at IT company

As salaries are generally not a topic talked about among colleagues in the IT industry, nor a theme that was easily brought up during interviews, working hours served as an illustration of divisive aspects in organisations. Clients or colleagues were reported as sometimes reacting to these differences in working conditions, which made the flows between India and Sweden appeared less natural and more an issue of management.

Counter-logistics also directs attention towards protests among migrant workers. I found such examples in the wild berry industry. A Thai recruiter planned for the possibility that relatives and friends could meet at a local marketplace in Chaiyaphum, Thailand, to discuss working conditions, prices and how to enforce placements for their family members at particularly productive picking locations in the Swedish forests. These practices challenge the priority of suppliers to coordinate the transnational setting and can be understood as the un-making of interoperability. Protests could also be perceived as explicitly political:

> They might be unhappy about something and Thai people will take to the street with signs. And Swedish people always feel so sorry for them. Anette, manager in a berry company

This quote points out a vulnerability of maintaining interoperability, because there is an interdependency of migrant compliance, public opinion and state policy. In these analyses, the consciousness of migrant workers sets their mobility apart from other material and infrastructural flows. Attention to migrant experiences of navigating migration industries, employers and distant consumers is therefore an important perspective to maintain.

The differentiation of workers into categories, based for instance on gender, sexuality, race, nationality or religion, is part of the commodification of labour that intersects with migration at local labour markets (McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2008). Logistics can help explore how migrant identities and multiple frames of reference are managed in the fragmented processes of migration. In the global IT industry, for instance, more jobs are allocated to Indian computer specialists because they ‘belong’ to a low-cost region, whilst this may also contribute to a legitimisation of lower salaries, racialisation and discrimination in the labour markets of receiving countries. The ambiguities of these frames of reference and their organisational dimensions deserve closer attention

in migration research. Migration researchers have however persistently considered (gendered) networks and households as central to accommodate mobility (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Amelina and Lutz 2018). In the supply chain of wild berries, 'making it feel like home' by accommodating the right food and right kinship networks, was often emphasised as the most successful element in managing Thai berry pickers. By minimising the transition in terms of language, culture or food, the work of social reproduction in Thailand, like the maintenance of a plot of land or sustainable childcare arrangements, could be logistically utilised for work in Sweden. The logistics of migration framework has the potential to maintain this attention to the costs and labour of social reproduction.

Concluding remarks

Research on global production networks and commodity chains that make visible the concrete components of economic globalisation rarely include migration as an important dimension of spatial asymmetries. Perspectives on migration mediation, by contrast, build on a research tradition where transnational social networks and migrant agency are central. The focus on mediation is therefore a possibility to bridge disciplinary divides to allow the circulation of elements of production and migrant workers to be theorised together, without losing sight of what sets these mobilities apart. This does, however, require experimentation with new analytical frameworks that allow concepts to be revised. A logistics of migration can be debated in terms of how far and how deeply the supply chain structures of the economy nestle their way into the lives and labour of people. Supply chains are, however, structures of economic and spatial management that particularly affect labour migration and have significant impacts on how the 'middle-man' can be theorised in relation to the economy. It is also obvious that logistics impacts the language and design of migration management more generally, where hubs, corridors and hotspots are assigned increasing worth in terms of economic efficiency.

Because of the complex and multi-sited networks between different levels of actors and infrastructures, a logistics of migration requires experimentation in methods to uncover the workings of globalisation. In this article, I have shown how questions about migrants, when posed to employers, are often answered in a way that is detached from migration per se and instead is caught up in descriptions of other transnational flows and management. Logistics is a way of translating this detachment and allows the migrant experience of mobility, as well as the transnational social reproduction performed by migrants or their communities, to be made visible as integrated into business strategies. As such, logistics also revisits the conceptualisation of multiple frames of reference as a foundation of the transnational worker's experience and how political alliances that address conditions of labour can be imagined.

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