DIIS POLICY BRIEF

The Migration Industry and Future Directions for Migration Policy

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International migration has become commercialised in both control and facilitation functions. This significantly shapes current migration flows and should prompt governments to reassess migration policies.

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Migration has become business, big business. Over the last few decades a host of new opportunities have emerged that capitalise on migrants' desire to move as well as on governments' attempts to manage migratory flows. Across the globe we are witnessing a wide assembly of actors whose existence depends on money paid either to facilitate or to constrain migration mobility – specialised transportation companies, visa facilitation agencies, labour recruiters, security contractors, human smugglers and NGOs. The businesses involved in this migration industry range from small migrant entrepreneurs using their own experience to assist others making the journey, to big multinational companies who compete in the booming market of government contracts to carry out migration management. The commercialisation of international migration is evident at every step of the migratory process and takes place in virtually every country of emigration, transit and immigration. As such, the migration industry is not only an important phenomenon in and of itself, it also fundamentally impacts migratory flows and governments' attempts to manage or regulate migration.

The migration industry

The commercialisation of international migration means that it has become impossible to speak of human mobility without also speaking of the migration industry. Yet, acknowledging the role that the migration industry plays

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **A better understanding of the current commercialisation of all forms of international migration and the new business opportunities that constitute the migration industry is needed if current migration flows are to be properly comprehended.**
2. **Governments should be aware of the potential unintended consequences of current immigration and border policies in terms of sustaining and nurturing parts of the migration industry.**
3. **Governments must regulate the outsourcing of migration functions carefully to ensure migrants' rights and avoid a democratic deficit.**
4. **A distinction between migration industry actors and migrants must be upheld when addressing migration-security concerns to avoid the criminalisation of international migrants and asylum seekers moving irregularly.**

prompts a number of questions that have so far received only limited attention. What determines the emergence and disappearance of particular markets and migration industry actors? What is the impact of different parts of the migration industry on migration patterns and networks? And what is the significance of the migration industry in regard to government policies and attempts to regulate migration?

Understanding the dynamics at play is by no means straightforward and the different components of the migration industry equally create complex interplays. An increasing number of businesses are working to secure both highly skilled and unskilled migrants access to travel and work abroad. At the other end of the spectrum private security companies and airlines are key actors in manning border checkpoints and preventing unwanted migrants from entering. Yet, the facilitation industry and the control industry are interlinked since tightened immigration policies and hardened migration control are likely to drive up the profitability of human smuggling and of corruption among border guards and agencies with the know-how to ensure visas or other means of legal migration.

What's old, what's new?

The migration industry as such is not a new phenomenon. For centuries migrants have encountered both facilitation and control actors as well as exploiters and rescuers during their voyages. However, today's migration industry has become more deeply embedded in the current migration regimes in several ways. Social networks and transnational linkages mean that the contemporary migration industry inevitably emerges as part of any established migratory movement. At the same time complex immigration legislation, barriers to legal immigration and restrictive asylum policies continue to fuel both agencies facilitating legal immigration and human smugglers. In addition, the pervasiveness of neoliberal governance has resulted in the outsourcing and privatisation to NGOs and private contractors of everything from guest worker schemes to the running of asylum centres and the carrying out of forced deportations. In several ways governments thus actively sustain and fund large parts of the migration industry.

Multiple actors involved

Scholars and policymakers have for quite some time acknowledged the existence of the migration industry, but mainly focused on the parts that facilitate migration – in particular irregular migration. These include labour recruiters and contractors, moneylenders, travel agents, transportation providers, legitimate and false paper providers, smugglers, formal and informal remittance and courier service owners, and lawyers and notaries involved in legal and paralegal counselling. All offer services for profit and are routinely regarded as actors who disrupt orderly migration management.

However, other migration industry actors work in very close connection with governments that are actively outsourcing migration management functions and may be linked to functions carried out entirely within one country, such as operating detention centres. In addition, yet more non-state actors may become involved in the migration industry for reasons other than (solely) financial gain. A growing number of NGOs, social movements, faith-based organisations and migrant networks may thus be seen to engage in what has been termed 'the rescue industry', e.g. running 'information centres' that focus on the risks involved in irregular migration, philanthropic and social projects rescuing trafficked women and minors, providing religious sanctuary or taking out government contracts to run asylum centres or provide counselling to deportees. Putting all this together suggests that the migration industry includes a wide array of non-state actors who provide services that may both facilitate and constrain international migration.

Reshaping global migration governance?

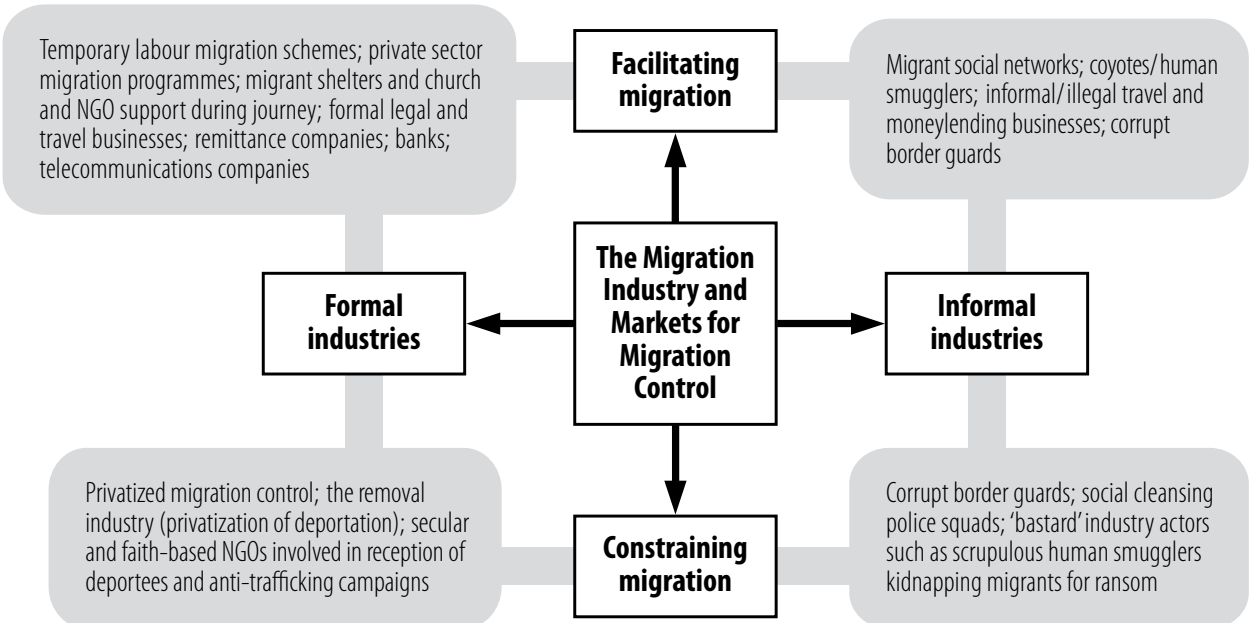
Secondly, it is important to appreciate the continued link between the migration industry and government policies. While some actors, for example transportation companies or human smugglers, appear to operate entirely independent of government involvement, statist structures such as immigration policies, labour market regulation, visa requirements, border control etc almost always remain an essential backdrop for understanding how these migration industry actors emerge and function.

The essential role of the state becomes even more visible when considering cases where labour immigration agencies are organised as quasi-governmental agencies or operate under government licenses. Last but not least, the use of private security companies, contractors and NGOs to carry out anything from border security to running asylum centres not only significantly blurs the line between public and private but also raises a number of questions as to the impact of the migration industry on government policies through knowledge, standard-setting, lobbying and lock-in effects. The pervasiveness of the migration industry, from contractors to entrepreneurs, both formal and informal, may thus well end up fundamentally reshaping global migration governance.

The migration industry and markets

Finally, the migration industry should be seen within the wider political economy shaping both migratory patterns and government responses. The privatisation of migration management is intimately related both to the politicisation of immigration and to the governmental paradigm of new public management. Labour immigration agencies tend to operate in larger frameworks of labour market policies and economic structures. Even the informal migration industry tends to be closely linked to legal and political structures in the countries of destination and origin. Understanding the

Migration Industry Actors



migration industry thus requires a concurrent understanding of the growing commercialisation of international migration and what may be seen as a set of emerging 'markets for migration management' in which the migration industry operates.

Conclusion:
A reassessment of migration policies is needed

From individual migrant entrepreneurs to international organisations, migration industry actors are exercising influence and authority at all levels of the migratory process. The migration industry in all its guises is here to stay. Yet so far this fundamental commercialisation of migration has received relatively little attention from policymakers. However, as the migration industry significantly shapes migration flows, this ought to be prompting governments to reassess migration policies in terms of both how to intervene and of which interlocutors to address in any attempt to manage migration.

At the practical level, taking account of the migration industry is likely to mean reorienting and adjusting policies in a range of areas. This may include forging closer cooperation with migration industry actors to ensure more orderly access for different kinds of labour migrants. It may include targeting humanitarian or development assistance to vulnerable migrant groups and/or communities with high out-migration rates. It means regulating the current outsourcing of migration functions more carefully to avoid a democratic deficit and accountability gap. And it means better understanding the current market for irregular migration in order to combat exploitation and corruption.

THE FACILITATION INDUSTRY

The first sub-category of the migration industry consists of the individuals, networks and companies who look to profit from assisting migrants. These include a wide variety of actors from migrant entrepreneurs to the big corporations operating, for e.g., labour immigration schemes in close cooperation with governments. It also includes clandestine businesses from international human smuggling rings to local border and visa officials tempted to make a little money on the side.

'Camionetas' is the common name for the various courier services, transportation companies or passenger vans that shuttle between the United States and Mexico. A key feature of such operations is their combination of multiple services (e.g. transportation of a small number of passengers, delivery of remittances and shipment of parcels destined for household consumption and local sale). These services are often established by entrepreneurial migrants, tapping into the needs of fellow international sojourners. Some of them, specialising in domestic destinations in the United States or Europe, appear to assist undocumented migrants in circumventing border controls.

THE CONTROL INDUSTRY

The migration control industry is linked to the growing privatisation of hitherto governmental tasks relating to deportation, detention and border control. As a result, companies in this area are experiencing rapid growth. Boeing's contract to set up high-tech border surveillance along the United States–Mexico border runs at US$2.5 billion and involves more than 100 sub-contractors. Florida-based Geo Group – one of G4S' main competitors – operates more than 7,000 detention beds in the United States, including the Guantanamo detention centre where migrants intercepted in the Caribbean are transferred.

G4S, or Group 4 Securicor as it used to be known, is the world's largest security company employing more than 625,000 people in more than 120 countries. In recent years an increasing part of G4S activities deal with migration management. The company operates immigration detention centres in Australia and the United Kingdom, and carries out passenger screening and profiling at European airports. In the United States G4S operates a fleet of custom-built fortified buses that serve as mobile detention centres and deportation transportation for illegal migrants caught along the United States–Mexico border. Until 2010 G4S held the exclusive contract to carry out forced removals from the United Kingdom. That contract was lost when Jimmy Mubenga, an Angolan national, died while in the hands of G4S guards on a plane at Heathrow airport – a case that has opened a larger debate about the consequences of outsourcing migration management in terms of public accountability and migrants' rights.

THE RESCUE INDUSTRY

The rescue industry consists of the increasing number of NGOs, humanitarian organisations and migrant associations involved in migration management. These perform very different tasks that may both facilitate migration (e.g. providing shelter or transportation) and constrain migration (e.g. conducting campaigns that warn against the dangers of irregular migration). At the same time, this set of actors may be linked closely to government cooperation, as in the cases of NGOs running asylum centres and of the IOM facilitating voluntary return migration. Yet, in many other instances, migration associations or humanitarian organisations operate entirely outside, or even in opposition to, government involvement. Common to this group of migration industry actors seems to be that they are driven by motives other than merely commercial gain.

Since 1984 the Danish Red Cross has been running more than 350 accommodation centres for asylum seekers in Denmark. The Danish Refugee Council has a contract with the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration to provide counselling for migrants awaiting return and to operate post-return integration programs in the country of origin.

FURTHER READING

Ninna Nyberg Sørensen and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen coordinate an international research network titled "The Migration Industry and Markets for Migration Management". The present policy brief is based on their forthcoming edited volume, *The Migration Industry and the Commercialisation of International Migration*, (Routledge, October 2012). See www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415623797

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