

Review - The Migration Industry

Written by Anastasia Christou

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Review - The Migration Industry

<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/08/30/review-the-migration-industry/>

ANASTASIA CHRISTOU, AUG 30 2013

The Migration Industry and the Commercialization of International Migration
Edited by: Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen & Ninna Nyberg Sørensen
New York: Routledge, 2013

Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen & Ninna Nyberg Sørensen have tapped into the business of migration in what no doubt will be an important contribution to this ongoing discussion on the extent and impact of money in the management of migration.

Both editors are senior researchers at the Danish Institute for *International* Studies (DIIS) and have expertly brought together 11 case specific chapters by a number of prolific migration scholars. The editors' agenda-setting introduction provides an extensive overview of the migration industry, the role it plays in the governance of migration, the impact it has on movement, as well how privatisation, the neoliberal state and new public management figure into the growth of this migration industry. The editors have tackled new concepts and theories by providing an interdisciplinary platform for a subject that often remains unspoken; and the case study approach covers a great deal of migrant destinations in Europe, the United States and Asia, as well as migrant-sending regions in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Review - The Migration Industry

Written by Anastasia Christou

One of the core arguments of the book that inevitably forms the thrust of its originality is the position that it is impossible to speak of migration management (or more boldly of migration at all!) without speaking of the migration industry. The book turns consideration to a frequently omitted complexity of relations between civil society, the government and private actors in how the logic of migration management is shaped by legislative, financial and political considerations. The editors provide a clear discussion of how they conceptualise the migration industry within the interplay of actors, roles and structures and the commercialisation of international migration.

The case studies address, through a multi-disciplinary perspective and a variety of countries, the phenomena of the facilitation and control industry of migration management. More importantly, among other themes, they expand the analytical horizon of migration facilitators (Hernández-León); they develop a typology for the understanding of the impact of migration industry actors on the global governance of labour/irregular migration and refugee protection (Betts); they illuminate the role of the private border guard and their accountability in the migration control industry (Gammeltoft-Hansen); they uncover the experiences of stranded migrants-turned human smugglers (Lucht); they examine document fixers and migration brokers (Berg and Tamagno); they expose corrupt public officials in capturing the systemic forces in undocumented migration (Rosales Sandoval), and social and criminal networks of the migration industry in facilitating human and monetary flow, the rescue industry and the humanitarian assistance involved (Nyberg Sørensen).

This book demonstrates the complexity of the migration industry and the extent to which it includes an enormously dynamic set of actors who cause, facilitate and sustain mobility. Migration entrepreneurs are involved in many stages of the social process of the international human mobility and they are present in subsequent stages in finding new ways to expand the commodification of migration. The book unpacks the dense web of ties and interactions in the current era of neoliberal governance and border control. There is a fascinating exploration here that the state delegates functions to private actors, as outsourced, privatised actions in competitive bidding processes (e.g. Lemberg-Pedersen), which really concretises the 'business' aspects of this industry, facts often unknown to the wider public. And such processes are very much global in the governance of migration (Betts).

Analytically, this is a compelling shift from public to private actors in how governance emerges. Hence, the political debate of the migration industry needs to expand beyond the dimension of in/formality to the processes that have extended the functionality of individual and institutional actors to how policy is shaped by such functional transactions. The involvement of private actors undoubtedly creates a whole new spectrum of policy dynamics and the state here should be scrutinised on its accountability of governance. Menz (Chapter 5) reminds us of the Foucauldian 'biopower' that governments exert and the neo-Marxist inspired theorisations that may help us to understand the way governments attempt to do so. This marketisation will no doubt continue to be a growing industry and by shedding light on such practices can only aid to what Gammeltoft-Hansen sees as a "fundamental discussion about the political legitimacy of outsourcing sovereign functions like migration control" (p. 145).

This book will no doubt be very useful to migration scholars and policy makers. Yet, I would welcome a complimentary sequel, more ethnographically and critically grounded, that picks up from the migration industry as an institution and gives direct voice to the various actors, stakeholders, activists, employees in this industry as well as migrants and their families having direct experience of such encounters. Their words matter, as much as our analytical lens does and having their perspective on paper, in their own words, will no doubt give us a more holistic picture of the impact, successes as well as constraints and failures of migration management. But this is an opportunity for more future research in this domain, ethnographically rich and theoretically informed from the ground. This is not simply a narrow focus on individual migration experiences but a more contextualised account of roles, conflicts and practices in the migration industry trajectory.

Migration is indeed a big business and the more insight we have into this corporate landscape the better we can shape government policy for more sustainable and equitable societies.

—

Dr. Anastasia Christou is Reader in Sociology at Middlesex University, UK. She was previously Senior Lecturer in

Review - The Migration Industry

Written by Anastasia Christou

Cultural Geography, University of Sussex, Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Aalborg, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Academy for Migration Studies in Denmark and Visiting Research Fellow at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung in Germany. Anastasia has conducted multi-sited, multi-method and comparative ethnographic research in the United States, Germany, Denmark, Greece and Cyprus and has widely published on issues of diasporas, migration/ return migration; the second generation and ethnicity; space and place; transnationalism and identity; culture and memory; gender and feminism; home and belonging; emotion and narrativity.