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Chapter 1
Theorising labour mobility power through the lenses of migration

Introduction*: migration and labour turnover as contested terrains*

In this chapter we take a journey across different literature streams to review the origins of the study of labour turnover in the nascent modern factory of the early 20th century, to then move to approaches to turnover and mobility power (Smith 2006) and that of migrant workers in particular, across labour process theory (LPT), comparative political economy (CPE) and critical migration scholarship (CMS). We explore the parallel (and ambivalent) efforts of capital at both facilitating and constraining mobility in the history of 'labour capture' (Smith 2006: 397) and in relation to the mobilities of capital (Harvey 2018; Sassen 1990; Brenner 1998). The relative unfree nature of labour in capitalism, showing elements of continuity with pre-capitalist forms of labour control (van der Linden 2008; Moulier-Boutang 1998) helps understanding why workers have always engaged with mobility strategies in the forms of desertion, migration and quitting to counter or diminish exploitation (van Rossum 2018).

While the following chapters will focus on specific cases and location of labour migration and the management of labour flows in different world regions, we need to first grapple with the theoretical debates that have emerged from the study of the relationship between labour mobility (as labour turnover) and international migration, looking at theorisation of the mobility and fixity of labour in relation with those of capital. Here we thus set the theoretical core of our argument, which aims to move beyond the ongoing 'suspicion' towards labour migration held by industrial relations, political economy, and employment studies. While we illuminate the ways in which labour studies can learn from migration scholarship and the autonomy of migration perspective (Karakayali and Bojadžijev 2007), we add to both by proposing ways to overcome the limitations of both labour and migration studies which tend to reproduce either functionalist or individualised notions of migrant mobility. We contend that both dualist segmentation theories of the migrant labour function in capitalist markets and integrationist approaches to migrant workers fail to grasp the mobility power of migrants.

To overcome deterministic readings of cross-border migration in capitalist economies we rather suggest a compositional approach (Gray and Clare 2022) to mobility practices. Therefore, we propose a re-theorisation of mobility power through the lenses of migration that overcomes the binary views of collective and individual resistance- especially among precarious workers experiencing restricted mobility, emphasising the historical continuity and relationality between exit and voice.

1. The origins of turnover as a problem

The notion of turnover as a problem to be managed and minimised was first developed in early management and organisation studies, reflecting the concerns of employers and foremen on the shopfloor. In the first years of 20th century, employers started to commission some studies to understand how to predict and reduce voluntary turnover or, in the world of an American government official, to deal with "the individualistic strike" (Jacoby 1985: 32). Since the early 20th century firm-hired practitioners or consultants started to produce detailed analysis and assessment of labour turnover and its costs to devise reduction strategies (Fisher, 1917a, 1917b), while scholars began to assess and generate hypotheses, theories and modelling of why employees leave their jobs and organisations (Douglas, 1918).

The work of Slicther (1919) and Brissenden and Frankel (1922) represent the first studies on turnover during the first decades of 20th century, which saw the emergence of the modern factory. Perhaps surprisingly, their apparently 'less theoretical' (Hom et al. 2017) research appears more sociologically nuanced, context sensitive and less functionalistic than the successive organization studies. These very early studies developed in the context of the nascent Fordist factory, expressed a greater sensitivity to the questions of the specific (migrant/racialised) composition of the workforce in relation to the problem of turnover. For instance, Brissenden and Frankel (1922) in one of the first comprehensive studies of labour turnover, define the problem of 'workers-led mobility' as primarily occurring in labour markets with abundant alternatives and, critically, caused or entrenched by inadequate management and working conditions. It is fascinating to observe how already in these first rudimentary theorisations, there was a high sensitivity to the social problems pushing workers to quit their jobs (insanitary environments, inferior or inadequate housing and transportation facilities) that are not always strictly related to the place of work and rather consider the wider

community/social environment. This is in contrast to those who argue that the sensitivity to the environment was only a later contemporary discovery and that the embeddedness theory of turnover (Mitchel et al. 2001; Hom et al. 2017) was a radical departure from original approaches.

For our purpose, it is important to highlight how in the first set of studies turnover has been explicitly considered a measure of the extent of the labour unrest and therefore explicitly associated with conflict in the workplace, to which suitable management responses must be developed. Indirectly supporting our view that turnover as labour mobility expresses a form of conflict in the workplace, Brissenden and Frankel (1922: 7) argued that labour turnover is a narrower and more helpful term than labour mobility because "it deals chiefly with the shifting and replacement involved in force maintenance" hence putting the emphasis on management need for the control over worker voluntary mobility and the sourcing of alternative labour rather than on worker perspectives (the reasons for leaving).[1] In other words, who measures turnover and for what purpose matters substantially in its political and sociological definition and when considering the relatively disruptive effects of labour turnover on the firm. In this regard already from the work of Brissenden and Frankel (1922) the management of the problem of turnover is already presented as an element of competitive advantage with other organizations, at a time in which the notion of employment policies and personel management was just emerging. Similarly, Slichter (1919) highlighted the coincidence of the birth of turnover with the dawns of personel policies and human resource strategies. Its ground-breaking work on the modern organisation shows how "the necessity of 'handling manpower' and turnover were at the very origins of HRM" (Alberti 2011: 201). By no chance his work emerged at this unique point in the history of the US large firm when companies responding to the growth of the direct employment relationship away from putting out systems and 'gang bosses', realised that it was inconvenient for them when workers started to move because of personal mobility choices. His study of turnover conducted between in 1912–1915 reported unprecedented rates with nearly half of his survey companies having rates in excess of 100 percent

[1] While the US Bureau of Labour Statistics originally used turnover to refer to the number of replacements needed, in order to fulfil the concern of employer to maintain the workforce, the authors suggest to keep into account all the 3 elements of analysis: 1) number of employee hired (accessions); 2) number leaving (separations); and 3) the number of replacements required to keep up the workforce" (Brissenden and Frankel 1922: 8).

annual labour turnover (Slichter 1919: 343). Such figures were a clear expression of workforce dissatisfaction.

Similarly, the intuition of Brissenden and Frankel (1922) remains valuable because they show the inextricable links between labour effort and labour mobility, and the actual concern underpinning employer struggles at measuring and monitoring turnover. The figures emerging from their analysis are striking: labour mobility in the US manufacturing by years 1910-19 (measured in terms of 'rate of replacement') amount to no less than 63 per cent of the work force and during even the more stable year like 1915 being completely over-turned, meaning that there were at least many accessions and at least as many separations as there were workers on the force. In the war period 1917/18 this pattern became more striking with more than four labour changes for each full-year worker in the aggregate work force (Brissenden and Frankel 1922: 38; Douglas, 1959: 710).

The huge efforts of production during the First World War and the mass mobilisation of labour, including new supplies, at a time of mass conscription were so substantial to require an enormous number of workers, although it was noticed how these were not as malleable as the patriotic rhetoric required, and workers continued to leave the factory and strike.[2] Indeed, high fluidity and turnover in the labour market far from coincided with a period of social acquiescence, anticipating a pattern by which turnover and collective unrest need to be considered in relation rather than in opposition to each other.

During the first two decades of the 20th century labour turnover appears high and characterised by the relative freedom of workers to leave their workplace, but also by the lack of social protection and lose regulation. This is the time when the labour movement in the US starts organising more extensively and bring into its rank also migrant and Afro-American workers. It is in particular from 1910 that employers start being more concerned about working conditions because of their negative impact on turnover, decrease in labour productivity and the spread of unionism (Fishback 1997: 10). Indeed, these high rates reflected the fact that the labour market was extremely fluid (Brissenden and Frankel 1922) and workers had plenty of opportunities to find jobs in different firms developing a pattern of 'job shopping' increased by the limited opportunities of

[2] As Dubofsky (1995: 126) notes, "The First World War years witnessed an unparalleled explosion of labor unrest. Strikes increase dramatically in 1916; they reached their highest level ever in 1917; and peaked in terms of numbers of workers involved in 1919 when over four million workers (almost 25% of all private-sector employees) struck". Also during Second World War labour conflict in the firms remained high (Glaberman 1980).

occupational mobility inside the firm (Brissenden, Frankel 1922: 17). The low rate of unemployment (1-2%) in 1917-18 created a situation where workers were allowed to accept up to 7 jobs in one day (Montgomery 1979: 96). Critically, the same author reports that these high turnover rates were actually accompanied by intense and ongoing collective disputes, both self-organized or supported by the trade unions.

It is without doubt that the very nature of work and the specific working conditions experienced by the workers - whether repetitive, with low wages and highly controlled and disciplined - are key in explaining why workers decide to quit (Smith et al. 2004: 377).[3] Sanford M. Jacoby (1983: 261) later argued that the decline of turnover after 1920 was actually not related to the new personnel management policies or by the threat represented by the unionisation by workers, nor by the desire of management to obtain economic benefits through purposefully reducing turnover levels. For Jacoby, the different composition of the workforce was rather the key factor that explains changes in labour mobility at that time. Indeed, a compositional analysis of the workforce helps to pay attention to the specific racial, ethnic, legal and gender status of the workers in a certain time and place, and in particular to explore the specific relationship between the recruitment of migrant labour and the control of labour turnover (see Chapter 4).

Economic historians Sanford Jacoby and Sunil Sharma (1992) focus on the specificity of the composition of labour providing a long term review of labour mobility patterns in industry across the two centuries (1880-1980). Contrary to Carter and Savoca (1990), through a comprehensive account of subjective and macro factors, they show that the great majority of jobs before the First World War were short term and only few sectors had longer term employment, whereby since the war there was "a sharp shift in the relative size and importance of the short and long term job sectors" (Jacoby and Sharma 1992: 161). This points goes back to the importance of examining the general state of the labour market and its relative fluidity in different historical contexts to understand the relative turnover as labour market power by workers. Further, Jacoby and Sharma (1992) show a corresponding pattern between migration and turnover, confirmed for a big chunk of the 20th century. Such heightened turnover tendency in migrant-rich sectors is

[3] This was true also in USSR where labour turnover remained high in particular after 1956 when the strict labour legislation against mobility approved during the Second World War (1940) was abrogated. On the basis of a large research conducted by some Soviet economists, Fakiolas (1962: 23) underlines that the five more important causes of labour turnover in 1960 were linked to "return to parents' home town", "grievances against the wage level", "inadequacy or complete lack of living accommodation, "job maladjustment" and "bad working conditions".

explained by the fact that migrants were taking jobs in the least protected and unionised industries. They conclude that it is unmanageable to count and measure the patterns of constantly floating populations, indicating the impossibility of definitely measuring or predicting labour turnover**.**

In summary, while economic historians have later illuminated the wider socio-economic context that influenced both turnover, migration and unionisation during the first part of the 20th century, early scholars of turnover, like their contemporaries in the nascent discipline of organization studies and human relations, struggled to come to a conclusion on how to define and *measure* labour turnover. The historical attempts at measuring the turnover of labour since the beginning of the modern organisation, indicate how it remains a strongly ambivalent terrain, even simply because it does not differentiate between the voluntary or non-voluntary nature of separations, e.g. between discharge, layoff, or voluntary turnover by workers. Turnover as such can indeed be either positive or negative for management or the workers, according to a variety of contextual, organizational, political and social factors that influence power in the employment relation.

2. From management studies to the labour process perspective

The organizational and management literature is important to understand how and why turnover starts to be considered troublesome from a management and social perspective, and what kind of solutions were proposed. The first studies in this field tended to be published in journals with an individualistic/cognitivist approach to social relations such as organizational behaviours and applied psychology. Among them, organizational psychologists like March and Simon (1958) and Price (1977) were primarely interested in advancing a Human Relations approach to the science of labour management. They criticised classical theory of cognitive rationality by economic actors, highlighting the complexity of behavioural choices by individuals and their importance for organizations. Still, theirs remains primarily a management-oriented agenda since their objective is to understand the problem of turnover in order to develop strategies to 'tame' this worker behaviour, and predict how organizations can survive at best despite workers quitting, and possible low levels of satisfaction, productivity and participation among the workforce. The hundreds of studies published in the first year of the 20th

century were conducted to solve the concrete problems experienced by firms: hiring and replacement expenses (Fisher 1917); disruption of productivity - related outcomes and other financial disadvantages for the company (Hom et al. 2017: 530). From the more descriptive studies of the 1930s, research developed into complex examination of turnover demographics and psychological traits, into the development of models of turnover such as that by March and Simon (1958).

Hom et al. (2017) attempting to identify different phases in the history of turnover research: the first phase was the association of turnover with individual, community and family factors (embedded behaviour); then the more recent psychological turn; and finally the HRM turn, where it is recognised that turnover may have effects and drivers that go beyond the individual (collective turnover). However, despite the consideration of how the demographics of different social groups affect turnover behaviours, mainstream organisation and management studies tend to rely on generalising social categories such as expats to identify patterns of behaviour by those who decide to stay when they integrate in the new country; or women who decide to quit because they have already plan to stay with their child if they got pregnant. In this way their approach leaves underexplored the multiplicity of social profiles that workers may hold at one time.

Only more recently management and organisation studies have tackled the question of migrant workers' turnover intentions as compared to that of natives. Studies in specific sectors with high flexibility and labour shortages have introduced the idea that migrants may acquire higher 'professional mobility' according to macro-economic factors such as increasing demand for migrant labour and the relatively global nature of the industry they work in. In sectors like hospitality the presence of occupational communities that expose migrants to the social norms of the country of destination are deemed to reduce the gap with natives' behaviours, facilitating voluntary turnover of migrants who show similar patterns to natives in terms of their quitting (Choi et al. 2017). This recent research is critical to the extent that it challenges the assumptions common to earlier studies that migrants necessarily suffer greater constraints and dependency on work and therefore would rather "not quit that work due to low job satisfaction or a lack of fit with an organization because that person sees work as a way to survive" (Blustein 2006, cited in Choi et al. 2017: 55). Rather, focusing on how structural conditions may provide greater opportunities for mobility, so that "individual workers will act and engage in turnover more frequently" (Hall 2004), Choi et al. (2017: 55) de-essentialise migrant intrinsic *in*capacity to engage in turnover in circumstances where "a labor shortage may allow

migrant workers more opportunities to move between companies". This approach signals a less essentialistic way of looking at turnover and migration even within organisation studies.

Notwithstanding the renewed emphasis on the importance of context (e.g. Hom et al. 2017) as well as sector and macro-economic factors (Hall 2004) to understand turnover behaviours by specific categories of workers such as migrants (Choi et al. 2017), there is still little attention to the wider social dynamics and especially workplace power dynamics that underpin voluntary labour turnover. Beside some consideration of collective aspects, most of the theories appear embedded in an understanding of turnover as fundamentally driven by individual psychological expectations and economic calculations ("subjective expected utility"), and oriented to problem solving for the firm. [4]

Instead, since the late 1970s the sociology of work and labour process theory introduced the point of view of the employment relation to consider the different meanings of turnover for employers and workers as immersed in an as intrinsically unstable and indeterminate relationship subject to unequal power dynamics (Edwards 1990). Considering the ambivalent meaning of labour mobility in the workplace, employers may be in favour of a system with a relatively high and constant level of turnover when these better serve industries with high fluctuation in demand or high seasonality of the service/product (e.g. in the hospitality sector see Lai et al. 2008). Employers may favour turnover when the management of the workforce does not require loyalty and permanence, when the costs of recruitment are relatively low, when the supply of labour is large and when training is not required (Brown and McIntosh 2000).[5] A different reason for employers to promote turnover may be understood in relation to the cost of maintenance and reproduction of certain groups of workers such as women (see also Chapter 4). The decision to hire women only temporarily to avoid covering the

[4] An emphasis on individuals' choices and their economic utility to explain turnover behaviour among workers has dominated also more recent accounts of turnover in organization studies, even though there have been some attempts to bring a more dynamic approach that includes social conflicts in the framework (e.g. March and Simon 1958) and less individualistic (community/family) and 'off work" drivers of turnover intensions such as through embeddedness theories (Mitchell et al. 2001) to explain both turnover behaviours and organizations' response.

[5] As Blackett (1928: 12-13) noted: "It is a mistake to suppose that the reduction of labor turnover is under all circumstances a net advantage. There are industries which thrive best in a mobile labor market because the business is by nature seasonal or subject to unexpected changes in volume. These industries tend to locate in large cities or to build up around them communities where labor moves easily from one employment to another".

costs of their maternity leave or avoid their retention after return from leave, are classic examples of how turnover may be purposely encouraged by employers of female workers and as a way to avoid the possible reduction of productivity in the case of workers with parental duties (Caraway 2007).

Managers may also explicitly support higher turnover rate as it removes "the discontented and more vociferous workers from the workplace, eliminating potential leadership from trade unionism or collective workplace organization, which was positively ranked above exit" (Smith 2006: 193). Processes of socialisation and politicisation among workers in the same workplace, which usually require time and a certain employment continuity under the same employer, are considered essential to develop bonds of strong solidarity that can give rise to collective action. Here key industrial sociologists (Beynon, 1973; Burawoy, 1979; Nichols and Beynon, 1977) have celebrated the importance of shop floor mutual action to maintain a level of conflict with management and exposed them as more effective than individual strategies of dispute resolution, based upon labour market competition such as workers' decision to quit, which has in contrast seen as disruptive of collectivism. This idea has been used as the conceptual ground for morally ranking unionism and worker organization above exit (Smith 2006). This was because of the alleged implications of exit for voice, rather than solely for the individualism associated to exiting behaviours in the firm. In fact, some scholars stress how high levels of turnover are linked to the absence or low levels of union density or of independent unions representing workers' grievances in a particular production unit: a high turnover may contribute to hinder the level of solidarity, impede collective action and foster fragmentation in working conditions (Smith et al. 2004). In contrast, a powerful trade union will be able to improve working conditions, carry out progressive bargaining with management and reduce or eliminate high turnover.

The ambivalent meaning of turnover however does not only lie in the different meanings that the two main parties in the employment relation attribute to it. Under different circumstances from those described above, employers may also have good reasons to try and limit the high turnover of workers. There are plenty of examples of employers finding ways to stop workers from moving at will, e.g. by establishing length of service and notice periods of separation on the contract of employment, and other procedures for constraining labour supply and mobility (Jacoby 1991). Mann (1973) talks about a 'mutual dependency obligation' whereby internal promotion may be used by the employer to disincentivise an employee from seeking alternatives jobs elsewhere, and

where employers are then expected to favour internal to external labour markets according to a paternalistic approach based on workers loyalty.[6]

More broadly the question of worker retention *vs.* turnover appears critical in situations of either scarce skills and high labour shortages. Skill retention or the reproduction of abilities that are deemed critical for the profitability of a particular production process lead employers to be concerned about workers moving away, possibly to competitors, especially if they have made substantial investments in training and employees are difficult to replace (Campbell 1993; Smith et al. 2004) The relationship between skills and turnover has been long recognised both in labour studies and comparative political economy precisely because it brings to the fore the relative dependency of employers on skill supplies as "any investment by an employer in an employee in the form of training runs a high risk of being lost as an *employee moves elsewhere*" (Bikerton 2019: 237).[7]

The question of skills as well as worker autonomy was indeed at the very core of the labour process theory and Braverman's theory of monopoly capitalism (1974) at its origin. For Braverman the autonomy of the worker lies primarily in the skills owned by the latter. One of his main concerns with the development of capitalism was the fact that the new processes of Taylorisation were depriving workers from their knowledge about the process of production and their craft, leading to an overall trend of skills degradation, which fundamentally diminishes worker autonomy and bargaining power at the point of production. This idea that worker autonomy is a function of their skills lies in turn in the Marxian distinction between labour and labour power, whereby the employer may buy the availability of the worker to deliver effort power but not labour power itself, which remains indeterminate and require a specific system of management control in the labour process.

[6] Recently, in the context of labour shortages following the Covid-19 pandemic we have witnessed the introduction of specific contractual clauses that penalise workers who decide to leave their employers earlier than a prescribed time, also in low-paid manual occupations (Boeri et al. 2022).

[7] An important issue observed by studying differences between national contexts is how the structure of a labour market can influence the sort of vocational training available to workers (Thelen 2004; Teague and Donaghey 2018). When state and employers don't invest in training there is a tendency to look for alternative sources of skills and 'outsource' the reproduction of skills to other countries. This is a typical example of the "substitution function" of migration, that is, when immigration is used by employers/governments if national training and vocational education institutions have failed to reproduce the needed skills in a certain labour market. However, we will see how replacing skills through migration is far from a straightforward process that state or capital can simply take for granted.

Moving to the point of view of the workers, Edwards and Scullion (1982) draw from the notion that the extraction of labour power by capital is always contested and subject to power struggles between capital and labour, whereby the 'threat' of turnover is always present and constitutive of the double indeterminacy of both effort and mobility power of labour (Smith 2006). Labour mobility indeterminacy refers to the uncertainty over "the disposal of labor power to the individual worker who has the burden and freedom (constraint and choice) as to *where and to which* employer the individual sells his or her labor services" (Smith 2015: 231).

The flow perspective to labour power, must therefore be considered in light of the historical tradition of labour process studies, which put at the centre "the constant need for capital to obtain consent from workers because of the unspecified magnitude of work effort" (Alberti 2014: 868). At the centre of the research by the pioneer of industrial sociology and labour process theory lied indeed the fragile balance between management interest in the ongoing circulation and supply of labour on the one hand and its capture or immobilisation on the other, which also gives rise to the possibility of overcoming capitalist social relations. In this sense the work of Chris Smith (2006) also moves away from the attention that Braverman (1974) has put on skills and production under monopoly capitalism rather focusing on the ability of workers to quit some certain employment relations, which may or may not depend on the type and level of skills they possess -and how scarce they are in the wider labour market. Highlighting the other face of the indeterminacy of labour power we shift the attention to other capacities that may be not be measurable according to classic understanding of craft and skills owned by workers and passed on from generation to generation in occupational groups. We will show in Chapter 4 how there may be different types of allegiances and kinships that shape the relative market power and transnational mobility power of migrants, however entrenched in the skills regimes regulating cross-border migration (Collins 2021).

3. Migration and the segmentation of labour markets

We have considered above how the debate over labour mobility has developed in direct connection with that on the control over the reproduction of skills by capital and the state, and how comparative political economy have tended to understand migration as a way for employers to substitute scarce skills given their dependency on skill supplies

(Thelen 2014; Bickerton 2019). In turn, from the point of view of trade unions it has been historically important to draw some boundaries and introduce forms of protectionism in the area of skills formation and occupations (Cobble 1991), arguably as a way to control labour mobility.

Within political economy, scholars have shown the historical work of unions in protecting skilled labour market segments (for example through occupational guilds excluding newcomers from certain occupations) and how certain types of unions have excluded 'outsiders' from certain professions. Comparing Europe and the US in the early year of industrialisation, Thelen (2004) problematically blames open borders and migration for the loss of craft and burgeoning mechanisation of jobs in US: it was the wider availability of low skilled migrant labour to have allegedly weakened the importance of skilled labour and countered the emergence of coordinated market economy in the US as compared to Europe, where unions more successfully protected skills and jobs of local workers and their regulatory power in the labour market (Afonso and Devitt 2016: 600).

More recently, higher levels of labour mobility such as those in the EU common markets are believed to have coincided with higher constraints on worker bargaining power as a result of employer-led flexibility, labour turnover and exploitation (Krings 2009; Cremers et al. 2007). According to this reading, freedom of movement of labour in the EU context has often been held responsible for a race to the bottom in working terms and conditions (Berntsen 2016). One of the reasons why mobility and turnover have been rather associated to individualistic and detrimental forms of conflict has to do with the ways in which labour studies and comparative political economy rather see the wider phenomena of labour migration as disruptive or fragmenting forces in relatively protected or regulated national labour markets. In particular, we may identify two main approaches to the study of labour mobility in the political economy and the employment relations literature: a neoliberal approach and an institutional one (Bikerton 2019).

The neoliberal approach tends to see labour mobility as mere competitive market response to existing miss-matches between labour supply and demand. According to this viewpoint, labour mobility reflects wage differentials across countries but contributing to erase them and produce an equalising effects by naturally following market rules. On the opposite side the institutionalist turn is represented by scholars studying the interaction between labour mobility and national Varieties of Capitalism (VOC) (e.g. Wright 2012; Devitt 2011). In broad terms the VOC perspective (Hall and Soskice 2001)

distinguishes different economic models across countries in liberal capitalist economies, primarily liberal and coordinated market economies (LMEs and CMEs). While the former are mostly regulated by market mechanisms, characterised by low wages, flexible labour market and lower protections and lack of sector collective bargaining, the latter presents a higher level of coordinated wage bargaining, education skills and training policies, usually managed by the state providing for the reproduction of the workforce and its skills, and cooperative industrial relations systems. Also some labour migration scholars have used this framework to understand different management systems of labour mobility arguing that:

> "Compared to coordinated market economies with relatively regulated labour markets, liberal market economies with flexible labour markets and relatively large low wage labour markets can be expected to generate greater employers' demand for migrants, especially but not only for employment in low-waged jobs" (Ruhs and Palme 2018: 1488-89).

In our view the point here is not to argue against the neoliberal model of labour migration by showing that migration has no effect on wages or terms and conditions. The problem with institutionalist and VOC approaches lies instead in the simplistic language of competition that pervades the relation between indigenous and migrant workers, and focuses on the effects of migration on the national labour market and on the local workforce, as if these were bounded and naturally counterposed entities with no social relationship between each other. These approaches tend to naturalise the existence of national borders clearly defining who belongs to the national workforce and who does not (another way of reproducing methodological nationalism), and imagining a mechanic competition between them. Adopting a more nuanced view of how segmented markets operate, including informally and 'from the bottom up' (Peck and Theodore 2010), means to look at migrant workers in their subjectivity and migrant labour in its complex relations with local markets and citizens (Anderson 2017). In this way we may start seeing how migrants are not simply subjugated to what employer may expect from them as a unique type of human resource, and that they rather be considered as more than a mere factor of production or an economic variable in capitalist systems.

Overall, the recent engagement of comparative political economy with international migration, a long overdue endeavour, has contributed to highlight a more dynamic

interaction between migration and capitalist institutions, representing an important break away from the tendency of labour and employment research to look at migration as a static factor, either victim of bad employers or faulty of race to the bottom in the labour market. However, the economic disposition of migrant workers (rather than the range of their wider motives and household dynamics) continues to be taken for granted in most Varieties of Capitalism and Comparative political economy approaches. Emphasis on the functions of substitution or complementarity used to describe the role played by migration in relation to existing institutions such as industrial relations system or training and skills formation, tends to still treat migrant labour as a variable in capitalist markets (Afonso and Devitt 2016). Migration in political economy jargon remains fundamentally a pawn of labour market and institutional dynamics led by state and employers, or pushed by mainly individual economic drivers. While it is important to take into account the regulatory and economic context at the country level, contrary to institutionalist readings we cannot simply extrapolate worker mobility behaviours from political economic conditions in the state and labour markets (cf. Afonso and Devitt 2016), nor as simply reflecting already formed employer or government strategies (Ruhs and Palme 2018).

Operating within the VOC perspective, Afonso and Devitt (2016) are interested in understanding how migration influences changes and continuity in institutional forms given the diversity of capitalist systems. They bring a more dynamic view of actors and social processes in relatively regulated markets considergin that migration is not merely a tool of liberalisation of political economy but may rather allow for segmentation, for example between stable and unstable employment markets characterised by different behaviours and patterns. Drawing from as Piore (1979) and Thelen (2004) notion of labour market dualisation, Afonso and Devitt (2016: 595) argue that migration may be used to shield rather than merely challenge or liberalise existing coordinated market economies. In this sense, migration allows for co-existing processes of flexibilisation (where migrants would allegedly benefit liberal market economies) and protection requirements for society (indeed, for natives; see also Erne and Imboden 2015). A key concern of Polany's in "The Great Transformation" (1957) was indeed the re-embedding of social relations under pressure of neoliberal market economies and Afonso and Devitt (2016) argue that migration can be understood as a way to reconcile these two movements. This re-conciliation is paradoxically possible only through a kind of protectionist segmentation of the labour market, which creates separate niches that impede or slow down downward competition on wages. Afonso (2015), in particular, has

shown how in the case of Switzerland such fragmentation and dualization have allowed employers and unions to compromises over certain levels of free movement of labour from the EU. Similarly, Erne and Imboden (2015) showed how in the same country trade unions managed to compromise over the free movement of labour agreement by using Swiss capitalists interest to access the EU common market as a lever to force employers to accept stronger labour rights for EU nationals (comparably stronger than the equal pay for equal work between Swiss women and Swiss men), hence forming two unequal pay policy regimes in the same country.

However, a problem with these approaches within comparative political economy is that unions and employer associations remain the ultimate representative actors negotiating the regulation of the labour market and do so uniquely at the national level, according to an analytical framework that overlooks the direct representation of migrant interests (see Chapter 5) and the multiplicity of regulatory actors shaping international and cross-border labour markets. It is no coincidence that the considered 'cross-class coalitions' compromising around migration and free movement only partially address the ongoing inequalities between natives and migrants, taking for granted the national boundaries of the state and the economy according to what we can consider a residual methodological nationalism of employment studies amd union practice.

Shire (2020) recently discussed the 'social order' of transnational labour markets arguing that the very segmentation of labour markets between primary and secondary allows for a sort of tolerance of migrant labour, which is however accepted to the extent that it guarantees the continuation of segmented markets with better conditions and pay for the citizens and poorer and more precarious terms for the foreigners. While inserting a more critical view of the drivers of such social ordering including a variety of actors (see Chapter 2), what is still problematic in these understandings of migration in the capitalist economy is that they maintain a form of essentialisation (Romens 2022) or fetishization of migrant labour, as if migrants would only benefit of labour market flexibility (incorporating the wild spirit of capitalism and free mobility), while the social security aspects would only be wanted and reserved to the natives.

Research indeed demonstrate how even in highly segmented market with niches of degraded migrant labour, the effects of precarisation may become *pervasive* for hitherto protected sections of the workforce (Alberti et al. 2018) and that not only those at the bottom of the labour market but all workers may see their conditions degraded when informal labour markets and un-regulated sections continue to expand. In other words,

also indigenous workers appear to suffer the consequences of the overall processes of precarisation, of which migrant labour is just a paradigmatic exemplar. Thinking more systematically about not only "how the other half works" (Waldinger and Lichter 2003) but on how the core and the margins of the labour markets are related, employment studies and comparative political economy have underestimated such interdependencies. On the contrary, the history of the 'standard employment relation' shows that secure employment with social benefits has been a privilege for only some sections of the workforce in Western countries and at a particular time of economic growth, but to the costs of co-existing with the unpaid, lower paid and temporary work of many other (women) precarious workers (Vosko 2006, 2010).[8] These readings show how we need to be suspicious of any understanding of what is the employment 'norm' and what are the 'exceptions' in more or less regulated or segmented employment markets.

Returning to Shire's (2020) idea that migration can contribute to a socially ordered system where segmentation allows for the continuation of differentiated labour markets, certainly helps explaining why, in some context, trade unions have been more accepting of labour migration (Afonso 2016; Erne and Imboden 2015). However, this over-emphasis on the impermeability of segmented markets is in contrast with the notion of precarisation as a process, whereby migrant labour is rather understood as anticipating general trends that sooner or later will affect all workers, and is paradigmatic or anticipatory of what happens in the labour market more broadly (Mometti & Ricciardi 2011). We can rather say that both the fragmentation of employment relations and workers, ongoing practices for the re-composition of work (Jordhus-Lier 2013; Grey and Claire 2022; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011) along with pervasive precarisation, are at play at different speeds and with different outcomes across regulatory contexts.

4. The good, the bad, and the intractable (migrant) worker

While industrial relations, the sociology of work and even political economy have increasingly taken into consideration the role of international migration in the labour market and in the labour movement specifically, we have shown the tendency for this to occur within a framework that privileges the nation state as unit of analysis and that tends

[8] For a critique of the enthusiastic apologists of the so-called golden age during the thirty glorious years (1945-1975) see Gambino 1996.

to overlook migration in its social aspect (Bauder 2006). The step forward in labour process studies has been to finally recognise "the dynamic tensions in the patterns of advantage and uncertainty that accompany the use of migrant labour power" (Thompson et al. 2013: 134), challenging an uncontested and victimising view of the migrant as the "good worker" (Dench et al. 2006), or of migration as simply fulfilling the 'function' of sustaining and extending flexible labour market structures (McCollum and Findlay 2015). Thompson et al. (2013) have indeed criticised a victimising approach to the analysis of the role of free moving Eastern European workers in the UK, as they rather highlighted the problems that employers found in managing this relatively unruly migrant workforce, because of their relatively instrumental approach to work and earnings and their tendency to adopt 'local's attitude and behaviours' as they became familiarised with the local environment (MacKenzie and Forde 2009; Baxter-Reid 2016).

Looking at the patterns of migrant labour over time in the same factory, Forde and MacKenzie (2009), pointed out that as soon as migrants became more integrated in the local labour market they started to refuse the expectations of long and irregular working hours and were soon replaced by the new generation of 'less-settled' migrant workers. The substitution process has been stressed in the case of the agriculture in the South of Italy (Caruso 2016; Corrado et al. 2016) where circulation of different groups of migrant workers has been observed. Similarly, McCollum and Findlay (2015) studying the role of Eastern European migrants in the flexible British labour market across a variety of sectors (from agriculture to hospitality) noticed the patterns of substitution of labour in employers' recruitment practices, and the fact that employers they would have rather hired post-colonial Commonwealth (Asian) migrants if the system based on visa sponsorship had been less cumbersome.

More recently, Thompson et al. (2013) studying migrant labour in the food packaging and processing sector in Scotland further developed the critique of the "good worker" showing how migrants themselves decide 'when and how to be good', or rather 'misbehave'. While Thompson and colleagues' research is important in foregrounding the agency of migrant workers rather than solely focusing on employers' instrumental use of migrant labour in food retail supply chains, alongside other labour scholars their focus remains on the opportunism of migrants' behavior and the mutual interest of both migrants and employers in perpetuating temporary and casual employment relations (see also Janta et al, 2011 on migrants and employers' 'matching goals' in the hotel and restaurant industry). Migrants' primary intention "to send money home, to pick up

language and other skills" are rather cited as drivers of their instrumental approach to low-paid casual work (Thompson et al. 2013: 132). While these external drivers and non-wage related motives for migrants to pick up employment (often below their skills level) has been critically emphasises in the migration literature (e.g. Currie 2007; Bauder 2006), the risk is to reproduce the view of migrants as rational cost-benefit calculators and exemplar of *homo economicus*. Such view has been criticised by early labour sociologists that originally interrogated the biases of industrial relations towards migration and its historical dismissal (McGovern 2007). While the question of wage differentials across countries has been and always will be an element in shaping the macro patterns of international migration in capitalism, reducing migrants labour market behaviour to economic or individual aspects is particularly problematic in that it shadows the myriad of objective and subjective, individual and household - related factors that shape the complex intentions, directionalities and temporalities of migration.

As noted by Thompson et al. (2013: 142), it is revealing that in sectors like the supermarket supply chain, local workers usually located in semi-rural areas, show greater patterns of labour market and social immobility as compared to migrants workers, e.g. preferring unemployment benefits over "harsh and unrewarding jobs in supplier companies". Migrants in contrast, are more successful at "moving on from initial jobs and navigate the labour market in search of better rewards" (Ibid.). However, highlighting such mobility differentials between migrants and indigenous workers should not lead to associate migrants with a higher instrumentalism/opportunism, but simply realising the difference in the structures and social differences that shape their strategies and behaviours. Alberti (2014) has applied this notion of mobility differentials to describe different degrees of precariousness and 'stuckness' in insecure employment within the migrant workforce in London, overcoming this false dichotomy between locals and migrants and showing instead how also migrants have different opportunities according to their immigration status, legal entitlements to benefits, their social networks, but also the barriers they encounter because of their class, gender, race, age and education (see also Samaluk 2016). In other words, it is not just about the economic resources available to the individual in a particular labour market that shape opportunity structures, but also the overall sense of security provided by more or less tangible assets such as family, friendship networks, institutional or political support that offer migrants overall prospects to flourish in a particular context.

The tendency in labour studies is to associate self-interested and market-focused behaviours to highly mobile foreign workers as the ultimate incarnation of neoliberal capitalism, in contrast with the relatively immobile, marginalised and unskilled local labour presented as the victim of such market forces, corroborating the (often racialised) sense of divisions between different segments of the workforce. Such narrative risks pushing migrants again to the end of the spectrum of collective vs. individual forms of resistance/conflict, where their practices are described as weak expressions of discontent and poor work ethics/missbehaviour. Another risk is to indirectly justify the racializing tones of divisions between migrant and the local workers, whereby managers and unions tend to blame the unethical, self-interested behaviour of temporary migrants quitting their jobs and expecting to return to them after a few months, or lowering productivity to cope with tiring and monotonous labour processes such as in food manufacturing and warehousing. Such 'opportunistic behaviour' may be rather considered the inevitable response to hard HRM strategies dominating those low-skilled labour intensive sectors, and a legitimate response that most workers, rather than migrants in particular, are likely to adopt as they became aware of the de-valuation of their labour and the low-pay beyond their initial frame of reference: migrants are therefore rather 'good when they *can* be' in the words of Baxter-Reid (2016).

Economistic approaches to migrant behaviours as well as the underpinning methodological nationalism of industrial relations research, concur to limit the ability of our field of study to deeply understand migration and its social and political significance in a transnational perspective. We argue, instead, that a truly radical view of labour mobility power involves questioning the very assumptions between migrant vs. non-migrants, individual and collective forms of resistance, rather acknowledging the material benefits of migrant mobility power beyond the mere realm of production (see Chapter 3 and 4). Furthermore, our approach to migration tries to go beyond the institutional lens constantly interrogating not only the differential implications of the operation of institutions (including trade unions) on natives and migrants, but also the fact that migrants' own behaviours or dispositions (e.g. earnings maximisation) cannot be taken for granted as they interact with those institutions, and that an economic rationale may not always shape theirs and their family's mobility practices as much as those of any other worker.

5. **Individual exit *vs.* collective voice: a hierarchy of resistance?**

Migrant workers' conflicting practices in the workplace have been rarely addressed or acknowledged in the sociology of work and employment relations. One of the reasons for this lies in the wider tendency of labour studies to categorise migrants' strategies as individual 'coping' rather than 'true resistance'. More broadly the emphasis on migrants' individualized market behavior points to the deep-seated distinction between individual and collective action that permeates studies of worker resistance in the sociology of work and in the labour process tradition.

The individual vs collective binary underpins the labour studies debate on worker forms of resistance at least since the discussion inaugurated by Hirschman in the 1970s. In 'Exit, Voice and Loyalty' (1970) Hirschman was the first to theorise the foundational difference between exit as a market type behaviour - celebrated by the economists to indicate an individualistic way of expressing discontent, and voice, as a more constructive way to engage with one's organization to improve matters while continuing to be members or customers.

However, going back to the origin of the debate, rather than treating it in purely sociological or categorical ways, the original argument by Hirschman must be considered in its own historical context. Hirschman indeed developed a nuanced critique of the ideological argument by economists, who elevated exit as a more efficient way of 'voting with one's feet' and who explicitly disregarded the contribution of voice, political participation and protest at a time when neoclassical economics and market-driven (individualist) approaches to organizational life were penetrating the mainstream debate and shaping early neoliberal economic discourses (Friedman 1964).[9] In a later article, Hirschman (1978) would actually acknowledge how differently distributed 'voice capacity' may be, and the relative easier access to forms of exit for certain groups of workers, critically referring to differences in wealth and income among individuals, hence relativising the superiority of voice over exit. Noticeably Hirschman (1978: 96) highlighted the limited resources of racialized minorities in making use of voice: "In the United States, where the problem is compounded because of race discrimination,

[9] Interestingly in that article Hirschman (1970) was exploring the political scientists' critique and the contribution that the notion of exit can provide to understanding of political behavior *vis-a-vis* the state (rather than private capitalist organizations), a topic that could be relevant in understanding the relationship between the state and migration.

inequality in access to exit has had some appalling consequences, such as the 'ghettoization' and partial ruin of our big cities".

Contrary to the view common to organisational psychology that quitting may be an emotive and immature response of workers to unsatisfactory conditions (March and Simon 1958), Edwards and Scullion (1982) explicitly acknowledged the possibility that turnover became a rational and collective expression of conflict, for example when quitting was used as a response to common problems and reflected previously shared 'pride in collective control'. According to this interpretation, if we take the term control in simple terms, quitting is likely to be an important form of escape in situation where 'managerial control is relatively intense'. The material benefits of quitting at the individual level should also not be discounted or degraded on a moral level: even when 'quitting was unable to resolve collective grievances, and it was therefore not necessarily a strategy that furthered workers' interests as a whole (…) it did of course permit individual workers to escape to a preferred job' (Edwards and Scullion 1982: 92).

Early labour process theory scholars are therefore helpful to illuminate how difficult is to draw a definite line between individual exiting behaviours and the more or less individual/collective gains accrued by such behaviours. Are these individual decisions to quit only impacting on the individual? What about their co-worker, their bosses, their family members? Smith's (2006: 394) conclusion is a balanced and convincing one in this regard, suggesting that rather than dwelling on the debate as to whether exit is superior to voice or vice versa, we rather "need more research to investigate the disruptive, conflictual and destabilizing effects workers can exert by using the labour market for dispute resolution". This would also help forming a better understanding of how management is forced to change or develop specific practices to manage high labour turnover and experiment with alternative ones 'especially within competitive labour markets'.

Turnover as labour mobility power is important for us not only inso far as it uses the threat of quitting to improve conditions in the workplace, but also as a way to act the freedom to move within the labour market to a completely different job. Scholars have highlighted how such labour market power may be constrained in the case of migrants subject to immigration controls by the state, that bonds their residence to a contract of employment with a particular sponsor. Elaborating the notion of mobility bargaining power as a mix of marketplace mobility and associational power, Strauss and McGrath (2017) from within labour geography have studied the forms of agency that migrant

precarious work use *in the context of relatively unfree labour relations*. Drawing from E. O. Wright 's (2000) distinction between structural and associational forms of working class power, as well as from Silver's (2003) notion of "marketplace mobility" as the "form of power exerted by workers in relation to their ability to exit employment relations in a tight labour market", Strauss and McGrath (2017: 204) critically add to the debate on the significance of labour mobility for migrant workers constrained by temporary visas.

While the 'flow-like approach' in labour process theory has identified the unique trait of the commodity labour power in its movement through space and time, it has discussed only partially the importance of international migration and state policies to control the movement of workers across borders. The consequences of such policies for the sake of 'the segmentation of employment and weakening of unionizing potential' (Smith 2010: 276) has indeed remained the focus of attention within labour process theory, perhaps reflecting the long standing primacy of collective forms of agency in industrial relations, rather than focusing on the micro and macro level effects that constraints on migrants' mobility and their precariousness specifically and what they imply in terms of management and labour control/autonomy dynamics. Human and labour geographers (e.g. Rogaly 2009) have rather helped to re-consider how workers have developed spatial mobility strategies including quitting alongside traditional forms of associational power to set themselves free from highly exploitative situations and challenge their subjugated position. The importance of migrant spatial practices of mobility has been noted especially in the context of absence of collective bargaining rights (Reid-Musson 2014: 163), but in our view grasping them requires a more radical departure from dualistic views of worker power or resistance (cf. Smith 2006). We will develop further our conceptual proposals about forms of worker power through the migration lens (see Tables on Chapter 3 and 6).

The table below summarises the forms of worker power and bargaining power as traditionally represented in the sociological and employment literature, which tends to distinguish between forms of worker power according to whether they are individual or collective (*organisational form*), where they are exerted (the *realm* where they manifest, workplace or marketplace) and whether their *resources* are associtional or structural-dependent on the position of the worker at the point of production (Wright 2000). The "resource approach" to worker power , recently popular in the field of labour and insutrial

relaitons research (e.g. Schmalz et al. 2018) highlights the extent to which these forms are based on the individual's strategic position in the production process or on the ability of workers to cooperate and leverage pressure from the outside the workplace, in the labour market and local community. Beverly Silver (2004)'s distinction of structural power between the workplace and marketplace realms clarifies that workers can develop their bargaining power either internally (within the workplace e.g. by reducing or withdrawing their work effort to obtain improved conditions) or externally (in the labour market, by quitting or threatening to quit). Silver also highlights under what circumstances workers tend to develop their associational power outside the workplace, building wider alliances with social movements and community groups, e.g. if workers have limited bargaining power but their labour needs to be delivered in place, such as in services Smith's (2006) has further developed this distinction by elaborating on the two aspects of labour power defining them as work-effort and mobility effort bargaining. The latter can be either exerted individually or as a group and be more or less a concerted effort to negotiate change in management practice.

Table 1. Forms of worker power and bargaining

	Workplace	Marketplace
Individual	Structural power	Marketplace mobility power (ability to exit a job)
Resource approach of exit)	Structural *and* associational	Mobility effort bargaining (threat
Collective	Associational power	Coordinated mobility effort bargaining

Definitions:

Structural Effort power: strategic position based on worker labour power at the point of production (Wright 2000).

Marketplace mobility power: "form of power exerted by workers in relation to their ability to exit employment relations in a tight labour market" (Strauss, McGrath 2017: 204, drawing from Silver 2004).

Associational power: based on the collective organisation of workers (unions, political parties, community groups) (Wright 2000; Silver 2003).

Mobility effort bargaining: "the application of workers' power over where to sell their labour services to the concept of work effort" (e.g. "network building, the resources used at work for the planning of job moves, and the use of mobility threats to create strategic rewards" (Smith 2006: 391). Smith highlights how just the threat of moving can force management to improve conditions (e.g. in condition of tight labour market and scarce or firm-specific skills)

Coordinated mobility effort bargaining: labour mobility power or mobility effort bargaining in the words of Smith may be also exercised informally by groups of workers: "the individual or work group can also use the threat of exit to re-negotiate the internal work bargain within the firm-improving wages, changing jobs, ghaining additional training resources, changing line management (p. 391)

Drawing from both Wright's original typology of worker associational and structural power and combining it with Smith (2006)'s work on the Marxian notion of the double indeterminacy of labour power, which emphasise labour mobility effort bargaining alongside work effort bargaining, Table 1 illustrates our understanding of the intersecting nature of labour mobility power, bringing together both collective and individual organisational form, associational and structural power resources. We maintain the distinction between the power of the worker as such (e.g. ability to withdraw one's labour) and the bargaining leverage arising from such power in relation to other workers and employers (e.g. collective bargaining).

It is worth noticing that Smith's conceptual distinction between "mobility-effort bargaining" from "work-effort bargaining" (Table 1, Smith 2006: 292) is not one drawing differences between individual and collective forms of labour power but rather focuses on the mobilisation of external (labour market) and internal (workplace) bargaining resources by workers. And yet while work effort tends to be associated also by Smith to a collective and formalised organisational form (trade union/work group), mobility effort bargain is understood as pertaining to both "individual" or "possible group" (Table 1, p. 292). One of Smith's (2006: 394) main points is that "the simple threat of exit, whether latent or manifest can also facilitate change to internal regimes and interact with effort

bargaining".[10] While Smith does not develop further this aspect, we build on his first intuition to further emphasise the hybrid nature of mobility power (as exercised in particular by migrant workers) as able to take both an individual and collective organisational forms (see Chapter 3).

Looking at the debate on exit and voice in relation to labour migration specifically, Meardi (2007) has looked at the migrants' exit strategies in the context of Eastern European migrations, thus somewhat considering migration itself as a form of mobility power. Meardi explored the implications of mass exits of post-Enlargement emigration from countries like Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic countries (most moving to richer countries such as Germany, the UK and Sweden) highlighting how these impacted on the balance of power in employment relations in the home country. In our view Meardi allows in this way to move towards a transnational understanding of mobility power by measuring the wage gains that exit as bargaining power has accrued for those back home, while contributing to smooth the binary between exit and voice.

Although the correlations between out-migration and wage increase is not the only element relevant to understand salary patterns in the new EU member states, it is certainly important to understand the transnational outcomes of labour mobility beyond a destination-focus approach as well as one looking only at financial gains in terms of remittances (cf. Kelly 2009, Datta et al. 2007). Another strength of Meardi's (2007) work is showing how exit can be used in combination with voice and/or how both follow a cyclical pattern. His work vindicates Hirschman's original approach as more nuanced than in the official narrative opposing exit and voice. Industrial relations view on exit have tended to follow a 'cyclical logic' whereby voice would appear strengthened according to long-term economic cycles (e.g. Kelly, 1998), or according to endogenous explanation where 'movement and counter-movements' (Polany 1957) in the form of social paternalism and commodification tendencies intrinsic to capital would follow each other in waves, alongside different intensities of voice and social protest to 're-embed'

[10] If we compare Smith's original theorisation with our table on worker power (resource based approach) it is then relevant to look at the "resource requirement" feature of his table whereby work effort is associated to formal organisation and mobility effort to more informal one : networks of contracts, external market power, strong labour market demands. So in this sense labour mobility power leverages resources in the labour market rather than in the labour process and therefore differs from the structural labour market at the point of production. Here is where Silver distinction between marketplace and workplace based structural power is helpful.

social relations. Differently from these approaches, argues Meardi, Hirschman (1982) provided the grounds for a more dynamic theorisation of the relationship between these forms of social conflict. By highlighting the 'rebound effect of disappointment', Hirschman shows how "*both* the pursuit of private concerns (manifest in individual exit) and that of public concerns (manifest in collective voice) are shown to be inherently dissatisfactory" (Meardi 2007: 518). Such dissatisfaction explains the continuous movement between the two forms of worker agency in ways that are far from mutually excluding:

> "At a given moment in time, the two options are alternative, although *their combined intensity is not fixed*: it will depend on the amount of discontent and of 'labour problems', and on the available options. However, in a dynamic perspective, they are complementary or mutually re-enforcing: strong exit at t0 will lead to strong voice at t1, and vice versa" (Meardi 2007: 518).

Applying this theory to the analysis of mass exit in the post Enlargement EU, Meardi concludes that strong exit at a given time prepares strong voice at a later one. This also means that exit behaviours have consequences not only in terms of macro trends in wages but also *vis-a-vis* management in the workplace. In their study of management of turnover in TNCs manufacturing in England, Smith et al. (2004: 374) similarly highlighted how, through high mobility, "workers encounter workers from other factories and can thus compare and perhaps overestimate the quality of alternatives, producing an over propensity to quit".

In other words, exit and voice can be generative of each other rather than alternative solutions available to workers or that workers select from a range of more or less ethical practices. It is out of contention that transnational migration as exit may therefore represent problems to both governments, in terms of their wider social impact, and management, in terms of economic effects on shortages and wages in the origin country, showing how there are not simple 'market solutions' to these issues. We will consider below how such approaches contrast with neoliberal accounts of the function of migration in capitalist markets.

In summary, with the help of labour and industrial relations scholars we start grasping the inter-dependencies of voice and exit as two forms of worker power as they developed beyond the individual vs. collective moral hierarchy of resistance. More broadly, the use

of quitting by workers subject to more or less constraining employment conditions across different phases of capitalist development and of the continuum of freedom and unfreedom into the wage relation, shows how mobility power rather constitutes an irreducible social force with critical implications for individuals and their communities.

6. Runaways, desertion and migration as historical forms of resistance

However, to further uncover the relationsip between individual and collective action we need to examine briefly some precious contributions made by social historians. Recent developments in Global labour history (van der Linden 2018) provide tremendous insights into the relationship between workers exit practices such as desertion and runaways, and their collective action to free themselves from exploitative working conditions, further illuminating the continuity that exists between exit and voice. These insights are in our view precious to shake entrenched biases in our disciplines and to overcome false dichotomies between individual and collective acts of resistance in both pre-capitalist and capitalist labour markets. In particular, a new wave of studies on worker escape practices has emerged in the past few years highlighting how runaways (i.e. deserting, absconding, being absent) need to be considered a workers' strategy 'in and of itself' that can be studied as an independent historical phenomenon (Hofmeester and van der Linden 2018). Different from Scott's (1985) interpretation of desertion as unintentional act of everyday resistance or reluctant compliance, as well as from Hardt and Negri (2000) romantic view of desertion as the paradigmatic form of resistance opposed to sabotage in the era of 'imperial control', the social historian van Rossum (2018: 506) argues that workers and prisoners practices of running away, desertion or quitting are "active form of *conscious* non-compliance" rather than acts of defiance. In this regard, van Rossum (2018: 507) criticises the notion that running away was a negative act by workers in harsh circumstances. On the contrary it "appears as an attempt to gain or regain some control over one's living and working conditions. And, as such, desertion was very clearly marked by ideas of justice and by aspirations of creating a better life".

Under this account, everyday forms of resistance are not merely the response to institutional forms of control from above, but fundamentally shape and influence them.

Certainly, employers and states applied hard measures to curb such acts of desertion, from using cruel to more lenient punishments, but also developed "seemingly limitless inventiveness in their endeavours to confine and control their workers" (van Rossum 2018: 507). An earlier historical overview of different forms of desertion by van Rossum (2018: 508) showed that while forms of desertion were brutally punished especially across the 1500, "in many places in the world withdrawing oneself from the work process was a punishable offence well into the twentieth century". This is testament to the continuing importance of formal and informal mechanisms to constrain labour mobility, and the continuities across enslaved, 'free' and salaried labour encompassing different phases of pre- and capitalist social formations (Moulier-Boutang 1998; Steinfeld and Engerman 1997; van der Linden 2018; Silverstain 2005).

According to van Rossum's (2018: 509) newly elaborated framework of exit and voice, desertion is no longer merely contrasted to forms of collective action, rebellion and protest but part of a bundle of strategies that could be deployed both individually and collectively. [11] In this sense Hirschman options of voice and loyalty (or acquiescence in later formulations), are presented in a *continuum* rather than in opposing ways, occupying a dynamic space between individual and collective strategies that express wider forms of contestation, from temporary absence (as individual desertion) to mass escape and revolt (as mutiny). Solutions included finding a better job but also more broadly expanding the opportunities for social mobility for the wider family/community. Hence, rather than presented as a strategy by which workers, either individually or collectively, simply reject working conditions and power relations, *exit* variously intertwines with negotiation, forming alliances with others and sometimes developing shared practices such as petitions, all aimed at the betterment of either collective or individual situations. Further historical examples of exit practices used in collective forms or as direct ways of negotiating/bargaining with the employers emerged in the form of taking time off (van Rossum 2018: 515). Re-thinking the notion of absenteeism is indeed critical to note how practices such as the Saint Monday and also Saint Tuesday were carried out by European and Americans artisans and workers in the 18th century and also during 19th century or in a more or less collective fashion (Thompson 1967; Gutman 1973). While absenteeism has been a classic subject of labour studies including labour process research, it has been

[11] Also Marcel van der Linden (2008: 175-178) highlights many cases of "collective exit" in particular among slaves, indentured laborers, journeymen and sailors.

often relegated to forms of 'organizational misbehaviour' (see for instance Ackroyd and Thompson 1999) or as 'deviant' in management studies (Everton et al. 2007) rather than considered a legitimate or creative form of social conflict to take 'our time'.

Differently from past literature that has focused on particular categories (e.g. rural workers, peasants), to analyse desertion and escape and other everyday forms of resistance, the novelty of van Rossum's (2018: 511) approach also lies in highlighting the universality and transversality of these practices across a range of differently constrained types of labour and employment relations. Critically, rather than solely in the formal cases of forced labour the type of employment relations that gave rise to acts of desertion included also free wage labour characterised by specific forms of control and where exit or movement were restricted. Among these categories the authors include sailors, contract workers, *and migrants* (van Rossum 2018: 510-11).[12] The relative use of this form of resistance depended however on the actual working experience of the worker and to that of the alternative options available. In our words, mobility power depends on what we may call the affordability of turnover and exit (see concluding chapter).

Moving forward from the Early modern world, it is critical to understand how the margins of workers' exit strategies were gradually restricted under pressure of wider processes where increasing discipline and surveillance (Foucault 1975) and global regulation made runaways more difficult and more politicised. As we will further explore in Chapter 4, the ongoing restriction of mobility was therefore 'transferred' into the field of social and welfare controls (Anderson and Hughes 2015), whereby the compulsion to work became more and more prevalent and part and parcel of welfare regimes: "The criminalization of withdrawal from the work process was slowly transformed into criminalization of the act of not working, or the state of not being employed" (van Rossum 2018: 518). The forms of sanctioning for unemployed workers and the compulsion to work as a condition to obtain benefits characteristic of so called workfare regimes in many Western countries today (Cohen et al. 2002; Dwyer, 2016) are illustrative of the continuing forms of control over workers mobility and exit from the labour market.[13] These are still a major concern for employers and the state, who develop

[12] See also Linebaugh and Rediker 2000.
[13] In most Western countries, for example, workers can access to unemployment benefits only if they are fired or their contract expire.

inventive strategies to put people to work or tie them to particular workplaces also in regimes of apparently free wage labour.

This long and more comprehensive view on workers' exit practices shows how these *were part and parcel of collective forms of refusal* or chosen as the only alternative in the absence of access to large organisations and power. The latter is often the case for disaffected migrants today similarly to how it was for racialised minorities in the US at the time of Hirschman study, who rarely find opportunities for engagement in existing trade unions (see Chapter 5).

7. The autonomist gaze

One way of overcoming deep-seated biases against mobility and the tendency of reproducing essentialised division between individual and collective actions as well as migrant and indigenous worker is to re-centre mobility as a foundational aspect of society rather than as the exception, while criticising the methodological nationalism that characterised not only labour but also mainstream migration studies. Human geographers of migration, as well as those belonging to the so called autonomy of migration perspective (see below) in this regard have criticised essentialist notions of ethnicity, whereby migrants are considered, inherently different from the indigenous population, the paradigmatic bearer of 'culture', expression of internally homogeneous and 'ancestral' ethnic identities and religious/cultural practices (Romens 2022). Also mainstream migration scholarship considers these attributes as distinctive to migrants, migration and settlement process thus reinforcing "the culturalising and racialising logic of methodological nationalism" (Çağlar 2016: 953).

Recently, Çağlar (2016) has made an important theoretical intervention in human geography that re-recentres mobility understood as the ordinary and common experience rather than the exception. The notion of foundational mobility highlights the experiences of those who remain migrants despite several years of "emplacement" in the country of immigration. The key argument of Çağlar (2016) is that methodological nationalism equates society and culture with one nation and prioritizes national and ethnic identities inscribing indigenous and migrants into distinct temporal frameworks whereby indigenous people never arrived but were always already here. Hence rather than being concerned about mobility per se, we need to reconceptualize migrants' sociabilities and

agency more broadly in a way that does not limit them to the national scale, so that their transborder practices and social relations can be best captured.

The critique of methodological nationalism in migration studies has been accompanied by a radical critique of notions of migrant integration in the country of destination. In this regard the temporal sensitivity of Çağlar's (2016) analysis towards the chronotopes of migration allows us to put under scrutiny also mainstream labour market studies' approaches to migrant integration, whereby migrants are assumed to incrementally increase their labour market power as they integrate in the society of arrivals. While it is intuitive that anyone who settles in a place for a certain amount of time is more likely to acquire the needed language skills, social ties and local knowledge to better navigate the local environment (e.g. for an excellent example of how this creates problems for employer see Forde and McKenzie 2009), it is still important to question the alleged linearity of such "integration pathways".

Deconstructing the linear temporal line underpinning notions of migrants' integration whereby migrants "are meant to uproot themselves from their home countries in time and integrate themselves in the country of settlement", Çağlar's (2016: 958) notion of foundational mobility as preceding notions of original settlement by natives, effectively overcomes such narratives. De-naturalising the assumed 'integration pathways' typical of migrants as compared to citizens, Çağlar rather emphasises the "coevalness" of migrant and non-migrants, which rather helps identifying the commonalities, shared norms, experiences and values as migrants and natives are embedded in the same social and economic processes (of a city/ a locality/ a country). Similarly, the notion of liminality developed by Underthun (2013) in the case of young migrant transnationals working in the hospitality sector, describes the ways in which these migrants were far from following an integration or settlement process with a start and an end, but were in constant transition and never completely 'arrived' in the country of destination nor in their workplace. Their precarious labour trajectories embody a kind of flexible subjectivity where the boundaries between arrival, stay and departure are blurred by an extending phase of 'in-betweenness', accentuated by the precarious nature of their jobs but also by their subjective existence as transnational migrants.

Authors like Nicholas De Genova (2005) have targeted the nationalist assumptions around integration behind other established migration studies approaches such as the "new economics of migration" (Massey et al. 1993; Portes 1997). Such strand of labour economics had usefully revealed the importance of community and household practices

in sustaining migration thus overcoming individualistic views of the migrant as a dis-embedded individual-alongside networks and chain migration studies (see Schrover 2018). This emphasis on migrant ethnic ties and networks, or ethnic enterprises, while apparently shifting attention to the agency of migrants, tend to reflect yet again the native point of view as it turns successful migrants into the best representative of the ideology of meritocratic systems of social mobility promised by the free market economy and its liberal state. Those 'who make it', especially if they are migrants, demonstrates the 'reality' of social mobility and incorporate the notion of 'deservingness' by succeeding under competitive economic systems and labour markets (see also Chauvin et al. 2013). Such approach has been criticized by authors such as De Genova (2005) and Mezzadra (2010) for reproducing at the same time the fixed and internally homogenous notions of ethnic communities (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2006) and the idea that social mobility (as well as migrant-self-exploitation) occurs mostly along the line of ethnic succession (cf. Bloch 2013).

Mezzadra (2010: 7) is particularly critical of the notions of migrant integration reproduced by the new economics of migration in that they are far from questioning the very "integrative code" of capitalist or commercial models of citizenship (see also Honig 2001) and individual success. In the new economics of migration the processes of exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination that migrants and people of colour continue to be subject to are presented as mere 'side effects' of a capitalism (and citizenship) in turn reinforced by migration as victims. In contrast, the autonomy of migration approach (see below) starts from highlighting the power of the tensions that migration generates (Papastergiadis 2000). These tensions are primarily identified in the historical conflict between the politics of labour controls and the politics of migration, including migrants' own collective practices of resistance despite their lack of citizenship and despite their precarity in the workplace.

With the term differential inclusion Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) indicated the current attempts by states and capitalists to manage the mobility of migrants in a differential manner: rather than merely by excluding or expelling undocumented migrant workers, or simply segregating them to the margins or the secondary segment of the labour market, migrant labour appears as partially included in the local labour market through migration regime, sexist racialisation and subordination. In turn, such forms of differentiation are made possible by a multiplication of 'subject statuses', through the production of a variety of legal and contractual figures that differently exploit migrants

through differentiated categories of dependency, constrained mobility and efforts at controlling their intractable political subjectivities (Neilson 2009). Critically, these differences are also used by management in the workplace to actively fragment instances of solidarity in the workforce (Jordhus-Lier 2014). Similarly, the threat of deportability and the illegalisation of undocumented migrants (De Genova 2002) show how, far from merely expelling paperless migrants from the labour market, the border functions as a disciplining tool to keep wages low and make migrant workers disposable. The fact that mobility is differentially accessed indicates also its relationality: mobility for some may be means immobility for others (migrant and non).[14]

State migration policies appear, therefore, critical to sustaining regimes of labour valorisation and segmentation, adding to the mix of labour market de- and re-regulation, welfare reforms and new transnational migrations and migrant division of labour in the global cities of the North (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Wills et al. 2009), as well as in emerging capitalist economies and global production sites (Chan and Selden 2017; Chan et al. 2020). And yet, such 'bordering technologies' are constantly challenged and put under pressure by migrant mobility practices, which are far from simply reacting to strategies of control and governamentality in contemporary migration regimes (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). In this sense state and supranational borders should not be seen as rigid entities established once and for all and impenetrable, but as continuously criss-crossed and made porous by migrants' own mobility practices (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013), as well as by the state and capital own interest at differentially including rather than merely excluding migrants and foreigners.

Understanding the relative autonomous nature of migratory movement is part and parcel of the same epistemological effort at overcoming methodological nationalism and re-centering mobility as a form of social conflict in capitalism that we have considered above in our critique to segmentation theories. The stream of inter-disciplinary research knows under the autonomy of migration perspective has made critical contribution in this regard. Drawing from research on the historical mobility of workers across borders and across the Atlantic (see Moulier-Boutang, 1998; Steinfeld and Engerman 1997; Van der Linden, 2008) members of this current argue that the historical accumulation of capital

[14] Balibar (2004) has illustrated this point with reference to the workings of freedom of movement within Europe, which (while arguably bringing many material advantages to EU citizens) exists because the movement from the outside is filtered and selected.

has been marked by "a *structural tension* between the ensemble of subjective practices in which the mobility of labour expresses itself" (Mezzadra 2010:1). In this sense the autonomy of migration perspective transcends the nation state and understands migration as a social movement, 'in the literal sense of the words, not as a mere response to economic and social malaise…but as a creative force within these structures' (Papadopoulos et al. 2008: 202).

Scheel (2013b) has recently summarized the different components of the autonomy of migration perspective as follows: the emphasis of the socio-subjective dimension of migration (beyond economistic readings of migrants drivers to move); the fact that migration is a constituent force 'from below' rather than simply driven by macro dynamics inherent to capitalist social systems 'from above'; that the movement of people across border precedes rather than react to the attempt at controlling and valorising it, and that borders constitute critical sites of contestation and social conflict . In this sense borders as a capital strategy of valorisation are a response to migrants autonomous mobility practices in the same guide as capital control functions are a response to the autonomous practices of workers. Migration can be interpreted as a form of refusal that destabilises and questions the omnipotence of the state in controlling people movements (Gray and Clare 2022: 10), but also state assumptions about social integration.

Against the accusation that this autonomist perspective romanticises individual escape practice as intrinsically rebellious (Hastings 2016; Scheel 2013b) there have been attempts at re-defining the concept, by emphasising the embodied and relational aspects of migrants mobility practices, as practices of appropriation that always need to interact and always incorporate the effects of regimes of controls or government (that is they cannot be considered in themselves as pure practices of self-determination or self-legislation):

"If autonomy is understood as the institution of a conflict between migration and the attempts to regulate it, then the analysis of people's embodied encounters with the means and methods of mobility control unravels the diversity of the practices through which people willing to move try to appropriate mobility, thereby initiating that conflict" (Scheel 2013b: 283).

These remarks by the new generation of autonomy of migration scholars, may help understanding how we study the forms of conflict that mobility generates (including the labour turnover of migrants) without elevating them to a paradigmatic forms of

resistance, but as incorporations of differentially accessed forms of power that migrants may use to free themselves from exploitative labour relations. Grey and Clare (2022: 3), from within human geography, have similarly highlighted how the strength of an autonomist approach to migration, and the question of labour mobility lies precisely in its ability to avoid idealising concepts whereby they rather succeed at developing "agency oriented approaches that neither forsake determinate analysis nor romanticise resistance". Using the language of the dialectic relationship between mode of production and modes of contestation, Grey and Clare (2022) emphasise the relationality of process of de- and re-composition of labour and working class struggles.

Overall re-centering mobility and building this language of commonality is extremely important in an era of sharpened divisions between migrants and citizens, and even more now with the deepening inequalities in mobility and immobility that the global pandemic, energy crises and new austerity politics has brought severely in evidence. Highlighting the commonalities between the migrant and the native, is also an imperative for Anderson (2017) as she argues for bridging the discursive and material divisions between the citizen-worker and the migrant worker: the relations between the two must not follow the logics of a zero sum game where one compete or 'take the job' of the other, even when the migrant worker may be preferred to the citizen because subject to immigration controls and therefore more exploitable. 'Everyday bordering' (Yuval-Davis et al. 2019), where the state control and maintain borders not only at the outside edge territory of the nation but also internally across local domains such as schools, hospitals and workplaces, becomes therefore a process that impact on society as a whole: while those formally excluded from access to social citizenship because of their immigration status suffer most, the experiences of migrants become exemplar and anticipatory of wider patterns of inequalities and of the denial of the 'right to belong' that affects working people and minorities more broadly. A deeper analysis of working class divisions and the 'molding' of employment relations through immigration controls demonstrates that "what is bad for migrants is not necessarily good for the citizens and regulations that work to marginalize and exclude migrants do not necessarily centralise or include citizens" (Anderson 2017: 1532).

On the contrary the two (socially constructed categories) seem to have more in common than it first appears. Applying this foundational mobility and notion of commonality between migrants and non-migrants we consider that the tensions that mobility of labour produces *vis-a-vis* management are relatively universal and constitute

in themselves a practice of resistance for all workers. Applied to the field of migration this means considering migrant mobility power and everyday practices as embedded in particular processes of labour control and state borders regimes while also considering how these practices exceed them (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). Still, with its emphasis on the non-economic and subjective levers of migration as a broader social movement, what the autonomy of migration could not do was to look more carefully at the dynamics of the politics of mobility in the labour process and at the subjectivities of migrants embedded in the capitalist employment relations. This is where we believe that combining labour process theory and the autonomy of migration, together with insights from labour and human geographies yields major advantages to better grasp the contemporary expression of migrant mobility power.

Concluding remarks: Migrant mobility power

In summary, while labour turnover can be interpreted as an agentic form or everyday practice of mobility if voluntary enacted by the worker (e.g. to move to a better job) a compositional approach to labour migration and its autonomy highlights the ongoing efforts at the entrapment of such mobility and how this has been historically central to capitalist accumulation (Harvey 2006; Moulier-Boutang 1998). In particular, we have attempted at unpacking and de-constructing mainstream theories of labour segmentation that relegates migrant to the secondary segment of the labour market. Criticizing the deterministic approach prevalent in employment studies and comparative political economy to the function of migration in segmenting national labour markets, we rather re-centering mobility as a form of social conflict and class struggle in and beyond the labour process and in a transnational perspective. Drawing from the autonomy of migration but also geographical accounts of foundational mobility as overcoming an essentialising distinction between the migrant and the citizen, the foreign and the indigenous worker, we have rather dispute the residual nativism or nation-centrism approach to migration in industrial relations and part of political economy.

Still we also believe that the conceptual tools offered by critical approaches within the labour process tradition and in particular the notion of labour mobility power are necessary to understand the everyday dynamics of resistance and contestation by migrant workers in the workplace and the labour market. Our review of the theoretical literature

surrounding labour migration has shown how we need to promote interdisciplinary dialogue to unpack the moments of tensions that mobility engenders for management, and the opportunities it opens for workers to build forms of resistance both individually and collectively.

Connecting the discussion on migrant labour mobility power with early studies of labour turnover we have also highlighted that there are always elements of constraints underpinning this choice of movement and *vice-versa* there are always subjective drivers that shape employers' strategy of churning labour in the organisation (March and Simon 1958). What migration studies illuminates in different ways than organisational studies do, is that the two aspects are differently entangled according to who the mover is - and how is mobility is differentially managed.

The relationality between different levels and forms of mobility must be therefore considered when analysing migrant mobility practices and capacities (cf. Collins 2021) as well as the important relationship between mobility and its opposite, fixity (Brown 2019), to unpack old and new forms of class struggle under different compositional configurations across the Global North and South.

In the following chapters we discuss some recent studies that have indeed detected the relative turbulent nature of migrant labour in the workplace either through explicit forms of workers resistance/cooperation or triggering the introduction of new forms of management and capture of migrant labour along networks of global production. In this sense, we explore the links between labour mobility and labour turnover, against the tendency of industrial relations studies to see turnover as merely employer- led strategy to reduce costs and allow flexibility, or as a disruptive force individualising worker strategies and weakening collective power in the shopfloor. Rather, we look at *labour mobility power through the lenses of transnational migration* as a not solely economic driven but wider social force that attempt to reappropriate forms of livelihood across fields of production and social reproduction.