

# Offshore Outsourcing and Migrations

## The South-Eastern and Central-Eastern European Case

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In the last fifteen years the European and Mediterranean area has been marked by a series of changes concerning in particular the mobility of persons, capitals and commodities. These changes appear to be associated with a strong asymmetry of opportunities. Wars, migrations, direct investments abroad and the enlargement of the EU point to new scenarios with social actors such as migrants, investors, professional people in charge of humanitarian aid, smugglers of undocumented migrants, traders, mercenaries, seamen.

These actors are endowed with different degrees of freedom of movement and of political skills in an area extending from Maghreb to the Ural mountains. These differences are the result of wide economic disparities, and even more of cultural peculiarities. In the last fifteen years in South-Eastern and Central Eastern Europe a new social and geopolitical readjustment has made room for more autonomy in the individuals' way of living than in the past.

From the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EU seems to have changed from a facilitator of trade to a sophisticated trendsetter in social and economic policies, not only for all its present members and for those who are waiting for admission, but also for some countries of the Mediterranean southern rim. The norms that the EU has established have stimulated a circulation of people, commodities and information

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that rises and falls according to the institutional and economic changes in the peripheral countries. On the other hand, the promotion of international economic and humanitarian cooperation is one of the main instruments assuring the hegemony of transnational elites. Both the foreign policy and the international cooperation through NGOs of member countries of the European Union are linked to the EU's policies of immigration and asylum.

A basic characteristic of the new relations between the actors of the EU and the societies of the Euro-Mediterranean area is the opportunity to act freely in the various European non-Eu territories where the former find themselves to operate. This freedom is not so much the armed colonialism of the past as the imposition of political and economic behaviour. The sovereignty of the State is submitted to the requests being advanced by new holders of power and of international elites, who are looking for areas where legislation can be easily rewritten or reinterpreted according to their will. During the last twenty years these areas have grown economically, in particular with the establishment of the so-called zones of export, where labour has few rights (Icftu 2004) or is deprived of legal frame. In this case they have become non-persons (Dal Lago 1999). The characteristic trait of these zones is the pre-arrangement of special legislations aiming to make the asymmetry of power and of freedom of action easier between dominant and inferior areas. In such redefinitions of the norms, new disciplinary instruments are formulated on the base of persistent threats. It is an updating of the old procedures pointing to ethnicization. Such process corresponds to the varied, discontinuous and irregular segmentation of the economic and political spheres.

## I Barriers and Landscapes

Borders in Europe have been modified several times in the last 100 years. While borders in the North American continent have been stable, they have been moving again in Europe. In spite of the commonplace of "Old Europe", Europe appears to be unable to stabilize its frontiers. While the North American continent had already defined its borders at the middle of the XIXth century (Zaccaria 2004), in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and after the concomitant institutional changes a deep economic and cultural inversion has involved not only the so-called former socialist countries, but also the Western ones.

Inequalities in the freedom to migrate have largely increased in Europe. A case in point is the fate of the inhabitants of former

Yugoslavia. In fact their ability to migrate has been widely differentiated: the Slovenians, nowadays members of EU, can move freely, while others suddenly have been degraded to the status of citizens of States or quasi-states that are not members of the EU. They cannot even cross the borders of the adjoining countries unless they have visas. This is the case of Bosnians and of Macedonians. It is on the ruins and on the building or rebuilding of new enclosures in Yugoslavia that the strategies of the unification of European States, of the enlargement of the EU and of the relations with the countries of Mediterranean southern rim are played. Now the heavy costs of political non-alignment, such as Yugoslavia pursued between 1948 and the early 1990's, appear clearly to all. In fact the Yugoslavia conflict has characterized the way and timing of the enlargement of the EU, as well as the planning of new systems of mobility and employment in most European and Mediterranean countries.

The expansion of the EU is a factor of strong correction of the economic policies of the candidate States and of the long-range and short-range mobility of people. The redefinition of the right of crossing borders shapes new dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The process of extension produces new borders both visible, such as the one between Ukraine and Poland, and invisible, such as the ones resulting from new and long procedures to move from country to country (Ruspini 2004). The borders between Western and Eastern Europe have been repeatedly altered. This is the most evident case. However the procedures to move from Maghreb to Europe, have also changed substantially.

The new borders of the EU are heavily guarded not to prevent military aggression but to limit and control migrations and petty trade along the frontiers with non EU-countries. The new control system at EU borders tends to become a technologically equipped police surveillance on the informal economy and on migrations (Dietrich 2003), although, both phenomena may survive through daring and risky strategies.

As to the process of enlargement, candidate countries are requested to preliminarily enter into new relations with the adjoining countries; they must especially set more rigid norms of entrance for the non-EU citizens.<sup>2</sup> Central and Eastern Europe countries have to establish new frontiers that becomes the new border of EU: to build a border in order to move more easily inside, here's one of the main

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2 Since 2000, Poland has demanded visas for the citizens of some republics of the Community of Independent States (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kurdistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan). Since July 1, 2003, Russians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians must carry proper visas with them when crossing Poland (Chomette 2003). Similar requirements are compulsory in countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Libya that are even not candidates to EU membership.

paradox of our time (Diminescu 2003, p. 23). So the freedom of movement in the EU corresponds to an enclosure that have been built in order to keep out the people who do not belong to one of the included states. Ironically a new iron curtain arises a little to the East of the borders where the first one arose: it controls the peoples who continue to be strongly limited in their international mobility to the west.

Borders assign people to different social, political and legal spaces inside and outside national territories; and borders promote the proliferation of several kinds of activities that become illegal and subversive merely by moving from country to country by a few miles (Donnan, Wilson 1999). The transit of undocumented migrants is considered as a threat of subversion to sovereign states. As a matter of fact, migrants and smugglers do not aim neither to subvert the State, nor to eliminate borders. On the contrary, their roles and their lives are strictly connected to the very existence of a State and of its borders, without which it would be impossible for them to make a living out of those activities that are symbiotic with trade at borders. Migrants as well as investors abroad are such just thanks to zones that are differently valued (Sacchetto 2004); the existence of different values for different areas can partially explain migration and offshore outsourcing. The regulation of people's movements through borders is constantly selective, as borders are never rigidly closed or totally open. They remain usually porous. They are invisible lines dividing what they join, because they are the most militarised and racialized land strips in contemporary political maps (Papastergiadis 2000).

The Europeanization of the national legislations of the new member States and of the candidate ones such as Romania and Bulgaria<sup>3</sup> involves the introduction of new legal institutions, in particular the administrative detention of undocumented foreigners and more rigid controls of people's mobility. The enlargement of EU is becoming a main question on the international political arena because it redesigns the maps of international mobility. Nevertheless, the government of the non-EU Euro-Mediterranean area seem to have been quick in learning the ideological structure of the EU and its institutional practices of hospitality. The so-called centres of identification and detention of undocumented migrants is one of these practices.

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3 The enlargement of the EU with the candidate countries that entered the Eu in May 2004 (Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic Slovakia Republic, Slovenia, Hungary) has required their adjustment to 80 thousand pages of European legislation. This has provoked a very strong metamorphosis in their legal systems and in their administrative structures.

In spite of the relentless militarization of the borders of EU against irregular immigration and of restrictive policies on the visas, undocumented mobility of migrants without paper is far from being controlled. These measures increase both the migrants' expenses and the selection of those who can afford a travel. To some extent they restrain migrations. The mobility of people can be encouraged or discouraged in various ways. From the financial point of view, the imposition of expensive visas reduces migrants' resource and complicates their travelling trajectories (Stalker 2000; Düvell 2004). On the other hand, as it has been pointed out (Cohen 1987), some zones have been deliberately kept in underdevelopment by the so-called international community in order to increase the propensity of labour to migrate.

In June 2004, the introduction of a new tax for the citizens of 8 newly admitted countries who want to work in Great Britain is a new start in migration policies (Salt 2004, p.4). Both for the international elites and for the migrants borders are surmountable if they are prepared to pay more or less heavy admission taxes. Consequently the admission taxes systems must be considered as important components of the new European strategy, which aims to redirect the mobility of capitals and of migrants rather than reducing them. This strategy marks a shift from the control to the management of migrations and investments abroad.<sup>4</sup>

To the travellers who cross the countries of South-eastern Europe the EU borders are permeable places where the cases of bribery abound. The difference between the exasperating slowness of the practices of legal crossing and the speed of the transit of the migrants without documents is evident, as it is evident that elite investors can cross borders easily. While border inspectors probably try to defend their power, the smugglers of migrants exploit the differences in value, which are intrinsic to a border, by minimizing (or curtail) the time for its crossing: for the hullers who cross the channel of Otranto, or for the boats that arrive in Sicily from Libya, success in terms of profit and safety is connected to the speed of their operations. Among the migrants it is clear that travel documents, passports and visas are their basic elements in the case of both regular and irregular migration. However, for many of them only money is important, because "money is the documents". Trust in money and regular or counter-feited documents show the arbitrariness of the power that is exerted at the borders. The powerful passports and visas of the international elites put them on the fast track, while the documents of people coming from

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4 Regarding the management of migrations see among other Stalker 2002; Martin 2003; Düvell 2004.

countries with scarce power are easily stopped. Borders mark the different zones to which people can have access with "valid" documents.

In recent years, in particular after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, the issue of borders has become central and consequently the governments of many countries have hurried to prove that their borders are safe. In Europe too, as an aftermath of political changes that were introduced after 1989 and of the expansion of EU to other countries, the debate about borders has revived. For each year from 1998 to 2002 between 50 and 60 million euros have been allocated to build the new Eastern Polish curtain and to prevent illegal immigration. It is a 1200 kilometre long border through which in 2001 about 27 million of individual crossings have been recorded. This flow is much lower than the one at the border between the U.S. and Mexico, which records approximately 300 million of people a year (Pascucci 2003; Andreas 2003). As to the United States, Peter Andreas (2003, pp. 1-2) asserts that "North American relations are driven by the politics of border control... Rather than simply being dismantled in the face of intensifying pressures of economic integration, border controls are being re-tooled and redesigned as part of a new and expanding 'war on terrorism'" (Andreas 2003, p.1).

Although there are differences between the European Union and the US in their approaches to "war terrorism", a new Atlantic cooperation concerning home security has proven to be quite active (Bunyan 2002). The new model of mobility has led to significant changes in bilateral agreements and to a renewed focus on the concept of borders. In particular, since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 controls and selections at the borders have been increasingly linked to security.<sup>5</sup> Institutionalised fear contributes to develop processes of hierarchization and of a new isolation in urban spaces; some areas become inaccessible for security's sake. In fact, the war on terrorism is far from being fought just against "rogue states"; a person who does not travel in business class is potentially dangerous.

## II The New Actors of the EU

Both locally and globally the new actors, who move from the EU to the countries of South-Eastern Europe and to the countries of the Mediterranean southern rim, are deeply inserted in to differentiated relations, as far as workplaces and social and political milieu are concerned. Their presence in the countries of South-Eastern Europe

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5 See Bigo (1998, 2004), Dal Lago (2003), Palidda (2000, 2003).

gives rise to a continuous imitation of Western patterns of life. This Westernisation can take place in a way both rigid especially inside factories and mild in everyday socialisation. The absorption of Western models are linked to the acceptance of new social hierarchies.

The mobility of social actors with a fair level of political skills produces a different mobility, the one of the transnational elites. This mobility holds a relatively important position in contemporary social sciences. Such cosmopolitan elites are able to sustain the processes of globalization and to develop new cultural and social practices (Sassen 1994; Hannerz 1996; Beaverstock and Boardwell 2000). Castells (2002) has pointed out the importance of such transnational elites for the attainment of globalization. To that effect these elites can rely on personal milieus existing through out the global metropolises.

Of less importance have been the research projects concerning social profiles such as small entrepreneurs or professional people and volunteers of humanitarian aid, who have predictably assumed behaviours both of pragmatic adaptation and of vigorous reform of local situations (Sacchetto 2004). In fact, in the shade of such elites some profiles persist, such as the new international entrepreneurs, who represent the main actors of the mobilization of cultural practices in large areas of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as of Mediterranean southern rim (mainly Tunisia and Morocco). It is obvious that these processes of mobility often but not always produce hegemonic policies of cultural and symbolic mimesis (Dezalay 2004, p.8).

The international elites represent a new political class which acts in European areas, from the Ural mountains to Maghreb. These elites are the bearers of a political and social power that was previously unknown. Local *power-brokers*, who are co-opted inside different political and productive strategies, very often co-operate with these actors. They are those who are already in charge of political and economic activities and who are expeditions, since they know their turf.

The mobility of elites represents the attempt to affirm their role in political and social contexts where they want to impose a new order in production as well as in society. It goes without saying that international elites, which move from the countries of EU to Eastern and to Southern Europe impose their culture and way of governing through their political and economic power.

These elites in their moving to the East or to the Mediterranean area need basic services that their backlines are supposed to provide. These backlines are social, industrial and political agencies that must build frameworks for transfers of resources and are of basic

importance in the mid-term; the backlines are constituted by services for enterprise and people, like restaurant, shops, tradesman.

In some Eastern European and Maghreb countries, local political parties have been financed by political organizations of the EU and international organizations. Some EU politicians are also working as advisors for local politicians<sup>6</sup>. In recent years, new strategies for transforming the social and political systems, with some international organizations supporting human rights and democracy have been launched by the NGOs. The Georgian “Rose Revolution” in 2003, the Ukrainian “Orange Revolution” in 2004 and the Lebanese “Spring Revolution” in 2005 are starting points for a non-violent shift towards market economies (Genté, Rouy 2005). The long-term policies that have been built by such international (mainly USA) and European organizations seem to offer an alternative to war intervention policies that were previously adopted in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The ability to alter the course of events becomes increasingly crucial, since in some countries the State lacks the power to thoroughly apply its national legislation. Those in charge of local administration are therefore more and more subject to the influence of investors and second-range officers working for powerful agencies. In addition to what happens in the world of business and politics, the role played by these new *power-brokers* in the above mentioned cultural domains has to be taken into consideration.

Thus the trend has been set to ignore the basic laws and social norms that were long established at a local level, because the political and economic forces boosted by the transformations that were undergone by institutions in the last 15 years cannot be constrained within a strict framework of prescriptions. Widespread attitudes and ways of thinking that have been expressed by some supporters of offshore outsourcing and professionals in the humanitarian field involve a relentless stigmatisation of the Other, according to what Sayad (2002) has called “State Thought”.

The spreading of this colonial mentality is also affecting European countries, because colonizers return to EU countries too: consequently, such stigmatisation is a continuous process. On the other hand, a significant cultural influence is being exerted by the migrants who have moved the other way round.

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6 For instance, one political co-founder of the Italian political party Forza Italia and deputy minister of Italian Home Affairs during the first Berlusconi administration, is also as an advisor for the president of the Romanian Great Romania Party (PRM). An Italian businessman, worked as a consultant for the president of the Romanian New Generation Party (PNG) during the electoral campaign in 2004.

### III Variable selection criteria

In the 1990's years Western European countries faced a new kind of migration flow: people from Eastern Europe could move freely. In recent years migrants have found a progressive regimentation that involves both the creation of an institutional framework for administrative aspects and the imposition of regulations of behaviour. On the other hand, the Western European countries promote *just-in-time* migration: migrants should arrive only on the basis of the needs of production system and should go back when they are unemployed (Düvell 2004).

In addition to "autonomous migrations", then, regulations aimed at a planned management of migration flows are set forth, though each of the strategies mentioned above involves factors of both constraint and freedom. In the last decade the development of recruiting systems in several Eastern European countries that are based on practices usually adopted in South-East Asia offers major evidence of the view of a totalitarian management of the migration flow. Therefore, sectors of production that cannot be easily relocated (such as building, agriculture, health and education) should benefit from these groups of workers temporarily moving from peripheral countries to the EU, since industries can gain high profits while offering low wages and poor guarantees.

The countries of Eastern Europe and those on the South rim of the Mediterranean Sea, which once promoted open-door policies towards citizens from brother countries, are now turning out to be the fiercest opponents of illegal immigration. For example, as a result of the influence of IOM and UNHCR, since its independence Ukraine has developed a new legislation on migration creating a migration service, by strengthening its own national laws through the signing of several treaties, and by promoting a certain degree of international co-operation within the context of migration and refugee policies. On the other hand, after years of open-door policies towards immigrants from West and Sub-Saharan Africa, Libya has recently showed a clearly stricter attitude by deporting and imprisoning hundreds of migrants who have been merely guilty of not possessing regular papers. Both the Ukrainian and the Libyan strategies are aimed to proving their efficiency in migration management in accordance with the EU institutions, in exchange for favourable economic agreements.

The countries on the South rim of the Mediterranean Sea and those on the Eastern borders of the EU, both of which are passageways for migrants, are turning into "trash zones"<sup>7</sup> since they work as a filter

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7 Cf. the interview made by Longo V., Sacchetto D., Vianello F. with the

on the migration flow, by blocking the persons allegedly unsuitable for their entry into the Schengen area. Migration and transit in these countries may last a few days to several years<sup>8</sup>: for citizens of the Eastern areas and of the Southern rim of the Mediterranean Sea, mobility is a never-ending conquest.

One in a variety of strategies adopted by migrants is to stay in belt countries for some years, where waiting for the right time and trying to earn enough money to make their European dream come true at last. Sometimes migrants also apply for asylum and then for nationality in countries just outside the EU, which is just another way to prepare themselves for an easier entry into the Schengen area. As a matter of fact, applying for a visa to Poland is definitely easier if one has a Ukrainian passport rather than an Afghan one<sup>9</sup>.

Conditions of legality or illegality may change quite quickly. In 1998, a staff of IOM experts was sent to Ukraine in order to formulate a set of rules aimed at controlling the illegal migrations through the country to the EU, but found out a surprising predicament made their task even harder: Seventy per cent of the transit migrants were absolutely legal. As a result of this situation, a new legislation regarding visa policies and procedures had to be set forth<sup>10</sup>. Today, international institutions working for the management of migrants and refugees are legion on the political scene (Düvell 2004). Among these organizations, the tasks of the IOM are by far wider than those of other agencies, in that IOM co-operates with the governments of the countries bordering the EU, providing by them with an extensive training in migration control and management. On their turn, state officers from border countries are sent to the EU in order to study the different law systems and the ways they are applied.

## Conclusions

The establishment of the EU exerts a major influence on mobility and on political and economic development both in member countries and in border ones. In countries issued from the socialist block, the

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philosopher and writer Irina Magdysh, for the magazine "Ji", Lviv (Ukraine), May 2004.

8 Migrants from West African countries are used to long stays in countries such as Libya, where 1-1,5 million migrants (many of whom do not have regular papers) are now being given shelter (Trentin 2004). On Morocco as a migration and transit country for migrants from SubSaharan Africa, cf. Barros et al. 2002. An exhaustive overview can be found in Palidda 2003a, who estimates Libya to have 2,5 millions migrants.

9 In Ukraine one can also buy counterfeit passports for 2.000-3.000 US\$.

10 Anonymous (2004), "From Arming the Borders to Recruitment of Labour", September 9, [www.thistuesday.org](http://www.thistuesday.org)

communitarian system does not seem to be strong enough to confront the action of international élites, whereas in countries characterized by a different tradition, such as Turkey and Morocco, local societies tenaciously oppose such "intrusions".

The EU has incorporated ten new countries, while assuming the responsibility for doing the dirty work both within and outside their national borders. Being part of the EU may be an advantage for new members, even if the status they have obtained is not necessarily the same for all of them. Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic can afford manufacturing production at mid-low-to-middle level wages, thus reaching leading industrial positions in Europe, while Romania, Bulgaria and, in the longer run, Ukraine should be limited to the lowest wage range of the manufacturing industry. The broadening of the EU seems to cause a gradual marginalization of the Southern Mediterranean countries: this shift is already quite clear to the Moroccan and Tunisian agricultural workers of Spain, Italy and France, who have already been replaced by Polish and Romanian workers.

The building of a "Fortress Europe" is constantly forging new social hierarchies, both inside and outside the EU. Purely repressive immigration policies are now confronting the request for full operating freedom from European power-brokers: this request shows the striking difference between these two different actors (migrant and elite) who play the major roles on the current scenario. On the other hand, poor wages that foreign investors pay in non-EU countries often push wage earners to choose emigration. The rhetoric of human rights and democracy seems to leave little room for individual freedom of movement and for really equal opportunities in the broad Euro-Mediterranean area.

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