

Transnational Corporations and the Making of Global Labour Markets: The Case of Foxconn in China and Europe¹

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Introduction

Scholars have identified borders and obstacles to the freedom of workers to move as central characteristics of capitalism (Anderson, Sharma and Wright, 2009; Gibson and Graham, 1986; Mezzadra, 2010). Accordingly, they have shown how national governments' immigration policies are guaranteeing the controllability of migrant workforces and how restrictive labour laws create the conditions for the proliferation of illegality and labour exploitation by the employers (Castles 2014; De Genova and Peutz 2010). In the attempt to move away from the focus on borders and their securitization as the primary site for the regulation of migration, the recent 'migration infrastructure' approach (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014) posited that migration flows are increasingly mediated, in an interlinked fashion, by technologies, institutions and actors. The migration infrastructure approach offers a novel and expansive insight into how commercial private actors, in particular brokers and recruitment agencies, and public authorities jointly organise and channel transnational migrant mobilities (Xiang and Lindquist, 2018). Recently, the infrastructure approach has been expanded by Shire (2020) who, working from a market institutional perspective, added markets as key analytical sites where to examine how commodification and controlling of migrant labor are intrinsic to the uncertain and contingent nature of market exchange.

In this chapter we expand further on this strand of migration scholarship that examines the role of private commercial actors in shaping labour markets, migration flows and labour regimes. We do so by focusing on transnational corporations (TNCs) and suggesting that transnational mobility of capital is developing a global labor migration regime. It certainly comes as no surprise that novel migration flows follow from mobility of capital or that employers seek migrant labor precisely because it can be managed in a more efficient way than local workers. Moving beyond the labor market perspective, there is a well-established strand of research on the new international division of labor, especially by feminist scholars who showed that, when TNCs relocated labor-intensive manufacturing from the North to the South, it resulted in heightened migration of young women as firms relied on inexperienced and ununionized workforce to suppress wages (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Kusakabe and Pearson, 2012; Pun 2005; Salzinger, 2003). Equally, migration scholarship

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abounds with studies investigating the conditions and nature of work resulting from the interaction between migrant workers and their employer.

Yet, while approaching labor migration from the perspective of mobility of capital and *localized* employment relations is important in order to illustrate processes that produce vulnerability of migrant workers, in this chapter we argue that what remains insufficiently explored is the link between 'local' labour regimes and transnationalization of production. Firstly, centring the focus on the production sphere which is engrained in global production networks instead of the market rules or regulations, we disclose TNCs' 'local' production and control regimes as an outcome of firm-specific management practices due to its spatial fixes. In other words, when firms expand across international borders, they typically export their labour management practices from the home country headquarters to the host country subsidiary (Morgan, 2018). Secondly, 'local' labour regimes are embedded in global production networks and supply chains. As extensively discussed in the literature on global supply chains, this means that local firm's ability to build a particular labour control regime is essential for firm's integration into global production networks that, importantly, are industry specific (Azmeah, 2014).

We draw on these insights from the labor regime and global production networks literature to show the commonalities in migrant labor incorporation and labor control in several European countries and China. To do so, we examine international expansion and the labor control regime of Foxconn, the world's largest contract manufacturer. Although the firm is Taiwanese-owned, its manufacturing headquarters as well as the bulk of its factories are located in mainland China. In early 2000, Foxconn expanded its production from China to Europe in order to be in proximity to its Western European markets. It set up two factories in Czech Republic and one in Slovakia, Hungary, and Turkey respectively. By analysing side by side Foxconn's establishment and its labour control regimes in China and Europe, we aim to show that work and employment practices at 'local' plants should not be viewed as autonomous but rather as interconnected 'nodes' (Coe et al. 2004) within firm's transnational organisation of production. Accordingly, we highlight the role of the state in enabling capital to expand, avail itself of the migrant workforce and put in place work and employment practices that enable specific locality's integration into the global economy. We argue that looking at a single socio-political context is insufficient as it conceals both the global dynamics of capital and the process through which a global migrant labour regime is developing within transnational production networks.

Shifting the perspective from a single workplace towards the transnational relations of production offers a model for thinking simultaneously about a global labor regime as well as diversity within globalization. To this end we highlight the insight drawn from Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson's (2013) concept of "multiplication of labor" which help us to illustrate commonalities of contemporary global capitalism while at the same time paying attention to the specificity of migrant labor regimes. By tracking the expansion of Foxconn from China to Europe, we aim to make visible how the current transnationalization of capital reveals the inadequacy of established oppositional topographies whereby China in particular, as inferred by the label "Made in China," is perceived as opposite to Europe and synonymous with low wages, excessive overtime, and exploitative working conditions.

In the sections that follow, we first illustrate the role of the state in creating new production sites and enabling particular migrant labour control regimes. We then explicate how a flexible production regime, best suited to meet the electronic industry's demands, is contingent on a rather complex workforce composition and on the linking the sphere of production to the wider sphere of reproduction. Our aim here is to make visible the extent to which global capitalist development is contingent upon the dual mobility of labour and capital. The movement of workers, as orthodox views have it, does not simply undermine working and employment conditions of the local workforce through a dis-embedding of national employment relations (Altreiter, Fibich and Flecker 2015). It also gives rise to new labouring subjectivities. By adopting the analytical lens of mobility, we also challenge the established views in migration literature on the role of the state in controlling migration and tying workers to employers. The state, we suggest, is still an important actor as far as it facilitates capital accumulation through the establishing and maintaining differential wage areas for capital to tap into. However, it is the transnational capital and firms' position in the supply chain, rather than the state, that plays a commanding role in directing cross border migration and in shaping workforce segmentation.

Research Methods

We collected our empirical data between 2000 and 2019 in China and Europe respectively. In China, research began in 2010 with interviews of workers, student interns and managers in nine cities mainly in coastal China where Foxconn factories are concentrated. Later it expanded to three other plants in the central and southwestern provinces where Foxconn moved in search for low cost labor following the government's 'Go West' initiative. The data derive from 2400 questionnaires and more than 500 interviews gathered by the University Research Group on Foxconn and the Hong Kong-based labor campaign group SACOM (Students and Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour). In Europe, the bulk of research took place in the Czech Republic (2012-2019), Foxconn's manufacturing headquarters for the Europe, the Middle East and Africa region, and continued in Turkey (2013), Hungary (2016-2017) and Slovakia (2016-2019). The gathered data consists of 150 in-depth interviews with former and current blue- and white-collar workers and managers, as well as key informants in public institutions such as ministries of labor, trade unions, labor inspectorates, and local job centers. The interviews supplied information about the firm's work and employment practices, the social composition of the workforce and workers' labor mobility, and the impact of trade unions. This combined insights into workers' experiences, modes of management, and the role of the institutions provides a picture of similarities and differences of work and employment practices as well as of labor mobility strategy in China and in Europe.

The Enabling State

This section discusses the ways in which state's facilitation of both capital and labor's mobility enables the transnationalization of capital. In both China and in Europe, Foxconn's relocation and expansion were supported by pro-growth coalitions composed of national and local state actors which became increasingly interventionist after the global financial

crisis of 2008 (Drahokoupil, 2008: 206). The state-capital relation illustrates the process of 'diversification' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) intended as expansion of capital and creation of new production sites to meet the demands of TNCs. This diversification is made possible largely by the state in terms of labor and migration policies, tax-free policies, provision of land and infrastructure, and lowering of production costs.

Foxconn was set up in Taiwan in 1974, with its ambitious goal to elevate the corporation's ability to produce electronic products at 'fox-like' speed in order to dominate the world market. In early 1980s China established its first special economic zone (SEZ) in Shenzhen that transformed a village of fishers into an area able to attract large-scale corporate investments. It is here that Foxconn located its first processing plant in 1988 that relied on 150 young female migrants from rural Guangdong. Following this initial localization in the South and East China where it enjoyed privileged export policy, land supply and labor recruitment policies, Foxconn made use of the government's 'Go West' Program, aimed at balancing the unequal regional development. This enabled Foxconn to transplant production to substantially lower-wage regions where the cost of labour is between a quarter and a third lower than in Shenzhen. Here Foxconn additionally enjoyed local government's support whereby the latter donated to Foxconn a vast piece of industrial land to build a manufacturing base and build a factory compound and several worker dormitories which could accommodate a workforce of 100,000. Today, Foxconn runs more than 30 assembly plants in China and commands a workforce of over 1 million, mostly rural migrants (Pun and Chan, 2012).

To serve the needs of capital, the development of the SEZs and technology development zones across China was based on a massive harnessing of young workers, in particular of unmarried women, which is often the cheapest and most compliant labor (see Lee 1998; Pun 1999, 2005). The government at different levels partially relaxed the household registration system (*hukou*) and actively coordinated the transfer of the "surplus labor" to the booming cities. By 2019, the size of the migrant working population had grown to about 291 million, spread all over the country and occupying all industrial sectors.² With the encouragement of the central government, local government leaders promoted and sustained a flow of migrant workers and internship students to the coastal area before and then to the other plants in Western China.

The role of the state in attracting capital and providing support to the investors in Europe is rather similar, albeit on a smaller scale. Foxconn's expansion to Europe, where it commands two plants in the Czech Republic set up in 2000 and 2007 respectively, one in Hungary set up 2008, one in Slovakia and Turkey, both set up in 2010, was enabled by the competitive advantage factors such as labor and migration policy, proximity to the Western European market and the pre-existing infrastructure. CzechInvest, the investment and business development agency of the Czech's Ministry of Industry and Trade, supported Foxconn to set up the manufacturing plant by finding it a suitable location. Furthermore, both the national and local Czech governments offered state aid and tax exemptions to Foxconn. For example, the national government granted Foxconn €58 million in state aid from 2007 to 2013, and a 10-year tax break from 2000 to 2010 (Čaněk, 2016). In Turkey, for example, Foxconn's location within a European Free Zone, exempted them from paying Value Added Taxes and taxes on profits and wages, and taxes on exports to the European Union (EU), North Africa and Middle East.

² http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202004/t20200430_1742724.html

Locating in Europe, allowed Foxconn not only to be in the proximity of its western European markets but also to avoid the EU's (high tariff barriers, as for example the 14 per cent import duty on LCD TVs and to label their products as "Made in the EU" rather than a less prestigious Made in China.

In Europe, after EU 'enlargement', arose an intense competition between employers to cut labour costs whereby the stark differentials between Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and older EU-15 Member States played into the ferocity of low-wage competition (Novitz, 2007). Consequently, in order to satisfy the conditions of 2004 enlargement, CEE states made use of the EU directives to make their labour markets flexible. For e.g. in late 2004, Czech Government introduced the concept of agency employment into the Labour Code and set out the rules for temporary work. Importantly, individual member states of the EU do not regulate the mobility of EU workers as these enjoy the right to the freedom of movement entitling them to take up employment across the EU. This allowed Foxconn to alter and widen its labor pool from its initial recruitment of local resident workers to those of temporary agency workers coming from the neighboring EU states of Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Poland, depending on the location of the plant. The presence of EU migrant workers pushed out of the market non-EU workers such as those from Vietnam, Ukraine and Mongolia. However, in recent years (2015-2019) due to the high labor turnover of EU migrant workers driven by latter's desire for better working conditions, pay and life opportunities elsewhere in Europe, of late Foxconn recruited non-EU workers once again. When hired as core workers directly by the firm, the presence of non-EU workers such as those coming from Mongolia, Ukraine and Serbia, potentially reduces labor turnover and stabilizes the workforce, because non-EU nationals are tied-in workers in that their right to stay in the EU is conditional on their employment contract.

Flexible work regime

One of the striking commonalities between Foxconn's subsidiaries in Europe and in China is the flexible use of labour. Tapping into the preferential policy provided by the states as well as the mobility of labor, in both locations Foxconn has put in place a flexible work regime characterised by numerical, task, working shifts, and wage flexibility.

In China, Foxconn heavily relies on the use of a young rural migrant workforce originating from all over the country. With the loosening of *hukou* since the 1980s, migrant laborers could move either within or outside their own region. However, in the cities migrant workers are effectively classified as temporary residents with rural *hukou*. Consequently, they have restricted access to welfare benefits, schools, health and housing, and their city residency is conditional on their employment. Foxconn recruited mostly these rural migrant youths, 16 to 29 years old, on 1 – 3 years contracts to work on the assembly lines. The high proportion, circa 85 per cent of young frontline workers has enabled Foxconn to command great physical dexterity, super speed, and long working hours in its factories. The expansion of scale and size of Foxconn factories has thus been established on the promise of a better life for rural migrant youth (Pun 2016). In addition to a migrant workforce, Foxconn also deploys student interns. The use of students from vocational schools, who make up 15 per cent of the total workforce during peak production months, assures flexibility and cuts

costs. The majority of student interns came from their second or third year of study, and most are 16 to 18 years of age. Foxconn exploited legal loopholes that exempt the firm from signing a formal labour contract for the use of student workers. Under China's Education Law, students who carry out internships organized by their schools maintain a student identity at all times and their relationship with the organization is not deemed as employment. They hence are neither protected by the Labour Law nor enjoy trade union membership.

In Foxconn's EU plants, while more diverse, the workforce flexibility is achieved by segmenting the workforce between core and agency workers. Shortage of local resident workers forced Foxconn to recruit workers abroad via Temporary Work Agencies (TWAs). It is also important to keep in mind that like Foxconn's relocation of its plants from the coast to China's inland, the firm's increased deployment of TWAs in Europe was aimed at mitigating workers' protests and demands for higher wage and better working condition. The ratio between core and agency workers is typically 60:40 per cent. In the Czech Republic, the former are predominantly Czech and a smaller group of Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Mongolian workers. Agency workers originate from the neighboring countries of Slovakia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria and are hired on 3 months to 1-year contracts. Contrary to mainland China, workers in Foxconn's European plants were more diverse in terms of age: directly employed workers are aged 30 to 50, agency workers are 20 to 35, and a minority of the latter group are older men and women aged 50 to 65. The unwillingness of local workers to perform repetitive work for low wages and the fluctuating production demand compelled Foxconn to enlarge its workforce by deploying agencies to recruit older workers and workers from countries outside the Czech Republic's traditional countries of immigration, namely Slovakia and Ukraine. Segmentation of the workforce, while relying on the specific composition of workforce in each location, has the aim of achieving numerical flexibility which in turn enabled Foxconn to adapt to the demands of the global markets. Accordingly, the 60:40 ratio of directly employed versus agency workers gets reversed during periods of high production, with agency workers making up the majority of the workforce (Čaněk, 2016).

In addition to the numerical flexibility, a segmented labour regime also allows for flexible scheduling of working time. In China, a normal work shifts were 10 hours, 8am to 6pm or, 8pm to 6am. However, during busy seasons a working day lasted 12 hours, which included four hours of imposed overtime. Foxconn adopted a so-called 'rationalization' policy and defends its policy of overtime as 'voluntary': according to the management, either an employee chooses to work overtime or not. Workers always consented to do 'some' overtime work, keenly aware that their basic incomes "are very low; hardly enough for personal use," an interviewed worker said. This is because core workers' wages were comprised of the base wage and of overtime. The base wage, usually near the local legal minimum wage, provided only about 50 per cent of workers' regular incomes. The 'rationalization' system was thus designed to extract extensive overtime work (Luthje and Buttolo, 2016) and allow for cost saving during low production season. Similarly, despite the maximum eight-hour workday stipulated by Education Ministry regulations, student intern workers frequently did excessive overtime during the day or night shift. In turn, the flexibilization of working time facilitated wage flexibilization. Student interns, in that they

were not seen as labourers in the legal sense, earned less than the minimum wage and were not entitled to government-run social insurance schemes.

Czech Republic's plants also deploy practices aimed at working time flexibilization. Core workers were managed through an 'hour-bank', which required a total of 930 hours over six months. The hour-bank system was used to organise shifts and had both a regulatory function with regard to the workforce (workers are rotated on the basis of the number of hours they worked) and a cost reduction function, as all hours are paid at the same flat rate. Agency workers, on the other hand, were hired on an initial contract of 300 hours established by collective agreement, which in periods of low production took three months to complete. During the first month, workers were not paid full wages but were given an advance of 1,000 Kč (€40) per week to deter them from leaving. Both core and agency workers worked 12-hour shifts, but while the former worked 3 shifts per week, the latter's shifts were highly irregular. During peak season they might work five or more shifts a week, while during low season they might have two shifts a week and work less than 12 hours per shift.

The pressure on labor costs whether in Europe or China was driven by uneven distribution of power and profit in the electronics industry. A key feature of the electronics industry is the vertical disintegration between product innovation and manufacturing. Lead firms - such as Apple, HP and Sony - focus on product development and marketing, while contract manufacturing companies - such as Foxconn - specialise in the assembly of hardware and compete for contracts from leading firms. This results in low margins with intense pressure on costs for contract manufacturers, particularly labour costs (Chan et al., 2013: 105). In the Czech Republic, for example, core operators earned €520–600 and agency workers €450–520 per month. This is slightly higher than the national minimum wage (€407 in 2017) but well below the general Czech median wage of €880 (ISPV 2016). In China, wages are linked to the regions: in Chongqing an operator earned €300–400 per month including overtime, which is above the minimum wage (€235 or 1800 RMB in 2017), but in Shenzhen, wages could be up to €500, almost equal to agency workers' wages in the Czech Republic. The shared standard of wage is most likely due to the logic of mobility of capital which facilitate the equalization of wage in China and Europe.

Collective workers' dormitories

Foxconn's flexible labor regime pivots on the use of collective dormitories. By comparing the dormitory labor in China and Europe, we note the process of 'intensification' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), namely capital's tendency to colonize the entire life of laboring subjects.

Since its first set-up in China in 1988, Foxconn has housed the majority of its workforce in collective dormitories. Dormitories were part of a larger complex that incorporates the factory, and a number of basic facilities such as beauty-parlours, eateries, and internet shops. Dormitories were often overcrowded and living conditions were poor. Group fighting, thefts, and other personal security problems arose in this pressure-cooker atmosphere. Security officers monitored the dormitory gate around the clock and, if needed, they inspected each and

every floor. Dormitories prohibited family life, and workers were assigned a single bed in a room shared with other workers. Male and female workers were forbidden from visiting each other's rooms. Foxconn imposed total control – not only were workers barred from cooking in the name of fire safety, but they also were prohibited to wash clothes as this get done through the centralised factory cleaning service to save water and energy. Managers stressed the importance of maintaining discipline in order to guarantee productivity. As a dormitory facility manager said, “We need to protect the workers, especially women workers from hanging out and make sure they return to their dorm rooms before mid-night.” This manager further emphasized that workers living in the over-crowded dorms should learn how to get along with each other as this is part of collective life inside Foxconn. In the dormitories, discipline, cooperation and obedience were the rule that without exception governed workers lives.

In Europe, collective dormitories housed migrant workers while local resident workers lived in houses and flats in villages or cities close to the factories. In contrast to China, Foxconn does not manage dormitories in Europe. As early as 2001, Foxconn tried to build its own dormitories in the Czech Republic but gave up because of local opposition. The solution was to pass the responsibility for the dormitories onto the TWAs, which arranged the hire of individual hotels, army barracks or former factory lodgings to house the workers. In Slovakia, the main TWA providing workers to Foxconn, has newly built a workers' dormitory on the outskirts of the city and in the vicinity of the plant. Whether these are located in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, the management system of dormitories is relatively standardized. Four workers per room were standard, but the availability of *en suite* bathroom and kitchenette differed radically from dormitory to dormitory. Unlike in China, living spaces were shared between men and women and in some dormitories, there were no separate showers and toilets for men and women who, all 70 of them per one floor, used the same limited facilities. Agencies exercised control over workers and while less obsessive than in China, it was continuous. Control aimed to suppress behaviours that the firm considers dangerous (such as smoking in the rooms), or that can decrease productivity (such as excessive drinking) or camaraderie (hosting friends). The major problems were conflicts between workers of different nationalities, especially regarding alcohol – which was not tolerated but nonetheless widely consumed– and prostitution occasionally.

The arrangement of factories and dormitories on the same campus or its proximity allowed for fast and flexible organization of production as well as compulsory overtime, as workers were always within management's reach. As there was no housing provision for families, there was no interest from capital in the reproduction of the next generation of laborers. The focus was on maximizing the utilization of labor of the temporary, migrant, and contract laborers by controlling the daily reproduction of their labor power. With no access to a home space independent of the enterprise, working days were extended to suit production needs. For example, it was not uncommon for agencies to claim additional work time from workers and make them return to the factory even though workers might have just finished their shift and have retired to the dormitory to get some rest.

The systemic use of dormitories has a long history in the UK, the USA, South Africa, Latin America, and Asia, where dormitories were used during industrialization (Smith, 2003). Workers – typically young, male, low-skilled or manual rural labourers – would live 'at work'

during the working week and return to their homes for the weekend. What is different today, compared with previous historical processes of industrialization, is that dormitories accommodate both male and female workers and aim at securing a workforce for short-term rather than long-term employment. In light of fluctuating production, dormitories allow firms to avail themselves of a pool of stationary workforce that they can stand down for several days without risking a labor shortage, thus enabling the 'just in time' model for the utilization of migrant workers (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2017). While previously assumed to be a unique feature of Foxconn's Chinese factories (Pun and Smith, 2007), the 'dormitory labor regime,' represents a global spatial 'fix' enabling capital to reorganise and expand. The dormitory labor regime is a spatial strategy that has transformed socialist China into the 'workshop of the world' and is expediting CEE's integration into global production circuits.

Concluding discussion

This chapter used Foxconn as the case study to examine transnational capital accumulation and its concrete configuration of production and labor control regime. We show that, contrary to expectations that labor conditions and work regimes would diverge based on the factories' respective placement in the global South and the global North, there are remarkable parallels in labor conditions and management practices. In comparing Foxconn production regimes in China and Europe, we identify a specific set of strategies and actions on the part of the firm that have enabled its global organisation of production. We additionally identify which practices the TNC imported from China and which are an outcome of transnational relations of production.

While we illustrate the role of the state in enabling firm's expansion and in upholding migrant labor control regimes, we also show that in the context where migrant labor is not immobilised by border and immigration controls, the firm steps in to devise practices that enable it both to limit and facilitate the mobility of labor. This mix of mobility and immobility is, we suggest, a pivotal aspect of contemporary labor regimes in that it allows firms to build a flexible, low-cost workforce that can meet the needs of buyers in terms of cost, time to market and fluctuations in demands. Electronics assembly is a highly cyclical market, characterised by phases of high production volumes which alternate with phases of average or very low demand. These periods require contract manufacturers to have in place above-average manufacturing capabilities for a limited - usually rather short - periods of time. Conversely, such a model needs to account also for periods of low production and hence the ability to radically decrease the numbers of workers once the orders from lead firms fall (Pawlicki, 2017). In pointing to the sectoral specificity and the power dynamics within the transnational production networks that are producing similarities in labour control regimes in China and Europe, we are not suggesting that there is a homogenization of global migrations and of social relation of production. Rather, we have tried to show how, despite social and institutional specificity of each locality, TNCs have learnt to manage the flow of migrant workers by segmenting and differentiating the composition of workforce, triggering in turn similar control regimes.

There are two important considerations we draw here for current migration research. First, while migration infrastructure approach has brought labour intermediaries commercial interests into sharp focus, it has neglected to examine the link between labour intermediaries

and employers. As we show in this chapter, intermediaries respond to the firms' need to alleviate labour shortages, meet the fluctuating market demand, externalise costs and regulatory risks, and reduce contractual responsibilities of direct employment. To put it differently, intermediaries 'serve' firms and hence any attempt to understand how private commercial interests mediate migration needs to focus closely on firm's labor regime and sectoral specificity. Second, migrant workers vulnerability to labour exploitation is not solely engendered by states' border and immigration policies. In fact, a legal status and the right to move and access different labour markets, does not put an end to migrant workers labour exploitation, as some critical migration scholar have postulated (Squire, 2010). Our findings show that states' role is not so much in preventing mobility but rather in attracting transnational capital through producing different legislation environments that differentiate working conditions, rights, and access to welfare between different groups of workers (Martin, Prokkola 2017). China and the EU are both characterized by legislations that aim to regulate internal workers' mobility and to maintain wage differences within internal areas (Kovacheva et al. 2012). We thus concur with Caro et al. (2015) that in the EU as well as in China, migration flows are increasingly TNCs-driven. We suggest that states are examined not solely for producing migrant workers controllability via immigration regulations and securitization of borders but also for establishing and maintaining differential wage areas for capital to tap into.

By examining labor control regimes in Foxconn plants in China and Europe we have noticed another significant commonality. Dormitories facilitate flexible production by imposing overtime work, as the distinction between "home" and "work" becomes blurred. As no children are permitted in the dormitories, thereby eliminating disruptions caused by schooling or parenting needs, the dormitories place migrant workers outside the regular cycles of the reproductive sphere and orient all activity towards meeting the production needs of the firm. The dormitory labor system is thus a cost-efficient solution for companies like Foxconn to ensure that workers spend their off-hours just preparing for another round of production. In light of the short product cycles that characterize transnational production and the need to rapidly adjust production upward or downward, dormitories operate as a gendered device of labor management that reorganize the productive, reproductive and unproductive spheres in order to deliver a flexible and high-speed production model. The extraction of additional value from workers' 'private' lives results therefore in what Aneesh (2009: 364) has called "a temporal unhinging of family life." Given the relevance of the reconfiguration of the gender division of labor for the global expansion of capital, we suggest that integrating gender more firmly into meso and macro level of analysis is indispensable if migration scholars are to account both for the ways in which transnationalization of production is contingent on the appropriation of migrant workers' private sphere and for how such appropriation is 'depleting' (Plomien and Schwartz, 2020) the conditions for social reproduction of migrant labor.

Importantly, as we discussed in the previous section, dormitories do not only constrain the mobility of migrant labor, but also facilitate it. Dormitories in both China and Europe function as places of socialization and exchange of information between workers about working conditions and wages elsewhere. Over-crowding and intensive human interactions might cause conflicts among workers, but being together and sharing a "common fate" also weave and tie their working lives closely together. These networks facilitate migration flows, job searching, and the circulation of work information as well as help for the workers

to cope with factory life. In other words, this is a workforce with significant experience of labor migration and labor awareness. Consequently, the ‘migrant capital’ (Ryan et al., 2015) that workers possess –the knowledge of the labour market, experiences of migration, and social networks – led them to view their job at Foxconn as temporary and enabled them to develop individual and/or collective exit strategies. Short production cycles and contractual obligations have produced a transient workforce, circulating between factories and in the EU, between different countries. Though commonly regarded inferior to exercising voice, turnover allowed migrant workers to accumulate more labor mobility capacity (Smith, 2006), which in turn put them in a stronger bargaining position against an employer that is reluctant to establish voice mechanisms, and led to significant increase of wages for migrant workers in both Europe and China.

Finally, by adopting the lens of mobility we are able to draw attention to the construction of novel labouring subjectivities. In the EU, we can observe the ‘return’ of the figure of the ‘multinational worker’ (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto, 2016). The multinational worker is a worker whose mobility strategies are not confined to a single workplace or a single country, but are enacted across the European labour market and shaped by the knowledge about cross-country job search strategies, by work and pay levels in different locations, and by migrants’ networks. The analytical lens of mobility is equally important in the Chinese context as it enables us to understand how turnover facilitated the formation of a new class consciousness amongst migrant workers organising factory-level strikes, work stoppages, bargaining on wages and social security, and launching media actions to express their dissatisfactions and to ask for changes (Pun, 2016). These struggles foretell a gradual formation of a new Chinese working class in the age of global capitalism.

Importantly for migration scholars, our findings indicate that transnationalization of capital is deeply intertwined with the mobility of migrant labor and that while capital is certainly playing a key role in the ‘making’ of new migration flows, so is migrant labor. As Ben Rogaly (2009: 1975) pointed out, it is not only capital that seeks its own spatial fix, the workforce does too. Our argument therefore speaks directly to the new international division of labour approach which, as Mezzadra and Neilson put it (2013), is primarily a theory of capital mobility. We advocate instead an approach that gives equal theoretical and analytical importance to mobility of capital and that of labour. This is crucial in order to understand better how such dual mobility contributes to the construction of global labor markets both through capital’s attempt to synchronise the mobility of labor with the flexible temporality of transnational production and via migrant workers’ resistance and struggle against capital’s control of their work and life.

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