STRATEGIES OF MOBILIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF VULNERABLE WORKERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN MURCIA

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1. Introduction

• Objectives:
  
  • To describe some of the strategies of mobilization and management of workers in the food industry in Murcia
  
  • To describe the changing role of Temporary Employment Agencies in the mobilization of workers.
2. Producing and mobilizing workers in Murcia

• 60-70s: Local Women
  • Their vulnerable position in the agricultural labour market is legitimated by their subordinate position in the domestic sphere.

• 80-90s: Migrant workers
  • Their vulnerable position within the labour force is legitimated by immigration policy and ethnic replacement as a business employment strategy.

Institutional and business management of workers mobility simultaneously handles the inclusion and exclusion of different vulnerable social groups in order to ensure the availability of a disciplined labor force and in order to ensure lower labor costs.
3. Intermediaries

• The role of intermediaries in mobilizing and management of workers in the new spaces of intensive agricultural production and in the configuration of local agricultural labor markets

• The furgonetero (literally meaning: the man who drives/travels in a van or recruiter-transporter)

• Temporary Employment Agencies
  • There is no substitution of one modality of intermediation for another, but a process of division of work between them
  • Occupational contracts in the agricultural sector: 67% (2006) → 86% (2014)
4. Border intermediaries: The migrant industry. The case of a Murcia Firm

• A new stage in the mobilization and recruitment of workers
  
  • Supranational scale: provide workers to agricultural firms in other European countries
  • “The workers are our customers”: provide services to displaced/mobilised workers themselves
Testimonies of Temporary Agency workers and managers of this firm from Murcia:

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“For example, (In France) there are areas where they have difficulty getting local workers, or people who work stably during the season... then of course, they need to go to an employment agency. And the fact is that someone who travels is that he wants to work, that he will not go one day and then leave” (TEA Worker).

“Last year we had as an average 4,000, 4,500 (employees) ... they are people who work in Spain and across Europe (...). We work in southern France, even in Paris for the strawberry theme ... also in the Rhone, we work in several regions (...), when our workers finish a campaign in one place, then they can be sent to another in France or Italy, in Italy we have also touched the grapes and tomatoes” (TEA Worker).

2/
“Our employees are our customers and treat them as such. You try the best you can to your customers and our workers are our customers because not only hired and drove in France, Italy or wherever we are... We always give them housing, electricity, water, all services except food. But that worker is always a potential client because we have a number of auxiliary companies dedicated to send money, to sell and finance flight tickets, to offer Real Estate services, we sell houses in Ecuador ...” (male, TEA partner).

3/
“When we arrived in France in 2000, there was still a large group of Spaniards who moved in the year 95, 97, 98 ... In 2000, 2001, Spaniards stopped going to France and are now returning, but now the foreign client does not want because in 2000 they left. Now they have been replaced by people from North Africa through the OMI contracts, they have been displaced by Eastern European countries, and have been displaced by this company from Murcia part or similar businesses” (Male, ETT partner).
Provisional conclusions

• Globalization of intermediation strategies

• The formation of a supranational or global chain of workers` intermediaries

• Potential impact in local labour markets and national regulations