

**Martin, Lauren & Prokkola, Eeva-Kaisa. 2017. Making Labour Mobile: Borders, Precarity, and the Competitive State in Finnish Migration Politics. *Political Geography*, 60: 143-153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.07.009>**

**Abstract:** This article explores how the multiplication of labour migration categories relies upon strategic territorialisations of borders to differentiate between workers' nationalities, worksites, and skills in Finland. We argue that for certain categories of workers, migration policies encourage workers to become mobile in ways that make them more precarious. We analyse worksites that show the different ways that labour is made mobile: the internationalization of higher education; Finnair's labour outsourcing and offshoring practices; and the recruitment of forest berry-pickers from Thailand. We first trace contentious migration politics in Finland, revealing conflicts over labour protections, universal labour rights, the state's obligations to create employment, economic competitiveness, national identity, and the precarisation of work. We show how practices of legal, procedural, and spatial differentiation particularise the conditions of work and argue that, even for skilled workers, the strategic territorialisation of borders works to differentiate between workers and work sites. This differentiation works to make labour mobile in multiple ways and, due to the selective territorialisation of labour protection, the political geographies of labour migration in Finland tend towards the precarisation of labour for skilled and unskilled workers alike.

**Keywords: Migration, Precarity, Borders, Territorialisation, Labour**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2012, the Finnish Parliament interrogated Finnair Airlines (a majority state-owned firm) over human rights violations in its Chinese cabin crew: dismissal for pregnancy, participation in industrial action, and marriage to a foreign citizen. In the two years following, Finnair laid off Finnish cabin crew, placed remaining workers on unpaid furloughs, and outsourced

international cabin crew services, leading MPs, unions, and the media to call for greater protection of workers by the state majority shareholder. In 2013, around 50 Thai berry-pickers sued Finnish berry processor Ber-Ex Oy for human trafficking violations of fraudulent recruitment practices and debt bondage (Seppälä & Thuren 2013). Low berry yields meant that workers paid by volume, rather than hourly wages, were left without enough money to return to Thailand. Both of these cases drew media, Parliamentary, and international human rights observers' attention, leading to public debates about the role of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) in Finnish workplaces, economy, and national culture. These struggles show how labour is increasingly *made mobile*, differentiated and relocated to across borders. Moreover, these struggles over labour rights, mobility, and citizenship status have unfolded alongside broader struggles over neoliberal economic restructuring, work conditions on construction sites (Lillie 2010), the internationalization of Finnish higher education (Paasi 2015, Moisio and Kangas 2016), and mass layoffs in Finland's industrial sector.

In this article, we trace struggles amongst state ministries, state-owned firms, labour unions, MPs, courts, and migrant workers in Finland to show how borders and labour have been reworked across the spectrum of skilled work, producing multiple forms of mobile labour, borders, and precarity. In doing so, we bring together previously isolated research on the multiplication of borders and labour, migrant precarity, and Nordic state restructuring to show how the political geographies of migration are a critical, but often overlooked, site for respatialisation of territory, law, and labour rights. Analysing low-skilled berry-pickers, skilled unionized state-owned Finnair cabin crew, and highly skilled international researchers, we trace how international mobility has become a precondition for work. In other words, we analyse how different actors use national borders to produce labourers in various ways. We argue that while migrants and asylum-seekers are often deskilled, made to work in

exploitative conditions, and suffer exclusion from labour markets (see Lewis et al. 2015) in ways that render them *immobile*, work sometimes requires mobility and relocation.

As Mezzadra and Nielson (2013) argue, borders have become a key site of articulation for capital, especially as a means of differentiating between labourers according to skill level, nationality, race, gender, and class. For them, both borders and labour have been multiplied, precisely in relation to one another, as a range of state and economic actors use borders to create territories of regulatory exception (see also Peck 2017) and workers dependent on employers for visa status. Borders have also become spaces of struggle over the conditions of work, the right to mobility, asylum, and identity (Belcher, Martin & Tazzioli 2015; Garelli & Tazzioli 2017) in addition to the proliferation of walls, detention centres, and non-state immigration policing (Jones et al. 2017). While we resist the tendency to generalize borders and overstretch analytic purchase, we must grapple with borders as complex institutions performatively produced by everyday bureaucratic practices, cultural institutions, and workplaces (Anderson, Klatt & Sandberg 2012; Paasi & Prokkola 2008; Mountz 2004; Rajaram & Grundy-War 2007). Changing border, asylum, and migration regimes also signal changes in the spatiality of sovereignty (Mountz 2011; Jones et al. 2017). For Mezzadra and Nielson (2013), these changes have made global space heterogeneous: a single point on the map will be criss-crossed by international, regional, and national regulations. In other words, territory has been “debordered” (Sassen 2013), revealing not a static state space but a “flexible territoriality” (Novak 2011). These scholars have, in short, problematized the presumed coherence between territory, legal jurisdiction, immigration status, and rights, and argued that they are in fact political technologies (Elden 2010; Coleman 2008; Paasi 2009). In this article, we advance this work by showing *how* these technologies of government are made to work through banal administrative visa decisions, ministry policy-making, and labourer litigation strategies.

For knowledge workers, berry-pickers and cabin crew, labour is increasingly made mobile precisely through recruitment, visa regimes, and short term work contracts: a strategic mobilization of labour and fixing of workplaces to ensure fewer employer responsibilities to workers. We show that, in addition to the demobilization of precarious migrants (Waite 2009), the multiplication of borders and labour are predicated on the *mobilization of labour*. We analyse struggles over three different workplaces in Finland to show both the context-specific ways in which borders and labour are multiplied and to show how international mobility has become essential to the “differential inclusion” of workers across the skill spectrum. Debates over the multiplication of borders and labour have focused on the exclusion of migrants from labour protection regimes altogether. Similarly, research on migration control, detention, and emerging geographies of sovereignty (Mountz 2011, Jones et al 2017) has not traced the ways in which labour is made mobile, and that it is made mobile in order to relocate work to spaces with fewer worker protections. Similarly, research on migrants’ precarity has focused on immigration status, poor work conditions, and social exclusion but has said less about how citizen-workers have also been made “migrantized” (with the exception of Garelli & Tazzioli 2017). We do not question the justifiable focus on the dire human costs of immigration regimes, but here seek to make connections between the very processes that render people, citizens, and workers differentially precarious. Research and organizing around precarity *has* problematized the flexibilisation of labour through short-term and zero-hours contracts, part-time work, non-unionized workplaces, high youth unemployment, offshoring manufacturing and outsourcing state services. Finland’s shift from corporatist to competitive economic management (Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014) has demanded *different kinds of workers*, namely globally oriented, multi-lingual, highly skilled engineers (Moisio & Kangas 2016). To date, analyses of precarity, the multiplication of borders, and Finland’s emergent competitive state have remained separate. By bringing together case

studies from different parts of a segmented national and international labour market, we want to show the ways in which the differentiation of labour and borders also includes the differentiation of precarity. We argue that the multiplication of borders and labour requires, in the case of Finland, the mobilization of labour and, through this mobilization, a de- and reterritorialization of workplaces, labour protections, and citizenship status.

Below we elaborate our approach to borders, migration, and precarity and describe how this approach informed our methodology. We then contextualize our three case studies in Finland's state restructuring, migration policy-making, and Europeanization. We illustrate these changes through the internationalization of higher education, a case that demonstrates the centrality of internationally mobile knowledge workers for Finland's economic development. We then turn to Finnair cabin crew and forest berry-picking to show how the mobilization of differentiated labourers and the strategic territorialisation of the workplace intersect to produce specific, but all too familiar, forms of precarity. Analysing these cases alongside each other allows us to illuminate both the highly specific ways in which particular workers are rendered mobile and the general way in which mobility has become a precondition for work.

## **BORDERS, MOBILITY AND PRECARIETY**

Migration studies scholars have traditionally explained labour migration in terms of push-pull factors and economic differences between states, north and south, or core and periphery. Recent scholarship, however, has focused on how international labour migration is shaped by state migration policies (Massey 1999; Raghuram & Kofman 2002; Samers 2010), supranational actors like the EU (Leitner 1997; Kofman, 2002; Cerna 2013; Geddes & Nieman 2015; Menz 2015; Paul 2013, 2015), international organizations like the International Organization for Migration (Ashutosh & Mountz 2011; Andrijasevic & Walters 2010), transnational corporations (Millar & Salt 2007), recruitment brokers and agencies

(Kern & Mueller-Boeker 2015; Sporton 2013), and other facilitators (Andersson 2014; Gammeltoft-Hansen & Sörenson 2013). These approaches challenge the view that ‘the migrant’ is the problem to be solved and, in turn, question the status of the migrant as an object of study (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015). Rather, the myriad interdisciplinary studies of enforcement show how states produce illegal immigration through legal categorization, policing, and securitization (Andersson 2014; Bigo 2001; Bosworth 2014; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Coleman 2005, 2008; Huysmans 2006; Martin 2012; Mountz 2010; Gill 2016). As Mezzadra and Nielson (2013) show, skilled labour categories for international migrants activate temporal and spatial borders to craft low-cost labour supplies.

The implementation of the Schengen Agreement and EU free internal mobility for EU citizens forced cooperating states to negotiate the sovereign right to manage non-citizens on their territory (Leitner 1997). The Schengen Agreement was incorporated into the legal framework of the EU in the Treaty of Amsterdam and sought to create more flexible and mobile labour force and, therefore, a more favourable environment for international investment. Migration policy has become increasingly supranational and a number of EU directives concerning labour migration from third countries have harmonized policies across the EU (Blue Card Directive 2009/5, Single Permit Directive 2011/98, the Seasonal Workers Directive 2014/26 and the Intra-Corporate Transferees Directive 2014/66) (see more Verschueren 2016). Yet, member states retain the right to determine the volumes of admission of the work permits for TCNs (Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union 79/5; see more Reslow 2012; Cerna 2013) and what income levels are set for family reunification, for instance. In practice, national regimes are still the most influential in setting out policies for entry, settlement and integration and in determining the employment and social security rights of different categories of migrants (see also Kofman 2002; Reslow 2012; Paul 2015). The admissions of “highly skilled” migrants are linked with the question of

human capital, regional economy, innovativeness and knowledge transfer (Lee & Nathan 2013; Paul 2015) whereas TCN migration schemes are addressed as security problems (Bigo 2002; Neumayer 2006) and often as a burdens to national economy.

The EU labour mobility regime multiplies labour categories, working to include them along differentiated access to rights, wages, protections, lengths of stay, and access to services or benefits. EU and Schengen policies result, therefore, in the production of a multi-tiered migration system, which has been further differentiated by skill-based visa systems in individual states (Van Houtum & Pijpers 2007; Van Houtum, 2010; Carrera et al. 2011; Paul 2015). This hierarchization of migrants' different legal statuses accompanies longer trends of civic stratification, the social and political construction of migrants rights and the systems of inequality which operate through the formal, institutional techniques of inclusions and exclusion and the more informal deficits that shape the delivery of rights and protection (Morris 2003: 79). Intra- and non-EU labour migration have been key sites of European integration and policy development, and recent conflicts over refugee resettlement and the suspension of Schengen and Dublin rules demonstrates that it remains a key sight of migrant, intra-state, and geopolitical struggle (Geddes 2008; Geddes & Niemann 2015). From the perspective of labour mobility and labour rights, EU regulations have worked to both allow companies to seek lower wage costs and to ensure relatively uniform protections for workers (see Lillie 2010, 2012). In the case of countries like Finland, where citizen workers are often compensated beyond the minimums stipulated in industry-wide collective bargaining, migrant labour has allowed companies to both comply with local laws and replace local with cheaper migrant labour. Offshoring production to zones of regulatory exception is a spatial strategy that relies upon bounded territorial spaces, and—crucially—upon the differences in wages and regulations between them (Lillie 2010, 2012). Similarly, labour subcontracting and international labour recruitment rely upon differences in citizenship status to constitute

different kinds of labourers. While both appear to exemplify the porosity of borders in the context of globalized capital flows, these practices demonstrate how states participate in constituting the conditions of labour mobility. The multiplication of borders and labour has also produced new conditions of labour precarity.

Lewis et al. (2015) argue that while borders, immigration laws and socio-legal status are present but submerged concepts in migrant labour exploitation scholarship, they create “hierarchies of precariousness within labour markets” (p. 590) that should be conceptualized as a continuum of precarious labour that illuminates both extreme and mundane experiences of forced labour. While their research focuses on ‘hyper-precarious’ migrants in the UK, here we are interested in how labour market regulations, territorial boundaries, and immigration rules produce “differential exposure” (Harker 2012) to precarious working and living conditions. As Waite (2009) argues, immigration status intersects with labour market experiences in contextually specific ways. In the case of Finland, producing flexible labour has presumed labour *mobility*, and the production of mobile labour has relied upon spatio-legal production of contextually specific forms of precarity. Moreover, our case studies show how particular critiques of Finland’s rigidity and inflexible labour protections have valorised mobility itself as a way of making labour flexible. We do not argue that Finnair flight attendants and higher education workers experience the same kinds of precarious work and legal status as Thai forest berry-pickers, but we do think it is important to show the common ways in which labour mobility and the strategic territorialisation of labour protections operate differentially to produce a spectrum of labour precarity. We also diverge from other work emphasizing how socio-legal status, exclusions from institutions, and poverty lead to immobilization. We show that making labour *mobile* is key to the differentiation of labour because it allows for the strategic bounding of labour rights to particular workplaces.



While others have pointed to the flexibility of territoriality (Novak 2011), our analysis pays attention to the strategic territorialisation of borders and struggles between different interest groups. The strategic territorialisation approach to labour migration parallels with, yet also complicates, the prevailing understanding of borders as something that do not only materialize at the physically located and marked borderlines but the enacted effects of a border can take place both within state territory and extra-territorially (Johnson et al. 2011), sometimes in a very creative and surprising ways. The shift from the borderlines towards a more fluid understanding of borders, however, does not mean that “borders are everywhere” or that their functions and effects are the same for all people. Instead, as Burrige et al. (2017: 13) put it “borders come into force through disparate, disconnected practices, through failures and gaps in services” thus providing security and welfare for some while denying it from others, also in a differentially exclusive manner. Our analysis shows the importance of territorial strategies for the analysis of the multiplication of labour, a question that, we argue, has been overseen by Mezzadra and Neilson (2013). Mezzadra and Neilson approach the question of migrant labour from the perspective of migrant categories and the resistance of the categorization by migrants themselves; however, they pay less attention to the struggle over different rationales and interest groups within and in-between state territories. Below, we seek to fill this gap in their work to show how “official” struggles over migration politics multiply when and where borders appear—as well as where, when, and which working people count as labourers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Our methodological approach emerges from questions about labour mobilization and strategic territorialisation of labour rights and our conceptualization of borders’ heterogeneity. As Michael Samers argues, studies of immigration policy should include “struggles within institutions, representatives of capital and the plural needs and voices of

civil society” and connect immigration discourses to “material dimensions like labour demands, competition over local resources and international obligations in the form of ‘human rights’” (Samers 2003, 575-6). Similarly, borders and immigration scholars understand state border policy not as one entity but as a “strategic terrain” where various countervailing politico-economic interests come to bear on one another (cf. Coleman 2005: 200; see also Mountz 2010). In order to analyse the discursive and physical mobilization of foreign labour, we collected and analysed legal statutes, negotiations, Parliamentary proceedings, employment office judgements, recruitment practices, company liability judgments, legal rulings on labour status, residency permit decisions, Schengen visa decisions, Finnish Migration Service (Migri) guidance documents, yearly calculations of visa allocations, human rights interrogations, and contracts. We included textual data and quantitative statistics produced by relevant organizations. We have limited our data collection to documents, which we understand to manifest particular *acts* in the struggle over migration and border regulation (cf. Prokkola 2013). While interviews with stakeholders would have allowed us to include different individual perspectives, we do include testimonies from a wide range of stakeholders and institutional discourses, enabling us to explore struggles between groups of people over the organization of labour and borders. These documents are also authoritative, representing policy guidance that is then implemented (through further documentation), and so while we do not present ethnographic accounts of precarious work experiences our analysis covers diverse, polyvocal, and highly contentious textual discourses on migration policy in Finland.

We conceptualise these documents, speeches, rulings, statistics and policies as technologies of government, “the actual mechanisms through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalise the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider to be desirable” (Miller

& Rose 2008, 32). By analysing how different actors situate migration in relation to their other priorities, we show how struggles over labour protections, economic competitiveness and the state's role in the national economy unfold through struggles over the strategic territorialisation of borders. This allowed us to identify divergent public discourses of labour mobility, where it is seen to contribute to nation-building projects and where it is understood to threaten them. Our methodological approach allowed us to identify contextually-specific discourses alongside global patterns of labour flexibilisation, especially the importance of labour market competitiveness in Finland's migration policy-making and the strategic use of foreign jurisdictions and citizens in achieving certain forms of competitiveness. Specifically, we analyse how labour is differentiated in order to make work and workers mobile through the strategic use of jurisdiction and national territories to limit labour protections, wages, and obligations. In other words, we trace how labour is made mobile through the selective territorialisation of migration categories and worksite protections. We analyse specific bordering practices—workers' nationality, legal boundaries of workplaces, and visa regimes—as socio-technical practices that authorize certain people to move across Schengen and national borders for specific periods of time. We argue that it is crucial to attend to the specific technical practices through which this multiplication occurs—and how it renders workplaces and workers mobile. What we find is that the multiplication of labour and borders unfold together, and they do as much through policies that seek to cultivate competitive national economies and societies as through policing, exclusion, and expulsion.

## **MOBILISING LABOUR AND POLITICISING MIGRATION**

Here we focus on Finland's relationship with migration to draw out context-specific socio-technical practices of bordering and labour. During the Cold War period, national integrity,

the Keynesian welfare state and employment were the key pillars of national policy-making in Finland. The government practiced active regional and social policy, including active ownership policy and the establishment of state-owned industries, to achieve full employment and social coherence of the nation (Moisio 2012). Kantola and Kananen (2013) note that labour market policies have been a particularly important—and depoliticized—site where competitive state values of economic growth and international investment replaced welfare state values of redistribution. Where the Finnish welfare state considered unemployment a social ill, unemployment now represents available (and willing) labour as an economic good for foreign investment. Kantola and Kananen (2013) argue further that these changes were largely accomplished through technocratic fixes at the Ministry of Finance, and welfare state ideals remain highly popular to both citizens and political parties. Migration policy-making in Finland unfolds, therefore, in the context of 20 years of economic reforms that have striated and hierarchized labour in spite of popular disagreement with those policies.

Recent migration policies have primarily aimed to address labour shortages, an aging workforce, and competitiveness in a global knowledge economy. Like many countries in Europe, Finland was a net emigration country until the 1990s (Geddes 2008). Urbanization in Finland has been slower than in other European countries and labour shortages in industries and urban areas have been managed with internal migration, especially from northern and eastern peripheral regions toward the urbanized south (Aro 2007). In the 1960s and 1970s, Finland's employment, average incomes and gross national product were considerably lower than in the neighbouring Nordic countries, and significant numbers of Finnish people moved to Norway and Sweden for work (Wahlbeck 2015). This flexible labour mobility was made possible by the Nordic Common Labour Market Agreement (1954). Many of these workers returned in the 1980s, and in the 1990s they were joined by Ingrian and Swedish Finns, Estonians, and Russians (Łobodzińska 2011). Thus, international labour migration has long

been part of the Finnish economy, but focused on return migration of Finnish workers from abroad rather than international recruitment to Finland.

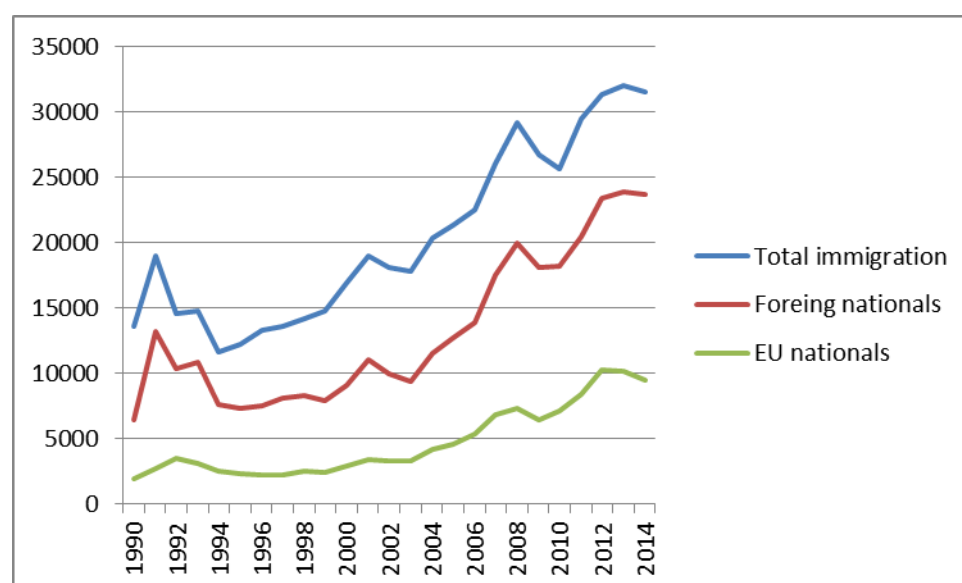


Table 1. Immigration to Finland in 1990-2014 (Source: Statistics Finland). Note: Total immigration includes Finnish returnees.

Migration trends changed following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Joining the European Union in 1995, Finland was an early member of the EU's internal mobility regime, but EU membership did not produce significant levels of labour migration to Finland until the inclusion of eastern European countries in 2004.

Non-citizen workers are currently regulated through Finnish, EU, and Schengen Area migration policies, though recent EU directives seek to harmonise basic minimums. EU citizens may work in Finland without a residency permit, but TCNs wanting to work for any length of time must apply for permission in the form of a visa or a residency permit. Other workers must apply for a residency permit, which depends on evidence of suitable salary. Residency permit applications are first submitted to a 'labour market test' by provincial Employment and Economic Development Offices; Migri then evaluates any statutory reasons

for denying the permit (EMN 2014: 9). Despite high rates of advanced degree attainment in Finland (OECD 2011), specialists, researchers, and consultants bypass the local labour market test. Intended to foster highly-skilled human capital, this practice differentiates 'knowledge economy skills' from—and prioritises them over—other skilled and unskilled workers.

Equal treatment is a cornerstone of the Nordic welfare ideology and, compared with the other parts of Europe, there is still a relatively strong agreement that migrants should have equal access to welfare benefits and protection (Keskinen 2016). At first glance, Finnish migration policy conforms to Ruhs and Martin's (2008) theory of 'numbers vs. rights,' in which high income countries are expected to provide a relatively high set of employment rights to labour migrants and therefore to regulate the number of low-skilled migrants more than a country that provides less protection and rights. Our study of the strategic territorialisation of borders, however, shows a more complicated picture of bordering work regarding the techniques of regulation. Because principles of equal treatment bar restrictions on migrant rights, Migri has used other policies to differentiate between different labourers, deter family migration and minimize fiscal costs of migration. Changes in 2016 raised net income requirements from €1860 to €2600 per month for a family of four (Finnish Immigration Service 2017), which is well above the median salary of 2200-2300 (net) in Finland. By setting such high barriers to admittance, the Finnish immigration service differentiates between deserving and undeserving migrants, frames migrants as burdens on the welfare state, and seeks to ensure that mobile labour remains temporary. Through these targeted administrative changes to TCN policy, Migri is able to deter and limit migration while adhering to principles of 'equal treatment.' By parsing labour migrants by nationality, skill category, degree, and 'income level and then by-passing labour market tests for highly

skilled TCNs, Finnish labour migration policy segments and multiplies labour, using the territoriality of national citizenship to differentially include Finnish, EU, and TCN labourers.

### **Mobilizing Skilled Labour and the Competitive State**

Finland's migration policies have developed against a backdrop of a highly dominant narrative of national competitiveness (Moisio 2012, Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014, Kantola & Kananen 2013). Critiques of Finland's welfare state have relied upon a sense of continual crisis in Finnish political economy, a crisis that can be solved through a now familiar battery of neoliberal policy solutions: privatization of state enterprises; internationalization; internal competition for resources; workfare; move from industrial production to knowledge economy society; the production of entrepreneurial, mobile, highly-skilled citizens (Moisio & Kangas 2016). And like other countries, the introduction of these policies has not unfolded smoothly, but has been incorporated into Finnish statecraft in a highly particular fashion. Finnish elite discourses promoting neoliberal strains of competitiveness appeal to both state-centred and borderless, global spatial registers at the same time: "On the one hand, [the state] is charged with stepping aside and setting the stage for market functions, but on the other hand, the state needs to be active in creating an optimal business climate, foster competition with society..." (Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014: 31).

As internationalization, competition, and innovation have dominated economic restructuring policies, transboundary labour mobility has become an increasingly visible site of structural change. Finnish visa regimes' differentiation of mobile labour emerge from ongoing negotiations between 'social partners': politicians, labour unions, employer organizations, and other interest groups. The Aliens Act (5§) stipulates that labour market organizations participate in the decision making process and legislation: "The social partners participate in monitoring and assessing practices related to issuing residence permits for

employed persons, and in preparing national and regional policies related to the general requirements for using foreign labour.” Migration policy is, therefore, legally constituted as a site of negotiation, contestation and compromise between competing visions of Finland’s economy, cultural, and national identity. Here, we outline state, labour union, and employer organization platforms on labour mobility and then examine how these tensions have played out in Finnish higher education internationalization policies.

For government representatives, Finland’s aging workforce and global competitiveness are its key concerns in migration policy-making:

“The government will promote such labour based migration which strengthens employment and public finance, dependency ratio and the internationalization of economy. The whole Europe is aging and due to it, it has to solve the problems of deficit of public finance. Immigrants will strengthen the innovativeness and know-how of Finland by bringing the strengths of their own culture as part of the Finnish society.” (Finnish Government 2015; translated from Finnish by author).

Prioritizing the interconnection between migration and innovativeness on the agenda frames the interdependency of mobility and innovation as the path to state competitiveness. Finnish state research institutions, such as TEKES, have published reports highlighting the potential of highly-skilled migrants and suggested that migrant’s cultural diversity and international networks can bring new ideas and innovation. Their approach understands diaspora and “economies of diversity” as key components of innovation (Nathan 2015, Florida 2002) so that skilled labour recruitment is folded into the state’s innovation strategy, including higher education policies (Raunio 2015). For state agencies, labour mobility is human capital infrastructure for state competitiveness in recruiting foreign investment. International labour mobility is, then, key to building strategic territorial advantages in the global economy.



Labour unions understand the situation differently. Union membership is high across sectors (75 percent of workers in 2013), and labour unions participate directly in labour migration policy-making and residency permit allocations. Historically, labour migration has been a marginal concern for unions (Aho 2015) but they have recently prioritised labour protections for *all* people living and working in Finland, noting that the boundary between permanent and temporary work is malleable, and temporary work can turn into permanent one (The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK 2013: 2). Finnish labour unions underline ‘equal treatment’ in workers’ rights and contracts, and their concern is that many migrants do not have unsatisfactory conditions of work and they may not be aware of their rights (SAK 2013). Temporary migrants are not usually members of the labour unions, and so those workers who have non-standard work contracts are in many ways outside the labour regulations and protection. Migration remains, however, an area of ambivalence: in some cases labour unions seek to *prevent* TCN labour migration by drawing attention to high unemployment figures in Finland and to the breaches of working conditions many migrant workers encounter.

Employer organizations, however, support increasing the migrant workforce not only because they presume it will increase labour flexibility for employers but because it will bring different kinds of workers to Finland. For business interests, the availability of low-wage and flexible labour is critical for economic development, and this includes international labourers. From a free market perspective, Finland’s labour market is considered rigid: workers expect high wages, quality conditions, long contracts, limited and regular working hours, and they expect to stay in place. An economic think tank oriented towards neoliberal economics, the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA argues that Finland’s sustainable regional development cannot be reached without migration (Myrskylä & Pyykkönen 2015). The report estimates that Finland needs approximately 34,000 net immigration yearly in order

to maintain a suitable labour force. Migrant labour is attractive not only for filling gaps, but because migrant workers are perceived to be more “flexible” in accepting irregular hours and sporadic work: “Immigrants are often accepting all kinds of jobs that are offered to them. Like students, part time jobs, irregular working times and weekend work suit them” (Myskylä & Pyykkönen 2015: 8; translated from Finnish by author). Migrant workers are important to business interests not only because they offer more workers competing for jobs, but also because they are *different kinds of workers*. Here migrant status is marked by nationality and differentiates between workers’ character as workers. Migration shifts power from labour to capital because migrants appear less able/interested in joining the unions, are more willing to accept growing workplace control and because “immigration can discipline existing workers by reminding them how easily replaceable they are” (Scott 2013: 1101). In other words, migration policies’ differential inclusion according to skill and nationality produces variegated forms of precarity but delimiting workplace protections in space and time. While low-skilled and unauthorized labour precarity is well-documented (Waite 2009, Lewis et al. 2015), Finnish migration and economic development policies increasingly expect that all workers will be more mobile. We argue that this *mobilization of labour* introduces specific forms of precarity across the skilled labour spectrum. Below we examine how higher education has become a key site for these policies and then return to Finnair’s highly mobile cabin crew and Thai berry-pickers’ to show how labour mobilization overlaps with strategic territorialisations of workplaces, as well. In doing so, we elaborate how the multiplication of labour and borders works to produce context-specific forms of precarity.

### Internationalizing Skilled Labour

Internationalization policies in Finnish higher education are indicative—and productive—of the prioritization of internationally mobile knowledge workers in the reconfiguration of the competitive state. As a small state, Finland is seen to be particularly

vulnerable to the turbulence of the global markets, and “fostering specific capacities qualities in its population” is conceived as a possible solution to this dilemma (Moisio & Kangas 2015: 10). Although there are no exact statistics concerning the education level of those migrants who move to Finland, fears of brain drain pervade competitiveness discourse (Johansson 2008; Niemiläinen & Korhonen 2017). Several studies found that the scarcity of internationality, and thus the loss of tacit knowledge that is understood to be embedded in international networks, was a major weaknesses of Finnish higher education and research. International networking and raising numbers of international staff of the universities has been presented as a means of achieving of competitiveness (Ministry of Education 2009: 15). Moreover, Moisio and Kangas (2015) argue that university reform in Finland can be understood as an attempt to produce citizen subjects that are entrepreneurial and global minded. Thus, it is not just about recruiting international staff but about increasing competition in the academic labour market—and creating different kinds of graduates.

The Ministry of Education’s promotion of international mobility has gone hand in hand with systemic reforms of the entire higher education system. The central government owned all fourteen universities until 2010, when they were made into independent foundations or corporations. The reform reorganized universities’ financing, administration, and direction and consolidated their role in “the innovation system” (Ministry of Education 2009). Since then, managerial techniques and neoliberal rationales of innovation, global-mindedness, networking and entrepreneurship pervade Finnish university administration. The new university law changed the employment status of university employees, transforming them from state to private sector employees. In many universities, the flexibilisation of contracts immediately set in motion the cooperation procedure for reducing the personnel (Sintonen 2010). Since 2012, the Finnish universities have completed all together 25 negotiations for layoff and nearly 4000 staff members have lost their permanent or fixed-term

jobs (Liiten 2016). While holding an important place in Finland's "innovation economy," these institutional changes have made highly skilled work more precarious.

Changing contract conditions has come alongside efforts to make Finnish knowledge workers more globally minded and more mobile, as well as recruiting foreign students and workers to universities. The 2010 university reforms used financial incentives, in particular, to push certain priorities, especially hiring international staff and publishing in internationally ranked journals. The Ministry of Education compensates departments for completed degrees and the publication of research: a non-citizen's Doctoral Degree compensation is fifty percent higher than a Finnish one, and publications are compensated based on a three-tiered scale that privileges English over Finnish-language ISI journals (Ministry of Education and Culture 2015; Paasi 2015). These changes have encouraged Universities to recruit foreign researchers and teachers through strategic recruiting packages to attract international talent. External funders (Academy of Finland, EU) also require international mobility as a condition of many grants. Between 2010 and 2013, the employment of foreign scholars in universities increased from 12 % to 18 percent (Läärä, 2014), yet a majority have short term contracts (Pekkola et al. 2015). TCNs, in particular, are precarious because their residence permit depends on work contract: "I have only limited time contracts, and I'm always afraid I would lose my job and then [be] expelled from Finland. I fully depend on my supervisor and I don't know what I would do if he decides not to prolong my contract" (a respondent, Hoikka 2016: 68). While highly skilled researchers do not face the same vulnerabilities to physical abuse, underpayment and overwork as low skilled migrant workers, it is important to trace how financial incentives for hiring practices *make highly skilled worker mobile* and that mobility requires transboundary mobility, in particular. In other words, 'internationalization' requires and reproduces national borders to define highly skilled labour. The border is therefore essential to the production of human capital in Finnish economic restructuring. The

mobilization and casualization of higher education workers contribute to the production of a “spectrum of precarity” (Lewis et al. 2015), a spectrum further complicated by the blurring of skilled and unskilled labour for many mobile workers (Mezzadra & Nielson 2013). Here we analyse to other positions on Finland’s spectrum of precarity to show how the labour mobility requires the strategic territorialisation of workplaces and employment rights.

### **OFFSHORING AND OUTSOURCING MOBILE LABOUR: FINNAIR**

“It is crucial to understand that only a company that is profitable on a commercial basis will employ people now and in the future. In the course of increasing globalization, Finland as a border state of global markets is depended on general economic development.” (Heidi Hautala, Minister of Development, Interrogatory 761/2013; translated from Finnish by author).

Finnair stands as a symbol of Finland’s high service quality and plays an important role in imaginaries of national Finnish identity (Wegg 1983). As a state majority-owned corporation, Finnair’s labor mobility practices have been discussed widely in both Finnish Parliament and the media: between 1998 and 2014, sixty Parliamentary Interrogatories<sup>i</sup> focused on Finnair. We focus on these here because these debates capture ongoing struggles over labor, mobility, and rights in the context of the institutional, human capital, and economic restructuring described above. Finnair’s labour practices show how national borders produce socio-spatial inequalities by differentiating between mobile workers and by moving and fixing workplaces in particular ways. As Mezzadra and Nielson (2013) have argued, we show globalized value chains require fixed borders in order to mobilize both labor and capital, but we take their argument further to show how states also take an active role in this process. In this case, we argue that the Finnish state actively works as shareholder and labour mobility manager for its business interests, elaborating other ways in which Finland’s competitive state policies require the mobilization of labor and bordering of workplaces in specific ways.

The company (Aero Oy until 1953) was established by Bruno Lucander in collaboration with German aircraft manufacturer Flugzeugwerke AG as a limited corporation in 1923 in Helsinki, seven years after Finland gained independence from Russia (Wegg 1983: 21; Finnair 2015). In the post-World War II economic environment it was difficult to maintain a viable privately-owned company in Finland, however, and in 1946 the Finnish government became a 70% shareholder in Finnair (Wegg 1983: 87). This was part of a wider trend of state investments in strategic infrastructures and industries in Finland and across Europe. Finnair was listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange in 1989, and the Finnish state continues to be a majority shareholder (55.8% in 2015). In Finland, as elsewhere, Finland's deep recession and preparation for EU membership in the 1990s challenged Keynesian and interventionist state policies resulting in institutional reforms, the commercialization of public services, privatization and outsourcing (Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014; Patomäki 2007: 144; Kananen & Kantola 2013; OECD 2003). Competition from low-cost airlines and 11 September provoked many airlines to consolidate and form alliances and joint ventures (Finnair 2015). For Finnair as other companies, labour negotiations and the strategic use of national borders have been important to cutting labour costs.

In 2015, Finnair employed 4817 employees (Finnair 2016), 337 of whom were employed through staffing agencies outside of Finland and 536 of whom are directly employed by Finnair and working outside of Finland.<sup>ii</sup> Finnair recruited new cabin crew by subcontracting with international staffing companies such as Adecco and FASCO. When Finnair announced it would contract with Thailand's temporary staffing firm to employ cabin crew on the routes between Bangkok and Hong Kong, MPs demanded explanation (Interrogatory 46/2002). Thai and Chinese personnel's salaries were considerably lower than those guaranteed in Finnish collective agreements. Simultaneously, Finnair decided to furlow Finnish cabin crew for a period of four weeks. Finnair justified recruitment of Chinese and

Thai flight attendants as a security and service quality policy, but MPs have repeatedly criticized this move as a displacement of Finnish workers by less expensive—and less protected—workers. In response, Finnish ministers have argued that the role of majority stakeholder was not to impose personnel policies nor interrupt the firm's management, arguing that Parliamentary Interrogatories pertained only to liabilities of state ownership, not to company policies:

“Finnair Oyj is an independent incorporated company, which, in its activation, follows amongst other things the principles of stock markets and the Companies Act. It is the responsibility of company's management team to take care that the company's management is organized properly. The topic of the Interrogatory pertains to the liabilities of the company's management, which are not issues that should be discussed in general meeting or taken care in the government.” (Response from Minister, Interrogatory 280/2002 vp, The personnel policy of Finnair; translated from Finnish by author)

Here Finnish economic policy ministers work as interested shareholders, confirming the distinction between state and private sector. Ten years later, however, Parliamentary debates focused on the content of Chinese workers' contracts, which contained provisions allowing Finnair to dismiss staff on the basis of pregnancy, sexual orientation, participation in industrial action or marriage to a foreign citizen, all considered “serious violations of human rights” in Finnish and EU law. Finnair promised to bring the contracts in line with Finland's human rights commitments, but the incident made clear the extent to which Finnair employed country-specific contracts and wages, relying upon national borders to segment its international workforce.

This strategy became visible again, when Finnair applied to employ American personnel on its Helsinki-New York route. The Helsinki Work and Employment Office rejected the application for work permits, noting that it was possible to find English-speaking personnel from EU and EFTA in a reasonable time; Finnair then changed the recruitment announcement to require ability to work from New York (and therefore American authorization for Finnish cabin crew to work in the USA). Moving the jurisdiction of the workplace itself, contract terms and social benefits were then negotiated according to weaker US and New York work contracts. The timing and content of the announcements suggests that the outsourcing was also used as a strategy to negotiate the rules and condition of the labour and put pressure on trade unions in Finland. In 2014 Finnair announced that it has signed an agreement with the Norwegian crew management company OSM Aviation on outsourcing of cabin service for Finnair's routes to Hong Kong and Singapore (Iho, 2014). The pressure put on trade unions and citizen workers, the conflict over the suitability, qualities and demands of “Finnish labor” versus the international labor, exemplifies how “migration answers [national labor markets’] established modes of differentiation” allowing the Finnish state to be “more adaptable, sly, and fragmented than the limited and sovereign community” imagined as its subjects (Mezzadra and Nielson 2013: 162, 165). In this case, Finnish economic and migration ministers multiply and expand Finnair’s labor market precisely through the territorialization of legal jurisdiction, citizenship status, and the workplace itself.

Despite the transnational mobility required of Finnair cabin crew, and the mobility of the workplace itself, labour protections adhere to the jurisdiction in which workers are recruited. Here, the state remains a key actor in the multiplication of labour, enforcing the limitation of contractual obligations to particular jurisdictions. As a majority state-owned company, Finnair’s use of outsourcing and offshoring shows how competing understandings



of the state's obligation to employ Finnish citizens and the state's obligation to produce a competitive economy come into conflict. As a shareholder, the Finnish state maintains its interest in a competitive enterprise, exercising its right *not* to regulate labour recruitment practices as a way of making policy (Lillie 2010). As a labour mobility manager, the Finnish state opens up pools of cheaper labour for its competitive industries. Finnair's outsourcing and offshoring practices rely upon—and thereby reproduce—a territorialisation of labour protections bound to citizenship.

### **RIGHT TO THE FOREST: BERRY-PICKING AS TOURISM**

“I have been working all my life. The life of the poor is a continuous fight, you cannot stop. You have to take work where you will get it. Often we poor and non-educated people find work only from foreign countries; from countries where workers are needed for construction and factories. During my life I have become very familiar with the life of a migrant. I have been employed as a migrant worker in Singapore, Brunei, Taiwan and South-Korea. Similarly I came to Finland to work, because they needed berry-pickers.” (Praisanti Jum-angwa, translated by Heli Kontio 2013)

From mobilized academic labour to the mobile workers and workplaces of airline cabin crew, we now explore how the legal definition of Finnish forests produces berry-picking as non-work and Thai berry-pickers as highly mobile non-labour. According to “Everyman's Right,” a right protected in Finnish law, everyone may freely pick flowers, wild berries and mushrooms in uncultivated lands (Ministry of the Environment 2013), so long as pickers incur no more than minor damage and maintain a reasonable distance to private dwellings. The boundaries of forest cottages' private space is not statutorily stated, but are implicit understandings passed down through family berry-picking traditions. If berry-picking is not a person's primary employment and berries are sold without processing, earnings from forest berry-picking are not taxed as income, allowing people in peripheral areas extra income.

Finland has only recently urbanized, raising wealth and incomes, leading to decreased interest in physically demanding forest berry-picking. Each summer, newspapers carry editorials decrying unpicked berries in the forests and read this refusal to pick as indicative of cultural decline or shifting national priorities (e.g., Korpelainen 2012). Whether or not more berries go unpicked, the practice of seasonal berry collection is hearkened as an important cultural practice, and changes in the ways that berries are harvested are interpreted as changes to the fabric of social life.

Simultaneously, the international berry market has grown rapidly in recent years. Finland's EU membership increased competition with other EU countries, and the globalization of agricultural trade has put Finnish berries in direct competition with berries from other parts of the world. As it has been shown in the case of Finland and Sweden, the forest berry industry is characterized by buyer-driven global value chain and there is a high competition in the markets which increase the demand for low-paid workforce (Eriksson & Tollefsen 2013; Rantanen & Valkonen 2011). Finnish berries are sold fresh in markets during the summer months, but the majority are processed into ingredients or other products. Every summer berry companies invite 12 000-15 000 seasonal migrants, mostly from Ukraine and Thailand, to harvest in Finland. Ukrainians tend to work on berry farms with contracts (Rantanen & Valkonen 2011: 2). Because farms are considered cultivated, improved land and therefore private, they are legally different spaces to forests; berry-picking on cultivated land is therefore subject to taxation and workplaces protections. Thai berry-pickers, in contrast, tend to work in forests uncultivated, semi-public lands, as described above. As such, forest berry-pickers work without contracts, workplace protections, or hourly wages. They are paid by weight not wages, are formally considered "self-employed", and do not have work contracts (or workplaces protections). Thus, the legal definition of the forest as a non-workplace bears directly on the precarity of TCN labour in this sector.

In 2005, the first wild-berry-pickers arrived from Thailand, 88 in total. Both the pickers and companies reported high yields, and now approximately 4,000 Thai people per year work as berry-pickers. Whereas farm-based berry-pickers can work without residence permits for up to three months and are regulated by Aliens Act 81 § (549/2010), the legal definition of forests as non-workplaces—and labour within them as non-work—places forest berry-pickers outside the Aliens Act. Legal rulings have upheld the special legal status of Finnish forests (and it should be noted that Sweden also has an everyman's right but decided that wild berry-pickers selling to companies would have work contracts). Each year, the Finnish government publishes seasonal work visa requirements for companies, specifying the process of recruitment, deadlines, and requirements that labourers have return air tickets, disposable income to support themselves on arrival, and adequate travel insurance to cover medical or death expenses (Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland, 2016). Thai berry-pickers take loans for these up-front expenses, and are expected to repay them from their earnings. They sell berries to one of Finland's major companies, the majority of whom specialize in freezing and packaging. The distinction is important because Thai migrant workers do not have formal work contracts with Finnish berry companies nor with coordinators. Rather they apply for Schengen Area visas as “entrepreneurs”, even though they must provide evidence of recruitment by a specific coordinator. Utilizing finely grained legal distinctions in this way, Finnish berry companies and recruiters are able to avoid responsibility for work conditions for Thai migrant workers.

In addition, berry-pickers are prohibited from working for other berry companies and cannot seek other work while in Finland. Not only does this make TCN berry-pickers dependent on their non-employer, it makes low-yield years particularly problematic. Thai berry-pickers take on debt to finance their visas, travel, and living costs and must repay it from their proceeds. The situation escalated in 2013 when berry yields were so low that

pickers did not make enough to recover their costs, leaving them in debt. A group of forest berry-pickers applied for the assistance as victims of human trafficking, which was later rejected by the Finnish authorities. The Ombudsman for Minorities in Finland (2014: 54) criticized the situation in the *Annual Report on Human-trafficking*; similarly, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI 2013) highlighted Thai recruitment for forest berry-picking as a violation of the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001). The Food Industry Organization and the Association of Natural Products, however, defended the special legal void surrounding TCN berry-pickers: in a statement for the Finnish Parliament, the trade organization emphasized that “the Finnish wild-berry stock competes with Swedes, Russian, Ukrainian and others” and that if “berries cannot be produced with competitive price in Finland, they will be purchased from elsewhere” (Juutinen, Vasuranta & Lukkarinen, K19/2014: 2-3). They go on to argue that work contracts would create various extra costs and taxation for both migrants and employers. The statement claims that forcing companies to prevent “the artificial activities of human trafficking” would endanger the whole industrial and commercial activity based on Finland’s forest berries. Here, the special legal status of Finnish forests works to produce a territorial competitive advantage, mobilizing TCN labour—legally constituted as entrepreneurship—to keep Finnish berries cheap(er).

Protectionists have questioned companies’ possible abuse of Everyman’s Right in Parliament (Interrogatory 866/2008) and in the social media, where nationalist and protectionist discourse has been virulent. Conflicts and mistrust among people living in and near forests and Thai berry-pickers have arisen over the unwritten rules associated with everyman’s right, and some have questioned whether foreigners can exercise everyman’s right. It is common practice to leave berries near homes for the residents to pick, but companies and coordinators have not informed migrant berry-pickers about these practices. In addition, hiring groups of pickers means that there are simply more people in the some

areas of the forest. changing the sense of solitude many Finns seek in secluded cottages. But critics have also asked whether companies abuse everyman's right to wild berries, since these are intended to be available to the public for individual income generation, not transnational berry production. To address problems raised by pickers and forest residents, representatives of the Ministry of Employment and Economy and thirteen berry-picking companies signed in a letter of intent that sets out improvements, proper guidance on everyman's' rights and responsibilities, insurance, physical examination, and minimum standards for the conditions of work. While the agreement does not clarify the official employment status of TCN berry-pickers, the Finnish embassy in Bangkok will not entertain visa applications for workers from companies who have not signed the agreement (Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2014). Employer responsibility can be seen as a "soft law" technique to govern the conditions of a highly particular form of work. Thai forest-berry-pickers find themselves paradoxically mobilised by a Schengen visa in order to work as unemployed persons in a non-workplace, a seeming legal void codified in law and upheld by judicial rulings. For TCN berry-pickers, Schengen, Finnish, and forest boundaries intersect to produce a particularly precarious legal classification of workers, workplaces, and berry-picking.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this article we have juxtaposed these three mobile labour practices—knowledge workers, airline cabin crew, and berry-pickers—because they demonstrate how labour is differentiated and mobilized while conditions of work are strategically territorialized. These cases show how well-documented capital and labour mobility practices like offshoring, outsourcing, and international recruiting articulate with highly localized juridico-political contexts. Although the groups can be categorized according to skill and wage level (cf. Paul, 2015), spatial strategies and national bordering create differentiations and similarities which cannot be explained by the skill level only. Our point is that these juridico-political categories

and the strategic territorialisation of borders spacings do the work of multiplying and differentiating labour and borders, of particularizing what many have argued is a generalizable condition of contemporary labour: precarity.

In the case of Finnair, companies outsource labour recruitment to jurisdictions where workers do not enjoy equal protections to Finnish workers, pressuring Finnish labour unions to accept contract conditions below what would be acceptable to their members. For TCN berry-pickers, the legal status of the work derives from its location in nominally public forest, exempting these migrants from contracted work relationships. From the companies' perspectives, it is a similar strategy to offshoring because uncultivated wild berries create an exceptional legal space through which companies can keep labour cheap. Berry-pickers are, however, recruited from abroad to perform highly localized labour, a form of labour that has symbolic meaning in Finnish national mythology. Meanwhile, researchers and skilled labourers are also actively recruited from abroad to increase university competitiveness, but do so on short-term contracts and residency permits. International researchers and students have a relatively easy time gaining access to universities, but once in Finland, their privileged status is predicated on their foreignness and so their long-term status remains precarious. In addition, this strategic incorporation of foreignness necessitates either a churn of temporary foreign researchers or long-term residents who do not integrate and seek citizenship. We have shown that not only are TCN migration policies nested in supranational EU policymaking and national admission policies, but the presence of foreign workers in Finnish forests have also ignited debates over Finnish identity in the context of globalization. Thus, the very localized character of agricultural labour is not nested within or under national and international regulatory regimes, but works through the strategic territorialisation of legal distinctions and national borders. Together, the cases show how a range of actors produce and contest the mobilization of labour and territorialization of workplaces. In all three cases,

national *borders* work to enable this in different ways, elaborating how labour and borders are multiplied to produce heterogeneous global space.

Through these three cases, we have shown how different kinds of borders—legal, institutional, regional, national, and everyday—overlap with each other in ways that produce context-specific forms of precarity for differently skilled TCNs in Finland. EU labour mobility has created complex relationships between national, EU, and non-EU workers and have produced new vulnerabilities for TCNs relative to their European counterparts. Crucially, differences in legal status of both workers and work spaces are mobilized strategically by states and employers. In Finland, state and private sector interests have more or less aligned towards creating competitiveness in all sectors, and this means that gaps in labour protections and precarious visa renewal processes come to be understood as necessary for economic growth. As our analysis shows, however, competitiveness rationalities have not gone without contest in the realm of migration policy, as particular policies have been challenged from both universalist human rights perspectives and nationalist appeals to Finnish cultural traditions. As the EU faces fundamental questions about its coherence, the internal migration regime and regulation of TCNs have become the cornerstone questions in nationalist protectionist debates, which often derive their power from seemingly local struggles over labour like forest berry-picking. The strategic territorialisation of borders by both state and non-state actors will continue to be central for understanding the conditions and politics of migration, labour, and precarity.

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<sup>i</sup> An Interrogatory is a parliamentary procedure in which a set of written questions are presented to the governments or to a minister by a member(s) of the opposing party in order to gain more information about the

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activities or planned activities of the government and their legality or to ask how the government will address pressing social problems. Ministers have 21 days to reply.

<sup>ii</sup> Finnair does not collect statistics on the nationality of its employees and so these numbers do not detail EU or TCN employees working in Finland nor Finnish employees working abroad. The 337 hired through international staffing agencies are TCN employees.