

# Drifting Here and There But Going Nowhere: the Case of Migrants from Turkey in Milan in the Era of Global Economic Crisis

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**Abstract** This paper argues that migration is becoming a protracted situation for the significant part of migrants in parallel to the deepening world economic crisis. Migrants keep drifting from one place to another in the face of future uncertainties. The paper analyses the protracted feature of migration, which is becoming increasingly salient through a new conceptualization, and links it with the world economic crisis and capital accumulation processes. The argument is supported by the data obtained from a field research implemented in Milan, Italy, in 2013 on migrants from Turkey. The Italian economy went into deep recession in 2009 when it was overlapped by a worldwide economic crisis. This situation led migrant workers to lose their jobs. Hence, self-employment of some Turkish migrants was directly related to the deepening economic crisis. Not only comparatively new Turkish migrants but also migrants who spent some years in Milan cannot see a secure future in there and think of migrating yet again.

**Keywords** Protracted migration · Drifting migrants · Global economic crisis · Milan · Turkish migrants

## Introduction

Italy has shifted from being a country of emigration to one of immigration like other Southern Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Greece and Turkey since the 1970s.

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Immigration to Italy has accelerated in the 1980s. Milan, which is the capital of Lombardy region and Italy's most dynamic economic-industrial metropolis, took the largest share from these migration flows to Italy. Migrants from Turkey have not been the subject of scientific analyses yet as a result of being one of the new and comparatively small migrant groups in Italy. Therefore, they are almost invisible. Being invisible in front of the law and generally in society is a part of being a migrant in any case. This aggravates Turkish migrants' invisibility even further. This paper argues that being a migrant is becoming a protracted situation for the significant part of migrants in the era of a deepening global economic crisis. We call these migrants 'drifting migrants' referring to their common features such as being the most precarious and disadvantaged part of the working class wherever they may be, including the country of origin. They are unable to 'cling on' or settle anywhere and drift from one place to another in order to survive. Their mobility is generally not a choice, but a necessity.

Unemployment, inequality and wars have been escalating in parallel with the deepening world economic crisis. Accelerated capital movements together with these factors trigger dislocation of people, and migration flows around the world. Efforts for solving the bottlenecks in capital accumulation by over-directing investments into built environment and searching for the most profitable/advantageous spaces and sectors for the capital generally leads to both irreversible environmental degradation and worsening inequality even further. The majority of migrants from Turkey in Milan are Kurdish.<sup>1</sup> Although, unequal economic development amongst the regions in Turkey seems to play an important role in their migration, there are also historical-political factors and pressures of continuous conflicts which are intertwined with one another. People, who are deprived of the means of their livelihood, flow into the geographies and sectors, where capital accumulation is faster, in order to survive. Spatial reflections of these migration flows most of the time emerge as spaces of urban poverty or urban transition zones. However, after the crisis of 2008, migrants in the most important migrant-receiving countries started to lose their already weak social mobility opportunities. Deprived neighbourhoods are not transit zones anymore for the 'successful' ones in climbing the social ladder, but they become transit zones until migrating to another place or country where they temporarily settle. Temporariness is increasingly becoming a main feature for the large part of migrants.

Migrants are generally flown into these transit/poverty zones by international migrant traffickers. They are often exposed to social exclusion especially by the middle and higher classes of the receiving society, which leads to spatial segregation. Turkish migrants live in the most deprived neighbourhoods with the other migrants and the most disadvantaged parts of native population in Milan.

Almost all the Turkish migrants in Milan performed internal migration from the very early ages before migrating internationally. They also migrated to other countries to work before migrating to Italy. But after the crisis of 2009 in Italy, not only the comparatively new Turkish migrants but also the small business owners, who considered themselves more settled, began thinking of migrating yet again. Protracted

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<sup>1</sup> We used the term "Turkish migrants" throughout the text, because all the migrants from Turkey in Milan are not Kurdish and all of them have Turkish citizenship.

migration started to become the most salient characteristic of the current global round of accumulation (Purkis and Kurtuluş 2013: 17).

## International Migrants in Italy and Milan

It is estimated that Italy had about 5.7 million residents of foreign citizens, half of which were female at the beginning of 2015, and immigrants represented 8.3 % of the total formal employment (Caritas Migrantes 2014: 12). Total undocumented migrants in Italy are estimated to be 550,000 (Salomoni 2012: 426). Foreign migrants have become the main source of cheap labour for small- and medium-scale firms in the north and north-east regions of Italy where the most important economic activities are concentrated (Reyneri 2004: 75; Ambrosini 2013a: 184–85, Caritas Migrantes 2014: 12; Riva and Zanfrini 2013: 2; OECD 2014: 20).

Even though Turkish migrants have not reached significant numbers in Italy, their official number gradually reached to almost 19,068 in 2010, dropped to 16,354 in 2011 and reached to 19,782 in 2014 again (ISTATA). New entries of non-seasonal workers were frozen during 2009 and 2010 (Salis 2012: 9). Then, the decrease in numbers of Turkish migrants in 2011 might indicate migration to other countries in the face of economic crisis. The International Organization for Migration (IOM 2014: 3) estimates that over one fifth of all international migration is undocumented. Hence, it can be estimated that the total number of Turkish migrants in Italy is around 25,000. The official statistics only include migrants with permanent work permits but not with temporary ones which come across more often. Then, we can estimate the number of Turkish migrants in Italy currently to be around 30,000. Although the majority of Turkish migrants live in the Lombardy region where Milan is a part of, they do not amount to 1 % of the registered migrants. It is followed by the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Toscana and Piemonte. These figures indicate that like other international migrants, Turkish migrants have also been concentrated in the regions where sectors of service, industry, agriculture and construction are most developed. Milan is the Italian city with the largest Turkish community, and Imperia and Como has the highest concentration of Turkish migrants. More than one third of the total Turkish migrants in Italy are in the Lombardy region. According to ISTAT (a, b), 7340 Turkish migrants had permanent residency in Lombardy in 2014 and 1076 in Milan. But, they are dispersed across Milan to different neighbourhoods.

Milan is the largest metropolitan area in Italy that leads cultural activities as well as economic ones. It is the capital for industry, trade and finance and one of the most well-known fashion and design centres in the world. Migrants are an indispensable part of production and reproduction of daily life in Milan.

The statistics related to Milan is published in two different ways by ISTAT which is the official statistics institute of Italy: The first set of statistics is for the metropolitan area, the second is for the city centre. Migrants amounted to 13.7 % of the population in the metropolitan area and 18.6 % in the centre by the end of 2014 (ISTATd). More than half of migrants in Milan Centre by the end of 2014 were from Philippines, Egypt, China and Peru (ISTATd). While the percentage of men is under 50 among other migrant groups, it is 52.2 % for Turkish migrants in Milano (57.1 % in Italy) (ISTATc). Men are predominant among the Turkish migrants. The share of migrants in the total

population has tripled in 20 years in the centre. These figures may not be reliable because they do not include seasonal and domestic workers.

Bossi-Fini Law has been approved in 2002 to prevent irregular migration in Italy. According to this law, residence permit is closely linked to employment. The entry for employment reasons especially for non-EU/EFTA migrants is limited to those cases in which an employer explicitly requires the worker (Campani 2007: 7; OECD 2014: 3, 22). According to Ambrosini (2013a: 178), “the law requires the immigrants to have a long-term work contract in order to be able to renew her/his stay permit for a 2-year period. This provision is in contrast with the reality of labour market which offers temporary work contracts, especially in the sectors where immigrants are predominantly employed” (see also Schireup et al. 2006: 191; Salis 2012: 7, 11; Riva and Zanfrini 2013: 4). The same law restricted family reunions and criminalized undocumented migration (Quassoli 2013: 219; Campani 2007: 7). Similar regulations have been implemented in almost all of the migrant-receiving countries after the 2000s when the immigration rate accelerated. According to these laws and quota systems, generally, migrants can get a temporary stay permit if only they have work contracts with particular employers and for a certain work (Riva and Zanfrini 2013: 2, 4). They are asked to leave the country within a stipulated time when the contract terminates. These regulations reinforce the position of employers on one hand and force migrant workers to work informally even more often than before; hence, their position in the labour market becomes more precarious. Keeping migrants in temporary condition is conceptualized as *permanent temporariness* which is interpreted as exerting disciplining power over bodies, families and social fields, which helps promote the interests of state and capital (Bailey et al. 2002: 139).

While migrants in Italy have been incorporated in the labour-intensive segments of different sectors of the economy such as industry, construction, agriculture, tourism, catering and domestic services, they have been excluded from the public and professionally qualified sectors. Migrants are accepted well as long as they remain in the lowest levels of professional and social scale and they bring benefits to the economic system, but they are still not recognized as a legitimate component of society (Ambrosini 2013a: 180). Low-skilled and low-status manual jobs that they perform, as a result of being bereft of occupational choices, are the types of jobs that young natives reject to undertake even if they are unemployed (Mingione 1999: 210; Quassoli 1999: 218). The labour market is ethnically segmented, and the most disadvantaged section of the working class consists of migrants, especially migrants from non-EU countries, but not of natives (Schireup et al. 2006: 2, 3, 15, and 175). Currently, as the crisis deepens and proliferates, the chances of settlement for migrants diminish whether they work formally or informally or even as self-employed. Migration looms yet again not by choice but by necessity for them. Uncertainty of the future transforms the condition of being a migrant to a protracted situation.

## Methodology

Migration is about movement in both time and space, and analysing it requires nuanced and a flexible methodological approach. According to an emerging literature, time and temporality aspects or dimensions of migration have been largely neglected despite the

new trends in migration towards increased temporality, whether at a global level or in specific national or local contexts.<sup>2</sup> Including temporal dimension into the analysis of international migration alongside spatial dimension facilitates interconnection of all levels of analysis. Individual trajectories of migrants are underscored by local, national and global contexts. Complex interaction between individual lives and social processes led to a revival of the life course approach. But, our understanding of life course approach is not agency-centred; rather, we adopted a relational approach to the agency-structure interaction. Its most ambitious claim is that it can unearth the interactions and intersections between the micro level of individuals and the macro levels of culture, economy, social policy (Kok 2007: 4, 5) and power relations. The life course approach is devised precisely to deal with the ongoing impact of past experiences (principle of lifespan development) in constantly changing contexts (principle of time and place) (Kok 2007: 6), which facilitates analysing migration in its true complexity. According to Robertson (2014), a timescale operating in migration processes can be taken at three levels: a macro timescale of global political economy, particularly around spatially unequal processes of capital accumulation (including financial but also cultural and social capital); a meso timescale of migration regimes (including national and supra-national systems of governance but also brokers, agents, recruiters and other facilitators of mobility); and the individual level timescale of biography. Gardner (2009: 20) emphasizes the interconnectedness of all levels of analysis by indicating that lives are structured by cultural expectations, gender and historical contexts as well as individual choice. Since life courses are themselves subject to change and influenced by global structures (such as the continually shifting and deeply gendered international labour market), this approach might help us connect the ‘micro’ level of individuals with the ‘macro’ level of structure, a long-standing challenge to migration studies. Our analysis of the mobility of migrants from Turkey needs to be understood in complex and relational ways. Hence, we draw attention to their more than subjective temporalities by emphasizing their life transitions with a dynamic and non-linear understanding of time. This approach makes it possible to study the very process of migrants ‘living on the move’ as open-ended and always becoming (Collins and Shubin 2015: 97). Migration is composed of a variety of times and temporalities that affect migrants’ legal statuses, labour market opportunities or vulnerabilities, everyday lives, social inclusion/exclusion processes, etc. in the host countries (Robertson 2014). We will be able to focus on the aspects related with Turkish migrant’s work trajectories and the regressive effects of the economic crisis to emphasize the protracted nature of their migration in the limited scope of this article by using insights from life course approach.

Empirical part of the study is based on data derived from the field research which was undertaken in the period between June and September 2013 in Milan, Italy. Twelve semi-structured in-depth interviews and two focus group meetings with men and women were carried out in the framework of the field research. Together with the men in the focus group, the sample this article is based on includes 13 men, majority of whom were from Pazarcık, Maraş in Turkey. Most of them were either doner kebab shop owners, workers in these shops or their suppliers. This is not a coincidence but one of the outcomes of the economic crisis as analysed below. Others were construction

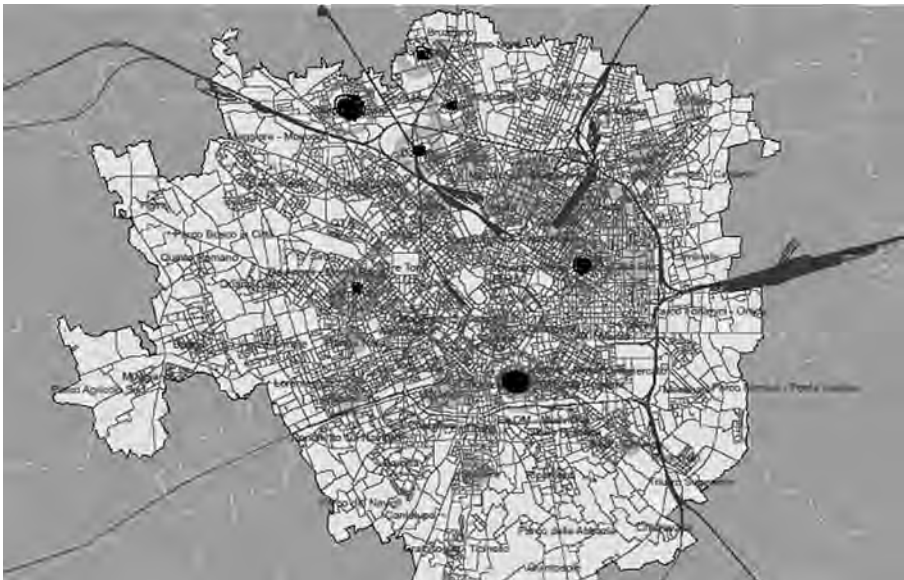
<sup>2</sup> Bauböck 1998; Cwerner 2001; King et al. 2006; Meeus 2012; Griffiths et al. 2013; Collins and Shubin 2015.

workers, subcontracted workers or informal sector workers. In choosing the sample, age, sex, experience, sectors, jobs, neighbourhoods and entry statuses and years of immigration to Italy were taken into account. A field research is implemented especially in the neighbourhoods where Turkish migrants live such as Cinisello Balsamo which is in the north-east of Milan Centre or they live in the south and south-east of Milan Centre where migrants congregated and processes of gentrification is underway at the same time such as Vigentina, Buenos Aires, Porta Venezia, Loreto and also in the north and north-western outskirts of Milan such as Quarto Oggiaro. Turkish migrants in Milan live in dispersed locations. Although migrants from Turkey do not form ethnic enclaves, they live together with poor natives and other international migrants in the cheapest parts of Milan (Map 1).

Five of 12 migrants were women. Female labour migration from Turkey to Italy does not carry similar characteristics of the global female migration. Majority of Turkish women migrated internationally through family reunions. Thus, the migration of Turkish migrants to Italy has basically been migration of men. Migration of women from Turkey to Milan deserves a more detailed analysis, which will be the subject of another article.

## Theoretical Approach

A complex and multidimensional character of international migration renders the search of holistic migration theory meaningless. The analysis should encompass different levels and link different approaches to migration. But, this does not mean that explanation and interpretation of a social phenomenon like migration does not change according to different theoretical frameworks. According to Castels, “a general



**Map 1** Source: Prof. Dr. Mario Boffè, Università Degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale

theory of migration is neither possible nor desirable, but that significant progress could be made in the ‘middle range’ by (re-)embedding migration research in a more general understanding of society, and placing it within broader theories of social change that draw on the repertoire of social science disciplines” (in Hear 2010: 1533). Thus, while we use a critical approach to explain the triggering factors of international migration,<sup>3</sup> we also find theories on the mechanism of continuation and resilience of migration over time very useful such as migrant networks,<sup>4</sup> institutional theory,<sup>5</sup> cumulative causality,<sup>6</sup> migration systems<sup>7</sup> and transnational migration theory<sup>8</sup> in explaining the different features of migration.

Classifying migrations in the confinements of voluntary/forced, political/economic, formal/informal dichotomies has been a widespread trend recently. But, there is also another trend that offers to go beyond these dichotomies. Mixed migration is one of these terms that allows escaping this dualistic terminology. This is because this term takes into account the multiple and changing natures of migration at the beginning and on the way.<sup>9</sup> According to Hear (2010: 1533, 1536),

“Migration is linked in complex ways to class, gender, generation, ethnicity and other social cleavages, which are embodied in hierarchies of power and social status, in positions in home and host communities, and in work and domestic relationships all of which may be transformed in the course of the migratory process. This kind of approach involves exploring further the role of migration in deep and surface, acute and cumulative social change; in the relations between the individual and the collective; in the continuum between force and choice; in the relationship between structure and agency; in the connections between macro, meso and micro levels of analysis; and, above all, in local, national, regional and global dispensations of power.”

According to the critical approach, capital accumulation takes different trajectories in different periods of capitalism. Hence, migrations also carry different characteristics depending on these periods. While capital seeks the spaces where it can be combined with labour in the most profitable manner, it moves between geographies, sectors and times. Thus, it gives rise to temporally and spatially uneven development. Then, it transforms these geographical differences into profits (Smith 2008; Harvey 2006). This movement of capital provokes the movement of labour. However, there are more obstacles in front of labour compared to capital. In spite of this, people especially in the global round of capitalism migrate because they had lost their means of livelihoods where they had lived before. This approach does not deny an agency to the migrants. They are not passive receivers, but their migration decisions and migration trajectories

<sup>3</sup> Portes and Walton 1981; Petras 1981; Standing 1985; Mitter 1986; Sassen 1988, 2000; Castells and Portes 1989; Rubenstein 1992; Bonacich 1993; Faist 2000; Brettel and Hollifield 2000; Overbeek 2002; Munck 2005; Hear 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Hugo 1981; Taylor 1986; Massey and Espana 1987; Gurak and Caces 1992; Massey et al. 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Taran and Geronimi 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Stark et al. 1986; Massey et al. 1993; Massey 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Fawcet 1989; Kritz et al. 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Faist 2000.

<sup>9</sup> King 2002; Castles 2000, 2003, 2007; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007; Brubaker 2009; Van Hear 2010; Dişbudak and Purkis 2014.

should be situated within a broader framework of social, economic and cultural context by adopting a relational approach. Therefore, the life course approach adopted in this study is highly useful in its aspiration to grasp the behaviour of individuals within their personal networks and within their specific place, historical time and society (Kok 2007: 6). Approaching migration from this point of view reveals that migration is not exactly a choice of individuals but a consequence of intertwined, complex and divergent dynamics.

Migration to Milano from Turkey carries economic, political, voluntary, forced, formal or/and informal aspects. Explaining this migration with one or two of these terms would have been a very reductionist approach to the subject. Probably, the triggering factors of this migration can be explained with one or two of these terms, but it is more appropriate to explain migration as a dynamic process which is triggered and continued by different factors and motives.

Intersections of economic, political, cultural, spatial and temporal aspects affected migration from Turkey to Milano, but in time, alongside these factors that started migration, other theories that focus on mechanisms of self-perpetuation of migration almost independent of its origin have been very useful in explaining the different features and dimensions of this migration. It is not possible to analyse these different aspects of migration to Milano from Turkey, which started after the second half of the 1980s, in the limited scope of this article as it deserves. Therefore, we will try to focus on the most salient aspects of this migration in line with the protracted nature of migration.

## Drifting Migrants of Protracted Migration

Increasing amount of researchers has been focusing on the temporariness of migration recently.<sup>10</sup> These works and conceptualizations are generally about the impacts of the changing immigration policies and regulations on immigrants' belonging, citizenship and daily lives. For example, Simmelink (2011) examines the consequences of protracted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Liberians in the USA and tries to place the issue within emerging theoretical frameworks of global citizenship. She calls Liberian and other immigrants and refugees who entered in the USA under this status *temporary citizens*. Bailey et al. (2002) coined the concept of permanent temporariness and analysed the effects of TPS system on Salvadorans' daily lives. They argue that material and non-material aspects of daily life become associated with an experience of space-time relations, which they call permanent temporariness, which limits geographic, economic, social and political ambitions of Salvadorans. They link the subject to the broader discussions about transnationalism, the international political economy of migration and capitalist restructuring. Both studies focus on migration policies and their effects on migrants. Collins and Shubin (2015) also mention *feelings* of floating or drifting in their case study on English teachers with temporary work contracts in South Korea. Feelings of floating or drifting are used in the context of difficulties managing

<sup>10</sup> Bailey et al. 2002; Purkis 2006; Simmelink 2011; Meeus 2012; Collins and Shubin 2015.



time as a result of being temporary and not being able to plan one's life. However, the temporariness of work contracts is not connected to the larger processes of capitalism.

The main goal of our analysis is not only to conceptualize the temporariness of these migrants but also to offer more relational and complex reading of temporality. In this study, we have also pointed out the increasing temporariness in migration policies in a growing number of states. But, our main point in offering conceptualizations like *drifting migrants* and *protracted migration* is to draw attention on new trends in current migrations towards continuously being on the move in parallel to the deepening world economic crisis and accelerating capital movements, which are beyond migrants' control. Each concept draws attention to different dimensions of being continuously temporary in one country. Our analysis is more about the main sources of this temporariness in general, and migration policies that increase temporariness are taken as part of these broader processes.

Turkish migrants in Italy, generally, and in Milan, particularly, which are the subject of this study, account for slightly more than half per cent of total registered migrants. Italy is not one of the main host countries for Turkish migration. Majority of Turkish migrants whom we interviewed came to Italy not by choice but by chance. They had mainly targeted the middle and north European countries. Almost all the male migrants started to migrate as labour internally from the early ages. Internationally, they worked in countries like England, France, Germany and Austria before migrating to Italy. The situation of protracted migration is becoming one of the most salient aspects of current migration.

“We went to Germany and then to Austria and when we could not find work there turned back to Germany by walking through mountains for 2 h. After Germany we went to France. Our story never ends.” (Focus group F.T., 45, (1989) 1996,<sup>11</sup> construction worker.)

“I came to Europe to Spain by plane...from there to Paris. I stayed in Paris 8–9 years. I worked there in some way or other, I sought asylum but they rejected... afterwards I went to Germany and then turned back to France again. I was working there informally again. A new law was introduced in Italy about migrants in 1996. We heard that and came here; we had had no other choice.” (A.B., 45, (1987) 1996, owner of two kebab restaurants.)

## Motives and Patterns of Migration

Migration to Milan from Turkey, especially from Pazarçık, has still been continuing in spite of a slowing down effect of the economic crisis in Italy. This can be explained by the facilitating effects of migration networks, as well as continuing economic, political and cultural problems in Turkey. Migration networks give rise to perpetuation of migration between certain areas by decreasing costs and risks of new migrants as older

<sup>11</sup> The dates in the brackets show first international migration experience, and the dates out of the brackets indicate migration to Italy in the whole text.

migrants become more experienced. As out migration continues, these places in the sending countries become almost empty, and as the elderly stays behind, their demographic composition changes dramatically (Portes 2010: 1551, 1552). In the case of Turkish migration to Milan, economic and political conditions in the country of origin played a more important role than the conditions of the receiving country. Migrants are generally from very poor families, and before migration, they were discriminated because of their ethnicity and social class in the country of origin. Majority of them have only basic education and have performed a number of jobs from an early age. According to them, the main reason of their migration is the limited possibilities of finding work in the country of origin, i.e. unemployment. The majority of the migrants from Turkey who participated in the field research are of Kurdish origin. Even though unemployment is widespread in all the regions in Turkey, it is higher in the regions where Kurds live. Hence, economic and political factors are closely related.

“I come from a very poor family. There were times we could not have food for breakfast. Because we were poor; we were hoping to go abroad to work in the future...we did not have much choice...We decided to migrate because of not having any alternatives ...governments do not invest deliberately where we lived. If they did we would not be here. I can ask you a question as well. Why there is nobody here from İstanbul, İzmir or Ankara? People who migrate are generally from Maraş, Diyarbakır, and Urfa, I mean people from the South East region where the most downtrodden (referring Kurds) live. Political reasons play important role here.” (A.B., 45, (1987) 1996, owner of two kebab restaurants.)

“In fact Kurdish problem had started in Turkey when we were there ...Because we were living in the same region, we were affected... If our country did not have problems, would we come here and work! We would work there.” (M.F.Ö., 55, (1988) 1991, owner of a kebab restaurant)

“For some of them reason is economic, for some others political pressures or unemployment ...there are people who are here for their future, for a better future. But above all to find work.” (M.D., 26, (2008) 2009, works in a kebab restaurant.)

Pazarcık is a migrant sending town, where most of its population is living abroad. At the beginning, intersection of economic and political reasons affected the migration, but over time, migration became self-perpetuated. Even then, the conditions at the beginning such as unemployment, limited possibilities to continue to live there and ethnic discrimination have not changed much.

“If you come across ten Turks in Milan, nine of them are from Pazarcık and 99 % of the doner kebab saloon owners are from there too.” (Focus Group, P1, 52, (1988) 1990, subcontracted worker.)

This shows that migration networks have been set up between Pazarcık and Milan. New migrants are supported by the older migrants in many different ways.

“Of course having acquaintances means assurance. We chose here because there were people we can lean on...Every one of them tries to teach the ropes. Older migrants have more experiences. There are people who have been here for 10–15 years.” (Y.U., 53, (1990) 2004, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

As migration has become self-perpetuated, social atmosphere has also changed in the sending areas in a way that encouraged young people to migrate. They live with the expectation of migrating someday. The majority ‘choose’ migration before reaching their twenties.

“We would see all the people who emigrated when they come back for holidays. So and so went to Germany and earned lots of money, so and so went to Switzerland earned so much money. When you see these people who are unskilled but doing better, you think I can try also, good luck may come my way too...on the other hand when all your friends go, you feel alone, like desolated. It affects.” (N.Ö., 46, 1998, works informally in temporary jobs.)

One of the most salient aspects of migrations of neoliberal restructuring era is that the majority of migrants use migrant smugglers for their journey abroad. The experiences of the Turkish male migrants in Milano confirm this pattern. Almost all of the male migrants had arranged their journey with migrant smugglers. As we mentioned before, when they could not stay in Northern or mid-European countries, where they aimed at originally, they ended up in Milan on the way back by coincidence. As a result of entering Italy clandestinely, without having any legal documents, they had to claim asylum. Status of entry is very important in terms of migrants’ future life and relationships with both countries, i.e. country of origin and receiving country. Migrants can pay very high prices.

“When we were going to Switzerland we were 40 people on a truck, almost all of us suffocating, barely managed to stay alive. We were caught and sent back. We tried again, went through very hard times. They take money but you still go through lots of difficulties.” (M.F.Ö., 55, (1988) 1991, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

“We found the smugglers first. They were smuggling people from Pazarçık. We went to Tiran/Albania. From there they took us to the seaside by train, we crossed to Italy in rubber dinghies. Each of them take ten people but we were 40 in it. It took me 72 h from Pazarçık to Italy. There were people waiting for 2, 3 weeks.” (N.Ö., 46, 1998, works informally in temporary jobs.)

## **Migrants’ Working Life Before and After the 2009 Economic Crisis in Italy**

Migration from Turkey to Milan goes back 30 years. It started towards the end of the 1980s and intensified in the 1990s, when economic and political instabilities escalated in Turkey. At the beginning, these migrants worked informally in various jobs, but the

majority of them got a residence permit in 1–3 years. The ‘paperless’ stage is considered almost normal, sometimes long, certainly difficult, but surmountable (Ambrosini 2013a: 177). When they were unemployed, they usually found work through the cooperative system<sup>12</sup> that runs outside labour regulations in Italy, which found temporary—sometimes for few hours or daily—jobs for them.

“We applied to cooperatives to find work. Sometimes you wait three days and find work for one day. I did all types of work. I was a driver; I worked in meat sector, newspaper printing, worked as a plasterer and decorator, did many kinds of jobs, cleaning toilets even.” (Y.U., 53, (1990) 2004, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

“There is a cooperative system here. Factories do not employ workers themselves; they ask cooperatives for example to send five workers and coop sends. It is a kind of legal subcontracting, legal theft. No social rights at all, no social security, because we were unregistered. Six o’clock in the winter morning, 40–50 of my countrymen waiting in front of it, and shaking. We felt lucky when we found work.” (N.Ö., 46, 1998, works informally in temporary jobs.)

Migrants fill the ranks of flexible labour force who often work long hours, without social security for very low wages. The types of jobs migrants do are labour-intensive, cheap, informal, unskilled, risky, heavy and temporary. Italians are not willing to do these kinds of jobs.

“My last work was in the printing sector. I worked there for 5 years. I had a heart attack afterwards... My boss liked me because I could do many different things. For example I was an electrician, bricklayer, driver, decorator all at the same time. He would give me extra money in front of the other workers deliberately. He liked me that much. When I had a heart attack doctor told me that ‘you cannot do heavy work anymore’. I went to visit my boss when I was still on sick leave and told him this. He said to me ‘you have to leave here’. I went to court to claim compensation, but they gave me the lowest possible amount after lots of hassle.” (M.F.Ö., 55, (1988) 1991, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

Heavy working conditions do not change for the migrant workers who work for Turkish employers.

“I work 11–12 h a day. Until I reach home it is 15 h which means the day is over. I go to sleep two three hours after arriving home and this repeats everyday... Nobody works as much as migrants... They sacrifice from social life, holidays, from everything.” (M.D., 26, (2008) 2009, works in a kebab restaurant.)

<sup>12</sup> Usually, workers employed by cooperatives are not subject to protection and labour laws since cooperatives have a non-mandatory application of the National Collective Labour Contract (CCNL that, in the Italian Public Law, manages the employer/employee relations in any sector and industries). Within cooperatives, workers are employed as associate worker. This means they are both workers and members of the cooperative. As members, they have no labour rights since they take the full risk of the job upon themselves; however, as workers, they have no access to company’s profit (Curcio 2014: 380).

Although, consecutive regularization programs legalized the irregular migrants, limited possibilities to work and segmented structure of the labour market forced them to work informally again (Reyneri 1998: 322; Mingione 1999: 209; Magatti and Quassoli 2003: 154, 169; Reyneri 2004: 82; Ambrosini 2013a: 183)

“I got my residency in 2001... I worked informally several times. Italians do not want to insure migrant workers. Insurance is expensive for the companies... Once one of the bosses had not paid my wages, I went to court not only for that but also I was uninsured. But nobody cared. They did not question him about that... I was working for another company illegally. This company had other factories in Romania and Poland. They were one of the top tender winners in Italy. Once they were the bidder of 1 million 450 thousand Euros worth tender offer and this kind of company employs you informally. They even had done work for Great Vatican.” (N.Ö., 46, 1998, works informally in temporary jobs.)

The majority of earlier migrants from Turkey in Milan could find formal work in the later years in the sectors such as steel industry, publishing, automotive, chemicals, construction and car tyres, and they worked under nearly equal conditions applied to Italian workers.

“I worked with Italians. You work 40 h in a week. More than 40 h would be overtime... You would get the same wage as Italians... We had nothing less than them. I mean rights of unionizing. Italian and foreigner were equal, but foreigner should work harder that is all.” (Focus group, B.B., 1990, construction worker.)

However, global transformation of capitalism and restructuring production in the world scale to overcome its crisis affected Italy as well. Industries have been outsourced to countries with cheaper labour. Some of the factories closed down and service and construction sectors started to be the leading sectors of the urban economy. This happened in Italy a lot later than the other industrial countries, and it increased especially after the mid-2000s (Daveri et al. 2006: 2). Turkish migrants working at these factories before they moved out or closed down had either early retirement and started to work in other sectors, which cannot be outsourced, such as construction or labour-intensive service sector jobs, or they became self-employed.

“After coming here things started to go wrong in this place. The factory was closed 16–17 days a month. We were working on an hourly basis. Therefore our wages decreased to 400 Euros. When we first came here we were working 15–16 h a day. There was plenty of work then. (Y.U, 53, (1990) 2004, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

Italians work in skilled parts of these sectors. Migrants are generally excluded from the public and professionally qualified sectors (Ambrosini 2013a: 184). Most of the migrants we interviewed were either doner kebab shop owners or workers in these shops; others were construction workers, subcontracted workers or janitors.

According to Ambrosini (2013a: 184), a significant amount of migrants still work in industry as well as in agriculture and service sectors. This facilitates Italians working in

more skilled and high-profile jobs. Venturini and Villosio (2006: 93) pointed out that the inflow of migrant workers raises the wages of national manual workers, i.e. it has a complementary effect instead of competing, and that this effect is larger in small firms and in the north of the country. The presence of immigrants enables an increase in both employment of native workers and in their wages, as they can now shift to better-paid and more skilled tasks (Reyneri 2004: 91). In the main cities of the Western world, the lower part of the labour market has been ethnicized and different migrant groups have been specialized in certain sectors of this market (Wacquant 2011: 88). Hence, there is a clear segregation between native workers and migrants, and generally speaking, they are not competing for the same jobs. Nevertheless, with the economic crisis in Italy, unemployment has increased for both Italian and migrant workers. Increasing unemployment seems to have accelerated discrimination and competition for the same work particularly between Southern Italian migrant workers and foreign immigrants. The position of migrants in the labour market has been weakening in parallel with the crisis in Italian economy.

“Of course there are some problems. They look upon you as a second class person. Because you are a foreigner, you are different for them. There are many who do not like us. They also came here as migrants (referring Southern Italians). They think we are taking their jobs, They think if we were not here they would have better standards, less unemployment...those coming from the below.” (South) work 10 to 12 h a day like us. (M.D., 26, (2008) 2009, works in a kebab restaurant.)

Italy has a substantial underground economy, and it offers various job opportunities for migrants as well as natives (Reyneri 2004). Regularization programs and annual quotas are used in Italy generally to regularize migrants already living and working in Italy (Salis 2012: 15, 2; Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011:271; Riva and Zanfrini 2013: 3). Even then, in many instances, migrants who have a legal right to work were employed irregularly (Schireup et al. 2006: 188). There are different types of irregularity. Sometimes, workers are registered, but their employment can have informal aspects such as showing full-time workers as part-time, making them work long hours and weekends and showing them as self-employed.

“We work on Saturdays but this cannot be seen on the paper...employers do the same thing to Italians, Especially at the moment, in the crisis...Before it was different. You would get what you deserved...But it is not like that anymore. They use crisis as an excuse...we have no alternative. If we protest we lose our job. ...Before the crisis I would quit, but now he knows I cannot. He behaves like take it or leave it, the door is there.” (Focus group F.T., 45, (1989) 1996, construction worker.)

“They show all of us as part time on the paper but make us work full time. It is something that should not happen in a European country. But if you do not like it you must leave here. I was getting 2500 Euros, it dropped to 2000 about 3 years ago...Now I get 1600 Euros a month. My social insurance is paid for part time. When you are registered as a part time worker on the paper you do not get

thirteenth, fourteenth wages, no holidays like full time workers. Employer says directly that ‘if you do not accept it find another job’. No paid holidays as well.” (N.B., 60, (1983) 1986, working for a fish trading company.)

The deepening economic crisis has affected both Italian and migrant workers, but its impacts on immigrants were greater.

“The crisis is most severe in construction sector...I mean our boss has not paid our wages and extras...They moved factories to other places like Poland or Turkey...Workers protested continuously.” (Focus group P1, 52, (1988) 1990, subcontracted worker.)

“Crisis surged in about 2008–2009. It most affected foreigners. Italians are affected, but not like foreigners...Companies sack foreigners first... On the other hand when you find work through cooperatives you cannot claim rights anyway.” (N.Ö., 46, 1998, works informally in temporary jobs.)

## Entrepreneur or Proletariat!

The world economic crisis which gave its first signals at the end of the 1960s tried to be overcome by the neoliberal policies that are based on restructuring of production on a world scale, privatization, flexibilization and deregulation. These policies have been put into force almost all over the world by the 1980s which focus on overcoming crisis by financialization of economies to a large extent and by prioritizing construction led growth which revives several other sectors of the economies. While industrial production was losing ground in the Western capitalist economies, capital tended to be appreciated in the built environment investments. Cities have been commodified. Spatial investments have been financed through short-term capital flows. Over accumulation of spatial investments fired several crisis in different parts of the world since the 1980s (Harvey 2012), but mortgage crises that intertwined with financialization/securitization frequented after the 2000s. The crisis in the USA in 2008 has been felt globally. Italy has gone through the same kind of crisis as well. Both investors and their customers were supported by credits to finance real estate investments which eventually gave rise to mortgage crisis. Italian economy went into deep recession when worldwide economic crisis ‘coincided’ with its own, which is closely interrelated with one another. This situation led migrant workers to lose their work in industry, and they started to work either in the service sector or construction.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, self-employment of some of the Turkish migrants cannot be explained by their efforts for upward social mobility in the Italian society or a sign of successful integration. Rather, it was directly related to the deepening economic crisis in spite of the restructuring in the global economy. The move into self-employment is often motivated

<sup>13</sup> During the period 2008–2010, the number of unemployed foreign workers has considerably increased (+64.2 %) and unemployment rates have almost doubled (from 6.9 % in 2008 to 13 % in 2010) which is higher than the unemployment rate of nationals (8.7 %) (Salis 2012: 9).

by lack of opportunities elsewhere (Kloosterman 1999: 100; Mingione and Quassoli 2000: 31; Schireup et al. 2006: 3, 131).

“Nowadays nobody can find a work at a factory. The reason is that there is a major economic crisis, a very deep one. Almost all the people from Turkey are in kebab business. All the Turks I know are fired from factories.” (M.D., 26, (2008) 2009, works in a kebab restaurant.).

The post-industrial transition implies a rise of small businesses as a result of the shift to flexible specialization modes of production in manufacturing and multifarious forms of outsourcing and subcontracting in manufacturing and services (Kloosterman and Rath 2003: 10). Deregulation, part of the neoliberal political program many countries adapted after 1980, also increased the possibilities for small firms in low value-added activities (Kloosterman and Rath 2003: 8; Bonacich 1993). When employment opportunities declined, many Turkish migrants started to set up doner restaurants by using their savings and bank credits. They are heavily indebted to the banks or relatives, and they rely basically on family labour. But sometimes, they employ new Turkish migrants as well. The owners of the shops and their family members barely make their livelihood under the conditions of crisis by working hard and long hours.

“We borrowed some money from relatives... we make our living with difficulty after paying the debt services. Because, conditions are gradually worsening due to the crisis... We cannot meet other expenditures. Since I ventured into this business I can just pay the rent of the shop but not my house rent.” (Y.U., 53, (1990) 2004, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

“The whole family works together here except one employee. We share what we earn. My younger daughter has social insurance as well as the worker. The cook is my nephew... I got residency for him... We open the shop at ten o'clock in the morning and it is open until 12 at night every day, Saturdays and Sundays included. No holidays or fiestas.” (M.F.Ö., 55, (1988) 1991, owner of a kebab restaurant.)

Self-employed and small business owner Turkish migrants generally meet their new workforce demands from their home towns and make them work long hours with low wages and unregistered.

“I work 6 days a week, 11 h a day. No paid annual leave. Our life standard is zero. I leave the house eight in the morning and turn back ten at night. Life goes past in between work and home.” (M.D., 26, (2008) 2009, works in a kebab restaurant.)

The majority of registered workers cannot get social benefits fully as a result of being registered as part-time workers even though they work full time. According to interviewees, there were very few Turkish migrants who had a doner business in Milan before the 2000s, North African Arabs were dominating the sector and it was apparently more profitable then. The tendency towards self-employment among Turkish migrants in Milan increased particularly between 2009 and 2010 when the economic



crisis in Italy and the world intensified. This was not a coincidence. Self-employment is other than being a way of escaping from unemployment; it was also facilitated by laws such as Turco-Napolitano and Bersani laws (Ambrosini 2013a: 188). Propelled by state policies and designed to combat unemployment and lighten the burdens of the public welfare system, the widely hailed new category of ethnic entrepreneurs has emerged with long working hours and low remuneration but without adequate social protection (Schireup et al. 2006: 3).

Self-employment of migrants is supported by the governments, because it decreased unemployment, hence lowered unemployment payments. It is open to debate if these '*entrepreneurs*' who work long hours and try to survive by using unpaid family labour but at the same time employ workers and appropriate their surplus value proletariat or not. It can at least be said that they have not climbed the social ladder in Italian society. Moreover, they even started to think about migrating again due to gloomy future prospects in Italy.

### Citizenship and Belonging

Turkish migrants in Milan are generally from Pazarlık, Maraş in Turkey. They had been socially excluded because of their ethnicity and/or religious belief in Turkey. In spite of that, their socio-spatial belonging to Milan is quite weak. This is affected by different factors such as the following: Turkish migration to Italy is comparatively new; it is not institutionalized, hence they do not have associations to protect their rights and strengthen their solidarity; Italy was considered as a transit country not a main destination, and most importantly, changing migration patterns in parallel with the deepening economic crisis. Migration is becoming more and more a temporary and a protracted situation for the most precarious parts of the societies. As a result, migrants drifting from one place to another do not develop strong socio-spatial belonging.

Migrants from Turkey are generally located in the lower status areas at the periphery of Milan together with the most disadvantaged parts of Italian working class, pensioners and domestic migrants. According to the current trends in migration, settling in one place is getting more difficult than ever. Even the earlier migrants who consider themselves more settled than the new ones cannot foresee their future in Italy, let alone moving into higher status areas near the centre. They cannot convey their problems and claims on civic, political and social rights through institutions set up by them as a result of increasing temporariness of their migration. Hence, they cannot participate in the political life of the country they reside in. Increasing future uncertainties together with economic crisis aggravate their concerns on the one hand and undermine their belonging on the other. Furthermore, their position as migrants, the socio-spatial exclusion they are exposed to and not having full citizenship rights exacerbate the weakening of their belonging. They are at best denizens (Riva and Zanfrini 2013: 2). Even the ones who migrated in the 1980s and 'succeeded' to some extent are not in a different situation. They cannot vote in the local and general elections, because they are not citizens. Almost all the Turkish migrants in Italy who were interviewed in this study mentioned that they did not want to have Italian citizenship while complaining about lack of social welfare services, infrastructure, housing and political representation.

Even if they wanted to have Italian citizenship, it would be very difficult to get it no matter how long they have been in Italy.

“I have not applied, because it will not change anything. You are the same stranger for them. You seem Italian on the identity card but your look is different anyway.” (Focus group P1, 52, (1988) 1990, subcontracted worker.)

According to Ambrosini (2013a, b) and Campani (2007), local policies on integration vary and access to benefits and resources of local social policies can be very limited for immigrants.

“Several local governments in Northern Italy, such as Milan’s, have restricted access to publicly owned social residences, introducing criteria related to official residence seniority. In recent years, as we will see, many local governments have developed a policy of exclusion of immigrants, motivated by security reasons, of priority for national citizens for access to various social benefits and of defence of the cultural identity of the territory.” (Ambrosini 2013a: 5; 2013b)

## Future Uncertainties

Return migration or migrating elsewhere is often mentioned by the migrants in Milan. Increasing economic uncertainties, escalating political pressures and rising unemployment in Turkey discourage them from returning back. Most of them cannot see themselves permanently staying in Italy as well. The main reason is the prevailing economic crisis. They live in a state of limbo.

“I am thinking of returning. But, when I am saying this I am not sure. If the situation is better in Turkey I would return. But if terror in Turkey starts again and people start dying in the mountains I do not feel comfortable, it makes me have question marks in my mind. Why should we return to that kind of country?” (A.B., 45, (1987) 1996, owner of two kebab restaurants.)

Drifting from one place to another, basically following the footsteps of capital (jobs), is one of the most salient aspects of migrations in the global era. Direction of labour migrations has always been towards the places where the rate of capital accumulation is higher. As the movement of capital between the most advantageous spaces accelerates, movement of people also accelerates, though not as fast. There are more barriers for movements of people than capital. Closing legal channels for immigration stimulates unforeseen escalation in undocumented migration through ‘backdoors’ and cheapens the labour as well (Purkis 2006: 56). Migratory movements in the global era are not the type of phenomena that start sometime and end at another.

Feeling of temporariness in the face of the conditions beyond their control has high potential of transforming into reality. Also, feelings of temporariness and future uncertainties cause very real effects in their lives such as not being able to plan their lives, avoiding to apply citizenship even though they comply the conditions necessary for it, again not trying to organize and claim their rights.

## Conclusion

Policies designated to overcome the crisis in the world economy undermine already weak segments of society by making them redundant and impoverished. They are taking away their means of subsistence, hence forcing them to leave their homelands. Cheap labour pool necessary for the capital is extended by diverse strategies. The mechanism which facilitates meeting cheap labour requirements of the regions, where capital accumulation is accelerated, with labour supply that consists of unemployed and pauperized parts of the societies is migrant trafficking. Almost all of the Turkish people who have migrated to Milan since the second half of the 1980s *'have chosen'* this way.

Our analysis of the mobility of migrants from Turkey/Pazarlık to Milan needs to be understood in complex and relational ways. Methodologically, we have tried to connect the micro level of individuals with the macro level of structure by using insights from a life course approach and incorporating it with relational one. Hence, we argued that material (unequal development, deepening economic crisis, increasing unemployment, tightening immigration policies that encourage temporariness) and non-material (perception of these factors by migrants and feelings of losing control over their own lives) aspects of everyday life increase migrants drifting from one space and time to another. Although we use a critical approach to explain the triggering factors of international migration, we also find theories on the mechanism of continuation and resilience of migration over time very useful. Thus, we tried to link different theoretical approaches and adopted the term mixed migration to take into account the multiple and changing natures of migration at the beginning and on the way, because in our understanding, migration is a consequence of intertwined, complex and divergent dynamics. Pazarlık is a migrant-sending town, where most of its population is living abroad. At the beginning, intersections of economic, political, cultural, spatial and temporal aspects affected migration from Turkey to Milan, but in the course of time, migration became self-perpetuated as well.

Currently, migration is becoming a protracted situation for the significant part of migrants keep over the world. Migrants keep drifting from one place to another in the face of future uncertainties. Turkish migrants in Italy form a small group. Majority of them are from Pazarlık. They are one of the most disadvantaged groups of the society in Turkey or anywhere else in the world, because of their class, economic vulnerabilities, ethnicity, religion and political ideas. Majority of them are Kurdish, poor and have basic education; they come from the most underdeveloped and unstable parts of Turkey; they had migrated several times internally and internationally before migrating to Italy; they performed several manual jobs; they were socially and spatially excluded in Turkey as well as in Italy. They are living in the lower status neighbourhoods in Milan. Italy was not their main destination, but they ended up in Italy. They worked informally and performed various temporary jobs until they regularized their situation. Most of them were men, and when they found settled jobs, they brought their family if there was one or married to girls from their village and brought them to Italy through family reunification. Majority of the earlier migrants, but not all of them, had formal jobs in the factories before the outsourcing of industries that intensified after the mid-2000s and the crisis in Italy in 2009, during which they became either unemployed or started to work in the ascending construction sector or labour-intensive service sector jobs. Some have chosen self-employment as a way of coping with unemployment.

But with the adverse effects of the crisis, they have become very vulnerable economically. Gloomy future prospects in Milan are making them thinking to migrate once again.

In this study, we have tried to point out important turning points and trends in individual migrant trajectories or life courses in line with the protracted nature of migration and to link them to the broader processes. We found out that not only comparatively new Turkish migrants but also migrants who spent some years in Milan and opened kebab restaurants cannot see a secure future in Milan especially after the 2009 crisis in Italy, which is part of the 2008 global crisis, and thinking to set off for migration once more. Although majority of them are thinking of returning to Turkey, unstable economic and political conditions in Turkey are holding them back. Being a migrant is becoming a protracted situation for the significant part of migrants in the era of deepening global economic crisis. We call these migrants drifting migrants referring to their common features such as being the most precarious and disadvantaged part of the working class wherever they may be, including the country of origin. They are unable to cling on or settle anywhere and drift from one place to another in order to survive. Their mobility is generally not a choice, but a necessity. They are the drifting migrants of the global age who are forced to be driven about to be able to maintain their existence.

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