

"If the peasant does not sh*t, the lord does not eat."¹

Labor Dependency and Migration Pathways in the Austrian
Agriculture
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¹ Hungarian proverb

ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at Hungarian migrant laborers in the Austrian agricultural sectors, specifically in the Burgenland region. The thesis will answer the question of '*How is the labor dependency in the agricultural sector of Austria on Eastern-European migrant workers reproduced?*'. I will look at this question in the context of the labor and mobility regimes of the European Union, Hungary, and Austria. In the analysis, I use the methodological paradigms of multisclarity and multi-sited research and use mixed methods of field observation, interviews, and other qualitative data collection. My analysis focuses on the actors of migration pathways, namely employers and work agents, the role of transnational social networks, and the redirection of reproductive costs in the reproduction of labor dependency.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The recent (and ongoing) COVID-19 pandemic has shed new light on several problems of how society is organized around the production of surplus value instead of the protection of human lives. Although the pandemic and the following state regulations brought an increase in precarity for laborers, in particular significant layoffs and grave health risks, the mentioned societal and productive relations did not change in essence. In most cases all over the world (on a nation-state level), the secured and smooth cycle of capital accumulation² is a priority over the livelihood and good health of the population. This manifests in Covid regulations that control private parties but do not limit how many people can work in the same room at the same time and do not reduce work hours. Or countries that introduce a "complete border lockdown"³ where only national citizens (or people who have permanent/temporary residence or are a family member of a national) are allowed to enter but allow a 'guest' labor force to come. The global chain of production and the labor-capital relation did not change.

Closed borders defined the past years, travel restrictions, lockdowns, etc., the symptoms felt by everyone. States, while in one way or another, try protecting their population, simultaneously must keep up the smooth cycle of capitalist production to avoid a total economic collapse. This requires compromise, the price of which, in the end, is paid by the working class. This compromise is seen as a side note put into all new regulations: "Except for work."

In the context of my research on labor dependency⁴ in Austria, even though the pandemic did not change the essential building blocks of the capitalist organization of production, it opened a window into these mechanisms. The pandemic revealed the issues of the global supply

² see Marx: Money-Commodity-Money'

³ see Hungarian regulations between end of 2020 and spring of 2021

⁴ Labor dependency refers to the phenomenon when the proper functioning of an economy is dependent on migrant labor force. I will elaborate on the labor dependency further in the Literature review section of my thesis.

chains of not just products but the supply of labor as well. Let us take a look at some of the more blatant symptoms of these issues and the compromises mentioned above in the case of Austria.

After the first COVID-19 cases were reported in Central-Eastern Europe at the beginning of March 2020, the national governments – although with varying immediacy and effectiveness – introduced safety protocols to ensure the population was protected. Hungary introduced mandatory quarantine for Hungarian citizens returning from abroad by the end of the month. On the 27th of March, the governor of Burgenland⁵ made a public statement:

*"Burgenland is massively negatively affected by this regulation because **we will lose urgently needed personnel** - especially in the health and care sector - at least for the next two weeks [...]. There are very close ties with Hungary in many economic sectors, in the labor market, and especially in the health and care sector. **We need the personnel from Hungary to be able to master this crisis situation.**"* – Hans Peter Doskozil (Governor of Burgenland)⁶ (translated by the author; emphasis added)

By the 1st of April, it became clear that agriculture faces a labor shortage besides the care sector due to the pandemic regulations. The head of the Chamber of Agriculture [Landwirtschaftskammer] in Burgenland, Nikolaus Berlakovich, gives a summary of their work and the most critical issues facing the agricultural producers in the Chambers' bi-weekly newspaper. In the 1st of April summary,⁷ he writes about a new online labor placement platform to counteract the labor shortage, but apparently, this was not enough since, on the 15th of April, he announced that:

⁵ One of the smallest regions in Austria, bordering with Hungary.

⁶ Official website of Burgenland (link: <https://www.burgenland.at/service/medienservice/aktuelle-meldungen/detail/ungarische-staatsbuenger-muessen-ab-heute-bei-einreise-nach-ungarn-in-14-taegige-quarantaene/>) Accessed on: 04.10.2022

⁷ <https://bglld.lko.at/kommentar-vom-mitteilungsblatt-der-bglld-landwirtschaftskammer-nr-7-01-04-2020+2400+3212542?env=bW9kZT1uZXh0JnBhZ2luZz15ZXNfXzMwJmN0PTQwJmJhY2s9MQ>

"The installation of the labor placement platform is just one example of the intensive work for our companies and is intended to ensure that enough workers are available. Commuter traffic in Hungary poses a particular challenge. Through my personal commitment and intensive talks with the responsible ministers, Köstinger, Edtstadler, as well as Foreign Minister Schallenberg and the Hungarian representatives, we succeeded in finding a solution. The important commuter traffic between Austria and Hungary is possible without restrictions." – Nikolaus Berlakovich⁸ (translation by the author)

Within effectively one and a half months into the pandemic, the smooth border crossing was ensured, despite the evolving and intensifying dangers of COVID-19. The supply of Hungarian workers was secured again. Still, in the coming years after 2020, new exceptions and deals will have to be made to keep it that way (see Chapter 4 for a more elaborate collection and analysis of the regulations).

The (additional) crisis of labor shortage in the care and agricultural sectors does not come as a surprise to the representative of the Austrian Union Federation (Österreichische Gewerkschafts Bund [ÖGB]), who tells me that about 80% of the total employed workers in Burgenland are Hungarians, either living there or commuting from Hungary (however according to official statistics, the rate of Hungarians employed in Burgenland is about 14%⁹, without taking into account the people illegally employed there). On my excursions with the union and its attached organization Sezonieri¹⁰ in Burgenland, the 80% number did not seem exaggerated. My everyday experience is that in almost every café, restaurant, and shop, I could speak Hungarian, and every time we approached seasonal workers in the fields, the only time

⁸ <https://bgld.lko.at/kommentar-vom-mitteilungsblatt-der-bgld-landwirtschaftskammer-nr-8-15-04-2020+2400+3218078?env=bW9kZT1uZXh0JnBhZ2luZz15ZXNfXzMwJmN0PTM5JmJhY2s9MQ>

⁹ see Table 1 and Table 2

¹⁰ Sezonieri is an organization which prepares excursions to Austrian agricultural production sites and provides information leaflets and other useful materials to workers. I joined several such trips in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021.

we had to talk in German was when the bosses arrived at the site too. In Burgenland especially, the high level of reliance on the Hungarian labor force is evident for anyone traveling there,

To gain insight into this, in my thesis, I will answer the question: *'How is the labor dependency in the agricultural sector of Austria on Eastern-European migrant workers reproduced?'* With the supporting questions: 'What is the role of transnational social networks in the reproduction of labor dependency?' and 'Who are the actors of the reproduction of labor dependency?'.

The goal of my thesis is twofold: first, to establish the dependency of Austria on the smooth supply of Eastern-European labor force (and within that, Hungarian labor) in the context of intra-European Union inequalities. Second, within the framework of transnational migration, to examine the reproduction of this dependency.

The thesis consists of three parts: 1) Methodology: In this chapter, I introduce the mixed methodology, which consists of the review of macro-level statistics, interviews with key stakeholders, and their analysis; 2) Transnational Labor Supply (Literature Review): In this chapter, I will argue that Austria is dependent on the inflow of Eastern-European labor and provide a theoretical context for analyzing this dependency with the framework of transnational migration and the mechanisms of the (re)production of intra-EU inequalities; 3) Context of Labor Dependency: In this chapter, I will provide a short overview of the history of inter-state relations between Austria and Hungary up until the EU accession of Hungary in 2004, in the framework of World-Systems Analysis. The context chapter also reviews the macro-level actors and the inequalities of the two nation-states. Starting with the institutional actors, I will review key decisions that ensure the smooth labor supply, introduce the concept of labor regimes and conduct a comparative study of Austria and Hungary. And through the introduction of the intra-EU mobility regime, the hardships of settlement in Austria, and cross-border labor activities. This chapter will point toward my following analysis and contextualizes the transnational

migration pathways between Austria and Hungary; 4) Analysis: The analysis will focus on the mezzo level of my case, the migrant labor in the Austrian Agriculture. In this section, I will introduce typologies of labor migration between Austria and Hungary and, through the use of cross-tables, show the relevant correlations between the typologies, which will be at the core of my analytical contributions. In this chapter, I will focus on the actors and mechanisms of the reproduction of labor dependency.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: TRANSNATIONAL LABOR SUPPLY

Many – if not all – phenomena of sociological interest are integrated into and working according to the broad rules of global, political-economic mechanisms. My goal in this section of the thesis is to establish the theoretical foundation of these global mechanisms that outline the boundaries within which my analysis lies and to outline the main sociological fields that my study is contributing. I will contribute to the literature on Political Economy, Global Inequality, and Migration Studies.

2.1 UNEQUAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE WORLD SYSTEM

Political economy, as the study of the relationship between markets, the state, and society, is an unavoidable field for my research. In this analysis, I will specifically use the Marxist, critical understanding of the political economy, which defines the relationship of market and state as dialectically integrated into each other and into productive relations that affect societal ties (Marx, 1995[1852]). Thus, critical political economy is a structural frame in my thesis that guides and contextualizes not just my analytical tools, which are embedded into it, but the other theoretical fields as well.

To operationalize political economy and to define the dimensions by which I will analyze my case, I would like to introduce the framework of the world-systems analysis into my research (Wallerstein & Hopkins 1982; Wallerstein, 1976; Arrighi, 1985). According to this analytical framework, the mechanisms of the world economy, such as capital flow (investments) and labor flow (migration), can be traced back to the given territory's place in the world systems. There are three types of positions in this system: 1) Centrum; 2) Semi-Periphery; 3) Periphery. These positions vary on the scale of our analysis; for example, Europe can be

identified as a centrum in connection with Africa, which would be a periphery, but also Austria can be considered as a Centrum and Hungary as a (semi-) Periphery. Since world-systems analysis operates with regions, the analysis can also be downscaled from inter-state unequal relations to similar intra-state observations. In my thesis, I will use both to understand the migration pathways and the economic mechanisms guiding them.

These positions are defined by their accumulated capital and their place in the global division of labor, but also the directions in which capital and labor are flowing (capital to the Periphery and labor to the Centrum). These dimensions define a region's economic power in the world system and also limit states' political decision-making. I will utilize this analytical school to determine the state-level actors (institutions and relevant ministries) and to understand their decisions and processes as a result of their position in the world system.

Admittedly, the core works of World-Systems Analysis do have some unanswered questions, such as its failure to incorporate capital accumulation through innovation¹¹ and the incomprehensive explanation for class transformations (see Brenner, 1977). I also realize that the framework's special attention to nation-states might erase the complexities of capitalist geographies. Still, it does provide a grounded general large-scale framework for my analysis. The large-scale actors in my thesis are the EU and the two national (Austria and Hungary) regulation frameworks and their political-economic systems; thus, I will review the scholarly work related to them.

¹¹ Innovation in this context is referring to the concept of improving production efficiency. Production, through surplus value theory, consists of two parts: absolute and surplus labor, where absolute labor means the amount of work equal to the workers wage and surplus labor means where the work done only produces profit. Innovation in this sense is the minimizing of absolute labor through the efficiency of the method of production and the means of production. (See Marx: the production of absolute surplus-value)

The unequal nature of the European Union has been well documented and thoroughly researched by countless academics with different approaches, and understanding the EU as a supranational institutional actor in the World Systems is vital for understanding the inequalities (Borocz, 2009; Kahonec & Kurekova, 2011; Anderson, 2021).

In many cases, the EU provides an environment in which capital can flourish, partially thanks to its neoliberal overtaking of it in the 1980s. Since the EU operates on a supra-national level, it can effectively uphold economic hierarchies within it and between its member states (Cantat, 2016) and thus fixate the country's positions in the World Systems. According to Céline Cantat (2016), the ideology of "Europeanism" can provide a complex framework for analyzing these hierarchies and the structures/institutions that keep them intact. Another possible framework could be Jozsef Borocz's EU as an imperial project. This Borocz (2016) argues that the EU as a supranational institution operates as an instrument of coordination between Western- and Central-European capital through "enforcement chains." I believe these approaches are two sides of the same coin. While Cantat describes the hegemonic ideology of the EU that legitimizes the unequal positions of member states from above (producing Borocz's enforcement chains), Borocz explains why there is little to no resistance or effort to break from this hierarchy from the lower positioned states, as the ruling classes of the two regions coordinate in their interests.

Defining the positions of the two nation-states in the world system is essential to be able to analyze the displacement and emplacement strategies of migrants. Generally, in the World Systems school, the Periphery provides cheap labor (with weak labor laws, for example) for Centrum capital. The Centrum has a more favorable environment for its own labor force. Beverly Silver and Giovanni Arrighi (2000) elaborate further on this subject; according to their historical observations, labor movements saw a tremendous explosion after both World Wars, which led them to identify two types of labor regimes in Periphery and Core countries that did

not have communist revolutions. At the end of the Second World War, the "Communist Threat" and the establishment of the US hegemony led the US to make some amends with the labor movement as a way of avoiding a Bolshevik type or similar worker uprising in their territory. They call this (citing Zolberg) "labor-friendly" international regime, which spread to the "first world" countries of that time, including Austria. US-friendly periphery countries got another type of foreign policy, which the authors identified as a "development-friendly" regime, which promised "national self-determination" and assistance in "catching up" with developed countries. According to the authors, this strategy was an alliance between the pro-democracy bourgeoisie of periphery countries and the core countries, which created an environment in which labor-repressive regimes could achieve "economic miracles." The characteristics of the "development-friendly" regime can be observed in Hungary after the transition from state socialism and the country's full integration into the capitalist world system. The observation is also supported by both the work of Borocz and Cantat, as well as other authors studying the state of labor in contemporary Eastern Europe in the World Systems frame (such as Czirfusz, Ivanics, Kovai & Meszmann, 2019).

The ideologically legitimized inequality between EU member states can be seen in the organization of value chains and the division of labor within the EU. The integration of new national economies into the productive system of the EU is happening according to the needs of the Western European economies (Gerőcs & Pinkasz, 2019). The industry sector policies of many Eastern European nation-states are in line with the German neo-mercantilist regulation framework and are hierarchically under the German industry, in a servile relationship. The integration into the division of labor and the relocation of certain productive sections to Eastern Europe also caused the new member states to build a specialized labor force according to the needs of western companies, which only reinforces their subverted position. This partial re-industrialization does not work towards equalizing member states and also upholds a class

politics that keeps the Eastern European labor force relatively under-educated and cheap while also introducing labor force flexibilization policies to adapt to the productive needs of the Western companies (ibid.).

Thus, the EU, the supranational institutional context to the contemporary state of labor dependency, ideologically legitimizes unequal positions of nation-states as well as economic and political power and uses enforcement chains to uphold this hierarchical system within its borders.

2.2 LABOR DEPENDENCY AND TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

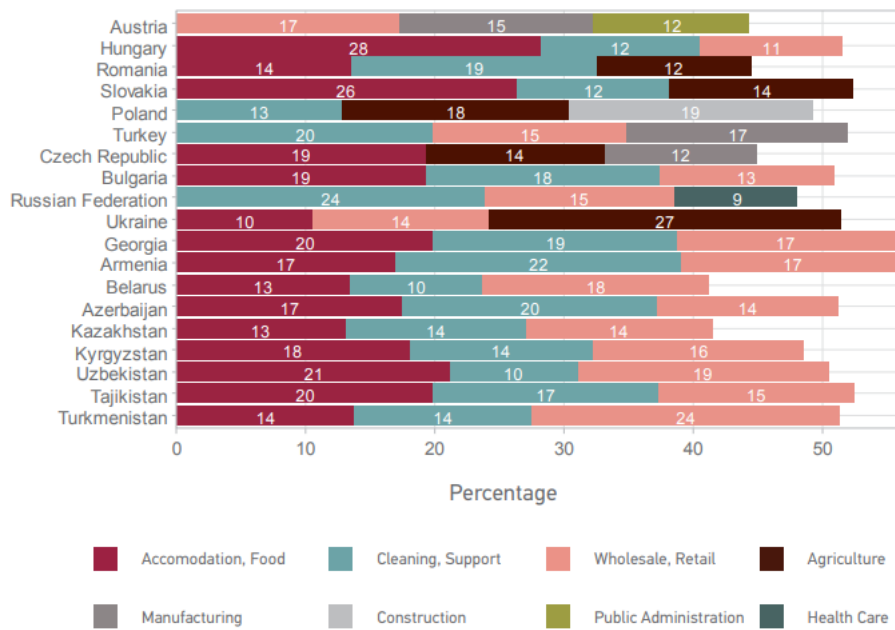
In this section, I would like to further expand on my usage of the term labor dependency and give a working definition of it and connect it to transnational migration theories. In my thesis, this term refers to the large percentage of the migrant labor force in Austria and that the disappearance of this workforce from the Austrian labor market would cause severe disruptions in the Austrian economy. Thus, it is dependent on it. In short: the smooth functioning of the Austrian economy depends on the continuous supply of migrant labor force.

Of course, labor dependency has a wide range of scholarly definitions and analyses. However, it varies mainly in its usage. The long-lasting threat of the aging population in Europe has first popularized the term and the connected calculations of labor dependency in the field of economics. At this point, labor dependency refers to the population who exit the labor force and are dependent on the working people, such as retirees who do not contribute to the capitalist production anymore. Their livelihood is dependent on state infrastructures which are in turn funded by the taxes paid by the wage laborers. The aging population becomes a problem through this since the more people exit the workforce, the more they burden the infrastructures, and the fewer people are contributing to them.

Since then, a lot of other models have been built by economists to analyze and problematize the aging population, some also vehemently criticizing the original model deeming it agist (see OHCHR, 2020). A possible solution discussed both in economics and migration scholarship is the integration of the migrant labor force into European populations, which discourse became widely active after a publication of the UN titled: "Replacement Migration: *Is It a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?*" (2001). In economics, a metric for migrant labor dependency was created as well, based on the previous models. According to this model, the Migrant Labor Dependency Ratio (MLDR) is the number of migrant workers per 1000 workers in the labor force (IOM, 2008; p. 440).

Using this calculation, the MLDR in Austria is very high. According to the data of the Labor Ministry of Austria ([Bundesministerium Arbeit]; 2021), in 2021, the total workforce potential was 4,136,682 people, while the labor force potential of people with a migrant background was 1,219,173. Based on these numbers, the MLDR in Austria is 294, indicating a high dependency (the above referenced IOM report considers a ratio of 72 in Japan in 2008 high). However, the dependency rate is probably even higher since this data only includes workers with a migrant background who are settled in Austria and leaves out the number of people who commute or migrate seasonally.

The supply of migrant labor has to be continuous for the Austrian economy, but another important question is: which industries are most lacking such labor? According to a policy evaluation (Vogtanhuber, 2020), the emplacement of migrants from the East are in Food, Cleaning, and Agricultural industries, which are sectors that are abandoned by native Austrians. Thus, the emplacement mechanism compensates for structural discrepancies in the Austrian labor market.



I. Figure: Top 3 most popular job types of immigrants in Austria

The field of migration studies provides a rich body of literature that theorizes mechanisms of migration; however, I will use the transnational migration paradigm in my thesis. The paradigm of transnational migration and transnational social spaces open up new pathways for migration scholars to theorize migration. Many migrants, although settled, lead transnational lives, engage with transnational organizations, and maintain relations in their "home" or "sending" countries. But not just migrants can be transnational. Financial, religious, or political organizations can also conduct their activities transnationally (Glick-Schiller et al., 1994; Pries, 2001). The transnational migration paradigm allows us to see actions, relations, and movements as more than cross-border, but instead as a network in which actors (individuals as well as organizations) with vastly different amounts of power participate and involve themselves in both the spaces of "host" and "home" countries. The transnational migration scholarship is adamant about deconstructing the methodological nationalism¹² found in other approaches to migration (as well as in different fields of social science) (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002).

¹² World Systems Analysis although is prone to methodological nationalism, in my thesis I try to deconstruct this by doing a multi-space analysis, with a special focus on transnational actors.

Instead of looking at migration within the boundaries of a nation-state, the transnational migration scholars propose that the analysis should extend beyond the borders and mechanisms of "push" and "pull," as well as the actors of said mechanisms be looked at simultaneously.

Moving toward the more specific mechanisms of the labor dependency, I will focus on particular aspects of the political economy of Austria, Hungary, and the European Union, namely the ways that they take charge of labor migration. Thus, I will introduce the labor regimes and the mobility regimes that take effect in the migrant workers' lives and the approach of the migration industry scholars.

I argue that in terms of the labor regimes, the embeddedness of migration industries into the political economy of Austria and Hungary (and the EU in general) and the modes of displacement and emplacement of labor migrants play a crucial role in understanding the motivation and patterns of movement. Although some migration scholars believed that the intra-EU borders were eroding and becoming fuzzy (van der Velden & van Naerssen, 2010), the COVID-19 border measures last year showed that the internal mobility regimes are quickly revitalized and hardened by each nation-state. I believe that mobility regimes and labor regimes are an essential part of the political economy and play a key role in revealing new evidence of unequal positions and migration patterns, which I will write about more extensively in my context chapter.

The way I use the migration industry in my analysis is limited to the actors who participate in facilitating labor migration for financial gains; thus, it is closer to the definition of Hernandez-Leon (2005). However, in thinking about the actors of the industry in my case, it is crucial to identify them on several levels, ranging from Temporary Work Agencies to regional or state-level decision-makers. Thinking with these actors, the terms facilitation and financial gain are expanded and become more abstract. The functions of the state in the migration industry are to incorporate it into the mechanisms of the state economy, regulate the workings

and different actors of the industry, and discipline the movements of the labor force. Thus, when examining the states' position in the migration industry, three stages have to be taken into account "host," where I discuss emplacement (following Caglar & Glick-Schiller, 2021), border, where I look at the disciplining mechanisms of movements (Pecoud, 2013), and the "home" where I try to explore the displacement mechanisms (following Miraftab, 2014).

3 METHODOLOGY

In my thesis, I deployed several methodological approaches through which I collected key information to answer my research question: *"How is the labor dependency in the agricultural sector of Austria on Eastern-European migrant workers reproduced?"*

I used five key data collection methods to base my analytical contributions. This chapter will present each separately, including the type of data they provided and their limitations. The five methods are 1) Field observations in Burgenland with Sezonieri; 2) Qualitative data from the Hungarian language office of the Austrian Union Federation; 3) Field observations in Western Hungary (Jánossomorja) and qualitative data from locals in Jánossomorja; 4) Three interviews: with a union representative, a Hungarian agricultural worker working in Austria, and a regional family supports social worker; 5) Review of statistical databases of EU, Hungary, and Austria.

Through this mixed methodology, I employ multiscalar (Caglar & Glick-Schiller, 2018) and multi-sited analysis (Miraftab, 2014) in my thesis. The multiscalar analytical framework points to the observation that mechanisms of migration are the result of decisions and structures on all levels. I identify the macro level as the EU regulatory framework and nation-state level measures, providing context for my case. Here I will review the history of the inequalities of the two nation-states and provide insight into the labor and mobility regimes which frame the reproduction of labor dependency. On the mezzo level, my analysis focuses on work agencies and Austrian employers, who structure and shape migration pathways and constitute the mechanisms of the reproduction of labor dependency. My micro-level analysis focuses on the importance of transnational social networks and their utility in facilitating labor migration. The multi-sited analysis is rightly recognizing that migrants do not exist in only one space and that in the case of labor migrants, the several spaces, in many cases, take different functions in the

productive and reproductive spheres of life. In my analysis, I will consider both the Austrian and Hungarian spaces.

3.1 FIELD OBSERVATIONS IN BURGENLAND WITH SEZONIERI

One crucial data collection method is the field observations I made during my trips with Sezonieri in the fall of 2020 and the spring and summer of 2021. Sezonieri is an NGO that specializes in helping Eastern-European seasonal workers in Austria. They are closely tied to the Austrian Union Federation, which provides funds to produce information leaflets in several languages (such as Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Slavic languages). The cooperation of the union and Sezonieri also manifests on the trips. When we arrive in the field, a local union representative is waiting for us with a car and acts as a guide as we visit the farms in the area.

We have visited over 30 farms in Burgenland during the trips and talked with over 150 workers. The conversations were more similar to a focus group interview (we talked to all the workers simultaneously) and lasted about 15-20 minutes (they were short for two reasons: the first is that the people had to get back to their work, and the second is, that the owner or the boss took about this amount of time to arrive at the site, and workers were uncomfortable talking with us in their presence). The conversations were in the workers' native language, most of the time Hungarian, where I asked questions and translated them to English or German for Sezonieri and the union representative.

These trips provided me with a general overview of the farm structure in Burgenland. They pulled my attention to the high presence of the Hungarian labor force there and the general labor conditions of these workers. This information helps construct on my macro-level the structural problems in the Austrian labor market and connect these structural problems with the labor supply chain in the mezzo-level analysis.

However, the field observations were led by the data needs of the union and not directly my thesis. Thus, this data is limited to labor conditions, including wages, equipment, and overtime (which changed according to whether the boss was there or not), the number of workers on the farm, size of the farm, the relationship with the boss, and whether the workers know their rights.

3.2 QUALITATIVE DATA FROM THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE OFFICE OF THE AUSTRIAN UNION FEDERATION

Over the past two years of my research, the most reliable informant were the workers of the Hungarian language office of the Austrian Union Federation. I first got to know them through Sezonieri, and during this time, I was in regular contact with the office through email and phone communications and had an interview with the head of the office (discussed below).

The office workers have an experience of over 20 years of the situation of Hungarian migrant workers in Austria since the function of the office is to provide help with disputes with the bosses over wages, overtime, equipment, and even retirement fund issues. This gave me insights for my mezzo-level analysis of the employers and work agents and the micro-level insights about the living conditions of different migrant laborers.

Sadly, they do not lead a statistical database about the demography of migrant workers or any specific numbers of their employment in Austria. Thus, I rely on the qualitative observations they have made during their years of work in this field.

3.3 FIELD OBSERVATIONS IN WESTERN HUNGARY

In the spring of 2022, I went to the village of Jánossomorja, in Győr-Moson-Sopron county in North-West Hungary, about 4-5 kilometers away from the Austrian border, on two field visits,

where I walked in the village, visited social spaces, and talked to the locals about seasonal workers and other cross-border labor activities of the local population.

During these field trips, I have talked with seven locals for a longer time, two people in the village library, three people at the bakery, and two people in the municipality office. All of them corroborated my information, that there are a lot of seasonal workers in the village and the area and that a lot of locals engage in cross-border labor. However, the local population is not doing seasonal work anymore, but Hungarian migrants from Eastern Hungary and Transylvania are engaging in such work. This part of my fieldwork provided information about the social dynamics connected to transnational networks and insight into historical changes in the migration pathways.

Even though the eastern Hungarians live in these villages, the locals told me that they are socially isolated from the village population. Thus the locals do not know seasonal workers personally. They accounted that the social isolation also comes from the cyclical migration (not just the housing problems) since they work from dawn until dusk. They spend it with the other seasonal workers when they get free time. Then, when they have more time in the winter, they go home.

The local social worker has a lot of eastern Hungarian seasonal worker clients, and she offered to help with recruiting interviewees. However, over a period of one month, none of her clients volunteered to give me an interview. According to the social worker, they were afraid to talk about their situation because the informal work agents are dangerous people, and the workers could lose their jobs. Because I asked the social worker for help, I also suspect that her position as an authority figure did not encourage people to give me interviews.

Thus, these field observations are limited to the perspectives of the local population, who do not engage in cross-border labor. However, their networks did include such workers, and

even though they did not utilize it for getting a job in Austria, their network extended transnationally.

3.4 INTERVIEWS

I conducted three interviews with people who have key knowledge and extensive experiences about labor migration between Austria and Hungary and migrant workers as well. Thus I consider them (semi-)expert interviews. Since the purpose of my interviews was to map the different perspectives and to collect additional information, the interviews were not standardized. The interviews were semi-structured to leave space for the interviewees (and me) to expand on specific topics or issues they find more important. The interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour and 10 minutes and were made either at a place chosen by the interviewee (such as a café or office space) or online. The following section will describe the interviewees and their relevance to my case.

I made the first interview with the head of the Hungarian language office, who, in the past 21 years, worked for both ÖGB (Austrian Union Federation) and MASZSZ (Alliance of Hungarian Unions), both unions work with Hungarians who cross the border for work, illegal employees included. I got information concerning the changes in the bargaining position of labor and the challenges during COVID, and the deployed methods of labor organizing in the agricultural sector and their challenges. His work in the Hungarian language office also enabled him to give me a general overview of the changes in the cross-border labor activities of Hungarians over the past two decades, based on the intensity of his work and the types of problems the workers came to him with. This interview contributed very much to my mezzo-level analysis of outside facilitators of labor migration and the farm structure in Burgenland.

I did the second interview with a Hungarian agricultural worker who has been working in Austria on the same farm for more than 17 years. I collect information from him about the "push

and pull" factors of migration for my macro-level contextual observations and his individual motivations and reasoning for working in Austria. He also told me about the changes he sees over time in the Austrian agricultural sector in terms of the labor force. I also collected information about the process and methods of recruitment strategies, the advantages and disadvantages of employing foreign labor, which is very useful for my mezzo level analysis, and the challenges that COVID posed for agricultural production.

The third interview is with a Hungarian regional family support social worker who has been working in this region for 16 years. From here, I collected information about the living conditions of the poorest families and illegally employed workers in Western Hungary and the problems with informal recruitment. She also told me about the state support system (such as social work, subsidies, and other institutional help) that needs to be employed in Hungary to compensate families who only have precarious seasonal work in Austria. Her interview was helpful in connecting the mezzo-level mechanisms of labor supply chains and recruitment strategies with the relevance of transnational networks in them.

The data I collected from the interviews are limited to the perspectives of the above-mentioned three people, who, although they were undoubtedly valuable informants, were merely observers of the most precarious workers and the employers as well. The perspectives of these two groups present a challenge to my thesis, and they remain observed in the analysis only through the eyes of outsiders.

3.5 STATISTICS

To put my analysis of the mezzo level of the reproduction of labor dependency into context, I looked at institutional mechanisms – the displacement and emplacement factors of migration –

through a review of national and EU level statistics, and notable national-level decisions and statistics will provide the basis for my work on the macro level.

The general numbers and trends will show me the magnitude of this question and provides a foundation which the other methods can build upon. The most important databases are Statistics Austria¹³; Eurostat¹⁴; Statista¹⁵; Hungarian Central Statistics Office¹⁶. One step closer to the specific field, it is important to also review and analyze the relevant EU regulations. As a supranational institution, the EU provides the regulatory framework for migration, agricultural production, economic relations, and – although to a lesser extent – labor, among others. (More or less) within the limits of this framework, the nation-state level decisions of Austria and Hungary have to be taken into account as well, since they are the (sovereign) state-level actors responsible for the orderly conduct of both economy and society and are the large-scale decision-makers who have the final say in the (from the perspective of my research relevant) specific regulations. Through these regulations and additional research conducted on these by other scholars, I will be able to construct a comparative labor regime model of the two countries and highlight the unequal relationship between them as well.

Examining the above-mentioned statistics and regulations helps me to establish to examine the political-economic context of the reproduction of labor dependency.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE ACCESS TO THE FIELD

Even though I tried to expand the list of interviewees, they were not accessible to me for a variety of reasons. 1) the farm owners in Austria, I had a phone number to one of them, but they did not return my calls for an interview, 2) the work agents and agencies, whom I tried to reach

¹³ https://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/index.html

¹⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

¹⁵ <https://www.statista.com>

¹⁶ <https://www.ksh.hu/?lang=en>

via email without avail; and 3) the eastern Hungarian migrant workers, who probably out of fear of losing their job, also did not volunteer for interviews.

My efforts in the field were targeting seasonal workers specifically, with the goal of first doing participatory observation and later interviews. However, I failed to get a job as a seasonal worker, despite my best efforts (this was the summer of 2021). Based on some informal conversations with Sezonieri and union representatives, this could have been caused by the labor market is at capacity following growing unemployment during the COVID crisis. From my own side, however, there are other factors that probably played a role in this. 1) My transnational network only included union members on the Austrian side. Thus I had no connection which I could effectively utilize for getting a job. 2) Although I sent emails in German to several large producers in the Burgenland region, I did not get accepted (I suspect it also has something to do with me not having any work experience in agriculture). 3) I did not contact work agencies. I have checked over ten websites of formal Hungarian work agencies, but I found no information about whether they send people to Austria or not. These experiences support the observation that transnational networks play a large part in getting a job in Austrian agriculture. Because the formal work agencies do not advertise where they send workers, I suspect that people going to Austria through them either do not know beforehand that they would be sent there or through their networks find out which agencies do so.

4 CONTEXT

The goal of this chapter is to give a broad context within which my analysis lies, both in the sense of unequal positions in the capitalist world system and the macro-, state mechanisms that structure labor migration.

The chapter has two main parts, first, a historical overview of the inter-state relations between Austria and Hungary starting from the 18th century until today. The second section of this chapter will discuss the macro-actors of the production and reproduction of labor dependency. I will start with the comparative analysis of the labor regimes of both Austria and Hungary and highlight the critical dimensions of the regimes, which can be understood as displacement and emplacement factors in labor migration. The analysis of the EU mobility regime will follow, where I look at the bordering regulation context of the EU and Austrian migration and settlement regulations, as well as an overview of the most crucial border decisions since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

4.1 HISTORY OF INTER-STATE RELATIONS BETWEEN AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY

The boundaries of my thesis do not allow me to go into detail about why Austria can be identified as a Core state and Hungary as a Periphery state, but I will try to reiterate some key elements of historical context and economic characteristics that enable me to do so.

While the industrial revolution and the social changes were started in Western Europe in the 18th century, in Hungary, feudalism has only strengthened its position and the integration of the country into the capitalist world-system as a raw material producer and exporter country. In the Habsburg Empire, the relationship between the two territories was clearly distinguished into an

industrial and agricultural zone. We can see this most strongly in the rule of Maria Theresia, who established a double toll border within her Empire, dividing the Austrian (and now Czech) territory and the (Greater) Hungarian territory in a way that industrial products could flow cheaply to Hungary from Austria and agricultural products the other way around. It wasn't until the state-socialist period that the industry of Hungary started to dominate Agriculture. This is a clear core-periphery relation, as Hungary provides raw materials and Austrian industrial products dominate the Hungarian market.

Although the toll system changed over the next 100 years, this relation got embedded, and there was little progress in industrial production in Hungary. The 1848-49 bourgeois revolution and national independence war offered some strategies of economic "catching-up" to the core countries¹⁷, but since the uprising was defeated, none of these strategies were implemented. Only in the 1870s did the modernization of the country begin, when the Habsburg Empire simultaneously lost its dominant position in central Europe to the Prussian Empire and experienced a global economic crisis stemming from the decline of profitability. The following 30 years are historically described as the modernization period of Eastern Europe where:

The Centrum accumulated an unmanageable amount of capital under the given production conditions, leading to a profitability crisis. As a result, large-scale capital exports were launched to the (semi-) Periphery, which also led to geopolitical struggles over spheres of influence and geopolitical conflicts. In Eastern Europe, this process led to a significant inflow of credit and working capital, which took the form of state loans and investment in agricultural production, agriculture-related industries and the, and infrastructure (e.g., rail network construction). – Éber, Gagyí, Gerőcs, Jelinek & Pinkasz, 2014, 20.

This, however, only strengthened the unequal positions between Eastern and Western Europe through the high level of capital concentration in the multi-national banks and corporations, and through them, the investment capital was flowing back to the Centrum.

¹⁷ The two main (and competing) strategies were 1. the liberalization of agriculture (Széchenyi) and 2. protectionist industrialization (Kossuth). See: Kozma, 1996

In the aftermath of the 1st World War, Hungary (as a state administrative block) lost 2/3rd of its territory, and the Habsburg empire fell apart, not to mention the reparations the country had to pay for losing the war. This led up to a huge loan from the League of Nations to stabilize production in a country still reliant on the export of agricultural products and import of raw materials needed for industry. The global economic crisis of 1929 made things even worse since the price of agricultural products decreased most, which caused Hungary to be dependent on the German war industry. Austria being in a very similar situation, was completely devoured by Nazi Germany with the "Anschluss."

After the 2nd World War, Austria got out of the 'Eastern Block' in 1955 and joined the 'West' again, this relationship came to a halt, but the rapid industrialization of Hungary, the decreasing exchange value of eastern technology, war loans and later the Volcker-shock and its aftermath still kept the country in a somewhat (and over time increasing) financial dependency on the west. In the end, the 1989 system change fully integrated Hungary into the production chain of the capitalist world system into a state of Semi-Periphery (Cirfusz et al., 2019).

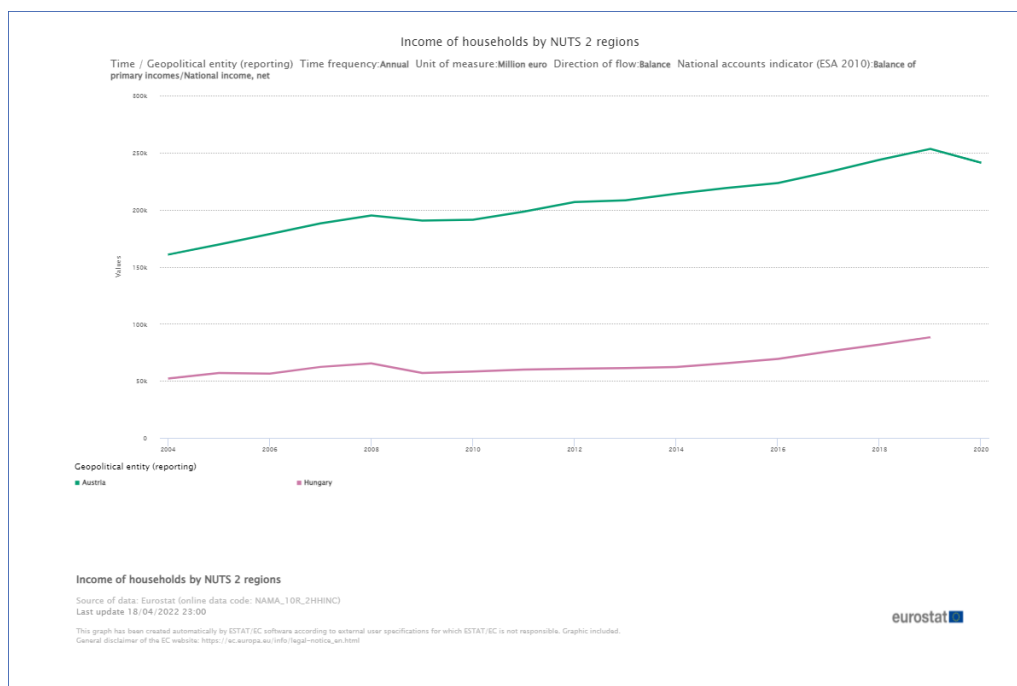
While Austria bears the characteristics of Core in its industry, financial power, and strong bourgeois and working-class (which can be seen in the very well-integrated and formalized union system), the Hungarian economy came to be the assembly line of Western-Europe (mainly Germany). The ever-weakening labor laws, the income inequality, and the freedom of movement make Austria a very desirable destination for Hungarian workers to migrate to, at the same time providing a cheap labor force to Austria, in which the Agricultural sector grows more and more reliant on the inflow of Eastern-European workers.

4.2 LABOR REGIMES

This subsection will go over some key aspects that define labor regimes, namely Wage politics, Class politics, and State and Status of Unions in the two nation-states between 2004 and 2021. Elaborating on these three points will highlight the essential inequalities between Austria and Hungary and get us closer to explaining the labor movement towards the former. The inequalities in labor regimes act as displacement (in the case of Hungary) and emplacement mechanisms (in the case of Austria).

4.2.1 Wages/wage politics

Wages and Wage politics is one of the labor regime's defining dimensions because since a worker is at the same time a consumer who has to reproduce themselves and their labor power, their wages define their worth in not only the capitalist eyes but also their quality of life. Wages and wage politics can also represent the antagonism between labor and capital and the side on which the states have chosen to stand.



2. Figure: Average annual income of households in Austria and Hungary

It would be easy just to bring up the fact that the Austrian mean net income in 2019 was 2301 euros a month, while in Hungary, it was only about 700 euros, but it is more complicated than that. Based on 2015 European Union data Jan Drahokoupil and Agnieszka Piasna (2018) researched the wage difference between the countries of Central-Eastern Europe and their Western counterparts. The authors considered the most common explanation for wage differences which is labor productivity. They made a measurable and comparable proxy for labor productivity with the characteristics of workers, work organizations, and firms. They found that the wage differences are even higher between these two regions than the average wages let on. Instead of the labor productivity theory, they propose that Central-Eastern European countries developed a low-cost, low-wage model based on their findings¹⁸, which supports the thesis that Hungary (and CEE in general) integrated into the World System as a semi-Periphery.

4.2.2 Class politics

By class politics here, I mean, on the one hand, a state's stance on the conflict between labor and capital and, on the other hand, the target of welfare systems and policies. This is part of a labor regime since, besides wages, these support systems help a chosen class or position of the society in their reproduction.

The Hungarian scientific association Helyzet Műhely recently published a journal volume (2019) discussing the current Hungarian government FIDESZ's social politics and political economy. In the introduction piece for the book, they call the system in place and evolving since the 2010 authoritarian accumulation regime, which runs through the whole journal. Czirfusz and his co-authors provide a historical analysis of Hungarian labor's long March down, in which they characterize the politics of this system as reducing the agency of

¹⁸ this is beyond the scope of my paper, but other comparative studies of Central-Eastern Europe have observed a variety of development paradigms. See Cornel Ban, 2019

labor as much as possible in favor of capital; it reduces government support for the reproduction of labor and promotes societal polarization with explicitly supporting wage-laborers in opposition to people who do not do such labor.

On the other side, Tálos and Obinger (2010) call the Austrian system from the 1970s a corporatist-Conservative welfare regime, which bears some similarities with the Hungarian model, such as the benefits being tied to labor market participation. However, some differences distinguish the Austrian state from the Hungarian, namely that Austria preserved its welfare characteristics. Although it went through some significant changes over the years, it still aims to protect the status of wage earners.

Altogether in class politics, the core guiding ideology of the policy-making of the two states is similar, but it seems that Austria makes more effort toward the sliding middle-class, while Hungary mostly subsidizes the upper-middle class.

4.2.3 The state and status of unions

Unions historically have been maybe the most crucial institutions of organized labor and the only ones that during the Cold War were allowed more power from the side of labor in the first world. The neoliberal shift and the collapse of the Soviet Union have also had a severe impact on Unions, thus the representation of labor. This unique position makes them an essential part of the labor regime analysis.

Both of our analyzed countries have seen a long decline in Union membership (although probably for different reasons) throughout the past thirty years. However, Hungary's authoritarian accumulation regime has dealt a more severe blow by rewriting the Hungarian Labor Law. In comparison with the previous labor law, the rights of a union have been gravely reduced, and the most important ones (such as consulting partners in ownership transfers and major layoffs) have been transferred to the Work Councils. Lehocky (2013) summarized the

new changes as a shift from the labor law assigning *rights* to employees and *duties* to employers to the opposite.

The situation of unions in Austria is somewhat better. According to Astleithner and Flecker (2018), Austrian trade unions are comparatively relatively strong and highly integrated into a stable setting for bargaining and corporatist concentration. However, in the past thirty years, the labor movement grew weaker, the membership has declined, and the neoliberal hegemony has made its way into the consensus-oriented institutional setting. However, through their legal integration into state institutions such as the Chamber of Labor, they still preserved some relevance. According to this, there also seems to be a rather large difference between how these states handle their unions, which would also make Austria a more desirable country to live in.

4.3 MOBILITY REGIMES

Since the free movement of labor within the EU is secured (most of the time, see below), the mobility regime analysis has to include the regulations for residence permits and citizenship as the legal framework of settlement practices, besides the bordering practices.

The bordering practices usually come into play as tools for disciplining migration, regulating the inflow of workers, and formalizing their movement (Pecoud, 2013). The intra-EU borders, however, are different and their disciplining function is far less visible than the outside borders of the EU. Since the EU is officially upholding the right to free movement, the citizens of the EU can normally cross borders without a visa or passport and reside in the destination country. Unsurprisingly, the section dedicated to free movement on the European Commission website has a total overlap with the free movement *of workers* section (European Commission Website, 2021), unsurprising based on the history of migration policies in Europe (Karatani, 2005). Thus, the obvious conclusion of the lack of intra-EU border control is also to

ensure the steady supply of cheap labor force and maintain a strong economy in the Western parts of the EU.

An interesting development in the border control practices emerged during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 when the nation-states of the EU made independent decisions to close the borders and limit entry for EU citizens as well. Two things became more visible here that are important for our case: one, that Austria is largely dependent on the Eastern-European labor force, both in Agriculture and in care work (see Introduction chapter, Vogtanhuber, 2020 and Cosma, Ban & Gabor, 2020). This can be seen in the special exception policies for seasonal workers as well (Humer & Spiegelfeld, 2020, p. 31-33.). Two that a large part of the seasonal labor force was only informally employed, which became highly visible during the border checks, which for the permission of entry required an official paper of employment. According to my seasonal worker and union informants, this resulted both in a spike in the number of formally employed seasonal workers as well as a new industry for forging such papers.

However, the free movement of EU citizens only secures temporary emplacement in an EU member state. According to EU regulations, the legal timeframe in which an EU citizen is allowed to stay in another EU state without any conditions or formalities is maximized by three months. After that, they have to submit themselves to the immigration authorities of the given state and fulfill the requirements of the longer-term stay (Directive 2004/38/EC). In the case of Austria, this means a strict screening process, almost the same as for non-EU citizens. As an EU citizen, there are three ways you can stay longer than three months in Austria: 1. You have employment in the given country (you can reside there until your employment ends); 2. You have proof of sufficient financial means and health insurance (this means about 13,000 euros for a year in Austria); 3. You are registered in an Austrian school or institution as a student (the sufficient means apply here as well).

The mobility regimes of the EU and Austria ensure that in the normal functioning of global supply chains, the supply of labor remains steady and secure, but they are not shielded from global events, such as COVID, which can cause even a full stop in the labor supply with the reinstitution of hard borders. In this context, let us now examine the actors of migration pathways and the role of transnational networks in the reproduction of labor dependency.

5 CASE STUDY

In my analysis, I will present and organize the qualitative data I collected from three interviews with key informants in the region, on my field observations in Burgenland and Jánossomorja, and the qualitative data provided by the Hungarian language office of the Austrian Union Federation. In the case of Austrian agriculture, from the farmers' point of view, there are three types of employees: Management, permanent workers, and temporary workers. According to my interviewees, the union representative, and the agricultural worker, management is the only position where Austrians work. The permanent workers' positions are filled up with western Hungarians and the temporary workers' positions with eastern Hungarians. The two worker positions require two different approaches to the maintenance of the labor supply. While the permanent positions require that the employees stay at the company, which is done by structures of support and reasonable wages, with the temporary employees, the goal is to have a reliable source of cheap labor that delivers every year (more to this in the 'facilitators' subchapter).

At the time of the accession of Hungary to the EU, the temporary workers were mainly recruited from western Hungary, who over time established themselves in the Austrian labor market and ascended to the level of permanent workers. It was from 2014 that the temporary positions were filled up by eastern Hungarians and Romanian workers from Transylvania¹⁹. While western Hungarians got established in the Austrian labor market and achieved relative job security, as well as social and institutional connections, the need for temporary laborers did not significantly decrease. Below, a table of labor migration types and the original region of the

¹⁹ The majority of Romanian workers in Burgenland are Transylvanians (also most of the time from the Hungarian national minority), in the following text I will refer to these workers as either Transylvanians or eastern Hungarians.

workers is presented for an overview. (The detailed explanation of the table can be found in the typology section)

Since, for the temporary positions, based on my field observations, large and mid-size employers usually use external facilitators, the facilitators needed to look for other territories for cheap labor. This chapter is dedicated to analyzing the mechanisms and actors of this labor supply chain and how it contributes to the reproduction of labor dependency in the Austrian farms on migrant workers.

Based on this data, I will first construct a typology of migration pathways between Austria and Hungary, introducing the four dimensions of this typology with the help of tables: employment types, the employers, migration types, and the "home" spaces of migrants, to shed light on the different aspects that construct the migration pathways.

Secondly, I will conduct my analysis of the reproduction of labor dependency through the mezzo level actors of labor migration, such as the Austrian farmers (employers), who represent the demand side of the labor dependency, and the formal and informal work agents satisfying this demand. Thirdly, I will focus on the redirection of reproductive costs in the case of migrant laborers to expose the role of state actors in the reproduction of labor dependency. And lastly, I will provide an overall summary of my findings and arguments. With the information I collected from the interviews and my fieldwork, I created cross tables to organize and visualize different data and their correlation. The cross-tables are only representing the situation of Austrian Agriculture today. The changes over time I will discuss separately in the text.

5.1 TYPOLOGY OF MIGRATION PATHWAYS

This section is dedicated to introducing transnational migration pathways based on the qualitative data I collected in the field and through interviews. I will begin with the introduction of four typological dimensions of labor migration between Austria and Hungary.

The first dimension is types of migration, in which I will introduce four types based on the differences in the temporality of movement and the temporal aspect of the job. My informants in the union official told me that the people who usually get in touch with them are the workers who are established in the Austrian labor market. These workers have spent a long time working in Austria, some of them decided to move there completely, and others have decided to commute. The first category, *settled migrants*, describes people who migrated to Austria and already established residence there. Since they established residence in Austria, their labor is also located within the country's borders; thus, their transnational activities do not include work anymore, although according to the union, very often they started as commuting or temporary workers and settled later. The other group, which is in regular contact with the union, is the *commuters*. This category describes people who work in Austria but live in Hungary. They have long-term contracts, travel to their workplace every day, and receive state support²⁰ from both Austria and Hungary.

Unfortunately, the union is struggling with reaching non-permanent labor forces; thus, the information I have about them I collected on my field visits in Burgenland and Jánossomorja. The non-permanent labor force also has two categories, who, although they are both in precarious labor conditions, differ in how frequently and for how long they stay in Austria. One of these categories is *seasonal workers*, who, according to the locals in Jánossomorja, are working for a duration of three to six months. I marked the other category as

²⁰ As state support system I mean the social protection and assistance that the Austrian state usually provides for its citizens. e. g. family subsidies, retirement fund etc.

other temporary workers who are working in Austria with short-term contracts (1-3 months), not as seasonal workers but to fix immediate labor shortages.

The second dimension is the type of recruitment, in which I discuss the differences in self-and external facilitation and whether the employment happens through formal or informal channels. I base this typology on the information given to me by the union, the agricultural worker, and my observation on my field visits in Burgenland. The most important differentiation is facilitation. Self-facilitation, where the worker is using his own network and skills to get a job, according to the union, results in higher job security and long-term contracts. *Direct formal* recruitment means that the worker is directly employed by the company, and the recruitment was done by the company on formal channels (such as job advertisement), and *direct informal* recruitment type means that the worker is directly employed by the company, and the recruitment was done by the employer on informal channels (such as a reference from a friend or previous employee, which was the situation of my agricultural worker informant).

External facilitation, however, results in short-term contracts and precarious labor conditions for workers, according to the union and the social worker. The formal facilitator is a Work Agency company dealing with short- or long-term fulfillment of labor needs. They refer people to workplaces from their own pool of workers. *Work agent formal* category means that the recruitment happens through an external legal facilitator. These agencies function as intermediaries, as they have contracts with the worker and with the company, but the company does not have a direct contract with the worker. *Work agent informal* category, on the other hand, means an external facilitator, usually one person, who deals with the recruitment from their personal network.

The third dimension is the "home" of the worker, where I found three usual spaces of origin, Western Hungary, Eastern Hungary, and Transylvania. In my fieldwork in Jánossomorja, I found out from the locals and the social worker that a very high number of

temporary workers are from *Eastern Hungary* and *Transylvania*. They are Hungarian citizens (in the case of Transylvania double citizens) who, according to the union, started to engage in cross-border labor after the 2014 EU enlargement. Western Hungarians who live in the region close to the Austrian border started with cross-border labor in small numbers after the '89 transition and in larger numbers after the 2004 EU accession of Hungary. The “home” spaces of workers also describe certain qualities of the labor force, while the eastern “home” spaces today provide cheap, “unskilled,” temporary workers to the Austrian agriculture, while the workers from western Hungary can be characterized as “skilled” (or “semi-skilled”) and usually fill the permanent positions in the farms of Burgenland.

These three regions have different positions in the capitalist world system, which result from their economic integration after the dissolution of the socialist block and after the EU accession of Hungary in 2004 and of Romania in 2014. For all three regions, it can be said that the post-transition period brought de-industrialization, which resulted in a large, free labor force, which became especially mobile towards Western Europe with the EU (worker) mobility regime. With the EU economic integration (which secured the semi-periphereic position of Hungary) and following decades, the western and eastern Hungarian regions saw different development pathways, as the western region (especially the north-west, close to the Austrian border) saw a partial re-industrialization (although according to the needs of the German economy, see Gerőcs and Pinkasz, 2019), eastern Hungary stayed the region with the highest unemployment rate within the country. The free and later highly mobile labor in Transylvania, on the other hand, can be understood as a result of the dissolution of farm cooperatives (similar to other agricultural regions of Romania, see Cosma et al.) and the ensuing chaotic land ownership (see Verdery, 1999).

The fourth dimension is the size of the employer, based on the size of farms in Austria. I gathered the general numbers of Austrian farms from the European Commission report of

2016. The *large farms*, which are over 100 Hectares of agricultural land, made up 2.1%; *mid-size farms*, which are between 20 and 100 Hectares, made up 29.5%; and *small farms*, which are under 20 Hectares, made up 68.3% of all Austrian farms by number. Based on my field observations with Sezonieri, the farm structure of Burgenland is very similar to the country-wide one. During the field visits, I noted that most of the farms we visited were small to mid-size farms, according to the workers, and the union told me that there are 2-3 large farms operating in the area, which we did not visit, because the union was already in the process of establishing themselves by these companies and our local union guide told us that we should not jeopardize it, with "such guerilla actions."

The intersections of these dimensions are creating different modalities of dependency in the Austrian farms. You can see an example below, where the workers from Western Hungary are prevalently engaged in migration that presumes long-term presence in Austria, while workers from Eastern Hungary and Transylvania prevalently engage in short-term labor migration.

1. Table: Type of Migration and "Home" of Worker

	Western Hungary	Eastern Hungary	Transylvania
settled migrants	3	1	1
commuters	3	1	1
seasonal workers	1	3	3
other temporary workers	2	3	3

3: Prevalent; 2: Usual; 1: Unusual

Source: Assessment based on own qualitative data

5.2 ACTORS OF MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Based on the accounts of the union representative and the Hungarian agricultural worker and my field observations, the demand side actors of the migration pathways can be divided into two cooperating fractions: the employers and the external facilitators, meaning the formal and

informal work agents, who function as a part of the migration industry. In this industry, I argue, the labor dependency is reproduced by the demand for cheap migrant labor by Austrian farmers, which is satisfied through the supply chains of work agents originating from different geographical regions. Through the following subsections of Farms/Employers and Facilitators, I will be exposing this reproduction.

With the help of the above-described dimensions of typologies, throughout this section, I will introduce cross-tables I created based on the qualitative data I collected and provide a guide to reading them, which will show important correlations of certain categories.

5.2.1 Farms/Employers

I introduced three sizes of farms (employers) before, which represent the demand side of the labor supply. These categories also differ in the fluctuation of labor needs (the amount of work and workers needed changes over the span of one year), visibility (for unions, state institutions, and the public), and usual recruitment strategies. Below, you can see the first cross table, based on the qualitative data of the union and my field observations in Burgenland, which shows the prevalence of recruitment strategies in the different sizes of farms.

2. Table: Recruitment type and farm size

Recruitment type/ Size of farm	Large farm	Mid Farm	Small Farm
Direct formal	3	1	1
Direct informal	1	2	3
work agent formal	3	3	1
work agent informal	1	2	3

3: Prevalent; 2: Usual; 1: Unusual

Source: Assessment based on own qualitative data

As we can see on the cross table based on my fieldwork, large farms use formal channels of recruitment. From the employers' side, according to the union representative, this is caused by the high visibility of the company since labor law violations, and other atrocities against

workers carry a risk of union action, state intervention, or even a public campaign. It is also related to the high fluctuation of labor need, which requires a reliable supply of labor, hence the use of work agencies, where the recruitment is outsourced, and direct employment with longer-term contracts. The small farms are the complete inverse of the strategies of the large farms. Informality plays a greater role in their recruitment strategies, as it offers more flexibility in terms of salaries, contracts, and the number of workers as well. For small farms, these flexibilities are safer since the inspection (either by the union or state agencies) of small private lands is limited²¹. Mid-size farms are the most diverse in terms of recruitment, depending on the priorities of the owner.

My informants recounted a change in the recruitment strategies of farms over the past 20 years. According to the union representative and the agricultural worker, the recruitment is getting more and more formalized, and the direct informal pathways are becoming unusual in mid-size and large farms. As the agricultural worker recalled, while he got his job 16 years ago through his wife, who worked at the company as part of the cleaning staff, today his company would not accept such a referral and prefers to hire people through a work agency, or teams who worked for them in the past and are reliable. This might be because the continuous supply of reliable labor is more important for larger-scale agricultural production than the flexibilities offered by informality²². The formalization of recruitment becomes important in light of the functions of work agents, which I will discuss in the following section, who, through this formalization, also gain more importance in the migration pathways.

5.2.2 Facilitators

The two main types of facilitation are self- and external facilitation, described in the typology section. I will discuss these two types separately in this section. The most important difference

²¹ This problematics is beyond the scope of my thesis, but generally it is limited due to unmarked land borders and chaotic ownership records.

²² This is the speculation of the agricultural worker corroborated by the union representative, however I could not corroborate it with farm owners.

lies in the transnational networks, but as I will show, this difference has a rippling effect in other spheres of the workers' life as well.

3. Table: Recruitment type and "Home" of Worker

Recruitment type/"Home" of worker	Western Hungary	Eastern Hungary	Transylvania
Direct formal	3	1	1
Direct informal	2	1	1
Work agent informal	1	3	3
Work agent formal	1	3	3

3: Prevalent; 2: Usual; 1: Unusual

Source: Assessment based on own qualitative data

As we can see on the table, based on data collected from the union representative and the social worker, western Hungarians today are getting jobs directly from the employer, mainly through formal and secondly through informal channels, and eastern Hungarians through formal and informal external facilitators. I argue, based on the information I collected in Jánossomorja, that the reason why eastern Hungarians are employed through external facilitators is threefold: 1) The physical distance of the Austrian border. The threshold for crossing the border by themselves in search of jobs is much higher for eastern Hungarians, some 4-6 hours by car. 2) Because of the long road, the money invested into the job search is significant, and there is no guarantee of a job. Paying for the gas, housing in Austria or at the border, and food, without a guaranteed job is not a viable option. 3) The nature of transnational networks. Since at the border there is always transnational activity, just the fact of living there gives you a higher chance of being part of transnational networks. For western Hungarians, this means a network that can be utilized for the purposes of job searching, and if the network is more extensive, there might even be several job opportunities, which makes for a better bargaining position as well. Eastern Hungarians (although similar networks might exist for Ukraine and Romania) are not integrated into networks that might lead them to a secure job in Austria.

External facilitators utilize their transnational network, on the one hand, to satisfy the demand in Austrian agriculture for cheap temporary workers and, on the other, to satisfy the demand for jobs in areas of a high unemployment rate, such as Eastern Hungary and Transylvania (references to migrant labor facilitation here). At first glance, it seems like it is a perfect solution for structural problems in the national and transnational labor market but contrasted with self-facilitation, this migration pathway results in lower wages (in many cases lower than the minimum wage even) and a higher degree of vulnerability for the workers. The facilitators function as a bridge between employers and workers, and their main product is their transnational network²³. The employer pays for the company as well as the workers. According to my informants, even the formal work agencies are not transparent to the company with what they pay the workers, nor to the workers what the company is paying for them. This non-transparency gives a lot of space for the agents and agencies to exploit the workers more (see Koene, Paauwe & Groenewegen, 2004; and Czirfusz, 2012). In certain instances, the workers employed by the agency even get paid in forints, according to the union representative, which indicates that they do not get the Austrian agricultural minimum wage, this points toward the breaking of the Austrian Labor Code by formal work agents as well for the sake of even cheaper labor.

The migration industry turns the needs of both the migrants and the receivers (may they be states, employers, or individuals) into profit. The work agents and agencies, i.e., external facilitators, are monetizing their transnational networks within the migration industry. In the context of my case, the external facilitators of labor migration are primarily targeting the demand for cheap labor in Austrian agriculture and delivering workers mainly from areas where the population is structurally under-employed. By continuously satisfying this demand, the

²³ There are other services the work agents provide, to reduce the labor for employing companies, like HR services. More on this, see Andrisajevic & Sacchetto, 2016

structures of Austrian farm labor do not need to be transformed into more localized labor recruitment; thus, the external facilitators contribute to the reproduction of labor dependency as well.

For the labor dependency to be reproduced, there is a need for a continuous supply of cheap labor; thus, the cheapness also has to be maintained. Certain functions of the external facilitators contribute to keeping the cost of migrant laborers low. The agents and agencies are also very often responsible for the housing of the workers, which is in many cases sub-standard and mass housing, while also asking more money from the workers to get this "service." During my fieldwork, I got to know that if the employer does not provide housing in Austria, eastern Hungarians are housed on the Hungarian side of the border, either in motels, worker dormitories, or rented flats. According to the social worker, the eastern Hungarian workers are socially isolated from the local Hungarian population, and the housing situation is just reinforcing this isolation²⁴. The nature of the work and their cyclical movement between spaces make their social life very limited. According to the Hungarian agricultural worker, the usual workday for a seasonal worker starts at 5 in the morning and ends at sundown (between 7 PM and 9 PM), and it also extends into the weekends as well. This only gives them barely enough time for reproductive labor, much less for social life. At the time that the agricultural labor would be less intensive, they moved back to their homes. Because they live in separated housing blocks, mainly together with other migrant workers, there is not much space to connect with local populations. This, on the one hand, keeps the cost of reproduction of migrant labor low and, on the other, prevents the eastern Hungarian workers from establishing their own transnational networks that could help them to shift to self-facilitation, thus keeping them in a dependent position that maintains a low cost of their labor.

²⁴ for the analysis of a similar situation of Ukrainian „guest” workers in Hungary see Meszmann, 2018

Downscaling the world system positions from national to regional levels, the ever-more-distant source area of the cheap workers also fits into the general observations of center-periphery relations. Considering Burgenland as a core for agricultural production, which lacks local cheap, flexible labor due to the structural problems in the Austrian labor market (Vogtanhuber, 2020), we can still see that the management personnel and owners are still Austrian. Western Hungary, a semi-periphery position in this system, gives the specialized ("skilled"), permanent labor force, and the "unskilled" labor needs are satisfied with cheap workers from Eastern Hungary and Transylvania, both areas struggling with under-employment and limited access to education.

4. Table: Summary Table of Types of Migration, Recruitment, and "Home" of worker

	direct formal		direct informal		work agent formal		work agent informal	
	Western Hungary	Eastern Hungarian	Western Hungary	Eastern Hungarian	Western Hungary	Eastern Hungarian	Western Hungary	Eastern Hungarian
settled migrant	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
commuter	3	1	3	2	2	2	1	3
seasonal worker	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	3
other temporary worker	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	3

3: Prevalent; 2: Usual; 1: Unusual

Source: Assessment based on own qualitative data

The table above of types of migration, recruitment, and home of workers presents the overview of relations discussed so far. The eastern Hungarian workers are most prevalent in the temporary labor migration positions and recruited by work agents, which are the most precarious positions due to their lack of transnational networks that can be utilized for secure employment. The temporary positions are the most crucial for all farm types since they are the ones ensuring that the seasonal intensity of agricultural labor needs is satisfied cheaply, and for large and mid-size farms, this need is usually met by formal and informal work agents.

5.3 REDIRECTION OF REPRODUCTIVE COSTS

For the creation of circumstances in which the reproduction of the migrant labor force, both in terms of the workers' own labor force and in terms of the labor supply, the responsible parties are employers and the work agents. Nonetheless, many workers still rely on state support systems.

Because of their insecure position in the Austrian labor market, seasonal and other temporary workers have very little to no access to Austrian state support systems. Thus, they rely largely on the Hungarian state for social support, such as the labor of social workers, family subsidies, retirement fund subsidies, and healthcare coverage²⁵. As the social worker described, even though the main profile of the family support division is child and elderly care for the local population, most of her clients are eastern Hungarian temporary workers who go back to their homes during the winter, and very rarely locals who live in the area all the time. The fluctuation of the number of temporary workers during the year in western Hungary causes the social workers of the region to be heavily strained between the spring and the fall. The Hungarian state is taking more care of the temporary migrant laborers than Austria, which saves costs on the reproduction of migrants' labor.

5. Table: Type of Migration and access to state support system

	Austria	Hungary
settled migrants	YES	NO
commuters	YES	YES
seasonal workers	NO	YES
other temporary workers	NO	YES

Source: Assessment based on own qualitative data

There are some ways provided by non-state actors at the disposal of the Hungarian workers to access Austrian support systems. One is private agencies that specialize in

²⁵ a similar redirection of reproductive and social costs of labor was studied in Germany as well, see Cosma et. al. 2020

maximizing the state subsidies and tax breaks for their clients. However, to get serviced by them, you need a considerable amount of money. The Hungarian agricultural worker told me that his family has been going to these agencies for years now, and because of his long-term job, they can afford it and come out positive at the end of the year; however, for temporary workers, they are inaccessible. The second is to contact the union, which is free; thus, there is no monetary obstacle to it. Yet, the problem is that very few people know about it and request it. According to the union representative, the fact that they provide help with such things only spreads through informal channels, and people only sporadically ask for this service and only by commuters.

The costs of reproduction are in the case of temporary workers redirected to Hungarian state structures, which also lowers the cost of these workers, both for the employers and the work agencies. The low cost of reproduction, through the services of the Hungarian state deriving from its semi-periphereic position, contributes to the security that a supply of cheap labor force is available for Austrian farms, thus maintaining the labor dependency.

5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this section, I will present the most important conclusions that can be drawn from my presented findings above in terms of the reproduction of labor dependency in the Austrian Agriculture.

I have identified the main actors of labor dependency on all levels, which are the European Union and the nation-states of Austria and Hungary on the macro level, which provide the structural context for labor dependency to exist and to be maintained. On the mezzo level, the constant demand for cheap labor from the employers' side and the facilitation and maintenance of the labor supply chains from the work agents' and agencies' side constitute the mechanisms of labor dependency. And finally, on the micro-level, the networks of migrant workers and the

relations between the eastern Hungarian workers and the locals of western Hungary organize and facilitate who gets to work in Austria and the position they end up in in the Austrian agricultural labor market.

Over time, we can see a certain level of formalization in the recruitment strategies of large and mid-size farms. While 20 years ago, all farm types would usually hire people through informal channels, as corroborated by the union representative and the agricultural worker, today, as we can see on the table (2. table), large farms almost exclusively recruit through formal channels, and the formal types become more and more prevalent in mid-size farms as well. Small farms, however, still heavily rely on informal recruitment strategies, mainly for labor cost reduction. There is also a difference in the recruitment of permanent and temporary laborers; in mid-size farms, the formalization is more advanced in the permanent labor force, while the temporary laborers are also recruited through informal channels. A large number of small farms indicates that informality in labor recruitment, which makes them dependent on workers who are mobile and have the necessary network to gain employment in Austria, but not the network to gain secure employment, will not disappear in the future.

As I have demonstrated above, access to the Austrian labor market is reached through transnational networks. In the case of external facilitators, their transnational network is exchanged for monetary gains through the mobilization of workers who lack the networks for self-facilitation into the Austrian labor market. The function of these actors is to keep the labor costs for employers low and to provide a reliable supply of labor for the cycles of agricultural production. In the past 20 years, these labor supply chains have been getting longer; today, instead of western Hungarians, eastern Hungarians (from Eastern Hungary and Transylvania) are employed through external facilitators and in temporary positions. This change over time supports my Polanyian argument that if a worker participates in the labor supply chain for a longer time, they can establish a transnational network in Austria that can be exchanged to a

more secure position in the Austrian labor market through self-facilitation. It also points to the observation that the labor dependency on migrant workers in the agriculture of Austria is most visible in the cheap, temporary labor force, which is still, after 20 years, very prevalent, although now with workers from other regions.

Transnational networks play a crucial role in the position of workers in the Austrian labor market; thus, they also play a role in the reproduction of cheap migrant labor. For eastern Hungarian workers, the threshold of establishing transnational networks which can be exchanged for secure employment is higher. This is because of the nature of their work and their social isolation; thus, they will continue to rely on the networks of external facilitators to get jobs. The lack of transnational networks that can be exchanged for secure employment of eastern Hungarians, the resulting dependence on the facilitators, and the continuing under-employment in their home regions are reproducing the available cheap labor force; thus, there is no need for structural readjustment in the Austrian labor market to eliminate labor dependency.

Although the system in which the temporary labor needs of the Austrian agriculture are satisfied by external facilitators through long labor supply chains, it works at the expense of the workers, and it can pose challenges to the agricultural labor market. As the supply chain gets longer, it is becoming more vulnerable to global events. Such was the COVID pandemic, which revealed not just the labor dependency, but its weaknesses as well. The ensuing panic after the closed borders resulted in some extra exception agreements but also decisions guided by panic. As the union representative told me, the cooperative action of the Chamber of Agriculture and the regional government of Burgenland was to transport Romanian workers en masse via plane to fix the labor shortage, which had some catastrophic results, as one person was COVID positive on the plane, and the whole group had to be quarantined for two weeks after arriving in Austria in a mass quarantine center. During my field observations, I also met with efforts

from the workers' side to circumvent the border restrictions. For example, Facebook groups of Hungarian workers working in Austria added a new function to them, namely real-time info sharing about the strictness of certain border check-points, these informal networks aimed for the smooth border crossing of commuters, but people without a contract still had a hard time. The union representative also told me that for the workers without contracts, a new industry of forging proof-of-employment slips for the workers was such a technique as well, which also redirected costs from the employers, who did not need to make official contracts, to the workers, who had to spend extra money on the forged papers.

In conclusion, the labor dependency of the Austrian agriculture on Eastern European migrant workers is reproduced through actors on several levels, which on the macro level uphold the economic and power hierarchies in the European Union, creating cheap, mobile labor, and the mezzo level reproduces the demand and continuous supply of said labor from regions of under-employment, and on the micro-level integrate the workers in different transnational networks, which can be exchanged into different positions on the Austrian labor market.

6 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have examined the labor dependency of the Austrian agricultural sector on the Eastern European migrant labor force. More specifically, I have looked at the Hungarian migrant laborers in Burgenland, the Eastern region of Austria, directly at the Hungarian border.

The COVID pandemic has pulled public and academic interest on the issue of migrant agricultural workers in Western Europe because, on the one hand, these countries experienced an intermittent labor shortage in their agriculture with the introduction of border regulations, which made the labor dependency evident for all, and on the other hand the migrant workers experienced even more precarious labor conditions, with grave health risks during this time. The immediate reactions of the Austrian state, Chamber of Agriculture, and regional governors to secure the supply of labor have led me to the question: ‘How is labor dependency in the Austrian agriculture on Eastern European migrant labor reproduced?’.

In my thesis, labor dependency refers to the phenomenon that the smooth functioning of the Austrian economy depends on the continuous supply of migrant labor force. To examine this issue, I have used the theoretical framework of the school of world-systems analysis to understand the ideologically legitimized unequal economic relations of nation-states within the EU and the transnational migration paradigm to gain insights into the functions of transnational networks and the multi-sited and multi-scalar nature of migration.

In my methodology section, I discussed the mixed methodology I used involving both qualitative and quantitative (in the form of statistical review) data collection. I conducted field observations in Burgenland through field visits with Sezonieri and the Austrian Union Federation and similar fieldwork in Jánossomorja, where I also had semi-structured interviews with locals. I also conducted three semi-expert interviews with a long-time union representative familiar with the region, a Hungarian agricultural worker commuting to Austria for work for 17 years, and a family support social worker in the Western Hungarian region.

In the context chapter of my thesis, I first introduced a political-economic view of the history of inter-state relations between Austria and Hungary, starting in the 18th century. As mechanisms of displacement and emplacement, this chapter also involved a comparative review of the differences in labor regimes in these two nation-states, with special attention to wage politics, class politics, and unions. Furthermore, I wrote about the mobility regime of the European Union and Austria, which enables actors to maintain labor dependency.

In my analytical chapter, I introduced a typology of labor migration between Austria and Hungary, along the dimensions of migration type, recruitment strategies, the “home” space of workers, and the size of employers. The intersections of these dimensions show different modalities of labor migration schemes which I analyzed through cross-tables.

The analysis was divided into three sections. 1) The actors of migration pathways, where I discussed the employers as the demand side of labor dependency and the facilitators of migration as the actors satisfying this demand. I have found that the most crucial part of labor dependency is on the cheap temporary labor force. This labor force is missing in Austria due to structural problems in the Austrian labor market, resulting from the Austrian labor regime, which cannot (or will not) satisfy this labor need with the local labor force. The permanent positions in this sector are filled up by western Hungarians, which is a result of longer participation in this labor supply chain, and the western Hungarians established transnational networks, which can be exchanged for secure job opportunities in Austria. I also found that the cheap, temporary labor force comes from more labor deprived regions of Hungary (Eastern Hungary) and Romania (Transylvania), further away from the Austrian border. Due to the unequal intra-state post-transition economic integration of different regions, these regions have under-employed free and mobile labor, which is used in Austrian agriculture. This labor force lacks the transnational networks that can be utilized for secure employment in Austria; thus, they rely on external facilitators. This reliance on external facilitators reproduces their lack of transnational networks through the housing situation and the ensuing social isolation from the western Hungarian population. 2) The redirection of economic costs. This section discussed my finding that the Austrian state is only partially covering some of the

reproductive costs of migrant workers. While the permanent labor force can access state support systems, such as pension funds, family subsidies, etc., the reproductive costs of the temporary labor force are redirected to Hungary. This can be seen in the Hungarian social worker's account of how most of her clients are seasonal workers and the secondary literature of Cosma et al. about a similar issue between Germany and Romania.

Finally, 3) Conclusions. The Austrian labor market is reached through transnational networks, and the unequal integration into these networks of eastern and western and temporary and permanent laborers results in unequal positions in the labor market. I have found that the labor dependency of the Austrian agriculture on Eastern European migrant workers is reproduced through actors on several levels, which on the macro level uphold the economic and power hierarchies in the European Union, creating cheap, mobile labor, and the mezzo level reproduces the demand and continuous supply of said labor from regions of under-employment, and on the micro-level integrate the workers in different transnational networks, which can be exchanged into different positions on the Austrian labor market.

This area of research has a lot of potential for further study. Unfortunately, I was not able to get in touch with eastern Hungarian seasonal workers, and their perspectives would be crucial for further work in this field. Moreover, additional focus on the chronological changes of labor migration in western Hungary would be immensely important to understand the functions and driving mechanisms of transnational networks through an examination of who leaves and who remains in the region, together with a more detailed historical analysis of the economic integration and development path of the region.

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