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“IT IS BETTER ‘HERE-HOME’ THAN ‘THERE-HOME’¹” – LOW-SECTOR MIGRANT WORKERS
AS TEMPORARY AGENTS IN THE
HUNGARIAN LABOUR MARKET

ANDREA PETÓ, DÓRA DEZSÓ AND NOÉMI KAKUCS

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of international migration, an inevitable consequence of globalization and regionalization, has challenged the Westphalian order of the world, and has great implications for democratic politics and civic participation. While migration, with women having a special role in it, is regarded as a means to meet major welfare problems of the developed, but aging Western European societies of the 21st century, it also poses a serious threat to various social models which fail to integrate or even exclude migrants from mainstream society. Current integration policies declare integration as a two-way process that should equalize migrants’ opportunities with those of “nationals.” However, these policies often remain at a descriptive level, and the integration strategies often appear blind to addressing the specific migrants’ positions. Low-sector labour migrants from third countries, both men and women, constitute one of the most vulnerable migrant groups whose integration would require policies that would specifically address their situations. The existing integration practices do not sufficiently consider the fact that third country nationals’ (TCNs) marginalized positions in the labour market strongly determine their lives and hinder their possibilities of integration. The present chapter aims at assessing current Hungarian national policies pertaining to migration and integration with a particular focus on their relation to migrant’s labour market participation, while aiming to grasp migrants’ particular experiences with migration into Hungary. Ethnic Hungarian, low-sector labour migrants’ special status and practices are highlighted in the prevailing favourable policy environment.

The analysis is based on a comprehensive review of statistical data on migration since 2000, an assessment of policy documents pertaining to

¹ In Hungarian language there are pairs of demonstratives to frame distance in time and space. In this quotation, given by a migrant, “here-home” refers to Hungary, the host country while “there-home” to Romania, the country of origin.

migration, and informative material from field work. These data sources provide insights into the particularities of the Hungarian migration system and of the legal and institutional frameworks developed by national authorities. The interviews and the focus group discussion also shed light on the opportunities and constraints of the current setup and its effects on migrants' lives. The interview sample is comprised of migrants who have arrived from third countries, reflecting migrant distribution based on country of origin, economic sectors they tend to engage in, as well as regional distribution in the host country. Ethnic Hungarian migrant interviews and cross-border labour migration are examined as a specific case for the purposes of this chapter.²

HUNGARY AND THE "MIGRATION ISSUE"

Hungary has been perceived as having a mediating/transitory role between East and West due to its geographic, economic, and cultural character; and also more as an "emigration" rather than an "immigration" country. Hungary has been mainly a transit country for migrants heading west, but it has also become a target country for special groups of foreign migrants. When dealing with international migration in the Hungarian context, one has to take into consideration the country's demographic, social conditions, and its historical context.

First, Hungary is one of the countries in Europe most affected by population decrease, with shrinking birth rates paralleled with the steadily growing rate of aging and dependent population. Such demographic conditions in principle favour international migration as immigration is viewed as a source for supplying economically active people to satisfy current labour market demands. Second, the economic activity rate of the native labour force, for both men and women, is one of the lowest in the European Union, thus one could argue that there is no need for a foreign labour force, as the current labour market demand could be easily satisfied with native labour. Lastly, while Hungary throughout the years has developed into a net migration country, the proportion of migrants is relatively low in comparison to other European countries. Furthermore, immigration to Hungary has a specific ethnic character,

² The interviews and the focus group discussion were conducted between June 2009 – February 2010. But for a few exceptions, the sample included third country migrants who: (i) have migrated to Hungary after 2000, (ii) are employed in different sectors, and (iii) have different statuses (legal vs. illegal migrants, refugees, residence permit holders, settlement permit holders, naturalized).

namely the majority of migrants are of Hungarian ethnicity. Thus, so far, there have been no spectacular problems related to the social segregation of immigrants, or cultural or religious conflicts between migrants and their host society to trigger public and professional debates. Migration as such is not a central issue for Hungarian political parties, and it stirs only occasional short-lived debates among professionals, in the media or the general public. Debates about labour migration are rather limited in their scope, as they frequently refer to the fact that the adoption of more liberal rules for the employment of foreigners would jeopardize the labour market prospects of resident Hungarians.

BACKGROUND DATA ON IMMIGRANTS TO HUNGARY

Hungary has been open to international migration since the political changes of 1989. The most significant group (approx. two-thirds) of immigrants settling in the country arrive from countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – i.e., neighbouring countries such as Romania, former Yugoslavia, and the Ukraine. Most, but not all of these migrants are ethnic Hungarians (Sik 1999; Habcicsek and Tóth 2002; Tóth 2005; Melegh 2006). While in Romania the hostile political climate triggered the mass migration of ethnic Hungarians in the early 1990s, the war in Yugoslavia forced ethnic Hungarians, but also Croats and Muslim Bosnians to flee from the conflict zones. Between 1988 and 1992, from Romania, more than 118,000 persons arrived in the country, and the number of ethnic Hungarians migrating to Hungary was continuous and steady until 2005, when it dropped significantly. Between 1991 and 1994 some 70,000 people arrived from Yugoslavia, but most of them returned after the end of the war (Tóth 2005). Thus, the majority of migrants not only become invisible, and seemingly integrate into the host society, but also contribute to the maintenance of the ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of the whole society as such. The immigration of ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries very much resembles internal migration given the fact that they are native Hungarian speakers and share the same cultural, religious, and historical heritage as the host nation. On the other hand, these immigrants are still considered to some extent as foreigners by the host population (Sik and Tóth 2003).

A smaller but important population group is comprised of people from Asian countries, mostly China and Vietnam, who have formed parallel societies and are considered to be part of the Chinese diaspora. While they speak only a minimum level of Hungarian that covers their business

needs, they formed strong and cohesive communities within the host society through, for example, their own school, a medical center, etc. A large number of Chinese citizens arrived in Hungary starting from 1988, when the visa obligation for Chinese citizens was lifted. An estimated number of 30–40,000 Chinese citizens arrived in Hungary until the visa obligation was re-introduced in 1992. Since then, immigration from China has continued, but its level has dropped significantly (Sik 2008).

More migrant groups reached the country as political and social turmoil in the Central-European region ended. Besides the continuously high number of migrants coming from neighbouring countries (Romania, the Ukraine, and countries of former Yugoslavia), a growing number of citizens have moved to Hungary from Western European countries, many of whom arrived as managers of multinational companies. From time to time waves of migrants from other conflict areas (e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, etc.) also reached the country, however, on a lower scale, and usually temporarily (Tóth 2005; Futó 2008a). All in all, however, the number of immigrants living in Hungary is relatively low compared to the rest of Europe. The proportion of immigrants was estimated, in 2007, to be approx. 1.6% of the total population of 10.08 million inhabitants. Even so, due to a natural population decrease and the parallel process of immigration (foreign population being younger and more active than natives, as presented below), the ratio of foreign population in the total population is slowly growing (Futó 2008a).

Among foreigners, the ratio of persons in an active age is an overwhelming 83.3% while the ratio of children and especially people above 65 is low. This is strongly linked to economic migration, since most of the foreigners arrive to Hungary in order to work. However, ageing can be seen in case of the foreigner population as well, the ratio of migrants above 60 is steadily increasing. These immigrants are either secondary migrants – i.e., elderly parents of migrants who come primarily for family reunification, or pensioners who migrate because of better retirement prospects. Immigrants in Hungary tend to have higher education levels than the native population. However, research shows that a large percent do not find employment corresponding to their level of education (Gödri 2005). The gender and age distribution of immigrants has changed significantly in recent years, as more and more women migrants arrive, almost as many as men.³ However, there was no system-

³ According to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office the distribution between men and women among the legal migrants has been around 55% men and 45%

atic change in the ratio of legal labour immigrants: two-thirds of them are still men. This might mean that either women migrate more often for family reunification purposes, or they are involved in irregular employment in higher numbers.

Budapest is the main target for immigrants, as every third migrant lives in the capital. But the number of immigrants is considerable in five other counties, too. These are Pest county (14%), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (5%), Csongrád (6%), Bács-Kiskun (3%), and Hajdú-Bihar (4%) (Futó 2008a). Immigrants strongly concentrate in some parts of Hungary, depending on their home country. Ethnic Hungarians from Romania concentrate mainly in the capital (approx 33%) and its surroundings (21%). Some ethnic Hungarian migrants head towards the western part of Hungary exclusively for settlement purposes. On the other hand, short-term migrants who perform seasonal work and commute back to their home countries live in the eastern counties of Hungary. Immigrants coming from Ukraine or from the former republics of Yugoslavia, beyond the capital, can be found in bigger numbers in respective counties near the Eastern and Southern borders (Juhász et al. 2006; Futó 2008a, 2008b; Sik 2008).

TRANSNATIONALISM AS REFLECTED IN THE HUNGARIAN CONTEXT

While for Hungary it has not posed problems yet, the incorporation of migrants in the host society can be achieved by various policies and institutional arrangements. Three types of migrant incorporation approaches are usually distinguished by the literature, these being: assimilation, exclusion, and integration (Tambiah 2000). When looking at migration policies within European countries one can identify that assimilationist models, that are largely one-way processes expecting the migrants to adapt to the host society with the aim to become indistinguishable from the majority, are being replaced by integrationist measures. The latter are being envisioned as relational activities including migrant populations, requiring mutual deliberation and a dynamic, multi-directional process of mutual understandings. Migrants' integration is being enabled by state policies in the areas of employment, education, and training, and by equal-opportunity and affirmative-action legislation. Howev-

women. See: <http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xtabla/nemzvand/tablnv07_01_01.html> (22 August 2010).

er, integration's success is still largely defined by the host countries' perspectives. Moreover, the implementation of such policies implies that integration can be achieved only over a longer period of time, and migrant integration becomes evident only by the second generation.

Tambiah (2000, 168) differentiates between three stages of integration: (i) participation in the labour market; (ii) access to social services, education and housing; and (iii) acquiring citizenship. However, formal integration, namely citizenship acquisition, does not automatically mean that the cultural and social integration of migrants has also been accomplished. The reasons for this can be manifold. It has become evident that increasing number of migrant communities want to keep their social and cultural distinctiveness even though they become economically and educationally integrated, which leads to the formation of diasporic communities, such as the Chinese community in Hungary. On the other hand, Glick-Schiller et al. (1995) argue that contemporary labour migrants are faced with the situation that full (economic, legal, social, and cultural) inclusion in the countries where they resettle is either not possible or not desirable. Thus, they tend to maintain linkages with their countries of origin. The current transformations in technologies, transportation, and communication facilitate the maintenance of existing, and the emergence of new transnational linkages of migrants.

Transnational analysis of migration trends offers an alternative perspective on understanding migrants' simultaneous attachments to different communities (host society and country of origin). There is vast literature on particular aspects of migrants' transnational social life both in American and European scholarship that focuses on different forms of transnational linkages and practices stressing different aspects of transnationalism (see for example Ögelman 2003; Caglar 2006; Collyer 2008; Guarzino et al. 2003).

Migrant transnational practices are also shaped by the political institutions both of the host and the sending countries. Much research focuses on the challenges migration poses to the nation-states and their ability to regulate their citizens. Literature on transnationalism also focuses on the nation-states' ability to reconfigure themselves, to redefine national belonging so that they maintain the ties with their transnational constituencies to profit from the remittances of migrants (see for example Guarzino et al. 2003; Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003). The typology⁴ created

⁴ Vertovec (1999) maps six different conceptual areas within transnational studies: transnationalism as a social morphology, as a type of consciousness; as a mode of cultural

by Vertovec (1999) provides a useful tool in analyzing the transnational practices of various Hungarian migrants groups – i.e., Hungarian migrants who left the country for political or economic reasons, but also ethnic Hungarian migrants coming to Hungary either because of political reasons or out of economic necessity. Looking at the role of the Hungarian state towards immigrants of ethnic Hungarian background is especially relevant as, with Hungary being both the lost mother nation and the host country for these migrants, one can notice that the state has continuously shown an ambivalent relationship towards these migrants. On a rhetorical level it favours them to stay in their birthplace, the territories lost after the Treaty of Versailles in 1920, while the practices of the Hungarian migration regime show that this group of migrants is the most welcome and measures are taken to facilitate their entry to the country.

The transnational practices in the case of our sample – ethnic Hungarian migrants from adjacent countries engaged in low-sector employment in Hungary – manifested mainly in their mobility between the country of origin and the host society. This underlines Caglar’s (2006) argument that transnational ties in the form of transnational political activities are less characteristic during the transition period of migration. Thus, in our case, Morokvasic’s (2004) argument that transnationalism is more a space to develop practices that optimize migrants’ economic output, and her “settled in mobility” concept to characterize the situation of Eastern European short time migrants prove to be most useful when analyzing our data.

As the quote chosen for our title suggests, many migrant workers are attached to two places, to two “homes,” one there, in the country of origin and one here, in the receiving country. By declaring that it is better here, i.e., in Hungary, their current situation is reflected on, and we intend to pinpoint their two-folded reality as influenced by their labour migration. Their actual situation is perceived as a perplexing phenomenon for the outsider, just as one migrant describes how she looked at these mobile people before her joining this “here and there life”:

... how can they feel [themselves], what can it be like there, or how does it work for them that they are so happy to come back home, but they are going back there straight away... (Eva, 58, Romania, domestic worker)

production; as an avenue of capital; as a site of political engagement; and (re)construction of place and locality.

By analyzing individual life stories of migrants, one can identify how the various levels of transnational practices and experiences shape one another, and how local level actors are influenced but also influence national and global forces. Thus, the chapter will first highlight some characteristics of the political institutions in Hungary that, while adhering to the common European norms on migration, on the one hand, shape migratory patterns, and, on the other hand, advocate the mobility of work force, which in our case leads to the emergence of migrant communities networking and commuting across the borders. Second, moving at micro level, the chapter will present how transnational experience is lived at ~~an~~ *an* individual level, and whether labour migrants are indeed “settled in mobility.”

HUNGARY FACILITATING TRANSNATIONALISM AT THE STATE LEVEL

While many researchers cry for a comprehensive migration policy, the current Hungarian migration policy, no matter how fragmented it is, apart from being restrictive in nature, can be characterized by exercising discretion in favour of ethnic Hungarians living outside of the country's borders. The main factors influencing the development of the Hungarian migration policy were the overwhelming number of refugees from Yugoslavia, the question of ethnic Hungarians living outside the borders, and the EU policy on migration Hungary has had to align with. One can easily claim that the main stream of migration policy has been determined by harmonisation and transposition of Directives, the Schengen *acquis*, the Hague Programme and other pieces of EU-legislation. Accordingly, since the early 1990s, one can detect a linear development in the Hungarian legislative and institutional framework pertaining to migration. Migration has been first and foremost dealt with as a security issue and the policy position regarding labour migration has been of restrictive nature (Hárs 2009). Policy and legal developments in various EU member states often served as a legitimacy basis for the subsequent governments opting for new – and usually more restrictive – approaches in regulating the entry and stay of foreigners in the country.

HUNGARIAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR IM/MIGRATION

The question of immigrants and refugees was initially addressed in the late 1980s, and later regulated by the Constitution and various legal pro-

visions, respectively.⁵ Prior to the democratic transition, the Constitution treated the issue of immigration mainly as an issue of political solidarity.⁶ The first legal provisions pertaining to migrants and refugees were introduced and accepted by the last parliament and government before the first democratic elections in 1990. Parallel to this, however, a less specific, nevertheless very important additional provision of the Constitution stressed the sense of responsibility with respect to Hungarians living outside of the country's borders.⁷ This provision expresses the underlying thought of not only the Hungarian foreign and neighbourhood policy, but also the immigration policy. The ~~problem~~^{question} of how to treat the ~~issue~~ of ethnic Hungarians living outside of Hungary's borders has since been one of the most influential factors in shaping the country's various policies. It has definitely created several occasions full of tension in Hungarian foreign policy, and it has also contributed to the emergence of ambivalence in the Hungarian immigration policy. According to Hárs (2009), from the various pieces of legislation, one can identify the picture of ideal/desirable immigrants – these settlers in Hungary should be law-abiding persons with no criminal records; healthy; able to speak Hun-

⁵ The legislation on migration has been changed several times since 1990. The main legal provisions are the following: (i) *Act 29/1989 on Emigration and Immigration*, regulating return migration of emigrant Hungarians and delineating the image of ideal immigrants; (ii) *1993 Act on Hungarian Citizenship*, introducing the conditions of eased naturalization process in the cases of non-Hungarian citizens having ancestors with Hungarian citizenship targeting immigrants from the neighbouring countries with ethnic Hungarian background; (iii) *1994 Act on the Entry, Stay, and Immigration of Foreigners in Hungary*; (iv) *Act XXXIX of 2001 on Entry and Stay of Foreigners*, introducing new visa requirements in line with the common EU standards; (v) *2001 Act LXII on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries*; (vi) *Act No. I of 2007 on the Entry and Residence of Persons with the Right of Free Movement and Residence (Free Act)* and (vii) *Act No. II of 2007 on the Entry and Stay of Third Country Nationals (TCN Act)*. The latter two pieces of legislation are transposing various requirements of several EU directives (Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification; Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents; Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service; and, Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research).

⁶ The Article 65. Par. 1. of the Constitution (1949) stipulates that “[o]n terms laid down in the law, the Republic of Hungary ensures the right of asylum for foreign citizens persecuted in their homeland and for those displaced persons who are at their place of stay harassed on grounds of race, religion, nationality, language or political affiliation”.

⁷ Article 6. Par. 3. of the Constitution (1949) stipulates that “[t]he Republic of Hungary bears a sense of responsibility for what happens to Hungarians living outside of its borders and promotes the fostering of their relations with Hungary”.

garian; with proper residence and subsistence in Hungary above the level of the average Hungarian standards; should be highly motivated to immigrate into and settle in Hungary; and should be able to integrate smoothly into the Hungarian society.

Legislative changes aiming at harmonization with the EU Immigration and Asylum *acquis* were paralleled with the creation of a separate legislative act referring to the Hungarians living across the border. The *2001 Act LXII on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries* (Status Law), adopted by the Hungarian Parliament on 19 June 2001 and entered into force on 1 January 2002, provided benefits and assistance to persons who are of Hungarian identity but of foreign nationality (citizenship), and who reside in any of the countries neighbouring Hungary, except for Austria. The Status Law provided automatically, or upon request, various rights and benefits in the areas of culture, education, and schooling (such as eligibility provided to researchers and academics to participate and be granted Hungarian state awards and state scholarship; access to the various levels of the Hungarian education system including participation in tertiary education with limited numbers available at state-financed training places, for example; or providing beginning of school-year support for textbooks and learning material, schooling equipment for minors in primary school with Hungarian as the language of instruction), travelling benefits, as well as preferential treatment in access to employment (employment for three months per year in possession of a labour visa and permit within the annual quota; as well as contribution to fees and charges incurred during the licensing process).

While the objective of the act was to support Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries to maintain their cultural heritage, some of the provisions laid down in the act apparently conflicted with the prevailing European standards of minority protection and anti-discrimination. Consequently, the act not only provoked unexpected reactions on the part of two of Hungary's neighbouring countries (Romania and Slovakia - both having a sizeable Hungarian community), but also was discussed intensively by international institutions, including the Council of Europe, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the European Commission among others (Gál 2004; Tóth 2004).

While the Status Law was an open instance of positive discrimination among non-Hungarian citizens along ethnic lines, the preferentialism of the Hungarian legislation towards ethnic Hungarians from the neighbouring countries is manifested in some other regulations, too. One such case is the eased naturalization. This procedure is used in the cases of

non-Hungarian citizens having ancestors with Hungarian citizenship, given that the basic conditions are met. While the number of naturalization cases in general is low⁸, their vast majority happens along special (exceptional) measures and ethnic lines⁹. The majority of immigrants of Hungarian ethnicity from adjacent countries acquire Hungarian citizenship this way. This practice very much contradicts the widespread criticism formulated about the Hungarian immigration and naturalization system, which is blamed for being indifferent towards ethnic Hungarians who “return to their motherland.” This does not take into account the fact that certain benefits for ethnic Hungarians and persons of Hungarian ancestry are enshrined in the immigration and naturalization process.

With respect to the entry and residence requirements in the country, the policies aligned with the EU requirements managed to incorporate such a concession that granted facilitated entry and residence in Hungary for ethnic Hungarians. A special – ethnic – visa, exceeding up to five years excluding remunerated work, was introduced in 2005 to overcome the negative impact of the strict visa requirements laid down by the *Act XXXIX of 2001 on Entry and Stay of Foreigners*, on ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries (i.e., Romania, Serbia and Ukraine). Ethnic Hungarians still receive preferential treatment under the law even after the legislative changes in 2007. To overcome the negative effect of the restrictive legislation on third country nationals (TCNs) with ethnic Hungarian background (after 2007 affecting Serbian and Ukrainian citizens only), the *Act No. II of 2007 on the Entry and Stay of Third Country Nationals* (TCN Act) introduced an innovative element in the regulation pertaining to family reunification – i.e., TCNs who migrate to Hungary because of family (re)unification purposes obtain “free mover” status if they have a family relationship with a Hungarian citizen. Besides, the TCN Act provides a special visa and residence permit for TCNs on the basis of bilateral treaties if the individual is coming to Hungary for the purpose of Hungarian language practice, maintaining national cultural traditions, non-scholarly curricula or self-education, or to maintain family and friendly contacts in Hungary (Art. 27). This renewable

⁸ In 2009, out of 4,951 naturalization applications submitted, approx. 59% were submitted by Romanian citizens, 18% by Serbian citizens and 14% by Ukrainian citizens. For further details see <<http://www.bmbah.hu/pdf/Statisztika0809.pdf>> (3 February 2010).

⁹ Applicants of Hungarian ancestry can ask for naturalization after one year of legal residence in Hungary; contrasting the general waiting period of 7 years applied in the case of non-ethnic Hungarian applicants.

“national” permit is valid for five years, and it is intended to compensate those adversely affected by the termination of the visa-free regime. The TCN Act introduced a settlement permit category as a continuation of the former system labelled as a “national settlement permit” for ex-nationals or descendants of an (ex-)national of Hungary (Art.35, Art.36, Art.37) (Tóth 2007, 8).

It can clearly be seen that the Hungarian legislation on migration has continuously found ways to ensure that ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries enjoy to some extent positive discrimination in getting access to entering the country. This is demanded not only because of national sentiments (obligation/feeling of responsibility towards the Hungarians living on the territories lost after the First World War) but also because of economic interest – i.e., these migrants supply the low-paid and low-skilled labour force upon market demand. While in the public and political discourse national sentiments towards ethnic Hungarians are more prominently expressed and mainly with reference to their maintaining their Hungarian identity, policies on migration actually facilitate their *de facto* labour migration to Hungary. Further ambivalence manifested here is that while on discursive level what is emphasized is that ethnic Hungarians should keep their identity while staying in their homeland; in fact, these migrants provide demographic life-line for the aging Hungarian population declining in numbers through their mass migration to Hungary.

MIGRANT WORKERS' EMPLOYMENT IN HUNGARY

The main characteristic of foreigner's employment¹⁰ in Hungary is that the majority of foreign workers come from the neighbouring countries. The historical and cultural heritage, the common language, geographical proximity enabling commuting, as well as labour market demand all facilitate the migration of ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring coun-

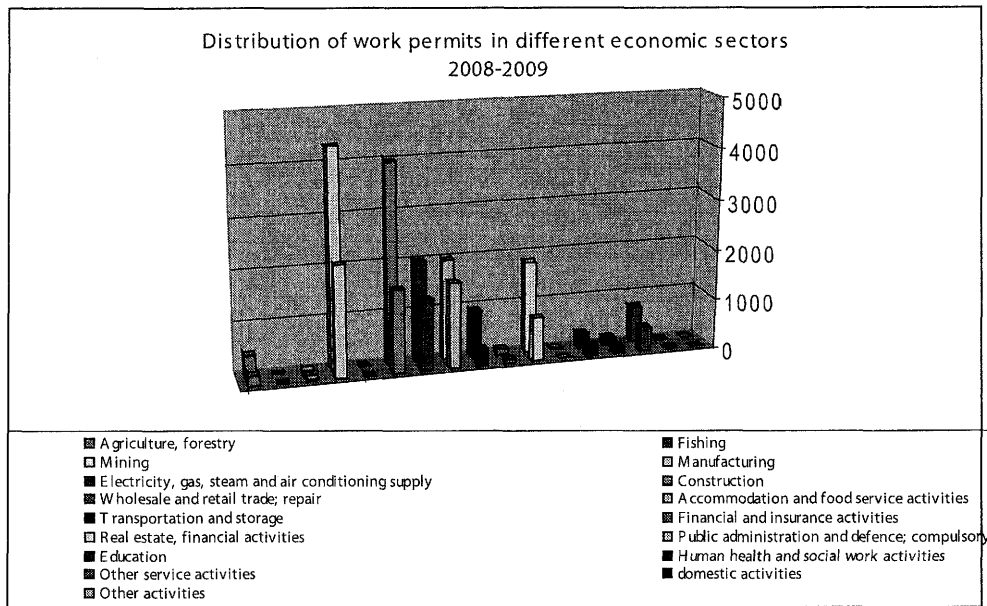
¹⁰ A note needs to be made at this point why the term “foreigner” and not only TCN (vs. EEA – European Economic Area – nationals) is used throughout the chapter. Hungary, as opposed to most accession countries of 2004, has not opened its labour market to all EU member states' citizens. Instead, it created an elaborated and complex system based on reciprocal agreements with individual EEA member states. In keeping with the principle of reciprocity, the Hungarian legislation regulating foreign employment was being modified every other year as a response to the modifications in the labour legislations of other EU member states. As a result, legislative documents, official statistics and research materials have used “foreigners” as a standard category until very recently.

tries for labour purposes (Juhász et al. 2006; Futó 2008a). Apart from a few sectoral or regional exceptions, immigrant labour, however, has no significant effect on the domestic labour market, as the proportion of immigrants is rather low in Hungary, therefore employment policies do not treat migrant labour as an issue of strategic importance (FSZH 2007). The number of foreign citizens on the labour market is slowly but continuously increasing, especially the number of Romanian citizens, while the number of other migrant groups is rather stagnating, dynamic growth is not detectable. There is a large group of foreign citizens living and working in Hungary which is well qualified and is employed in higher positions. There is also a wide range of informal workers in Hungary, but it is hard to determine the extent of illegal foreign work, or to describe its structure with statistics. The majority of foreigners, both legal and illegal, work in the capital, Budapest, and the surrounding metropolitan areas. Many others work in the counties to the south, south-east, and east of the country, near the borders with the Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia. Increasing numbers of foreigners are employed – mostly legally – in the western, more developed regions of Hungary (Futó 2008a, 2008b; Juhász et al. 2006; Sik, 2008).

Facing native labour shortage, the employment sectors such as construction, agriculture, manufacturing, domestic sector, and trade employ immigrant labourers in high numbers. For details see Figure 1.¹¹

¹¹ In 2009, the number of general work permits (seasonal permits not counted) issued in the construction and manufacturing industries halved as compared to the corresponding figures in 2008. The huge drop in the number of work permits issued in 2009 mainly affected the construction and manufacturing sectors, as it was the export oriented manufacturing sector and the construction sector which were affected most by the global financial crisis. The drop in the number of work permits issued is also due to the change of status of Romanian citizens with respect to labour market access in Hungary. Thus, the loss in the numbers of work permits issued is compensated by the increase in the number of labour registrations applicable in the case of EU nationals.

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF WORK PERMITS IN DIFFERENT ECONOMIC SECTORS, 2008-2009



Source: own calculation based on Public Employment Service data

The pattern of labour migration is specific to each migrant group. While Chinese and Asian minorities work in retail and catering trade, migrants from the adjacent countries take up work in manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and services (Juhász et al. 2006). Chinese and other Asians entered the trade sector as early as the 1990s, when trading in cheap Chinese products replaced the petty trading of citizens of the neighbouring countries who commuted between their home countries and Hungary. This form of circular migration of ethnic Hungarians was booming in the 1980s and 1990s, their place, however, has been taken over in the 1990s by Chinese retailers (Sik 2000, 2008). Ethnic Hungarians from the adjacent countries entered labour intensive sectors such as construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and service provision. Migrants from the Ukraine are typically cross-border commuters, working seasonally in construction and agriculture. Apart from taking up low-skilled jobs, migrants with Romanian citizenship predominantly offer skilled work, but also seasonal work, home caring, and nursing services (Juhász et al. 2006). The domestic sector in Hungary is one of the main sources of illegal employment and is also characterized by strong gender and ethnic dimension, namely it is Hungarian speaking migrant women originating from the neighbouring countries who are employed to perform care and domestic work as domestic servants, cleaners, nurses (A Munkaadó Lapja 2007).

It is not only the historical and cultural heritage, the common language, geographical proximity, as well as the availability of seasonal employment that facilitates the illegal employment of ethnic Hungarians coming from neighbouring countries, but also the general conditions of the Hungarian labour market. In Hungary, undocumented work is rather widespread and tolerated by the wider community. Irregular work takes up such forms like working without labour contract, or registration, employment with nominal contract, and foreign employment without a permit. The primary reasons of vast illegal employment in Hungary should be looked for in the general labour market regulations and conditions – i.e., high taxes, employer's contribution rate, etc. (Futó 2008a). According to various estimations, undocumented work among the native population is estimated to reach a maximum of 30%, while the share of migrants in the undocumented labour market is not higher than among the overall labour force (i.e., around 10%) (FSZH 2007).

To advance the prevalent labour market conditions, a unique instrument – employment with “temporary work book” (*alkalmi munkavállalói könyv*) – was developed in 1997 primarily with the aim to whiten the Hungarian shadow economy, and to raise the economic activity of native individuals of productive age. The use of this temporary work settlement has been widespread in the construction sector, agriculture, trade, and service provision – exactly the sectors having high rates of migrant labour. Thus it has proved to be of relevance for migrants, too, as they were also eligible to use this arrangement under certain conditions. First, its scope extended to migrants with a residence permit only. Later, in 2005, however, the scheme was modified and a separate “green temporary work book” was introduced for short-term labour migrants which entitled its holder to seasonal agricultural work only (Frey 2005). The “green temporary work book” was introduced exactly with the aim to acknowledge the presence of foreigners without residence permit (nationals of Romania, Ukraine and Serbia) ~~of~~ the Hungarian labour market, albeit ⁱⁿ only in one specific work sector – agriculture.

The popularity of this employment scheme has been growing since 2002, but lately it has also become associated with the shadow-economy because of the widespread cases of misuse (like under-reporting employment periods, disguising regular employment as temporary, as well as tax-evasion) (Semjén et al. 2008). To eliminate the ambiguities and ease the administrative burden of this form of employment, in early 2009 the government decided to revise the regulation on temporary employment. The 2009 modifications pertaining to temporary work (as per No. T/11083

Bill on Eased Employment) extend to sectors with high migrant participation, and also regulate the involvement of TCN migrants in such work relations. However, the regulation is still restrictive: TCNs can be employed only for seasonal agricultural work and domestic work. Nonetheless, the regulation opens up one more sector for TCN labour market participation in a legal way, thus acknowledging the market demand for cheap TCN labour in the domestic sector. It is yet to be seen whether the bill would indeed serve the purposes it was redesigned for, i.e., to facilitate labour force mobility and to combat undocumented work in general. With respect to immigrant labour, however, it can serve as a tool for regularizing temporary migrants' stay engaged in circular migration, even if for a short period of time.

One particular provision of the 2001 Status Law has been extended to the realm of labour market as well. It catered for the eased employment of those citizens of Hungarian descent who obtained the "Hungarian Certificate" (*Magyar igazolvány*). If they wanted to undertake employment in Hungary and had a valid "Hungarian Certificate," they were subject to eased licensing procedure. A work permit had to be obtained for them, too, but the permit could be issued without waiting – without prior inspection of the labour market, and despite the existence of an eligible native labour force – for a period of no longer than three months per year. Furthermore, the possibility of reimbursing the costs associated with obtaining the documents necessary for the permit also existed. This instrument is yet another instance of the Hungarian legislation's preferentialism pertaining to immigrants of Hungarian ethnicity. This arrangement only allowed three months work in Hungary per year, but unlike in the case of the "green temporary work book," sectoral restrictions were not applicable. However, this settlement has proven to be unsuccessful as the number of work permits issued under the 2001 Status Law was negligible. This was due to the fact that the easement did not compensate for the administrative burden immigrants seeking legal employment in Hungary needed.

EXPERIENCING TRANSNATIONALISM AT PERSONAL LEVEL

Migrant workers arrive primarily out of economic necessity, recounted as "I was forced to do this," which reflects the economic collapse and transformation in the CEE region where the loss of employment turned masses of people towards labour migration. First of all, labour migrants

"IT IS BETTER 'HERE-HOME' THAN 'THERE-HOME'" ...

rightly recognize the structural imbalance between their country of origin and the countries they migrate to for economic purposes. In case of Hungary, such "forced" workers arrive predominantly from Romania and the Ukraine, populating sectors such as agriculture, construction, and the domestic services. These workers experience deskilling, low-pay, and often exploitation in their work, moreover, they struggle with a negative reception, especially from the fellow, native workers' side. Nonetheless, ethnic Hungarians arrive by taking advantage of the situation facilitated by various factors, all conducive to their entering the labour market in Hungary:

I saw that there is work to do, you can work, you can also earn money, so I said then rather here-home than there-home. (Janos, 42, Romania, private entrepreneur)

The eased procedures for entry (e.g., getting visas for free) and immigration (e.g., less time required if one proves "Hungarianness") greatly contribute to the labour migration of ethnic Hungarians as is presented in the previous sections. However, research (Németh et al. 2009; Berde et al. 2009) has also demonstrated that sharing the language of the host country is a crucial factor in the case of migrants with ethnic Hungarian background. While the Ukraine and Romania are emigration countries where the labour force migrated in large numbers to Western European countries like Italy, France, etc., only a limited number of their citizens emigrating chose Hungary, the majority of whom being ethnic Hungarians.

Moreover, the geographical proximity of these migrants' homes plays a key role in their decision ^{on} ~~when deciding~~ where to take up work. Often it is worth and economically more beneficial migrating to the neighbouring country than commuting to work within one's native country, as Piroška's case indicates:

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There is no job in the factories and if you need to commute then the bus takes a quarter of your wages. So, this is not, not good. So we came here too to work, because it might be more profitable. It can be that we earn one month's wage in ten days here. So this is also why we came here. (...) It is not worth commuting to work because the wages are so small that it is not worth it commuting. (Piroška, 45, Ukraine, agricultural worker)

We present in the following, based on the individual interviews, what strategies ethnic Hungarian migrant workers in low sectors of the economy employ to satisfy their needs, and how these practices in effect meet

the host country's demand for a "reserve labour force" which is available when in need and disappear when redundant. In addition, ethnic Hungarians live and are present in two places, or to borrow Morokvasic's term (2004), are "settled in mobility," and for these migrants integration (other than participating in the labour market) becomes a distant notion, nonetheless a problematic one.

Unless they arrive through legal and formal channels to take up jobs in the manufacturing sector, migrants are recruited informally through weak tie migrant networks – by an acquaintance from their home settlement and arrive to Hungary to take up irregular jobs and join an already existing brigade or group of people (Németh et al. 2009). The host country's tolerance of such informal recruitment practices can be interpreted as directly supportive of transnational networks that supply labour markets in demand of cheap and flexible labour (Morokvasic 2004). Such informality is apparent in the following case where even an initial loan structure is present, characteristic of trafficking cases:

My friend called me and told me "Listen, I have a big problem, I need to discuss something with you. Could you come over because it is rather long on the phone." So I said, "Of course, am getting dressed." I went to her and she told me "Listen," it was 2003 February, "My husband and others are building in Pest, in X district on X hill." Because her husband was leading the group, and they build with 4-5 people, and "There is an old woman with the family, 91 years old, and she needs someone. My husband called home to ask me to look for someone, because the Madam requested it. And I really thought about you if you would go or not." (...) and I said "Listen, I have no passport, and not even enough money." And she said, "Listen, they cover all expenses, I give you the money and they will give it back to my husband." (...) so this is how it was managed. My friend helped me out. (...) and this man from my village together with the Master waited for me at the western railway station, by train, by K [name of train] I came, so everything turned out just fine! (Eva, 58, Romania, domestic worker)

Although not openly spoken about, the majority of low-skilled migrants start their "work career" in Hungary as irregular workers. Without having a mediator who already has connections in the host country it is almost impossible for migrants to enter the labour market.

You can get a work permit if there is a company behind you. If there is no one behind you and you are left at your powers, then it is a huge energy investment, and suppose you are one who lives in Vojvodina and you do not have friends or other connections, it is very difficult to find work. (Robert, 38, Serbia, unemployed)

People recruited through such mediation are therefore invisible and unprotected against the potential labour exploitation, not only by the

person or company for whom the actual services are delivered, but also within the group. An alarming example is a domestic worker's story who has to do caring work, as well as cook for the whole construction brigade of five, and a family of six people, and herself.

So then the old woman, I also had to cook for the men who were building, the Madam left in the morning for work and told me what to cook, two-course lunch, by when she returned for 3, then she had the men settled, I did not have to help her in that because I could not leave her mother. She could not walk, I was pushing her in a wheelchair, bathed her everyday, measured her blood pressure, gave her drugs, breakfast, always had to massage her feet, back with this and that, so nine months passed by like this. But I was at home twice, but they gave me only three days because they could not leave the old woman with anyone. The old woman was quite nippy, because she had words which stabbed me. And I say to her on one occasion, "Aunt E. I am struggling here with you, and you always, I see it, that you are looking for what you can pick at" and she says, "Struggling? You get such good money." Well? I got ninety thousand forints a month that year. But I say, I cooked, for as many as were working there plus the family. So! (Eva, 58, Romania, domestic worker)

As they acquire more local knowledge, they still establish personal contacts in an informal way; however, they negotiate on their own behalf and terms. Depending on the sector, and the length of migrants' residence and employment history in the host country, they can change their statuses from performing undeclared work to a registered job performance, for example in the construction sector. However, in the feminized domestic sector, undeclared work is the standard, thus such a move is actually impossible. Still, even in performing domestic work migrant workers can achieve better statuses, and so lessen the level of their labour exploitation by making themselves independent from the employer – for example, changing from a live-in caregiver position to a live-out cleaner/caregiver set-up.

By becoming independent individuals in an informal or formal economy, migrant workers also cut off the only existing social network they possess, and continue their life in Hungary in relative social isolation, being left only to one's own devices. Concerning their family relations, it is also widespread among low-sector migrant workers that they leave their families behind in the countries of origin. As a result "the family" is a dominant theme in their narrations, around which evolve ~~(many concepts)~~^{that} these migrants build their perceived life upon. "Working for the family," "we do more good for the family," and "sending earnings home" are recurring descriptions in their stories, emphasizing their familial responsibilities, and justifying their presence in both spaces while retain-

around which many concepts evolve that these migrants build their perceived life upon

ing the mobile and flexible characteristics of their life and work. As one migrant man introduces himself in a patriarchal, male breadwinner style:

I start with that I have family, two children, wife, no one works. And one can say that I came here to work...there is no job opportunity in Ukraine. The two sons and my wife do not work. By and large I earn our living. (Nimet, 51, the Ukraine, agricultural worker)

The earnings in Hungary add to the family budget and sometimes are indeed a great contribution to it, if not the only source. Still, its value is often downplayed especially in narratives where the “forced labour” notion, i.e., the migrant is in Hungary out of economic necessity only, is strong,

It [the earned money] might sound a lot, but at home it is, if we go home we convert it, like nothing. Because we buy a carload of wood or pay the gas, everything, that is it. What I earn here is hardly enough for anything. It only adds to the family budget. So it is not that much. We work hard for our money with no effect. (Piroska, 45, the Ukraine, agricultural worker)

If the family is left behind, which is often the case, ethnic Hungarians migrating to Hungary for work do not consider their migration country as a destination. They do not want to establish themselves in the host country; they behave more like guest workers. Their stay in the country is only for/about work, which is manifested by the fact that they tend to stay close to their place of work, and quite often they opt for staying in workers’ dorms (Németh et al. 2009). One, for example looks at her experience in Hungary in this way, “Well, I picture myself coming to work as if I was coming on an excursion.” Thus, they maintain a notion of temporariness even if they have been working in Hungary for more than five years. Instead of the “classical” migration to a new place to re-settle, many migrate in order to stay, i.e., uphold or raise their family’s standard of living, in the countries of origin.

The descriptions of how these migrants try to make sense of their realities confirm Morokvasic’s argument of migration’s changing character in the CEE countries, which the author terms as these migrants are in fact “settled in mobility” for a longer period of time, that is to say, to get used to being, even literally, present in two places: the host country where they earn their living, the “here-home” and the country of origin, “there-home” where they remit these earnings in order for their families to be able to stay there. Even though these migrant workers spend consider-

ably more time in the host country "as if on an excursion," they remain emotionally attached, and feel more belonging to their countries of origin. Some can organize a regular yearly routine whereby they spend time and work in their countries of origin as well, either as their own choice or as a practical necessity. Such work organization is typical for example in the agricultural sector where the seasonal workforce is on demand, but can be managed in the domestic sector, too.

Under ethnic Hungarian low-sector migrant workers' specific conditions, the notion of integration is either incomprehensible, or at best problematic. On the one hand, these individuals are seemingly invisible in the host society given their cultural and linguistic sameness, and they make efforts to melt into the receiving community, and thus to "go native." Therefore, state-facilitated integration mechanisms are not needed. On the other hand, such migrant workers see themselves as temporary agents, not wishing to stay forever, only taking advantages of prevailing policy and economic environments, thus their intention to fully integrate into the host society remains challenged. Additionally, full social and cultural integration of these migrants cannot be achieved without the existence of a family and larger social network, as a number of migrant workers underline the family's actual presence and their support as a crucial factor of one's integration.

The current state of affairs apparently satisfies both the ethnic Hungarian low-sector migrant workers who do not wish to stay for long – rather viewing their existence in Hungary as temporary but welcoming the eased procedures to enter the country – and the Hungarian labour market's need for disposable workers, who appear when in need and disappear when unwanted. The mobile ethnic Hungarians create no problems for the state; they do not need special measures applied and integration policies as such. Partly due to the fact that most are single individuals and undeclared workers, they barely voice their demands for social and welfare provisions. Thus, they do not pose an additional burden on the receiving state, which in turn largely overlooks these migrant workers' interests and rights.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON TRANSNATIONALISM AT THE STATE AND PERSONAL LEVELS

The present chapter assessed Hungary's current migration and employment policies and how the country facilitates transnationalism of its ethnic minorities in the neighbouring countries. Contrasting the state level

with the personal level we presented low-sector labour migrants' lived experiences. Hungary receives dominantly ethnic Hungarian migrants from the neighbouring countries, and it is assumed that their integration into Hungarian society is unproblematic in general, and into the Hungarian labour market in particular. Yet, our research has shown that many low-sector labour migrants establish undocumented work relations in the host society and if they wish to settle and regularize their stay they need to meander their way through the administrative hardships of the current migration regulations. While the migration legislation does have selective and preferential practices tailored for Hungarian co-ethnics that facilitate their entry into the country, the protective measures and other characteristics of the Hungarian labour market, which cannot even absorb its own native labour force, direct towards channelling these low-sector labour migrants into the informal economy.

Although migration patterns in Hungary, as anywhere else, reflect current economic realities and interest of the migrant individuals, the Hungarian government so far has ignored the labour and market aspects of migration. Instead, Hungary tends to focus on legal regulation and strict control (which are fully in line with EU standards), which noticeably lead to a protection of the Hungarian labour market from foreign labour force, especially TCN labour. Migration to Hungary, on the other hand, has a very strong ethnic dimension. Thus, preferentialism catering to the needs of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries has been developed and maintained in this restrictive migration regime. Various legal and institutional practices have been created by the host country that facilitate the transnational migration of ethnic Hungarians, and migrants take advantage of these. As our case demonstrated, low-sector labour migrants use this facilitated transnational migratory space more to move around as directed by economic prospects in order to maintain or increase their social status "there-home," rather than settling "here-home." What remains in practice is wide-spread circular migration of ethnic Hungarians across borders.

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