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MOVING WORKERS

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LABOUR, COERCION AND IM/MOBILITIES

Edited by Claudia Bernardi, Viola Franziska Müller, Biljana Stojić and Vilhelm Vilhelmsson

WORK IN GLOBAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Moving Workers

Work in Global and Historical Perspective

Edited by
Andreas Eckert, Sidney Chalhoub, Mahua Sarkar,
Dmitri van den Bersselaar, Christian G. De Vito

Work in Global and Historical Perspective is an interdisciplinary series that welcomes scholarship on work/labor that engages a historical perspective in and from any part of the world. The series advocates a definition of work/labor that is broad, and specially encourages contributions that explore interconnections across political and geographic frontiers, time frames, disciplinary boundaries, as well as conceptual divisions among various forms of commodified work, and between work and 'non-work'.

Volume 19

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Introduction: Moving Workers in History

This book explores how workers moved and were moved, why they moved, and how they were kept from moving. In particular, it examines the junction of mobility and coercion, thereby merging insights from two very different but in many ways mutually supportive currents of study and epistemological renewal. On the one hand, global history has broadened the scope of studying labour spatially and temporally as well as creating new methodological incentives by eschewing the binary distinctions previous generations of scholars tended to make between free and unfree labour, productive and unproductive labour, or wage labour and unpaid labour – to name only some of the most common examples.[1] Historians of work have thus increasingly begun to emphasise the interrelational nature of labour regimes in their various guises throughout history and around the globe. On the other hand, the expanding field of mobility studies has been paying more and more attention to questions of labour in connection with mobility, since work is one of the prime motivators for people to move and be moved. In this line of research, human movement emerges as a social process enmeshed in myriad relations of power and control.[2]

This volume aims to combine the influence of these two historiographical currents by investigating them through the lens of coercion[3] as an analytical tool to improve our understanding of the complex and interconnected processes of labour and mobility in different historical contexts. With contributions spanning Europe and North America, *Moving Workers* combines fresh perspectives on the entanglements of human labour and human movement. It shows that all struggles relating to the mobility of workers or its restriction have the potential to reveal complex configurations of hierarchies, dependencies, and diverging conceptions of work and labour relations that continuously make and remake our world.

1 Andreas Eckert, "Why all the Fuss about Global Labour History?" in *Global Histories of Work*, ed. Andreas Eckert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 3–22.

2 Fiona-Katharina Seiger, Christiane Timmerman, Noel B. Salazar, and Johan Wets, *Migration at Work: Aspirations, Imaginaries and Structures of Mobility* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020).

3 Johan Heinsen and Juliane Schiel, "Through the Lens of Coercion: For a Shift of Perspective in Labour and Social History," in *Labour and Coercion: Doing Social History after the Global Turn*, ed. Johan Heinsen and Juliane Schiel (forthcoming).

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In this introduction, we will map out the relevant theoretical and historiographical framework for the volume and discuss the key analytical concepts shaping the empirical studies included therein. These concepts – mobility, immobility, labour, and coercion – form the threads that bind the chapters together and illustrate the value of studying human labour and human movement as entangled processes of hierarchical social relations.

Mobility

Human history is marked by an intrinsic quest for mobility. Moving around enables people to foster ties extending across geographies to advance their cause. Persons who can move are often regarded as "pillars of community", as historian Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor has argued, because less mobile people can benefit from their broadened horizons and the advantages they bring.[4] Mobility is also directly linked to access to public space, which in turn forms an important component of citizenship. Conversely, attempts to restrict people's mobility commonly translate into social exclusion and segregation. A case in point is the fact that one of the largest and most consequential fights for desegregation, the twentieth-century U.S. Civil Rights Movement, gained significant traction by bringing public transportation into focus.[5]

The historical clashes surrounding mobility, its advantages and restriction that are discussed in this book reveal the extraordinary social relevance of commanding one's own movement, as well as the obvious desire to do so. They also show that authorities' understanding of mobility often differs from that of the people they hope to control. Yet governments and employers invariably need to define mobility in order to be able to oversee it. The difficulty of this endeavour resonates throughout history and to this day, exemplified by the fact that scholars continue to grapple with the many dimensions the notion of mobility encompasses.

Placing his finger on this exact problem, Noel Salazar asked "What's in a name?" in a recent theoretical contribution to mobility studies. This simple but pertinent question illustrates that the term "mobility" has become an effective catchword crisscrossing various streams of literature far beyond the original field

4 Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 2.

5 Pryor, *Colored Travelers*, 2. For the historical trajectory of the struggle to access public transportation in the United States, see Elizabeth Belanger, "Working-Class Mobility and Streetcar Politics in Reconstruction-Era St. Louis," *GeoHumanities* 8, 1 (2022): 122–139.

of social science in which it was born.[6] Mobility is now considered a condition, a method, a paradigm; it has even surged as far as becoming a "turn" – the *mobility turn*. As Mimi Sheller and John Urry, to whom this turn is commonly credited, summarise plainly: "All the world seems to be on the move."[7] But Salazar's question makes it clear that we have still not firmly established what mobility actually is. Is it a mere expression of the imagination that the world is continuously in flux?[8] Or is it, more inclusively, a complex assemblage of movement, ideologies, and experience, as Tim Creswell has suggested?[9]

Fifty years ago, the pioneering writings of Henri Lefebvre introduced the notion of "rhythmanalysis", a concept that accounts for the simultaneous spatial and temporal dimensions of human movements taking place at the expenditure of energy.[10] In other words, rhythm occurs through time in a space, which Lefebvre defined as a social relation, thereby laying the groundwork for a theoretical approach to the relationship between movement and stasis. Following his inceptions, we hold that mobility is not only a physical matter of moving entities; it is also imbued in the social relations that precede and follow it.

Far from the apologetic understanding of free movement of glamorous elites by globalisation theories, this prismatic approach underlines the ambiguity of freedom of movement. We build on this to emphasise that mobility is designed, channelled, governed, tracked, controlled, and surveilled in varying ways – and also that it is unequal, since it is hierarchised through lines of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, nationality, age, caste, and dis/ability, among others.[11] This necessary attention to the *conditions* of movement within situations of inequality leads us to explore in greater

6 Noel B. Salazar, "Mobility: What's in a Name?", in *Mobility in Culture: Conceptual Frameworks and Approaches*, ed. Nancy Duxbury and Dea Vidović (Zagreb: Kultura Nova Foundation, 2022), 20–37.

7 Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A*. 38, 2 (2006): 207–226, here 207. A series of studies on the concept of mobility appeared during the early 2000s before the development of the "New Mobilities Paradigm" by Sheller and Urry in 2006 vastly increased the pace of the mobility turn. Sheller and Urry co-founded the Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe) at Lancaster University in 2003 and established the journal *Mobilities* together with Kevin Hannam in 2006. See also John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000) and John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

8 Noel B. Salazar and Alan Smart, "Anthropological Takes on (Im)Mobility," *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 18, 6 (2011): 1–9, here 1.

9 Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006), 3.

10 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

11 Claudia Bernardi, "Capture, Coexistence and (Im)mobility of Labour Forms through the Borders," in *Research Handbook on the Global Political Economy of Work*, ed. Maurizio Atzeni,

depth the power relationships that legitimise or prevent the mobility of people – the ongoing dynamics that Nina Glick Schiller and Noel Salazar have termed "regimes of mobility".[12]

And in fact, the concept of mobility provides us with concrete tools to do so since it comprises much more than physical motion: It is only through "people, objects, words, and other embodied forms" that mobility obtains meaning.[13] This means that mobility is *related* to movement across a given space but does not *equal* it; rather, it encompasses the relation between entities on the move as well as the ability to choose whether to move at all. Stordeur Pryor has conceptualised this ability as a "currency" that creates "economic, political, and social possibilities".[14] With regard to human movements, mobility also contains a subjective dimension of moving safely, without restriction, and in self-determined fashion. People who have power over their own mobility can thus also decide *not* to move – and conversely, *being* moved without consent or against one's own desires means that movement also holds coercive aspects. In this vein, it ceases to be a mere connector between two points and emerges as an analytical category for exploring social relations.[15] The specific view onto coercion that this approach enables is an ideal tool for studying workers who moved and were moved throughout history.

Labour and coercion

The fruitful field of migration history has long been making significant contributions to our understanding of the role of labour in the spatial movement of people over short and long distances, along with the related systems of control.[16] This interconnectedness of labour and migration history reflects the importance of labour for the analysis of profound changes in migration patterns and policies

Alessandra Mezzadri, Dario Azzellini, Phoebe Moore, and Ursula Apitzsch (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023).

12 Nina Glick Schiller and Noel B. Salazar, "Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, 2 (2013): 183–200.

13 Noel B. Salazar, "Theorizing Mobility through Concepts and Figures," *Tempo Social* 30, 2 (2018): 154.

14 Pryor, *Colored Travelers*, 2.

15 See Kevin Hannam et al., "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings," *Mobilities* 1, 1 (2006): 1–22.

16 Jan Lucassen, *Migrant Labour in Europe 1600–1900* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, *Globalising Migration History* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

across time and space.[17] Mobility scholars, who are usually concerned with a broad variety of moving elements such as ideas, objects, and culture, have recently also applied significantly more attention to the topic of labour – and especially to the entanglement of work and racialisation in present and/or very recent times.[18]

Similar to mobility scholars who scrutinise social processes conditioning movement, researchers of global labour history also typically approach processes as analytical tools rather than fixed categories. This intersection is precisely where the authors in this book position themselves. The emergence of global labour history in the late 1990s was in fact a reaction to protracted debates about the analytical essentialisation of different labour regimes that allowed for straightforward categorisation and comparisons between, for instance, wage labour and slavery. With a view to directing attention towards labour relations outside of "free wage labour" and beyond the Western hemisphere, several historians have recently argued for the use of coercion as a useful concept to overcome the limitations of taxonomies and their epistemological constraints.[19] The fact that no academic approach has hitherto succeeded in drawing a clear line between "free" and "unfree" labour underlines the existence of coercive elements in virtually all labour relations, past and present. These links between coercion and labour are "not only crucial to our understanding of historical societies, but also speak to ongoing developments in the contemporary global economy."[20]

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17 See Jan Lucassen, *The Story of Work: A New History of Humankind* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2021).

18 Cristiana Bastos, Andre Novoa, and Noel B. Salazar, "Mobile Labour: An Introduction," *Mobilities* 16, 2 (2021): 155–163.

19 Christian G. De Vito, Juliane Schiel, and Matthias van Rossum, "From Bondage to Precariousness? New Perspectives on Labor and Social History," *Journal of Social History* 54, 2 (2020): 644–662. On the lengthy scholarly debate on free and unfree labour and the concept of coercion, see Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997); Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García, eds., *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Tom Brass, "(Re-) Defining Labour Coercion?", *Critical Sociology* 44, 4–5 (2018): 793–803. Key works on global labour history include Jan Lucassen, *Global Labour History: A State of the Art* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006); Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Andreas Eckert, ed., *Global Histories of Work* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); Anamarija Batista, Viola Franziska Müller and Corinna Peres (eds.), *Coercion and Wage Labour: Exploring Work Relations through History and Art* (London: UCL Press, 2023).

20 Social History Portal, European Labour History Network (ELHN), working group "Labour and Coercion", "Mission", URL: https://socialhistoryportal.org/elhn/wg-coercion, accessed 6 April 2022.

Historian Andreas Eckert has defined the historiographical contribution of global labour historians as being "infused with both specificity and comparison, which sees shared entanglements as bi- or multi-directional rather than unidirectional."[21] Applying this perspective to the mobility of workers, this book joins a vibrant scholarship focusing on the role of coercion in affecting human movement across the globe. It explores the linkages with labour exploitation writ large as well as with the spatiality of coercive labour regimes and their interconnectedness to regimes of im/mobility, stressing the need to historicise these connections.[22]

This being said, a precise definition of the concept of coercion is at the very heart of ongoing academic discussions. Some scholars have advocated for an essentialist understanding, which implies an analytically defined labour relation that can be measured in terms of "degrees of coercion" and consequently produces an understanding of a "spectrum" of labour coercion.[23] Others have emphasised constant engagement and entanglement as being essential to understanding the practice of coercion in different historical contexts.[24] This approach is in response to the recent appeal by historians Christian de Vito, Juliane Schiel, and Matthias van Rossum for an empirical analysis of labour coercion based on studying the "modalities of domination and dependence, allowing for a more articulated conceptualization of social formations across time and space."[25] They promote a technique that begins with the study of individual sites, institutions,

21 Andreas Eckert, "Why All the Fuss about Global Labour History?", 7.

22 See for example Clare Anderson, "Global Mobilities," in *World Histories from Below: Disruption and Dissent, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 169–195; Johan Heinsen, Martin Bak Jørgensen, and Martin Ottovay Jørgensen, eds., *Coercive Geographies: Historicizing Mobility, Labor and Confinement* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

23 Important contributions have come, for example, from Alessandro Stanziani, who approaches coercion as the opposite of freedom of labour, while emphasising that both forms are historically coexistent and have been "defined and practiced in reference to each other", as well as from Marcel van der Linden, who has argued for the use of an analytical taxonomy focusing on three "moments" of coercion that define the nature and form of coercive labour relations, namely the moments of entry, extraction, and exit. Alessandro Stanziani, "Introduction: Labour, Coercion, and Economic Growth in Eurasia, Seventeenth – Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Labour, Coercion, and Economic Growth in Eurasia, 17th–20th Centuries*, ed. Alessandro Stanziani (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–26, here 1; Marcel van der Linden, "Dissecting Coerced Labor," in Van der Linden and García, eds., *On Coerced Labor*, 293–322.

24 Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, "Contested Households: Lodgers, Labour, and the Law in Rural Iceland in the Early 19th Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2023.2197916: Johan Heinsen, "Runaway Heuristics: A Micro-Spatial Study of Immobilizing Chains, C. 1790," *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 56,1 (2022): 37–60.

25 De Vito, Schiel and van Rossum, "From Bondage to Precariousness," 649.

experiences, and trajectories and insists on a complexity implying both spatial and temporal entanglements and historical specificity.

Immobility

The focus on processes necessitates thorough examination of the actual practices of social agents and includes negotiation, conflict, and resistance as essential components of coercion. Workers are not passive recipients of their subjugation; they are actors who dynamically participate in the social worlds they live and work in, contributing to (re)producing and altering those worlds in one way or another. Assuming the perspective of workers automatically brings into focus the dimension of *im*mobility. Over the past few decades, a growing body of scholarship has emerged that discusses workers' mobility as a reaction to their imposed immobilisation. The most obvious examples are the many runaways from countless slaveries throughout history, but the notion equally applies to military deserters, escaping serfs and indentured servants, and ultimately all types and groups of workers confronted with experiences of confinement.[26] Their escapes are to be understood as a highly visible outcome of the mobility of coerced workers that even the most oppressive labour regimes produce.

Immobility is not always desired by employers and detested by workers, however. When relocation laid the foundation for labour relations based on coercion, forced mobilisation sometimes became the target of workers' resentment and resistance. Only one example of this are European convicts who were shipped to overseas colonies as labourers under dire conditions of privation and disease, stripped of their social environments and family ties.[27] In these cases, people aspired to stay at home while the forces of the labour regime attempted to uproot

26 Matthias van Rossum and Jeannette Kamp, eds., *Desertion in the Early Modern World: A Comparative History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Viola Franziska Müller, *Escape to the City: Fugitive Slaves in the Antebellum Urban South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), chapter 2; Forrest D. Colburn, ed., *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989); Abbott Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607–1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947); Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty, and Matthias van Rossum, eds., *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism, 1600–1850* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

27 Johan Heinsen, "Escaping St. Thomas: Class Relations and Convict Strategies in the Danish West Indies, 1672–1687," in Rediker, Chakraborty, and van Rossum, eds., *A Global History of Runaways*, 40–57.

and displace them. These considerations and the contributions in this book illustrate how the concept of immobility needs to be integrated into the analytical toolkit used by scholars of mobility and labour – not as a binary opposite of "free mobility" but instead as a key component of human movement. They also place the conjoined aspects of mobility and immobility at the very centre of work as one of the characteristic – or perhaps even fundamentally defining – activities of human existence.[28] Virtually everywhere there are workers, it seems, there are others who try to control their mobility.

Many scholars in the field are aware of this Janus-faced nature of mobility and immobility. Indeed, the very foundation of the mobilities paradigm includes the simultaneous question of the "politics of (im)mobilities" as focused on the contingent relations between movements.[29] Yet while the theoretical literature on mobility is extensive, the notion of immobility remains both understudied and undertheorised. Sociologist Kerilyn Schewel has argued that there is an inherent "mobility bias" in social theory, as movement tends to be associated with human agency and social change while immobility is (wrongly) associated with sedentariness, complacency, and stasis. She proposes instead that immobility should be approached as a complex and dynamic process, defining it as "spatial continuity [. . .] over a period of time" that is relative and contextual rather than absolute.[30] The recent pandemic caused by COVID-19 and characterised by lockdowns, isolation, and countless people being "stuck" in distant places has brought this issue to the fore among mobility scholars, with some even suggesting the advent of an "immobility turn".[31]

Moving Workers thus approaches immobility in the same way as mobility – namely by showing that it is contingent on contextual relations as well. While mobility is understood as the ability to move, immobility should be seen as a (spatial) continuity dependent on social processes and inherently connected to historically contextual power relations. By contrast, mobilisation implies an interference from the outside – for example a (spatial) movement instigated by someone else. Similarly, immobilisation is considered a (spatial) restriction imposed by other historical actors that may also result in confinement. It is the historical interplay

28 James Suzman, *Work: A History of How We Spend Our Time* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Jan Lucassen, *The Story of Work*.

29 Peter Adey, "If Mobility Is Everything then It Is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)mobilities," *Mobilities* 1, 1 (2006): 75–94.

30 Kerilyn Schewel, "Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies," *International Migration Review* 54, 2 (2020): 328–355, here 329.

31 David Cairns, Thais França, Daniel Malet Calvo, and Leonardo de Azevedo, "An Immobility Turn? The Covid-19 Pandemic, Mobility Capital and International Students in Portugal," *Mobilities* 16, 6 (2021): 874–887.

of these different configurations of workers' movements that this book aims to highlight and examine. Or, as Noel Salazar aptly phrased it, it aims to explore "the very processes that produce movement and global connections [and which] also promote stasis, exclusion and disconnection."[32] The contributions in this collection narrate stories that are exemplary of such processes while focusing on the entanglement between coercion and im/mobility as a major nexus.

Chapter synopsis

The chapters in this book, which span the period from the sixteenth century to the present day and cover a variety of regions across the European continent and North America, engage with a broad range of workers' experiences. They are situated at the crossroads of divergent paths of investigation and different scholarly traditions. While the majority of the authors are trained historians, *Moving Workers* also includes anthropological studies as well as chapters that draw heavily on methods of the social sciences. Striving to apply the tools and insights of global labour history to Western histories, they avoid theoretical models imbued with methodological nationalism.[33] Instead, the contributors start from the ground, looking at groups of labourers and asking what im/mobility meant to them in their specific place and time – and how it came into being. They explore the construction and workings of coercion, investigating how all these elements informed, related to, and interacted with each other.

In the opening chapter, Gabriele Marcon leads us into the world of highly mobile workers – or so it appears at first sight: Germans who migrated to the mines of sixteenth-century Tuscany. By asking whether they were "inveigled or invited", Marcon immediately places his focus on experiences of coercion and their inextricable links to mobility and immobility. He analyses debt, employment contracts, and wage payments as mechanisms of coercion, both during recruitment and once the men and women had arrived at their new worksites, while simultaneously exploring the autonomous dimensions within the very same labour relations. The Grand Duke of Tuscany and his mining officials imposed differing degrees of im/mobility on labourers in order to allocate them to the various mines throughout the territory according to their numbers and skillsets. This policy produced stark distinctions among the German migrants as well as between

32 Salazar, "Mobility: What's in a Name?", 24.

33 Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen, *Prolegomena for a Global Labour History* (Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1999), 7.

them and the largely unskilled local workforce – and all of these people reacted to the coercion and restrictions imposed on their mobility with diverse strategies.

In striking contrast to chapter one, the second contribution by Johan Heinsen sets out from a context of extreme immobilisation: convict labour. The early modern Danish state created a penal system – which they referred to as "slavery" – designed to simultaneously meet the two needs of punishing intransigents and creating a disposable workforce for various forms of hard labour. As Heinsen shows, this system was prone to frequent and repeated escape attempts, many of which were successful. The imprisoned workers' fierce resistance led to reforms and institutional change which, over a long period of time, shifted the priority from productivity through coerced labour to an increased emphasis on the isolation of convicts from society, their secure incarceration, and eventually rehabilitation as the primary aim of the prison system. Heinsen thus reveals concrete connections between the historical development of the prison system in Denmark and the conflicts surrounding the im/mobility of convicts as coerced workers for the state, thereby questioning the relevance of Enlightenment schemes to explain "progress" in the prison system.

Forced mobilisation by a distant actor is the core theme of the third chapter by Magnus Ressel, who analyses the transatlantic slave trade as a brutally forced mass migration enabled by the techniques of accounting. Through the use of account books, a late-eighteenth-century Belgian slaving enterprise abstracted human beings to the extent that potential investors came to perceive them as mere commodities alongside other enthusiastically described products with the utopian allure of vast global riches. Carefully examining the so-called business "prospectus" of this enterprise, Ressel traces how the accountant consciously turned people into numbers to disguise their high mortality rates as a sober and anticipated part of a business reality.

Around the same time, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, limited access to land and property rendered the vast majority of Iceland's working poor susceptible to coercion, as Vilhelm Vilhelmson and Emil Gunnlaugsson discuss in the subsequent chapter. In order to make workers available where they were needed at the right time, the authorities aimed to regulate their movements by means of passports. This undertaking was highly dynamic, as it was organised around seasonal and regional labour demands and affected servants, fishermen, and common labourers alike. The passport system ultimately failed, as the authors stress by turning their perspective to the workers. This was in part because workers employed various evasive tactics – including what the authors call "subversive mobility" – to resist the restrictions imposed by the coercive labour regime and its passport system in an attempt to regulate mobility and bring about periodic immobilisation.

Turning to a domestic context, the fifth chapter by Müge Özbek follows girls and young women from rural areas into Istanbul, where they worked in the households of wealthier families in the late Ottoman Empire. Analysing forms of control over these domestics' mobility, Özbek identifies the legacies of (abolished) legal slavery, lack of access to their own wages, and physical pressure that immobilised them at their worksite by keeping them confined in the house. Challenging prevalent conceptions, Özbek also points to the complicity of family members with employers in producing highly exploited domestic workers against the backdrop of patriarchal claims to their persons and labour. This turned fathers, mothers, and husbands into agents of labour coercion. When such women did venture to leave their place in the household against all odds, society attached the mark of vice and prostitution to them, and the police intervened accordingly. The stories described by Özbek as well as by Vilhelmsson and Gunnlaugsson demonstrate that contesting mobility restrictions equates to a contestation of a top-down construction of society, providing insights into the extent of power domestic servants and common labourers were able to exercise.

Aigi Rahi-Tamm flips the picture once again in chapter six. Highlighting the desire *not* to move, she delves into the experiences of landowning Estonian peasants. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Soviet central government envisioned these *kulaks* transitioning to working on collective farms; those attempting to resist this collectivisation were deported to labour camps in Siberia. Rahi-Tamm scrutinises their struggles as workers and survivors in both locations, underlining the constant back-and-forth between forced mobilisation and immobilisation – both as punishment and as a labour supply measure. When the displaced persons were eventually allowed to return to Estonia in the late 1950s, their stigma of being *kulaks* and deportees translated into local hostilities that prevented them from reclaiming their former farms, forcing them to seek out new occupations and homes. With special consideration for gender and age, this chapter explores the very meaning of work in a society of upheaval.

In chapter seven, Claudia Bernardi analyses the movement of Mexican agricultural workers in the mid-twentieth century. Rather than merely focusing on their work as *braceros* (participants in the bilateral so-called "Bracero Programme") after their arrival in the United States, she draws a comprehensive picture of these individuals' labour mobility as a process beginning with their departure from home and extending through their stay at recruitment centres all the way to their lives at the work sites. Discussing control over labour, indebtedness, and coercion, Bernardi demonstrates how various actors were involved not only in valorising Mexican workers' mobility. In fact, their immobilisation was equally capitalised on by persons like recruiters, local service providers, and border officials. This chapter emphatically shows how mobility and immobilisation

not only coexisted but in fact constituted one another, intertwined within the same labour mobility regime that the author presents as a means of coercion as well as of valorisation of workers' im/mobility and waiting times.

Transnational mobility is likewise the topic of Angelina Kussy's chapter eight, in which she discusses Romanian peasants and their gradual move as a social group towards becoming care workers in Spain. Kussy identifies the dispossession of peasants by the Communist regime in the twentieth century as a form of coercion that undermined their social reproductive regime and rendered them dependent on wage work. The consequence in Romania was mobilisation into various industries, which established the historical conditions for the current labour mobility regime. Connecting two historical transitions, Kussy draws on biographical interviews to explore the experiences of immobilisation and illegalisation of the granddaughter generation in present-day Spain. Through the remittances these women send back home to Romania, they assume their place within an emerging mobile global care class whose members use their wages to aid those staying behind. It is a process instigated by neoliberal reforms and facilitated by the open borders in Europe.

Finally, the afterword by philosopher Thomas Nail expands the historical timeframe back to the Palaeolithic, tracing how human movement in various civilisations and cultures fostered exchange and innovation. Nail's work revolves around the philosophy of motion and mobility, with the mobile human as the central figure shaping societies through history. In his reflections, he visualises human movement by evoking the image of fractal patterns, connecting a series of cultural sequences of motion to other patterns occurring in nature. He presents mobility as the freedom to move, and he understands coercion as an outcome of "being stuck", a force that is applied to move people back to their assigned place within a static pattern. Nail's contribution deepens our understanding of mobility from an interdisciplinary perspective while adding to the vibrant debate on human motion and strengthening the connection between labour history and mobility studies. Resonating with the thrust of this book, his kinetic approach to history extends beyond static categories and stresses the study of processes. This enables us to see, as Nail aptly puts it, the "false contrast" of mobility and immobility.

Moving Workers engages with many different actors who have either contributed to the establishment of or resisted the coercions inherent in different forms of labour im/mobilisation: political formations, institutions, entrepreneurs, control agencies and officials, trade unions, social movements, workers, employers, and recruiters. With a special focus on workers' social practices, this book positions the experiences of working men and women centre stage.

Collectively, the chapters guide us toward several observations on labour coercion and im/mobility: Mobility and immobility as well as mobilisation and immobilisation must be seen as part and parcel of the same labour regimes, and they exist in reciprocal relationships. Coercion can be an engine, manifesting as (a combination of) immobility, forced movement, or immobilisation. Because it is difficult to draw a clear line between work and mobility, workers' attitudes toward their respective im/mobilisations cannot be understood without linking their experiences to those of labour coercion, and vice versa. By paying close attention to their actions, we recognise that workers' continuous insistence on mobility – and the fact that throughout history, they often moved despite restrictions and inherent criminalisation – must be understood as a clear assertion of their perceived rights.

This view provides a window to how workers see the worlds they inhabit. As Thomas Nail reminds us in his afterword, the Greek word *theoria* means to journey to neighbouring villages and listen to their stories. With *Moving Workers*, we have attempted to embark on the equivalent of such a journey by engaging with different disciplines and listening to their perspectives. Our aim is to eschew traditional boundaries of investigation for the sake of entangling and fusing different analytical concepts and approaches so as to achieve a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of labour and mobility throughout history.

Gabriele Marcon

Chapter 1
Inveigled or Invited? The Migration of German Miners to the Medici Mines in Sixteenth-Century Tuscany

In February 1558, Tyrolean silver assayer Hans Glöggl wrote a letter to the soon-to-be Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–1574), regarding his employment as the new head of the Medici silver mines.[1] A few months earlier, the duke had invited Glöggl to Pietrasanta (Versilia) in hopes of curbing the decline of silver production in the mines. His stay was originally planned to last only a few months, after which he was to return to his previous occupation in Schwaz, a mining town in the Tyrol region. While working for the duke in Tuscany, however, Glöggl was informed that he was to stay in Pietrasanta for at least five more years. In his letter, Glöggl stressed that the duke inveigled him into staying, meaning that his contract had not been prolonged under conditions of his own choosing.[2] Nevertheless, he was generously remunerated over the duration of his new employment as head of the Medici mines. His wage was increased, and he was offered material and monetary incentives that allowed him to move to Tuscany with his wife and nine children.[3]

Was Glöggl's migration to Medici Tuscany part of an economic strategy of his own design? Or was it the outcome of a forced displacement imposed by his new employer? In the sixteenth century, German[4] miners working in the

1 Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF), Mediceo del Principato (hereafter MP), f. 469, c. 229r–230r.

2 In this chapter, I use the term 'inveigled' as a means of conveying the coerced recruitment of Hans Glöggl.

3 A preliminary analysis of Glöggl's migration to sixteenth-century Medici Tuscany can be found in Hermann Kellebenz, "Mercanti Tedeschi in Toscana Nel Cinquecento," in *Studi Di Storia Economica Toscana Nel Medioevo e Nel Rinascimento in Memoria Di Federico Melis* (Pisa: Pacini, 1987), 222–223.

4 Italian speakers using the terms *todesco* or *alemanno* at the time were not referring to a state or nation of Germans. Rather, they used these words to identify people who spoke German or one of its dialects, or who had worked as miners in the mines located in and beyond the Alps. In this chapter, I use the term 'German' knowing that neither Italian speakers nor German miners employed the term as a national or regional identifier, and that this choice implies a certain degree of simplification and inaccuracy. The German names will be spelled in the ways used in the documentation. All translations from German and any resulting mistakes are my own.

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highly productive mining regions of Central Europe were skilled labourers whose practical knowledge concerning the extraction and refinement of precious metals was in high demand.[5] In the period between the 1470s and the 1530s in particular, German miners and metallurgists had established thriving and highly profitable silver, copper, gold, and lead mining enterprises in the Saxon and Bohemian territories of the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains), Tyrol, Slovakia, Carinthia, Hungary, and the Harz region. In these areas, they developed their expertise on mineral resources through the combination of practical inquiry with natural philosophy, allowing these practitioners to locate metals underground, excavate deep-shaft mines, and refine metals through alchemical processes.[6] Territorial rulers in Saxony, Tyrol, and the Harz mountains designed sophisticated administrative frameworks for this activity. Underground metals were territorial rulers' property, and their exploitation was part of the royalties that guaranteed the princely monopolies on minting coins.[7] Mining activities in Central Europe also thrived on the financial participation of private investors and merchant bankers, who contributed to the costs of labour and technological improvement in return for part of the profits yielded by the extraction operations.

The combination of mining knowledge, administrative skills, and capital investments in Central European extraction regions provided German-speaking miners with wide-ranging expertise in mining activities that led to their recruitment and mobility all across Europe. On the one hand, the technological improvements in ore extraction and metalworking operations sparked the interest of European rulers. In the sixteenth century, Renaissance humanists and mercantile elites considered mining one of the worthy endeavours of princely rulers, legitimising their involvement in the business by arguing that "mines bring great and considerable use to the princes and lords [. . .], here territories are cleaned up, levelled out, cultivated [. . .] towns and villages are built, and instead of the wild creatures a new

5 The identification of German miners as 'skilled' workers does not automatically imply that local workers were considered 'unskilled'. Over the duration of their stay, Medici mining officials challenged German expertise on many occasions through inquiries into the natural and alchemical compositions of metals in the Medici mines. As Ann Daly argues, "words like 'skills' can create, rather than reflect, hierarchies of knowledge". See Ann Marsh Daly, "'Every Dollar Brought from the Earth': Money, Slavery, and Southern Gold Mining," *Journal of the Early Republic* 41, 4 (2021), 564.

6 Christoph Bartels, "The Production of Silver, Copper, and Lead in the Harz Mountains from Late Medieval Times to the Onset of Industrialization," in *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, ed. Ursula Klein et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 71–100.

7 Hermann Löscher, *Das Erzgebirgische Bergrecht des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957).

world is being created."[8] The rush for new metals along with the search for techniques to increase the productivity of old mines prompted rulers in Italy, Scandinavia, the Balkans, England, France, and Spain to recruit German miners so as to transfer their expertise to local territories. On the other hand, this movement was not always the result of recruitment per se. The richness of the underground world itself attracted German miners to remote territories, and the promise of immediate and ample remuneration fuelled their material desire for economic wealth, promoting mobility to newly opened mines. As Tina Asmussen insightfully puts it, these movements implied "a contemporary perception of wealth and aspirations towards upward mobility".[9]

This chapter considers the migration of German-speaking miners to Medici Tuscany as a combination of recruitment by rulers and miners' own mobility. By juxtaposing the princely need for expertise and miners' individual strategies, it aims to explore the historical overlaps between coercion and autonomy in the process of early modern labour migration. Historians have undertaken considerable efforts to understand the mechanisms underpinning mining migrations across the globe,[10] and the available literature has indicated two main research trajectories. First, scholars of labour migrations have focused on coercion to analyse the unfree movements of enslaved, forced, and indentured populations to the Iberian colonial mines in the early modern period as well as to the coal and gold fields of India, South Africa, California, and Australia during the late nineteenth century.[11] Second, the few studies on migration flows to early modern European mines have emphasised the free and autonomous aspect of miners' geographical movements. For example, the expansion of resource extraction in Central Europe attracted agricultural labourers with the promise of steady incomes in prospering mines. Moreover, skilled miners who could

8 Cited in Tina Asmussen and Pamela O. Long, "Introduction: The Cultural and Material Worlds of Mining in Early Modern Europe," *Renaissance Studies* 34, 1 (2020): 8–9.

9 Cited in Tina Asmussen, "The Kux as a Site of Mediation: Economic Practices and Material Desires in the Early Modern German Mining Industry," in *Sites of Mediation*, ed. Susanna Burghartz et al. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 163.

10 For a general overview of this literature, see Ad Knotter, "Mining," in *Handbook Global History of Work*, ed. Karin Hofmeester et al. (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 237–258.

11 On forced migrations to colonial mines in Latin America, see Raquel Gil Montero, "Free and Unfree Labour in the Colonial Andes in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *International Review of Social History* 56, 19 (2011): 297–318. On ethnic migrations to coal mines during industrialisation, see Ad Knotter, "Coal Mining, Migration and Ethnicity: A Global History," in *Making Sense of Mining History*, ed. Stefan Berger and Peter Alexander (London/New York: Routledge, 2019), 129–150.

"sell their skills in transregional labour markets" regularly moved to distant destinations while "unskilled and general labourers remained in their places of origins".[12]

This contribution aims to help overcome the dichotomy presented above by examining the coexistence of coercion and autonomy in early modern European mining migration,[13] with a focus on the movement of German miners to the Medici silver and lead mines during the mid-sixteenth century. At the time, precious metals were extracted in the north-western and south-western areas of Tuscany.[14] In Pietrasanta and Campiglia, the mining enterprise established by Duke Cosimo I de' Medici between 1542 and 1592 controlled the production of metals, the employment of miners, and the organisation of labour through the supervision of German mine managers and local officials. The workforce consisted of unskilled labourers and miners from surrounding towns alongside skilled and unskilled male and female German miners who came predominantly from the Ore Mountains, Carinthia, and Habsburg Tyrol. The need for expertise in the Medici silver mines shows that coercion emerged from different spatial and temporal categories of labour relations – particularly in and outside the mines and during the entry, extraction, and exit phases of labour.[15] At the same time, the analysis of German miners' autonomous strategies of mobility that followed material desires and promises of financial gains reveals more nuanced patterns of forced im/mobility.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first part provides a brief overview of the role of German mining expertise across early modern Europe, with a particular focus on Cosimo I de' Medici's projects. In the second part, I discern patterns of migration resulting from hiring processes and autonomous strategies by examining the activities of the recruiters that hired miners in the German-

12 Translated from Yvonne Kathrein, Georg Stöger, and Alois Unterkircher, "Migrationen in einem vormodernen Bergbaurevier: Forschungsstrategien und Annäherungsversuche," in *Perspektiven in der Fremde? Arbeitsmarkt und Migration von der frühen Neuzeit bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. Margrit Schulte Beerbühl and Dieter Dahlmann (Salzburg: Klartext Verlag, 2010), 54.

13 On labour relations in early modern mines, see Rossana Barragán Romano, "Dynamics of Continuity and Change: Shifts in Labour Relations in the Potosí Mines (1680–1812)," *International Review of Social History* 61, 24 (2016): 93–114.

14 Magda Fabretti and Anna Guidarelli, "Ricerche sulle iniziative dei Medici in campo minerario da Cosimo I a Ferdinando I," in *La Toscana in età moderna (secoli XVI–XVIII): Politica, istituzioni, società. Studi recenti e prospettive di ricerca. Atti del convegno, Arezzo, 12–13 ottobre 2000*, ed. Mario Ascheri and Alessandra Contini (Florence: Olschki, 2005), 139–217.

15 I refer in particular to the theoretical and methodological framework for the study of coercion offered in Marcel van der Linden, "Dissecting Coerced Labor," in *On Coerced Labour: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez Garcia (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 291–322.

speaking lands as well as the expectations fuelling miners' material desires to work in new mines. In the final section, I investigate coercion across various moments and places of labour relations through analysis of debt relations, employment contracts, and wage payments. The overall picture that emerges shows how coercion and autonomy overlapped in individual and group migrations, blurring the commonly assumed separation between forced and voluntary movements in the early modern European labour context.

The need for expertise

Mining activities in Tuscany have a long history. Archaeological surveys show that the Etruscans and the Romans extracted iron, silver, and copper in its southern and north-western territories – particularly in the Maremma region, Val di Cecina, and Versilia.[16] In the Late Middle Ages, territorial rulers and city councils expanded these extraction activities by designing new administrative and legal frameworks, some of which accounted for the first mining laws issued in Europe.[17] Iron production in particular thrived in these early phases of mining activities, with iron ore extracted on the isle of Elba distributed to refineries and workshops located along the Tuscan shores – more specifically, from the harbour city of Piombino to the towns of Ruosina and Seravezza in the Versilia region.[18] With the advent of the Medici as Dukes of Florence (1530) and Grand Dukes of Tuscany (1569), mining activity increased even further. By the early 1540s, the Medici had established large-scale mining initiatives for a variety of metals across the Tuscan territory (see Map 1.1).[19] To boost the production of precious metals, they hired German miners, whose extraction and metallurgy skills with regard to silver, gold, copper, and lead were particularly renowned across early modern Europe.[20]

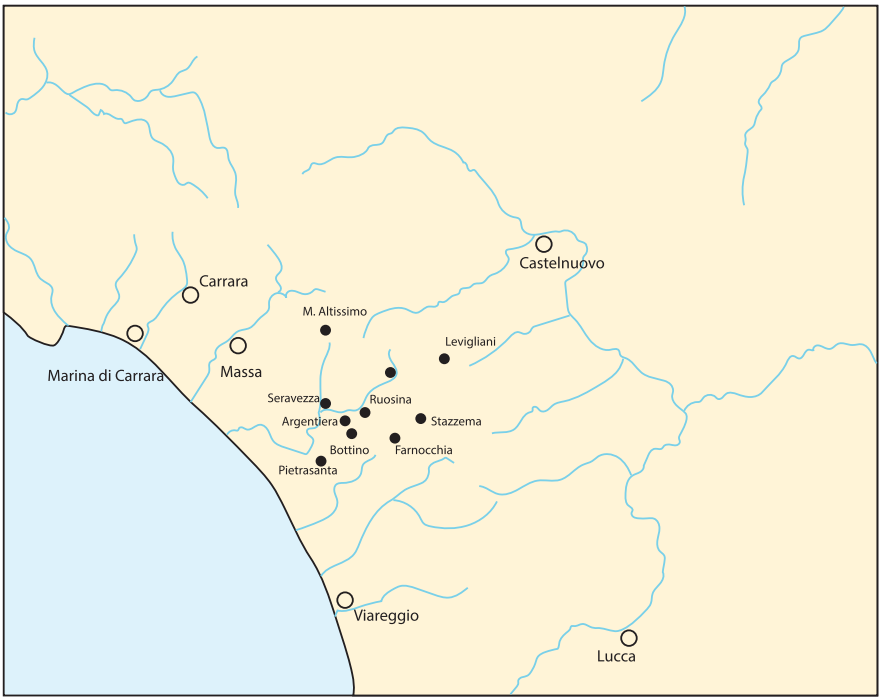
16 Fabretti and Guidarelli, "Ricerche," 143–145.

17 Roberto Farinelli and Giovanna Santinucci, eds., *I codici minerari nell'Europa preindustriale: archeologia e storia* (Florence: All'insegna del giglio, 2014), 11–17.

18 For a detailed analysis of iron extraction on Elba, see Ivan Tognarini, "La questione del ferro nella Toscana del XVI secolo," in *I Medici e lo stato senese 1555–1609: Storia e territorio*, ed. Leonardo Rombai (Rome: De Luca, 1980), 239–261.

19 From the 1560s onwards, mining in the Maremma region became particularly relevant for the supply of alum to the textile manufactures in Florence, which used the metal as a mordant for dying clothes. See Roberto Farinelli, "L'avvio delle iniziative granducali per la coltivazione dell'allume a Massa Marittima," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age* 121, 1 (2009): 69–82.

20 Bartels, "The Production", 71–100. On Tuscan engineers and craftsmen, see Andrea Bernardoni, *La Conoscenza Del Fare: Ingegneria, Arte, Scienza Nel De La Pirotechnia Di Vannoccio Biringuccio* (Firenze: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2012).



Map 1.1: Mining districts in the Versilia region around 1550, Fabretti and Guidarelli, "Ricerche", 163.

The relevant skills provided by these German miners consisted of techniques for extraction, metallurgy, and labour organisation developed in Europe's most productive mining regions. At the turn of the sixteenth century, rich new silver and copper deposits had been discovered especially in the Ore Mountains and the eastern Alpine territories.[21] At the same time, new techniques in mining and metalworking established the conditions for these discoveries to yield large profits. The implementation of ventilation and drainage systems, along with more efficient ways to separate copper and silver ores with the help of lead (known as *Saigerprozess* or liquation), improved productivity to unprecedented levels.[22] For example, silver outputs in the

21 For a general overview of the expansion of mining production in the early modern period, see John U. Nef, "Mining and Metallurgy in Medieval Civilisation," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe from the Decline of the Roman Empire*, eds. Edward Miller et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

22 For an analysis of metallurgical methods from the perspective of the history of technology, see Philippe Braunstein, "Innovations in Mining and Metal Production in Europe in the Late Middle Ages," *Journal of European Economic History*, 12, 3 (1983): 573–591.

Schwaz area of Tyrol grew fivefold, with miners extracting and refining around 1,358 metric tons of silver between the 1470s and the 1530s.[23]

In order to raise the necessary capital to implement new technologies, territorial rulers and merchant capitalists designed sophisticated speculative financial instruments that were traded via city fairs and between princely courts.[24] The rapid growth of mining enterprises in Central Europe also caused significant demographic transformations as the news of discoveries spread quickly across the continent, stimulating seasonal and permanent migrations from agricultural areas to the mining locations.[25] Extraction activities in the Ore Mountains, Tyrol, and the Harz region prompted swift population increases in towns located near the mines. The 400 miners working in the Schwaz area, mentioned during the Council of Basel in 1442, grew to 7,400 in 1489 and eventually peaked at 12,500 in 1556.[26] Similarly, the mining town of St. Joachimsthal (today: Jáchymov) in the Ore Mountains in the border region between present-day Bohemia and Saxony became one of the largest cities in the Holy Roman Empire, housing approximately 18,200 inhabitants by 1534.[27] During this period, many small-scale settlements situated in the vicinity of mining shafts transformed into some of Europe's largest economic and demographic centres.

With the aim of establishing new mines of their own and emulate this economic prosperity, territorial rulers throughout Europe encouraged the migration of skilled miners from the German-speaking mining regions. In 1521, King Christian II of Denmark and Norway (1481–1559) hired German workers from the Ore Mountains to reopen tin and iron mines in his lands.[28] In England, the Company of Mines Royal,

23 Erich Egg, "Die Bergleute als neuer Berufsstand im Schwazer Silberbergbau 1450–1550," in *Bergbau und Arbeitsrecht: Die Arbeitsverfassung im Europäischen Bergbau des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ludwig and Peter Sika (Vienna: VWGÖ, 1989), 211–221, here 212.

24 For a general analysis of the market of mining shares in the Ore Mountains, see Richard Dietrich, *Untersuchungen zum Frühkapitalismus im Mitteldeutschen Erzbergbau und Metallhandel* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1991).

25 This movement was generated by what contemporaries referred to as "Berggeschrey" or "mountain clamour". See Wolfgang Ingenhaeff and Johann Bair, *Bergbau und Berggeschrey: Zu den Ursprüngen europäischer Bergwerke. 8. Internationaler Montanhistorischer Kongress, Schwaz in Tirol/Sterzing in Südtirol. Tagungsband 2009* (Bruneck: Berenkamp, 2010).

26 Egg, *Bergleute*, 212.

27 Christoph Bartels, "Strukturwandel in Montanbetrieben des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit in Abhängigkeit von Lagerstättenstrukturen und Technologie: Der Rammelsberg bei Goslar 1300–1470 – St. Joachimsthal im Böhmischen Erzgebirge um 1580," in *Struktur und Dimension: Neunzehntes und Zwanzigstes Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Karl Heinrich Kaufhold zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Gerhard (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997), 25–70.

28 Björn Ivar Berg, "Probleme der 1521 nach Skandinavien auswandernden sächsischen Bergleute," in *Montangeschichte lehren: Quellen und Analysen zur frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Hans-Joachim Kraschewski and Ekkehard Westermann (Husum: Matthiesen, 2015), 165–168.

founded after Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) granted private partnerships the right to extract copper in the county of Cumberland (now Cumbria), employed German-speaking experts and miners from the Tyrol region and the St. Joachimsthal mines.[29] Movements of crews of German miners are also documented for mining initiatives in Hungary, Slovakia, the Balkans, the Mediterranean area, and Colonial Spain.[30] In general, rulers' interests in fostering the migration of mining experts revolved around two aspects. On the one hand, new technologies for mining and metalworking activities increased metal outputs, thereby contributing to achieving the princes' socio-economic objectives. Extraction activities could secure the flow of high-quality metals to local mints as well as stimulate occupation and the increase of labour activities in rural and remote areas of their domains.[31] On the other hand, German practitioners designed new ways of organising labour that aroused the interest of external investors. By establishing systems of experience-based oversight of labour activities, mining officials in the German-speaking lands supported the notion of mines being governed by a trustworthy and efficient administration, thus attracting capital investment from local and distant marketplaces.[32]

The presence of German miners in the Medici mines was intended to solve technical and organisational issues encountered by Medici officials in the earliest phases of production. The extraction of precious metals was a costly and labour-intensive activity, and a few years after the Pietrasanta silver mines reopened in 1542, the industry was already making losses. Between 1546 and 1547, Duke Cosimo spent almost 36,000 lire to pay around 45 miners, metallurgists, and unskilled workers to refurbish old pits, extract and refine ores, and search for new deposits in the surrounding areas. Despite the high costs, not a single pound of silver was produced

29 Maxwell Bruce Donald, *Elizabethan Copper: The History of the Company of Mines Royal, 1568–1605* (London: Pergamon Press, 1955).

30 Renate Pieper, "Anwerbung Sächsischer Bergleute für den ersten Bergbau in Hispanoamerika: Der Vertrag von Sevilla vom 31. Dezember 1528," in *Montangeschichte lehren: Quellen und Analysen zur frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Hans-Joachim Kraschewski and Ekkehard Westermann (Husum: Matthiesen, 2015), 169–171; Katalin Szende, "Iure Theutonico? German Settlers and Legal Frameworks for Immigration to Hungary in an East-Central European Perspective," *Journal of Medieval History* 45, 3 (2019): 360–379.

31 Luca Molà, "States and Crafts: Relocating Technical Skills in Renaissance Italy," in *The Material Renaissance*, ed. Evelyn Welch and Michelle O'Malley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 133–153.

32 Franziska Neumann, "Imagined Investors: Markets, Agents, and the Saxon Mining Administration," in *Markets and Their Actors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Tanja Skambraks et al. (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 71–100.

during this time.[33] Accounts of the silver refining activities show that the metal "evaporated" during the process and that local metallurgists faced severe difficulties in operating the furnaces.[34] In 1545, Giovanni Battista Carnesecchi, captain of Pietrasanta, reported on the hardship of the latter task by stating that "I cannot resist the heat, as it seems to me that I have to look for health and not for death."[35] In the eyes of the Medici duke, the recruitment of mining experts seemed a necessary step towards creating a more economically sustainable and profitable enterprise.

In reaction to failed experiments and growing expenditures, Cosimo I eventually hired mining experts from the Ore Mountains and the Schwaz area. In 1546, Cristof Tegler (†1557), a citizen of Nuremberg and metalworker in St. Joachimsthal, arrived in Pietrasanta with a group of around 15 male and female miners.[36] As new head of the Medici mines, Tegler allocated labour in a hierarchical organisation based on skills and provenance. He hired German miners and metallurgists for metalworking and supervising positions that were better remunerated, while general and supply tasks such as hauling, charcoal making, and carpentry were allocated to unskilled labourers and auxiliary workers from nearby towns. These jobs were the lowest paid in the Pietrasanta mines. After Tegler's death in 1557, rich mineral deposits in the Maremma territory that came under Duke Cosimo's rule during the War of Siena (1552–1559) offered new opportunities for refining silver ores through the use of lead.[37] This strategy prompted the recruitment of additional metallurgists and miners with expertise in lead refining. One of these newly arrived practitioners, the Tyrolean metalworker Hans Glöggl, became the new head of the Medici mines in 1558.

Recruitment and autonomy

The recruitment of German miners employed a three-pronged approach. First, Florentine merchants operating in the economic centres of the Holy Roman Empire used pre-existing trade networks to provide credit to incoming miners. Secondly,

33 Roberta Morelli, "The Medici Silver Mines (1542–1592)," *Journal of European Economic History* 5, 1 (1976): 121–139, here 127.

34 In the years 1545 to 1546, refining reports often documented consistent gaps between assaying (small-scale refining processes) and the final outputs. In 1545, a Medici official wrote to the duke that "most of the vein disappeared into the air with great loss". See ASF, MP, f. 656, c. 23v.

35 Cited in Fabretti and Guidarelli, "Ricerche," 147.

36 The main archival source describing this migration is Cristof Tegler's account book. See ASF, Miscellanea Medicea (hereafter Misc.), f. 323/I.

37 Farinelli, *La coltivazione dell'allume*, 78.

ducal envoys to the Habsburg courts lobbied the territorial rulers to permit German miners to leave. Thirdly, the Medici outsourced the task of recruiting additional workers to Tegler and Glöggl, their German mine managers. The distinctiveness of this system lay in the simultaneous presence of various actors – merchants, agents, and subcontractors – who contributed to providing information to employers and miners on labour and expertise, facilitating workers' movements through lines of credit, and mediating the constraints placed on migration by the political authorities governing German-speaking mining regions.[38]

Within the large network of Florentine merchants operating in the Holy Roman Empire, intermediation by the Torrigiani family in particular helped the Medici recruit miners from the Ore Mountains. The Torrigiani were Florentine merchant-entrepreneurs who had specialised in textile trading since the fourteenth century.[39] By the early sixteenth century, the family had established a commercial branch in Nuremberg to import Neapolitan raw silk into Southern German cities.[40] While doing so, the Torrigiani represented Cosimo's commercial interests in the German territories on various occasions,[41] and their trade network with German merchant families in Southern German cities facilitated the recruitment of miners from the empire. The city of Nuremberg was close to the profitable mines of the Harz region and the Ore Mountains, and it formed one of the commercial headquarters of numerous influential German mining entrepreneurs and investors.[42] In the sixteenth century, it was one of the most important centres for trading *Kuxen*, the financial assets used to purchase mining shares in the Saxon silver mines.[43] Moreover, throughout the early modern period, Nuremberg remained a bustling centre of metalworking activities. The imperial city became particularly famous for the craft of metallurgy, which flourished in the second half of the fifteenth century, and its craftsmen and merchants consequently traded a wide range of silver and gold items

38 On the processes and actors of recruitment in the early modern period, see Jan Lucassen, "Working at the Ichapur Gunpowder Factory in the 1790s (Part I)," *Indian Historical Review* 39, 1 (2012): 19–56.

39 Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli, "Florence, Nuremberg and Beyond: Italian Silks in Central Europe during the Renaissance," in *Europe's Rich Fabric: The Consumption, Commercialisation, and Production of Luxury Textiles in Italy, the Low Countries and Neighbouring Territories (Fourteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)*, ed. Bart Lambert and Katherine Anne Wilson (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 107–130.

40 Guidi-Bruscoli, "Italian Silks," 110.

41 For other trade operations on Cosimo's behalf, see ASF, MP, f. 606, c. 34v.

42 Guidi-Bruscoli, "Italian Silks," 109–110.

43 Theodor Gustav Werner, "Das fremde Kapital im Annaberger Bergbau und Metallhandel des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte* 57 (1936): 113–179.

and artworks as well as iron tools, armour, cannons, and guns all across Europe.[44] It was at this strategic crossroads of craft, capital flow, and trade that the Torrigiani gathered information about mining and metallurgy experts.

While there is no information on precisely when and under what circumstances the Florentine family approached Cristof Tegler, archival sources document their role as facilitators and credit providers for incoming German miners. Before arriving in Pietrasanta in December 1546, Cristof Tegler, his wife Cristina, and eleven miners received a total of 324 lire from the Torrigiani on Cosimo's behalf.[45] This procedure was repeated in 1548 when a German miner travelled from Pietrasanta to Nuremberg to enlist additional miners.[46] Upon his arrival in the city, he enticed prospective workers with bills of exchange worth 40 scudi each that the Torrigiani had to redeem "anytime he will request it".[47] In the end, the recruiter came back with twelve miners whose hiring costs amounted to 750 scudi in total.[48] This credit represented an advance on the workers' wages and allowed them to cover their travel expenses. While facilitating the logistics of migration, however, these loans also created debt relations that bound the miners to their new employer – an aspect we will revisit in the next section.

The recruitment network of German miners also built on the mediation provided by the ducal agents operating in the German-speaking countries. As diplomatic envoy to the Holy Roman Empire, Francisco de Zara accomplished various businesses on behalf of Duke Cosimo.[49] Besides his regular diplomatic activities in Vienna, Prague, and Trent, Zara visited the mines of Schwaz – the centre of Habsburg silver production – in the spring of 1558, and was hosted at the headquarters of the Fugger family.[50] He had been tasked by Cosimo to hire a new mine manager to send to Pietrasanta, a delicate job that required the approval of Habsburg authorities.

44 For example, the city maintained a fruitful commercial and cultural relationship with Venice. See Bettina Pfotenhauer, *Nürnberg und Venedig im Austausch: Menschen, Güter und Wissen an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2016).

45 ASF, Miniere Medicee (hereafter MM), f. 5, c. 1r; 5r.

46 ASF, MP, f. 638, c. 237r: "The German miner Gherardo Brambay is going to Germany by our order to bring some good miners into the service of our mines" (my translation).

47 Ibid.

48 ASF, MM, f. 5, c 1; c. 19–20.

49 In 1558, Zara went to Trent to recruit German mercenaries for the duke. In a letter sent on January 4, he informed the duke that he had found a regiment "previously employed by the King of England", which he was scheduled to meet in Ratisbon in the following weeks. See ASF, MP, f. 457, 44r.

50 For a recent account of the Fugger family, see Mark Häberlein, *The Fuggers of Augsburg: Pursuing Wealth and Honour in Renaissance Germany* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

Zara had already obtained a safe conduct permit signed by the emperor to carry out this business in the Tyrolean territories as early as March 1556.[51] But while negotiating the recruitment of 30 miners from Schwaz and 60 workers from the lead mines at Bleiberg in Carinthia, he encountered opposition from the Tyrolean authorities and the Governor of Carinthia, Cristof Tonaus. Indeed, local political authorities understood the emigration of miners as a threat to their own mining production. Territorial rulers worried about the loss of skill and expertise in the mines, and they were particularly concerned that hiring out a small number of miners might prompt others to follow their trajectories and move to new and unexplored mines. When Zara had already secured the service of Hans Glöggl in March 1558, the Tyrolean chamber only permitted the recruitment of 30 more "general miners, but not the best and most enduring ones" to be carried out "in silence".[52] The Carinthian governor Cristof Tonaus resisted the recruitment drive even more, temporarily blocking the departure of the 60 lead miners destined for Pietrasanta. Only an intervention by Zara was able to resolve the situation. In the summer of 1558, he travelled to Vienna and was received by the emperor, who allowed a smaller group to make its way to Florence.[53]

Finally, the German mine managers themselves played a fundamental role in this layered network of recruitment. Cosimo assigned to them the task of recruiting additional miners from the German-speaking countries. As heads of the Medici mines, Tegler's and Glöggl's role was to oversee the production process and decide on the allocation and organisation of labour. Their contracts, which provided them with "full authority" over the mines, offered them incentives in the form of shares of the profits yielded by the extraction each year, which were paid quarterly as part of their wages. From this position, Tegler and Glöggl pursued Cosimo's interests as their own and recruited skilled practitioners according to technical considerations aimed at increasing the mines' productivity. By doing so, they would also increase their personal financial returns.[54] Simply put, Tegler's and Glöggl's income depended on how effectively they could synchronise the mines' production needs with the migration of skilled miners.

51 With this safe conduct, the emperor notified the Tyrolean authorities to "not create any impediment for the business of the Duke of Florence" (*in verrichtung wolgedacht Herzogen von Florenz gescheffen nit verhindern lasset*). See Tiroler Landesarchiv Innsbruck (hereafter TLAI), Geschäft von Hof (GvH), 14 April 1556.

52 "*dreissig Knappen doch nit die besten und bestendigisten [. . .] doch in aller still hinweg fueren muge.*" TLAI, Gemeine Missiven (hereafter GM), f. 262, c. 326r.

53 ASF, MP, f. 471, c. 41r.

54 See Marcel van der Linden, "Work Incentives and Forms of Supervision," in *Handbook Global History of Work*, ed. Karin Hofmeester and Marcel van der Linden (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 469–489.

For this reason, the German mine managers had to determine the status of extraction and metallurgy activities in the Medici mines. In 1545, for example – one year before moving to Pietrasanta permanently – Tegler surveyed the sites and complained that Italian miners were extracting ores without cleaning up leftover materials, which obstructed the bottom of the pits where "one can find the best ores".[55] To solve this problem, he argued that the mines needed some "good overseers from the German countries" who could control and organise mining crews more efficiently (see Fig. 1.1).[56] He also initiated the use of stamp mills to crush and wash the ores before they were refined.[57] His assessment allowed Tegler to arrive in Pietrasanta the following year with a group of overseers and skilled practitioners from St. Joachimsthal, such as the skilled washer and engineer Matheis Vister (Fister), who built and oversaw stamp mills and washing plants.[58] Hans Glöggl likewise recruited miners and metalworkers with a view to enhancing silver outputs. When he settled in Pietrasanta in 1558, he strove to increase the lead production in Campiglia and use it to refine silver-bearing ores extracted from the Pietrasanta mines. Accordingly, he personally recruited two silver assayers from Schwaz and promoted the recruitment of lead miners from Bleiberg.[59]

The synchronisation of skills with the production needs of employers and subcontractors created the conditions for German miners to be assigned to various mining locations throughout the Tuscan territory. Skills needed to be disseminated within the Medici mining enterprise, which by the mid-sixteenth century encompassed extraction sites in Pietrasanta (Versilia, silver), Campiglia Marittima (Maremma, lead), and Volterra (Val di Cecina, copper).[60] As all of these facilities were in early stages of their activity, they required skilled practitioners to organise labour, discover new deposits, and increase metal outputs through new metalworking operations. For this reason, in the summer of 1558, Glöggl relocated to Campiglia 13 miners as well as 5 skilled metalworkers and ore washers out of the 26 workers arriving

55 Tegler's letter was translated into Italian and sent to Cosimo. I used the transcription in Roberta Morelli, "Argento Americano e Argento Toscano: Due Soluzioni Alla Crisi Mineraria Del Cinquecento," *Ricerche Storiche* 1 (1984): 196–201, here 196. The English translation is my own.

56 Morelli, "Argento Americano," 196.

57 For a visual description of these machineries, see Wolfgang Lefrève, *Picturing the World of Mining in the Renaissance: The Schwazer Bergbuch (1556)* (Berlin: Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 2010).

58 ASF, Misc., 323/I, c. 3v.

59 ASF, MP, f. 471/I, c. 28–29.

60 Fabretti and Guidarelli, "Ricerche," 139–217.

from Schwaz that year.[61] Their task was to build new stamp mills and washing plants and increase the yield of lead ore. This synchronisation of skills with commodity production shows that the assessment of labour productivity and technical capabilities was paramount to the mine managers' economic strategies. Besides aiming to increase the yield of the ducal mines, the circulation of German skills to and between the Medici mines also allowed Tegler and Glöggl to bolster their own economic returns.

These profit-making decisions were fundamental aspects of mining migrations. Finding treasures underground spoke to miners' material desires and evoked promises of rapid enrichment and social mobility. In her recent study, Tina Asmussen insightfully identifies these forces in the material practices underpinning the financial exchange of mining shares (*Kuxe*) in the Saxon and Bohemian silver mines.[62] However, the imaginary qualities of hidden treasure also entailed risks and fears: mines could impoverish people just as quickly as they could make them rich. Consequently, the treasure hunt was a dangerous and uncertain craft, and its success often depended on unpredictable factors. Economic desires prompted people to embark on this quest, but they were inevitably intertwined with anxiety and risk.[63]

The opening of new mines in Tuscany engendered great expectations among German miners. The news of the discovery of new resources circulated in Southern German cities, stimulating profit-making strategies and fostering mobility to Tuscany. According to Tegler, the decision of miners to move to Pietrasanta was a result of the decline in production that Central European mines underwent in the mid-sixteenth century.[64] In 1545, he informed the duke about the unemployment situation in the German mines by saying that "miners would come because the mines in Germany are in poor condition [. . .] and they will arrive in great numbers if they were paid as much as in Germany."[65] In terms of remuneration, German miners received weekly wages of 7 lire in Tuscany, which was 4 ½ lire more than the equivalent of a weekly

61 Roberto Farinelli, *Le miniere di Rocca San Silvestro nella prima età moderna: Organizzazione produttiva, cultura materiale, tecniche estrattive e metallurgiche nell'impresa di Cosimo* I (Siena: Nuova Immagine, 2018), 124–135.

62 Tina Asmussen, *The Kux*, 159–182.

63 On these aspects, see Tina Asmussen, "Wild Men in Braunschweig – Economies of Hope and Fears in Early Modern Mining." *Renaissance Studies* 34,1, (2020): 31–56.

64 See Hans-Joachim Kraschewski, "Wirtschaftliche Wechsellage, ihre Einwirkungen auf den Bergbau des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts und die bergbauliche Arbeitsverfassung," in *Konjunkturen im europäischen Bergbau in vorindustrieller Zeit: Festschrift für Ekkehard Westermann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Christoph Bartels and Markus A. Denzel (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 203–220.

65 Morelli, "Argento Americano," 198.

Fig. 1.1: Mining landscape showing different labourers at work in the Ore Mountains. Hans Hesse, Annaberger Bergaltar, 1522, Annaberg-Buchholz (middle section), Wikimedia Commons. Accessed 21 November 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Annaberger-Bergaltar_middle_section.jpg.

salary of 10 *groschen* in mid-sixteenth century Schneeberg.[66] In Tuscany, their skills allowed German miners to receive wages higher than those paid to Italian miners (7 lire versus 6 lire). Their knowledge of mining and metalworking techniques also gave them access to better-paid occupations such as smelting, smithing, and overseeing as well as allowing them to negotiate long-term contracts (between two and five years).[67] In addition, miners moving to Tuscany would not only increase their wages but also their chances to make profits from resource seeking operations. Of the six new deposits located in Pietrasanta between 1548 and 1550, five were granted to German miners as their discoverers. Because miners could search for new deposits and claim rights to their exploitation, they could sell the excavated ores to the duke and increase their daily wages.

The combination of recruitment processes and profit-making opportunities brought around 130 male and female German-speaking miners to the foothills of the Tuscan Apennines. Whether attracted to new opportunities or recruited to satisfy the needs of territorial rulers and their subcontractors for expertise, recruitment and mobility coexisted in early modern mining migrations. The following section shows that forms of coercion emerged regardless of the circumstances in which German miners moved to Tuscany, and that they characterised various phases of the labour migration.

Spaces and moments of coercion in mining migrations

In my case study on the mobility of German miners to Medici Tuscany, I differentiate between two distinct spatial and temporal categories of coercion – one that occurred *before* workers entered a labour relation and *outside* the workplace, the other unfolding *within* the labour relation and *at* the workplace. The first category includes debt relations and employment contracts, while the second category subsumes im/mobility patterns across the Medici mines. This distinction is far from clear-cut and features numerous intersections. For example, the analysis

66 This calculation is my own. It relies on Tegler's account books and his personal calculation of the exchange rates between *kronen* and *lire*. In 1545, he received a monthly wage of 50 *kronen* calculated in 7 *lire* or 84 *kreuzer* per *krone*. Therefore, because 1 *lira* = 12 *kreuzer* and 60 *kreuzer* = 20 *groschen*, then 10 *groschen* were 2 ½ *lire* (or 2 lire and 10 soldi). For Tegler's calculation, see ASF, Misc., 323/II, c. 3v. On Saxon miners' wages, see Adolf Laube, *Studien über den Erzgebirgischen Silberbergbau von 1470 bis 1546* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974), 210.

67 ASF, Misc., f. 323/I, c. 9r–10v.

of debt relations between miners and employers shows that coercion bridges the two categories: miners incurred debt before entering the labour relation and outside the workplace, but they paid off that debt in the Medici mines over the duration of their employment.

Payments made in advance generated forms of coercion that fell under the first category (before/outside). This credit provided to workers by employers functioned as a way of "transforming the working relationship into debtor-creditor relationships".[68] In so doing, miners were bound to their new workplace until their debt was cleared. As discussed in the previous section, when miners were hired in Schwaz, Nuremberg, and Bleiberg, they received weekly wages as well as advance payments. Remuneration starting with the hiring day rather than at the time the actual work began was a widespread practice in pre-industrial labour markets.[69] In the early modern period, jurists conceived of the payment of wages "in advance for work" as a form of legal guarantee for both employers and employees.[70] In the Medici mining enterprise, German miners were employed under contracts that paid them from the moment of their recruitment. For example, when the emperor finally allowed German-speaking miners from Bleiberg to move to Pietrasanta in the summer of 1558, Cosimo had already been paying their wages since spring.[71] In the mines, wages were paid weekly and reflected the importance of the respective workers' skills in the district. Table 1.1 shows that washers and overseers received higher wages since Tegler considered their skills fundamental for production.

On top of their regular pay, miners were also granted advances to offset their travel expenses. These had a double meaning within the context of migration. On the one hand, they were meant to support the mobility of workers and allow them to face the logistical cost of settling in a foreign country.[72] On the other hand, they generated credit relations that tied workers to their employers. The debts incurred through advance payments to German-speaking miners in St. Joachimsthal were settled by calculating – on an individual basis – the difference between the weekly wages received from the moment of recruitment and the anticipated travel expenses. This calculation was first written down by the new mine manager Cristof

68 Andrea Caracausi, "I Salari," in *Storia Del Lavoro in Italia*, vol. III: *L'età Moderna. Trasformazioni e Risorse Del Lavoro Tra Associazioni Di Mestiere e Pratiche Individuali*, ed. Renata Ago (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2018), 112–113.

69 Andrea Caracausi, "The Just Wage in Early Modern Italy: A Reflection on Zacchia's De Salario Seu Operariorum Mercede," *International Review of Social History* 56, S19 (2011): 107–124.

70 Cited in Caracausi, "The Just Wage," 109.

71 ASF, MP, f. 635A, f. 12.

72 Caracausi, "I Salari," 113.

Tegler, who travelled with the miners and reported to the Medici officials on wages and travel costs incurred along the way.

The arrangements for these advances are difficult to assess, but Tab. 1.1 shows that they differed depending on wages and skills. Matheis Fister was the highest-paid employee besides Tegler. His weekly wage was 8 lire and 15 soldi; this amount had already been paid to him for 10 weeks before he arrived in Pietrasanta, precisely from 25 September to 4 December 1546. During his journey, he received advances amounting to the considerable sum of around 125 lire (or 18 scudi). Conversely, workers who earned less received smaller payments on their way to Pietrasanta. Yet miners who earned similar wages were often granted different advance payments, as evidenced by the example of the smith Hans Schmit and the overseer Andreas Kuehn. The registers kept by Tegler do not account for this difference. Most likely, the varying advances reflect that some workers incurred greater expenses because they travelled by horse, or because they brought their wives and children along to Pietrasanta.[73]

Once the debt to be repaid to the Medici enterprise was established, German miners were listed in the mines' ledgers as debtors, and Medici officials took note of the amounts withheld from their weekly wages as a result. These ranged from 1 lira and 10 soldi to 2 lire and 10 soldi; for some miners, this sum represented half of their pay. The debts were generally settled within approximately 3 months, but in some cases where payments did not occur regularly, the length of the debt relationship was prolonged. In 1547, for example, metalworker Valentin Kneussel did not pay his dues every week, and he therefore still figured as a debtor owing 32 lire in the ledger of 1551.[74] Advance payments solved miners' logistical problems and paid their travel expenses – but they also transformed labour relations into debt relations, thus binding miners and their skills to the enterprise for longer periods.

Coercion emerging before a new labour relation was entered also became entangled with miners' profit-making strategies. The recruitment of new mine managers was the result of agreements made between new and old employers, which hired out miners' skills to new enterprises without consulting the

73 Additional archival material shows that many members of the first group came with their wives. Their presence is not mentioned in the account books reporting their travel expenses, however. For an analysis of women's work in the Medici mines, see Gabriele Marcon, "Wages Unpacked: Remuneration, Negotiation, and Coercion in the Medici Silver Mines," *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 32, 1 (2022): 55–74.

74 Weekly instalments to pay off miners' debts also included the occasional withholding of larger amounts. This complicates the calculation of the percentage of weekly deductions from miners' salaries. See for example the greater deductions for one week listed in ASF, MM, f. 5, c. 24. The prolongation of Valentin's debt is in Ibid., f. 7, c. 3r.

Tab. 1.1: Weekly wages, advance payments (in lire/soldi/denari), and period of debt settlement (in months) for the members of the first crew of German-speaking miners arriving in Pietrasanta in December 1546. Source: ASF, Misc., 323/I, c. 2r–4r.

Name	Activity	Advance Payments	Weekly Wages	Settlement
Matheis Fister	Overseer	125.11.8	8.15	10
Valentin Kneussel	Smelter	85.12	7	48
Thomas Brant	Overseer	16.16	7	1
Caspar Schaden	Miner	25.15	5	3
Balthasar Vetter	Miner	24.12	3.10	3
Peter Rotheburg	Auxiliary worker	14.16	3.10	3
Lorenz Rauner	Washer	–	6	–
Hans Schmit	Ironsmith	36.10	7	3
Andreas Kuehn	Overseer	20.10	7	3
Johannes Hubner	Washer	10	7	2
Gerhard Brambach	Overseer	12.18	5	1

workers themselves. At the same time, the German mine managers exploited their forced migration abroad as an opportunity to negotiate for higher wages. The movement of Hans Glöggl to the Medici mines provides insights into these entanglements.

In 1558, the Tyrolean metalworker found himself part of a trade agreement between the Fugger family (Glöggl's former employers) and Duke Cosimo I. When the Medici asked the Fuggers for an experienced metalworker to come and oversee the ducal mines, the latter soon replied that they had found "a very experienced man" for the task.[75] In April 1558, Glöggl was sent to Pietrasanta to carry out mining operations as though he was employed in the ducal mines.[76] While thus fulfilling the Fugger's decision to help out the Medici, he also went through a probation period and exhibited his skills and expertise to the duke. In Tegler's case, this probation had lasted approximately two months (from November to December 1545), during which the expert from Nuremberg refined 100 pounds of silver-bearing ores and surveyed the mines in Pietrasanta. Had the results of these trial periods not satisfied the duke's expectations, the German mine managers would have had to return home. The probation period in Glöggl's case was the result of an agreement between two employers – the Fuggers and the Medici – and did not classify as a labour relation concluded between employer and employee. There was thus a degree of negotiation between the two employing parties, each of which laid claim to controlling the miners' immobilisation and mobilisation according to their needs. This

75 ASF, MP, f. 462, c. 231r.
76 ASF, MP, f. 471, c. 41r.

clash seems to have been resolved diplomatically, for on 1 February 1558, Glöggl wrote to Cosimo I that

> [. . .] my masters the Fuggers have sent me here to see and examine His Excellency's mines, and to debrief His Excellency, that I could not fail to obey to their [the Fuggers'] will, however at that time I did not know I was to stay here [. . .].[77]

The letter shows that Glöggl's migration was the result of the binding labour relation he had with the Fuggers, who decided to hire out his skills to the Medici. This exclusive relationship between employers and employees was widespread in the mining sector at the time, particularly with regard to skilled German miners. In 1549, for example, Cosimo sent skilled miners to Genoa at the request of Doge Andrea Doria (1466–1560), who hoped to boost copper mine productivity in his territory.[78] Migration could thus be a part of the contractual obligations that bound miners to their employers. Glöggl confirmed the arrangement made for him by stating that he was not leaving home "in search of a new employer, having already a great occupation in Germany".[79] The probation period reflects the short duration the Fuggers envisioned for Glöggl's stay in Tuscany, which they thought would last only a few months, whereupon he would return to Schwaz. However, the Fugger's choice forced the expert miner to migrate abroad to fulfil the obligations he had toward his employers, performing work for another employer without any clear knowledge of how long this service would last.

Eventually, what was meant to be a temporary employment turned out to be a long-term commitment. The Fuggers allowed Cosimo to employ Glöggl for three years with an option to stay a further two, after which he was bound to return to Fugger service. Glöggl had not envisioned working in Tuscany for such a long time, but although the decision had been made without his consent, he leveraged the unexpected prospect of long-term employment to bargain for a higher wage. In his letter to the duke, he wrote that he had been offered 500 florins per year in Schwaz, emphasising that

> [. . .] for the same provision I can have in Germany (where everything can be found for a reasonable price) I would unwillingly leave to an unknown and expensive country, with my wife and many children, where I am not able to speak the language.[80]

77 ASF, MP, f. 469, c. 229r.

78 ASF, Misc., f. 323/IV, c. 38v. One of the miners is Hans von Nuremberg, a metalworker who arrived in Pietrasanta in 1548.

79 Ibid.

80 ASF, MP, f. 469, c. 229v.

Because mobility was not an option he had considered before his Fugger masters hired him out abroad, Glöggl negotiated his salary with his Tuscan employer by highlighting the unexpected prolongation of his and his family's stay in an unwelcoming and expensive country. He asked Cosimo to increase his yearly pay to 600 scudi and provide room and board for himself, his wife and nine children, and his horses, which the duke agreed to. He also requested that the Medici reimburse him for the travel expenses incurred during his journeys from Tyrol to Tuscany and back, as well as between the ducal mines.[81] In the end, Glöggl's stay in Tuscany was not easy. After failing to find an efficient way to smelt lead ores, he faced the antagonism of local Medici officials, who criticised him for spending too much without producing any results. After three years in Tuscany, he refused to prolong his agreement with the Medici for two additional years and left to govern the gold mines in Leventhal (Carinthia) for the Fuggers instead.

The second category of coercion in the context of the Medici mines consisted of im/mobility processes within the ducal territories. As discussed before, Cosimo's mine managers synchronised the need for expertise and new techniques across the lead, copper, and silver mines of the Medici domains with German miners' mobility. In 1558, German miners from Schwaz were ordered to move south to the lead mines of Campiglia. While the relocation of skills reflected the profit-making strategies pursued by Tegler and Glöggl, however, the German-speaking miners themselves did not benefit from these forced migrations. In January 1558, Giovanni Battista Donati, the Medici mining official in Campiglia, informed the duke that "such workers get sick and die in great numbers because they do not have a proper house and they drink dirty water."[82] In Campiglia, the miners lived in small makeshift shelters located at the pits' entrances. Temperatures rose significantly during the summer months, and the absence of drinking water endangered the health of the German-speaking miners, who were not used to working in such heat. In the summer of 1558, between eight and ten Germans fell ill over a period of around two weeks. Four of them died in the following days, and three more men as well as a female worker became sick.[83] Over the course of the next few weeks, the situation worsened to the point that the remaining German miners refused to work and threatened to go back to Tyrol because "they didn't want to get sick like the others". Glöggl ordered the Medici official to incarcerate those who had revolted for some days and then transfer them back to Pietrasanta.

81 Ibid.
82 Farinelli, *Le miniere di Rocca San Silvestro*, 101.
83 Ibid., 243.

While skilled miners were commanded to move between the mines, local Tuscan labourers were forced to stay in their respective territories. Unskilled workers such as haulers, charcoal makers, and carpenters represented a considerable share of the mining labour force. They built structures and provided materials such as timber, charcoal, and clay to the mines and refining facilities. In the Medici mines, these tasks were performed exclusively by local workers from the nearby towns of Ruosina, Stazzema, Seravezza, Volegno, Gallena, and Retignano. The presence of smelting workshops in this area that refined iron ore extracted on Elba fostered labour specialisation in auxiliary activities such as charcoal making. Local labourers were employed in family workshops and manufacturing activities in nearby towns, and they were occasionally subject to *corvée* labour in the duke's mines.[84]

The use of forced (*corvée*) labour in the Medici mines followed the mines' largely unforeseeable demand for unskilled labour and supply materials. Cutting trees, producing lumber, transporting rocks, and charcoal production were pivotal activities that often required considerable amounts of manpower at short notice. It was for this reason that the ducal officials and the German mine managers made it mandatory for local labourers to work in the Pietrasanta mines "anytime the needs of the mines would require them".[85] In April 1547, the Medici official Girolamo Inghirami conferred with Cosimo about the latter's intention to prohibit locals from working in the mines outside his domain while allowing them to decide whether they wanted to work as miners within his domain. Inghirami stated that such a regulation might be appropriate for the miners (*cavatori*), but not for the local labourers who performed unskilled work, arguing that "this business demands their work at any time, even if they are not willing to provide it [. . .] because from hour to hour any sort of need occurs in the mines."[86] He explained that hiring labourers from outside the Pietrasanta territory would increase costs and slow down production. Instead, the subjects in the Medici domains could be "commanded with imperial tone" to provide materials and labour for the mines. Mining officials thus influenced the spatial mobility of local labourers not only by forbidding them "to work for this business outside the dominion", but also by forcing them to provide labour whenever the mines needed it.[87]

84 On the role of these towns and their labour force in the context of the Medici silver districts in Versilia, see Ilaria Garofani, *Archeologia Industriale in Alta Versilia: La Miniera Del Bottino e Gli Stabilimenti Industriali Dell'Argentiera* (Lucca: Istituto Storico Lucchese, 2007).

85 ASF, MP, f. 656, c. 228r–229v.

86 Ibid., c. 228r.

87 Ibid.

Early modern mines were labour-intensive workplaces that employed different ways of im/mobilising workers. While the skills of German miners were moved across Europe and within the Medici domains, local labourers were forced to stay near the respective mines. This double standard shows that the categories of skills and provenance as defined by employers played a fundamental role in shaping the labour organisation of mining activities.

Conclusion

This contribution shows that early modern miners were subject to recruitment as well as engaged in autonomous forms of migration. It starts from the premise that mining expertise in early modern Europe was an asset benefitting territorial rulers and individual miners alike. While the former considered skills in metallurgy and labour organisation pivotal to increasing mining production, the latter used their expertise to migrate between European mining regions, following new discoveries and waves of high and low production. The case of the Medici mining enterprise in the mid-sixteenth century provides an entry point into these trajectories. Recruitment of skilled miners occurred in the German-speaking countries, and was facilitated by a multi-layered network of merchants, ducal agents, and German mine managers. Miners' movements followed profit-making strategies as well, with discoveries of new and uncharted deposits acting as incentives for miners to migrate to different territories. The final section of the chapter focused on German miners in the Medici mines, showing the outcomes of recruitment and mobility in the context of labour. German-speaking miners experienced coercive measures within their labour relations and processes of migration, including indebtedness to their employers or forced mobility to and within the Medici territories.

In this context, coercion and profit-making strategies were not always clearly separable categories. Whether inveigled or invited, coerced and voluntary forms of mobility coexisted in the process of labour migration. On the one hand, employers' desires to recruit and im/mobilise skilled miners conflicted with German miners' strategies, giving rise to forms of coercion. Because German miners were considered to possess unmatched skills in the most challenging areas of the industry, their migration was often forced, limited, or at least negotiated. For example, the objectives of the Medici employers ran contrary to miners' profit-making strategies when migration to and between the Tuscan mines worsened the latter's living conditions. The movement of skills had to be synchronised with the lead and silver production processes, and German miners were therefore forced to migrate to extraction sites scattered across Tuscany, exposing them to unhealthy

and sometimes deadly labour environments. These restrictive approaches to the mobility of miners are not only key to understanding the concerns raised by Tyrolean and Carinthian authorities regarding the departure of workers from their territory. They also shed light on the desire of the Medici officials to retain German skill in their territory by way of debt relations and exploit the general workforce by preventing local labourers from leaving mining areas.

On the other hand, these coercive forms of migration could also be compatible with miners' profit-making strategies. In some cases, princely demand for expertise and miners' pecuniary strategies synchronised with the material and economic desires generated by the extraction of precious metals in early modern Europe. For example, the Medici's goal to attract skilled miners and establish new mining activities throughout the Tuscan territory coincided with Tegler's and Glöggl's wishes to increase their revenues by receiving a percentage of the mines' yearly profits. Nevertheless, the episode of the recruitment of Hans Glöggl also reveals that employers hired out mining experts to faraway enterprises without consulting their employees. Glöggl clearly stated his reluctance to move to Tuscany permanently, and that he did so out of obligation to the Fuggers. At the same time, he was also able to exploit this adverse situation to negotiate a higher salary and obtain economic benefits for himself and his family. In this case, the wage increase Glöggl received represented not only the regular remuneration that skilled miners sought to achieve when moving abroad. It was also a form of compensation for his forced displacement. In general, this and other episodes examined in this chapter show that the adoption of blurred categories of coercion and autonomy facilitates our understanding of the individual and structural motivations underpinning labour migrations in pre-industrial societies.

Johan Heinsen

Chapter 2
Escape and Reform in the Early-Modern Danish Prison System

A key aspect of Denmark's early modern penal system was the continuous use of extramural convict labour in the service of the military state.[1] For more than two centuries, the punishment of hard labour in chains existed alongside the more well-known institution of the prison workhouse, forming a bifurcated prison system. Whereas both genders could be employed in prison workhouses to produce textiles, only men were sent to labour at naval and army facilities.[2] The latter punishment was known to contemporaries as "slavery", and the prisons housing the respective convicts at night as "slaveries".[3] Inmates worked on fortifications, shipyards, and docks, contributing to the construction and maintenance of the state's military infrastructure. They often laboured side by side with navy sailors and mercenary soldiers, though they were always recognisable as a distinct part of the workforce, identified by their chains and – in later periods – their prison uniforms. The system was linked to the larger Northern European military labour market and its state-driven trajectories of labour mobility and coercion.[4] Former soldiers from Denmark's mercenary army were disproportionately overrepresented among the inmates, with a large share of them being migrants from all over the Northern European market for military labour. This special form of punishment thus served the demands of the military state in multiple overlapping

1 This chapter builds on my monograph *Det Første Fængsel* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2018). I would like to thank Emilie Luther Valentin for providing feedback on the text.

2 On prison workhouses in Denmark, see Emilie Luther Valentin, *Feelings of Imprisonment* (PhD thesis, Aalborg University, 2022); Nina Koefoed, "I Trust You with My Child: Parental Attitudes to Local Authorities in Cases of Disobedient Children in 18th Century Denmark," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 33 (4) (2020): 489–504; Anette Larner, *The Good Household Gone Bad* (PhD thesis, Aarhus University, 2018).

3 An in-depth discussion of the use of this term by contemporaries can be found in Johan Heinsen, "Penal Slavery in Early Modern Scandinavia," *Journal of Global Slavery* 6 (3) (2021): 343–368.

4 The logics driving the institution's creation are discussed within the context of similar European penal labour schemes in Johan Heinsen, "Historicizing Extramural Convict Labour: Trajectories and Transitions in Early Modern Europe," *International Review of Social History* 66 (1) (2021): 111–133. A broader discussion of the uses of convict labour in global history is found in the introduction to Christian G. De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein, eds., *Global Convict Labour* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

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ways – by creating a disposable workforce as well as by providing a punitive measure enabling state workers to be disciplined without losing control of their labour.[5] It represented a mobilisation scheme that placed workers in certain locations or circulated them between them, often as the result of a need for additional labour. At the same time, the punishment was meant to be "exemplary" and to widely communicate the consequences of transgressions. As a punishment designed to deter, extramural labour therefore served the purpose of keeping working populations in place both literally and figuratively.

From its emergence in the sixteenth century, this prison institution was designed around the extraction of labour. Labour remains a central aspect even in the modern Danish prison system, but the meaning of penal labour has slowly shifted over the five centuries since its introduction. Today, labour is principally understood in its relation to the rehabilitative scope of prisons. Simultaneously, the idea of making inmates defined as the worst transgressors work outside of the walls, where opportunities for escape are ample, has come to be contradictory to the notion that prison also produces security. This shift was cemented with the opening of penitentiaries in the 1850s based on international models emerging in the early nineteenth century.[6] These penitentiaries made isolation from society and other inmates their central penal technique. The significance of this shift is well-known in scholarship: Historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century pitched the penitentiary as a triumph of modernism and reason.[7] In the 1970s, revisionists began reinterpreting the penitentiary as a reflection of a more general reconfiguration of power relations writ large.[8] Both perspectives, however, have located the impetus for change in the realms of ideas and discourses – and perhaps most importantly, in the work of Enlighten-

5 Johan Heinsen, "Mercenary Punishments," *International Review of Social History* (forthcoming).

6 On the emergence of penitentiaries in Denmark, see Peter Scharff Smith, *Moralske Hospitaler: Det modern fængselsvæsens gennembrud 1770–1870* (Copenhagen: Forum, 2003). The prevalence of the revisionist perspective in Scandinavian historiography has led to a tendency to not consider the early modern institutions as part of the history of prisons in their own right. See e.g. Peter Scharff Smith and Thomas Ugelvik, eds., *Scandinavian Penal History, Culture and Prison Practice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

7 In a Danish context, the most notable example is Fr. Stuckenberg, *Fængselsvæsenet i Danmark*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1893–96).

8 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977); Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

ment thinkers and reformers: Fundamentally, the nature of prison changed as a result of things happening outside its walls.[9]

This chapter presents a reading that posits a longer trajectory of change. It argues that the shift away from a focus on productivity and towards the prioritisation of security and isolation can be traced in response to the myriad actions of convicts themselves.[10] It thus sees the driver of institutional change not in the determined brains of officials but instead in their sweaty palms as they faced an inmate population endeavouring to escape its confinement. At its core, the prison emerged as a means of keeping the punished in place. As argued recently by sociologists Thomas Max Martin and Gilles Chantraine, "preventing escape is an essential part of the *raison d'être* of prisons, which is academically neglected."[11] This contribution concentrates precisely on this struggle, examining its dynamics from the early seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century.

The analysis focuses on large-scale collective action and mass escape in particular, primarily because these events appear to have triggered some of the most noticeable changes. However, it also relates such extraordinary events to the everyday struggles and attempts to flee of individuals and smaller groups. Common practices of autonomy thus form the backdrop for the more dramatic events taking centre stage on the following pages, effectively blurring the line between individual and collective action. I argue that convicts' attempts to practise autonomy – most notably through escape – were an important driver of institutional change alongside the more well-established explanatory factors extrinsic to prisons themselves and described in the literature outlined above. Arguably, the changes occurring in direct response to escapes ultimately made prisons look more like the penitentiaries we know: Institutions that often involve work programmes as part of their rehabilitative

9 The most dominant historical critiques of this framework have similarly interpreted prisons as the result of extrinsic factors. Most relevant in this context is perhaps Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1991).

10 For a discussion of "agency" as a driver of institutional change, see Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City, 1690–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). In recent years, the theme of escape as an expression of agency has gained considerably in the study of penal transportation. A work incorporating many of these insights and viewing escape practices as a contributor to penal innovation is Clare Andersen, *Convicts: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 360–389. While this chapter does not employ the term (primarily due to its vagueness as a result of academic overuse), it is indebted to this turn.

11 Gilles Chaintraine and Thomas Max Martin, "Introduction: Toward a Sociology of Prison Escape," in: Thomas Max Martin and Gilles Chantraine, eds., *Prison Breaks: Toward a Sociology of Escape* (London: Palgrave, 2018), 1–30.

aspirations, but that are principally focused on producing security rather than on labour extraction.

The chapter will focus on three moments in which hard labour as punishment was transformed in response to mass prison breaks: The first part culminates in 1640, when the first Danish prison was rebuilt in response to escapes. The second section investigates the dynamics leading to the permanent closure of the same prison in 1741 due to fear of mutinies and collective flight. Finally, the last part looks at the evolving system of displacement that can be viewed as the backdrop for a large-scale insurrection at the prison workhouse in Christianshavn in 1817. The narrative takes us from the emergence of the institution of prison in Denmark in the late 1500s to the beginning of a new carceral regime in the early nineteenth century – with the latter crucially no longer focused on labour extraction but on incarceration as a technology of docility and security.

Endemic escapes

On 29 March 1640, the Danish king Christian IV (1568–1648) wrote an order to his son-in-law, statesman Corfitz Ulfeldt, tasking him with the construction of a new prison – a *trunke* – to replace the existing one by the Copenhagen docks (*Bremerholmen*). Ulfeldt was in command of Copenhagen Castle along with the adjacent naval facilities that included the shipyard of the Danish navy. Christian IV is most famous for the resounding defeats he suffered in his quest to wrest control over the Baltic from Sweden and position himself as a European heavyweight. Corfitz Ulfeldt is best known for the treason he would commit a decade later, when he joined the Swedish archenemy following the emergence of suspicions that he had plotted to coup Christian IV's heir. The letter in question places the two men at the centre of the earliest known example of a form of low-scale prison reform encountered throughout the history of prisons in Denmark. It reads:

> Since the prisoners still escape Trunken daily, it is best that another *trunke* be built for them in a place where better watch can be kept. It shall be built from rocks, since timber will not last and will cost more than rocks, in particular if good, firm timber is used. The foundation of said *trunke* is to be made without boulders, in the style that all foundations are made in Glückstadt. Thought shall be given to how those who are inside can dispose of their shit. If it [the prison] could be built near the beach, they might carry it [the shit] out

> themselves at night, by which manner the loads could be many and small, so that the prison warden does not have to let more out at once than he can handle at a time.[12]

It was a change prompted by the inadequacy of the existing prison with regard to retaining its inmates. The building that was eventually erected is among the earliest known purpose-built criminal prisons in Europe, predating the Amsterdam prison identified by Pieter Spierenburg as the world's first such institution by 14 years.[13]

The earliest known use of coerced workers at the site is documented for 1566, when a naval defeat prompted a high demand for labour at the docks. Authorities on Zealand, the island on which Copenhagen is located, were ordered to send "idle, able-bodied hands" to the Copenhagen docks.[14] We know of similar calls to round up unemployed men and put them to work in military infrastructure beginning in 1558. They can be linked to the anti-vagrancy policies that were being instituted to allow authorities on all levels of society to force repeat idlers into "thraldom and labour", as one legal text phrased it.[15] Private employers do not appear to have made use of this opportunity, but the state itself did. Over the following decades, men were apprehended and sent to Copenhagen and the fortresses along the Swedish border where the state was focusing its efforts. What initially looked like a conscription scheme appears to have gradually turned into a penal measure in its own right: At some point before 1600, thieves who had been sentenced to hanging were pardoned in order to be used in the same fashion. From an order issued in 1601, we know that during the institution's early years, such men would eventually hang when they were no longer considered sufficiently productive.[16] Convicts appear to have been housed in barracks and in the dungeon of Copenhagen Castle until the first iteration of Trunken – as the prison itself came to be known – was built around 1620.

From its very beginning, the punishment saw regular escapes. Perhaps the earliest trace of this is a note from 1576 which clearly states that special precautions were needed. In it, the king mandated state authorities throughout Denmark to apprehend "loose people [who] roam [and] who serve no one and have no permission to travel", with strong men among these itinerants to be "put in irons"

12 C. F. Bricka and J. A. Fridericia, eds., *Kong Christian den Fjerdes Egenhændige Breve: 1636–1640* (Copenhagen: Rudolph Klein, 1882), 319–320.

13 Spierenburg, *Prison Experience,* 143.

14 L. Laursen, ed., *Kancelliets Brevbøger: 1566–1570* (Copenhagen, C. A. Reitzel, 1896), #90.

15 Tyge Krogh, *Staten og de Besiddelsesløse på Landet* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1987), 54.

16 Rigsarkivet, Lensregnskaber 1559–1662, København A., Regnskaber 1599–1602. I would like to thank Tyge Krogh for this reference.

and sent to Copenhagen.[17] This is the earliest mention of the chains that would become the trademark of the slaveries. All convicts performing extramural labour eventually had to wear chains, which were generally light enough to not impede the labour extraction – their main purpose was to make inmates who ran away easily identifiable. Chains were not enough, however: In 1599, we find the earliest mention of guards in a note to a state official in Blekinge who was admonished that such coerced workers were to be kept under observation so that they "do not run away".[18] But convicts were able to escape nevertheless: A note from May 1607 refers to a group of vagrants who had gotten away – the first explicit mention of a collective escape.[19] The earliest known prison break from Trunken itself occurred on 11 January 1621, with a note explaining that a number of convicts had escaped during the Christmas celebrations and should now be searched for around Zealand.[20] A similar note from later in the same year refers to lists of escaped convicts that were to be circulated among authorities. The lists themselves are not preserved, but the note explicitly states that the way to identify these escapees was by their lack of identity papers, and that special watch should thus be kept at ferry berths.[21] The following year, the king's frustrations expressed themselves in an order to penalise runners by applying their original punishment, which in many cases apparently meant hanging.[22] The first named escapee can be found in a list of convicts from 1622/23: Gulbrand Sivertsen, who disappeared on 26 July 1622. He had been convicted of burglaries in Akershus county in Norway and sent to Copenhagen to labour.[23]

The earliest escape for which we know the particulars of *how* it occurred is described in the memoirs of Icelandic naval artillerist Jon Olafsson and must have taken place in the 1620s, though Olafsson does not date the event. The text's details are difficult to verify, but Olafsson knew Trunken well since he had experienced a stint as a chained convict labourer himself. In his recollections, he tells the story of a man named Peter, a former student from the town of Korsør on Zealand, with whom he had shared a room in Copenhagen at one point. Peter was about to be married before being sentenced to 18 years for having cut his father-in-law with a penknife. He eventually escaped the prison with seven other

17 L. Laursen, ed., *Kancelliets Brevbøger: 1576–1579* (Copenhagen, C. A. Reitzel, 1900), #78.
18 L. Laursen, ed., *Kancelliets Brevbøger: 1603–1608* (Copenhagen, C. A. Reitzel, 1915), #390.
19 Ibid., #583.
20 L. Laursen, ed., *Kancelliets Brevbøger: 1621–1623* (Copenhagen, C. A. Reitzel, 1922), #8.
21 Ibid., #194.
22 Ibid., #454.
23 C. F. Bricka and J. A. Fridericia, eds., *Kong Christian den Fjerdes Egenhændige Breve: 1589–1625* (Copenhagen: Rudolph Klein, 1887–1889): 249–263.

convicts by way of sliding backwards through the latrine and from there into the sea, where they swam to a nearby sand dune. There they disposed of their irons. One man was caught and hanged, but the others were able to escape to Sweden, and Peter eventually became an educator for the children of a lord. He later returned to Denmark to claim an inheritance held by his erstwhile prospective father-in-law and victim, who refused to believe that Peter had left the prison legitimately and was only willing to pay him if he could prove he was a free man. This infuriated Peter, who was ultimately apprehended by the town's authorities, taken to Copenhagen, and executed.[24]

Throughout their existence, endemic escapes defined the slaveries. The nature of the work, which was typically performed outside, meant that total surveillance was impossible, so escapes tended to happen at worksites. Having shed their fetters, convicts would attempt to return to their former identities or create new ones. In the agricultural economy of early modern Denmark, a sustainable existence outside of the labour market was impossible, as the period saw a criminalisation of begging and itinerancy. Eventually, a runner would therefore have to find a new master. In the second half of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century, many tried their luck with mercenary army regiments that were always eager to accept new recruits. This practice was most sustainable when convicts managed to cross the border into Sweden, whose regiments offered similar opportunities with less risk of recognition.[25]

A process of escalation

In a way, the prison built by Ulfeldt in 1640 was a success. It was renovated in 1706 and stood until 1741, when it was closed and the building became a naval storehouse. It mostly fulfilled its purpose of retaining inmates for over 100 years. At times, its occupants formed a labour reserve to be employed elsewhere besides at the docks – such as in the 1670s and 1680s, when prisoners were transported from Trunken to the Danish Caribbean colony being established on St. Thomas, or in the early 1710s, when Copenhagen was ravished by the plague and they

24 Jon Olafsson, *Jon Olafssons Oplevelser som Bøsseskytte under Christian IV*, trans. S. Bløndal (Copenhagen: Julius Clausen, 1905), 33–34.

25 Johan Heinsen, "Runaway Heuristics: A Micro-Spatial Study of Immobilizing Chains c. 1790," *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 56 (1) (2022): 37–60.

worked as grave diggers.[26] Throughout this period, the convict population grew slowly but steadily, and the Copenhagen institutions eventually became unable to hold all the individuals sentenced to convict labour. The 1740s were an especially busy time that resulted in the construction of prison workhouses in three Danish provinces as well as in Norway, which was part of the Danish king's composite state at the time. A number of fortresses also came to hold chained male convicts in a manner similar to Trunken, though this expansion appears more gradual. It was precisely during this period of prison building and expansion that Trunken was closed down in May 1741. The reasoning for this decision is not entirely clear, but Copenhagen's city architect Laurids de Thurah provided a likely explanation in an account from 1748. Describing the naval dockyard, he recounted that it had been

> A terror to many ears, at least to miscreants, who for their misdeeds had not quite deserved death, or perhaps they had deserved it, but had been pardoned, who were sentenced and put to labour in irons on Bremerholm, either for life or shorter after the severity of their misdeeds. But since one has perceived this kind of people, and not unjustly, to be too dangerous to host in this place which is of utmost importance to the King and the country, since it was reasoned that he who has committed one villainous deed in this world might easily decide to commit more, if the opportunity is given to them, and that such mischievous people might decide, when they get their chance, to set some warehouse on fire, of which many exist at the docks of easily combustible materials, not so much to take revenge or to do damage in itself, but to try, in the midst of the fire and the confusion it would cause, to free themselves of their slavery.[27]

This perceived danger appears closely linked to the fact that Trunken was located at the heart of the dockyard. Hauling lumber and other combustible materials for shipbuilding activities was a recurring task performed by convicts, so the threat of arson was not an unreasonable perception. As the city's official architect, de Thurah surely had better sources than those available to us today, and his own brother was a high-ranking naval officer at the time. Yet these dangers related to incarcerating and exploiting convicts at a strategically important site were not new. What had changed?

Preceding the closure was a prolonged process that seems to have begun in 1732, when the decision was made to erect a new prison in northern Copenhagen. The building took longer to finish than expected, largely because the initial plan of creating a rasphouse – a type of prison institution revolving around intramural

26 Johan Heinsen, *Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World: Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

27 Laurids de Thurah, *Hafnia Hodierna* (Copenhagen, 1748), 207–208.

labour and pioneered by the Dutch – was set in motion but eventually abandoned.[28] Instead, the prison that became known as Stokhusslaveriet was a direct continuation of the practice of extramural convict labour known from the naval dockyard. However, it was administered by the army rather than the navy, and its inmates were no longer used regularly at the shipyard.

On 13 May 1741, 93 men were marched from Bremerholmen across the city to the new facility, which had taken nine years to complete. If we wish to investigate the validity of de Thurah's explanation, we therefore need to look at the period before 1732. Sifting through the archives of the various naval courts that handled transgressions of convicts at the docks, we find ample information to substantiate the architect's interpretation: The 1720s and early 1730s saw a wave of collective escapes that can be linked to a large influx of former soldiers. In 1709, Denmark had engaged in a war with Sweden that ended in 1720. The fighters of the mercenary army – many of whom had been recruited abroad so as not to put pressure on the agricultural labour market in Denmark – soon bolstered the ranks of the convicts. They ran the prison, disciplined snitches, operated a black market, orchestrated thefts, and attempted daring mass escapes. Because a complete inmate register is preserved in which all prisoners and their backgrounds are listed and entries, exits, and potential escapes are recorded, we can trace the contours of the groups that were influential at Trunken from 1722 to 1732.

One of the first indications of the dynamics that came to define the institution during this period comes from 1722, when convict and ex-soldier Abraham Bølge was revealed by a fellow inmate to have forged passports for several prisoners. Passports were required for escapees to board ferries and cross maritime borders.[29] Bølge was subsequently punished by having his thumb cut off to prevent him from writing. The man who had revealed him was ostracised by his fellow convicts and beaten up by a gang of former soldiers with enough influence in the prison that no one challenged them.[30] Several such episodes of collective action are known from the early 1720s, and they increased in frequency and severity by the middle of the decade. The convicts also grew more daring in other regards, for example by challenging the rations: Some of the men who had been involved in the earlier activities surrounding Bølge's forgeries, including former sailor Anders Christensen Ged, were among those lodging complaints about the prison cook in 1726. They claimed that the porridge was "thin" and that they were being

28 F. Stuckenberg, *Fængselsvæsenet i Danmark 1550–1741* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1893).

29 *Forordning om Passer og Skudsmaal*, published 19 February 1701. Reprinted in Jacob Henric Schou, *Chronologisk Register over de Kongelige Forordninger og Aabne Breve, 1699–1730* (Copenhagen: Niels Christensen, 1795).

30 The story of this event is told in detail in Heinsen, "Penal Slavery."

served only bones instead of meat.[31] When they were served fish, they got nothing but "the head and the tail".[32]

There may well have been some substance to their grievances. The same year, a prisoner stabbed two other inmates in the dark of the sleeping quarters. Jakob Kolberg had been born in Danzig and deserted four times as a soldier before being incarcerated. He held no grudges against his victims. When asked why he had done what he had, he explained that "he was hungry". It was apparently an act of desperation – Kolberg had already sold part of his clothes in order to buy food.[33] However, his hunger may also have been influenced by the fact that the convicts had collectively refused to eat their food until they were granted what they thought was their right. The cook was eventually fired, but this did not end the complaints. In April 1727, several of the aforementioned leaders went as far as to beat up their old accomplice Abraham Bølge, who was now working as an assistant to the prison cook.[34] No one seems to have dared to testify against the men singled out by the visibly maltreated Bølge in court. A similar situation occurred in March 1728, when the convict Engelbrecht Almgrøn was brought before the naval court because he had audibly threatened to kill three fellow inmates. His actions turned out to be a tactic aimed at being placed in an isolation cell since he knew the other convicts were out to exact revenge on him: Almgrøn had abandoned a collective escape plan, and his fellow plotters had found out he was to blame and had threatened "that they would either hang him or break his neck". Realising he was already in a perilous position, he decided to reveal everything he knew, hoping it might buy him freedom – or at least safety. He explained that he rarely ate a full meal because three of the leaders among the convicts demanded part of his food. They had also taken what money he had, reasoning that it belonged to the collective and should be spent on buying brandy from the wardens. He had subsequently been forced to borrow money from the same men.[35]

The most important part of Almgrøn's revelations concerned the fact that four men among the ringleaders – ex-sailor Abraham Anthonisen along with the former soldiers Johan Christopher Pahl, Johan Andreas Eggers, and Arnold Wilhelm Osenberg, maintained an internal jurisdiction and court among the inmates.

31 Rigsarkivet, Admiralitetet (Søetaten), Overadmiralitetsretten, Standretsprotokoller, 1724–1727 (49), fol. 174.

32 Ibid., fol. 172.

33 Ibid, fol. 174 and 138.

34 Ibid., fol. 290–291; Rigsarkivet, Holmens chef (Søetaten), Standretssager 1727, Complaint signed by Abraham Bølge, 11 April 1727.

35 Rigsarkivet, Admiralitetet (Søetaten), Overadmiralitetsretten, Standretsprotokoller, 1727–1732 (50), fol. 97–98.

Osenberg, originally from Frankfurt, conceded during the trial that he had acted as a judge and held an internal court, but he argued that it was a collective action in which everyone had had a part. He also admitted to having taken Almgrøn's food, but claimed to have in fact bought it with money given to him by friends from his time as a soldier. Another prisoner who testified that he had been punished by running the gauntlet among the convicts added much weight to Almgrøn's accusations, however. Along with Anthonisen, Eggers, and Pahl, Osenberg was sentenced to additional punishment for his "illegal and self-appointed authority".[36] Almgrøn was not released, however, and was subsequently tormented by his fellow convicts. At one point he grew so desperate as to attempt to stab another inmate so as to be brought before the court, where he stated that he would rather die than live on in the prison.[37]

Prison wardens did not always interfere in such situations – a fact owed in part to their frequent embroilment in convict politics. In 1727, a group including several of the leaders mentioned above was caught stealing iron from the worksites and selling via receivers in the city. When the court investigated, it discovered that the two prison wardens were in fact central to the scheme, as were men like Anders Christensen Ged and several others that had abetted the ploy. Ged's wife also acted as a fence for the iron. The wardens received life sentences for their involvement and exchanged their private quarters for the convict sleeping quarters as a result.[38] The group around Osenberg also stole. In late February 1729, a collective act of theft was revealed, though there was initially some confusion about who was behind it. In this window of uncertainty, the gang "deliberated internally and decided that two men should run and take the blame along with them." The choice fell on Osenberg and a fellow German, Jürgen Isenberg. A third ex-soldier, Jens Pedersen Slagter, had already designed an escape route from a worksite that the group had intended to use during the summer, perhaps because it was easier to be on the run in pleasant weather than in the freezing cold of early spring. Another convict forged passports for the two men, who escaped the prison but were ultimately caught.[39]

On its own, an escape like the one undertaken by Osenberg and Isenberg was nothing spectacular: At least 293 of the roughly 1,500 convicts in Trunken between 1690 and 1741 fled the prison at some point during their stay.[40] But the exits in

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., fol. 101.

38 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Justitsekstrakter 1722–1727 (11125), Admiralty court sentence, 10 November 1727.

39 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Justitsekstrakter 1728–1736 (11126), Sentence and resolution of admiralty court sentence, 14 July 1729.

40 For an overview, see Heinsen, *Mutiny*, ch. 5.

the 1720s were different. They were more orchestrated and clearly linked to an internal hierarchy that manifested in other ways as well. Over time, the admiralty grew keenly aware of this, and in the mid-1720s it began to pick out ringleaders and transfer them to other destinations – chiefly the stronghold of Kronborg and the small and desolate outpost of Christiansø in the Baltic.[41] The first group transferred in this fashion was one that had orchestrated an escape in 1723.[42] Anders Christensen Ged eventually ended up at Christiansø, as did Osenberg and Isenberg. But whenever the admiralty removed the top levels of inmate leadership from Trunken, there were always other men ready to step up who had studied their ways. Sometimes they were even more daring than their predecessors: Jens Pedersen Slagter, for instance, was chief among the inmates who worked to make a hole in the prison roof during the night in January 1730. The next day, the admiralty managed to get the convict Bent Tralmand to speak about the collective efforts he had witnessed the previous night. Eggers was among the prospective escapees, as were several men who had been involved in the beating of Bølge. Tralmand told the court that he had seen them make picklocks, write things on paper, and tamper with their irons. Perhaps he talked because he had already been suspected of having given up the scheme, or because he had previously been allowed a short leave to visit his wife. When he revealed the details of what had happened, his face was already bruised. In the sleeping quarters, two convicts had audibly discussed how to kill him, devising a plot to wait until dark when no one would be able to tell who had delivered the fatal blow. Everyone involved offered the same categorical explanation that they had indeed participated, but only as much as everyone else. For this reason, the court was unable to pick out ringleaders and had to resort to collective punishment: floggings and heavier irons.[43] This only made the convicts more eager to flee, of course. In September, another collective action revolving around the same core group was revealed. At least 16 men were involved in this plot, which consisted of digging a tunnel underneath the main entrance of the prison. They had made their way through the rock with a large spike stolen during their work loading a naval vessel. The plan had been pursued for at least six weeks, and when their tunnel was ready, the prospective escapees waited for the right moment. Their idea was to

41 The labour at these institutions is discussed by David Høyer, "Udenværkernes forandring 1818–1821," *Årbog Helsingør Kommunes Museer*, 2011: 43–44; Ingeborg Dalgas, *De bremerholmske jernfanger og fangevogtere på fæstningen Christiansø 1725–1735* (Aarhus, 2014).

42 Rigsarkivet, Admiralitetet (Søetaten), Overadmiralitetsretten, Standretsprotokoller 1722–24 (48), fol. 194–195.

43 Rigsarkivet, Admiralitetet (Søetaten), Overadmiralitetsretten, Standretsprotokoller, 1727–1732 (50), fol. 248–252.

take a boat at Nyhavn and row to the fishing villages north of Copenhagen, where they hoped to steal a larger boat and make it to Sweden. During their interrogations, they justified their actions with the brutality of the new warden, who beat them during their work no matter whether they "deserved it or not, which happens in drunkenness".[44]

Perhaps the largest such escape attempts occurred in 1732. In both cases, the leaders were inmates who had been part of the plots two years before, working with men like Slagter and Eggers. Now they were realising their own plans. We know somewhat less about these plots because no detailed interrogation records are preserved. However, the sentence passed after the first attempt in September 1732 reveals a plan similar to the tunnelling attempt in 1730: A group of men had worked on an escape tunnel since Whitsun, yet none of the participants was willing to say who had orchestrated the work and what the plan had been. Only an uninvolved convict who had overheard a conversation revealed enough that the court could reconstruct the group's plan to "break through the warehouse, go to the fishing villages and take a vessel and to go to sea, where they wanted to take the first and best vessel they could in order to sail on, which is clearly an intention of murder." This time, they pardoned the informant "in consideration of the threat to his life".[45] The following month, a group of sailors heard leaders among the convicts talking with each other during their work: "They wanted to break out and do so much that it should echo around the world." The men made their attempt during one of the subsequent nights by breaking a hole in the roof, but a guard post outside forced them back. This time, the details of the scheme were revealed by a convict who had actively been encouraged to spy on the prospective escapees. He was subsequently released.[46] The official correspondence relating to these cases reads like the product of anxious thoughts. It was not just escape, but "rebellion" and "mutiny". Naval authorities subsequently conjured up new ways to stifle potential prison breaks: One innovation was the adoption of chain gangs, which were to be used during the morning and evening marches to and from the worksites from 1732 onwards. They were likewise to be employed inside the prison when the inmates' "behaviour appears secretive".[47]

In light of these events, de Thurah's explanation for why Trunken was abandoned at the height of the period of prison expansion seems highly plausible. While the institution had always seen endemic escapes – as evidenced by its initial

44 Ibid., fol. 291–292. On the power of wardens to apply physical force at this institution, see Heinsen, "Penal Slavery."

45 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Justitsekstrakter 1728–1736 (11126), Various sentences and resolutions passed from late September to early November 1732.

46 Ibid., Court minutes, 24 October 1732.

47 Ibid., Resolution, 12 November 1732.

rebuilding in 1640 – the events of the 1720s and 1730s were on a different scale. Most importantly, escape had taken on a decidedly collective dimension, with convicts collaborating to flee in large groups and enforcing internal discipline.

Evolving responses

As mentioned before, the 1720s saw authorities in Copenhagen respond to the unrest in Trunken by trying to displace ringleaders among the convicts. Many of the men named on the previous pages were transferred, but each time those who remained behind were joined by newcomers to form new groups. Nevertheless, the practice of displacement grew into a staple of the prison system during this period, and it remains an important strategy for dealing with escapees even today. As the eighteenth century went on, the fortresses of Kronborg in Helsingør and Nyborg on the island of Funen became the main institutions for incarcerating individuals who ran repeatedly from other locations. It was not that these prisons were harder to escape from than Stokhusslaveriet – rather, the practice seemed rooted in the logic of trying to break up groups and place people in surroundings they were less familiar with. At Kronborg and Nyborg, convicts generally performed the same types of labour they had in Copenhagen, primarily in the maintenance of military infrastructure. And like at Stokhusslaveriet, they were under the management of military officials. In 1803, a rasphouse erected during the 1770s in the closed-off courtyard of Denmark's largest prison workhouse located in the Copenhagen neighbourhood of Christianshavn was outfitted as a maximum-security prison for those who repeatedly broke out of the slaveries. The prison workhouse had traditionally been viewed as a punishment unfit for male felons, but these notions were gradually abandoned over the course of the late eighteenth century, and the rasphouse at Christianshavn effectively came to form the lowest tier within the prison system.[48] This also meant that the bifurcated strands of the prison system began to converge. Like the workhouse it was a part of, the rasphouse was designed around the concept of intramural labour and not managed by the military. The inmates' labour consisted of rendering colonial dyewoods into fine grain from which the colour could be extracted. This development thus represented not only a transfer from one institution to another but a shift in the type of convict labour deemed most suitable for those considered dangerous in the eyes of the authorities. It was motivated by the belief that the building itself was ideal for the purpose of keeping convicts prone to flight in check,

48 Valentin, *Feelings*.

given that the structure was physically nestled within the rest of the prison and therefore much harder to escape from. Furthermore, rasphouse inmates lived and worked in cells, an exception in early modern prisons. Compared to the slaveries, escape rates from prison workhouses had been negligible during the late eighteenth century, so the assumption was not unfounded.[49] The building complex worked against escape attempts, whereas slaveries offered ample opportunities for flight.

The military authorities in charge of the slaveries had urged for this change, with the most persistent trail of requests coming from the fortress of Kronborg in the 1780s. It was not because the convicts were not considered useful there: At the time, the high demand for labour to construct an effective perimeter against the onslaught of the sea itself prompted a large influx of convicts to Kronborg from other institutions, especially the main slavery in Copenhagen. As had been the case in the 1720s and 1730s, however, the men transferred were usually selected because they were troublemakers. The fact that the labour performed at Kronborg was also more taxing than that in Copenhagen further increased the tensions, and the sources sometimes suggest the convicts felt the food at the fortresses was worse than in Copenhagen as well.[50]

Again, we can trace evolving groups with recurring characters that acted collectively to challenge their confines. One key event was a revolt at Kronborg in 1780 that prompted the commandant to request that convict Andreas Fackler be moved to the Christianshavn facility. He was told his hopes were in vain, however, and that Fackler should instead be "tamed" through "hard labour".[51] From fragments of correspondences, we know that Fackler had been involved in a large-scale collective breakout attempt early that year. More than 25 inmates had worked together, aided by two soldiers. Passports had been forged, but the plot was revealed when a convict informed the authorities – which apparently prompted a prisoner named Anders Pedersen to try to murder the informer. While Pedersen was executed for his attempt, the informer was pardoned and given a sizable reward of 20 rigsdaler, albeit on the premise that he would be deported out of the

49 For the period from 1769 to 1800, Emilie Luther Valentin has identified 111 escapes on the basis of more than 12,000 individual stints in the institution. Valentin, *Feelings*, 259.

50 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Kronborg Fæstning, 1716–1912, F. Justitsprotokoller, 1752–1770 mm., 3–4, 112; Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Nyborg Fæstning, F. Justitsprotokoller, 1760–1786 (3), 253.

51 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Kronborg Fæstning, F. Slavesager, 1698–1794, letter from Generalitetskommissariatet to the commandant of Kronborg, 28 August 1781.

Danish king's territories. Meanwhile, a large group of the conspirators – among them Fackler – were punished with floggings and heavier irons.[52]

But Fackler was not to be "tamed" by lashing, shackles, or labour: He once more figured centrally in a rebellion occurring in 1785 that led to the execution of yet another convict, Florian Raab. Here, too, the lack of preserved interrogation records renders the details murky, though a short account from the early twentieth century contains more details than the currently available sources, suggesting that the minutes still existed at that time. What seems clear is that Raab shot a soldier with the soldier's own rifle after a work gang confronted an officer they considered to be treating them harshly. Furthermore, in the morning before the shooting, the convicts had called the officer a thief, as he was rumoured to have appropriated work materials and to have used prisoners as helpers in these instances of theft. This confrontation led to the arrest of six of the inmates who had abandoned the worksite altogether at this point. Later that day, the rest of the roughly 40 convicts in the fortress refused to work in solidarity. They were herded back into the prison yard, which was located directly inside the building's main gate. Moments later, the crown prince – on the first leg of a round trip to inspect all of Denmark's fortresses – entered through the gate. The convicts made a terrible noise as he passed them, and they demanded that the future monarch should listen to their complaints. The situation escalated as the inmates attempted to tear down the palisades and the guards began trying to force them back inside with their bayonets. It was at this point that Raab grabbed the gun of a soldier who was trying to shut the door. The bullet went through his neck and killed him.[53]

During a series of interrogations, Raab apparently changed his story several times. The minutes of the last of these sessions are preserved: Raab claimed it had been three other convicts he had been arrested with that had instructed him what to say, and that these men had caused the entire incident in the first place. Fackler was among them, and he found himself among the 7 convicts sent back to Copenhagen that year as punishment for his involvement. By this time, Raab had already been executed. According to older accounts, he had been offered a pardon but refused it; in the preserved interrogation record, he said that he would also find it acceptable if he was to keep his life, "however sorry it may be".[54]

52 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, F. Justitsprotokoller, R, 1771–1796, #117.

53 K. C. Rockstroh, *Slaverevolten paa Kronborg 1785* (Frederiksborg: Frederiksborgs Amts Årbog, 1936), 19–20.

54 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Kronborg Fæstning, 1716–1912, F. Justitsprotokoller, 1752–1770mm (4), 16–17.

Like in Trunken in the 1720s and 30s, these collective escape plots appear linked, with one feeding into another. And even with Fackler and his compatriots transferred, the escape attempts continued. In February 1788, another substantial attempt unfolded that only failed when one of the first convicts to exit a makeshift hole in the palisades became stuck, blocking the exit.[55] A few weeks later, on 17 March, several of the men involved in the February undertaking were pivotal in a particularly dramatic incident unfolding at the Helsingør quarter known as Lappen, a maritime district to the northwest of the fortress and north of the city itself. Lappen was populated by a motley of inhabitants including fishermen and ferrymen, and a large group of more than a dozen convicts had been working there for some time. We do not know exactly what their work consisted of, but it involved harrows, pickaxes, and shovels and took place near a large gate. A few days earlier, while working, the inmates had spotted two Swedish boats nearby that seemed perfect for an escape attempt. Explaining their motivations before the court, a convict later described the temptation: After seeing the boats, he said, "it was no wonder that they could imagine to seek their freedom", adding that "anybody could easily reckon that a convict will make an effort to be free." Another of the prisoners in the gang described how he had been thinking to himself for days that "if anybody runs, I will run too." As usual, they refused to identify an instigator or the person who had been the first to act during the interrogations. Nevertheless, in a sudden and seemingly coordinated move, twelve men had rushed for the boats. An alarm to apprehend them was sounded, but they managed to reach one of the vessels. As they unmoored it, some shouted "hurrah" while others greeted those left behind, wishing them a "merry summer". As they neared the open water,[56] a group of ferrymen launched a boat in pursuit. One convict acted as the captain of the escape vessel. We know very little about him besides his name – Ploghöfft – and that he had also been involved in the escape attempt only a few weeks earlier that ended when his fellow inmate Schultz became stuck in the palisades. Ploghöfft urged his fellow convicts on, threatening to strike those who did not work to their best ability as well as the prisoner manning the rudder if he did not steer the boat properly. One of them would later describe how Ploghöfft "worked ferociously and that he wanted the rest to do the same". Yet despite their efforts, the ferrymen came closer. When they were within shouting distance, they demanded that the convicts drop their tools and surrender. Ploghöfft exclaimed "God damn (Pinedöd) every man dead or to Sweden." The ferrymen fired a warning shot, and when this had no effect, the next shot was

55 Ibid., 127.
56 Ibid., 129–130.

aimed directly at the escapees. Ploghöfft was shot dead. His last words are reported as "Oh God, I've had enough!" Another convict was severely wounded, and many of the others suffered smaller pellet wounds. Unable to retaliate in any meaningful way, they surrendered, throwing their makeshift weapons and oars overboard, and were towed back.[57]

The fact that convicts kept working in the area caused unease, however, and a year and a half later, three of the ferrymen at Lappen lodged a formal complaint with the commandant that the labouring prisoners had continually been threatening them since the incident. One event in particular, unfolding when a prison guard had allowed three convicts some brandy in an inn after they had finished their work assisting some bricklayers, had unsettled them. The ferrymen explained that they "truly fear that these ungodly daredevils will insidiously assault us or haunt our homes, especially when they get drunk and see their opportunity, which is often given to them since the officers appear too powerless to control them." They suggested that the surviving participants of the escape attempt should be transferred elsewhere to ensure the security of the people at Lappen.[58] Several witnesses had been around that afternoon and had heard various utterings from the convicts. One of the inmates – a Hungarian former mercenary soldier by the name of Joseph Zerringer, who seems to have been central to the original escape attempt – had been heard by a guard saying to a ferryman that "if not for these ferrymen, we would have been gone and in the war," referring to the ongoing Baltic conflict between Sweden and Russia.[59] The innkeeper noted that the convicts had said "they cared a lot about Lappen, which he deduced to mean nothing good, but that they said it because some of the inhabitants there had pursued them when they deserted." He had asked them to calm down as they had approached another ferryman in the inn, repeatedly asking him if he had been among those who had apprehended them, to which he had replied no.[60] The prisoners themselves denied having said these things, but Zerringer admitted that when one of the ferrymen had approached them he had said "shut up about that, we had been satisfied that the Devil had taken both you and the Swedish boat."[61]

57 Ibid.

58 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Kronborg Fæstning, F. Sagsakter 1752–1801 (1), Memorial of ferrymen Ole Nielsen Kudsk, Lars Hansen Hyre, and Engelbreth Andersen, 24 September 1789.

59 Ibid., Deposition of Martin Beyer, 26 September 1789.

60 Ibid., Depositions of Lars Hansen Beckmann and Niels Mossen, 21 October 1789.

61 Ibid., Deposition of Joseph Zerringer, 26 September 1789.

These events were followed by renewed but initially futile attempts to transfer ringleaders to the rasphouse. Eventually, however, policymakers saw the sense in the repeated calls to place the most unwieldy convicts in the high-security ward inside the prison workhouse at Christianshavn – and the small building within the larger workhouse thus came to hold the most daring escapees in the Danish realm.

For a time, this change in policy seemed to do the job, but then things came to a head. On 25 June 1817, terrible noises resonated through the streets of Christianshavn, and curious crowds began to form in the streets around the prison workhouse. In the square in front of the building itself, a crowd stood on the opposite side, pushed back by soldiers, while convicts hurled bricks, tools, and insults from inside at those coming too close. There was "a chaos of voices",[62] and the entire city was on high alert. Soldiers began firing their rifles at the revolting inmates, who had occupied the entire prison complex. The artillery joined in. A student who witnessed the events remarked: "I can ensure you that a cannon shot in the middle of a city fired towards one of its houses during a rebellious tumult sounds very different from any other shot I have ever heard."[63] The noise was terrifying. Flames started rising up as the convicts set the prison church on fire, while groups of policemen and soldiers chased through the streets searching for small groups who had managed to escape the prison before the siege. The student witness remarked how he had noticed something was up because he had been disturbed during his studies by the sound of a horse galloping down the street outside. From his window he saw a bald man on a stolen military horse riding so hard that sparks flew off the cobblestones. He was perplexed; "the horse was a reddish brown", but so was the man himself. At a distance, rider and mount blended together to form the likeness of a "complete centaur". Another bald-headed reddish man armed with a club – a "Hercules", as the witness described him – followed on foot with two soldiers in pursuit.[64]

The red men were obviously rasphouse inmates, their skin coloured by the dye. The rebellion had originated among this lowest class of convicts, who had whispered, conspired, and coordinated for months. To the Copenhageners in the streets outside, it appeared like a sudden explosion, but it was the result of tensions that had grown over a long period – and were ultimately tied to the change in 1803. For what the authorities had effectively created within the rasphouse was a think tank: Slowly but steadily, the convicts transferred there had tested

62 Carl Bernhard, *Samlede Skrifter*, 14 vols. (Copenhagen: Schubothes Boghandel, 1871), 72.
63 Ibid., 78.
64 Ibid., 68–70.

out every circuitous way towards freedom. A few attempts had succeeded, most had failed – but the inmates grew ever more daring in the process. Meanwhile, conditions inside the prison seem to have deteriorated. Denmark's involvement in the Napoleonic Wars emptied the state coffers, which – coupled with rampant inflation – had a direct impact on living conditions inside the prison workhouse. Its management had also changed, with a former military commander placed in charge of the institution who implemented martial forms of corporal punishment to maintain discipline.[65] There were recurrent hunger strikes, and everyday relations grew harsher and more violent. In this way, like at Trunken in the 1720s and Kronborg in the 1780s, worsening material conditions once again influenced the collective processes taking place among the inmates.

The first major escape attempt occurred in the summer of 1815: Following an impromptu hunger strike,[66] a large number of inmates tried to force their way through the gate, where they were met by soldiers. Fifty convicts managed to escape, but all were caught. During the subsequent investigations, the prisoners voiced their complaints centred around three recurring themes: first, the food; second, the violence and arbitrary character of physical punishments; third, the practice of shaving convicts' hair, which was considered a form of humiliation besides making them look distinct. Notably, they did not complain about the labour itself, much like the previous waves of large-scale collective action explored here had not been directed at the work but rather at the circumstances under which it took place. This does not mean that the hardships of prison labour did not prompt action – but it suggests that more was needed for such issues to snowball.[67] While their motivations are always difficult to interpret, this suggests that convicts acted in accordance with a moral economy, and that grievances gained momentum when the thresholds defined by this moral economy were perceived to be violated.

In the case at hand, there was no stopping the avalanche. A further attempt during which inmates plotted to attack the prison guards and break out using

65 Valentin, *Feelings*, 279.

66 For more on the events themselves, see Jens Engberg, *Dansk Guldalder eller Oprøret i Tugt-, Rasp- og Forbedringshuset 1817* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Rhodos, 1973). Engberg's account is wrapped in a Marxist interpretative framework that simplifies the event and fails to link it to the developments in the prison system. However, his presentation of the incident itself is based on the vast records produced in its wake. The following account of the 1817 prison revolt is based on Engberg's work unless otherwise noted. For another description similarly indebted to Engberg's work, see Ulrik Langen, *Tyven: Den utrolige historie om manden, der stjal guldhornene* (Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag, 2015).

67 For examples of convicts explaining their escapes with the hardship of their labour, see Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Kronborg Fæstning, F. Justitsprotokoller, 1752–1770mm (4), 104; Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Nyborg Fæstning, F. Justitsprotokoller, 1760–1786 (4), 367.

their keys took place later the same year. This plan originated among men who had already escaped from the slaveries several times, indicating that these were the types of fantasies conjured up by seasoned escapists. Their apprehension led to unrest in the rest of the prison, with convicts in other tiers becoming unruly as well. In one ward, they barricaded themselves in and only gave up when soldiers arrived and began shooting at them. Two men were sentenced to death. They had been vocal about their demands: the release of their leaders.

On 7 April 1817, several of the men involved in the 1815 events acted again. During the night, a large group of rasphouse prisoners broke out of their fetters and then out of their cells, pulling socks over their shoes to be able to walk silently. In the yard, they managed to tie up a guard. Several sets of keys had been forged in preparation, and the men were able to unlock the inner gate – but not the second one that would have led them out into the street. Instead, they hid in the yard, perhaps hoping to rush out if someone happened to be let through the gate. The following morning, however, they were all apprehended and confined to solitary cells, which they likewise tried to escape – a plot that was only discovered after they had managed to break through a wall separating two of the cells.

The core of this group were experienced prison breakers. One of them was a man by the name of Jens Christensen Mellerup, who had been put in a local prison workhouse in Jutland during his early youth on an account of theft. After his release, he stole again and was subsequently sentenced to slavery at Nyborg, where he made his first escape. He was apprehended and eventually ended up in the rasphouse.[68] Mellerup had been involved in the 1815 episodes as well. His cellmate was Christian Anders Olsen, who had been a smith's apprentice in his youth and forged the keys for the failed attempt to flee. Olsen had been in several local prisons before ending up in Copenhagen's slavery, from which he escaped. Now he was doing time in the rasphouse as well. At night, the pair had been visited several times by a third convict named Niels Olsen, who occupied the neighbouring cell but had figured out a way to unlock its door at night. He seems to have been the mastermind behind the plans. We know that it was he who had studied the guards' patterns in order to surprise them. He had originally been a conscript sailor but had committed theft which had gotten him into prison – and he had likewise escaped from several different prisons before ending up in the rasphouse.[69]

All three were transferred back to the rasphouse ward in late spring. Meanwhile, their fellow convicts had been working on a tunnel that enabled another

68 Rigsarkivet, Generalauditøren, Auditøren for Nyborg Fæstning, F. Justitsprotokoller, 1800–1818, 164.

69 Landsarkivet for Sjælland, København Stokhus, Slaverulle, 1774–1826, Entry for Christian Anders Olsen, 3 May 1810.

mass escape. They had also begun coordinating efforts with other groups. Messages circulated within the prison in ingenious ways: Some were relayed orally in code, while others were written down on scraps of paper or linen, sometimes using blood as ink. By wrapping such a scrap around a pebble, it was possible to transmit it to other wards with a pea shooter. The language of these messages is telling: It is one of solidarity, addressing "comrades" and "brothers in misfortune". The plan for the insurrection itself is somewhat diffuse. Apparently, the original digging plot was abandoned for a more direct approach featuring a veritable uprising. This was the reason why extensive communication was necessary: The rasphouse convicts needed to make sure that the inmates in the other wards would join in – even those in the correctional ward, who only served short sentences. When Niels Olsen was transferred to the prison infirmary, it presented a chance to find allies. Signs were arranged that would allow the various wards to rise up at the same time.

The plan was leaked, however. The authorities installed additional guards and apprehended one of the suspects in the correctional ward. As he was led across one of the prison yards in the morning of 25 June 1817, he yelled to the rasphouse convicts that he was being put into detention. Within minutes, the latter emerged from their ward armed with heavy clubs fashioned from the dyewoods themselves. A guard was assaulted and his keys taken from him. Moments later, everyone was out of their cells and wards. Fourteen men managed to escape the prison complex, but because the guards had been alerted beforehand, the gates were sieged before more inmates could exit. The plan may have included more than just escape in the first place, however: One of the rasphouse prisoners was later quoted as having said that "not one stone of this building shall stay on top of the other." While other convicts began hurling everything they could find out of the barred windows at the soldiers below, Mellerup's gang made their way to the attic, where they managed to start a fire.

Over the course of the following hours, the inmates tore the inside of the building apart. A few couples among them also used the occasion for a rare physical encounter. Meanwhile, others pilfered the prison stores. A few were hit by soldiers' bullets. But the original plan of mass escape was clearly unfeasible, and the fire eventually drove the prisoners out of the building complex, forcing them to surrender to the soldiers outside. All escapees were also caught. The man on the horse seen by the student witness – his name was Christian Brinck, a former Kronborg convict sentenced for assault on two officers – made it all the way out of the city, where his mount reportedly died from exhaustion. He was also apprehended. All convicts were bound around their legs with their arms tied behind their backs; they were kept under military guard on the ground in the courtyard of the naval workhouse. The city itself was under lockdown.

A military tribunal was convened immediately. It worked non-stop for forty hours to interrogate every single involved convict, after which the judge sentenced seven insurgents to death. They were executed on 28 June. Only one of the seven played the part of the penitent sinner, while the rest refused.[70] Mellerup scorned the hangman who had grabbed him by the neck: "Then by the Devil, I at least know that my head is still mine," he reportedly said. The city had been turned into an "amphitheatre", with every elevated spot occupied by onlookers. The banks teemed with people, and even the roofs of churches had become impromptu spectator stands.[71] Every Copenhagener knew the story of the rioters: Not only had rumour travelled "like an avalanche" during the three days that had passed, but the event itself had literally echoed through the streets.[72] The tribunal was subsequently transformed into an ordinary commission that continued investigating the events. In October, another seven inmates were executed, and many others were punished with floggings or had their sentences extended.

Fig. 2.1: Two prisoners, both serial prison breakers, and two guards at the maximum security prison at Kastellet. Drawn by Martinus Rørbye, c. 1832, courtesy of Statens Museum for Kunst.

70 Bernhard, *Samlede Skrifter*, 88–89.

71 Aarhuus Stifts Kongelig alene privilegerede Adresse-Contoirs Tidender, som forsendes med Brevposten, 11 July 1817.

72 Bernhard, *Samlede Skrifter*, 88–89.

The events of 1817 prompted another fundamental change in the Danish prison system – once again revolving around the question of what to do with the convicts most prone to escape. In the aftermath, new facilities were needed to replace the partly destroyed prison at Christianshavn, which led to the establishment of a new maximum-security prison near Copenhagen's fortress. What sets this institution apart is that it was the first prison designed not around concerns of productivity, but instead solely as a way of ensuring "security". In the planning phase, the idea was that the occupants of this special prison were not to work at all, since any method of making them productive would compromise security (see Fig. 2.1). This created a new problem, however, as authorities figured that the prisoners would use their idle hours to devise escape plans. They were therefore ultimately put to the simple task of picking oakum. Although this could be done effectively using tools, the latter were forbidden due to the risk they posed.[73]

Conclusion

The maximum-security prison created after the 1817 rebellion was not the coming of the modern penitentiary: It lacked some of the purposeful architecture of surveillance and the constant emphasis on individual isolation that defined the ambitions of later institutions. Nevertheless, it certainly foreshadowed them with its focus on security rather than on the extraction of useful labour. In this sense, it completed an arc in which a prison system created in the sixteenth century from the scraps of a conscription scheme targeting vagrants developed slowly but steadily into one where the impetus of labour was secondary to other aims. Read as a result of a struggle, this can only be understood as a defeat on the part of the authorities, who failed in their sustained efforts to turn the poor and the criminal into a resource for the state. However, as many of the escape attempts discussed in this chapter failed – often leading to detrimental consequences for the convicts themselves – it should not be read as a history of subaltern triumph or an abstract celebration of agency either. The main driver sustaining this prolonged arc were not notions of what prison should ideally be like, but simply the reactions of authorities faced with holes in walls and broken fetters – and these responses created institutions that were successively harder to escape from. The modern penitentiary that was imported from abroad by the 1850s might have come anyway, not least for the reason that penal modernisation became a matter of international political prestige for

73 Lis Ekelund Nielsen and Palle Tolstrup Nielsen, *Danmarks Værste Fængsel: Om Krudttårnsfangerne i Kastellet 1817–47* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2005).

Western European policymakers as the nineteenth century went on. Yet the slow and gradual changes implemented in the Danish penal system until that point – several of which echo to this day – cannot be accounted for without taking the tensions as traced in this chapter seriously. First and foremost, they were reactions.

In broader terms, this also suggests that a social history of coercion and immobilisation needs to account for the ways in which such practices produce generative sites of contestation. While labour coercion makes workers out of human beings and immobilisation – as a ubiquitous part of such practices – places those workers in designated sites or propels them along defined trajectories, such processes of transformation are open-ended: The people they create are more than just workers, and they remain individuals. For this reason, we cannot study coercion without considering how autonomy contributes to historical change.

Magnus Ressel

Chapter 3
Accounting Practices and the Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Business Prospectus of an Eighteenth-Century European Slave Trader

Over the past three decades, the field of accounting history has become a dynamic discipline within historical research.[1] The novelty comes not from the topic itself, however – the effects of these commercial techniques, which originated in mediaeval Italy, have been discussed intensely in academic literature during the last 150 years.[2] Rather, we have witnessed a profound shift in the dominant research paradigm since the 1980s. Very roughly speaking, we can say that a formerly prevailing concentration on the 'modernising' effects of this tool of 'capitalism' has been replaced by a focus on its cultural, social, and psychological aspects. A milestone in this regard was a conference on *Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice* that took place in 1991.[3] Research is now increasingly interested in the changes in mentality and cognition accompanying the growing complexity of accounting techniques since the Late Middle Ages – in business as well as in the political sphere.[4]

1 This essay is the result of research for which I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the Alfried Krupp Kolleg Greifswald and the German Historical Institute in Paris for its financial support. Many thanks go to Claudia Bernardi, Viola Müller, Vilhelm Vilhelmson and Biljana Stojic for their advice on this article and help with many aspects of this text. I am furthermore grateful to Stephan Stockinger for his proofreading and the anonymous peer-reviewers who gave further valuable advice. The only currency abbreviated in this article is the Flemish guilder (= fl.).

2 For an overview, see Christopher J. Napier, "Historiography," in *The Routledge Companion to Accounting History*, ed. John R. Edwards and Stephen P. Walker (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), 47–66.

3 See Peter Miller, "Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice: An Introduction," in *Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice*, ed. Anthony G. Hopwood and Peter Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–39; Garry D. Carnegie and Christopher J. Napier, "Critical and Interpretive Histories: Insights into Accounting's Present and Future through Its Past," *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability* 9, no. 3 (1996): 7–39.

4 See for example Yannick Lemarchand, Cheryl McWatters, and Laure Pineau-Defois, "The Current Account as Cognitive Artefact: Stories and Accounts of La Maison Chaurand," in *Merchants and Profit in the Age of Commerce, 1680–1830*, ed. Pierre Gervais, Yannick Lemarchand, and Dominique Margairaz (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 13–32; Richard Goldthwaite, "The Practice and Culture of Accounting in Renaissance Florence," *Enterprise & Society* 16, no. 3 (2015): 611–647.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137155-004

One aspect of the new research paradigm is here of particular interest: Due to the abstraction and organisational performance of bookkeeping, heterogeneous items – objects and services – were homogenised and transactions were evaluated in monetary terms. Bookkeeping thus became the basis for an economic interpretation when referring to production units or quantities. This affected not only the perception of business itself but also the activities of entrepreneurs within the economic sphere. Accounting contributed to an increasingly abstract way of thinking of the economy as a set of production components that interacted with each other only when a flow of money was visible. This in turn transformed the merchant into an "accounting subject" whose economic activities were shaped by this cognitive disposition.[5] What is more, this applied not only to typical economic activities; it also had an effect on society at large in the sense that an entire range of activities was devaluated: The only pursuits and undertakings that were 'measured' – and thus more highly valued – were those visible in monetary terms. This has had discriminatory repercussions until today, for example with regard to household work.[6]

Accounting therefore was (and still is) far more than just an 'objective' representational tool: It is a mnemonic device that influenced the business practices of its operators. They projected their activities into the wider world through it, and it was thus also an instrument of power. Previous research has already noted with regard to the early modern period that government(ality) and accounting had a 'Foucauldian' relationship, as account books increased control over the governed.[7] The neat order and control of the world of business through accounting is well captured in Antonio Piemontesi's and Luigi Sola's etching "Il Negoziante in Banco, che ascolta, e dà commissione ai Mezzani" from 1793 (Fig. 3.1).[8] From the countless details, it shall only be emphasised that the merchant occupies the central position in a highly ordered system, which is dominated by paper and writing.

In the following, I will focus on mental effects of accounting techniques on the business activities of entrepreneurs in the pre-industrial age. Such an approach is not uncommon in the field of accounting history, with one notable example provided recently in insurance history: According to this interpretation,

5 Heinrich Lang, *Wirtschaften als kulturelle Praxis: Die Florentiner Salviati und die Augsburger Welser auf den Märkten in Lyon (1507–1559)* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2020), 25.

6 Mariana Mazzucato, *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy* (Milton Keynes: Penguin Random House, 2019), 91–94.

7 Juan Banos Sanchez-Matamoros et al., "Govern(mentality) and Accounting: The Influence of Different Enlightenment Discourses in Two Spanish Cases (1761–1777)," *Abacus* 41, no. 2 (2005): 181–210.

8 On this etching, see: Manuel Rossi, "Luigi Sola and Antonio Piemontesi (active between the 18th and 19th centuries) Il negoziante in banco," in *Window on the World: The International Market for Prints in Eighteenth-Century Livorno*, ed. Cinzia Maria Sicca (Florence: Edifir, 2020), 38–40.

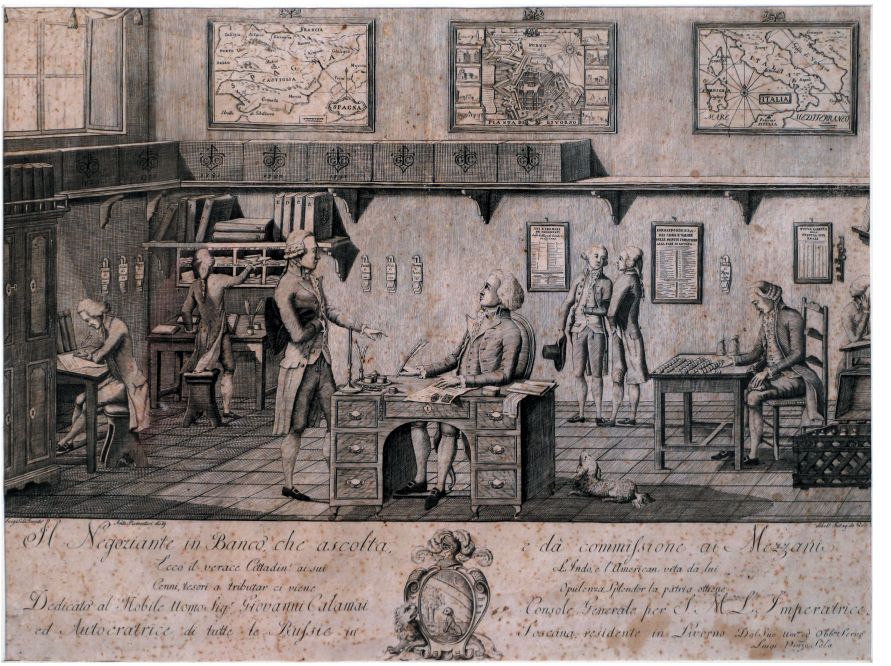


Fig. 3.1: *Il Negoziante in Banco, che ascolta, e dà commissione ai Mezzani*, by Antonio Piemontesi 1793, Livorno, *Wikimedia Commons*, original in: *Camera di Commercio di Livorno.*

the origins of maritime insurance in late medieval Italy derived directly from a technical aspect of bookkeeping – namely, the desire to balance accounts:

> The daily thinking and practice of merchants that is reflected in the many thousand records of entries and values on the "credit" and "debit" sides of the account books led to the emergence of an idea: namely, how to prevent undesired effects in the world of values. Ultimately insurance led to nothing beyond the fact that the credit side of value transcriptions was independent of outside environmental influences.[9]

Determining the premium of the income ensured that the account would be balanced regardless of whether a ship arrived or sank. We encounter other examples in literature as well for how daily work with account books shaped the mentality of their users.[10]

9 Cornel Zwierlein, *Prometheus Tamed: Fire, Security, and Modernities, 1400 to 1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 33.

10 Franz-Josef Arlinghaus, *Zwischen Notiz und Bilanz: Zur Eigendynamik des Schriftgebrauchs in der kaufmännischen Buchführung am Beispiel der Datini-di-Berto-Handelsgesellschaft in Avignon (1367–1373)* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2000), 397–446.

One field of inquiry in which this approach has not yet been applied intensively is that of the transatlantic slave trade. For sure, accounting documents have always been used to investigate the slave trade, as the vast majority of relevant sources are in fact related to the field of accounting history. We find numbers, prices, and lists in diverse forms and on various levels. They can be discovered in ships' logs, in the account books of plantation owners, and in the correspondences and business papers of organisers of the slave trade in Europe.[11] The fact that these forms of discreet representation of the enslaved persons are the standard case has resulted, among other things, in a dominance of the quantitative approach in present-day research on the Atlantic slave trade – and thus, for example, in the possibility to compile the impressive *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*.[12]

This strong dominance of the economic perspective onto the slave trade also leads to various problems, however – as is perhaps most evident in the bitter debates following the publication of *Time on the Cross* in 1974.[13] There is a robust corpus of literature by scholars criticising purely economic studies of the slave trade for failing to address the experiences, suffering, and perspectives of the enslaved persons. Some even go so far as to argue that such economic studies perpetuate the "dehumanisation" inherent in the sources they draw upon, which treated people as commodities for trade.[14]

Accounting historians with an interest in slavery in the Atlantic have reacted to this criticism. With regard to plantation slavery, studies of account books have proven to be fruitful in recent years for highlighting the perspective of the enslaved. This research has shifted our understanding of the social realities of the plantations

11 See the typology of typical sources on the slave trade: Jean Mettas, "Pour une histoire de la traite des Noirs française: Sources et problèmes," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 62 (1975): 19–46.

12 On this database, see in particular David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

13 Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross,* 2 vols. (London: Wildwood House, 1974). The debate is summarised in Eric Hilt, "Revisiting *Time on the Cross* After 45 Years: The Slavery Debates and the New Economic History," *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics* 1, no. 2 (2020): 456–483.

14 See e.g. Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2007) with her attention to the "commodification" of slaves and the reduction of the history of the slave trade to "quantitative" facts; or Jennifer Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), who speaks of "these data as part of the prisons of meaning enslaved people struggled against" (21).

and their impact on the wider socio-economic setting they operated in.[15] One aspect that has been discussed intensely as part of this broader issue is the "dehumanisation of slave workers" made evident by the accounting documents:[16] They regularly include records of the parading or flogging of slaves. The conclusions drawn by Richard Fleischmann after years of comparing plantation records from the British West Indies and the antebellum U.S. South have far-reaching implications:

> As a result of our continuing investigations of plantation accounting records, both in the US and the British West Indies, we believe that accounting is much more constructive than reflective of societal values, more active than passive in social ordering, and, therefore, far more complicit in sustaining slavery and its institutions than many other accounting scholars or historians have acknowledged heretofore.[17]

This argument will be taken up here and pursued even further, with the fundamental question being that of the correlation of the techniques of accounting as a dehumanising factor that enabled the slave trade in its greatest intensity during the Age of Enlightenment despite growing humanitarian sentiment.[18] In other words – and in connection to the overall topic of this volume – the abstraction of human beings to sheer numbers in account books will be scrutinised as an important prerequisite for this forced mass migration. The concrete argument here is that a very fundamental precondition of the slave trade was more than the mere search for profits. It was also – and perhaps at times primarily so – a mental-cognitive disposition that enabled Europeans and Americans to enforce a vast mobilisation of (to be) enslaved Africans. This level is particularly hidden and latent, and therefore rarely reflected in relevant studies on the enslavement trade. However, it is quite indispensable for revealing the basic parameters of this practice and understanding why an activity that was also considered particularly inhumane by contemporaries was intensively pursued – and even perceived as especially worthy of imitation.

In the following, I will make deductions regarding the rationale of the perpetrators of the transatlantic slave trade via an analysis of key business documents of the

15 See in particular Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

16 Richard Fleischman, David Oldroyd, and Thomas Tyson, "Plantation Accounting and Management Practices in the US and the British West Indies at the End of Their Slavery Eras," *Economic History Review* 64, no. 3 (2011): 765–797, 771.

17 Richard Fleischman, "Confronting Moral Issues from Accounting's Dark Side," *Accounting History* 9, no. 1 (2004): 7–23.

18 On a similar phenomenon in the colonial scenario of Zimbabwe around 1900, see the recent publication by Sean Bradley Power and Niamh M. Brennan, "Accounting as a Dehumanising Force in Colonial Rhetoric: Quantifying Native Peoples in Annual Reports," *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 87 (2022). Accessed November 11, 2022. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2020.102278.

only substantial Belgian slaving enterprise that ever existed. Its history shall be sketched roughly beforehand: The Westphalian Frederic Romberg (1729–1819) moved to Brussels with a modest capital stock in 1755, where he was able to earn a moderate fortune over the following decade. In 1766, he obtained the so-called *Transitoktroi* to connect Ostend with Luxemburg via an organised freight service on solidly paved roads. With it, he soon advanced to one of the most successful entrepreneurs on the European continent, offering direct overland transportation from Ostend to Naples with hardly any toll charges. He invested his earnings in new businesses, thereby becoming an important factory owner and insurer who at times was even involved in financial transactions for the Habsburgs. He once stated that his company had an active capital of 20 million fl. at the peak of its activities.[19]

From 1768 to 1790, Romberg was also the most important shipowner in the Austrian Netherlands. His fleet grew considerably during these years as the country enjoyed a neutrality bonus in the war between Great Britain, France, and the Dutch Republic.[20] Romberg tried to use his ships for the slave trade as well – not least because he was asked to do so by the Spanish crown. He employed his Ghent company "Romberg & Consors" for this purpose, which had been founded in June 1780 with the aim of delivering naval stores from Amsterdam to Atlantic France overland and thus without the risk of being captured by British corsairs.[21] As the company established contacts in France and acquired a solid reputation, it was the ideal firm to be charged with organising slave trading for the Bourbon partners. It remained active as a Belgian company until October 1783, when it was relocated to Bordeaux due to the end of the war and the neutrality bonus; there it would continue as a French firm under the name "Romberg, Bapst & Cie".[22]

A so-called "prospectus" of this company will be our first item of analysis. The prospectus was a handwritten document inviting investors to buy shares in specific economic ventures, in this case a slaving voyage. In it, we find detailed profitability

19 A solid biographical sketch of Romberg is provided in Françoise Thésée, *Négociants bordelais et colons de Saint-Domingue: Liaisons d'habitations. La maison Henry Romberg, Bapst et Cie. 1783–1793* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1972), 21–26.

20 Jan Parmentier, "Profit and Neutrality: The Case of Ostend, 1781–1783," in *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. David Starkey (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 214.

21 On this, see André Reussner, "Voie de terre contre voie de mer (le transport des mâts du Nord) 1778–1783," *Neptunia* 8 (1947): 24–25; Magnus Ressel, "An Entrepreneur as Central Protagonist of Foreign Relations in the Early Modern Period: Frederik von Romberg's Service to the Habsburg-Bourbon Alliance in 1780–81," *Annales Mercaturae* 8 (2023) [forthcoming].

22 I am currently preparing several articles and a book on this topic. At present, the best work on Romberg's Belgian slaving ventures is the article by John G. Everaert, "Commerce d'Afrique et traite négrière dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 62 (1975): 177–185.

calculations with the aim of luring capital givers into this type of business. Romberg's future slave trading operations were thus the subject of a carefully prepared representation within an accounting framework. This analysis will subsequently be substantiated via a second source: A lengthy disquisition on the advantages the Habsburg Belgian provinces could enjoy by engaging in the slave trade was written by a French refugee and radical figure of the Enlightenment in the Austrian Netherlands during the early 1780s, Augustin-Pierre Damiens de Gomicourt (1723–1790). Published in six volumes between 1782 and 1784, his work *Le voyageur dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens* (The Traveller in the Austrian Netherlands) was supported by Frederic de Romberg, who thereby hoped to influence public opinion in his favour.[23] The strategies used to legitimise the slave trade in this treatise thus reflect Romberg's opinion to a substantial degree and allow for a comparison with his prospectus.

The following pages will be structured as follows: The first section will provide insights into the broader context of representing enslaved people in the account books of the merchants who organised the trade via a diachronic historical summary. By highlighting several exemplary cases, a form of evolutionary change over the centuries can be roughly sketched. This will be followed by a section on the mentioned prospectus advertising investments into the slave trade as well as another on the *Voyageur* and its defence of the slave trade. The conclusion will offer a hypothesis on the relationship of accounting techniques and the transatlantic slave trade in the late eighteenth century.

Historical context

When the slave trade began to increase in intensity in the sixteenth century, it was conducted by nations that had been acquainted with the system of double-entry bookkeeping and other forms of business accounting for centuries. At this point in time, there was already a long tradition of organised slave trade between Italy and the Slavic world, with the Italian republics satisfying their need for enslaved labourers such as domestic servants, construction workers, and galley rowers via the Balkans or the Ukrainian steppe. These slaves formed a substantial part of the Italian population.[24] In the business documents of a specific actor in

23 Augustin-Pierre Damiens de Gomicourt, *Le voyageur dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens, ou Lettres sur l'état actuel de ces pays,* 6 vols. (Amsterdam, 1782).

24 See Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30, no. 3 (1955): 321–366; Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale: Tome II: Italie – Colonies italiennes du Levant – Levant latin – Empire byzantin* (Ghent:

this business, Francesco Datini, we see slaves ordered like any merchandise, as in the following example (Fig. 3.2).

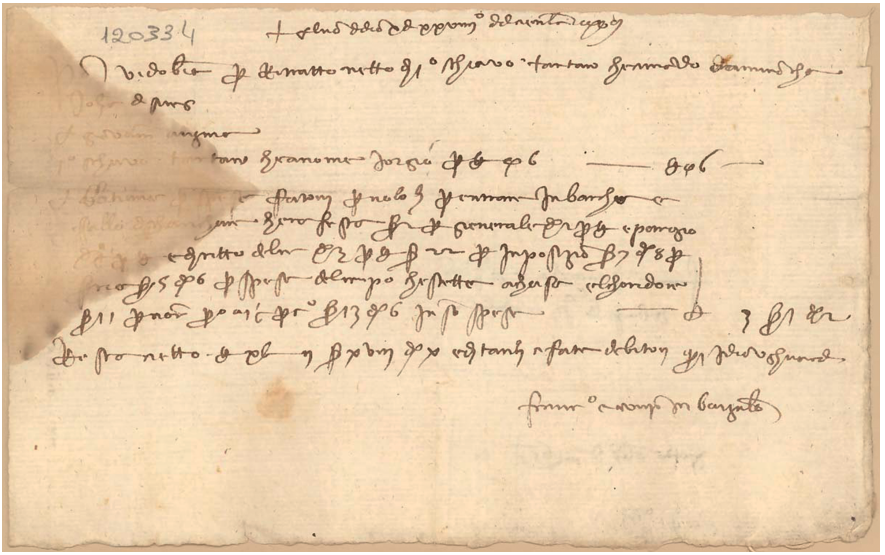


Fig. 3.2: *Fondaco di Maiorca* of the Datini company, letter from Barcelona received in Mallorca, Archivio di Stato di Prato, Fondo Datini, busta 1058, inserto 4, codice 120334.

The essential parts translate as follows:[25]

> In the name of god, on the 29th of December 1409
>
> We are debtors to you for the net result of one Tartar slave coming from Minorca.
> On behalf of Francesco Datini, I write this into the account book:
>
> To Giovanna Anzina
>
> One Tartar slave with the name Jorgio for lire 46
> We had expenses for freighting and to put him into the boat [several more expenses for feeding or a customs charge are named; MR] lire 3, soldi 1, denari 2
>
> Netto remain lire 42, soldi 19, denari 10 (. . .). May god protect you.
>
> Francesco e comp. in Barcelona

Rijksuniversiteit, 1977); Jacques Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au moyen âge dans le monde méditerranéen* (Paris: Fayard, 1981); Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 305–326; Juliane Schiel, "Tatort Tana. Die Rolle Lateineuropas in der Sklavenökonomie des Schwarzmeerraums (ca. 1300–1500)," *Historische Zeitschrift* 313, no. 1 (2021): 32–60.

25 For his help with the transcription, I am very thankful to Heinrich Lang (University Leipzig).

This letter is well structured into lines with specific expenses and a total at the end. The data transmitted in this manner was to be explicitly entered into account books and thus became part of further commercial operations. This letter obviously follows a standardised form and that is determined by the logic of accounting, which allowed an operationalization of the slaves like any other product.

The 'discreetness' of the slave trade as a standardised operation within a normal accounting system changed with the onset of the transatlantic slave trade and its higher degree of specialisation. Bookkeeping has always been a highly flexible and adaptable way of organising business, including the changing treatment of specific aspects of enterprises. Pertinent to this topic is an observation made by Peter Miller in 1998:

> To draw attention to the margins of accounting is to emphasise the fluid and mobile nature of accounting. Practices that are now regarded as central to accounting will have been at the margins previously, and practices that are at the margins today may be at the core of accounting in the future.[26]

Such a development seems in fact to have taken place in the context of the slave trade as well. In an analysis of the accounting documents of a specialised Portuguese slave trader operating along the coast of Guinea in the early seventeenth century, we encounter new specificities. The business was documented by way of double-entry bookkeeping, and due to the lack of precious metals, the basic economic unit in the account was "cloth money". In practice, this meant that the trader used pieces of cotton cloth called *panos*, one metre wide and around two metres long, not only as trading goods but as the reference unit for the commercial operations in his books. The price of a slave varied between 120 and 150 *panos*.[27] Bookkeeping was thus adapted to the necessities of a more complex form of organising trade in slaves. It was used in a manner suited to the specifications of the slave trade – in this case, the lack of precious metals.

The 'perfection' of accounting techniques adjusted to the slave trade reached a pinnacle of sorts in 1771 with the publication of a *Guide de Commerce* in Paris, which offered precise and explicit instructions and guidance on how to manage the slave trade via double-entry bookkeeping. Yannick Lemarchand and Cheryl McWatters in particular have analysed this guide in detail. They consider it to be realistic and in fact based on actual bookkeeping documents from several Nantes slave traders. Lemarchand and McWatters also point out the high degree of sophistication of the slave trade in terms of the accounting techniques of the age, which they view

26 Peter Miller, "The Margins of Accounting," *Sociological Review* 46 (2014):174–193.

27 Linda A. Newson, "The Slave-Trading Accounts of Manoel Batista Peres, 1613–1619: Double-Entry Bookkeeping in Cloth Money," *Accounting History* 18, no. 3 (2013): 343–365.

as being closely related to a desire on the part of the Nantes merchants and shipowners to control as much of the process as possible. Overseeing the slaves' controllers – the captains – was the aim of this sophisticated bookkeeping:

> Such systematization was part of the concern to affect the finest possible control over the captain's activities, but was related more generally to the desire to master an activity of eminent risk as much as possible.[28]

The bureaucratic manner of categorising and evaluating the slaves likewise contributed to lending the trade its specific tone. The intrinsic nature of bureaucratic structures and their iterative process meant that the categorisation of slaves' bodies essentially approached 'perfection' in accounting terms: It produced orderly columns and rows of figures that obscured the brutality the scheme ultimately rested on. We may even go as far as to state that bookkeeping feigned the economic evaluability of the traded entities. By recording them in lists and assessing their worth via an attached price, the labour power of enslaved bodies was broken down, or summed up, into calculable units in the bookkeeping. In other words: Accounting only considered the productive potential and corresponding costs of the enslaved.[29]

With figures and data thus available, it was possible to synthesise them and present the results to the outside world – for example with the purpose of convincing investors to provide funds for specific undertakings. As the slave trade was a very capital-intensive business, one of its typical characteristics was the permanent need to find investors for individual voyages. Using data from bookkeeping could certainly improve the chances of success of such searches for funding, as it presented empirical evidence from a recent past that could presumptively be expected again in the future. However, a substantial transformation also took place in the process of copying the data from the books into other documents with the aim of enticing potential investors: Such presentations to the outside world were the results of conscious acts of selection and aggregation of data by the same persons who were responsible for the account books. It is to these specific "advertising" documents that we will now turn our attention.

28 The authors also point to other contemporary perfections and sophistications in the slave trade, like better ships: Cheryl S. McWatters and Yannick Lemarchand, "Accounting Representation and the Slave Trade: The *Guide du commerce* of Gaignat de l'Aulnais," *Accounting Historians Journal* 33, no. 2 (2006): 1–37.

29 In insurance history, this objectification has been remarked on with regard to the slave trade: Robin Pearson and David Richardson, "Insuring the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Journal of Economic History* 79, no. 2 (2019): 417–446.

The prospectus

The type of source to be examined first was called a "prospectus" by French contemporaries. Prospectuses were essentially advertisements of one to three pages (or occasionally more) soliciting financial investments into specific business undertakings, and they seem to have been quite common in France during the second half of the eighteenth century. For example, we find them in newspapers, where they advertised investments into specific shops or factories.[30] They also occurred in the context of planned fishing voyages to Newfoundland or Iceland (Fig. 3.3).

We also encounter them in the context of the French slave trade.[31] It is therefore no coincidence that prospectuses were also produced in the Austrian Netherlands for its slaving operations around 1780. They were designed to attract small numbers of select investors from the higher echelons of Belgian society into this new business. We shall now examine one complete handwritten prospectus issued in 1782 (Fig. 3.4, translated in Tab. 3.1).

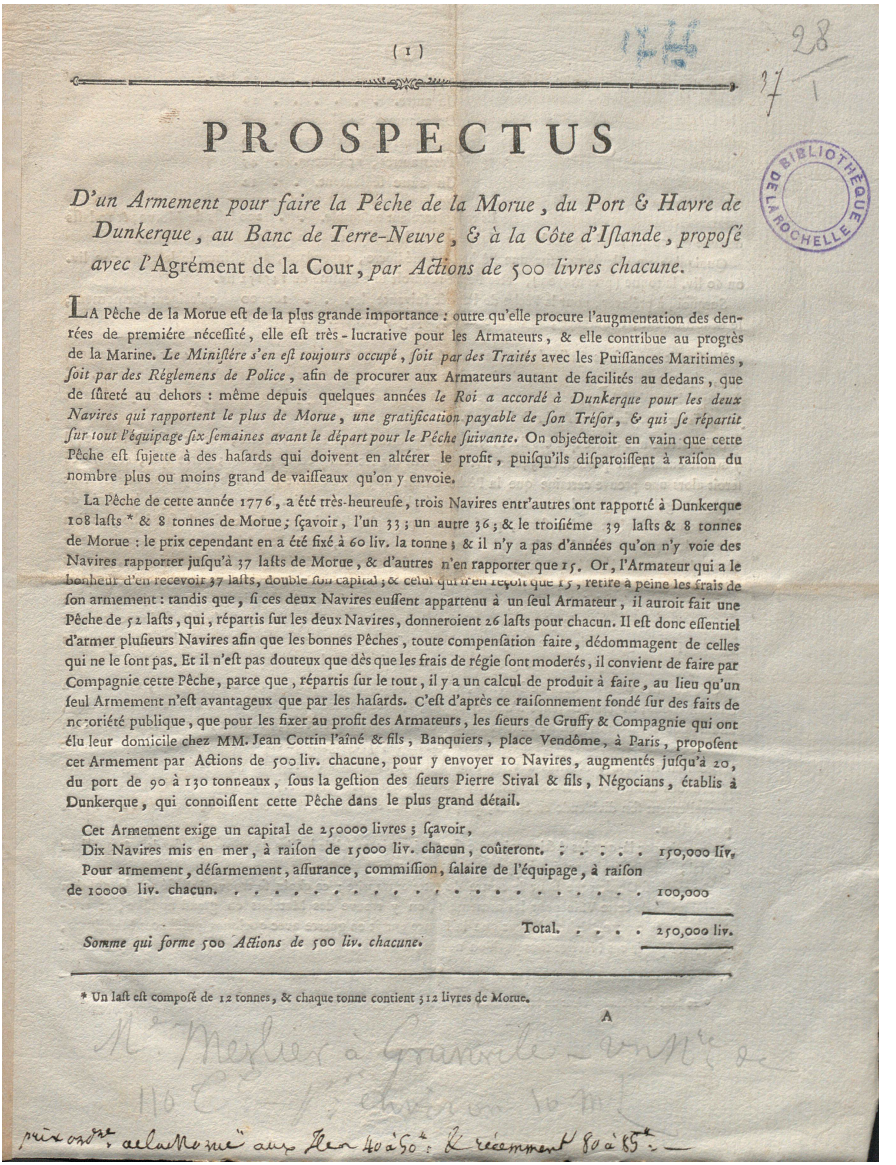
We do not know much about the production of this prospectus by the company Romberg & Consors. It forms part of a folder of documents relating to a trial in the 1790s in which an investor, Vilain XIIII, sued Romberg for a refund. Since Vilain was one of around 20 persons who had given money for this undertaking, we may presume that each of them had received such a well-written prospectus – as well as a number of others who decided not to invest. It can thus be viewed as a form of 'mass' advertisement among a relatively exclusive group of rich and influential members of the Belgian elite.

The prospectus asked for funding for two slaving voyages to transport several hundred slaves as well as products from Africa (in this case, the coast of Guinea) and St. Domingue under the command of a captain who was allegedly very experienced in such ventures. It states that the two ships would cost 24,000 and 9,000 fl. and their armament 15,000 and 8,000, respectively. The cargo, which covered the products to be exchanged for the enslaved Africans, was calculated at 80,000 fl. Interestingly, these products – *March(andises) d'Echange* – remain unknown. We may presume that the producer of the prospectus wished to obscure the fact that weapons were to be delivered, a circumstance that certainly would have increased the risk for the voyage in times of a global corsair threat.[32] The sum for

30 See for example the "Prospectus de l'établissement d'une maison d'association, en faveur des filles de boutique, ouvrieres & domestiques," *Mercure français* 249 (Paris, 1762), 204–210.

31 Pierre Beaumont, *Le Havre, un port négrier* (Le Havre: Atelier d'Impression, 2019), 18–19.

32 Magnus Ressel, "Spoils of Neutrality: The Austrian Netherlands in the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Early 1780s," *Journal of Modern History* [forthcoming].



(1)

PROSPECTUS

*D'un Armement pour faire la Pêche de la Morue, du Port & Havre de Dunkerque, au Banc de Terre-Neuve, & à la Côte d'Iſlande, propoſé avec l'*Agrément de la Cour, *par Actions de 500 livres chacune.*

LA Pêche de la Morue eſt de la plus grande importance : outre qu'elle procure l'augmentation des denrées de premiére néceſſité, elle eſt très-lucrative pour les Armateurs, & elle contribue au progrès de la Marine. *Le Miniſtére s'en eſt toujours occupé, ſoit par des Traités* avec les Puiſſances Maritimes, *ſoit par des Réglemens de Police*, afin de procurer aux Armateurs autant de facilités au dedans, que de ſûreté au dehors : même depuis quelques années *le Roi a accordé à Dunkerque pour les deux Navires qui rapportent le plus de Morue, une gratification payable de ſon Tréſor, & qui ſe répartit ſur tout l'équipage ſix ſemaines avant le départ pour le Pêche ſuivante.* On objecteroit en vain que cette Pêche eſt ſujette à des haſards qui doivent en altérer le profit, puiſqu'ils diſparoiſſent à raiſon du nombre plus ou moins grand de vaiſſeaux qu'on y envoie.

La Pêche de cette année 1776, a été très-heureuſe, trois Navires entr'autres ont rapporté à Dunkerque 108 laſts * & 8 tonnes de Morue ; ſçavoir, l'un 33 ; un autre 36 ; & le troiſiéme 39 laſts & 8 tonnes de Morue : le prix cependant en a été fixé à 60 liv. la tonne ; & il n'y a pas d'années qu'on n'y voie des Navires rapporter juſqu'à 37 laſts de Morue, & d'autres n'en rapporter que 15. Or, l'Armateur qui a le bonheur d'en recevoir 37 laſts, double ſon capital ; & celui qui n'en reçoit que 15, retire à peine les frais de ſon armement : tandis que, ſi ces deux Navires euſſent appartenu à un ſeul Armateur, il auroit fait une Pêche de 52 laſts, qui, répartis ſur les deux Navires, donneroient 26 laſts pour chacun. Il eſt donc eſſentiel d'armer pluſieurs Navires afin que les bonnes Pêches, toute compenſation faite, dédommagent de celles qui ne le ſont pas. Et il n'eſt pas douteux que dès que les frais de régie ſont moderés, il convient de faire par Compagnie cette Pêche, parce que, répartis ſur le tout, il y a un calcul de produit à faire, au lieu qu'un ſeul Armement n'eſt avantageux que par les haſards. C'eſt d'après ce raiſonnement fondé ſur des faits de notoriété publique, que pour les fixer au profit des Armateurs, les ſieurs de Gruffy & Compagnie qui ont élu leur domicile chez MM. Jean Cottin l'aîné & fils, Banquiers, place Vendôme, à Paris, propoſent cet Armement par Actions de 500 liv. chacune, pour y envoyer 10 Navires, augmentés juſqu'à 20, du port de 90 à 130 tonneaux, ſous la geſtion des ſieurs Pierre Stival & fils, Négocians, établis à Dunkerque, qui connoiſſent cette Pêche dans le plus grand détail.

Cet Armement exige un capital de 250000 livres ; ſçavoir,

Dix Navires mis en mer, à raiſon de 15000 liv. chacun, coûteront.	150,000 liv.
Pour armement, déſarmement, aſſurance, commiſſion, ſalaire de l'équipage, à raiſon de 10000 liv. chacun.	100,000
Total.	250,000 liv.

Somme qui forme 500 Actions de 500 liv. chacune.

* Un laſt eſt compoſé de 12 tonnes, & chaque tonne contient 312 livres de Morue.

A

Fig. 3.3: First page of a prospectus from 1776 calling for investments into fishing along the Newfoundland coast, Médiathèque Michel-Crépeau (La Rochelle), MS 2286, no. 37. Sincere thanks for the right to use the image.

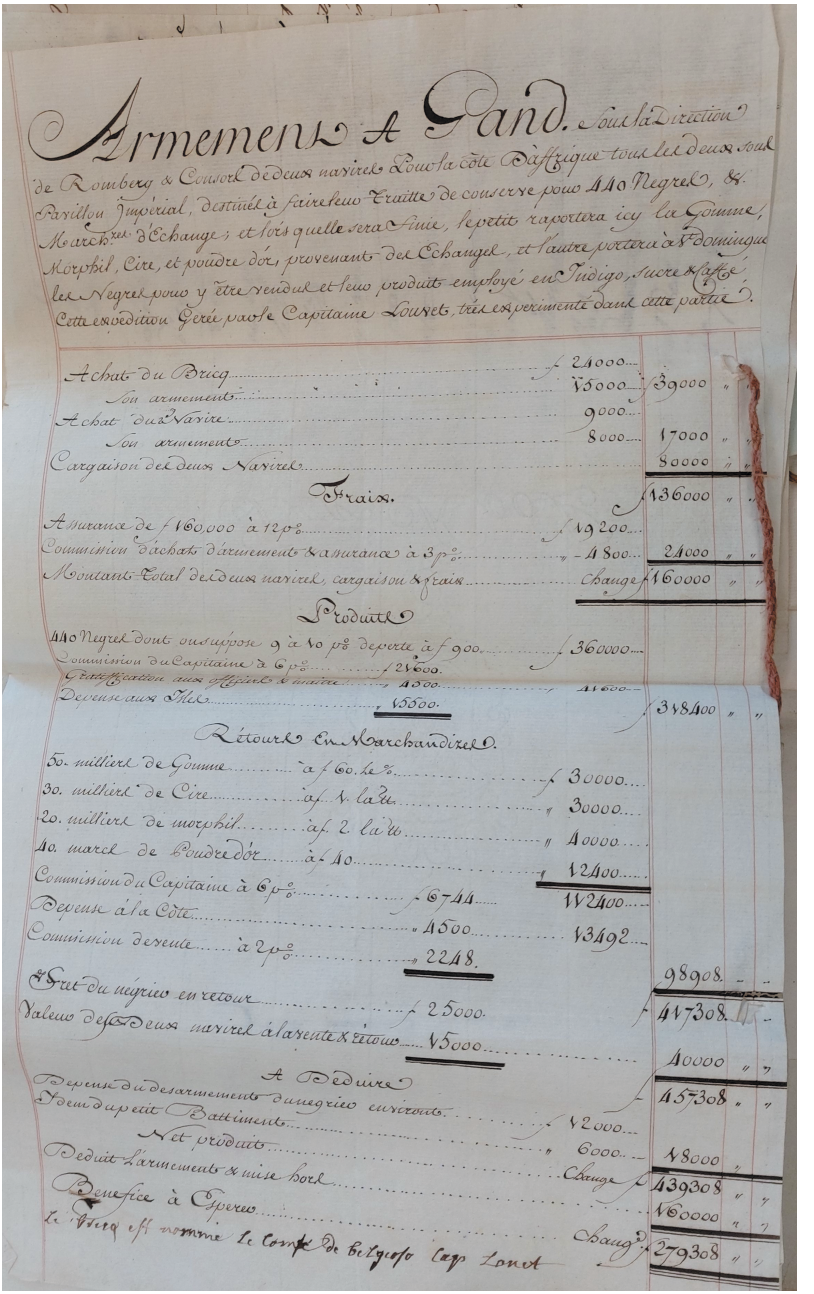


Fig. 3.4: Prospectus for a slaving voyage from Ostend in 1782, Archives de l'État à Bruxelles (Forest), Conseil de Brabant, Procès de la noblesse, I 86, no. 8065.

Tab. 3.1: Translation of the prospectus in Fig. 3.4 by the author.

Armament in Ghent. Under the Direction of Romberg & Consors of two ships for the coast of Africa, both under the Imperial Flag, intended to make their trade of safe transfer for 440 negroes & exchange goods; and when this is finished, the small one will bring back here gum, morphil, wax, & gold powder coming from this trade, and the other will carry the negroes to St. Domingue to be sold there and employed for the cultivation of indigo, sugar, & coffee. This expedition will be led by Captain Louvet, very experienced in this part.			
Purchase of the brig		24,000	
Its armament		15,000	39,000
Purchase of the vessel		9,000	
Its armament		8,000	17,000
Cargo of both ships			80,000
			136,000
Expenses			
Insurance of 160,000 fl. at 12%		19,200	
Armament purchase commission & insurance at 3%		4,800	24,000
Total amount of two ships, cargo, & expenses			160,000
Revenue			
440 negroes with an assumed loss of 9–10% at 900 fl.		360,000	
Commission of the captain at 6%	21,600	41,600	
Gratification to officers & master	4,500		
Expenditure in the isles	15,500		318,400
Returns in merchandise			
50 thousand gum at 60 fl. per one percent		30,000	
30 thousand wax at 1 fl. per pound		30,000	
20 thousand gold powder at 2 fl. per pound		40,000	
40 marc of gold powder at 40 fl.		12,400	
Commission of the captain at 6%	6,744	112,400	
Expenditure at the coast	4,500	13,492	
Sales commission at 2%	2,248		98,908
Freight from the slave trader inbound	25,000		417,308
Value of both vessels on sale & return	15,000		40,000
			457,308
To be deducted			
Cost of disarming the slave ship approximately		12,000	
Ditto for the small vessel		6,000	18,000
Net income			439,308
Deductions from arming & disarming			160,000
Profit to be expected			279,308

this first category was certainly realistic at 136,000 fl. The next section lists the insurance and commission fees, which amounted to 24,000 fl. The sum of all expenses to be met prior to the start of the voyage – the total required investment – was thus calculated at exactly 160,000 fl.

There follows a listing of expected profits. The ships were to transport a total of 440 slaves, with the death of 40 assumed during the voyage. Four hundred would thus be sold at the price of 900 fl. each for a total of 360,000 fl. Deducted from these earnings were the commission of 6% for the captain (21,600 fl.), compensation for the officers and the "maître" (4,500 fl.), and expenses in the Atlantic colonies (15,500 fl.), leaving a net profit from the slaves of 318,400 fl. The second item in the list is the sale value of various additional products to be brought along from West Africa, like gum arabic, wax,[33] morphil (ivory), and gold powder, which was expected to amount to the sum of 112,400 fl. Here too, a commission fee for the captain was deducted (6,744 fl.) along with expenses on the African coast (4,500 fl.) and commission fees for sales (2,248 fl.). A profit of 98,908 fl. for these products remained – slightly less than a third of the profit from the sales of the enslaved persons. Furthermore, other products were expected to generate a profit of 25,000 fl., and the sale of the ships following the completion of the journey was expected to bring another 15,000 fl.[34] To be deducted from this was another type of expense: At the end of the voyage, the two ships would need to be disarmed for an estimated cost of 18,000 fl., which included the sailors' pay. Altogether, the expected earnings amounted to 512,400 fl. (360,000 + 112,400 + 25,000 + 15,000), while the expenses stood at 233,092 fl. (160,000 + 21,600 + 4,500 + 15,500 + 6,744 + 4,500 + 2,248 + 18,000). The deduction of all expenses from the expected earnings resulted in an estimated net profit of 279.308 fl. Comparing the earnings and expenses, the expected return on investment [(earnings – expenses)/expenses] was thus 119,8%.

Romberg was able to convince a number of investors with his prospectus. Together with his two sub-companies in Ostend and Ghent, he himself bore 65% of the investment, while 35% of the capital was furnished by partners from the Austrian Netherlands – often nobles like Vilain. We are able to compare the information in the prospectus with the result of the venture. One of the ships, the *Belgiojoso*, made it to Havana, where it sold 290 of 330 enslaved people taken

33 African beeswax was a highly sought-after product in Europe: Angus Dalrymple-Smith, *Commercial Transitions and Abolition in West Africa, 1630–1860* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 127–131.

34 This sale is not atypical, as ships used for the slave trade were often of low quality and purchased specifically for such voyages. After a slaving run, they were generally so worn out that they could only be used for light coastal trade thereafter. See e.g. Jean Meyer, *L'armement nantais dans la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1969), 161–163.

from Africa. The other ship, the *Prince de Saxe-Teschen*, suffered a high death rate among its slaves, selling less than 100 of the roughly 300 Africans it originally carried. The yields mostly remained well below expectations, since the ships arrived at their destination after the conclusion of the Peace of Paris in September 1783, which resulted in a significant drop in prices. The ultimate return on investment was −76.3%.[35] Despite seemingly having been well prepared and providing solid figures and estimations, the reality of the voyage was far from the optimistic calculations with which the investors had been enticed to give their money.

The prospectus fulfilled its primary purpose, however, as several Belgian nobles and entrepreneurs like Vilain invested into the voyages after receiving the document. Perhaps this success was also due to the fact that enslaved people were not the only freight mentioned. Other products were listed as well, especially some from West Africa that had an exotic allure to them. As the prospectus was a document that could be varied infinitely according to the needs and intentions of the slave trader, this aspect has its own importance. It would have been possible, for instance, to specify the products to be exported in more detail in the field "*cargaison*" (freight). In this and many other aspects, however, Romberg's prospectus was surprisingly imprecise, while several other items such as the commission quotas for the captain and his officers were listed in considerable detail.

The author of the prospectus obviously not only wanted to sound realistic in terms of numbers but also hoped to arouse positive emotions among its readers. Specifying the revenue share for the captain and his officers signalled that the captain himself would have a high interest in concluding the voyage successfully with as few losses as possible. The African products stand out for their exoticism far beyond the ordinary range of goods any Belgian subject would usually deal with. Deliberate highlighting of such products by the responsible merchant was no coincidence; it fed into a specific desire on the part of the compiler of the prospectus as well as on that of the Belgian public, as will be shown in the following.

Defending the slave trade

The prospectus shows us clearly that the death of some of the enslaved people was not only accepted but even calculated into the voyages beforehand. The compiler was in no way obliged to highlight this aspect; we find other prospectuses from which it is absent.[36] By showing that he was aware of this important detail,

35 Ressel, "Spoils of Neutrality."
36 Beaumont, *Le Havre*, 18–19.

however, the slave trader demonstrated expertise and professionalism. As the prospectus was only meant to circulate within a limited circle of elite investors, the assumption of the death of numerous Africans needed no further defence. This was different in the wider political and public sphere, however. The government of the Austrian Netherlands was reluctant to allow its entrepreneurs to participate in the slave trade in the years around 1780 – though not primarily due to humanitarian concerns but because of a different feature of the slave trade: It was based to a substantial degree on the export of weapons to the Africans – and transporting weapons during wartime was a dangerous activity, as the privateers of all belligerent powers eagerly sought pretences to capture neutral ships allegedly transporting contraband. As a result, Romberg was unable to launch several slave voyages in 1781 and 1782 because the government in Brussels would not approve them.[37]

We may assume this was one of the reasons why he was actively trying to influence public opinion in 1782. Although we have no definite proof, the likelihood that he was the instigator of a 1782 publication advocating engagement in the slave trade from Ostend can be regarded as high. The author of the publication, Augustin-Pierre Damiens (who added "de Gomicourt" to his name after 1757) had been born in Amiens and, after studying law, became an advocate in his hometown and later in Paris. A critical work on French constitutional history he wrote in 1768 caused some stir in France.[38] This publication, which strongly insisted on the liberty of the French people vis-à-vis their monarch, basing these liberties on the ancient constitution of the country, was condemned by the Court of Accounts (*Chambre des Comptes*) and suppressed by the *Parlement de Paris*. Later, Damiens de Gomicourt settled in Brussels and remained a staunch enemy of the French monarchy, with his many publications during the following years emphasising the virtues of Great Britain and the Dutch Republic. He also became a supporter of enemies of the French crown, whom he offered the possibility to publish their works at the Brussels publishing house he collaborated with.[39]

Between 1782 and 1784, Damiens de Gomicourt published the aforementioned six-volume work on the Austrian Netherlands. After having lauded Great Britain in the mid-1770s and the Dutch Republic in the late 1770s, he now turned to the Austrian Empire, whose strong leader Joseph II observably pursued an Enlightenment

37 Ressel, "Spoils of Neutrality."

38 Augustin-Pierre Damiens de Gomicourt, *Mélanges Historiques et critiques, contenant diverses pièce relatives à l'Histoire de France* (Paris, 1768).

39 On Damiens de Gomicourt, see in particular Henry de Groote, "L'auteur du *Voyageur dans les Pays-Bas Autrichiens*," *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 26 (1948): 118–135.

policy. The following passage from the *Voyageur* clearly shows Damiens de Gomicourt's opinion of the Austrian emperor:

> Joseph II was thus for all these beautiful Provinces what the beneficent star is for the whole of nature, which is illuminated and animated by it. Superstition has fled, fanaticism has disappeared, patriotism has been enlightened, and it no longer consists in maintaining ancient customs.[40]

This was of course not so much a truthful description of the contemporary Austrian Netherlands than a wish that France might turn into such a state.

It seems very likely that Damiens de Gomicourt received strong support from Romberg in Brussels. In the Romberg account books, we find a payment of 1,098 fl. to a "Damiens en cette ville" on 15 November 1782.[41] Damiens de Gomicourt had already published a treatise on the Austrian Netherlands in 1778 in which he had not mentioned Romberg – who at the time was already quite prominent and wealthy – at all.[42] In 1781, he published a work on the Dutch Republic that made reference to Romberg twice, showing some respect for his achievements.[43] It seems as though this brought him into personal contact with Romberg, who was subsequently able to turn Damiens de Gomicourt into his mouthpiece via the six-volume disquisition on the Austrian Netherlands beginning in 1782. The large amount of repetition and thematic overlap speaks for a publication produced in haste. Especially telling is the fact that Romberg is mentioned frequently in most of the volumes: Damiens de Gomicourt invariably wrote about him most favourably and could not praise his many deeds for the country enough.[44]

Damiens de Gomicourt also printed a document that Romberg and his partners had submitted to the government – a memorandum putting forth detailed arguments in favour of the slave trade: As a means of promoting the export

40 Damiens de Gomicourt, *Le voyageur*, vol. 1, 6. This and all subsequent translations from this work are by the author.

41 See the company's ledger Archives Générales du Royaume (Brussels), Manuscrits Divers, 2783, fol. 71. On the ledger, see Roger de Peuter, "Eighteenth-Century Brussels Merchants and Their Business Papers," in *Kaufleute in Europa: Handelshäuser und ihre Überlieferung in vor – und frühindustrieller Zeit*, ed. Jochen Hoock and Wilfried Reininghaus (Dortmund: Gesellschaft für westfälische Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 1997), 99–113.

42 Augustin-Pierre Damiens de Gomicourt, *Lettres sur l'état présent des Pays-Bas autrichiens, relativement à leurs forces, à leurs gouvernemens, à leur commerce & aux moeurs de leurs habitans* (London, 1778).

43 Augustin-Pierre Damiens de Gomicourt, *Lettres hollandoises, ou Correspondance politique, sur l'état présent de l'Europe, notamment de la République des Sept Provinces-Unies* (Amsterdam, 1781), 214–215, 416–417.

44 Romberg himself pointed out the favourable passages in his memoirs in 1810: Frederic Romberg, *Memoire des faits* (Brussels, 1810), I–VI (Royal Library of Brussels, IMP G 2077).

industry to the African and American markets, it stated, the trade in slaves would boost not only the shipping industry but the entire national economy. Arms manufacturers from Limburg and Liège would supply weapons, powders, and ammunition, the textile manufactures of Antwerp and Brussels could provide high quality cotton and *indiennes*, and Flanders could produce alcoholic beverages.[45] The fact that Damiens de Gomicourt had direct access to such internal documents speaks for a close relationship with Romberg.

We also find vague references to a public debate on the merits of participating in the slave trade in the *Voyageur* when Damiens de Gomicourt points to opponents of Romberg's slaving ventures:

> Many people here still cannot understand how the Negro trade, which the Messieurs Chapelle and Romberg have begun, could increase business. I have been assured that these gentlemen have had many opponents, and they have had to summon up all their courage and patriotism to overcome the difficulties they have encountered. The Negro trade can be conducted at far less expense than most other commercial enterprises. This trade exposes the entrepreneurs to great danger, because during the crossing from Africa to America a third, sometimes even half of the Negroes can die. Yet they have a considerable profit from the sale of the remaining ones. A Negro today in all the American colonies is worth at least 1500 livres.[46]

No direct connection between opposition to the slave trade and the mortality of the enslaved persons is made, even though both are mentioned in the same paragraph – Damiens de Gomicourt makes it seem as though the opponents were only worried for political and economic reasons. Separate from this is the fact that the high mortality rates among the enslaved are depicted solely as an issue in terms of profitability, which nevertheless remained substantial.

Damiens de Gomicourt also tried to harness the resentment against centuries of discrimination in the Austrian Netherlands, which had been de facto excluded from overseas trading, and thus also from the slave trade, since 1585. The only opportunity the country had ever had to engage in the business was around 1780, and it had to be grasped. At this point, Damiens de Gomicourt shifted away from simply defending the slave trade, but still actively tried to convince his readers to support it in order to further the national weal:

> If one considers the enterprise of Mr. Chapelle and Mr. Romberg with regard to the Austrian Netherlands, it must be admitted that it is very useful to them: For the return cargo that their ships will take after the sale of the negroes will consist of such wares which the

45 Damiens de Gomicourt, *Le voyageur*, vol. 1, 75–86; The original can be found in Archives Générales du Royaume (Brussels), Conseil des Finances, 4401.

46 Damiens de Gomicourt, *Le voyageur*, vol. 1, 58–59.

> inhabitants of the Netherlands are forced to take from those nations which have colonies in America, especially from their neighbours the French, Dutch, and English, like sugar, coffee, indigo, cotton, and so on. These goods will be sold in the port of Ostend, where they can be bought for a much cheaper price than if they were first brought there by foreigners. I believe and I am convinced that the Austrian Netherlands cannot have a flourishing trade if they do not have a widespread trade with America. They can supply the Americans with everything that the English and Dutch now bring them, namely: canvas, cotton and wool cloth, handicrafts of all kinds, foodstuffs, French wines, brandies, etc. They will take from France, as the English and Dutch do today, all the objects of luxury, sensuousness, fantasy, the products of the fine arts, and will also bring them books, papers, arms and munitions of war which their country produces, just as the Indian company at Trieste will give them the oriental products. The American trade will open new sources for the Dutch farmer; these will induce him to increase the cultivation of acreage and will enable the capitalists to spend their money on the reclamation of deserted lands.[47]

In contrast to almost all legitimations of the slave trade written in these years, we find no remarks on the Christianisation of the enslaved people, the allegedly harsher conditions in Africa from which they were being "saved", or the "melioration" of the shipping across the Atlantic to decrease the death rate. These and other arguments frequently put forth by defenders of the slave trade are absent from Damiens de Gomicourt's text.[48]

Instead, we find that the death of enslaved people not only clearly mentioned in its appalling quantities but also quite readily accepted. It is interesting that the excessive death rates of 33 to 50% asserted by Damiens de Gomicourt differ considerably from the 10% assumed in the prospectus. In reality, they were mostly around 15% for France, Great Britain, and the Dutch Republic during this period.[49] Damiens de Gomicourt obviously intended to be drastic, exaggerating to drive home his point concerning the high profitability. The only problem that a lot of dead slaves caused from his point of view was slightly less profit. We find no redeeming qualms of any sort in his defence of the slave trade, only a very enthusiastic description of the many products that would come into the country with it. These products were to be imported directly via Ostend, thereby reducing the dependence on neighbouring countries. The wealth of the Austrian Netherlands would increase as its export markets grew substantially. In addition, the slave trade was linked to exotic products and thus to riches satisfying an explicitly mentioned "fantasy". It had a utopian allure to it; a promise of vast and infinite global wealth – and this wealth should not be left to the competitors

47 Ibid., 59–61.

48 On the typical arguments of the opponents of the slave trade, see Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759–1815* (Farnham: Routledge, 2009).

49 Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 136–143.

but instead tapped by the Belgians via Romberg. It does not seem implausible to assume that these notions express exactly what Romberg thought about the slave trade as well.

Conclusion

It has been argued here that there was a close relationship between the slave trade and the accounting techniques of the Western world, which were invented in Tuscany during the Late Middle Ages and have shaped the economic practices of Europe ever since. Western societies were unique in their way of representing the slaves they brought from Africa to the Americas: They were counted, documented, and priced in systems of accounting. We find such economic practices applied as early as in the slave trade from the Black Sea to Italy during the fourteenth century. Thus transformed into abstract and discreet entities in the papers, slaves were made the equivalent of objects and turned into merchandise. This perception made it easier to treat them as commodities, and accordingly to organise their forced mobilisation by transporting them to another place for lifelong labour.

For sure, the slave trade was not an outcome of this commodification and identification with numbers; trade in slaves is much older than bookkeeping. But these techniques certainly facilitated it with their increased level of abstraction, thereby easing its transition towards a mass phenomenon organised on a vast scale. This finds reflection in bookkeeping itself: As the slave trade grew in importance, so did the accounting practices surrounding the business, and they became ever more complex and fine-tuned. The transportation of slaves shifted from the margins to the centre of a specialised field of accounting, and a peak was reached in the late eighteenth century with the production of a complex manual to assist accountants in organising the slave trade. Christopher Bayly's remark that the slave trade of the late eighteenth century was "a flexible, financially sophisticated, consumer-oriented, technologically innovative form of human beastliness" seems a fitting description of such a manual.[50]

This may help us to understand why the importance of the slave trade increased so massively during precisely the same decades when a more humanitarian mentality also began to gain traction in European society, soon to culminate in the *Bill of Rights* and the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*

50 Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 40.

on the two sides of the Atlantic.[51] Two aspects of bookkeeping seem to have come together here to obscure the brutality of the slave trade in the eyes of the responsible persons in Europe. The first was objectification via the elaboration of the account book with its neat and ordered columns and rows in which the slaves were no longer visible other than as numbers. The second was the frequent appearance of exotic products in the same account books, which were associated with prosperity and national autarky in an age of intensive rivalries between European states and societies.

These two aspects were naturally of very different natures: The prospectus analysed here was closer to account books, while the extensive disquisition on the Austrian Netherlands was a publication aimed at the broader public. Both linked the slave trade with exotic products, however, and this appears to have been the essential message: The slave trade in combination with the accompanying goods had the allure of tapping a hitherto prohibited source of national weal. It was more than just a strategic message to the readership as well, showing us the "fantasy" of a businessman who constantly worked with his account books. It is remarkable that for all its seeming neutrality as a business calculation, the prospectus was ultimately as utopian as Damiens de Gomicourt's prosaic writing, since Romberg incurred massive losses with his slaving ventures.

This chapter argues that the dehumanisation of African slaves via their abstraction in account books was an important prerequisite for people in the Age of Enlightenment to be able give orders to enact a forced and brutal mass migration. This hypothesis – which of course can never be fully provable – was supported here through the comparison of two different types of sources on the slave trade that are linked via the figure of an important slave trader. A surprising result is that dry profit calculations alone do not appear to have determined decisions. To become capable of giving such orders, the merchant had to connect the slave trade to exotic products and fantasies of a long-awaited national flourishing. By perceiving the Africans as numbers and the exotic products as harbingers of a utopian future, a businessman like Frederic Romberg was able to force thousands of Africans into involuntary labour migration via his account books – and accept the death of many of them in the process.

51 On the rise of humanitarian sentiment in the 18th century, see Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007).

Vilhelm Vilhelmsson and Emil Gunnlaugsson

Chapter 4
Passports, Permits, and Labour Im/Mobility in Iceland, 1780s–1860s

In the 1780s, following a decade of debate, a series of legislative reforms were introduced by the Danish royal authorities to enhance the regulatory framework of labour in Iceland. In particular, an act passed in 1783 prohibited any form of masterless casual labour without a written permit from the local authorities, tightening previously existing restrictions on masterless labour dating back several centuries that required a minimum of property ownership and payment of a special tax.[1] The new law stated that any landless persons finding themselves without employment in service during the traditional turnover period in spring were to inform the local authorities, who would assist them in securing such a position or else provide them with a written attestation allowing them to remain masterless for the remainder of the year. Craftsmen such as carpenters, spinners, weavers, and coopers as well as cottars (fishermen living in cottages near fishing grounds) were exempt from this rule, but at the same time they required attestation from the local magistrate to be allowed to work in these professions.[2]

Among other measures, including stricter forms of punishment for noncompliance, the new laws introduced a reformed internal passport system. It required anyone regardless of social status who wished to travel from one county to another to obtain a document detailing who they were as well as where they were heading and for what purpose, and have it signed by the county magistrate and

1 In pre-industrial Iceland, as in most of Europe, people were required to belong to a certain household and submit to the authority of the head of that household. For landless adult workers, this usually meant becoming servants. Masterless labour was any labour arrangement that fell outside this requirement. In other words, masterless labourers were workers who were not subject to the authority of any master but could work on their own behalf as day labourers, for piece rates, or under similar arrangements. They were a frequent subject of complaint by authorities and social commentators throughout the early modern period in Iceland as well as in Europe in general. For Iceland, see Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, "Tactics of Evasion: The Survival Strategies of Vagrants and Day Labourers in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rural Iceland," *1700-tal: Nordic Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17 (2020): 34–56. For Europe see Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Worthy Efforts: Attitudes to Work and Workers in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 426–547.

2 Oddgeir Stephensen and Jón Sigurðsson, eds., *Lovsamling for Island* I–XXIII (København: Höst, 1853–1889), here IV, 683–686.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137155-005

their parish priest. These documents were valid for six months, and from 1808 onward they also had to include a physical description of their bearer. All household heads were required to inspect the documentation of anyone arriving in their home and report persons lacking the required papers to the local authorities.[3] While the passport law was explicitly aimed at controlling vagrancy and preventing debtors from absconding, its implicit purposes also included enhancing control and surveillance of labour mobility by rendering workers and their movements more observable – or, as theorist James C. Scott puts it, more "legible"[4] – to the authorities and thus more governable, as this paper will show. We argue that these revised laws formed what some mobility scholars have termed a "mobility regime", a form of governmentality that aims to simultaneously facilitate and contain movement, which is inherently entangled with modes of exploitation and discrimination, and thus ultimately of social order.[5]

Overall, the reforms undertaken by the Danish authorities were intended to strengthen the pre-existing dominant labour regime of compulsory service under which all landless or unemployed adult persons, male or female, were required to become servants on an annual basis, mostly on farms.[6] This was the dominant form of labour relation in the Nordic countries – including Iceland – during the early modern period and remained so until the latter half of the nineteenth century.[7] At the same time, these reforms developed in response to social and economic changes in the wake of developments in the mid-eighteenth century that led to increasing specialisation of work – and in particular to the proliferation of mostly home-based wool manufacture and more intensive (though still largely seasonal) fishing. As historian Hrefna Róbertsdóttir has argued, the reformed labour laws were meant to facilitate this development without disrupting the "social equilibrium" of a societal structure based on rural animal husbandry, reflecting the growing desire of the Danish rulers of Iceland to rationally govern and control the labour market in the country.[8]

3 Ibid., 580–582.

4 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

5 See Nina Glick Schiller and Noel B. Salazar, "Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 183–300.

6 Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk: Vistarband og íslenskt samfélag á 19. öld* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 2017).

7 Jane Whittle, "Introduction: Servants in the Economy and Society of Rural Europe," in *Servants in Rural Europe 1400–1900*, ed. Jane Whittle (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017), 12.

8 Hrefna Róbertsdóttir, *Wool and Society: Manufacturing Policy, Economic Thought and Local Production in 18th-Century Iceland* (Gothenburg: Makadam, 2008), 157–169.

One would assume these legislative reforms to have created a significant paper trail of casual labour permits, passports, and related documentation – a veritable archive of individual identities.[9] However, the implementation of the revised labour laws was often arbitrary and developed somewhat independently of the aims of the legislative authorities, as local labour needs and the subversive practices of individual workers frequently diverged from the regulatory coercion inherent in the Icelandic labour laws. This is reflected in the archives, with the preservation of documents relating to passport control often haphazard and differing greatly between regions. In this paper, we will discuss the somewhat ambiguous role of internal passports and the associated casual labour permits in facilitating the increased governance of labour coercion in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iceland, a subject that has hitherto not received much academic scrutiny. Focusing on the use and non-use of state-issued documentation by workers, we argue that while legislation and other normative sources along with the archival records of issued passports provide fascinating insights into the means by which the authorities sought to govern the im/mobility of the labour force, they cannot be studied in isolation. Rather, any such analysis must consider the actual practices involved: It needs to take into account the various tactics employed by labourers to either evade or exploit – and thus subvert – the passport and permit systems in order to escape or least mitigate the coercion implicit in the labour legislation and the compulsory service regime. We will begin, however, by briefly examining the social and economic context of labour in pre-industrial Iceland.

Economy and labour in pre-industrial Iceland

While its geographic dimensions make Iceland the tenth largest island in the world, the territory was home to a miniscule population of 50,000 to 80,000 people in the period from 1700 to 1900. Icelandic society during this time was almost entirely rural, dispersed across the entire island but mostly confined to its edges as the interior was (and remains) mostly barren and uninhabitable.[10] As late as

9 The role of passports and similar official paperwork in developing and shaping notions of a permanence of individual identity as well as in creating modern statecraft is thoroughly discussed in Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds., *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

10 For a general overview of Iceland and its social, economic, and demographic history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years: The History of a*

the 1860s, some 97% of the population still lived in rural areas, with the independent farm household serving as the basic economic unit and site of production.[11] However, early modern Iceland was also characterised by a dual economy that was highly seasonal and required a mobile and accessible workforce. One part of this economy consisted of animal husbandry supplemented with the hunting of seals and other wildlife for additional income. On the other side was the business of seasonal fishing, in part for local consumption but mainly for the export of stockfish to markets in northern Europe – and from the 1760s onwards, also of "wet" (salted) fish to southern European markets.[12]

In practice, this distinction was not quite so clear nor on equal terms. Fishing was indeed vital to household consumption patterns as well as being of significant economic value in terms of wealth production and foreign trade. Farming, however – and with it the social role of the farmer and his household – remained culturally fundamental to Icelandic society, structuring its social organisation and "cosmology", as anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup has put it, while fishermen and their seaside communities were commonly associated with poverty, immorality, and social disorder.[13] A symbiotic relationship nonetheless existed between these two different economies, as some contemporaries observed,[14] since their labour pools were in constant flux, with labour power flowing in both directions on a seasonal basis. While the origins of this system of reciprocal and circular labour mobility remain speculative, by the sixteenth century the south-western and western

Marginal Society (London: Hurst & Co., 2000), 187–224, 261–293; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, *Wasteland with Words: A Social History of Iceland* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 18–63.

11 Gísli Á. Gunnlaugsson, *Family and Household in Iceland 1801–1930: Studies in the Relationship Between Demographic and Socio-Economic Development, Social Legislation and Family and Household Structures* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1988), 37.

12 Gísli Gunnarsson, *Monopoly Trade and Economic Stagnation: Studies in the Foreign Trade of Iceland* (Lund: Ekonomisk-historiska föreningen i Lund, 1983); Guðmundur Jónsson, "Institutional Change in Icelandic Agriculture, 1780–1940," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 41 (1993): 101–128; Magnússon, *Wasteland with Words*, 18–32; Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, "Frá búdrýgindum til markaðsveiða: Selveiðar og selveiðihlunnindi við Húnaflóa, 1703–1918," *Skírnir* 195, no. 1 (2021): 158–192.

13 Kirsten Hastrup, "Closing Ranks: Fundamentals in History, Politics and Anthropology," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (2006): 147–160, here 148–151. For a more detailed analysis, see Kirsten Hastrup, *Nature and Policy in Iceland 1400–1800: An Anthropological Analysis of History and Mentality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). On the discourse on fishermen and their communities, see Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 99–100 and Agnes Arnórsdóttir, "Var hyskið í þurrabúðunum bjargarlaust með öllu? Viðhorf til tómthúsmanna í Reykjavík á fyrri hluta nítjándu aldar," *Sagnir* 5, no. 1 (1984): 7–13.

14 Skúli Magnússon, *Forsøg til en kort beskrivelse af Island (1786)*, ed. Jón Helgason (Köbenhavn: Munksgaard, 1944), 37.

parts of the country had become the primary fishing regions during the winter season, with workers streaming in from the north and south from February to May only to return home for the labour-intensive summer season on their farms. The fishermen living in the south and west in turn migrated to the northern and southern farming districts to participate in the hay harvest in late summer.[15] This pattern seems to have intensified in the eighteenth century. Map 4.1 portrays this cycle of seasonal labour mobility visually. It shows the seasonal flow of labour from inland farming districts in the north and south to the main fishing grounds in the southwest and west during the winter fishing season (dotted arrows) and the opposite flow of workers from the fishing grounds in the counties of Gullbringusýsla and Snæfellsnessýsla to the inland farming districts for the hay harvest in summer (dark arrows). The named locations indicate places mentioned in this chapter, but the edges of the circles do not represent the actual boundary lines of the counties mentioned; they merely provide a rough indication of their location on the map.

Vital to the understanding of this dual economy is the distribution of its most important resource – land – and its influence on social relations. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, private ownership of land was around 52%, with almost all of it belonging to a very small elite. Another 32% were owned by the church and the remaining 16% by the king.[16] The same parties were heavily involved in the fishing industry as well, owning the majority of the fleet of rowing boats and running substantial and labour-intensive fishing operations.[17] A good example is the fishing district of Akranes in western Iceland in the year 1809, where Magnús Stephensen, chief justice at the Icelandic High Court (*Landsyfirréttur*) and a prominent member of the landowning elite, owned half of the 70 fishing boats in the village while none of the other 20 boat owners possessed more than three boats.[18]

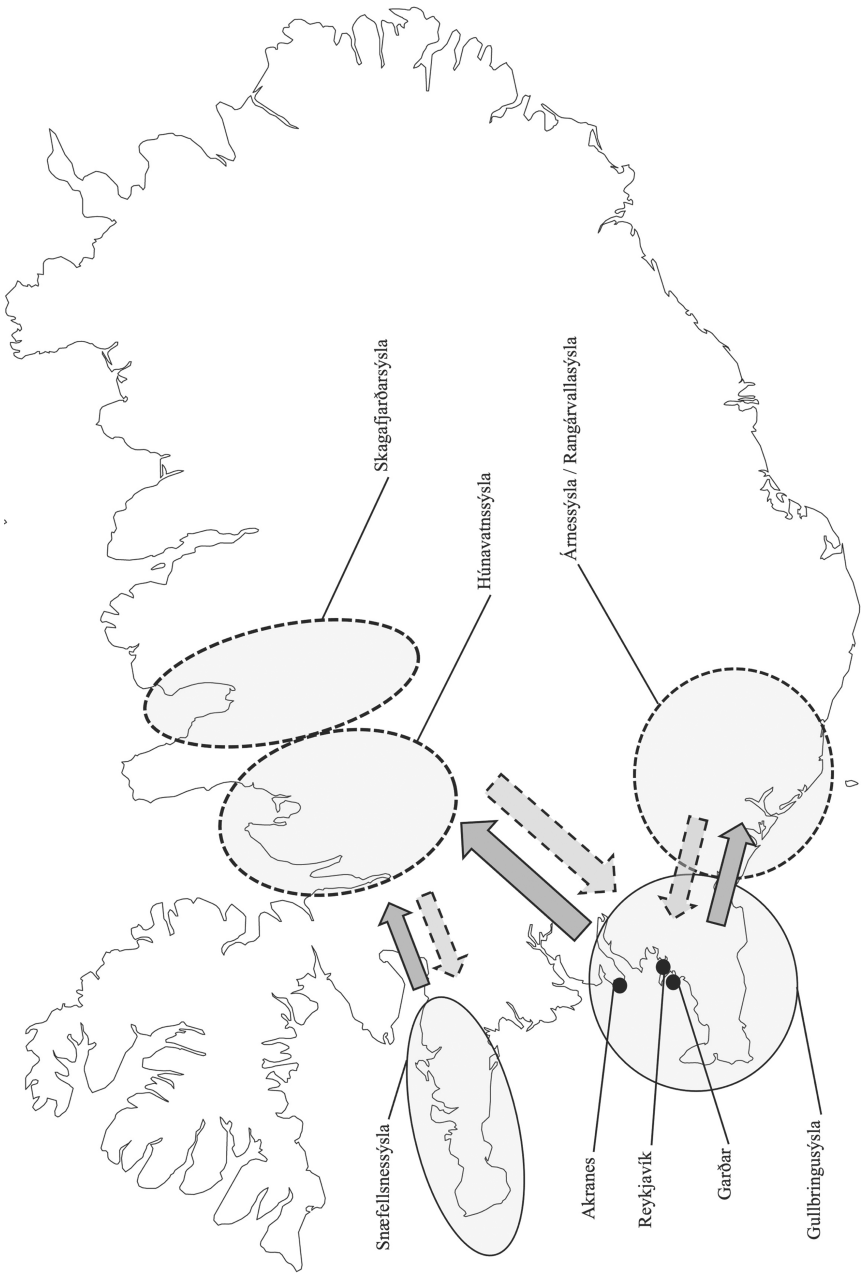
This high concentration of the means of production in the hands of a scant few proprietors meant that social relations were characterised by a dichotomy in several ways: On the one side was the small class of landowners and the other a

15 Helgi Skúli Kjartansson and Orri Vésteinsson, "Hvar reru fornmenn til fiskjar? Um vertíðamynstur miðalda," *Saga* 56, no. 2 (2018): 84–121; Emil Gunnlaugsson, "Kaupavinna á 19. öld: Um hreyfanlegt vinnuafl og verkafólk frá Reykjavíkurkaupstað" (BA thesis, University of Iceland, 2020), 9–11.

16 Björn Lárusson, *The Old Icelandic Land Registers* (Lund: Ekonomisk-historiska föreningen i Lund, 1967), 60–61.

17 See for example the discussion on the fishing operations in the Skálholt diocese, which required hundreds of fishermen during the winter season, in Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, "Biskupsstóll í Skálholti," in *Saga biskupsstólanna: Skálholt 950 ára – 2006 – Hólar 900 ára*, ed. Gunnar Kristjánsson (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Hólar, 2006), 126–134.

18 Ólafur B. Björnsson, *Saga Akraness* I (Akranes: Akranesútgáfan, 1957), 282.



Map 4.1: The circuits of seasonal labour mobility in nineteenth-century Iceland, in Emil Gunnlaugsson, “Kaupavinna á 19. öld”.

large mass of subalterns who owned little or no property and were subject to some form of labour coercion as a result.[19] This latter group can be divided into four main categories: tenant farmers, fishermen living in cottages (*búð*, *þurrabúð*, *tómthús*) by the seaside, farm servants, and masterless day labourers (*lausamenn*). Taken together, these four groups essentially made up the entire workforce of the country. But although they were largely from the same social class and there was a significant level of mobility between the four categories, tenant farmers remained socially superior to the other three and were perceived to be culturally constitutive as heads of farming households and thus as masters to their workers.[20] In this chapter, we will focus on the latter three groups (fishermen, farm servants, and masterless labourers), which can summarily be characterised as the labouring poor of Icelandic society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[21]

Compulsory service, coercion, and the seasonal labour market

Having labour power accessible throughout the year for a modest price (such as live-in servants) was deemed essential to the dual economy of fishing and livestock farming by contemporaries. In the late eighteenth century, a prominent state official calculated that an average-sized farming household needed at least three male farmhands and three maidservants to perform all the labour such a

19 Labour coercion is understood here in very broad terms akin to the taxonomy introduced in Marcel van der Linden, "Dissecting Coerced Labor," in *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

20 Gunnlaugsson, *Family and Household*, 60–83; Guðmundur Hálfdanarson, "Social Distinctions and National Unity: On Politics of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Iceland," *History of European Ideas* 21, no. 6 (1995): 763–779. Christina Folke Ax has convincingly argued the need for a more nuanced view of social groups and their stratification and "cultural profiles" in pre-industrial Iceland. For the purposes of this analysis and the sake of simplification, we have refrained from delving too deeply into the cultural and social diversity within the peasantry and the labouring poor of pre-industrial Iceland. See Christina Folke Ax, "De uregerlige: Den islandske almue og øvrighedens reformforsøg 1700–1870" (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2003), 24–52.

21 Swedish historian Jonas Lindström defines the labouring poor as "people who neither had enough land nor were paupers, but depended on wage work for their survival." Jonas Lindström, "Labouring Poor in Early Modern Sweden? Crofters and Lodgers in Västmanland in the 17th Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 44, no. 4 (2019): 403–429, here 404.

household required, including the seasonal labour mobilisation to fishing stations.[22] As described above, this need was met with compulsory annual service for all adults without tenancy or a legal occupation, a form of coerced labour management that had ancient roots but became increasingly important from the seventeenth century onwards. This coercion was first and foremost legal – that is, in the form of a legal requirement. While more research is necessary, the current state of knowledge shows that the law was applied with considerable force at times but was more relaxed during other periods.[23] Some county magistrates tasked with enforcing the legislation were exceptionally vigilant and had their local constables follow up on any indication that the servant laws were being transgressed. Those in violation were subjected to corporal punishment, imprisonment, or forced placement in service depending on the circumstances.[24] Evasion of service and other tactics of everyday resistance remained relatively common nonetheless, as Vilhelm Vilhelmsson has documented extensively.[25] For most people, service remained a temporary position, however, and life-cycle service was an accepted norm and perceived as an important part of social reproduction in Iceland.[26]

Although bylaws on wages and daily output had existed since medieval times, servants were sometimes able to negotiate wages and working conditions with their masters, and they could (and often did) move from one household to another during the traditional turnover period in May.[27] From 1685 to 1866, servants were subject to strict regulations on domestic discipline stipulating that masters should physically reprimand disobedient or obtuse servants, with updated regulations in 1746 adding that servants were forbidden to venture beyond the boundaries of the household without their master's permission. There is ample

22 Skúli Magnússon, "Sveitabóndi," *Rit þess íslenzka lærdómslistafélags* 4 (1783): 137–207.

23 Yngvi Leifsson, "Flökkufólk: Líf og ferðir flökkufólks á Norðurlandi 1783–1816" (MA thesis, University of Iceland, 2011); Guðmundur Már Ragnarsson, "'Ráddu þér sjálfur, vertu frjáls': Markmið og framkvæmd lausamennskulaga 1863" (BA thesis, University of Iceland, 2013); Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 175–179; Jónsson, *Vinnuhjú á 19. öld*.

24 Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 201–210.

25 Ibid.

26 See Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, "The Moral Economy of Compulsory Service: Labour Regulations in Law and Practice in Nineteenth Century Iceland," in *Labour Laws in Preindustrial Europe: The Coercion and Regulation of Wage Labour, c.1300–1850*, ed. Jane Whittle and Thijs Lambrecht (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Press, 2023), 227–245.

27 Arnór Sigurjónsson, ed., *Búalög: Verðlag á Íslandi á 12.–19. öld* (Reykjavík: Framleiðsluráð landbúnaðarins, 1966). On servant mobility, see Gunnlaugsson, *Family and Household*, 82. On master-servant contract negotiations, see Vilhelmsson, "The Moral Economy of Compulsory Service."

evidence that this corporal chastisement was practised widely.[28] Servant labour was therefore subject to a great deal of violence, coercion, and immobilisation on multiple levels, as the state forced most landless people into service that subjected them to the labour needs and personal authority of their masters.[29]

Coercion was of course also inherent in the social relations of many tenant farmers. With ownership of land came the ability to organise labour on a large scale, which in the eighteenth century included corvée labour (*kvöð/kvaðir*) for many tenants. In the southern and western parts of the country, where fishing was of greater economic importance, a common type of *kvöð* was to make tenants row their landowners' boats for a certain number of days each season.[30] It has been estimated that at the turn of the nineteenth century, around 9,000 workers were needed to man all of the rowing boats in Iceland, the majority of which were located in the fishing districts in the south-west and west.[31] This massive requirement of temporary labour power could not be met by the local population alone – in part due to the unsustainable demographics of fishing communities such as the parish of Hvalsnes, where mortality generally outpaced births in the period from 1750 to 1850, but also due to the prohibitive labour and settlement legislation implicitly aimed at hindering the growth of non-farming communities and securing labour power for the farming economy.[32] Instead, mobile workers – mostly tenant farmers and their servants – journeyed from northern and southern farming regions to the Reykjanes and Snæfellsnes peninsulas in mid-winter when there was less work on the farms, leaving the women and children in charge of the everyday tasks of maintaining the household. When travelling for this work, the farmers and servants were known as *vermenn* ('fishing-station men') after their destinations for the winter. In the fishing districts, they joined the crews of boats that were sometimes owned by the peasants themselves but more often by wealthy estate owners, merchants, or church and royal estates. When the fishing went well, this could be a very profitable endeavour. For servants, however, their catch

28 Loftur Guttormsson, *Childhood, Youth and Upbringing in the Age of Absolutism: An Exercise in Socio-Demographic Analysis* (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2017), 235–250; Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 111, 117–121, 126, 130, 157.

29 Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*.

30 Óskar Guðlaugsson, "Í kvaðar nafni" (MA thesis, University of Iceland, 2017), 17–56. This system entered decline before the turn of the nineteenth century and began to disappear from there on out.

31 Jón Þ. Þór, *Ránargull: Yfirlit yfir sögu fiskveiða á Íslandi frá landnámsöld til skuttogaraaldar* (Reykjavík: Skerpla, 1997),72–73.

32 Loftur Guttormsson, "Population, Households and Fisheries in the Parish of Hvalsnes, Southwestern Iceland, 1750–1850," *Acta Borealia* 28, no. 2 (2011): 142–166.

remained the property of their masters unless they had previously negotiated otherwise, as was sometimes the case.[33]

Cottars, seaside farmers, and their servants in turn travelled from the south-western fishing districts to the farming regions in the north and south to work for remuneration – often paid in products such as butter – during an eight-week period at the peak of the labour-intensive hay harvest season in July and August. This was called *kaupavinna*, which directly translates to 'wage-work', and can be traced to the sixteenth century at least, although it increased substantially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[34] Concerned with the high pay this work provided as a result of the heightened demand for extra labour during the harvest, local authorities frequently tried to impose a maximum wage.[35] Often returning to unemployment in autumn, some of the landless among these migrants turned to vagrancy and begging for a short period before heading to their homes in the fishing stations of the south-west.[36]

While this circular flow of labour was shaped by the needs of the dual economy of fishing and farming and the dominant labour regime of compulsory service, the high degree of mobility and disruption of the disciplinary regime of rural households it entailed was also a constant cause of concern for local authorities, who feared the subversive influence of the combination of uncontrolled mobility, wage labour, and the undisciplined nature of masterlessness. Some landless workers were indeed tempted to evade service altogether and join the fishing season in winter and *kaupavinna* in the summer, working illegally on their own as masterless day labourers, while making a living for the rest of the year working various casual jobs, begging, or travelling around selling tobacco or other luxury products. This invited further worries regarding the vice and immorality of uncontrolled labour mobility as well as regular complaints about shortages of servant labour.[37] The revision of the labour laws in the 1780s was in part intended to rectify this problem. It turned out to be more difficult to implement than the authorities imagined, however, as the next two sections will illustrate.

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33 Lúðvík Kristjánsson, *íslenzkir sjávarhættir* II (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1982), 365–443.

34 Gunnlaugsson, "Kaupavinna," 9–10; Skúli Magnússon, *Beskrivelse af Gullbringu og Kjósar sýslur (1785)*, ed. Jón Helgason (København: Munksgaard, 1944), 77.

35 Gunnlaugsson, "Kaupavinna," 58–59.

36 Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, *Lýsing Íslands* IV (Kaupmannahöfn: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1922), 335.

37 Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 165–254; Guðný Hallgrímsdóttir, *A Tale of a Fool? A Microhistory of an 18th-Century Peasant Woman* (London: Routledge, 2019), 58–59.

Passports and im/mobility

This section examines the implementation and use of passports in the years following the relevant decree passed in 1781, as well as several debates that shed light on how contemporaries interpreted and understood the new regulations. In doing so, particular focus will be placed on the reactions of the groups most affected by these passports – that is, the seasonal labourers and tenant farmers employing them in the fishing districts of the county of Gullbringusýsla.

The roots of the late eighteenth–century passport system can be found in two different earlier types of identity documents in use in Iceland. Dating to the sixteenth century, the first of these was a written attestation,[38] a passport of sorts given to the 'deserving poor' – meaning persons who were unemployable but allowed to move around and sometimes beg.[39] This was later extended to include servants when they left service in one household for another.[40] Another document type pertained to peoples' sacraments. Taking the sacrament was a ritual normally undertaken twice a year by all individuals in the early modern Icelandic church. The prerequisite for taking the sacrament was basic knowledge of Lutheran theology and of obedience to church law. Failure to comply could result in being banned from communion.[41] From at least the seventeenth century onward, a written attestation from a parish priest concerning an individual's sacrament was required by law when moving to another parish, which meant that priests had an active role in policing movement.[42] The passport law of 1781 broadened the scope of these requirements to apply to nearly all movement between counties regardless of social status or the purpose of the journey. It also further regulated passport control, detailing both the process of acquiring a passport and of reporting newcomers to the authorities. All passports now had to be issued by the county magistrate rather than by the local police constable (*hreppstjóri*), and they also required an attestation from a priest. Peasants were to report all newcomers to their parish priest, who would review their passports and report any misgivings to the county magistrate. Peasants sheltering travellers without passports risked financial punishment or worse, and the same applied to priests who issued

38 This would be a handwritten note containing relevant information about its bearer and his or her status as being unable to work, as well as the priest's signature and/or signet.

39 *Alþingisbækur Íslands* II: *1582–1594* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1915–1916), 223.

40 Stephensen and Sigurðsson, eds., *Lovsamling for Island* I, 433; II, 615–616.

41 Einar Arnórsson, *íslenzkur kirkjuréttur* (Reykjavík, 1912), 128–132.

42 Már Jónsson, ed., *Guðs dýrð og sálnanna velferð: Prestastefnudómar Brynjólfs biskups Sveinssonar 1639–1674* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2005), 70.

attestations without the former approval of county magistrates.[43] This time-consuming and burdensome process may be part of the reason why the system remained difficult to enforce and was either ignored or interpreted in contrasting ways, as the following paragraphs will detail.

In 1786, Markús Magnússon, dean of Kjalarnesþing and priest of the Garðar parish in Álftanes in Gullbringusýsla, a district encompassing some of the most important fishing stations in the country, wrote to the newly appointed governor Hans von Levetzow concerning passport use (respectively the lack thereof), informing him that the passport decree of 11 April 1781 was to all intents and purposes not in effect. He claimed that people from the "uplands" (inland farming regions in other counties) were streaming to the seaside and complained that the authorities were blind to what kind of people they were. Even in the few instances where people had acquired passports, their documents did not attest their status and whether they were farmers, servants, casual workers, or vagabonds, thus seriously curtailing their usefulness as tools for managing labour mobility by rendering their bearers more legible.[44] As Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup has argued, the sedentary life of farming was considered the cornerstone of moral living and the foundation of social order in early modern Iceland. Unrestrained mobility exercised by masterless workers and vagabonds was thus perceived as a major source of immorality and disorder and deemed intolerable in a society built on the hierarchy of the Lutheran household and the moral duties of obedience and industriousness.[45]

The dean was very concerned with morals in his community and viewed seasonal fishermen as the prime source of disturbance.[46] In his letter, he also stated that passports were necessary for individuals to legally take the sacrament – itself another source of moral regulation and social control – since many workers stayed in the fishing stations for large parts of the year. He offered the suggestion that fishermen should be required to hand over their passports to the respective parish priest upon arrival, effectively preventing them from moving to other parishes without the approval of the local ecclesiastic authorities.[47] Regardless of the region's economic need for labour during the fishing season, mobility was thus

43 Stephensen and Sigurðsson, eds., *Lovsamling for Island* IV, 580–582.

44 National Archives of Iceland (NAI). Governor of Iceland. III-143. Letters from Kjalarnesþing to the governor (1786), Markús Magnússon to Levetzow, 10 January 1786.

45 Hastrup, *Nature and Policy*, 113; Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 82–90.

46 NAI. Dean of Kjalarnesprófastdæmi. BC/1. Correspondence book (1784–1796) see letters between 1784 and 1788.

47 NAI. Governor of Iceland. III-143. Letters from Kjalarnesþing to the governor (1786), Markús Magnússon to Levetzow, 10 January 1786.

apparently viewed as highly suspect by local authority figures, with passports explicitly cited as a tool for maintaining moral order and an ideal way of controlling the flow of movement between different sites of labour extraction such as inland farms and seaside fishing stations.

Later the same year, the governor of Iceland issued a directive ordering every person travelling between regions to abide by the passport laws of 1781, which prompted letters of protest from seasonal as well as local fishermen. These letters shed light on the contrasting understandings of the passport laws, showing that notions of what constituted illegal movement were both diverse and complicated. For example, some *vermenn* wrote that the county magistrate in their home district had simply dismissed their requests for passports, as they were not moving permanently but instead travelling temporarily and would thus return home at the end of the season. Others stated that they had understood the laws to apply only to vagrants, adding that the effort of acquiring a passport, which was costly and required a lot of additional travel, was a significant burden for impoverished workers. Some locals in the fishing districts were concerned that imposing passport use on all travellers would inhibit necessary seasonal labour power from undertaking the journey and thus cause a labour shortage, which would be damaging for the boat owners.[48] These protests illustrate how many people – labourers as well as employers – initially considered the revised legislation to not be relevant for the average farmer or servant, and how the line of demarcation between accepted and forbidden mobility was contested by those who were subject to the requirements of the law.

The coercive nature of the internal passport regime as well as the limitations of its reach become more evident when looking at its actual implementation. During the first six decades of the nineteenth century, passport control became firmly administered in the fishing districts of south-western Iceland. This development was no doubt connected to a renewed crackdown on vagrancy and masterless labour after 1809 and the increasing administrative power of state organisations in this area as Reykjavík grew to become the administrative and economic centre of the country.[49] A considerable number of passports (around 5,000 trips) from this

48 NAI. Governor of Iceland. III-143. Letters from Kjalarnesþing to the governor (1786), Jón Arngrímsson, Guðmundur Jónsson, and Jón Jónsson to Levetzow, 21 March 1786, Jón Ingimundarson and Jón Jónsson to Levetzow, 22 March 1786, Einar Þorkelsson to Levetzow, 24 March 1786, Jón Jónsson, Oddur Sigvaldsson, Sveinn Jónsson, and Björn Þorgeirsson to Levetzow, 27 March 1786, Árni Jónsson, Jón Erlendsson, Þórður Sighvatsson, and Snorri Jónsson to Levetzow, 11 April 1786, and Jón Erlendsson to Levetzow, 12 April 1786; III-173. Letters from Dalasýsla to the governor (1786–1803), Complaints about the passport directive for those who leave the county to fish, 17 July 1786.

49 Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 177; Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, 201–205, 213–216. Differences in the intensity of state surveillance existed between peripheral areas and the centres of administration

period have survived in the archives of the county of Gullbringusýsla and the town of Reykjavík itself, where passport surveillance was most intense. These documents show how the system functioned as a class-based mobility regime whose primary purpose was to manage and control labour. For example, there is a noticeable absence of certain social groups: farmers are extremely few, and priests and state officials are non-existent in these archival remnants. Cottars, day labourers, and servants, on the other hand, are well represented and make up the vast majority of people found in the passport archives. Around one third of these mobile workers were women in the early 1800s, but their proportion diminished to around 12% by mid-century, indicating an increasingly gendered division of labour as modernisation gradually pervaded Icelandic society.[50]

Looking at the implementation of passport laws also illustrates the importance of seasonal mobility for the survival of the labouring poor in the fishing districts of the south-west. As discussed in the previous section, almost no possibilities for legal casual labour existed in Iceland at the time. The decree of 1783, which essentially banned masterless labour, did however make an exception for people dwelling "by the seaside" who made their living mainly by fishing, granted they engaged in masterless work only after obtaining a passport for the journey and only during the fishing off-season. Participating in the hay harvest in inland farming districts was considered quite lucrative, and there is some archival evidence that servants would bargain for the right to go to *kaupavinna* in the summer when negotiating the terms of their employment with their masters.[51] The high degree of labour mobility between the fishing and farming districts highlights the flexibility of these labour relations, which produced a distinct set of master-servant relations mostly specific to Gullbringusýsla and Reykjavík and characterised by the combination of service or tenancy with wage labour.[52]

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or transport links; this was the case with the 18th-century passport system in France and also seems to apply to Iceland, see Vincent Dennis, "The Control of Mobility in France, 1680–1780," 7–8.

50 Gunnlaugsson, "Kaupavinna," 37, 42, 45. Carolina Uppenberg has described similar patterns concerning changing gender divisions of labour during the second half of the 19th century, as well as how rural male servants gradually gained a higher degree of independence in their work compared to women, see Carolina Uppenberg, "I husbondens bröd och arbete. Kön, makt och kontrakt i det svenska tjänstefolkssystemet 1730–1860" (PhD thesis, Gothenburg University 2018), 273–288.

51 NAI. County magistrate in Gullbringu- and Kjósarsýsla. ED2/41. Probate records (1862–1865), folder 18.

52 Maria Ågren has argued for the importance of analysing labour practices, as they highlight notions of difference and flexibility in the social reality of working people in early modern times. See Maria Ågren, "Introduction," in *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, ed. Maria Ågren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–18.

This flow of labour and the associated specific pattern of labour relations is precisely what drew the ire of the authorities and explains why passports were a more distinct feature of life in this part of Iceland than elsewhere on the island. Impoverished seasonal workers were distrusted by the local authorities, who feared people with financial or other personal commitments might abscond. The mobility facilitated by way of passports was thus conditional, with the documents required to specify both point of origin and destination and their validity being limited to six months. Those who were granted such passports were also subject to the whims of the authorities. One example of this is a passport issued in 1814 to a poor man who was on his way to *kaupavinna*; on the document is noted the strict condition that the man was to return after the summer, and that his acquired wages would be used to feed his three children who had become paupers.[53]

Passports also functioned as tools for managing people residing by the seaside. Iceland suffered a harsh economic depression during the Napoleonic wars, and the distress severely hampered the livelihoods of non-agricultural workers in fishing areas in particular. Many people were subsequently displaced by local authorities under the pretext of the poor law legislation stipulating that permanent settlement for five years was a prerequisite for poor relief entitlement, as a result of which many people were forcibly returned to their birthplace for support. In 1807, placards were set up in Reykjavík instructing people to leave for their place of birth if they could not sustain themselves or were in the city without passports.[54] To facilitate this expulsion of landless workers and paupers from the county of Gullbringusýsla to their places of origin all over the country, the authorities issued passports serving as official documentation so they would not be turned away upon arrival. As many as 30 people were sent away with passports in one single day in 1807, most of them from the same parish.[55] Passports therefore also functioned as an extension of the poor laws, facilitating the forced removal of labourers who had lost their livelihoods. During the same period, passport control of incoming persons became more systematic in Reykjavík and the surrounding county of Gullbringusýsla, as previously mentioned.

The implementation of passport legislation outside of the main fishing counties in the south-west seems to have been laxer and more haphazard. Let us look at a few examples from the period between 1809 and the 1830s. While sentencing

53 NAI. County magistrate in Gullbringu- and Kjósarsýsla. C/3. Correspondence (1814–1815), no. 168.

54 Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson, *Ómagar og utangarðsfólk: Fátækramál Reykjavíkur 1786–1907* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1982), 14–23, 34–36.

55 NAI. County magistrate in Gullbringu- and Kjósarsýsla C/3. Correspondence (1806–1810), see all passports from 25 June 1807.

a person for vagrancy in 1810, the county magistrate of the northern county of Skagafjarðarsýsla stated that people had never had to fear the passport laws until then, as they had not been implemented in the region.[56] The same magistrate had replied with laughter when approached by a man asking for a passport on his way south to the fishing stations in 1808, stating that it was not necessary and a waste of time. As the *vermaður* wrote in his autobiography, however, the passport laws had become more strictly enforced by 1813.[57] In 1839, the county magistrate of Húnavatnssýsla commented on the fact that none of the men travelling south to the fishing stations from the county applied for passports anymore. 155 of them had obtained papers in 1821 when he had just taken office, but they stopped doing so shortly thereafter, apparently without any repercussions.[58] In the year 1822, the magistrate of Rangárvallasýsla had to send passports by mail after *vermenn* from his county arrived at the fishing stations in Árnessýsla, where the issue of their lack of papers was raised. None of them had thought it necessary to obtain travel documents.[59]

The passport laws of 1781 were thus enforced rather erratically in the decades after their inception, with considerable differences between years, officials, and regions. In the fishing districts in the south-western part of the country where they were primarily put to use, the passports served as much to govern the lives and restrict the mobility of the local labouring poor as they did to facilitate the seasonal movement of *vermenn* to the fishing stations in order to better manage the use of their labour power. They therefore supported an increased governance of coerced labour by making workers' mobility more legible. The implementation of the laws was severely limited in many parts of the country, however – due in part to the rural nature of the society and its lack of infrastructure, which made acquiring a passport time-consuming and difficult, and in part to the minimal presence of professional government bureaucracy to implement the requirements of the legislation. Evasive tactics employed by persons subject to the law also played an important role, as will be discussed the following section.

56 Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 176.

57 Gísli Konráðsson, *Ævisaga Gísla Konráðssonar ens fróða, skrásett af honum sjálfum* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1911–1914), 72–73, 94.

58 Jón Eyþórsson, ed., *Sýslu- og sóknalýsingar Hins íslenzka bókmenntafélags 1839–1873* I: *Húnavatnssýsla* (Akureyri: Norðri, 1950), 6; Bjarni Guðmarsson, "Fáein orð um verferðir Húnvetninga á fyrri tíð," *Húnavaka* 30 (1990): 163–175.

59 NAI. County magistrate in Árnessýsla. A/1. Correspondence book (1822–1828), 22 January 1822.

Subversive mobility and other tactics of evasion

In January 1786, the police constables in the district of Álftanes in Gullbringusýsla compiled a list of the names of 26 masterless labourers (*lausamenn*) residing in the area at the request of the new governor of Iceland, Levetzow, whose residence was located nearby. While a few of the recorded individuals were invalids, most were men in good standing who had never been "a burden for the community" or engaged in peddling, begging, or similar social offences. Indeed, many had conscientiously paid the required tax on masterless labour and all their other duties to the church and the local poor relief fund as stipulated in the pre-1783 regulations. They had primarily worked in "the fisheries or other lawful employment", as the document stated, with some even operating their own boats and thus being employers as well as workers. One week later, two separate documents declared that these men had now become servants, listing the names of their masters and the farms on which they resided.[60] This procedure was in accordance with the revised law on masterless labour introduced in 1783 and discussed at the beginning of this chapter.[61]

A royal proclamation issued several weeks thereafter, following an enquiry by a local fisherman who was in need of workers, shows how this reconfiguration of the legal and social status of workers entailed an increased level of coercion and dispossession for the labouring poor. It stated that all fishermen who had previously worked on boats owned by *lausamenn* were required to become servants, and that their new masters would henceforth decide on whose boats they would serve and who would lay claim to their wages. The only exceptions were cottars or "other free folk" who continued to be permitted to hire themselves out to whatever boats they pleased.[62] Becoming a cottar, however, required not only a permit from local authorities – who were generally reluctant to provide them, as the perceived unreliability of fishing as a livelihood meant cottars were commonly seen as a potential burden on poor relief funds – but also the goodwill of landowners willing to allow cottages on their property.[63] Cottars were therefore not always as free to dispose of their labour as the proclamation implied, since their landlords often imposed such a heavy burden of corvée (mostly in terms of

60 NAI. Governor of Iceland. III-143. Letters from Kjalarnesþing to the governor (1786), Eyvindur Jónsson, Auðunn Bjarnason, Eyjólfur Jónsson, Einar Bjarnason, and Hans Ormson to Levetzow, 6 January 1786 and 14 January 1786.

61 Stephensen and Sigurðsson, eds., *Lovsamling for Island* IV, 683–686.

62 NAI. Governor of Iceland. I-21. Correspondence book (1786), resolution dated 2 March 1786. It remains unclear what other "free folk" he was referring to.

63 Gunnlaugsson, *Family and Household*, 96.

rowing on the landlord's boats) that the cottars were effectively bound to them and their labour needs to an extent similar to servants. This fact was well known to the governor issuing the proclamation, as he was embroiled in a heated debate with Ólafur Stephensen, one of the most powerful landowners in the country, over the latter's extensive use of corvée labour for his fishing fleet at the time.[64]

The affair in Álftanes illustrates how the revised legislation affected the organisation of labour when it was enforced: Almost without exception, the 26 fishermen were forced by threat of imprisonment to give up living and working independently and take up positions as servants to others, whereby they became embedded (at least in theory) in the culture of household discipline and hierarchy and were subject to the labour needs of their masters. As noted by physician and naturalist Sveinn Pálsson in his report on the county of Gullbringusýsla written in 1792, however, while masterless labourers were "no longer tolerated" and should be either imprisoned or forced into service, "they nonetheless still exist but hide from the authorities" by enlisting as servants under false pretences with the assistance of complicit local tenant farmers.[65] This was nothing new, of course: The practice of 'fake' service by individuals who did not fulfil the steep property requirements to be legally masterless was a common matter of complaint in the decades prior to the law reforms of the 1780s as well.[66] Indeed, one of the primary aims of the revised labour laws was to curtail such evasion. Yet while the reformed legislation made such tactics both more difficult and the punishment more severe, the practice continued and remained a common issue in the nineteenth century, as Vilhelm Vilhelmsson has discussed extensively elsewhere.[67] The same seems to have applied to often illegal cottar settlements, which flourished during certain periods and became the basis for the development of towns and villages around the turn of the twentieth century.[68] The remainder of this chapter will focus on the limitations of the labour law reforms, and the directives on passports in particular, in the management of coerced labour by analysing some of the tactics employed by the

64 Gunnlaugur Haraldsson, *Saga Akraness* II: *Átjánda öldin* (Reykjavík: Uppheimar, 2011), 181–201; Einar Hreinsson, *Nätverk och nepotism: Den regionala förvaltningen på Island 1770–1870* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet, 2003), 158–178.

65 Sveinn Pálsson, *Ferðabœkur Sveins Pálssonar. Dagbœkur og ritgerðir 1791–1797* (Reykjavík: Snælandsútgáfan, 1945), 610.

66 See for example Hrefna Róbertsdóttir and Jóhanna Þ. Guðmundsdóttir, eds., *Landsnefndin fyrri 1770–1771* I: *Bréf frá almenningi* (Reykjavík: Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands, 2016), 365; Hrefna Róbertsdóttir and Jóhanna Þ. Guðmundsdóttir, eds., *Landsnefndin fyrri 1770–1771* II: *Bréf frá prestum* (Reykjavík: Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands, 2016), 184.

67 Vilhelmsson, "Tactics of Evasion"; Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, "Ett normalt undantag? Tilfälligt arbete i lag och praktik i 1800-talets Island," *Arbetarhistoria* 41, no. 3–4 (2017): 32–40.

68 Gunnlaugsson, *Family and Household*, 32–40.

labouring poor in attempts to manoeuvre within and around the coercion and surveillance stipulated by the legislation.[69]

Árni Sveinsson (1771–1839) was an impoverished fisherman who lived in a cottage in Gullbringusýsla for some time around the turn of the nineteenth century, but later travelled regularly between fishing districts with his second wife and their young children until local authorities separated the family in 1815 or 1816 due to Árni's apparent inability to provide for them – a procedure common in Iceland when families became homeless and/or dependent upon poor relief.[70] He subsequently became a vagrant, roving around the western and northern parts of the country and rarely staying in one place for long. As a youth he had learned about natural medicine; this allowed him to exchange healing practices for food and shelter on his journeys, earning him the nickname Doctor Árni and the general goodwill of local communities. In between bouts of vagrancy, he would join shark fishing vessels for the winter season in northern Iceland and spend long periods collecting herbs for making medicine. When Árni was arrested and tried for vagrancy in 1821, the subsequent trial revealed the various ways in which he had evaded apprehension and forced placement in service during the preceding six years.[71] For instance, he had acquired a passport from the county magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla in northern Iceland in 1818 by producing a letter from a local farmer confirming that he was his servant. The letter turned out to be a forgery written by Árni himself.

Outright forgery of passports was probably infrequent, as it required some skill in reproducing official documents. The acquisition of passports through fraudulent means as in the case of Árni Sveinsson as well as other unlawful uses of travel documents were probably more common. While documentary evidence is limited, such practices are implied in various declarations and resolutions penned by the authorities. An amendment to the passport laws in 1808, for example, stated that all passports had to include physical descriptions of their bearers and their own signature written in the presence of the relevant authorities, indicating that people may have

69 The concept of "tactics" is borrowed from Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). For further elaboration on its application to studying labour and coercion, see Vilhelmsson, "Tactics of Evasion."

70 Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson, "Fattigvården på Island under 1700-talet," in *Oppdaginga av fattigdomen: Sosial lovgivning i Norden på 1700-talet* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), 187–215; Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson "The Poor Laws and the Family in 19th Century Iceland," in *The Nordic Family: Perspectives on Family Research*, ed. John Rogers and Hans Norman (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1985), 16–42. The text follows the Icelandic tradition of referring to people by their given name (first name) and not their patronym, as family surnames were (and are) not commonly in use in Iceland.

71 The case of Árni Sveinsson is discussed in detail in Vilhelmsson, "Tactics of Evasion," 47–55.

been sharing passports or acquiring them under fake names or false pretences. Subversive practices of this sort are well known in the historiography of passports throughout early modern Europe.[72] A declaration issued by the chief of police in Reykjavík in 1804 that reminded residents of their responsibility to uphold the passport laws underscores this. The text stated that it was common for outsiders to come to Reykjavík "without a pass, or with an illegal pass" and take up residence with locals, emphasising that passports should only be accepted once they had been validated by the police chief's office and thus implying an effort to rein in misconduct of this type.[73] Guidelines sent by the district governor for northern and eastern Iceland in 1810 strictly demanded that county magistrates providing passports to servants seeking a change of residence were to request some form of guarantee that this was truly the case, indicating that false testimonies on the matter were a known problem.[74]

There are some documented cases of individuals acquiring passports by way of falsehoods or fraud, including convincing county magistrates to issue passports for them by lying about service contracts with peasants in distant counties.[75] The case of Eiríkur Eiríksson is telling in this regard. Eiríkur was interrogated in the county of Húnavatnssýsla in northern Iceland in 1837 on suspicion of being a vagrant and masterless. He had been in the county for a few years, apparently as a servant (although this remained dubious), before heading south to Gullbringusýsla for the fishing season. Upon returning, he claimed that he could not secure a servant position, leading him to roam around the district doing casual work wherever he could find any. Upon being apprehended, he insisted he was a servant on the Straumur farm in Gullbringusýsla and only needed a valid passport to be able to return there. There is no indication that Eiríkur was ever a resident in Straumur,[76]

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72 Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 190–221; Alison K. Smith, "False Passports, Undocumented Workers, and Public (Dis)Order in Late-Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 3 (2020): 742–762; Andreas Fahrmeir, "Governments and Forgers: Passports in Nineteenth-Century Europe," in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 218–234.

73 NAI. Police chief of Reykjavík. C/1. Correspondence (1803–1806). Resolution no. 292, 23 July 1804.

74 NAI. County magistrate of Skagafjarðarsýsla. B/136. Amtsbréf um vegabréfslausa menn 1786–1825. Circular, 10 March 1810.

75 NAI. County magistrate of Gullbringusýsla. C/5. Correspondence (1824–1826). No. 621. 6 November 1825. For other examples, see Leifsson, "Flökkufólk," 30–31, 92–93.

76 He is not to be found in parish registries of the Garðar parish, to which Straumur belonged, for the years 1835–1838, nor in the ministerial books in which parish priests registered people arriving in or leaving their parishes based on submitted passports.

however, and his recorded testimony before the court is rife with contradictory claims regarding his social status and spatial movements. He nevertheless appears to have received a passport, and the case was resolved amicably.[77]

The cases of Árni Sveinsson and Eiríkur Eiríksson also reveal that peasants did not always ask people arriving on their doorstep for passports as they were required to by law, even when taking them in for longer periods and employing them. Indeed, none of the 38 peasants interviewed in the case of Árni Sveinsson had asked him to present any documents. Other research indicates that this obligation was only occasionally fulfilled by peasants, mostly when they were already suspicious of the person in question or had clashed with them in a different matter.[78] This, too, was a matter of complaint by state officials, who regularly found reason to emphasise and reiterate the duty of household heads to inspect the documentation carried by visitors.[79] The apparent apathy towards passport control is captured comically in a play from 1796 by Sigurður Pétursson (1759–1827), who later became a magistrate in Reykjavík. In the play, a farmer in a fishing county asks a faraway traveller and obvious vagrant who has come to his home to show his passport. The vagrant simply taps his shoes and says, "These are my passports, they go all over the land and are valid all over the world." The matter is then forgotten about until the vagrant has managed to cheat the farmer out of some money.[80]

While the reluctance of the peasantry to participate in policing the mobility of the labouring poor may have been owed in part to practical reasons such as the difficulty of reporting visitors without passports to the relevant authorities, who often resided far away, and their own need for temporary workers, it also stemmed from the long-standing cultural tradition of hospitality compelling households to provide shelter and food for a limited time (generally a maximum of three days) to visitors regardless of their social standing.[81] In the harsh winter climate of a subarctic island nearly devoid of infrastructure such as bridges and roads, this could

77 The case is discussed in more detail in Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 206–208.

78 Leifsson, "Flökkufólk."

79 See for example NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/5–2. Dóma- og þingbók (1807–1812), 122; NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/5–3. Dóma- og þingbók (1819–1821), 376; NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/7–1. Dóma- og þingbók (1825–1827), 506; NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/9 1. Dóma- og þingbók (1837–1842), 278. These are only a few samples taken from a single county; there are many similar proclamations in court records from all over Iceland.

80 Lárus Sigurbjörnsson, ed., *Leikrit Sigurðar Pétursonar: Hrólfur og Narfi* (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1950), 15.

81 See Jón Jónsson, *Á mörkum mennskunnar: Viðhorf til förufólks í sögnum og samfélagi* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2018), 164–166.

be a matter of life and death. As one prominent state official put it, the peasantry viewed it as a punishable offence to deny visitors food and shelter "even if they know that it is a vagrant"; this was justified with the simple refrain that "we all deserve to live".[82] Some vagrants even specifically referred to this tradition during interrogation by declaring that they had not stayed in any one place longer "than the law allows", erroneously mistaking custom for law.[83]

This transgressive mobility was characteristic for labouring poor who remained outside the compulsory service system and thus on the margins of the law for one reason or another. Árni Sveinsson rarely spent more than a week or two in the same place, and the transitory life of Eiríkur Eiríksson is described similarly in court records. While some itinerant labourers and vagrants sought to obtain passports to facilitate their movement, others simply ignored the law, relying instead on the goodwill and complicity of peasants and employers. One county magistrate wrote in exasperation in 1781 that it was "impossible" for the authorities to apprehend these noncompliant labourers as they remained mobile "like a band of outlaws", immediately moving to another district once they became aware of the authorities looking for them – more often than not with the help of local peasants who covered for them.[84] It was this uncontrolled mobility of the labouring poor that the revised passport legislation was intended to prevent and uproot, but its success was obviously limited. When perusing the vast and diverse archives of state officials, one regularly encounters casual references to people moving into or out of districts without the required documentation.[85] This constant movement can be considered a tactic in many instances – a subversive mobility with the aim of evading the authorities in order to make a living outside the confines of the compulsory service system.[86] At the same time, it is also an example of what theorist Rob Nixon has called "slow violence": an implicit undercurrent of coercion and violence inherent in the labour laws that forced those among the labouring poor who were unable (or unwilling) to establish their own households or become servants to be constantly on the move and on the lookout for authority figures,

82 Magnússon, *Beskrivelse*, 21.

83 NAI. County magistrate in Eyjafjarðarsýsla. GA/4–1. Dóma- og þingbók (1813–1819), 2r.

84 NAI. Hið danska kansellí. KA/29–41. Correspondence (1781–1781). Litt. B. Copie extract af nogle af de verdslige betienende i Island forslage angaaende lösemændene.

85 See for example NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/5–3. Dóma- og þingbók (1819–1821), 346; NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/7–2. Dóma- og þingbók (1827–1830), 32–35; NAI. County magistrate in Gullbringu- and Kjósarsýsla. C/2–1. Correspondence (1795–1803), 21–22, 93, 112, 113–114.

86 For further elaboration on this argument, see Vilhelmsson, "Tactics of Evasion."

rarely finding the chance to establish any significant social and emotional connections in stable communities.[87]

The immobilising aspect of the passport laws naturally also applied to the sedentary population of peasants and servants, who were as prone to violating them as were the itinerant labouring poor – though in many cases without any repercussions, since their social position rendered them more legible to the authorities and thus less of a problem. Many *vermenn* travelled for the fishing season without ever acquiring passports – and mostly without any trouble, as we saw in the previous section. The vast archives of county magistrates contain frequent references to people travelling to distant regions without passports, with no mention of them being made to pay the fines dictated by law.[88] Ívar Jónsson from Skagafjarðarsýsla, for example, journeyed south to Gullbringusýsla in 1825 without a passport. When the magistrate inquired with the district governor whether he should bring charges against Ívar, the reply stated that since his trip had been short and he had already returned home, any charges against him should be dropped.[89]

Lack of a passport initially did not cause any problems for carpenter Páll Sigurðsson either when he arrived along with his girlfriend – both eloping from previous marriages – in Álftanes in Gullbringusýsla in 1817 to work for the local parish priest, Markús Magnússon (who was likewise discussed in the previous section). Once Páll got his girlfriend pregnant, however, their presence in the community raised the ire of the local police constables who, fearing the additional burden on the poor relief fund, ordered them to separate, as the law forbade unwed parents to reside within the same parish. They disobeyed and stayed, subsequently having another child. After some delay, they were finally put on trial in 1819 for violating the law of 1783 prohibiting masterless labour, at which point Páll's missing passport became a matter of some concern. In his argumentation during sentencing, the county magistrate stated – presumably in response to Páll's own testimony, which

87 On the concept of "slow violence" and its potential application for analysing social relations in historical context, see Geoff Ward, "The Slow Violence of State Organized Race Crime," *Theoretical Criminology* 19, no. 3 (2015): 299–314. The concept originates in environmental humanities, with its principal proponent Rob Nixon defining it as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight . . . that is dispersed across space and time . . . neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales." Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

88 See for example NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/6–3. Dóma- og þingbók (1820–1823), 30.

89 NAI. County magistrate in Skagafjarðarsýsla. B/136. Amtsbréf um vegabréfslausa menn 1786–1825. Pro memoria signed by district governor G. Jónsson, 19 October 1825.

is unfortunately not included in the record – that it was "no excuse that he is a craftsman". While exempting craftsmen from the regulations on compulsory service, he argued, the decree forbidding masterless labour asserted that they were nonetheless required to obtain "a pass" from their local magistrate when moving to other counties for work, which Páll had failed to do.[90] This interpretation was upheld by the higher courts,[91] indicating that state officials may generally have understood the clause in the decree stating that craftsmen in the countryside were allowed to work "for the peasantry" for daily or weekly wages only if "they have been provided with a magistrate's attestation" as referring to a passport of sorts.[92]

This may explain why – despite intensive searches in various archives – we have been unable to find any indication that specific permits were issued during this period that allowed individuals to work as craftsmen, such as the permit letters (*lausamennskubréf*) issued after the revised legislation of 1863 allowed workers above a certain age to purchase them for a significant fee.[93] Instead, this may have been an arbitrary decision made by officials when issuing passports or in response to individual circumstances. In fact, the argumentation by the upper courts in Páll's case went even further by stating that Páll should be considered exempt from compulsory service since he was well known for his skills in carpentry, as the law stipulated that this applied to all persons "whose main occupation" was craftsmanship, regardless of whether they had a journeyman's certificate or not.[94] Other cases show that the economic value of individual craftsmen to local communities was deemed an essential precondition for obtaining a permit to work outside the compulsory service system – but also that it depended entirely on the discretion of the respective magistrate and the position of the worker in question within the local community.[95] Persons viewed as morally or socially

90 NAI. County magistrate in Gullbringu- and Kjósarsýsla. GA/4–2. Dómabók (1819–1832), 7–13.

91 *Landsyfirrjettardómar og hæstarjettardómar í íslenzkum málum 1802–1873* II: *1815–1824* (Reykjavík: Sögufjelag, 1919–1924), 175.

92 Stephensen and Sigurðsson, eds., *Lovsamling for Island* IV, 685.

93 For this article, we searched the correspondence books of the county magistrate of *Gullbringusýsla* for the periods 1791–1803 and 1824–1826 as well as the correspondence books of the chief of police in *Reykjavík* from 1803 to 1806. We have encountered no such documents in our years of archival research, although we have found various instances where magistrates temporarily resolved to allow a particular person to remain masterless until the next turnover period. Other scholars have likewise searched for permits issued to craftsmen after the introduction of the decree of 1783, with little success. See Hrefna Róbertsdóttir, "Samfélag átjándu aldar: Hugarfar, handverk og arfur fyrri alda," *Saga* 49, no. 1 (2011): 53–103, here 77–79. For further discussion of the changes to labour legislation in Iceland in the 1860s, see Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 178–179.

94 *Landsyfirrjettardómar* II, 175.

95 Vilhelmsson, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, 186–187.

questionable for whatever reason – like the itinerant worker Eiríkur Jónsson, "who calls himself a blacksmith"[96] – could not count on receiving such a permit regardless of their level of expertise.

Conclusion

Passports have a dual nature. They offer freedom of movement to those who possess them and thus facilitate mobility, and they simultaneously restrict movement by limiting the right to move to those who are able to lawfully acquire a passport from the relevant authorities, thereby rendering immobile those who are not. They also double as identification documents, making their bearers 'legible' to the authorities and thus traceable, accounted for, and ultimately governed. The same logic applies to the internal passports issued in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iceland. As discussed in this chapter, they facilitated the organisation of seasonal labour mobility as well as functioning as an essential tool for a "mobility regime" that regulated not only who *could* move about in the country, and for what purposes, but also who was *forced* to move, since they served as a mechanism for removing undesirable people. The seemingly common disregard of these passport regulations by workers, employers, and even state officials, illustrates their limits as tools for labour coercion, however. Their implementation in Icelandic society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century clashed not only with long-standing cultural traditions of unhindered seasonal mobility and notions of hospitality, but also with the need for flexibility within an economy based so fundamentally on a mobile labour force and the fact that the country lacked the administrative infrastructure necessary to maintain such a coercive mode of surveillance and control. The use of passports was also appropriated for their own ends in some instances by the labouring poor, who – by procuring documentation through fraudulent means or making other illicit use of otherwise legal documents – turned this inherently invasive and coercive form of surveillance into a mechanism for subverting the mobility regime and evading or outright resisting the coercive labour legislation and its basic component of compulsory service for the labouring poor.

96 NAI. County magistrate in Húnavatnssýsla. GA/8–3. Dóma- og þingbók (1855–1860), 113.

Müge Özbek

Chapter 5
Keeping Domestic Workers Dependent in Early Twentieth-Century Istanbul

In May 1911, the father of seventeen-year-old live-in domestic worker Azime arrived at Heybeliada, an island in the vicinity of Istanbul, to pay a visit to his daughter. Azime was employed in the home of island resident Hakkı Bey. To his disappointment, however, Azime's father was not granted entrance to Hakkı Bey's house in which his daughter lived and worked, and he could thus not see her. Soon thereafter, he resentfully went to the local police station and returned to the door of Hakkı Bey's house accompanied by a policeman for a second attempt – but to no avail. Father and officer were told that Azime was not at home, despite the father's insistence that he had already seen his daughter crying through one of the windows.[1]

The next day, Azime's father submitted a petition to the police requesting that his daughter be allowed to return to him. In the document, he stated that he had hired Azime out to Hakkı Bey as a live-in domestic worker six years earlier when she was eleven years old. During the period of his daughter's employment in Hakkı Bey's household, he had visited her on occasion, and upon each of his visits, Hakkı Bey had given him some money that had been sufficient to cover his travel expenses. He highlighted that the only motivation for his visits was parental love and affection, and added that the amount of money Hakkı Bey had provided during his last visit had been so tiny that it had not even sufficed to cover his travel costs. On the occasion of his current visit, he had then been forbidden to see his child. The petition went on to state that Azime was now seventeen years old, and that it was no longer suitable for a girl her age to work as a servant. The father thus requested that his daughter be returned and her salary paid to him. In response, Hakkı Bey claimed that Azime had been living and working at his house happily for six years and was not willing to leave. The police ultimately left the decision to Azime, who chose to remain in Hakkı Bey's house.[2]

In addition to the curious tension between Azime's father and her employer, the described situation is a poignant vignette illustrating the broader issues and questions addressed by this article: the commodification and management of girls

1 BOA (Ottoman Archives of the President's Office), DH.EUM.VRK, 21/50, 1329.Ca.07 (6 May 1911).
2 BOA, DH.EUM.VRK, 21/50, 1329.Ca.07 (6 May 1911).

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and women like Azime, who mostly came from provincial Muslim communities in Anatolia and were placed as domestic workers in affluent Muslim households in early twentieth-century Istanbul. My contribution will explore the gendered patterns and dynamics of severe exploitation and coerced labour in live-in domestic work in a late Ottoman context. I am primarily concerned with how these patterns and dynamics were linked to controlling female domestic workers' mobility respectively immobility.

The study analyses police investigations involving experiences made by female domestic workers in Istanbul during the early twentieth century. The cases representing the article's main sources come from the late Ottoman police files located in the Ottoman Archives section of the Turkish Republic Presidential State Archives in Istanbul. Within these investigations, female domestic workers mostly appear as subjects of controversy between their employers and family members or as runaways. Correspondingly, I have organised the paper into two intertwined sections: The first focuses on the negotiations and conflicts between employers and immediate relatives regarding the lives, labour, and im/mobility of female workers. In this part, I explore the role played by immediate relatives in the process of the movement of female domestic workers from their hometowns to Istanbul, where they were employed, and examine the ways in which families remained involved in the lives of their female relatives after their recruitment. The second part focuses on the experiences of domestic workers who abandoned the households they were working in for various reasons. The main focus of this latter section is the hitherto understudied but nevertheless crucial relationship between the increasing over-policing of the urban experiences of women (particularly from the lower classes) and exploitative domestic labour practices in early twentieth-century Istanbul. These two closely related aspects highlight the intricate connections of im/mobility and labour coercion along with the proliferation of actors, institutions, and mechanisms involved in the respective processes.

Peering through the lens of im/mobility and focusing on everyday tensions and controversies, this article attempts to understand the layered power dynamics embedded in late Ottoman domestic labour. Going beyond a framework defined by the relationship between employer and domestic worker, it explores how labour exploitation manifested in the contribution of actors that are usually less visible, such as family members, as well as in mechanisms not readily interpreted as labour exploitation techniques within Ottoman studies, such as the urban policing of women.

Im/mobility as a perspective for the study of late Ottoman domestic work

Im/mobility is the aspect at the core of this analysis. I argue that the levels of exploitation and coercion in late Ottoman female domestic work can be meaningfully understood by analysing the various forms of control exercised with regard to the im/mobility of female labour. More specifically, I will explore how severely exploitative and coercive work experiences of late Ottoman female domestic workers illustrate a particular assemblage of im/mobility practices that compelled them to move from their hometowns to Istanbul while simultaneously enforcing spatial confinement or immobility within their employer's homes after their arrival. Although some research on the migratory patterns of domestic workers in late Ottoman Istanbul has been conducted in recent years, studies applying the perspective of im/mobility – which I believe represents a fruitful tool for understanding the experiences and coercion of domestic workers – are hitherto lacking.

The new mobilities paradigm offers a view to the workings of social institutions and practices through the lens of mobility.[3] Within this framework, mobility is not perceived purely as physical movement but rather as a method of investigating the social process of movement with the premise that mobility both produces and is produced by social relations. In a sense, the 'mobility turn' challenges the concept of movement as a line between two fixed points, instead pointing out the analytical prominence of spatial relations, networks, flows, and circulations of a multitude of things ranging from people to money, from goods to culture, and from information to images.[4] Notably, while the concept of the mobility turn does imply movement, flow, and circulation, it also relates to social status or "spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings" as being intertwined with mobility.[5] When referring to mobility, we are often delineating immobility – for example in the sense of "borders, airports, toll roads, hotels, motels, detention centers, refugee camps, etc.", which are "in-between and liminal places at which movement is paused, slowed or stopped," as Mimi Sheller puts it.[6] Mobility as a mode of inquiry thus offers – or demands – ways of thinking in which mobility and immobility are

3 Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38 (2006): 207–226.

4 Tim Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28,1 (2010): 17–31. Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm," Applied Mobilities 1,1 (2016): 10–25.

5 Sheller and Urry, "New Mobilities Paradigm."

6 Mimi Sheller, "Sociology after the Mobilities Turn," in *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*, ed. Peter Adey et al., (London: Routledge, 2013), 45–54.

interwoven or overlapping. In other words, it calls for renewed critical attention to how mobility and immobility are tied together, as well as to the new configurations of their enmeshment.

Inspired by these arguments, this paper sets out to investigate how the mobility of girls and young women from lower-class provincial Ottoman families was channelled, tracked, controlled, governed, or blocked, and how this regulation of lower-class female im/mobilities was linked to the production of readily exploitable, cheap (or often unpaid), and compliant domestic labour. I argue that the coerced or manipulated nature of the movements of these young women, combined with their subsequent immobility within the walls of affluent Istanbul homes, defined their experience of coercion as domestic workers.

Female domestic labour in late Ottoman Istanbul

It is difficult to estimate with any precision how many households employed female domestic workers in early twentieth-century Istanbul. According to the study of Istanbul households by Cem Behar and Alen Duben, which draws on the 1907 census, 8% of Istanbul households had at least one live-in domestic servant, with most of these persons being young women: Eighty percent of all domestic servants were female, and sixty percent were under thirty years of age.[7] There may also have been women engaged in domestic work in the households they lived in who were defined as relatives or omitted from the census records altogether. Another group of women who likely did not live in the affluent Istanbul households registered in the census provided daily services such as cleaning and laundry. Taking these undocumented positions into account, we can safely assume that somewhere between five thousand and more than ten thousand women were employed in domestic work, making them the largest group of female workers in the city.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, slavery remained a common source of domestic labour in elite households of the Ottoman Empire. The first anti-slavery efforts began with the trade ban on African slaves in 1857, which primarily disrupted the flow of enslaved Africans into the Ottoman Empire via Mediterranean routes. Since it was not a total abolishment of slavery, however, the decline of the slaving industry remained a slow and gradual process. For example, trade in Circassian slaves, who were also a major source of domestic labour, continued through subsequent decades. Until the mass migration of Circassians to Anatolia after the Crimean

7 Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility 1880–1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 77.

War of 1853 to 1856, the Ottoman government did not view domestic slave trade as an issue provided that the slaves had originally been imported from outside the empire. What ultimately prompted a major shift in Ottoman slavery policies was the reappraisal of domestic slavery after Circassian refugees began to sell their children – especially girls and young women – as domestic slaves based on the existence of a hereditary slave caste among Circassians.[8] Former Circassian landlords managed to maintain their rights as slaveholders after their migration to Anatolia, and selling Circassian children to elite households as slaves soon became common practice among Circassian immigrant communities. Besides the legitimacy provided by the existence of a hereditary slave caste, the poverty of immigrant families and their desire to secure better lives for their children contributed to turning large numbers of young Circassian girls into domestic slaves. However, this sudden increase in household slavery during the late nineteenth century caused alarm among reform-minded social and governmental elites. In the late 1800s, the Ottoman government therefore also began to seriously restrict the Circassian slave trade. With its ultimate prohibition shortly before the turn of the century, domestic slavery was almost entirely eliminated by the early 1900s – that is, it was restricted to a small number of (primarily elite) households. Finally, following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, a law mandating complete abolition was issued to finally purge the Ottoman Empire of slavery.[9]

This study employs case files from the late Ottoman police archives that mostly date back to the second constitutional period after 1908, although a few of them are from earlier decades. While most of the domestic workers appearing in these documents were legally free Ottoman citizens, this did not guarantee them the status of free wage workers. Nor did the legal abolishment of slavery immediately replace slave labour with free wage labour. Ehud Toledano, for instance, contends that "the gradual, yet resistant, decline of the established practice of domestic slavery did not easily bring about wage-labour arrangements for servants, and frequently beslemes took their place."[10] Processes of domestic labour in the late Ottoman world continued to share characteristic qualities with domestic slavery. Madeline Zilfi points out that female domestic work in the Ottoman Middle East was

8 Ömer Şen, *Osmanlıda Köle Olmak* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2007), 45–47. Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise 1800–1909* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

9 Şen, *Osmanlıda Köle Olmak*, 45–47. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*.

10 Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 73.

> informed by the evaluative perceptions that were also common to other places and cultures throughout the world. The ambiguity defined between women's duties and socially recognized "work," or between female kin and female servant was definitive for female servants' situation in the households throughout the world. In addition, the persistence of slavery into the late nineteenth century as a prominent form of female domestic work had been a keynote in the definition of female domestic labor in the Ottoman context.[11]

Beslemes (feedlings) or *evlatlıks* (adoptees) were two common names used for live-in domestic servants recruited mainly from impoverished rural communities to well-to-do households – exploitative and often abusive labour arrangements in the guise of charity and benevolence. For many poor parents or relatives, giving away or hiring out the young females of the family as domestics was an acceptable practice that even became customary in some areas of Anatolia. Sending out girls to perform domestic work reduced the number of mouths to feed at home and provided some money for the subsistence of the remaining family members. In addition, domestic labour in affluent households was considered a form of training for marriage and housewifery. Orphaned children and widowed women were also commonly sent away as domestic workers to reduce the burden that relatives or other community members would have otherwise shouldered for their care.[12]

The existing literature on late Ottoman household workers mostly focuses on their subjugation and vulnerabilities, emphasising that domestic labour in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire was informed by and/or comparable to slave work in former periods. For example, Ferhunde Özbay describes how practices such as adoption that underpinned domestic slavery continued in the context of domestic work. According to Özbay, while "slavery as an institution" disappeared, slavery as a practice in domestic work did not: It was merely transformed, she argues, but the master/slave relation remained.[13] Following a similar approach in her work on the recruitment of orphaned children into domestic service, Nazan Maksudyan claims that the exploitation and abuse of children in the households they were recruited into was hidden beneath the guise of charity.[14] Madeline Zilfi points out that the continuation of domestic slavery until the turn

11 Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 82.

12 Ferhunde Özbay, "Turkish Female Child Labor in Domestic Work: Past and Present" (Istanbul: project report prepared for ILO/IPEC, 1999); Yahya Araz, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Çocuk Olmak (16. Yüzyıldan 19. Yüzyıl Başlarına)* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2013); Nazan Maksudyan, "Foster-Daughter or Servant, Charity or Abuse: Beslemes in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21,4 (2008): 488–512.

13 Özbay, "Turkish Female Child Labor."

14 Maksudyan, "Foster-Daughter or Servant."

of the twentieth century was also crucial for defining the nature of late Ottoman domestic practices. This literature essentially posits that the late Ottoman domestic labour regime was constructed and reproduced as a continuation of household slavery within employers' homes.[15]

By contrast, Yahya Araz and İrfan Kokdaş assume a different perspective by focusing on the transformation of labour relations in the domestic service market. They conclude that domestic work being "transformed into a salaried sector was accompanied by the process of recording such regulative contracts at traditional and religious sharia courts."[16] In their study, Araz and Kokdaş demonstrate that the employment of domestic workers could occur in slightly varying modalities. A common practice was for brokers to visit villages and towns and take children away with them to be placed in urban households – mainly in Istanbul. In exchange, they would pay the families of the girls a sum of money. Beginning in the 1880s as part of the increased governmental concern regarding the mobility of people in the empire, brokers were compelled to register these transactions in local courts. Alternatively, family members of the girls would take them to Istanbul themselves and place them in others' service – again via a broker they contacted within the city. The third possibility was for governmental officials dispatched to different parts of the empire to recruit girls and women in the areas where they were stationed, bringing them back to Istanbul when they returned.[17]

We may assume that most of these transactions were concluded by way of oral agreements. Written contracts kept by the shariah courts also became common especially after the 1880s, as noted by Araz and Kokdaş. In these contracts, the transaction was officially called *icâr-ı sagir/e* (hiring out of boys/girls). They defined the relationship between the two parties, which depending on the situation were usually a family member and the employer or a broker. The domestic workers themselves never signed the agreements, which contained details such as the person's age and the wages they were to receive, as well as how they would be paid.[18]

In this article, I will focus on the post-slavery contexts where domestic workers were legally free Ottoman citizens and new contractual relations were emerging, as Araz and Kokdaş point out. I will avoid simply equating late Ottoman domestic work to slavery or considering charity/benevolence and exploitative

15 Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*.

16 İrfan Kokdaş and Yahya Araz, "İstanbul'da Ev İçi Hizmetlerinde İstahdam Edilen Kuzeybatı Anadolulu Kız Çoçuklarının Göç Ağları Üzerine bir Değerlendirme," *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 33,1 (2018): 41–68, here 47.

17 Ibid., here 45–47.

18 Ibid.

labour arrangements as two mutually exclusive practices. However, I believe that acknowledging the severe exploitation and coercion occurring in the context of late Ottoman domestic work and understanding how it was arranged and applied is still an important task.

To this end, I will attempt to portray how this labour regime materialised on the ground through a reading of police files offering glimpses of the practices and contradictions that shaped the everyday experiences of domestic workers. I will pay particular attention to routine contestations between the various involved parties such as the domestic workers themselves, their family members, and their employers, as well as examining the ways in which family members and employers became complicit, as they both could co-perpetuate labour coercion within the framework of domestic work. While the emphasis of the available literature is on the exploitative and often abusive relationship between domestic workers and their employers within the confines of the employer's home, my study tries to bring several formerly unrecognised actors into focus as well – namely the family members of domestic workers and the police forces in Ottoman cities.

Gender, class, and urban policing

Istanbul experienced rapid urbanisation in the nineteenth century as Ottoman markets were integrated into global trade networks. Although the extent of its industrialisation was limited, the commercialisation of the economy under the influence of worldwide capitalist developments and a large population movement toward Istanbul brought about immense demographic, social, and economic transformations in the Ottoman capital. The city's population increased from 359,000 in 1829 to 895,000 in 1884 and 1,116,000 in 1914,[19] and commercial life in Istanbul flourished particularly after the Anglo-Ottoman Economic Treaty of 1838, attracting money, goods, and people from all across the empire as well as the world beyond.[20]

Among other things, the dramatic changes occurring throughout the nineteenth century entailed increased surveillance and organised policing of the urban population. Especially during the second half of the century, administrative treatment of

19 Kemal H. Karpat, "The Population and the Social and Economic Transformation of İstanbul: The Ottoman Microcosm," in *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 104.
20 Ibid., 107.

the urban poor in the Ottoman Empire entered a decisive stage as successive governments adopted institutional and legal changes to develop a modern, cohesive system of social control built on interconnected apparatuses and institutions. To this end, new instruments such as a modern police force along with institutions such as orphanages, reformatories, workhouses, asylums, prisons, and maternity hospitals were established. New definitions for idleness and work with corresponding production and disciplinary consequences emerged, and a reform policy of institutional punishment gradually replaced corporal punishment.[21] In the 1890s, the Ottoman government issued two vagrancy laws aimed at systematising efforts to control the urban poor. *Darülaceze*, the first modern poor house of the empire, opened in 1896 shortly after the introduction of the second Vagrancy Act (*Serseri Nizamnamesi*). While people unable to work – the disabled, the aged, and the very young – were defined as the 'deserving' poor, unemployed and non-disabled migrant men were now referred to as vagrants (*serseri*) and regarded as the central cause of urban poverty. Used as governmental instruments to control the urban poor, newly defined criminal offenses were more concerned with what individuals appeared to be than what they had actually done.[22] Vagrants were almost exclusively identified as unemployed migrant males, while females, poor girls, and women living outside of traditional household arrangements were largely not addressed under the Vagrancy Acts.

Nevertheless, poor women in Istanbul were also subject to increased governmental scrutiny. The difference was that the main issue pertaining to migrant girls and women in the eyes of the authorities was not idleness or unemployment but rather the state of being outside the confines of the customary household, which was equated with proneness to vice and prostitution. Rapid urbanisation, immigration, and ongoing wars and conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus that brought waves of refugees – typically mostly women and children – to the city meant that an unprecedented number of women now lived in non-traditional household arrangements, and the Ottoman government began to adopt specific policies and practices to manage the labour, bodies, and im/mobility of these female urban poor. This included regulations concerning sex work and increased efforts to control and restrict the number of women entering the city, raids on women visible in public spaces, deportation to provincial towns and cities, and the establishment of institutions to confine solitary lower-class girls and women.

21 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977).

22 Nadir Özbek, "'Beggars' and 'Vagrants' in State Policy and Public Discourse During the Late Ottoman Empire: 1876–1914," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45,5 (2009): 783–801.

None of these measures proved entirely effective in eliminating women from the public space, however.[23]

Urban experiences of female domestic workers present a crucial case study for understanding how the uneven process of urban policing affected women's lives and how lower-class women negotiated the increased policing they were subject to. The figure of the female domestic worker embodied a crucial set of social and administrative anxieties triggered by the increased number and visibility of solitary working-class women. Unlike women in the streets, however, female domestic workers were supposedly confined to well-to-do households – and indeed, in the early twentieth century they were suspended on the edge between the middle-class homes they worked in and the streets. They were expected to serve obediently within their assigned households while risking being labelled as potential prostitutes whenever they dared venture out.

Negotiating female lives and labour

In this section, I will focus on the role played by family members in the placement of girls and women in the households where they worked. In literature dealing with late Ottoman domestic work, family members are often depicted as passive bystanders, or at most as intermediaries who hired out their children semi-reluctantly and with good intentions before retreating into silence and invisibility. However, the police documents examined in the following showcase moments of negotiation and controversy between family members and employers, thereby providing an opportunity to revise our understanding of the power and agency the family members of female domestic workers could exercise in the process – albeit without overlooking the stark socio-economic disparity between the workers' families and their employers.

As exemplified by the case of Azime narrated at the beginning of this article, family members typically perceived themselves as one party to a contract – be it

23 On the increasing governmental efforts to control the presence and visibility of lower-class women in the late Ottoman period, see Gülhan Balsoy, "Bir Kadın Hastanesi Olarak Haseki Hastanesi ve 19. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Bikes ve Bimesken bir Kadın Olmak," *Toplumsal Tarih* 257 (2015): 80–84; Noémi Lévy-Aksu, *Osmanlı İstanbulu'nda Asayiş 1879–1909*, trans. Serra Akyüz Gönen (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017); Müge Özbek, "The Regulation of Prostitution in Istanbul, 1875–1915," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46,4 (2010): 555–568; Müge Özbek, "'Disorderly Women' and the Politics of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Istanbul, 1900–1914," in *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019), 51–64.

oral or written – that was temporal and renegotiable, especially if they believed that the terms were no longer favourable for them.[24] The cases below show that family members submitted petitions to their local police stations demanding the return of their female relatives to their households. If they could afford the journey, they also appeared at the doorsteps of the houses their relatives worked in to renegotiate or renege on contracts with employers. Some renegotiations could turn into irresolvable conflicts and end up in police stations.

Azime was one of the many female children hired out to affluent Istanbul households as live-in domestic workers by their own families in the late Ottoman period. She was still a child when she was sent off, and her father had the legal and customary authority to hire her out without her consent – Azime's recruitment into domestic labour was finalised in a transaction between her father and her employer. As mentioned above, written contracts for similar hiring processes authorised by shariah courts begin to appear in records in the late 1870s. It is unclear, however, whether any written contract regarding Azime's recruitment existed, though her father alluded to one when mentioning her salary. We do know for certain that throughout the six years that Azime worked as a live-in domestic, her employer paid some money to her father. When the father was no longer paid for his daughter's labour, he demanded Azime's return and even requested her salary to be paid to him, implying that it was overdue.

In the written employment contracts from the period, we observe a certain salary defined for domestic workers.[25] This money was to be kept by the employers on behalf of the workers and paid to them at the end of their service. Archival cases demonstrate discrepancies between this legal requirement and material reality, however. It seems that the money was often paid to family members rather than to the workers themselves, as appears to have been the case with Azime, or paid out in the form of a dowry when a woman left her employer's house for the purpose of marriage. Nezahat Hanim, who lived in an upper-class household in Istanbul prior to the First World War, recalls that "there was a continuous circulation; they were trained, made their dowries, grew up, and then left. They were replaced by newcomers."[26] There are other archival cases similar to Azime's as well: For example, a document on the case of a woman named Emine indicates that she did not receive the salary determined in her contract herself.[27] In a petition she submitted to the police after abandoning the house she had been

24 BOA, DH.EUM.VRK, 21/50, 1329.Ca.07 (6 May 1911).

25 Kokdaş and Araz, "İstanbul'da Ev İçi Hizmetlerinde."

26 Alan Duben and Cem Behar, "Haneler ve Aileler: Yapı ve Değişim," in *İstanbul Haneleri: Evlilik, Aile ve Doğurganlık, 1880–1940* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 1996), 77–78.

27 BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 28/65, 1328.Ra.12 (10 March 1910).

working in, she stated that "they refrain from giving me my belongings and paying my allowances accumulated during this period. I request that you order justice to be established in this matter." On the other hand, her employer İshak Cevdet Paşa stated that Emine's father Hasan Ağa, who occasionally came to Istanbul during the period of his daughter's employment, "collected the accumulated earnings of his daughter". Paşa added that if there was any remaining money he owed, he would disburse it to Hasan Ağa when the latter arrived in Istanbul to receive his daughter. This means that Emine's control over the salary for her work was restricted or nonexistent even though she was a 21-year-old adult by this time. These cases reveal that female domestic servants' access to the money they earned was limited at best, with their remuneration usually paid to male family members.

In fact, this restricted or non-existent control over their pay was linked to the restrictions placed on their mobility. The choice to leave or stay in the house she worked for was ultimately left to Azime – her employer Hakkı Bey emphasised that she had been happy living and working in his home, and the young woman seems to have chosen to stay with her employer. It is impossible for us to determine to what degree Azime felt confident or safe enough to express her desires openly. We can assume, however, that staying in Hakkı Bey's house was her only realistic choice: After having been there for 6 years with her father only visiting occasionally, her employer's home was familiar to her, whereas her father's household would have represented a great unknown. The problem here is the limitedness of Azime's options. She was not a slave in legal terms, which means Hakkı Bey did not have the right to retain her by force. But although she was able to leave her job, she could do so only under the guardianship of her father, who would then have the right to decide whether to take her back to their village for marriage to a partner of his choice, or to place her in another affluent household in Istanbul as a domestic. As will be elaborated below in the section concerning the urban space, Azime did not have the option of quitting her work with her salary in her own pocket to search for a new job in a free market.

In many instances, family members could demand the return of domestic servants to their own homes.[28] One example is the story of Leyla from Tavas, who began work as a domestic servant in the house of Emin Paşa when he was vice-governor (*mutasarrıf*) of the nearby city of Denizli. When Paşa and his family moved back to Istanbul, they took Leyla with them. After a while, her father submitted a petition to the local police requesting the return of his daughter to his

28 BOA, ZB, 401/142, 1321.Eylül.06 (19 September 1905).

custody. The police took Leyla from Emin Paşa's mansion and sent her to her father; she was accompanied by an officer on her journey from Istanbul to Denizli.

In another similar case, Ismet, a young girl from Porvi near Edirne, worked as a domestic servant in the house of a doctor at the Edirne military hospital.[29] Ismet's father İsmail Çavuş worked in the municipality of Porvi and submitted a petition to the local police, claiming that his daughter had been taken to Istanbul without his consent and put to work in the house of her original employer's father-in-law. He requested that his daughter be returned to his custody in Porvi. The doctor admitted that Ismet was working at his father-in-law's house in Aksaray, Istanbul, but argued that this was a temporary situation. When İsmail Çavuş insisted that his daughter be given back to him, the Aksaray police went to the father-in-law's house and took her away. This was not the end of the story, however, for 175 kuruş were needed for Ismet's return journey to Porvi. Employer Memduh Bey and his family refused to pay, claiming they owed the girl nothing; they merely gave her a 30 kuruş stipend for the entire period. They were also unwilling to accept the girl into their house again, and Ismet was thus temporarily placed in the house of an officer from the local police station while her father requested the money from her employer, Memduh Bey for her trip.

Mothers sometimes intervened as well, primarily in the absence of fathers. Atiyye, a mother from Kütahya, submitted a petition to her town's police to return her daughter, who had been taken to Istanbul by Hüsna Hanım, the wife of Nuh Efendi from Bursa. Atiyye stated that her daughter had been adopted by Hüsna Hanım and gone to the capital with her.[30]

Even in earlier cases concerning the Circassian communities, where 'masters' claimed domestic workers as their slaves reminiscent of the time when slavery was officially allowed, biological family members could invoke the 'paternal rights' they had regained with the abolishment of slavery. For example, a Circassian man complained to the police that a fellow Circassian from Aziziye, Hasan Bey, had given his daughters to Esirci Mehmed Ağa, who in turn had sold them as slaves.[31] He demanded that his daughters be returned to him, claiming that he possessed paternal rights with regard to them since slavery had been eliminated. In another similar case, Bekir, a man of Circassian origin, applied to the police claiming that his sisters and their children were being kept as slaves at the Çifteler farm in Eskişehir.[32] He stated that one of his sisters was already dead and the other had been sold to another master, and that the owner of the farm was

29 BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 49/31, 1328.N.05 (10 September 1910).
30 BOA, DH.MKT, 54/2, 1311.C.04 (13 December 1893).
31 BOA, DH.MKT, 181/34, 1311.C.03 (12 December 1893).
32 BOA, DH.MKT, 1674/25, 1307.Ra.21 (15 November 1889).

now planning to sell their children. Bekir demanded that the police take action with respect to the situation, which he argued was unlawful.

From the turn of the century onward, we see that family members had the legal right to reclaim authority over their female relatives employed as domestic workers. In most of the archival cases, they managed to successfully regain custody of the respective young women. This clearly distinguishes the late Ottoman labour regime from the era of slavery preceding it, though young domestic labourers were still denied the status of free workers: The girls and women remained subject to patriarchal possession of their bodies and labour. Now, however, the possession was temporary and transferable between family members – mostly men, but sometimes also older women – and employers.

There were severe geographic and socio-economic inequalities between the employers in Istanbul and other large cities and provincial families – though it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss them in detail – that compelled the latter to hire out their young girls and women to work in wealthy urban households in the first place. Yet the unquestioned patriarchal power that families wielded over the lives and labour of girls and younger women was a crucial component of the late Ottoman domestic labour regime as well. The customs and contracts that defined domestic service in the late Ottoman Empire essentially made family members owners – and the young females they hired out for domestic work their possessions. Family members (mostly male), but not the working women themselves were authorised to conclude the contracts transferring control over their labour to their employers, usually for indefinite periods of time.

The following section in Nedim Tör's diary entitled *Memoirs of Nevzih*, in which he addresses his new-born daughter, offers glimpses into the everyday life of a middle-class urban family and demonstrates how a contract between a husband and an employer was arranged. Following the birth of Nevzih, the first child of Tör and his wife, the couple decided to hire a nursemaid for her; they were already employing a young live-in domestic worker for the usual household chores at the time.

> [. . .] that morning, the 30th of Kanunuevvel, Monday [12 January 1913], your wet nurse Emine Hanım arrived. She is a petite young girl in her twenties. Two days earlier, her husband, Mehmet Efendi from Çorum, visited us and permitted his wife to be your wet nurse in exchange for a salary of 3 lira.[33]

According to law and custom, the parties to the contract concerning Emine's labour, body, and life were her husband and her employer. The terms of the

33 Ahmet Nedim Servet Tör, *Nevzih'in Günlüğü: Defter'i Hatırat* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008), 23.

agreement were discussed and finalised verbally in Emine's absence – and although this is not specified in the *Memoirs*, we may presume that her salary was paid to her husband as was customary.

With these contracts, authority over the lives, labour, and mobility of domestic workers was transferred from family members to employers; it was also extended to include control over their bodies. The case of Ayşe, a twelve-year-old girl working in the household of İbrahim Efendi, an officer in the Directorate of Revenue, provides an example of this.[34] In October 1909, İbrahim Efendi submitted a petition to the Ministry of the Interior stating that Ayşe, who had been living in his house for more than three years, had fled a month earlier. He had recently been informed that Ayşe was now residing in the house of a Sait Efendi, who lived in a neighbourhood near Şehzadebaşı. In his petition, İbrahim Efendi requested that Ayşe be taken from Sait Efendi's house and sent back to her father in Izmir. He argued that Ayşe had been placed in his custody by her father on the premise that she would be returned to the latter at his request. He was worried, İbrahim Efendi added, that she might get into trouble if she continued to stay with Sait Efendi, and he claimed she had stolen some money from his house when she escaped, though it was not possible to prove this. He warned that if she stayed in Istanbul, where she had no relatives, it could lead to "trouble". The police launched an investigation, and Ayşe was discovered in the house indicated by İbrahim Efendi. She stated that she had run away from her employer's house because his family had beaten her frequently, and she requested to be returned to her father in Izmir. In the end, the police sent her back to her family.

In a similar case, Dilber, a domestic servant in the household of Hüsnü Bey, who worked for the Imperial Band, likewise fled her employer's house and went to live in another.[35] When Hüsnü Bey learned where she had gone, he asked the police to retrieve her and return her to her parents. He insisted that since Dilber's parents had entrusted her to him, he could not permit her to live in another house. The police eventually sent the young woman back to her hometown of Trabzon. As these two cases show, although the employers did not have the legal right to force absconded domestic workers back into service at their houses, they still held sway over the women's lives and were able to subvert their choice to work elsewhere with the help of the police, compelling them to return home.

In the case of Vesile, a nine-year-old orphaned domestic working for İsmail Hakkı Paşa, the governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Kayseri, a third male party likewise

34 BOA, ZB, 405/62, 1325.Teşrinievvel.09 (22 October 1909).

35 BOA, ZB, 458/3, 1311.M.21 (4 August 1893).

claiming authority over her life appears.[36] Two years after Vesile had begun working at Paşa's house, her employer was appointed to Yozgat, and Vesile moved there along with his family. Shortly thereafter, however, a man from Vesile's village named Hasan submitted a petition to the Kayseri police arguing that the girl was his fiancé, and that their engagement had been arranged with the permission of her father while he was still alive. According to Hasan, her employer had taken Vesile to Yozgat against her will, and he therefore requested that the police return her to Kayseri and to him. He claimed that he planned to marry her soon. İsmail Hakkı Paşa refused to send the girl, however, stating that Vesile was under his supervision and currently being trained in his house by his mother Münire. He asserted that the engagement was not legitimate, as Vesile had been in his custody for nearly two years. He declined to return her as she was not ready for marriage and had nobody to supervise her in her village.

In the patriarchal setting of late Ottoman Istanbul, female domestic workers were never truly considered persons in their own right. Instead, they were forced to transition between the roles of daughter, servant, and wife. Although it is clear that the relationships and negotiations between family members and employers were characterised by stark socioeconomic disparity, these cases also highlight a process of complicity in which both sides helped to perpetuate the restriction of mobility and the labour coercion suffered by domestic workers from which they both benefited. These cases thus provide an indication of how this patriarchal complicity – though occasionally punctuated by moments of contention – created and reinforced the structures producing bonded female labourers.

As the outlined cases further illustrate, family members – fathers, brothers, mothers, husbands, and even fiancés – showed up after the recruitment of their female relatives into domestic service and demanded their return to their own households and custody. This suggests that family members were more than passive bystanders condemned to give up their children via a contract only to subsequently retreat into silence and invisibility. Instead, the preserved snippets of everyday negotiations and disputes between family members and employers demonstrate the active role played by the former during the placement process and the period of employment of domestic servants. They also offer insights into the layered and complex power dynamics inherent in the late Ottoman domestic labour regime, revealing its inherently patriarchal logic that allowed strict control of the im/mobility of domestic workers and the related coercion they experienced during their jobs.

36 BOA, DH.MKT, 1018/43, 1323.Ş.20 (20 October 1905).

On the other hand, despite the fact that the lives of girls and women were restricted to the point that they were essentially defined as property whose ownership could be transferred from one household to another, some among them did indeed claim the right to their own lives by simply walking out of the households they had been assigned to. It was often at this point that the police stepped in, removing them from the urban space and returning them to the confines of customary households, thereby enforcing their position of dependency. The following section investigates the crucial role played by metropolitan police forces in maintaining and amplifying the dependent status of female domestic servants.

Urban policing and female domestic labour

On 18 April 1910, the Directory of Public Security sent a telegram to the Trabzon police department requesting the resettlement of a young woman who was being sent to the city for the second time, to prevent her from returning to Istanbul. The message concerned the runaway domestic servant Hayrünisa, who had been working in the mansion of the governor of Izmir, Mahmud Muhtar Bey. She had been apprehended by the police while "soliciting in the streets" of Istanbul after having escaped from Mahmud Bey's house, and was subsequently sent to Trabzon because she claimed to have relatives there. However, the Trabzon police transferred her back to Istanbul on the basis that Hayrünisa had nobody in the city to take care of and supervise her. The Istanbul police packed her off to Trabzon a second time, but the constabulary there remained insistent and returned Hayrünisa to Istanbul once more. A note dated 7 March 1910 was written by the governor of Trabzon to the Department of Public Security; it argued that settling this morally "depraved" woman in Trabzon where she had no relatives would be improper. Following the tiresome trips back and forth between the two cities, Hayrünisa became sick; she was admitted to a hospital in Istanbul, where she died after a short stay.[37]

This section explores the more significant trend exemplified by Hayrünisa's case: The over-involvement of police in the urban lives and mobility of poor and working-class women. I will focus on the experiences of female domestic servants who made their way out of the houses they worked for, as well as those who found themselves expelled from their workplaces for various reasons. My objective is to examine the coercive role of urban police forces in returning these women to interior spaces whenever they dared to leave them. The question lingering in the

37 BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 96/7, 1328.R.07 (18 April 1910).

background is that of the crucial link between the over-policing of lower-class women in the urban space and their working status within households.

In the late Ottoman context, the abandonment of her job by a female domestic worker was not defined as a crime in and of itself. However, such an act was perceived as an indication of deviance, moral laxity, or aversion to work; it was also often associated with an proclivity for prostitution. Despite not having committed a legal offense, a female domestic who left her employer's household could thus be arrested and detained on these grounds. The term used to describe this sort of event was "escape". In most cases, a complaint by the respective employer triggered a police investigation to find a 'runaway' domestic worker. If found, absconded women were kept in police custody until they could be returned either to their employers or their families.[38]

The following quote illustrates the fears, anxieties, and desires revolving around the lives, labour, and urban mobility of female domestic servants. It also sheds light on the types of governmental approaches and measures prompted by these feelings and how they affected the conditions under which women worked. The narrative about runaways or dismissed domestic servants necessarily "falling into vice and prostitution" provided a convenient pretext for escalating police pressure against them, strictly demarcating their living and working conditions and even their aspirations for their lives.[39] Gendered urban policing based on the discourse that women who dared to live outside of customary households would eventually become prostitutes was crucial to the enforcement of restrictions on the participation of women in the free labour market, maintaining and augmenting their bondage to their employer's households.

When a domestic ran away from the house she worked at and managed to find her way to her parents' home or the home of other relatives, the police frequently discontinued its investigation and permitted the girl or woman to stay with her kin. Tevfika, for example, who worked in Asaf Bey's home in Şehzadebaşı, left the house one Friday morning and did not return.[40] The subsequent investigation revealed that she had met with relatives after leaving the house and gone to Bursa with them. The police left her to stay with her family. In another case, a woman named Zehra likewise ran away from the house she worked in and returned to her hometown.[41] When domestics returned to their families, the police usually no longer bothered them and did not force them to return to their employers.

38 Balsoy, "Bir Kadın Hastanesi"; Özbek, "'Disorderly Women.'"
39 Özbek, "'Disorderly Women.'"
40 BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 7/21, 1327.N.22 (7 October 1909).
41 BOA, DH.EUM.KADL, 13/3, 1329.R.03 (3 April 1911).

Even when a domestic servant eloped with a man and married him, she was usually permitted to stay with him. Fatma, who worked in the house of Mahmud Nureddin Bey, an officer at the legislation bureau of the Council of State, fled her employer's home due to mistreatment and hardship, as she claimed after eventually being discovered.[42] The police investigated to find Fatma and return her to her mother – Mahmud Nureddin Bey likely refused to accept her back into his house. During the investigation, the police learned that after fleeing, the young woman first began working in the house of Muhlis Bey, an employee at Ceride-i Mehakim-i Adliye, in the neighborhood of Unkapanı. She then married Vapur Ambarcısı Halil Ağa, who lived in Zeyrek. Ultimately, Fatma was permitted to remain with her new husband.

Finding a new employer could also be acceptable if he or she proved to be respectable enough. Niyazi Bey, a fourth-year student at the Royal Medical School, employed a further domestic worker by the name of Fatma.[43] When she fled, Niyazi Bey requested the police to find Fatma, whom he claimed to have adopted, and return her to him. He also alleged that she had been deceived by two other women, who should likewise be tracked down; legal proceedings were initiated against them. Here the "adoption" did not imply a legal procedure but instead merely Fatma's employment as a domestic worker. The police were unable to find the young woman, however. One of the other women mentioned by Niyazi Bey was discovered working as a domestic in the house of a man named Namık Bey in Küçükçekmece, and the local police were asked to investigate her.

On the other hand, when a girl or a woman escaped from the house she worked in or lost her job and for some reason did not return to her family or get married, she risked being arrested by the police, who would try to return her to the household of her father, husband, or employer. For example, a girl working as a domestic in a house in Kumkapı was fired because her employers had suspicions regarding her morality.[44] They turned her in to the police, and during her interrogation at the police station she stated that she was from the Jewish community in Edirne. She had escaped her parents' home a few years earlier and come to Istanbul; since then, she had worked as a domestic servant in several houses in the city. In the meantime, she had also converted to Islam. She had nobody to supervise her in Istanbul, but there was a sister who had also converted and worked as a domestic servant in a Muslim house in Edirne. The police

42 BOA, ZB, 319/58, 1322.Teşrinievvel.09 (22 October 1906).
43 BOA, ZB, 490/101, 1324.Teşrinievvel.26 (8 November 1908).
44 BOA, ZB, 422/157, 1323.Teşrinisani.27 (10 December 1907).

decided to send the girl to the house her sister was employed in, as they suspected she would fall into destitution if she was "set free" in Istanbul.

Fifteen-year-old İkbal worked for Hanife Hanım, an older woman from the famous Bedirhanoğlu family who was the mother of Bedirhanoğlu Abdülrezzak Bey.[45] İkbal's father was a worker in a tobacco factory in Bursa. When Hanife Hanım died, İkbal was left alone in the streets; the police found her there and sent her to Bursa to be remanded to the custody of her father. Arife worked in the house of Server Bey, a government doctor, and was likewise picked up by the police after fleeing her employer's home.[46] Server Bey refused to take her back into his household and requested she be sent to her parents' house in Kastamonu. He paid the expenses for her journey. Dudu, who fled from the house in Eyüp where she worked was also apprehended by the authorities a short while after absconding.[47] As her employer refused to reaccept her into his house as well, Dudu was sent to her father, Rençber Ahmed, in her hometown of Kastamonu.

The real trouble for the police began when there was no household to accept an ex-domestic. For example, a woman named Melek was arrested for prostitution in a hotel room in Derviş Street, Beyoğlu.[48] During the inquiry, Melek stated that she was initially from Arabia and had been brought to Istanbul as a slave by Şeyh Ibrahim, a slave trader five or six years earlier. Immediately after her arrival, she was sold to Mustafa Rukneddin Bey, who died a few years later. Melek was subsequently sold again to Nazmi Bey, a notable from Edirne, in whose house she lived until 1908. After the Proclamation of Liberty in 1908, she was freed and returned to Istanbul, where she worked as a domestic servant in several houses. At the time of her arrest, she had been unable to find work for fifteen days, however. Melek also claimed that she had been forced into the hotel room against her will. The census department had no record of her; she did not have any relatives in Istanbul or in Edirne, and she did not know where exactly she was from. Reluctant to release Melek back onto the streets, the police asked the management of *Darülaceze*, the newly established workhouse, to admit her to the institution.

The efforts of the metropolitan police forces to limit and regulate the presence and mobility of women were not restricted to compromised female domestic servants, however. Gülhan Balsoy has explored the function of Haseki Hospital in Istanbul as a place where lonely and homeless women were incarcerated during

45 BOA, ZB, 429/26, 1322.Şubat.20 (5 March 1907).
46 BOA, ZB, 437/60, 1320.Teşrinievvel.09 (22 October 1904).
47 BOA, ZB, 437/96, 1320.Şubat.13 (26 February 1905).
48 BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 34/70, 1326.Mayıs.15 (28 May 1910).

the second half of the nineteenth century,[49] while Noémi Lévy-Aksu sheds light on the attempts by the newly established police organisation to limit and control prostitution.[50] Gizem Sivri discusses the governmental efforts to develop a women's prison.[51] Sex work, which had been illegal but nevertheless tolerated for a long time, began to be regulated by law in Istanbul in the early 1880s. As a result of this regulation process, sex workers were forced to register in lists kept by a special municipal commission; they were subjected to administrative surveillance and spatial control as well as compulsory periodical medical checks.[52] Muslim women were not included in the scope of the initial regulatory efforts, however; until the promulgation of a new ordinance in 1915, they did not have to register as prostitutes. When a Muslim woman was arrested for prostitution, she was therefore most likely to be submitted to her family or sent to a provincial town. In summary, we see increasing and accelerating governmental efforts beginning in the mid-nineteenth century to control the presence and lives of lower-class women in Istanbul – especially solitary poor women trying to survive on their own.[53]

It is clear that unaccompanied lower-class women in the streets of Istanbul were occasionally arrested, and those who were arrested were held in limbo at police stations as wards of the state. They were detained until immediate relatives, their husbands or employers, or some other guardian whom officials deemed eligible came to the station to take custody of them. In a period when established gender norms were in flux, the police worked as stand-in patriarchs to consolidate control over women's lives, labour, and mobility in the temporary absence of traditional and suitable guardians.

I argue that these new measures to police lower-class women resulted in harsh restrictions concerning their presence and mobility in the urban space – and that this circumstance cannot be separated from their rights and participation in the free labour market. It was definitive for the status of domestic servants in the households where they worked and lived: They generally had no choice but to accept the conditions they were subject to there. When they ventured out into the urban space – a space they were considered not to belong in – they risked being arrested by the police, investigated, labelled as "women of that

49 Balsoy, "Bir Kadın Hastanesi."

50 Lévy-Aksu, *Osmanlı İstanbulu'nda Asayiş*.

51 Gizem Sivri, "Women's Prisons and Women Prisoners in the Late Ottoman Empire (1840–1920): From Invisibility to Expendability" (Master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2017).

52 Zafer Toprak, "İstanbul'da Fuhuş ve Zührevi Hastalıklar, 1914–1933," *Tarih ve Toplum* 7,39 (1987): 31–40.

53 Özbek, "Regulation of Prostitution"; Özbek, "'Disorderly Women.'"

kind", and sent back to their families or employers. A curious aspect revealed in the archival documents examined for this study is the zeal of the police in "cleaning" the public space of women on their own. In contrast to prior cases of runaway slaves, these women were not forcibly returned to their employers' houses if they could instead be sent back to their parents, or if they could marry to construct a traditional household for themselves. However, they were not allowed to exist in the urban space in their own right, nor to participate in the labour market freely.

In other words, the gendered form of urban policing of the mobility of lower-class women in the public space played an essential role in the constitution and management of female workers as household dependents rather than free workers who could walk out of their domestic workplaces into urban life and the urban labour market at will. Nevertheless, this over-policing did not succeed in creating impervious boundaries between the domestic and urban spaces.

Conclusion

In summary, the studied police files illustrate how girls and young women from impoverished provincial backgrounds were commodified in their capacity to labour as live-in domestic workers in affluent Istanbul households. They shed light on the role gendered power relations played in shaping patterns and dynamics of severe exploitation and coercion in this domestic work. Finally, the documents also open up a window to understanding the crucial links between patriarchy, the control of im/mobility, and labour coercion in a more general sense.

In legal terms, female domestics were free individuals. But in a patriarchal, and class-based reality, they were part of a network of relationships and obligations that compelled them into forced and unpaid labour and were extremely hard for them to repudiate. First of all, elder (primarily male) family members possessed the customary and legal power to send their underage female relatives off to Istanbul to be employed as domestic workers without the need for their consent. Once in the city, these young women were immobilised inside their employers' houses for years through a gendered form of social bondage. Even after reaching adulthood, they were not permitted to abandon their employer's household of their own accord. They were deemed household dependents rather than free workers or free individuals due to their gender. When they did abandon their jobs, they risked being arrested by the police and forced to return either to their employers or to their families.

I have identified three intertwined fundamental mechanisms that locked late Ottoman female domestic workers into coercive labour relationships. The first was the customary and legal setting that enabled senior adults to transfer children and younger women back and forth between households without the latter's consent. The second was the patriarchal complicity of family members and employers in their joint efforts to keep female domestic workers bound to customary households. Negotiations between family members and employers were marked by the context of stark socio-economic disparity between the two parties. Nevertheless, both sides often co-perpetuated a circuit of female labour coercion – mainly by classifying women and girls as household dependents and preserving this status, a situation both families and employers benefited from. The final mechanism, the over-policing of lower-class women in urban settings, deprived female domestic workers of the ability to abandon their employers' households and live life on their own terms in Istanbul, thereby further securing and solidifying their dependent status.

The police investigation records analysed here cast light on the role of im/mobility for understanding the power asymmetries that characterised and co-existed with severe exploitation and coercion. By focusing on the experiences of live-in domestic workers, this study has examined how the socio-spatial mobility of these workers was prevented or constrained, and how the resulting immobility formed an integral aspect of their labour relations.

The sources also highlight the connections between immobility and mobility and emphasise how specific forms of exploitation and coercion were shaped by the regulations, inequalities, and gendered disciplinary pressures that delineated the movements of late Ottoman domestic workers. In most of the studied cases, the manipulated or forced mobility of domestics was followed by their immobilisation in their employers' houses. In essence, immobilisation was inextricably linked to these young women's experiences of mobility – and this interweaving was the key element characterising their labour coercion experiences.

On the other hand, the cases presented above also inevitably remind us of the unstable character of late Ottoman domestic labour practices as well as the porousness of the borderlines between domestic and urban spaces. Although the boundaries of customary households were supposed to be impenetrable for female domestics, in reality they were transgressed frequently and in varying ways. By simply walking out of the houses they worked in and submitting petitions claiming mistreatment by their employers, eloping with men, taking up work for other employers, or turning to sex work as an alternative way of surviving in the city, they not only created moments of freedom for themselves within a patriarchal society but also found possibilities for new definitions of living and working in the city as women.

Aigi Rahi-Tamm

Chapter 6
Lives between Forced Labour Measures: The Case of *Kulaks* Deported from Estonia, 1940–1960

In June 1940, the independent Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were annexed and incorporated by the Soviet Union. In the years 1941 to 1944, Soviet occupation was replaced by that of Nazi Germany. The Sovietisation of the Baltic states – meaning the adoption of a political system modelled on that of the USSR – continued in autumn 1944. The end of World War II did not equate to peace in the region: Due to the implementation of the Soviet regime, the post-war period has remained in Baltic people's memories as "the war after the war".[1] Instead of restoring the homes ruined in the global conflict, the Soviet leadership headed by Stalin chose to destroy thousands of homes and families, driving many inhabitants out of their native lands.[2]

The political violence that accompanied the establishment of Soviet power in Estonia involved diverse measures, including the unlawful deportation of peaceful populations from their indigenous homelands to Siberia, the Far North, and other regions of the USSR with harsh climates located thousands of kilometres from Estonia. The first mass deportation from the Baltic states took place immediately before the war on 14 June 1941 and affected 45,000 people, including 10,000 from Estonia. The largest such operation in the postwar Soviet Union occurred in March 1949 under the codename *Priboi* ('Breaker'), when a total of 95,000 people – among them some 21,000 from Estonia – were deported from the Baltic republics.[3] Mass

1 Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Homeless Forever: Home and Homelessness among Deportees from Estonia," in *Narratives of Exile and Identity: Soviet Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States*, ed. Violeta Davoliute and Tomas Balkelis (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018), 68. This research was supported by the project "War after War" (PHVAJ16908).

2 On violent peacetime, see Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron eds., *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945–50* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

3 Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Deportations in Estonia, 1941–1951," in *Soviet Deportations in Estonia: Impact and Legacy. Articles and Life Histories*, ed. Kristi Kukk and Toivo Raun (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2007), 16–21.

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arrests and deportations in the Baltic states as well as western Ukraine, western Belorussia, and Moldovia added new groups to the *Gulag* (*Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei* or Main Administration of Corrective Labour Camps) population. Deportations occurred largely on a national basis and according to a specific combination of other factors like class, anti-Soviet activities, and others.[4]

This contribution focuses on one specific social category, namely the cases of people deported from Estonia in 1949 as *kulaks* (prosperous peasants who made use of hired labour; often applied to opponents of the collective farm and other state policies as a term of political scorn).[5] In the Baltic republics, the deportation of kulaks was related to the suppression of armed resistance as well as to the implementation of the system of collective farms known as kolkhozes. Most of the peasants wished to avoid joining a collective farm at any cost, as Stalinist kolkhozes had much in common with serfdom. For Estonian peasants, they equated to poverty, hunger, and devastation.[6] Deportation as a form of forced migration, along with the events preceding and following it, demonstrate the brutality applied during the consolidation of Soviet power – especially the disregard for human lives, historical traditions, and values. Deportations and collectivisation not only led to an enormous waste of man-years and creative potential; the death toll along with the physical and mental suffering also had long-lasting consequences.[7] As Lynne Viola has stated, the peasantry paid the highest price for the Soviet experiment.[8]

The reshaping of a peasantry oriented around the productivity of individual farmsteads in the Republic of Estonia into peasants with a Soviet mentality meant a rupture in the social and cognitive continuity that began with these people's "liberation" from the "slavery" of their property and continued with the collectivisation of agriculture and the "cleansing" of villages of another obstacle – the kulaks. In the next stage, the "socially alien element" was removed from the rest of society and its representatives deported to Siberia for "re-education" for the rest of their lives. Following the changes in the wake of Stalin's death in 1953, the

4 Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 154 and 190.

5 Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxii.

6 Olaf Mertelsmann, "Living on a Stalinist Kolkhoz: Peasant Survival Strategies in Estonia," *Daugavpils Universitate Humanitāro Zinātņu Vēstnesis* 15 (2009), 86 and 92.

7 Melanie Ilic, "From Interview to Life Story," in *The Soviet Past in the Post-Socialist Present: Methodology and Ethics in Russian, Baltic and Central European Oral History and Memory Studies,* ed. Melanie Ilic and Dalia Leinarte (London: Routledge, 2015), 3–11; Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, "Trauma and Life Writing," in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, ed. Davis Colin and Hanna Meretoja (London: Routledge, 2020), 305–316.

8 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 192.

deportees were allowed to return to their native land – but a hostile reception by the authorities of the Estonian SSR prevented them from overcoming the stigma of being kulaks, and new restrictions kept them away from their former farms. For many decades, members of kulak families suffered from social exclusion. Since the selection, punishment, and mistreatment of kulaks was a widespread and complex process, all of its stages are reflected or mentioned in this article alongside various political, economic, and cultural factors that offer further insight into the nature of coercion in the context of the Estonian SSR from the 1940s to the 1960s. In keeping with the core issues in this volume, the main emphasis will be placed on different forms of labour coercion in relation to mobility or immobility.

So far, studies on these deportation operations have focused on their political aspects, on their preparation and implementation, and on the selection process of victims and their fates at the special settlements (*spetspereselenije*) they were sent to.[9] The everyday organisation – or rather, the everyday chaos – of life in Siberia has been described in far less detail. The working and living conditions of people sent to the special settlements, as well as other factors that determined their ability to cope, are primarily reflected in the reports of state institutions – but these documents are kept at Russian archives with restricted access.[10] On the one hand, work in Siberia was regulated through rules imposed by the state and influenced by local conditions, but on the other, memoirs and other biographical sources describe phenomena arising from differing cultures, values, attitudes, or mutual relations. The formation of social relationships has always been related to multiple processes occurring in parallel.[11] Therefore, the complex of problems related to labour and the meaning of work itself are very clearly connected to the events preceding and following these deportations – from the reorganisation of rural life to the readaptation of people returning from the special settlements to life in Estonia. When the situation is assessed from different perspectives – especially those of the central authorities in Moscow, the Estonian SSR, the Siberian regions, and the affected individuals – a diversity of motives for action unfolds, and we find typical as well as exceptional solutions characterising different patterns of labour relations, the use of forced labour, and (im)mobility in the Soviet system.

9 On research on deportations, see Aigi Rahi–Tamm, "Stalinist Repression in Estonia: State of the Research and Open Questions," *Politička misao: Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. 1–2 (2017): 32–51.

10 See the survey of everyday life of the deportees based on documents from the Ministries of Internal Affairs in Vadim Makšejev, *Narõmi kroonika 1930–1945: Küüditatute tragöödia. Dokumendid ja mälestused* (Tallinn: Varrak, 2011).

11 Bert Altena and Marcel van der Linden, "Preface," *International Review of Social History* 47, 10 (2002), 1.

Long-lasting and continuous cultural and value-based conflicts in all spheres of life that became significant factors over the entire period of forced Sovietisation have sometimes been overlooked in studies focusing on political history.[12] Yet in-depth studies of everyday life clearly reveal the meaningfulness of acts based on cultural norms, traditions, values, and attitudes[13] as examined in this study. Jelena Zubkova also supports this approach: Despite the ideological slogans officially employed to emphasise the need to consolidate Soviet power, she states, the actions targeted the "destruction of the people's former way of life, traditions, and habits".[14]

As European labour historians have noted, deeper insights into the Soviet labour regime and examination of the experience of convicts in the eastern half of Europe by way of country-specific studies allow us to gain new knowledge and apply new approaches in the global context of labour history.[15] Work has usually been closely linked to different facets of life, playing a role in individuals' self-consciousness or in the value systems of different social groups. In terms of the workforce as a whole, topics like the motivation of workers, the environment, the efficiency of organisation, human well-being, and various psychological aspects are important.[16]

12 Epp Annus, *Soviet Postcolonial Studies: A View from the Western Borderlands* (London: Routledge, 2018).

13 David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

14 Jelena Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml 1940–53* (Tallinn: Varrak, 2009), 98.

15 Andreas Eckert, "What Is Global Labour History Good For?" in *Work in a Modern Society: The German Historical Experience in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), 176–177; Christian G. De Vito, Clare Anderson, and Ilbe Bosma, "Transportation, Deportation and Exile: Perspectives from the Colonies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *International Review of Social History*" 63 (2018), 20; Marsha Siefert, *Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945–1989: Contributions to a History of Work* **(**Budapest: Central European University Press, 2020*)*.

16 Jürgen Kocka, "Work as a Problem in European History," in *Work in a Modern Society: The German Historical Experience in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), 1–15; Toon Taris, *The Psychology of Working Life* (London: Routledge, 2018), 2–4; Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Popular Culture and Workers' Culture as Symbolic Orders: Comments on the Debate about the History of Culture and Everyday Life," in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Ludtke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 178–181.

Historical context

As a result of World War I, the multinational empires in Europe collapsed, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania declared their independence, triggering military conflicts. After Estonia proclaimed its independence in 1918, wars broke out with Germany and Soviet Russia, and a radical land reform was carried out simultaneously even before the adoption of a new constitution, since the ruined economy had to be restored as quickly as possible. Land that had previously belonged to manors was appropriated by the state, and new settler farms were established in addition to the old farmsteads. The dominant understanding was that owning a piece of land created a positive relationship with the independent state, supported by the idea of the national movement that agriculture formed the backbone of a nation.[17] All three Baltic republics were able to prove their viability as nation states. As a result of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact that divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, however, the fate of the Baltic states remained dependent on the will of Moscow – and they were eventually occupied and annexed in June 1940.

The establishment of Soviet power began with the dismantling of the previous regime of the Republic of Estonia (1918–1940) and the construction of a new Soviet society, which meant radical changes and a drastic decline in living standards. Economic and socio-political Sovietisation began with the expropriation and redistribution of land in 1940 along with simultaneous nationalisation of enterprises and their assets. The abolishment of private property followed by the regulation of salaries and prices, currency reforms, and restrictions of individual liberties and freedom of movement quickly worsened Estonians' quality of life and led to dissatisfaction.[18] The market-based model of development applied during the time of the republic was replaced with a Soviet command economy in which economic resources were subject to the objectives of the central authorities of the USSR.

Characterising the first Soviet year (1940–1941) from Moscow's perspective, Jelena Zubkova considers the establishment of the new institutions of power according to the Soviet model, the adoption of basic laws, and the development of the means of Sovietisation based on Soviet stereotypes to be most important activities. Implementation of these measures caused confusion and general discontent among the Baltic countries' societies, indicating how poorly the central authorities understood the

17 Norbert Angermann and Karsten Brüggemann, *Baltimaade ajalugu* (Tallinn: Varrak, 2018), 230 and 242.

18 Olaf Mertelsmann, *Der stalinistische Umbau in Estland: Von der Markt- zur Kommandowirtschaft* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2006).

specific conditions there – especially the economic realities. As a result, several reorganisations were made arbitrarily.[19] Over the years, phenomena resulting from local national traits, mentalities, traditions, and culture began to shape an understanding of the Baltic republics as a different region. This image was more clearly established in the 1960s with the onset of domestic tourism.[20] In the 1940s, the "otherness" of the region mainly manifested in the shape of anti-Soviet activities and statements that resulted in repressions and a strengthening of the apparatus of the security services.[21]

The three keywords describing the establishment of Soviet power in general surveys of Baltic history are repression, resistance, and collectivisation.[22] Terror was used to suppress the former public life, creating a general atmosphere of fear in society. The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) began to compile lists of anti-Soviet individuals, including members of the political elite, the military, the police, and other high-ranking officials. Year by year, the mapping of Baltic society became more extensive, with various social groups considered alien – for example, "enemies of the people", "kulaks", "bourgeois nationalists", "counter-revolutionary" or "socially dangerous elements", or "people from the past". The political intent was to "cleanse" society of these groups by way of different campaigns.[23]

Mass deportations of families left the most painful and lasting traces in Baltic people's memories. In Estonia, there were four major deportation operations in 1941, 1945, 1949, and 1951, with smaller deportation actions targeting up to 100 people at a time occurring in between. In total, around 33,000 people were affected. The decisions regarding the deportation process were made in Moscow, with regulations issued at the level of the Council of People's Commissars or the Council of Ministers of the Communist Party, or by way of directives issued by the USSR NKVD that determined the categories of people to be deported. The specific decisions about exactly who was to be removed were made by the offices of the Ministries of State Security and Internal Affairs. It was invariably an imposed situation for the affected individuals – there was no choice about whether to go or not. If you were caught, you were taken away. Deportations targeted individuals, families, specific social groups or classes, or even entire nations. When the deportation of

19 Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml,* 78–96.

20 Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml,* 95; Angermann and Brüggemann, *Baltimaade ajalugu*, 284.

21 Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml,* 94–96.

22 Angermann and Brüggemann, *Baltimaade ajalugu*, 220; Andres Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States* (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 141.

23 Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939–1957," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 13, no. 1 (2012): 5–45.

Germans was ordered in 1945, the victims were identified exclusively by the nationality stated in their passports.[24]

The violence of the new power during the first Soviet year (1940–1941) engendered strong opposition among the Estonian population, which was also reflected in the large number of people (ca. 70,000) who fled to the West at the end of the German occupation (1941–1944).[25] In order to suppress the resistance, widespread arrests began after the Red Army reconquered Estonia and Soviet power was restored. In the period between 1944 and 1953, roughly 30,000 people were arrested and sent to hard labour camps and prisons outside Estonia, where about a third of them died. Around 1,500 people were killed while engaging in armed resistance.[26] In 1947, the authorities began to force Sovietisation – in other words, the strategic direction shifted towards collectivisation, which until then had been relatively slow so as not to provoke negative reactions among the people.[27] Collectivisation ruined Estonian farmers' traditional ways of working and living, undermining their economic security and plunging agricultural production into chaos.[28]

Did the Soviet authorities feel they were in a safer position in 1947? Probably not. But resistance was more active in the countryside, and the activities of the fighters – the *Forest Brothers* as they were called by the people, or *bandits* in Soviet rhetoric – were only possible thanks to the aid of the rural population, which gave them food, shelter, and other resources and maintained contact with them. Resistance movements in the western Soviet regions became a major internal- political problem in the postwar years and suppressing them required various different tactics ranging from the organisation of mass anti-banditry operations all the way to infiltration of Forest Brothers groups by assassin agents.[29] In the latter

24 See in detail Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Deportation of Individuals of German Nationality from Estonia in 1945," in *Estonia since 1944: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, ed. Toomas Hiio et al. (Tallinn: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda: 2009), 415–428.

25 Aigi Rahi–Tamm, "Human Losses," in *The White Book: Losses Inflicted on the Estonian Nation by Occupation Regimes 1940–1991*, ed. Vello Salo et al. (Tallinn: Estonian State Commission on Examination of the Policies of Repression, 2005), 28–30.

26 Tõnu Tannberg, "Relvastatud vastupanuliikumine Eestis aastatel 1944–1953 julgeolekuorganite statistikapeeglis," *Tuna* 1 (1999), 24–30.

27 Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml,* 123–130.

28 Indrek Paavle, "Sovietisation of Agriculture," in *Estonia since 1944: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, ed. Toomas Hiio et al. (Tallinn: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda: 2009), 37–78.

29 Pearu Kuusk, *Nõukogude võimu lahingud Eesti vastupanuliikumisega: Banditismivastse võitluse osakond aastatel 1944–1947* (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2007); Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

half of the 1940s, Moscow's impatience concerning the situation in the Baltic countries grew, and the regime began to tighten control.

Such disciplining required a lot of trustworthy agents. As there were only very few communists in the local communities, the Soviet heads of the Baltic republics asked the Central Committee (CC) of the All-Union Communist Party to send Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian communists living in other Soviet republics back to their home regions permanently in order to fill vacant posts in the party and economic institutions. Their numbers were insufficient, however, and most of the new party members came to Estonia through migration from other republics and demobilisation from the armed forces.[30] In addition, the proportion of migrants grew rapidly due to economic pressure. Like elsewhere in the USSR, heavy industry – including the war industry – was developed on an accelerated timeframe in the Baltic countries. This industrialisation required a large workforce which Estonia itself could only provide a small part of, and the plan was to bring most of it in from outside the country. The masses of migrant workers made the regions bordering the Russian SFSR, Narva and Ida-Virumaa, problematic areas in which national composition remains a sensitive issue to this day. Due to the shift in its geopolitical position, Estonia experienced a large influx of migrants after World War II, with around 180,000 workers streaming into the country between 1945 and 1947. Following Stalin's death, this inflow decreased temporarily, and in the late 1950s, resettled Estonians began to return to their native land. Another wave of migrants arrived in the second half of the 1960s. By 1959, the percentage of native Estonians in the country had dropped to 74.6%, and by the end of the Soviet era it was as low as 61.5%.[31]

In the 1940s, the dynamics of the Estonian population changed as a result of diverse processes of mobility. In addition to movement caused by the war (escapees, return from temporary residences, demobilisation etc.) and people being settled from other Soviet republics, the composition and movements of the population were influenced by various measures of retribution against individuals and groups considered disloyal, including their deportation to remote areas or prison camps. The deportation operation in March 1949 enabled the Soviet authorities to carry out the collectivisation of agriculture and triggered a mass migration of the rural population into towns and other regions. Whereas only one third of all Estonians had lived in cities before 1945, more than half of the population resided in municipal areas by 1953.

30 Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml*, 110–111.

31 Kalev Katus, Allan Puur, and Asta Põldma, eds., *Eesti põlvkondlik rahvastikuareng* (Eesti Kõrgkoolidevaheline Demouuringute Keskus, RU Series D No 2, Tallinn, 2002), 54–55.

Fear of violence also made people seek shelter, with some of them leaving their homes and essentially living in exile voluntarily. Although everyone without a permanent place of residence and work was sanctioned in the Soviet system, some Estonians continued to hide themselves and their families for years, continually moving from one place to another. These ordeals have often been overlooked by research.[32] The regime strictly regulated migration within the state and imposed various restrictions concerning locations of work and residence.[33] The mechanism of compulsory registration of internal passports and places of residence established in the early 1930s was a key instrument of total control in Soviet society – the regime demanded to know where its citizens were and what they were doing at all times. In the years 1944 to 1991, some 500 criminal and 400,000 administrative proceedings were initiated in the Estonian SSR for violation of the passport regime.[34] In fact, between 1940 and 1956, people in the countryside effectively lived as serfs, since changing one's job without permission was punishable.[35] This was the most straining period in general for the Baltic peoples, whom the central regime aimed to transform into "new Soviet persons" by subjecting them to strict control through violence and forced migration, a unification policy dictated by Moscow, and the suppression of all opportunities for national development.[36]

Reforming agriculture: From restricted choices to coercive measures

During the interwar period, Estonia was an agrarian economy with a population of about one million, 67% of which lived in rural areas in 1939. Agriculture provided livelihoods for about 60% of the population. The country had one of the

32 Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Forced Migration of Estonian Citizens to the East 1941–1951: Some Similarities with the Accounts of People Who Fled to the West," in *Sovietisation and Violence: The Case of Estonia,* ed. Meelis Saueauk and Toomas Hiio (Eesti Mälu Instituudi toimetised, Proceedings of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory 1, 2018), 271–276.

33 David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924–1953*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 243–284.

34 Indrek Paavle, "Ebaühtlane ühtne süsteem: Sovetliku passisüsteemi kujunemine, regulatsioon ja rakendamine Eesti NSV-s," *Tuna* 2 (2011): 66–67.

35 Indrek Paavle, "'Kes tööd ei tee, ei pea ka sööma!' Ühe lootusetu võitluse lugu: Nõukogude töökohustus ja parasiitide vaenamine Eesti NSV-s," *Tuna* 4 (2015): 65.

36 Tõnu Tannberg, "Kreml ja Baltikum aastatel 1940–1953: kuidas sovetiseerida väikeriike. Autorist ja tema tema raamatust," in Jelena Zubkova, *Baltimaad ja Kreml 1940–53* (Tallinn: Varrak, 2009), 255.

highest per capita food productions in Europe and was a successful agricultural exporter in the 1930s, especially in the area of meat and dairy products.[37] The rapid and successful development of the country's agriculture bolstered national identity and individualism, which had always been among the key features of the Estonian mentality.[38] The dramatic changes that took place during the 1940s and 1950s in the course of Sovietisation destroyed earlier lifestyles and dealt a crushing blow to numerous socio-psychological values, making them a key issue for the interpretation of the entire Soviet period.

As some of the first Soviet reforms, land was expropriated, and taxes and restrictions were imposed. On 23 July 1940, the lower chamber of the Estonian parliament issued the "Declaration of Land as the Property of the Entire People", which resulted in large-scale dispossession and redistribution of land as well as establishing 30 hectares as a maximum size for farmsteads. This number would subsequently be reduced to between five and seven hectares. In autumn, a monetary reform regulating wages and prices caused a shortage of foodstuffs and essential commodities. To avoid increasing discontent among the people, Moscow initially made some compromises – for example by refraining from total nationalisation and land reform as well as by putting off the collectivisation of farms. The redistribution of land would continue after the war, however.

The state stockpiling system in the USSR had to ensure supplies of agricultural products through their compulsory sale based on plans and norms. In 1944, the system of compulsory sale was reintroduced, and the first norms and prices were fixed. As the natural taxes and norms of production appeared too low to Moscow, they were already raised the following year. The amount of production required by the state depended on the total area of the farm rather than on the area sown, the quality of the land, or the amount of available workforce. Until the republic's cereal norms were not fulfilled, farms were not allowed to sell

37 Anu Mai Kõll, *Peasants on the World Market: Agricultural Experience of the Independent Estonia 1919–1939* (Stockholm: Almqvist och Wiksell, 1994).

38 Li Bennich-Björkman, *Political Culture under Institutional Pressure: How Institutional Change Transforms Early Socialization* (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 28–35. Bennich-Björkman emphasises that strong individualism is one of the significant features of the Estonian mentality, and that it formed an important part of the early socialisation fabric. Estonian individualism has sometimes been contrasted with the more communal or collectivist Russian mind, with this difference expressing itself, for example, in the way Estonian and Russian villages were planned. While in Russian villages, the farmsteads and houses were built close together, houses in Estonia were placed far apart, which is sometimes interpreted as a symbol of the individualist Estonian peasant. To trace the roots of this individualism, we need to consider the *longue duŕee* of Estonian history.

their produce on the free market or through public purchase, and this prohibition was extended to those farms that had already fulfilled their quotas.[39]

These and various other measures show that ideological principles and adherence to USSR-wide tendencies were more important than economic arguments. Despite the decline of agricultural production and the further increase of norms and other obligations for farms (like the requirement to perform forestry work), along with the impoverishment of the population, Estonia did not suffer severe famines like several other regions including Ukraine and Moldova.[40] Nor did the authorities reconsider the need for reforms, however.

In 1947, a new collectivisation campaign was launched in the USSR that included the western republics, where individual farms were being restored after the war.[41] Stalinist agricultural policy might be viewed as a way of channelling funds from agriculture into the hands of the state to finance industrial investment in sectors like the arms industry.[42] The purpose of the establishment of collective farms was to ensure control by the authorities in the countryside. Every farmer had to give his land, animals, tools, and production facilities to the collective, meaning that prosperous individual farms were made unviable. Only a limited number of domestic animals as well as some buildings and a small private plot (about 0.5 ha) could be retained for personal use. When the Estonian peasants refused to join the collective farms voluntarily, measures practised in the Soviet Union since the 1920s were introduced; they ranged from inciting hatred between the rich and the poor within the village communities to mass repressions.

According to the Soviet understanding of Marxist ideology, the revolution had to liquidate the classes of the rich exploiters (the ruling class) and transfer power to the workers and peasants.[43] The "class struggle" justified brutality against those who doubted the policies being imposed, and Soviet leaders envisioned violence as

39 Indrek Paavle, "Vili ja munad režiimi teenistuses: Sundandam 1940. aastate Eesti külas," in *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, *The Estonian Historical Journal* 127/128 (2009): 215–220.

40 Veniamin Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946–1947 godov: proiskhozhdenije i posledstvija* (Moscow: Rossiiskaija akademija nauk, 1996); Nicholas Ganson, *The Soviet Famine of 1946–47 in Global and Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Igor Casu, "Do Starving People Rebel? Hunger Riots as Bab'y bunty in Spring 1946. Soviet Moldavia and the Resistance Debate," in *New Europe College Yearbook* (Bucharest, 2021), 7–53.

41 Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 164–171; Galina Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 49–56.

42 Mertelsmann, "Living on a Stalinist Kolkhoz," 83–94.

43 Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 4 (1993): 745–770.

one of the means of creating a new society.[44] Many people were labelled "socially alien elements" on the basis of their social status and considered enemies of the regime or disloyal citizens.[45] Since the class differences in independent Estonia were not pronounced enough to form a solid antagonistic basis for class struggle between the rich and the poor, hostility between the "classes" had to be artificially generated and imposed.

Expanding the class struggle required a constant differentiation of people into "right" and "wrong" groups that allowed the latter to be deprived of their property and freedom of action while granting benefits to those whom the state favoured. During the time of the redistribution of land, two types of lists were drawn up in the community committees: one naming the peasants who had excessive land to be expropriated, and one listing new owners who were to be given land. A new social class thus emerged in the country – new settlers whom the Soviet rule regarded as supporters. Nevertheless, it soon became obvious that the economic basis was not the main factor shaping attitudes toward Soviet rule, since there were anti-Soviet views among those who had obtained land from the state through redistribution as well as pro-Soviet sentiment among the kulaks.[46]

The campaign to liquidate the kulaks as a class also began in the Estonian SSR – in a first step through tax policies that turned the former landowners into tax debtors.[47] On 30 August 1947, the Council of Ministers of the ESSR established the criteria for defining a kulak household[48] and imposed higher agricultural taxes for those confirmed as kulaks. The lists of kulak farmsteads grew rapidly. It is important in this context to highlight the participation of local officials in the exclusion policy, which made them complicit in the eyes of the victims. Identification of kulaks and "enemies of the people" (persons in opposition actively working against the Soviet Union) would become one of the most destructive processes in the

44 David L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 239.

45 Paul R. Gregory, *Terror by Quota: State Security from Lenin to Stalin (An Archival Study)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 106–139.

46 David Feest, "Metsanurga kiri Pällile," *Tuna* 1 (2003): 76–86.

47 Anu Mai Kõll, *The Village and the Class War: Anti-Kulak Campaign in Estonia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 20–25; David Feest, "The Collectivization of Agriculture in the Baltic Soviet Republics 1944–1953," in *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe: Comparison and Entanglements,* ed. Iordachi Constantin and Arnd Bauerkämper (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 79–112.

48 A number of criteria were listed in descriptions of *kulak* households, such as regular farmhands or wage labour used in a systematic manner or non-family labour systematically paid for in kind, i.e. in products or use of machinery; earned income from the lease of farm machinery, mills or other subsidiary work; land rented for cash; or income earned from commercial activities.

villages. The materials and lists of kulaks compiled at the community level were then confirmed by the county executive committees and, finally, by the Council of Ministers.[49]

The consequence of these measures was the emergence of a group of internal refugees. Since the liquidation of the kulaks began by imposing higher and gradually increasing agricultural taxes, many of them were soon unable to pay their dues, and their property was subsequently inventoried and expropriated for a symbolic price. About 3,000 people were convicted of criminal or administrative non-compliance with the tax rules or other obligations, among them numerous women who had replaced their killed or arrested husbands as heads of their families; they were sent to prison for one to three years. This meant that in the years 1948 and 1949, the proportion of women among the Estonian prison population began to rise rapidly.[50] Many ruined farm owners gave up the fight, leaving their homesteads and going into hiding. Kulak families who chose to leave their homes referred to this process as "self-dekulakisation".[51] But it was not easy to give up one's land – most applications were turned down, and people were forced to continue farming. The internal refugees generated by this process often moved from one place to another for years, trying to find ways to provide for themselves.

As several studies demonstrate, the composition of the group labelled "kulaks" was extremely varied.[52] The most common accusation concerned the use of paid labour. Understandably, a productive farmstead required additional workforce. And although the use of paid labour was allowed according to a decree by the ESSR Council of Ministers issued on 26 September 1946 – it was prohibited as late as May 1949 following the forced collectivisation[53] – the authorities felt free to interpret the situation differently, regarding it as an "anti-Soviet activity".

Despite the increasing obligations, harsher sanctions, and attempts to prevent the rural population from leaving the villages, the policies were largely inefficient and the authorities failed to extract all the production of the farms. Although the propaganda for the establishment of collective farms was intense and intrusive, it did not have a significant effect on Estonian farmsteads: By 1949, only 10% of them had joined a collective farm. Armed resistance continued as well. In early 1948, Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, received a report from the officials tasked with inspecting the situation in the Baltic republics. It

49 Aigi Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas ja maakonnas* (Tartu: Kleio, 1998), 28–33; Kõll, *The Village and the Class War*, 85.

50 Paavle, "Sovietisation of Agriculture," 68–78. Paavle, "Ebaühtlane ühtne süsteem," 52.

51 Kõll, *The Village and the Class War,* 215; Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 17.

52 Kõll, *The Village and the Class War,* 113–158.

53 *ENSV Teataja* 4 (1949), article 101.

complained that counter-activities by "bourgeois nationalists" – people of anti-Soviet mentality were labelled as enemies with regard to both their class (bourgeoisie) and their nationality (non–Russians) – and their armed gangs, as well as the farm system in general, were impeding the establishment of collective farms.[54] In order to suppress the resistance and expedite the collectivisation, the authorities decided to tighten measures.

The decision to carry out a deportation operation was made in Moscow on 18 January 1949 at a session of the Politburo of the CPSU CC. On 29 January, the USSR Council of Ministers passed the decree implementing decision no. 390–139ss "On the deportation of kulaks and their families, illegal persons, families of bandits and nationalists killed in armed conflicts or convicted in court, legalised bandits who continue resistance activities and their families, as well as persons assisting the families of repressed bandits, from the territories of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia".[55] The deportation scheme thus targeted kulaks along with various groups of so-called "enemies of the people". As the personal files of these families reveal, the accusations formulated by the authorities were generally quite similar, with the only differences concerning the order of components relating to the issues of resistance and land. The common denominator for those deported as "enemies of the people" was that one of their relatives had previously been arrested, sent to Soviet prisons or labour camps, fled to the West, or remained missing. There were many with family members who had been part of the Home Guard,[56] served in the German army, or participated in armed resistance. People belonging to this category were often among the active leaders of their communities – heads of local governments and schools or other well-known public figures.[57] For propaganda purposes, after the deportation was carried out, it was referred to as a liquidation of kulaks as a class similar to the one carried out in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.[58] In reality, however, those listed as rich kulaks by the authorities had often become the least affluent farmers in their villages by 1949, with tremendous duties and taxes imposed

54 Meelis Saueauk, "O roli Kommunistitšeskoi partii Estonii v provedenii martovskoi deportatsii 1949 goda," *Tuna*, special issue "Spetsvypusk po istorii Estonii XX veka" (2010): 154–163.

55 Aigi Rahi-Tamm and Andres Kahar, "Deportation Operation *Priboi* in 1949," in *Estonia since 1944: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, ed. Toomas Hiio et al. (Tallinn: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda, 2009), 429–460.

56 The *Omakaitse* (Home Guard) units were formed in the summer of 1941 to counter the terror of the Soviet destruction battalions. During the German occupation, local Home Guard units served primarily behind the lines, guarding roads and bridges and conducting roundups. They took their orders from the organs of the Estonian Self-Administration as well as from German military authorities. The Home Guard was disbanded in 1944.

57 Rahi-Tamm, "Deportations in Estonia," 19–20.

58 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 21–22.

on their households. The masses of deportees consisted primarily of (ca. 80%) of women, children, and elderly persons who could hardly be regarded as dangerous criminals. In most cases, the deportations were not directly linked to activity by the affected individuals themselves: As was customary in the Soviet Union, the arrest, going into hiding, or political mentality of a person led to punishment being inflicted on their family.[59] The family was not absolved of its responsibility even when the original culprit had been imprisoned or died in a hard labour camp by the time their relatives were deported.[60]

The *Priboi* deportation operation was planned in detail by the USSR and republican Ministries of State Security (MGB, *Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti*) and Internal Affairs (MVD, *Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del*).[61] The task of the MGB was to draw up the lists of persons to be deported, detain them, and take them to loading stations. The USSR MVD saw to the transportation of the deportees. It was also responsible for guarding them on their journey as well as for administrative surveillance and employment in the places of destination in Siberia. According to calculations, 1,875 operative groups were to be formed for the deportation of 7,500 families – that is, each operative group was to be in charge of deporting four families. To carry out the task in Estonia, this would have meant employing 2,198 MGB operatives, 5,953 military personnel, 3,665 destruction battalion personnel, and 8,438 party activists (people in official positions) – a total of 20,254 people. It quickly became apparent that there was not enough appropriate staff available in the republic, however, and thousands of MGB officials and military personnel were transferred to Estonia for the purpose from all over the Soviet Union (for example, from Karelia, Leningrad, Belorussia, or Kazakhstan).[62]

The success of such a large-scale operation depended on its unexpectedness to keep people from fleeing or panicking. The operation was officially launched in the early morning of 25 March with the operative groups going into action, and it was to be carried out within three days. Every group was assigned definite number of families that the group had to send out. Local events unfolded under the leadership of MGB personnel. People taken into custody were put on trucks and taken to railway stations, where they were loaded into boxcars. Escorting and surveillance of the trains was the responsibility of the convoy troops. In the last days of March 1949, 19 trains containing 20,702 deportees set out from Estonia.[63]

59 Gregory, *Terror by Quota*, 124–125.

60 Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas*, 66–70.

61 The Ministries of State Security and Internal Affairs had many names at different times.

62 Rahi-Tamm and Kahar, "Deportation Operation *Priboi*," 431–439.

63 Ibid., 439–446.

The deportation operation was primarily aimed at disrupting the resistance movement and forcing the peasants to join the collective farms, and it broke the opposition to the collectivisation measures practically overnight. Simultaneously, everything that still remained of the peasantry's economic independence was eliminated.[64] Within ten days, about half of all farmsteads submitted applications to join a collective farm, and by 1951, 92% of all Estonian farms were collectivised.[65] Those who continued to resist collectivisation were ultimately broken with high taxes, and the entire process was declared completed in the Baltic region by 1952. Active armed resistance in Estonia abated during this time as well.[66]

The last stage of the decline of life in the countryside unfolded in the years 1950 to 1953, when not only the old farmers but even new settlers and functionaries who had complied with the Soviet regime and its ideology were bitterly disappointed – for in the course of collectivisation, everybody including the new settlers lost their land. The erstwhile concessions had merely been aimed at temporarily calming the situation and were of a tactical nature within the regime's longer perspective. Year by year, the desire of Estonians to leave the countryside increased. From 1950 to 1954, the number of working kolkhoz members dwindled from 211,000 to 183,000.[67] Although the state had imposed various surveillance measures regarding the population's movement, it could not entirely control it – especially in the sparsely populated rural areas, where thousands of farms lay isolated in the forests. In addition, the peasants demonstrated remarkable ingenuity in their efforts to leave.

In people's memories, the period of the establishment of collective farms was akin to a hard labour experience.[68] The kolkhozes primarily aimed to fulfil the state procurement norms at fixed (and extremely low) prices and deliver taxes. Every kolkhoz had to follow a detailed plan of production, with targets set so high that not much – if any – output could be distributed among the members according to their number of labour days. Kolkhoz work was also remunerated very badly. The kolkhoz chairman decided how many workdays each task was worth. In 1950, the average payment per workday on Estonian kolkhozes was 2.3 kg of grain, 1.6 kg of potatoes, and 1.68 roubles; two years later, the workers received

64 Feest, "The Collectivization of Agriculture," 96–98.

65 Rahi-Tamm and Kahar, "Deportation Operation *Priboi*," 446.

66 Tannberg, "Relvastatud vastupanuliikumine," 29.

67 Mertelsmann, "Living on a Stalinist Kolkhoz," 86.

68 Reet Ruusmann, "Kolhooside rajamine ja algusaastad kui ajaloopilt eestlaste elulugudes" (BA thesis, Tartu University, 2002); Jean Lévesque, "'Into the Grey Zone': Sham and the Limits of the Kolkhoz Order in the Post–war Russian Village, 1945–1953," in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Juliane Fürst (London: Routledge, 2006), 103–119.

only 1.0 kg of grain, 0.7 kg of potatoes, and 1.14 roubles. By comparison, a worker in 1950 received less for a day's work than he or she had for a single hour of unqualified work before the Sovietisation.[69] Coping with the harsh situation in the countryside was primarily possible by relying on the private plots of 0.5 hectares that provided the largest part of peasants' income. Without these private plots, the population could not be fed. Olaf Mertelsmann has argued that "living only with the income from the kolkhoz, peasants would have simply starved to death. Private plot and kolkhoz formed a symbiosis."[70] Despite its ideology, the government thus had to accept private food production. Only later, under Khrushchev's rule, were incentives raised by increasing the prices for agricultural products, and life in the countryside began to improve. Once the collective farms were allowed to apply some elements of market economy and organise production in a more rational manner, thereby motivating the workers, it became possible for them to turn profits. But these examples concern a later period, and they are not representative for all collective farms.[71]

Collectivisation also altered the meaning of working in society at large. Work is a significant part of an individual's daily life shaped by economic context, but it is also a multifaceted cultural construct.[72] In the Soviet Union, the relationship between the individual and the working collective was regarded as a cornerstone of society with the help of which Soviet citizens were educated and controlled – and their loyalty tested.[73] Collective interests were also ranked higher than those of the individual. The propaganda used in the process of liquidating the kulaks as a class and establishing collective farms made the advantages of collective work clear to the rural people: The land and means of production were collective property, and each citizen contributed to the wellbeing of the collective by fulfilling state plans, obliged to work according to the principle "he who does not work, neither shall he eat."[74] David L. Hoffmann has emphasised that peasants had to be transformed from petty landowners to rural labourers with a more proletarian consciousness who began to live "a collectivist life".[75] In reality, breaking the bonds of Estonian farmers with their fields and animals and replacing them with

69 Mertelsmann, "Living on a Stalinist Kolkhoz," 84–87.

70 Ibid., 88–91.

71 Indrek Jääts, "Sotsialistlik põllumajandus: varane kolhoosiaeg Oisu piirkonnas Järvamaal," *Akadeemia* 1–2 (2004).

72 Patrick Joyce, "The Historical Meanings of Work: An Introduction," in *The Historical Meanings of Work*, ed. Patrick Joyce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1–30.

73 Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How It Collapsed* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 39.

74 Vene NFSV tööseaduste koodeks (Tartu: Pedagoogiline Kirjandus, 1947), 3.

75 Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 48.

the misery of Soviet collective farm life meant a loss of work motivation and a drastic decrease in employee morale. Work on the collective farm was seen as the work of nobody, and "collective farmer" quickly became a derogatory term. Recklessness was the standard of everyday life.[76]

The peasants reduced their efforts in the nearly unrewarded work on collective farms, trying to work as little as possible for the kolkhoz, as confirmed by memories and agricultural statistics. Food production per employed person dropped by roughly one third compared to the last years of independence.[77] The fact that collectivised peasants needed additional income also led to stealing from the kolkhozes, though theft directly from other peasants occurred rarely. The primary targets of this pilfering were staple foods and animal fodder, any type of material in short supply, and small tools. The traditional saying "let the manor's rope trail", implying that one could be indifferent towards the job done for the manor or kolkhoz, became common. Since the collective farm symbolised property that was unfairly expropriated, taking some of it back was not considered theft. Stealing was widespread in the USSR in general, and the fight against it lasted all through the Soviet era with varying intensity. The Soviet population accepted the pilfering in factories and collective farms as a normal practice: According to Vladimir Shlapentokh, only about 20% of workers condemned it.[78]

Similar to the process of collectivisation, the USSR leadership did not take into account the historical background and cultural traditions of Estonia when implementing its plans for industrialisation, which were unrealistic due to the lack of local workforce. The state recruitment system stipulating the redistribution of people from the countryside to the cities came into operation soon after the re-establishment of Soviet power in Estonia. Migrant workers from other republics began to arrive in the country, leading to some of the longest-lasting and most critical demographic and cultural problems. Recruitment of local Estonian workers only started to pick up after the collectivisation drive, when people began to seek opportunities to escape the villages.[79] Rapid urbanisation as well as life in the collective farms shaped a novel way of life, and the new social environment necessitated the adoption of new habits reflecting the individual ability or inability to cope with new social realities.

76 Ruusmann, "Kolhooside rajamine."

77 Mertelsmann, "Living on a Stalinist Kolkhoz," 88.

78 Shlapentokh, *Normal Totalitarian Society*, 109.

79 David Vseviov, *Nõukogudeaegne Narva: Elanikkonna kujunemine 1944–1970* (Tartu: Okupatsioonide Repressiivpoliitika Uurimise Riiklik Komisjon, 2001), 64–66.

"Let them learn to work in Siberia"

Deportations were an important component of the policy of repression in the Soviet Union. The deportation operations carried out from 1919 to 1952 involved between 6 and 7 million people (of which at least 1.2 million perished) and were aimed at "cleansing" the border areas or certain regions, including the annexed territories, of aliens as well as certain domestic nationality groups.[80] In her study on special settlements, Lynne Viola writes that population groups from occupied Baltic states and other bordering nations were classified as "socially alien".[81]

Categorising the population included labelling some groups as "enemies", and the propaganda incited hatred for these groups in the public discourse. In Estonia, the kulaks were depicted as exploiters in the villages, living at the expense and using the workforce of others. This is illustrated by the rhetoric used at party meetings after the 1949 deportations, for example: "It was a good idea to deport the kulaks and enemies of the people. Let them now learn to work by themselves."[82] The authorities tried to convince the people that the kulaks were being offered an opportunity to redeem themselves and be re-educated into "new Soviet persons".

In the 1920s, the state-defined kulak family was stereotyped as something less than human. This dehumanisation facilitated their "liquidation as a class" through expropriations as well as by physical removal from the villages[83] and forced resettlement. "Ideology was and remained the animus of policy on kulak special resettlement, and indeed the Gulag as a whole."[84] It is difficult to discern any economic benefits of the deportations, since the authorities began to make plans about what to do with the army of kulak labourers only as the first contingents were already boarding the trains in 1930.[85] The Gulag, which has become synonymous with forced labour or concentration camps in the Soviet Union, was intended to solve two main problems: Punishment of the enemies of Soviet power and the creation of an economically self-supporting system. The goal of the camp network was to colonise regions in Siberia as well as Northern, Far-East, and Central Asia to exploit their natural resources using the forced labour provided by Gulag inhabitants. Such an ambitious plan of colonisation naturally required a large workforce. The Gulag economic order, which supplied the Soviet mining, timber, fuel, and other

80 Viktor Zemskov, *Spetspereselentsy v SSR, 1930–1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003), 283.
81 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 5.
82 Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas*, 64.
83 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 5–6.
84 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 189.
85 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 9; Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, 35.

industries, did not achieve efficiency, however – the predatory camp economy was only about half as productive as the rest of the state economy. As Galina Ivanova has emphasised, it is not at all surprising that the camp system underwent a complete reorganisation immediately after Stalin's death.[86]

In April 1949, another large group of people arrived in the Siberian special settlements from the Baltic republics. Some 7,550 families (around 21,000 persons) from Estonia were settled in the oblasts (administrative units, provinces) of Omsk, Novosibirsk, and Irkutsk as well as the Krasnoyarsk *krai* (province containing autonomous oblasts). In terms of gender and age, 7-year-olds formed the largest group, with underage children in total making up about 38% of the deported. Around 5% were over 70, and only roughly 10% were men of working age. The majority of the deportees were thus women with children.[87] Unlike the 1941 deportation, when men had been sent to prison camps and women with children to forced settlements, family members were not separated after the war – though of course many husbands and fathers of these women and children had been killed either in the war, during the resistance, or in prison camps. In addition, more than 9.000 people (including 3.000 men) escaped deportation by being undiscoverable when the authorities came for them. Although the question of listed people who had not been deported was raised repeatedly until 1953, there was no further deportation operation in Estonia – unlike Lithuania, where several more actions followed.[88]

The composition of a family largely determined its chances for survival in Siberia. Families where only the mother worked and had to feed the children – and often one or two grandparents – suffered serious subsistence problems and had to fight for survival almost the entire time after their forced resettlement. Families including men or older children – with the latter often having to help earn a living instead of studying – generally found it easier to cope with the difficult circumstances. Initially, however, everybody had to face the shock of being taken away from home, the journey into the unknown, and the misery of the Siberian villages.

For the reception of the deported and their distribution to regions, regional housing commissions consisting of the chairman of the respective region's executive committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies, the secretary of the regional party committee, and the head of the Directorate of Internal Affairs (UMVD, *Upravlenije Ministerstva Vnutrennih Del*) were formed. The Ministry of the Interior

86 Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, 189.

87 Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas*, 66–68.

88 Rahi-Tamm and Kahar, "Deportation Operation *Priboi*," 446–449; Arvydas Anušauskas, "Soviet Genocide and Its Consequences," *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 4 (1999), 132.

assumed the overall responsibility for employment and administrative surveillance of the special settlements. As the trains with deported persons arrived in Siberia, the chairmen of the local kolkhozes and sovkhozes (state farms employing wage labour) as well as some representatives of industrial enterprises gathered at the railway stations to augment their workforces. Families with more labour potential in the shape of men and older children were valued more highly. On the other hand, families with small children or elderly and sick members as well as individual deportees also had to be distributed. There were more than 2,850 single elderly persons, 146 invalids, and 185 children without parents or relatives among those deported from the Baltic republics.[89] Minors deported alone, as well as children whose parents died during the forced resettlement, were sent to orphanages.

The emotional state of the deported is reflected in an excerpt from the memories of Udo Suurtee, born in 1930, who was sent to the region of Tatarsk in Novosibirsk oblast:

> We were herded with our belongings into a big room where the slave market was held. I cannot describe it in any other terms. Like horse trading – they look into your mouth and clap you on the back. Everybody wanted the best workforce. Of course, they viewed the old and weak with a critical eye, they were regarded as redundant. They wanted the young and strong who could work. Builders and technicians – drivers, tractor drivers, smiths, etc. were most in demand. Nobody needed a young man eager to learn like me, but I was valued as a big and strong lad. The bosses also looked at the women with quite lustful eyes, but when it appeared that they had two or three children, the men's faces darkened.[90]

The vast majority of persons deported from the Baltic republics (97%) started working in struggling kolkhozes and state farms, while only 3% went to factories.[91] Siberian economic leaders hoped for additional workers, but the composition of the groups of deportees did not meet their expectations. Officials of the regions suffering from a permanent lack of workforce had made numerous proposals to Moscow for sourcing additional workers. The oblasts of Omsk and Novosibirsk were particularly outspoken in this regard, asking when the family members of the deported

89 Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," in *Toimik "Priboi": Artikleid ja dokumente 1949. aasta märtsiküüditamisest*, ed. Meelis Saueauk and Meelis Maripuu (Eesti Mälu Instituudi toimetised, Proceedings of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory 2, 2019), 76.

90 Estonian National Museum (ERM). In 1998, the museum sent out two questionnaires on deportations to its correspondents (nos. 200, 201). The received responses are preserved in the archives of the ERM KV 867–883. ERM KV, Uudo Suurtee.

91 Heinrihs Strods, "PSRS Valsts Drošības ministrijas pilnīgi slepenā Baltijas valstu iedzīvotāju izsūtīšanas operācija 'Krasta banga' ('Priboj') (1949. gada 25. februāris–23. augusts)," *Latvijas Vēsture* 30, no. 2 (1999), 45.

who had remained in Estonia could be relocated to Siberia.[92] The authorities did not make such decisions, however.

Immediately before the deportees arrived, propaganda was disseminated among the locals that robbers and fascists were coming on the trains, and a special campaign entitled "On the reception of resettled collective farmers from overpopulated regions of the Soviet Union" was initiated.[93] Since the establishment of surveillance was the most important indicator for the leaders in Moscow, unfriendly attitudes towards the newcomers were thought to contribute to strengthening control. Minimising the sympathy of fellow citizens for the victims was also a continuation of the dehumanisation of deportation. Silvi Korp (Jõekallas), who was born in 1939 and deported to the oblast of Novosibirsk, recalled how "the attitude of locals belonging to different nationalities varied. Initially the influence of communist education was felt, we were called fascists and mud was thrown at us. Later, the attitude changed completely."[94] It soon became apparent that the locals in many places had themselves arrived as deportees during the collectivisation campaign in the 1930s, and the initial barriers disappeared.

The most important representative of public and supervisory authority was the commandant, whose word was law in the special settlement.[95] A total of 138 special administrative headquarters (*komendatura*) for the surveillance of deportees from the Baltic republics were established; their task was to monitor the presence of people and their compliance with the restrictions, preventing infringements and holding those responsible to account. The special settlers were not allowed to leave the territory of their settlements – they were effectively subject to movement restrictions, attached to a specific district with no opportunity to freely choose their residence. A permit issued by the commandant was required for any kind of movement, even if it was only to a neighbouring village to visit friends and relatives or go to a doctor. All contacts between people were subject to strict control.[96]

One of the harshest components of the dehumanisation of the 1949 deportees was the fact that they were sent to the special settlements permanently – that is, for the rest of their lives. This was repeated to them continuously from the moment the responsible operative group entered their home to take them away until they disembarked from the trains and were distributed among the places of residence. The recollections of Ele Tapper-Teras (born 1939), who was taken to the Tschulym region of Novosibirsk oblast, reflect the deportees' confusion:

92 Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 81.
93 Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 78.
94 ERM KV, Silvi Korp (Jõekallas).
95 Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 93.
96 Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 91–94.

> The commandant told the people who were herded together to sit down, but there were no chairs or benches in the room. Estonians were not used to sitting on the floor, thus nobody followed this order. There were about 70 people altogether. The floor was clean, yet nobody obeyed even the second or the third order. The people thought they were being told to sit on the floor so that it would be easier to shoot them in the back of the neck and replied to the commandant that no, we prefer to die with our heads held high, not ask for mercy crawling. Some people even began to sing. The interpreter had quite a hard time explaining that sitting on the floor is Russian custom and nobody will be shot, but they will be informed of the existing arrangements, told what they were allowed and not allowed to do. And that the next day would be the first day of work and they had to demolish the plank fence surrounding the barracks.[97]

Since the deportations in the Soviet Union took place in different periods and on different bases, the deportees were divided into categories that changed frequently. The main differences concerned the duration of their exile (initially, terms of 5, 10, or 20 years) and the severeness of movement restrictions.[98] In the first years after the war, the number of people who fled from the special settlements rose rapidly. During this time, around 900 children deported in 1941 returned to Estonia, but most of them were arrested again after the 1949 deportation and sent back to the special settlements. To prevent escapes and unauthorised departures from the settlements, the laws were tightened in 1948: Under Article 82 of the Criminal Code of the Russian SFSR, absconding persons could be punished with imprisonment including forced labour of up to 20 years. This penalty was subsequently reduced to 10 years. At the same time, the term of exile was extended for some categories of people, including those deported from the Baltic SSRs: They were deprived of the right to return home forever. Later, the 1941 deportees from the Baltic states, who had initially been sent to the special settlements for 20 years, were also included in the group of permanent exiles.[99]

The lives of the people living in the special settlements were subject to rigorous and permanent control; commandants relied on informers and the vigilance of the working collective – neighbours and acquaintances who helped to gather information about the movements and relationships of the inhabitants, their contacts to their native lands, and their moods and the topics they discussed.[100] Yet the entire arrangement of life could not be based exclusively on the requirements of control imposed by Moscow, even though it was the main ideological instrument in the process of re-education. In order to better understand the situation, we need to look at the circumstances the deportees from Estonia found themselves in.

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97 ERM KV, Ele Tapper (Teras).

98 Zemskov, *Spetspereselentsy v SSR*, 100–105.

99 Zemskov, *Spetspereselentsy v SSR*, 159–169; Rahi-Tamm, "Deportations in Estonia," 22–24.

100 Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 91–97.

In 1947, there was a severe famine in Siberia that was at times even worse than the one in 1932–1933. In addition to the damage caused by drought, parts of the crops perished under the snow in early winter because there were not enough workers to harvest them. Reports by the MVD of the USSR describing cases of people eating horse and cat meat, as well as the immensity of the wave of dysentery and other extreme phenomena, provide evidence of the graveness of the situation. In many regions, the collective farmers could not even buy bread (they were to receive 100–150 grams of bread per labour day) since their salaries were not paid for more than half a year. The situation only began to stabilise to some extent in the summer of 1948.[101]

When the contingent from the western regions arrived in April 1949, thick snow still covered the fields, and the deportees had to perform temporary work. Although the lack of workforce was acute everywhere, no comprehensive plans regarding the reception and employment of the arriving labourers had been made. They were housed in barracks, clay and soil huts, and other arbitrary rooms unsuitable for living. Many became subtenants in the already overcrowded houses of locals. Those who refused to give shelter to the newcomers were threatened with punishment, which naturally influenced the mutual relationships and general mood.[102] Since the deported had been sent to Siberia permanently, job and accommodation security were important. Archival documents reveal how, beginning in the second half of 1949, the central authorities in Moscow shifted responsibility for the working and living conditions at the special settlements more and more to the local oblast authorities. The leaders of the more problematic kolkhozes and sovkhozes were even threatened that the deportees would be transferred elsewhere should no measures be taken to improve their living conditions, while the more successful ones were promised new contingents.[103]

Recollections as well as the records of executive committees and party organisations in the regions describe the gloomy situation. A report by the head of the UMVD of the Novosibirsk oblast from 16 January 1950 tells of people suffering from food shortages, especially elderly people living alone and the sick who did not have relatives and could not work. Many families had no grain or other foodstuffs – there were around 500 such people in the regions of Mihailovsk, Pihtovsk, Severny, among others. Several other areas were also suffering from severe food privation.[104] As the harvest in 1949 was bad, it was impossible to pay for labour

101 Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 80–81.

102 Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas*, 97.

103 Documentation Centre of Contemporary History of Omsk Oblast (TSDNIOO), f. 955, op. 9, d. 5, l. 9–10.

104 Partijnij arhiv Novosibirskovo oblastnogo komiteta KPSS (PANOK), f. 4, op 34, d. 371, l. 186.

days in grain. Nine Estonian families living at the Red October collective farm in the Severny region were given bread in summer, but in autumn the authorities demanded that they repay this "loan" – which was impossible as they had no bread at all. Potatoes and many other vegetables were also eaten by rats.[105]

The chances of getting remunerated for work varied. In sovkhozes, where salaries were paid, it was generally possible to cope somehow, but the situation in the kolkhozes was more severe. The kolkhoz was a collective enterprise whose members shared the income. The individual shares were calculated on the basis of the so-called labour day (or norm day) principle – depending on time worked and the skill required for specific tasks, payment in grain or other foodstuffs was calculated. And kolkhoz work was quite differentiated: Field work was rated the lowest in terms of labour days, whereas the collective farm's chairman was at the top of the scale. The amount of the individual workers' payouts depended on how much was left after the state had taken its share. Grain and other agricultural products grown in kolkhozes were sold to the state at fixed prices. From this income, every kolkhoz bought the required means of production, and whatever was left was divided among its members according to their contribution expressed in labour days. It was paid in grain or sometimes in cash at the end of the economic year. In 1949 and 1950, these salaries were little more than symbolic. The special settlers were subjected to gruelling treatment with regard to the length of their workdays and other labour norms, often toiling without any days off.[106] In order to survive, they were forced to accept any kind of work and obligations.

In 1949, the deportees from the Baltics found themselves in a situation in which they were obliged to work but had to find other ways to subsist – either by way of the subsidiary private plots or by finding additional income. Since they initially had no subsidiary private plots, however, they received foodstuffs on loan: They were given a fixed amount of bread that was deducted from their salaries, and it could thus happen that at the end of the work year, they had nothing to receive. At best, they managed to get out of debt. To survive, people traded the clothes and other items they had taken with them for food. The absence of proper sustenance and the extreme living conditions – including a lack of winter clothes and appropriate footwear that increased susceptibility to infectious diseases – were reflected in high mortality rates. The death rate among those deported from Estonia in 1949 was around 15%. This was still lower than the death rate of the 1941 deportees, however: The latter's fate was extremely tragic, with about 60%

105 Gosudarstvennij arhiv Rossijskoj Federatsii (GARF), f. R-9479, op. 1, d. 464, l. 122–124.
106 Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 139–148; Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 96–102; Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 89–91.

of them perishing.[107] When assessing the situation of the deportees, it is always important to consider whether they were deported before or after the war, as well as the specific contexts of the respective point in time, in order to avoid misinterpretations.

Due to a lack of available documentary data, there are gaps in our knowledge about the mortality rate. The first three years from 1949 to 1951 were the most dramatic. Monthly mortality was highest between February and April, when food supplies were depleted, and people exhausted from malnutrition were more susceptible to various infectious diseases. Children born in Siberia most frequently died of diphtheria. Various kinds of accidents also occurred, and access to medical treatment was very limited.[108]

In 1951 and 1952, the general quality of life (working conditions, nutrition, and availability of medical services) began to improve, as is clearly manifested in decreased mortality rates and a normalisation of birth rates. These indicators began to improve when family members who were initially sent to different settlements were allowed to reunite: People were transferred in groups and with the permission of the MVD of the USSR, and the members of separated families tried to move to places where the living conditions were better. Yet in several cases, reunion was only possible after release from forced settlement. In the 1950s, some family members who had been sentenced to time in prison camps (mostly men) were also able to re-join their families. According to a decree issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 11 March 1952, all people convicted for political reasons were sent to their families in special settlements after serving their sentences. Furthermore, until 1956, kulaks who had been arrested prior to the deportation of their families in March 1949 for not paying the unaffordable agricultural taxes and had served their sentences were also sent to Siberia.[109]

According to the regulations concerning the special settlements, deportees originally had to be assigned to fixed places of residence. However, the famine and extreme circumstances of 1947 and 1948 showed the MVD that some measure of movement and resettlement to places with better living and working conditions had to be allowed in order to improve the situation. People tried to escape from the most miserable places at any cost. The main direction of migration was from kolkhozes to sovkhozes and from remote areas to district centres. In March 1949, when the deportation operation was carried out, Ethel Luus (Piht) (born 1926) was away from home visiting her relatives in Tallinn, but she was apprehended there

107 Rahi-Tamm, "Human Losses," 30–38.

108 Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 90.

109 Estonian National Archive, RA, ERAF.17SM.3.112, 119; Rahi-Tamm, "Elu asumisel Siberis," 90–91.

and deported separately from her family. In October, she was allowed to join her mother, sisters, and brothers in the region of Altai in Krasnoyarsk *krai*:

> It was not like a real village, it seemed too small for that. It was situated at foot of a mountain. There were no streets, people walked and rode through everywhere they could. [. . .] The village was located 7 km from the wild taiga (boreal forest), there were no wooden houses. [. . .] The dwelling was made of a mixture of cow manure and straw pressed between two boards, [. . .] later it was covered with clay and finally with lime plaster. [. . .] There were red cockroaches in every house. For the pigs, people dug holes in the ground, covered them with a kind of roof and that was it. [. . .] Mother lived in a collective farm, and with her were also three sons of her friend, who had been deported without their parents (mother took care of them). There were two collective farms in this village – one was rich and the other was poor – like in fairy tales. We, of course, lived in the poor one where even the locals had not enough food, not to speak of people like us. We lived in this collective farm for two years and then mother demanded that she be allowed to work somewhere where salaries were paid. Thus, we got the opportunity to move to Ochury, where my brother and I also found jobs at the granary.[110]

As the cases of Ethel and many others illustrate, the imperatives of real life and the death of thousands of people forced the authorities to make certain changes. While the deportees were initially deployed to perform casual and mostly unskilled work in the fields and forests, they were gradually transferred to jobs with better salaries that required special skills. Women most frequently mention ploughing, harrowing or disc harrowing, hoeing, haymaking, and harvesting as the most common jobs. In winter, they worked at storage facilities and kilns, performing sorting tasks and the like. They were also milkers and stock farmers, builders and general labourers, or they provided other physical work. Older people were usually employed in horticultural brigades. Men and boys were initially put to work at cattle sheds or building sites as well as various transport operations. The eventual changes to life and circumstances in Siberia became most apparent in the employment and coping of men, which simultaneously reflected the shift in political prejudices of the local authorities. As there were only few men, male Estonians were soon entrusted with tasks like collective farm brigadier or chairman, while most physical labour remained to be done by women. Many young men were trained as car or tractor drivers, their technical skills acquired in Estonia allowing them to advance more quickly. Hard-working and responsible individuals were appointed to senior positions like farm manager or bookkeeper, and some were even allowed to pursue their original profession – for example as teachers or doctors – which had initially been prohibited.[111]

110 ERM KV, Ethel Luus (Piht).

111 Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas*, 88–92.

Any type of skill providing additional income (crafts, sewing, etc.) significantly influenced a deportee's ability to get by, and parcels and money sent from Estonia were likewise of great importance. When people were allowed to establish private plots, their quality of life also improved considerably: It enabled them to alleviate the food gap and sell their crops at the market. The practices learned in their native land, which Estonians used on their private plots and especially in animal husbandry, provided good results and were followed and widely adopted. Effectively, the kulaks sent to Siberia to "learn to work" ended up introducing innovations to the locals. The replacement of the obligation of labour days for which they were primarily paid in bread and grain with actual salaries also motivated them to be more active. At the earliest opportunity, they strove to escape from the crowded communal living quarters and build their own earth or clay huts. Later on, families moved to better flats or built their own log houses; the shortage of living space would remain an acute problem for years, however.

A significant share of the people deported from Estonia believed that they would achieve a level of subsistence corresponding to the living standards of an average Soviet family within six or seven years. Most of them also confirmed that habits and meanings of work played an important role in their lives. The innovative methods of work in different areas (agriculture, animal husbandry, crafts, technology, administration, etc.) contributed to the normalisation of social communication. The social status of the Estonian deportees, which was initially quite low not only due to ideological influences and bias but also because of their poor Russian, began to improve. During the first two years, the deportees had to struggle for survival and face various prejudices and cultural shocks. Deprived of all hope of return to their homeland, they had to find some meaning in their lives to fight frustration. Their recollections clearly show how they tried to overcome their sadness with the support of amiable natives and friends and regain the dignity that had been taken from them through their work.[112]

Without a doubt, the process of the forcibly resettled Estonians' integration into the social environment of Siberia requires more detailed investigation. On the basis of studies conducted thus far, it can be argued that the initiatives by Estonians that were recognised by their communities or enterprises motivated them to make further efforts and broadened their opportunities to ensure subsistence. Every national group shaped and transported the patterns of behaviour

112 Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "On the Borderline between Tears and Laughter: Changes of Tonality in the Life Histories of Estonian Deportees," in *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe*, ed. Simona Mitroiu (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 147–152; Alain Blum, Marta Craveri, and Valérie Nivelon, eds., *Mir Gulaga i Spetposelenii: Rasskazyvaiut Svideteli iz Tsentralnoi i Vostochnoi Evropy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2016).

characteristic to its home and cultural context. As Norman Naimark has emphasised, the deportees were forced to forget their native land and culture.[113] Against this background, it is particularly interesting to examine which factors helped them resist the pressure of the authorities and which patterns supported their adaptation. A specific subculture emerged in Siberia that was influenced by cultural elements of both locals and the various repressed national groups.

By the mid-1950s, when people began to be released from the special settlements after Stalin's death, the social status of the deported had changed considerably: Now the former "elements of the parasitic class" were considered hard-working men and women with an eagerness to learn. The local leaders did not want to lose them and recommended they stay in Siberia rather than returning to their native lands. As a sign of public recognition, numerous deportees were awarded diplomas, medals, and orders for their good work.[114] From the perspective of the Siberian authorities, they had been able to stabilise their existence there by the mid-1950s, manoeuvring between the rules and attitudes prescribed by Moscow and the exigencies of local life.[115]

From special exile to home

Stalin's labour camp system began with mass arrests and deportations of kulaks, and it ended with the mass release of ordinary Russian workers and peasants in the amnesty declared days after the dictator's death in March 1953.[116] The dismantling of Stalin's Gulag occurred step by step.[117] Roughly 70,000 people were sent to Gulag prisons and into exile from the Estonian SSR between 1940 and 1953; around 25,000 of them were killed or died there.[118] When Lavrentii Beria, one of the heads of the Gulag reform who understood the Gulag crisis, was removed from his position in June 1953, the pronouncement of successive amnesties was

113 Norman Naimark, "Ethnic Cleansing between War and Peace," in *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 233–235.

114 Rahi, *1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas*, 125.

115 Rahi-Tamm, "Homeless Forever," 70–76.

116 Golfo Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity in Stalin's Gulag* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 244–247.

117 Marc Elie, "Khrushchev's Gulag: The Soviet Penitentiary System after Stalin's Death, 1953–1964," in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 109–142.

118 Rahi-Tamm, "Human Losses," 25–46.

delayed. Plans for a more large-scale liberation of people who had been sent to special exile from the Baltic republics were not realised; the amnesties began gradually and were distributed over several years according to categories. The restrictions concerning the special settlements were first lifted for underage persons; the release process as a whole intensified in 1956, but more widespread liberation only really began in 1958. According to data from the MVD of the Estonian SSR, 27,837 people were released from special settlements during the years 1954 to 1960.[119]

The expectations arising among Estonians with the opportunity to return to their homeland were high. The longing for a return to their homeland had definitely been one of the primary survival and coping strategies of the deportees. Yet people were afraid to talk about it even among friends, as they feared rumours might reach their commandant and they would be even more strictly controlled as a result. But despite the claims of the authorities that it would never happen, the hope to return home persisted throughout the time of exile; in the mood reports by the MVD, the deportees from the Baltic republics always stood out in this regard.[120]

Returning home from Siberia required intensive preparations: People had to sell their houses, domestic animals, household implements, and other items they could not take with them to Estonia. They also had to cover the travel expenses themselves. Loreida Sims (born 1930) recalled her return as follows:

> I was looking forward to arriving on Estonian soil with excitement. I was rather confused when I heard people speaking Estonian in a small railway station. [. . .] I had to hold myself back not to go and introduce myself as an Estonian. I was so happy. [. . .] My husband Tõnis liked rural life; he got a job as a mechanic in the collective farm "Üksmeel". We got a room in an expropriated house. I also bought back a part of our family's furniture from the Lehtpuu family – two chairs, a table and a wall clock. [. . .] Tõnis also bought back a bed frame, a cupboard, and a chest of drawers that his acquaintances had kept. [. . .] We were happy to be able to live in our native land again.[121]

Unfortunately, this feeling of happiness did not last long for everyone; in many cases, the joy of returning home was soon supplanted by disappointment. For in the eyes of the authorities of the Estonian SSR, the persons coming back from prison camps and special settlements were problematic: They threatened the achieved stability, and various restrictions were therefore applied to them. One

119 Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Doubly Marginalized People: The Hidden Stories of Estonian Society (1940–1960)," in *War, Revolution, and Governance: The Baltic Countries in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Lazar Fleishman and Amir Weiner (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 242–245.

120 Rahi-Tamm, "Deportations in Estonia," 48.

121 ERM KV, Loreida Sims.

of the most significant of these was the prohibition to return to their original homes. The former individual farmhouses had mostly been destroyed or ravaged, turned into offices for collective farms, or inhabited by newcomers. According to a regulation passed by the Council of Ministers of the ESSR on 1 October 1957, persons released from special settlements were allowed to live anywhere in Estonia except in the capital Tallinn, in border zones, and in the cities and districts from which they had been deported. Another clause stipulated that confiscated property would not be returned.[122]

At the same time, local authorities did have the right to allow the elderly, disabled, and persons conducting themselves in a "positive" manner to return to their former homes. As the documented cases show, the exercise of this power depended on the relations of individuals to the local authorities: Some people were permitted to return to their native villages, while others were systematically excluded. This unequal treatment raised many questions, especially among the returnees themselves, and prompted a wave of letters and appeals to higher governmental institutions asking for help in resolving various situations.[123] Whether people succeeded in asserting their interests – and to what extent – depended on numerous factors. Tensions in the villages dating from the period of collectivisation and the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" had not abated by the end of the 1950s.

There was a special category of people among the returning deported who were prohibited from living anywhere in the territory of Estonia. According to current knowledge, this restriction was applied to at least 2,627 people who had lived in special settlements, but more precise information on how or why they were selected has not been found.[124] The affected persons themselves sometimes referred to it as a "second deportation". Eda Anton (born 1944) described such a situation:

> I call the following period the second deportation, the second Siberia. When we arrived in Estonia [in 1958], my father found a job at a collective farm near Väike-Maarja and went to the passport office to register. The official's answer was very short – your family has no right to live in the ESSR, and you have to leave within three days or else . . . Everybody was stunned. [. . .] Still, father heard from his former fellow Siberians in Valga that our family

122 Rahi-Tamm, "Doubly Marginalized People," 247.

123 Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 50–78.

124 Aivar Niglas, "Release ahead of Time of Estonian Citizens and Residents Repressed for Political Reasons by the Soviet Authorities and Their Rehabilitation from 1953 to the 1960s," in *Estonia since 1944: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, ed. Toomas Hiio et al. (Tallinn: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda, 2009), 481.

> was not the only one to be turned down, and that the others had settled on a collective farm 6 kilometres to the east of Valga. So, we became residents of Latvia.[125]

The majority of the persons subject to this ban moved to the Valka region of the Latvian SSR or the Pskov oblast in the Russian Federation near the border to Estonia. Most of them were allowed to return to Estonia in the 1960s, but for a certain group of people the restriction remained in place until the end of the Soviet era.[126]

Due to the negative attitude of the authorities, these people found it difficult to get jobs or continue their studies, and opportunities to do so depended largely on the will and courage of directors of enterprises or schools to employ or enrol them. Fear of becoming compromised through contacts with the "undesirable" persons also spread throughout Estonian society. This prejudice by their fellow citizens caused permanent feelings of guilt among those who had been made culprits by the authorities, and they thus became doubly marginalised – first by being convicted by the regime, and then through condemnation by their compatriots.[127]

The deportees' memories of their Siberian hardship were also influenced by their impressions upon returning to their native land. Individual victims' assessments of their experiences vary, mainly depending on what happened to them and their families specifically – in particular, to what extent they had to face death and other difficulties and problems.[128] The ability to cope and overcome the challenges differed between families, areas, and periods. Ultimately, the traces of people's personal traumas and the varying tension of remembrance still shape the discourse on the deportations in Estonian society to this day and will continue to do so.

Conclusion

The decision to perform the mass deportation in 1949 was made in Moscow at the highest level of the Soviet regime. The action was carried out as a military operation by the power structures, leaving no choice for the individuals segregated from society. The forced displacement (or forced mobility) did not take into account people's wishes, their ability to cope with harsh conditions in the remote areas, or individual factors like age, gender, civil status, skills, experiences, education, or knowledge of

125 Memories of Eda Anton, written down on 21 March 2011 (at the author's disposal).
126 Rahi-Tamm, "Doubly Marginalized People," 248–250.
127 Rahi-Tamm, "Doubly Marginalized People," 247–248.
128 Aigi Rahi–Tamm, "On the Borderline," 144–164.

foreign languages. To the Soviet authorities, the implementation of measures based on ideology was of primary importance. They did not care that a considerable part of a qualified workforce with permanent residence was turned into forced migrants who had to fight for survival in an unfamiliar environment and accept casual labour, as the cases described here illustrate. Although the organisers of production in the target regions were aware of the defects in the system, the mobility of forced labour made it an attractive option.[129]

Since economic factors were not relevant compared to political considerations, the re-education of this "contingent" was a priority, particularly in light of the understanding that they were to remain in the special settlements forever. The hostile environment experienced by the deportees among the locals was consciously created before their arrival, and the permanent control of communication, the dominant mood, and the severe movement restrictions did not facilitate their integration – rather, they increased their opposition to the situation. As the MVD reports confirm, the Baltic deportation victims firmly believed they would be able to return home at some point in the future. This set them apart from other categories of population and impeded their adaptation as well. In their attempts to shape a socialist society, the authorities ignored and underestimated the role of individual values and did not consider regional peculiarities or traditions.

Assessing the situation from the Siberian viewpoint, it is clear that the composition of the groups deported in March 1949 in terms of gender and age was a disappointment for those who had to receive them and provide jobs and places of residence. The target regions, where economic and living conditions were already poor, did not need more people in precarious circumstances, and the problems created by the influx of deportees could not be solved by intensifying the mechanisms of control and preventing escapes. What was needed was an effective workforce, and this would have required a different approach. Since the makeup of families largely determined their ability to get by, the authorities began to permit family members who had been sent to different settlements to reunite. The first relocations were soon followed by others, and in the 1950s people who had served their sentence in prison camps were likewise sent to join their families in special settlements.

Contacts with men and women who had been used to working on farms and whose earlier skills and experience served as good examples resulted in heads of local enterprises who wanted to improve people's quality of life beginning to employ more active and efficient deportees from poorer places. As soon as possible, Estonians in Siberia moved from poor collective farms to more successful ones or

129 Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, 190.

to sovkhozes, and later also to cities. Such concessions regarding movement, along with regulations allowing them to work in specialised jobs instead of providing only basic physical labour, improved the deportees' ability to cope. Many young people began to acquire technical and other skills needed for more qualified jobs.

The work culture characteristic of Estonian identity that helped the deportees survive the first years and later gave them the moral strength needed to undertake efforts to improve their economic situation and find the motivation to pursue careers also enabled them to restore the self-esteem that had been severely damaged in the process of the dehumanisation of kulaks. Removed from their native land as "people who did not work", the kulaks ultimately began to teach others in Siberia how to work effectively, thereby turning the initial ideological scheme upside down. Amidst the Siberian hunger and misery, the authorities' aim to eradicate elements of the pre-Soviet village economy, where family members worked to serve the needs of their own homestead with the diverse skills of both men and women, collided with a reality in which attitudes and skills acquired through work culture on farms appeared to save the lives of thousands. In other words, real life did not confirm the advantages of ideologised collective life – but the Soviet power apparatus could not admit it for fear of disrupting the principled faith in the superiority of socialism over capitalism.

The local authorities responsible for organising life and work in Siberia had to manoeuvre between the orders from Moscow and the realities of everyday life, and their policies appear to have been rather chaotic as a result. Over the years, the initial strict prohibitions and restrictions were relaxed – especially concerning movement from the initial fixed residences to others even before the principle of sending people to special settlements for life was retracted. However, the deportees return to their native land in the second half of the 1950s exposed them to negative attitudes by the government of the Estonian SSR, dealing another severe blow to their slowly returning self-esteem.

The imposed restrictions re-endorsed the term 'kulak', thus sending a signal to society that the authorities had not been mistaken in their policy. The prohibition against going back to one's own former farm and native village was particularly insulting to the older generation, whose primary motivation for survival in Siberia had been to make it back home and not be buried in foreign soil. But now the doubly marginalised people were forced to seek other jobs and residences for many years. In the case of such movements to seek a home due to personal restrictions, the boundaries between voluntary and forced migration appear blurred. A similar process occurred in the case of internal refugees in the 1940s, when farmers suffering from high taxes left their farms and moved from place to place with their

families for many years. The pivotal changes affecting the families stigmatised as *kulaks* were thus intertwined with diverse movements in both Estonia and Siberia.

For the authorities, collectivisation provided certain results: It led to increased state revenues from agriculture. Yet in a longer perspective, it actually meant a decline in farming output. It did not consider regional peculiarities or local farming traditions, and the low effectiveness of agriculture consequently became too burdensome for the economy.[130] Although kolkhozes differed in terms of the quality of their management, their specialisation, and other circumstances, the collective farm system never enabled efficient agricultural production in Soviet Estonia. Collectivisation uprooted the peasants from their homes, the land they had cultivated, and their farm animals, turning a part of the population that valued its traditions and native homes into city people or migrants, often changing their workplaces and residences against their will. This specific form of mobility led to a decline in agricultural employment and engendered a chaos that has been interpreted as biographical rupture. The metaphor of rupture is a key notion in postsocialist analyses of Soviet society, as it stands for the abrupt social changes that caused breaks in national continuity at the political, cultural, and cognitive level.[131]

Authoritarian regimes have frequently attempted to shape people's attitudes with prohibitions and orders, ignoring the limits imposed by their way of thinking and internal values. The case examined in this contribution vividly demonstrates that coerced labour is a complex phenomenon in which political, economic, and cultural factors resulting from the general strategies of authorities as well as from individual opportunities are intertwined. In addition to direct physical compulsion, numerous other factors and hybrid forms of coercive situations exist depending on the severity of prohibitions and requirements. In the Baltic space, the battle between new and old lifestyles, mentalities, and attitudes lasted for decades and continued until the end of the Soviet era.

130 Olaf Mertelsmann, "Searching for Reasons of the Forced Collectivization in the Baltic Republics," in *Occupation Regimes in the Baltic States 1940–1991*, ed. Dzintars Ērglis (Riga: Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Apgāds, 2009), 638.

131 Ene Kõresaar, "Elu ideoloogiad: kollektiivne mälu ja autobiograafiline minevikutõlgendus eestlaste elulugudes," (Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum), 107–110.

Claudia Bernardi

Chapter 7
Empalmado y Contratado: The Valorisation and Coexistence of Labour Mobility and Immobilisation in the Experience of Mexican 'Braceros', 1940s–1960s

In the nineteenth century, the world experienced a considerable proliferation of labour forms relating to capital, as well as a massive surge of worker mobility between and within continents.[1] Although characterised by different logics of coercion, most of these forms of labour shared the feature of mobility required by the emerging mode of operation of capital and increased global production. Within this stream of mobile workers, there were attempts by institutional and private actors to profit from workers through direct recruitment and importation. There are many well-known and emblematic cases of labour mobility to the American continent as well as some lesser-known but nevertheless significant instances of mobility within the Americas – like the Mexican *vaqueros* brought to Hawaii to "handle horses and cattle" in 1832, an early example of the relevance of skill in the selection of foreign workers.[2] The 1800s witnessed the multiplication of labour mobility as a driving force for the booming primary sector of the economy during the great cycle of capital accumulation in the Second Industrial Revolution.[3]

The extensive movements of workers to and within North America, along with the processes of immobilisation intertwined with them, provide a varied bundle of stories depicting forms of labour coercion. One well-known case sheds light on the varied ways in which mobility and immobility functioned as drivers of labour coercion through the valorisation of workers – that is, the sum of all means applied to derive value from the lives of workers from the very beginning of their process of mobility: The temporary movement of Mexican labourers to

1 This work is funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU and by the 2021 STARS Grants@Unipd programme, research project ESSENTIA- *The Mobility Regime across Mexico and United States: the case of farmworkers from Tabasco and Oaxaca (1930s–1970s).*

2 National Archives of the United States, *Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General,* 92-FL-4-4-12.

3 Isabella Black, "American Labour and Chinese Immigration," *Past & Present* 25 (1963): 61–67; Kristin Surak, "Guestworkers: A Taxonomy," *New Left Review* 84 (2013): 87.

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the United States of America during the twentieth century is exemplary for the strong intervention of institutions and capitalists in shaping the management of workers.[4] In particular, a treaty enacted between the two countries as an exceptional measure during the Second World War was eventually extended until 1964 under the unofficial and contested name "Programa Bracero/Bracero Program" as a series of bilateral agreements.[5] A host of academic literature has described and analysed this program's mechanisms and effects, the states' interventions and national debates, the frictions between migrant and resident populations, and the role of the program as a means of modernisation for Mexicans.[6] The

4 For a long-term perspective on Mexican contract labour migration in the twentieth century, see Luis F.B. Plascencia, "'Get us our privilege of bringing in Mexican Labor': Recruitment and Desire for Mexican Labor in Arizona, 1917–2017," in *Mexican Workers and the Making of Arizona*, ed. Luis F.B. Plascencia and Gloria H. Cuádraz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018).

5 In Mexican Spanish, *braceros* are literally individuals 'who use their arms', from the word *brazo* (arm). In Italian, the term *bracciante* derived from the word *braccio* (arm) was similarly used since the late eighteenth century to identify workers employed in low-skill tasks that primarily require muscular strength. In Mexico, the term *bracero* entered public discourse since it provided a clear image of the migrant workers' function: They were reduced to the body parts needed for their tasks, reified and degraded by the inner workings of a labour regime; see Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* (New York/London: New York University Press, 2008). Although it only came into widespread use and entered institutional discourses during the Second World War, the term had been applied to previous experiences of labour-managed migration in the area as well, substantiating the notion of Mexican workers as a 'reserve army of labour', a well-known concept in Marx's critique of political economy; see Cindy Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guest Workers of the World," *Historical Perspective 1- Labour History* 44, 1 (2003): 70–94). The so-called *bracero* turned this negative label into forms of self-organisation and protest such as the "Alianza Bracero Proa"; see Abel Astorga Morales, "Breve historia del movimiento social de ex braceros en México," *Revista Historia Autónoma* 5 (2015): 133–147. Available online at: https://revistas.uam.es/historiaautonoma/article/view/14 (accessed 3 May 2022). The first pivotal study on the Bracero Program is Carlos Alberto Madrazo, *La verdad en el "caso" de los braceros: Origen de esta injusticia y nombre de los verdaderos responsables* (México: published by the author, 1945).

6 For detailed studies on the functioning of the Bracero Program and its history, see Richard C. Craig, *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); Naomi Verdugo, "The Bracero Program: A History of Foreign Contract Labour in California," *Agenda* 11, 4 (1981): 9–13; Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New Orleans: Quid Pro Books, 2010); Richard S. Street, "First Farmworkers, First 'Braceros': Baja California Field Hands and the Origins of Farm Labour Importation in California Agriculture, 1769–1790," *California History* 75, 4 (1996/1997): 306–321; Fernando S. Alanís Enciso, *El Primer Programa Bracero y el Gobierno de México 1917–1918* (San Luis Potosí: El Colegio de San Luis, 1999); Jorge Durand, *Braceros: Las miradas mexicana y estadounidense. Antología (1945–1964)* (México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2007); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North

Bracero Program has also been examined within the broader topic of Mexican migration to the United States,[7] within the history of United States and Western labour contract migrations, and particularly within the history of the plethora of guest worker programs at the global level.[8] More recent studies have contributed to the understanding of the role of recruitment centres together with local governments in selecting workers and shaping the program.[9] Notably, these studies have expanded our knowledge concerning the political infrastructure that allowed worker mobilisation.

This contribution is linked to these most recent studies, as it primarily investigates the ways in which mobility and immobility coexisted during the lifetime of the Bracero Program. There has recently been a growing interest within migration and mobility studies in investigating the causes and consequences of immobility that affect the static population as well as returning migrants. The focus is primarily on immobility as a spatial constraint that migrants are subject to as a result of border militarisation respectively securitisation and related to refugee camps and detention centres for asylum seekers, but also as a voluntary choice within the aspiration-capability framework – for example, immobility of one family member within a household might allow the mobility of another member, or migration may function as a temporary solution in order to stay.[10] From this perspective, the various forms of immobilisation are considered either an outcome of the exclusion and potential deportation of migrants, or a voluntary choice by

Carolina Press, 2011); Aidé Grijalva and Rafael Arriaga Martínez, *Tras los pasos de los braceros: Entre la teoría y la realidad* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos Editor, 2015).

7 Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Area of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C. S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labour: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

8 Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants"; Nur Banu Kavakli Birdal, "The Bracero and European Guestworker Program Revisited: A Comparative Analysis," *Çalişma ve Toplum* 4 (2012): 149–164; Surak, "Guestworkers"; David Griffith, *(Mis)managing Migration: Guest Workers' Experiences with North American Labour Markets* (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 2014).

9 Martha J. Sánchez Gómez and Raquel O. Barceló Quintal, "Una mirada a la intermediación laboral desde la figura de un mayordomo oaxaqueño: La importancia de las redes étnicas," *Norteamérica*, 12, 1 (2017), accessed 23 November 2021, doi:10.20999/nam.2017.a004; Diana I. Córdoba Ramírez, "Los centros de contratación del Programa Bracero: Desarrollo Agrícola y acuerdo político en el norte de México (1947–1964)" (PhD diss., El Colegio de México, 2017).

10 Kerilyn Schewel, "Understanding Immobility: Moving beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies," *International Migration Review* 54, 2 (2020): 328–355, accessed 23 September 2021, doi:10.1177/0197918319831952; see also Hein De Haas, *Migration and Development in Southern Morocco: The Disparate Socio-Economic Impacts of Out-migration on the Todgha Oasis Valley* (Nijmegen: Radboud University, 2003).

individuals driven by the evaluation of cost and benefit. This article subscribes to a different point of view by considering immobilisation of workers to be a constituent of the process of mobilisation, since the two aspects coexist and enable each other's existence. Immobilisation does not simply equate to a spatial condition of confinement, imprisonment, or constraint to a static state, however; it also has an immaterial dimension that shapes workers' subjectivity through coercion. What is more, various forms of immobilisation can be employed within the same regime: Control over labour, coercion and indebtment, exploitation of waiting times, and moulding workers into disposable subjects are all means of valorising immobility.

Secondly, this article identifies the various means of valorisation applied to workers across the space spanning Mexico and the south-western United States by the actors involved in the Bracero Program. Scholars have regularly focused on the ways in which various actors including federal, regional, and local governments, growers, and formal and informal intermediaries profited from the official program.[11] Taking a different stance once again, the following pages investigate the proliferation of ways in which workers created value through the very process of their mobility, rather than just profits at the worksite. In other words, it highlights the elements composing the varied means of valorisation of labour mobility as a process beginning with the departure of workers from their homes and extending across their entire trajectory. In reality, mobile workers were already productive before their arrival and remained so after their return, and Mexican society was deeply involved in this elaborate process established and exploited by various actors across a multi-scale space.[12]

In particular, this chapter considers the ways in which mobility and immobility were intertwined within a labour mobility regime understood as a means of capture, management, coercion, and valorisation of workers' (im)mobility. By analysing the means and strategies of valorising workers, it aims to situate Mexican peasants within the greater labour mobility regime extending beyond the specific function of the Bracero Program.[13] This view allows us to overcome the idea of a "migration industry" as "the ensemble of entrepreneurs, businesses and services

11 Galarza, *Merchants of Labour*, 1, 50–54.

12 Claudia Bernardi, "Within the Factory of Mobility: Practices of Mexican Migrant Workers in the 20th Century US Labor Regimes," in *Precarity and the International Relations*, ed. Vij Ritu, Kazi Tahseen, and Wynne-Hughes Elisa (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 253–277.

13 The term 'peasant' is used here to refer to the Mexican 'worker of the land' who could be the owner of a small plot, a farmer on a collective land possession (*ejidos*), an employed agricultural worker in vast land possessions, a temporary worker hired as a picker, etc. Although differences among these forms of agricultural labour are relevant, they are beyond the scope of this chapter.

which, motivated by the pursuit of financial gain, facilitate and sustain international migration" and the notion of a "factory of irregular labour migration".[14] More broadly, the concept of valorisation considers the logics and practices that turned peasants into a means of advantage and benefit not just in terms of monetary profit or financial gain. It also takes into account the many actors involved in the process in an informal fashion – citizens, recruiters, local actors – besides the formal actors whose roles were regulated by the legal contract or the binational agreement. Finally, it incorporates the peasants' subjectivity in terms of their social recognition as workers and valuable citizens.

Through the use of primary sources collected in the presidential archive of the Mexican Archivo General de la Nación and the oral histories published in the Bracero History Archive,[15] this chapter lends a voice to the program's protagonists – former *braceros*, growers, unions, institutional representatives, and others – while also introducing a novel perspective that analyses and highlights the coexistence of the means of valorising mobility and immobilisation along with workers' desires that together constitute the labour mobility regime encompassing Mexico and the United States.

"Programa Bracero": The agreement and its modes of operation

During the Second World War, Mexico was asked to contribute to the Allies in terms of manpower, leading to the signing of the international agreement known as Convenio Internacional de Trabajadores Temporales in Mexico respectively as the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement in the United States. This agreement was also referred to by its unofficial name "Programa Bracero/Bracero Program", and the massive and constant importation of labour it allowed and regulated – initially justified as an exigency of the war – was subsequently extended until 1964.[16] In fact,

14 Rubén Hernández-León (2005), "The Migration Industry in the Mexico–U.S. Migratory System," *UCLA: California Center for Population Research*. Accessed 2 October 2022, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3hg44330, 1; Catherine Lejeune and Manuela Martini, "The Fabric of Irregular Labor Migration in Twentieth-Century Western Europe and North America: A Comparative Approach," *Labor History* 56, 5 (2015): 614–642, doi: 10.1080/0023656X.2015.1116825.

15 Bracero History Archive, accessed 23 November 2021, https://braceroarchive.org.

16 Ignacio García Téllez de la Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social al Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 2 May 1942, México City; "Condiciones Socioeconómicas de los Braceros," *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación* 4, 4 (1980), 21; Rudolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Longman, 2000), 286; Moisés González Navarro, *En México y los mexicanos*

U.S. agricultural employers and powerful grower associations maintained their request for Mexican workers, reiterating a labour-shortage argument "for which the only evidence provided is the assertion of employers themselves. Federal regulatory agencies, as well as most members of Congress, accepted employer attestations as factual and without need of verification."[17] More to the point, there was no actual shortage of labour but rather a "shortage of wages" that rendered the exhausting work in the fields undesirable for U.S. citizens.[18] Around 4.6 million contracts were signed during the lifetime of the program, with some individuals returning more than once on different contracts. Between 1951 and 1957, *braceros* went from representing 15% of seasonal farmworkers to 34.2%. Some 94% of hired Mexicans worked in fields in the U.S. Southwest, especially in California, Arizona, and Texas; most of them returned to Mexico once their contracts expired.[19]

The program was based on a complicated mesh of institutions, entrepreneurs, capitalist associations, and state authorities as well as local officers, representatives and professionals, workers, and their affective networks. It created a multi-scale spatial organisation of mobility: Diverse means of transportation brought Mexican workers from villages to processing centres that were connected to recruitment centres by train or bus; from there, the housing camps of associations' labour pools and finally workplaces were reached by truck. Upon arrival, workers were placed in specific housing lots or barracks and would spend the entire season working in the nearby fields far from the city. While also employed in the construction of railways early on, Mexicans were later mostly signed on as pickers, and sometimes as truck drivers or for other medium-skill jobs in the fields. They were primarily hired as seasonal workers to harvest crops of cotton, strawberry, tomatoes, lettuce, and sugar beets, as well as other commodities.

The processing centres were core elements of this logistic system and soon became an issue of friction between local governments, since they attracted massive numbers of workers who waited in small cities lacking the necessary infrastructure

en el entranjero: 1821–1970, vol. III (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1994), 312; Kavakli Birdal, "The Bracero and European Guestworker Program revisited," 155; Patricia Morales, *Indocumentados mexicanos: Causas y razones de la migración laboral* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1989), 157.

17 Plascencia, "'Get us our privilege of bringing in Mexican labor'," 124. The term "labour shortage" is considered here as a fictional condition of the economy imposed by top actors like employers and institutional forces upon workers to mobilise them into a process of valorisation, turning them into a more docile, cheap, and racialised workforce at their disposal.

18 Craig, *Bracero Program*, 29.

19 Acuña, *Occupied America*, 289; Cohen, *Braceros*, 21; Julian Samora, *Los Mojados: The Wetback Story* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 19; Calavita, *Inside the State*, 238.

to host them.[20] In these centres, Mexicans were assessed by the commissions that controlled the documents necessary for entering the selection process. They were inspected, submitted to medical examinations, and – if deemed eligible – sanitised.

Over a period of more than twenty years, this articulated system of selection, control, and recruitment changed the involved space, institutions, and peoples of Mexico and the United States. The program was unprecedented in terms of its scale, the quality of state intervention, the capital profits for growers, the variance of its modes of operation, and its systematic and strategic use of mobility in the increasingly globalised world. It played a crucial role in capitalism's transformation during the economic boom of the Glorious Thirty and became a permanent and structural feature in the years to come as well, albeit within a different juridical framework.

"Pos son listos": Profiting from contract workers

For our purposes, labour mobility is understood as a form of labour characterised by an absence of support and recognition of workers' reproduction as well as their intrinsic weakness due to their status as foreigners. "Immigrant labour is not just any labour" – rather, it is based on "the institutional differentiation of the process of labour-force reproduction and maintenance",[21] where 'reproduction' refers to the effort and means required to sustain human's lives. The fragile position of mobile workers as temporary labourers and non-citizens exposes them to poor working conditions despite existing legal frameworks and labour contracts. Scholars therefore often consider this outcome part of the institutionalised (but fictitious) differentiation between the *static* native and the *mobile* foreign worker – in other words, as the primary evidence of an exploitation of foreign labour that would cause further disqualification of native workers and impoverishment of their working conditions. Attention is focused on the destination country, where the various processes of hierarchisation and differentiation take place, and on the workers' experience as individuals.

One of the primary issues of contestation – especially by scholars and unionists – was the labour contract itself. It was written both in English and Spanish and signed by the respective grower or growers' association, a Mexican government

20 On the disposition of centres and governmental negotiation, see Córdoba Ramírez, "Los centros de contratación del Programa Bracero".

21 Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labour and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labour Flow* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 37.

official, a U.S. Department of Labour representative, and the individual worker. Contracts were usually seasonal with a clearly stated duration; there was a minimum wage per hour, reduced by 10% for a deposit to be repaid once the worker returned to Mexico; and work was guaranteed for 75% of the contract period, with workers receiving a minimal sum of money on non-working days. In the words of Mexican American activist and professor Ernesto Galarza, "while the contract is theoretically free, in practice there has grown up in Mexico a fringe industry consisting of the procurement of contracts."[22] Galarza questioned the very nature of the liberal idea of freedom in the contract. While the two governments had established a legal framework that theoretically afforded free choice to Mexicans in signing up for a temporary contract in the United States, officials in both countries built up a veritable industry in which contracts could be bought. This mechanism may be considered a form of coercion, since it jeopardised the freedom of entering a binding legal agreement – the contract – as a fundamental condition for the modern idea of free labour. In addition, it undermined the autonomy of workers and restricted them to subordinate relations with top actors like the intermediaries.[23]

Clearly detectable forms of valorisation existed in the sites of production, the fields of the south-western United States, as a result of the identical working conditions arranged in the contracts – as well as due to their violation. The *braceros*' labour was much cheaper than that of native workers, with their wages usually 8–15% lower for the same jobs in similar locations.[24] In other words, since they received less pay, their labour generated greater added value compared to that of natives. Despite the conditions stipulated and agreed on in the contracts negotiated under the bilateral agreement, the time and form of payment were uncertain and became part of the valorisation process. Shifting wage schedules were communicated at the last minute, fragmenting time into uncertain shifts and forcing workers to be permanently available despite their contracts stating otherwise. Indeed, the *braceros*' wages were usually paid irregularly – sometimes per hour, other times per box of picked agricultural goods – and they would generally not know until payday. When they asked for clarification concerning the changes to their remuneration, they were told that it depended on varying picking conditions or on their

22 Galarza, *Merchants of Labour*, 36.

23 Jairus Banaji, "The Fictions of Free Labour: Contract, Coercion, and the So-called Unfree Labour," *Historical Materialism* 11, 3 (2003): 69–95; Claudia Bernardi and Ferruccio Ricciardi, "Il contratto nel groviglio dei rapporti di lavoro (XIX–XX secolo)," in *Le frontiere del contratto: status, mobilità, dipendenza (XIX–XX secolo)*, ed. Claudia Bernardi and Ferruccio Ricciardi, (Palermo: New Digital Frontiers, 2021), VII–XXII.

24 Galarza, *Merchants of Labour*, 32.

transfer from one field to another.[25] Uncertainty regarding wages as a result of employers' tactics was part of the valorisation process – and mobile workers were well aware of the reasons, as described concisely by former *bracero* Miguel Zavala López.

López was an agricultural worker born in Copándaro in the Mexican state of Michoacán in 1925; his family later moved to the village of Aguascalientes within the same state. He began working on the family-owned plot of land at an early age, sowing beans, corn, chickpeas, and wheat. In 1955, he arrived at the processing centre at Empalme to be assessed for the Bracero Program. López was well aware of the schemes applied by employers to improve their profits by paying workers as little as possible. Swapping between criteria for payment was one of these ploys, as he explains: "Most of the time we work on a contract basis. Well, I think when it didn't suit them, they paid us by hours – for example, when the orchard or field was good, they paid us by hours. When it was very bad, then they paid us by contract. Well, they are smart."[26] In other words, growers determined the criteria of payment on the basis of maximum profitability: Workers were subject to arbitrarily varying criteria or could be moved to another field, thereby losing "access" to the regulated payment governed by the international agreement and stipulated in their contracts. According to – or in spite of – regulations, Mexican peasants had to be disposable to be profitable. As López tersely put it: "Pos son listos" [Well, they are smart].[27]

Most of the paycheques included deductions for taxes and benefits that should not have applied to the *braceros*, and some of the workers inquiring about these deductions received answers like these from their growers: "The extra nine cents is for the county"; "I took off the round dollar because I haven't time to make change for 200 men"; "I don't keep the money, I just send it to the consul."[28] Despite the prevailing legal standards, the mobile worker was managed to better valorise the process of mobility in ways that often amounted to evasion of the contracts and the binational agreement.

25 Mize and Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labour*, 12; Galarza, *Merchants of Labour*, 33–57.

26 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*, edited by Violeta Domínguez, 12 June 2002, Bracero History Archive, no. 132, accessed 3 October 2022, https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/132. Original text: "Casi la mayoría de las veces trabajamos por contrato. Pos yo creo cuando a ellos no les convenía, nos daban por horas cuando, por ejemplo, la huerta o el field estaba bueno, nos daban por horas. Cuando estaba muy malo, ya nos daban por contrato. Pos son listos." All translations from Mexican Spanish to British English are by the author.

27 Ibid.

28 Galarza, *Merchants of Labour*, 33–57.

Another form of valorisation relied on the legal diminishment of the *braceros*' pay by the government, which "deducted money for taxes, pensions, social benefits from workers' pay checks".[29] Despite their legitimacy, these kinds of deductions were used to fund social services that the Mexican workers clearly would not benefit from. In addition, there were "illegal deductions for rooms, board, transportation, and farm tools and supplies", including blankets and "the twist ties used in banding carrots together".[30] Employers deferred taxes and benefits to the labourers' salaries, converting even their basic reproduction needs into value: Food and housing as well as supplies were not considered basic needs whose fulfilment workers were entitled to, but instead supplementary benefits to be paid for.[31] Whereas minimum reproduction was required by the agreements, entrepreneurs limited their expenses wherever they could, creating a fresh business by selling supplies to the *braceros* and thereby making them dependent on the firm. In other words, if the reproduction of workers could not be completely ignored, it had to at least become a profitable affair for the growers.

The value of mobility

A range of credentials was required to obtain access to the selection process, and passports as well as papers documenting good health and good behaviour became a means of screening as much as a source of profit for 'intermediaries' of various kinds. Far from only mediating between grower and workers, these figures – which included illegal recruiters (*coyote*), foremen (*mayordomo*), commissioners, military officers, mayors, local and state government officials, and immigration policemen, among others – fostered a shadow economy and featured as independent but constitutive actors on the fringes of this refined regime. The Bracero Program was also used by local office holders to reward their allies, supplement their own salaries through bribes, and for political purposes. On the one hand, the municipal governments in Mexico used the opportunities provided by the program to manage local political conflicts and protests by assigning *bracero* cards to get rid of political opponents. In Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán, for instance, the *sinarquista* were presented with the many possibilities of earnings abroad and sent to the U.S. – in other words, they were moved to another country to neutralise domestic

29 Mize and Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labour*, 13.
30 Mize and Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labour*, 12–13.
31 Galarza, *Merchants of Labour*, 41.

political turmoil.[32] The required papers thus established a valorisation process in the form of profits coming from bribes as well as by increasing the political power of local governments that were able to expel their opponents.

On the other hand, certificates were sold to persons wishing to be *contratado* (contracted) by local officials both in the U.S. and in Mexico. As early as 1944 in the United States, "military officers had already swindled braceros out of at least forty thousand pesos through the sale of counterfeit certificates."[33] Relations established between illegal intermediaries and officials in the recruitment centres as well as along the paths of mobility may have facilitated and sped up the process for potential labourers willing to pay: It was a network of relations and an infrastructure – both legal and illegal – that was sold to the mobile workers,[34] and indebtedness was a common outcome for many of them. Guillermo Cervantes Manzo, a former *bracero* born in Michoacán, made his first trip to the recruiting centre at Empalme in Sonora with his father when he was seventeen or eighteen years old. He fell ill upon arriving at the centre, however, so that his father had to take him to Guanajuato, a three-hour trip from their home in Michoacán, leaving him there and returning to the centre to be hired. After recovering, Manzo completed the final part of the journey back to Michoacán by himself. He would be recruited the following year, and every subsequent year until the end of the program. The first of seven children, he joined the ranks of the *braceros* explicitly to make money and improve his living conditions in Mexico. His first attempt to be recruited ended in nothing but money spent: "You came with money on loan, you didn't come with your own money. You had to be paying interest and then some [workers] were barely able to pay what they had committed to, and some would not even be able to pay."[35] Workers were often indebted – and hence valorised –

32 Alberto Maldonado García, *The Politics of Bracero Migration* (PhD diss., University of California: Berkeley, 2016). *Sinarquista* were members of the Unión Nacional Sinarquista, a far-right Mexican political organisation established in the 1930s that opposed the revolutionary process begun in 1910 as well as the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* that ruled the country during the following decades. Each municipal government had to communicate the number of potential eligible workers in the municipality to the central government, which would distribute eligibility cards to them on the basis of proportionality. These cards allowed workers to be selected in the contracting centres.

33 Cohen, *Braceros*, 95.

34 Bernardi, "Within the Factory of Mobility."

35 *Interview with Guillermo Cervantes Manzo*, edited by Veronica Cortez, 20 May 2006, Bracero History Archive, no. 366, accessed 29 November 2021, http://braceroarchive.org/items/show/366. Original text: "Uno se venía con dinero a rédito, no se venía con su propio dinero. Había que estar pagando intereses y entonces algunos apenas si alcanzaban a pagar lo que se traían de compromiso y algotros ni lo alcanzarían a pagar."

from the moment of their departure in Mexico. It was the very process of mobilisation itself that was the origin of this debt, as prospective *braceros* needed money both to reach the processing centre and to obtain the documents required for access to the program. In fact, local officials and government members regularly intercepted workers on their way to the centres, using the program as an opportunity to sell documents and contracts.[36]

It is worth noting that the valorisation of mobile workers through debt did not necessarily imply the obtainment of a contract, as the abovementioned case of Guillermo Cervantes Manzo proves. These costs were incurred not only by *contratados* who would subsequently have the possibility to repay their debts, but also by workers rejected at the processing centres in Mexico due to health problems, lack of required documents, or undesired profiles or traits. In fact, it has been calculated that only "one out of every ten job seekers ever attained bracero status. In 1952, a total of 31,990 men were rejected at the processing centres in Mexico, compared to 21,000 in 1954 and 44,411 in 1955."[37] Hundreds of thousands were rejected in total over the years, but all of them had been mobilised by the existence of the program. The simple act of providing access to the competition to become a contract worker was simultaneously the first means of valorisation – in other words, the *expectation* of potential recruitment became part of the labour mobility regime that created value from the selection for inclusion in the program. Debt was a component of value production and related to the workers' lives far beyond the terms and durations of their contracts.

The entire transnational space that was part of the labour mobility regime was involved on different scales. In Mexico, peasants paid for the cost of transportation from their homes to the processing centres to potentially become eligible for a contract. Minerva Christine Ann Cheatum, a clerk and typist working at Rio Vista, the processing centre in Socorro, Texas, recalls the *mordida* (bribe) Mexicans had to pay to move faster towards the centres in Mexico in an interview with Carrillo Fernanda:

> Minerva Christine Ann Cheatum: Most of time they walked. They would get rides with people. They didn't have any money, so they would bring out whatever [they had]. They brought their money to pay, because they had to pay so much to get across. They didn't have to, but in order to get there faster they would always – (both talking at once).

36 Michael Snodgrass, "Patronage and Progress: The Bracero Program from the Perspective of Mexico," in *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254.

37 Henry Anderson, *Harvest of Loneliness: An Inquiry into a Social Problem* (Berkeley: Citizens for Farm Labor, 1964), 143, cited in Gilbert G. González, *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor?* (Boulder/London: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 73.

> Carrillo Fernanda: Oh, okay, like a fee.
>
> Minerva Christine Ann Cheatum: Somebody was going to take their money and say, "Hey, I can get you there faster, but you pay me." They were paying the mordida to get there faster. Some of them would never make it across, and they would have to go back to Juarez, or Chihuahua, or wherever they were from.[38]

It was not just simple transportation to reach the centre that was needed. Testimonies emphasise the payment of bribes "to get there faster", meaning that it was *time* Mexicans were paying for. Bribes were required not only to gain access to the selection process, but also to get in more quickly than others. In fact, once the quota requested by growers was filled, workers were sent back until the next season, or until a new quota opened. Miguel Zavala López recalls the costs of accelerating the process:

> At the time they charged us about $400, the coyote, to put us on the list for Empalme, Sonora. So there I think they already had connections with those who were calling the names on the list, or I don't know how they did it, the fact is that they had already signed us up and we were already going to Empalme and there we waited, every day we went there to the recruiting centre to see if they called us by name and on the day they did not call us, well, you would go away all disconsolate, and get in the shade because it was hot. And early the next day, again there. So we were a large crowd in a huge field waiting for people to be named by microphone, and you were just there listening for your name to see if you would be hired.[39]

Since the *mordida* to speed up the process was not always successful, Mexicans were sometimes delayed and had to wait for months before being employed despite their bribes:

> There were times when you were hired soon, but there were times when for one, two, three months you could not enter. It could be that the coyote was not well related to the people inside, or I don't know what the reason was, but sometimes you waited one, two, three, four

38 *Interview with Minerva Christine Ann Cheatum*, edited by Carrillo Fernanda, 3 April 2003, Bracero History Archive, no. 77, accessed 12 November 2021, http://braceroarchive.org/items/show/77.

39 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "En ese tiempo nos cobraban como $400, el coyote, pa llevarnos ya en la lista hasta Empalme, Sonora. Entonces allá, yo creo que ellos tenía ya conexiones con los que están nombrando la lista, o no sé cómo le hacen ellos, el caso es que nos llevaban ya apuntados y ya nos íbamos hasta Empalme y allí nos esperábamos, allí a diario estábamos yendo allí al centro de contratación a ver si nos nombraban y ya el día que no nos nombraban, pos ya se iba uno por allí todo desconsolado, por allá sombreado porque hacía unos calorones. Y al otro día tempranito otra vez allí. Así el gentío que estábamos en un campo grandísimo que estaba para estar nombrando la gente por micrófono y estaba uno ahí nomás al pendiente escuchando su nombre a ver si ya se contrataba."

> months there and were already without money, and already out there searching for where you could work a little for a meal.[40]

The network and relations the prospective *braceros* paid for were less valuable than the money invested and the debt incurred. Debt was a common outcome even for those able to enter the program if they could not successfully accelerate their acceptance; the waiting times outside the processing centres can thus be considered a form of coercion as well, since they induced indebtedness after the recruitment process but before employment.[41]

Transfer from the recruitment centres in the U.S. to the fields was organised in an efficient and cost-effective manner, with employers implementing tight bus schedules to keep expenses down. This often meant that transports were not available, leaving workers stuck in fields. Besides the schedules, other corners were also cut to increase profits: Unqualified drivers and disregard for safety measures made accidents a common occurrence.[42] Beyond this article's focus on the specific travelling conditions faced by *braceros*, it is important to stress the overall role of mobility in restructuring social hierarchies. In fact, conditions of transportation are highly relevant for the way in which the logistical organisation of mobile workers' movements contributes to devaluing their lives, which are often not considered worthy enough to be protected as much as those of other humans. The efficiency and low cost of transportation provided to foreign workers frequently prevailed over their safety, qualifying them as less valuable and placing them at a lower level in the social hierarchy.

Finally, on their way back home to Mexico after the end of their contracts, *braceros* entered another scenario of valorisation. Complaints sent directly to the President of Mexico by numerous workers described the "fees" they had to pay while crossing the border. Clemente Armenta Jiménez, for example, wrote from Pewaukee in Wisconsin – presumably the place where he was employed – about the practices at the border: "At the border where we all cross back to our land, our beloved Mexico, the authorities of these places (North America or ours)

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40 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Había veces que pronto se contrataba uno, pero hay veces que duraba uno hasta dos, tres meses que no podía entrar. Sería que el coyote no estaba bien relacionado con las personas de adentro o no me imagino cómo era, pero a veces duraba uno hasta dos, tres, cuatro meses allí y ya sin dinero y ya por ahí a ver dónde trabaja uno un ratito por la comida."

41 On the relation between debt and coercion in *bracero* mobility, see Claudia Bernardi and Nico Pizzolato, "Logics of Debt: Rethinking Im/Mobility and Coercion in the Context of the *Programa Bracero*, 1942–1964," in *Labour and Coercion: Doing Social History after the Global Turn*, ed. Juliane Schiel and Johan Heinsen (forthcoming).

42 Mize and Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labour*, 15.

attempt to charge us 30% of our shirts and other articles of clothing and other and objects."[43] Clemente was aware of the due contribution he had to make, so he appealed to the president to be exempted before embarking on the journey back home. All returning workers were forcefully required to share their new clothes or highly desirable commodities like radios. This was a form of coercion imposed upon mobile workers that occurred after they had fulfilled their contracts and left their respective worksites but was nevertheless embedded in the overall regime of labour mobility. The contract also stipulated the 10% deposit on wages that was to be returned to the *braceros* when they returned home. The circulation of labour was thus accompanied by a circulation of money in the form of a deposit at Wells Fargo and Union Trust Co. in San Francisco, which was then transferred to the Banco Nacional de Crédito Agrícola in México.[44] Thousands of workers never received their deposits back, however, so that these deductions ultimately contributed to enriching the Mexican government through valorisation of workers' mobility.

The labour mobility regime was far-reaching not only in terms of the processes extending beyond the worksite; it also mobilised and involved many more workers beyond those accepted into the Bracero Program. As peasants abandoned Mexican fields in large numbers to be recruited into the program, Mexican growers complained of labour scarcity – for example in Sonora, where the Asociación de Productores de Cereales de la Region Agricola de Hermosillo affirmed to have recruited workers from the interior Mexican states. They wrote a telegram on the matter to President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines: "In Sonora we have a scarcity of hands for our work in the field and in the present harvest of cotton and wheat that we are starting to sow, we had to bring people from the interior of the country. Stop recruitment in Hermosillo, it causes serious damage to the agricultural economy of this region."[45] Peasants were moved inside Mexico to replace

43 *Clemente Armenta Jiménez, Pewaukee, Wisconsin, to the President of Mexico*, 5 October 1945, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City (hereafter AGN), Manuel Ávila Camacho, 1940–1946 (hereafter MAC), caja 0795, 546.6/120-8, 3: "Que en la frontera al pasar todos los que retornamos a nuestra tierra, nuestro México querido, las autoridades de dichos lugares (norte américa o del nuestro), tratan de cobrarnos el 30% de nuestras camisas y demás artículos de Ropa y de otro objectos."

44 Jorge Durand, "El Programa Bracero (1942–1964): Un balance critico," *Migración y Desarrollo* 9 (2007): 27–43, 37.

45 *Asociación Productores de Cereales de la Región Agricola de Hermosillo to the President of Mexico*, 20 October 1954, AGN, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines 1952–1958 (hereafter ARC), caja 883, 563.3/246: "Estamos en Sonora escasos de brazos para nuestras labores del campo y en las actuales cosechas de algodón y trigo que principiamos a sembrar, hemos tenido que traer gente del interior del país. De llevarse a cabo contratación en Hermosillo, causar graves perjuicios a la economía

others leaving to become *braceros*, opening up a further path of labour mobility for which a system of recruitment within the country was organised by growers. In other words, the circuit of labour mobility from Mexico to the United States established by the Bracero Program was accompanied by a second, smaller circuit of labour within Mexico. Taking this process into consideration, the regime of labour mobility appears even more far-reaching and complex than has previously been assumed, as peasants living in the internal Mexican states who were not recruited into the program were nevertheless part of a larger system of labour mobility.

The valorisation of immobility

The discursive apparatus of individual liberty for contract work and free movement within the Bracero Program masked complex forms of coercion and exploitation at their worksites, where immobilisation was a further device applied by entrepreneurs in order to maximise profits. Whereas the process of selection and recruitment was protracted and complex, the control over workers that resulted in immobilisation was much more immediate: "If you violated the 45-day contract and didn't come home on time, they wouldn't renew your contract. They wouldn't let you go back."[46] Every *bracero*, regardless of the availability of fields to pick, had to stay on his assigned farm until the end of his contract and return to Mexico immediately thereafter unless the contract was renewed. Any other movement was considered an infringement that annulled the contract and consequently changed the respective worker's status to 'illegal', costing him the possibility to be recruited again within the framework of the international agreement. The regulation and valorisation of workers' mobility was thus closely entangled with immobilisation through control that aimed to dispose of workers at any time. The immobilisation at the worksite was complementary to the rapid mobilisation at the end of the contract. The contract in combination with the immobility imposed by the employers' control practices restricted each worker to a specific location and bound him to the employer under penalty of deportation – that is, forced mobility.

agrícola de esta región." For an analysis of the mobility of workers within Mexico as well as between Mexico and Guatemala, see Claudia Bernardi, "Matching Movements at the Borders: The Connected Mobility of Guatemalan and Mexican Workers (1940s–1950s)," in *Atlas Histórico de América:* Nuevas Miradas en la Huella del Americano. *Siglos XIX y XX*, Volumen III. Publicación *566* Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia (2021).

46 Cited in Mize and Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labour*, 13.

The distribution of processing and recruitment centres together with labour pools and mobility routes created a complex space that prospective *braceros* had to navigate for a certain period. They often had to wait days or months before obtaining a contract despite their eligibility, and they were unaware of how long they would have to wait before being employed in the fields. In other words, they were immobilised in a state of limbo. Miguel Zavala López describes his corresponding experience with specific reference to the contractor:

> The longest I lasted was about two months when he couldn't hire me. I do not know why, I tell you, because the man would no longer be well connected with the people, with those in there, or he was not assigned calls, or who knows what it was, the fact is that sometimes we took a long time. And sometimes you would hardly arrive in the morning and get ready and they would already call your name. As soon as you arrived at Empalme, you could be recruited, and that very day they might call your name. And other times, I tell you, no, you had to wait there for months, I waited for two months, but others could wait longer.[47]

Waiting at the recruitment centre in Empalme, Sonora, represented an obstacle in the path of mobility and a black hole in which workers were kept in uncertainty and timelessness.[48] The town's name itself even became a way of referring to this condition as experienced by the prospective *braceros* – when a worker's name was not called through the megaphone for months, they were said to be "empalmado":

> What you suffered when *empalmado* there, you were *empalmado* and, that is, we called it *empalmado* when we couldn't get through, they were *empalmado* (laughs). In Empalme you were *empalmado* and you couldn't get through, but as I told you, you can't explain why.[49]

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47 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Lo más que yo duré fueron como dos meses cuando no me podía contratar. No sé porque, te digo, porque pos el señor ya no estaría bien con la gente, con los de allá dentro o no les daría, o quién sabe cómo estaría, el caso es que a veces nos tardábamos mucho. Y a veces apenas llegaba uno hoy en la mañana y ya se armaba uno y ya le gritaban a uno de volada. Apenas llegaba uno de Empalme y luego, luego se iba uno a las contrataciones y ese mismo día le gritaban. Y otras veces, te digo, no, tenía que uno durar allí meses, yo me aventé dos meses, pero otros duraban más."

48 For detailed studies on the recruitment process and the city of Empalme, see Gabriela González Barragán, *El sistema de contratación para los trabajadores migrantes en la región costa-centro de Sonora (Hermosillo–Empalme 1949–1962)* (Tesi de licenciadura, Universidad de Sonora, México, 1988); Carlos Moncada, *Me llamo Empalme* (El Hermosillo: Sembrador, 2005); José Fernando Gámez Rodríguez, "Los Braceros en Empalme 1955–1964," in *Barrios y Pueblos de Sonora: Historias por Contarse*, ed. Aarón Grageda Bustamante et al. (Hermosillo: Universidad de Sonora, 2011).

49 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Lo que sufría uno cuando se empalmaba allí, se empalmaba uno y, o sea, le nombrábamos empalmar cuando no podíamos pasar, se empalmaban (risas). En Empalme se empalmaba uno allí y no podía uno pasar, pero es como te digo, no se explica uno por qué."

Waiting times allowed a labour supply pool to be maintained. A labour supply is generally understood as the disposable reserve workforce granted to growers and entrepreneurs that is displaced and moved to the site of production for employment; this view understands the labour supply as an amount of workforce that is always available to be commodified as needed, with valorisation of a worker beginning at the moment they are hired. From a different perspective, however, waiting times prior to employment can be considered a constituent part of the valorisation process. An important mobility hub into which large numbers of workers were channelled naturally became a location for buying and selling staple goods, a valuable site for small informal businesses started by locals to take advantage of the massive presence of waiting men.[50] The areas around the centres became proliferation spaces for informal economies and satellite activities that generated value from the waiting time of the prospective *braceros* by selling food, providing accommodation and transportation, and procuring cheap hands for manual work:

> And when I had been there for a month or two, I no longer had anything to eat and we fought there asking for work from the same people who sell food. [. . .] Once we also worked in the fields. We were hired by a man, after the processing, he was already waiting for us and took us there to the field to work in the field. We worked in the field for the man, clearing the land of stones and sticks and everything.[51]

To avoid these poor working conditions and survive the limbo, daily commuting to the United States became a viable solution:

> Others worked on the other side, in restaurants, cleaning large houses, that was where you settled when you were not getting a contract, because days and days could pass before you were named. Some days you looked for work, or to see what you could do to get something to eat. The next day, you would be there again and they didn't call you to work again, or you could already have a small job, just for when someone left there, helping to wash dishes or whatever. And there you suffered a lot.[52]

50 Sergio Chàvez, "The Sonoran Desert's Domestic Bracero Program: Institutional Actors and the Creation of Labour Migration Streams," *International Migration*, 50, 2 (2012): 20–40.

51 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Y ya cuando llevaba uno un mes o dos, pos ya no tenía uno para comer y hacíamos la lucha por allí a pedir trabajo a los mismos que venden pa la comida [. . .] Una vez trabajamos también en el campo. Nos contratamos con un señor, después de las contrataciones, ya nos esperaba y nos llevaba por allá al campo a trabajar en el campo. Al señor le trabajamos en el campo, a limpiar la tierra de piedra y de palos y todo."

52 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Otros trabajaban en otro lado, allí en los restaurantes, en casas grandes limpiando, por allí se acomodaba uno cuando ya no se podía uno contratar, porque pasaban días y días y no te nombraban. Otro día te ibas ya pos a buscar trabajo, o a ver qué le hacías para comer. Al otro día, otra vez a estar allí y no te nombraban otra

In order to not remain *empalmado*, workers were accustomed to bribing foremen and officials in the processing centres to be accepted faster, as mentioned above. In fact this seemingly dead time also became a prime occasion for selling acceleration of the process: Those able to pay immediately could turn their immobilisation into a new step in the process of mobility towards the place of work. Recruitment and processing centres were sites of valorisation as much as the fields in which mobile workers were employed (see Fig. 7.1).

Fig. 7.1: Leonard Nadel, "A woman serves food and drinks to braceros at the Monterrey Processing Center, Mexico", National Museum of American History-Division of Work and Industry, *Bracero History Archive*. Accessed 3 November 2022, https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/1419.

In Mexico, other forms of immobilisation with the purpose of valorising worker mobility occurred as well. Already in the early 1940s, many landowners, growers, unions, and local representatives complained to the President of Mexico about the "abandoned fields" in several Mexican states. The letters sent to the president referred directly or implicitly to the allure of the Bracero Program as the main cause of peasants leaving, demanding efforts to make them stay in the local fields

vez a trabajar, o ya tenía uno su chambita, ya nomás pa cuando saliera uno de allí, de ayudar allá a lavar platos o lo que fuera. Y ya desde allí sufría uno bastante."

and not leave the country.[53] The mobilisation towards the U.S., they stated, meant there were no longer enough workers "to pick cotton".[54] This labour shortage argument was reiterated repeatedly, with some complainants arguing for outright termination of the Bracero Program[55] or the introduction of measures "to prevent the exodus of braceros".[56] The term "exodus" reflects the perception of the phenomenon by Mexican growers, or at least the alarm they wished to communicate to the government. Given the situation, various steps were eventually taken in response.

In 1944, the government prohibited the mobilisation of workers from the central Mexican states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán, and over the following years, a list of ineligible persons was compiled: minors under the age of 21, skilled workers with a job, unhealthy persons, individuals weighing less than 50 kilograms, those who had not completed their compulsory military service, and *ejidatarios* – peasants sharing a form of collective possession called *ejido*. Also, since credentials for obtaining access to the selection process – so called *mica* – were distributed by local officials, unpaid work could be required in

53 For an extensive analysis of the relation between mobility and immobilisation to land, see Claudia Bernardi, "*Ejidatarios* and *Braceros*: The Troublesome Relation between Land and Mobility in Mexico (1930s–1950s)," in *Mobility, Labor, Right: Historical Trajectories and Interactions in the Americas and Europe (XVII–XX Centuries)*, edited by Claudia Bernardi. Torino: Annals Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, 2022.

54 *Juan Rodríguez and León Guanajuato to the President of Mexico*, 11 November 1943, in AGN–MAC, caja 0794-10341, 546.6/120-4; *Victor M. López, Secretario Comité Regional Soledad Veracruz, to the President of Mexico*, 3 March 1945, AGN–MAC, caja 0794-103401, 546.6/120-4; *Eugenio Elorduy*, *Presidente Cámara Nal. de Comercio de Mexicali, Baja California, to the Secretario de Gobernación,* 22 September 1948, AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés 1946–1952 (hereafter AGN-MAV), caja 592, 546.6/1-2; *Juan F. Acosta, Presidente Unión de los sin Trabajo – Zacatecas, Zacatecas, to the President of Mexico*, 16 October 1953, AGN-ARC, caja 893, 548.1/122, leg 172.

55 *Confederación Nacional Pequeña Propiedad Agricola to the President of Mexico*, 20 October 1947, AGN-MAV, caja 594, 546.6/1–32; *Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Transformación de Mexicali, Baja California, to the President of Mexico*, 22 September 1948, AGN-MAV, caja 592, 546.6/1-2; *Federación Nacional de Defensa Revolucionaria to the President of Mexico*, 25 January 1954, AGN-ARC, caja 893, 548.1/122, leg 6–7; *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación to the President of Mexico*, 20 January 1954, AGN-ARC, caja 893, 548.1/122, leg 6–7; *Heriberto G. Ramos, Union de Productores de Algodon, to the President of Mexico*, 12 August 1955, AGN-ARC, caja 883, 546.6/31; *Camara Agricola y Ganadera de Torreón Coahuila to the President of Mexico*, 13 August 1955, AGN-ARC, caja 883, 546.6/31.

56 *Antonio Vizcarra Espinosa – P. los Nuevos Centros de Población Agrícola, Sonora, to the President of Mexico*, 23 January 1954, AGN-ARC, caja 893, 548.1/122, leg 6–7; *Bartolomé Vargas Lugo to the President of Mexico*, 13 January 1954, AGN-ARC, caja 893, 548.1/122, leg 172; *Ing. Alberto Salinas Ramos, Presidente Asociación Nacional Cosecheros, Ciudad de México, to the President of Mexico*, 14 January 1954, AGN-ARC, caja 893, 548.1/122, leg 172.

return. In Baja California in 1954 and in Chihuahua in 1955, workers had to perform unpaid field work, picking cotton in order to receive a certificate allowing them to be recruited.[57] State governments also sometimes demanded money from prospective *braceros* to fund public infrastructure, for example in Oaxaca.[58] In addition, local administrations and growers jointly enacted various strategies for benefiting from mobilised labour: Workers faced the threat of seeing their dreams and aspirations unfulfilled if they did not pay their 'fees', making imposed immobility a form of coercion or extortion for access to the desired mobility.

The valorisation of subjectivities

Waiting times represented a part of the process of valorisation not least because they moulded the subjectivity of workers. They constituted a period of unfulfilled desires, of suspense and expectation, that shaped the relationship between *braceros* and the states, recruiters, growers, and nations they came into contact with.[59] Immobilisation is not only a spatial constraint or physical confinement – it also includes an immaterial dimension.

Migrants were not aware of the concrete workings of the selection and recruitment process managed by the states, and above all of the possibility of being stuck in a recruitment centre like Miguel Zavala López in Empalme. He reports how workers had to seek small jobs to survive the waiting times, sometimes even by commuting to the United States, and that they were unaware of what characterised the recruiting process itself:

> VD: Clear. Did you already know these things before you left?
>
> Miguel Zavala López: Well, no. I still didn't know about them, because I remember that just when we started going there at that time, it was the time when the recruitments began there in Empalme. And I'm not sure from what date the recruitments began in that town, but when I started going, I still didn't know anything about all that.[60]

57 González Navarro, *Los extranjeros*, 281–284.

58 "Estado Libre y Soberano de Oaxaca," as cited in González Navarro, *Los extranjeros*, 285.

59 Calavita, *Inside the State*; Cohen, *Braceros.*

60 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "VD: Claro. ¿Usted estas cosas las sabía ya desde antes de irse? MZ: Pues no. Todavía no las sabía yo, porque pos yo me acuerdo que apenas cuando empezamos a ir en ese tiempo, fueron las contrataciones que se abrieron allí en Empalme. Y no estoy seguro desde qué fecha se abrieron esas contrataciones allí en ese pueblo, pero yo cuando empecé a ir pos todavía no sabía nada de todo eso."

Workers experienced bewilderment and confusion, and they had no knowledge of the concrete workings of the program – as López said: "you can't explain why."[61] After leaving their homes to work abroad, they became immobilised and felt bogged down for no apparent reason. Informal recruiters actively participated in keeping workers in this state of suspension and uncertainty when their bribes to accelerate the process were not successful. The prospective *braceros* could not understand why their *mordida* did not lead to the expected result. Not only had the nations established a labour program that was supposed to manage mobility while effectively leaving workers immobilised in processing and recruitment centres, but under-the-table payments to informal (illegal) recruiters in order expedite the procedure were unsuccessful as well. Workers' expectations of a smooth process were dashed in the limbo of unexplained waiting times that immobilised them. As Miguel Zavala López put it: "I do not imagine what was the reason. [. . .] You had a hard time when you had to wait."[62]

When analysing the available oral sources, a peculiar additional form of immobilisation emerges as well: the lack of recognition. People often consider work to be an expression of desires, the fulfilment of expectations, a means of social mobility, and an appreciation of workers' abilities. Besides the skills and expertise needed to complete a task, every job implies a certain type of acknowledgment and credit to the worker. *Braceros* were certainly in search of recognition, both in the workplace and at the (trans)national level, as they had been acknowledged in their role of drivers of modernisation by the Mexican nation state.[63] Describing the (lack of) relations with his hierarchic superiors, Miguel Zavala López affirms this:

> The foreman was the one who dealt with us and he was the one who did everything. We never knew the owners, most of us never knew the owners. Now, there were good people for picking, some very good workers, who turned out good, I never saw that they gave them benefits or something because they were a good worker. We never had prizes because someone picked so much and performed so much. They never gave us any of that. If he was

61 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Lo que sufría uno cuando se empalmaba allí, se empalmaba uno y, o sea, le nombrábamos empalmar cuando no podíamos pasar, se empalmaban (risas). En Empalme se empalmaba uno allí y no podía uno pasar, pero es como te digo, no se explica uno por qué."

62 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Había veces que pronto se contrataba uno, pero hay veces que duraba uno hasta dos, tres meses que no podía entrar. Sería que el coyote no estaba bien relacionado con las personas de adentro o no me imagino cómo era, pero a veces duraba uno hasta dos, tres, cuatro meses allí y ya sin dinero y ya por ahí a ver dónde trabaja uno un ratito por la comida. Se la pasaba uno a duras cuando se tardaba uno."

63 Cohen, *Braceros*.

> a good worker, then that was it. We never had prizes like this because we picked so many boxes of fruit or whatever.[64]

The contract worker was pushed to work harder, to prove his work, to earn more, and to receive credit for the results, as he received compensation on the basis of piecework: "When you are under contract, in order to earn more, you work hard, because look, they paid us $0.12 for a box of tomatoes."[65] The "prize" ("el premio") referred to by López stands for the recognition of a good worker, "un buen trabajador", as well as to potential additional payment for quality work. Lack of recognition implied a devaluation of this work, and the refusal to grant additional remuneration for high effort made the *braceros*' labour even cheaper. Whereas recognition of work bolsters dynamicity, commitment to improving one's condition, and success in social mobility, its devaluation – both material and immaterial – confirms the immobilisation of migrant workers from the subjective point of view. The curtailed spatial mobility of the *braceros* was thus accompanied by a diminishment of expectations and recognition:

> If you were a good worker, that was it, you earned more money than the others, but they never recognised you. They never said: 'You are a good worker, you do not make mistakes and you are a clean worker, and you are never a jerk.' They never took you into account. They could have said: 'You are a good worker, now we are going to reward you, we are going to give you an extra check,' or 'We are going to let you emigrate,' or something else they could have said. No, it was the same, good and bad worker, it was the same.[66]

The *braceros*' desire to change and improve their lives was increasingly catalysed during the waiting period when they suffered a lack of food, credit availability,

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64 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "El mayordomo era el que trataba con nosotros y era el que hacía todo. Los dueños nunca los conocíamos, casi la mayoría nunca conocíamos los dueños. Ahora, sí habíamos gente buena para piscar, unos trabajadores buenísimos, que salieran buenos, yo nunca vi que les dieran utilidades o algo que les dieran algo porque es un buen trabajador. Nunca tuvimos premios de que, pos éste piscó tanto y tanto nos rindió. Nunca nos dieron nada de eso. Si era buen trabajador, pues hasta allí nomás. Nunca tuvimos así premios porque piscábamos bastantes cajas de fruta o lo que fuera."

65 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Cuando uno anda por contrato, con tal de ganar más, tú pos le entras duro al trabajo, porque pos fíjate, nos pagaban la caja de jitomate a $0.12 centavos dólar."

66 *Interview with Miguel Zavala López*. Original text: "Si eras un buen trabajador, pos hasta allí nomás, ganabas más dinero que los demás, pero nunca te reconocieron. Nunca dijeron: 'Tú eres un buen trabajador, no faltas y eres un trabajador limpio y nunca estás de marrullero'. Nunca te tomaban en cuenta. Que hubieran dicho: 'Eres un buen trabajador, ahora te vamos a premiar, te vamos a dar un cheque de más', o, 'te vamos a emigrar', o alguna cosa que hubieran dicho. No, pos era igual trabajador bueno y malo, pos era lo mismo."

and resources. At the same time, as they perceived a lessening of workforce demand (when recruitment was reduced) or when their names were simply not called, they may have approached potential employment with diminished expectations concerning working conditions. In other words, the desire to be awarded a contract could make their labour cheaper since they faced the threat of not being employed at all, of wasting money, or of becoming highly indebted – a subjective dimension that likely influenced their work relations and demands. Their acknowledgement as subjects within the social process of mobility was limited, and more research could help to further elucidate the role of their feelings within the workings of the Bracero Program – especially with regard to their decision to enrol more than once.

It was not just that workers experienced various forms of labour – unpaid and contractual – but one particular form could be the *conditio sine qua non* for access to a better job in the future. Ultimately, it was access to the selection process, and thus to potential recruitment, that was sold to them. In other words, Mexicans were mobilised towards the recruitment centres by the *expectation* of being employed to work in U.S. fields, for which they were often forced to go into debt or provide unpaid labour. The condition for access to a potential, temporary job became a reward to be earned – a prize desired with eager anticipation and for which hardship was endured. But the social process of recognition became stuck there, and workers' subjectivity was immobilised.

Conclusion

Historical analysis of the labour mobility regime created by the Bracero Program provides various insights contributing to the current intellectual debate on labour migration in relation to the emergent discourse on mobility and immobility.

The profitability of workers has been discussed with reference to the idea of a "migration industry", which foregrounds the complex of companies, agencies, and services that facilitate and support international migration.[67] Within this approach, the idea of a "factory of irregular labour migration" allows us to analyse the policies of restriction and regulation implemented in North America and Western Europe since the end of the Second World War.[68] Nevertheless, the approach is limited to considering migration an industry only for its ability to generate profits through a set of binational institutions and structures, omitting the

67 Hernández-León, "Migration Industry."
68 Lejeune and Martini, "Irregular Labor Migration."

crucial role played by the overall labour mobility regime and its management as well as by the processes of hierarchisation and construction of subjectivity, chains of mobility, and the aspect of work ethic, to name but a few fundamental issues. It is the very productive dimension of mobility that weaves a story which cannot be reduced to borders standing in defence of the nation, nor dilated in the global flows that characterise the later understanding of contemporary capitalism. Nor can this story be traced back exclusively to a migration industry in which valorisation only covers profits obtained from the services provided for mobility to another country, and which is analysed only in relation to migration policies – albeit from a transnational perspective. From the point of view taken in this contribution, the exploitation and valorisation of mobile workers does not begin at the worksite but instead involves a much larger timeframe, a multi-scale space, and heterogeneous forms of labour. This approach seeks to avoid the pitfalls typical of labour studies in which productivity is strictly connected to the workplace and immobile labour power, as in the case of migration and mobility studies in which individuals are rarely considered as productive and valorised subjects along their paths of mobility.

The valorisation process relies not only on places as static geopolitical objects; it also has to do with the profitability of mobility itself, which turns space into the very battlefield continuously recreated by frictions and crossings. Mobile workers do not produce value exclusively at the worksite; on the contrary, they are already productive when they leave their homes, and they remain so for a long time after the end of their formal employment contracts. The circulation of workers itself as well as with the immaterial dimension produce value at every step in this cartography of mobility. The simple act of providing access to the competition to become a contract worker was immediately valorised in the context of the Bracero Program – in other words, the *expectation* of recruitment became part of the social and economic process created by the selection procedure for participation in the program. Practices of mobilisation and immobilisation coexisted to maximise valorisation of workers' movements and waiting times, involving not only the destination worksites and recruitment centres in the United States but also the processing centres in the northern and central regions of Mexico as well as farms throughout Mexico. This article's approach considers immobility as being constituent to and coexistent with mobility within the same regime: Control over labour, coercion and indebtedness, exploitation of waiting times, and the moulding of workers into disposable subjects were all means of generating value out of immobility. Waiting times played a key role by breaking both the supposed continuum of moments of labour and the linearity of paths of migration, thereby affecting both the temporality and the subjectivities of workers.

Various forms of immobilisation were employed by formal and informal actors: Institutions, officers, representatives, and other legal as well as non-legal individuals and groups profited from this complex mechanism of (im)mobility valorisation.[69] The wide range of required credentials, unpaid work, deductions, fees, deposits, debts, bribes, taxes, uncertain contracts, waiting times, and shifting schedules formed constitutive components of a well-established labour mobility regime that coerced and valorised workers along their paths of mobility, at their sites of immobilisation, and through their expectations.

In short, the articulation of the labour mobility regime established through the "Programa Bracero" relied on manifold processes that led to valorisation of Mexican peasants through the coexistence of their mobility and immobilisation.

69 Bernardi, "Within the Factory of Mobility".

Angelina Kussy

Chapter 8
From Peasants in Romania to the Global Care Class in Spain, 1949–2019

In this chapter, I argue that the collectivisation of agriculture (1949–1962) in Romania together with the overall project of modernisation during the post-war era of communism in the country and the neoliberal reforms that began in the 1980s should be viewed as a long historical process that was constitutive for the migration of female Romanians to Spain after 1989 for the purpose of employment in highly exploitative domestic work.[1] In doing so, I draw on my own ethnographic fieldwork focused on Romanian women in Castellón de la Plana in Spain. This fieldwork reveals migrants' motivations for moving abroad, which I subsequently analyse in a broader intergenerational perspective, as their stories extend back to the lives and living conditions of their grandparents in the Romanian regions they came from.

Recent research on domestic workers shows that in the current era of an ageing population, the growing need for social care work[2] has led to the outsourcing of care provision to private households in many countries including Spain. In the 'core' capitalist countries in the Global North, this burden is frequently placed on female migrants, who often work informally for low wages and with minimal labour rights.[3] The term "care chains"[4] has been used to describe the global circulation of care workers to these countries from the more peripheral areas within the global capitalist divisions. To secure their livelihoods, lower-class women from the so-called Global South or Central and Eastern Europe have joined the ranks of what I refer to as the "global care class", a reserve legion of care workers.

1 I would like to express my gratitude to all the editors of this edited volume for the insights which greatly assisted this chapter and to Prof. Kacper Pobłocki who advised me on writing strategies and helped me out to put together the ideas for this chapter during my research stay at the Center for European Regional and Local Studies (EUROREG) of the University of Warsaw in 2021. For reading the very early manuscript of it and giving his useful feedback I am also grateful to Dr. Jaime Palomera.

2 Physical and mental care for vulnerable social groups like children, the elderly, and disabled people, as opposed to medical care provided in hospitals.

3 Emma Dowling, *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It?* (London: Verso Books, 2022).

4 Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," in *Justice, Politics, and the Family,* ed. Daniel Engster and Tamara Metz (New York: Routledge, 2014), 250.

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Silvia Federici has argued that,

> [b]ehind the nationalist appearances and particularities, there is only one logic driving the new forms of primitive accumulation: to form a labor force reduced to abstract labor, pure labor power, with no guarantees, no protections, ready to be moved from place to place and job to job, employed mostly through short term contracts and at the lowest possible wage.[5]

The transnationalisation of care work plays a crucial role in the current global social reproductive regime, which in turn is constitutive to the creation of what Federici calls "pure" labour power. The term "global care class" thus refers to the persons representing the living manifestation of this situation – people recruited to the transnational sector of care work.

Evelyn Nakano Glenn has pointed to the link between slavery and other forms of coerced labour and care work, tracing the ideological roots of the exploitation of lower-class women – frequently women of colour – to various forms of care work throughout history.[6] The often harsh conditions of contemporary domestic work and its relation to growing global inequalities has also inspired historical research on the topic. While studies on care chains that apply a synchronic approach mostly focus on the extraction of care capacities from the Global South to the Global North (following old colonial relations), recent historical research has adopted a diachronic perspective focusing on the historical continuity of domestic service/work along with its transformations and the flow of migrants within this labour sector throughout history.[7] This contribution will employ this diachronic approach. To delineate the preconditions arising from recent history that have caused women from a less privileged post-socialist country to become domestic workers in Spain, I will demonstrate that these women became part of the global care class as a consequence of a twofold dispossession – the first carried out by the communist state, the second by the neoliberal one. I will explore how social reproductive regimes, coercion (in the sense of the state's direct imposition by force or through the more complex systemic creation of a lack of alternatives), and the inherent mobility of contemporary care work all played a part in this process. In other words, I will illustrate how structural forces of mobilisation and labour coercion effected changes

5 Silvia Federici, "On Primitive Accumulation, Globalization, and Reproduction," in *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, ed. Silvia Federici (Oakland: PM Press, 2019), 18.

6 Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

7 See Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Silke Neunsinger, eds., *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015).

in social reproduction regimes in twentieth-century Romania, which in turn led to increased transnational mobility of female Romanian care workers.

The chapter is structured as follows: In the first section, I explain my methodology and define the key concepts employed. The second part focuses on how the Romanian communist state changed the way society reproduced itself when it created a working class by imposing on its peasants a labour regime that involved regular commuting from more remote rural areas to urban centres, and by coercing them into agricultural collectives and factories. Simultaneously, a form of immobilisation of workers was exacted by closing the national borders during the dictatorship. I will subsequently discuss how neoliberal reforms in Romania during the 1980s structurally created a lack of opportunities for post-socialist workers, forcing them to emigrate. In doing so, I will focus on women, showing how the lack of social protection for themselves and their children they were faced with created coercive conditions forcing them to seek work abroad as domestic workers – and how the conditions of this work in Spain along with the scarce opportunities in their homeland do not allow them to return to Romania. In the conclusion, I point out that examining the current situation of migrants from an ethnographic and a historical perspective reveals how this entanglement of various forms of capitalist exploitation leads to further labour coercion and immobility.

Methodology

This chapter draws on ethnographic fieldwork performed in Castellón de la Plana between March 2018 and July 2019, in addition to telephone interviews conducted in 2020. Castellón de la Plana is a Spanish industrial city on the Mediterranean coast, and the capital city of Castellón province where around 10% of the total population are of Romanian origin.[8] The interviewees were members of the Romanian demographic enclave in the city created as a result of a massive wave of migration beginning in the final decade of the twentieth century. I draw on formal interviews with Romanian care workers as well as on numerous conversations and observations made in workplaces, cafés and parks, migrant's houses, and other places in Castellón de la Plana. Various types of interviews (exploratory, thematic guided in-depth, life-story and semi-structured)[9] were conducted with inhabitants of Romanian origin as well as other people with a stake in their

8 Data from the time of my fieldwork conducted in Castellón de la Plana; in 2012, this number was as high as 14%. Source: Spanish Institute of Statistics.

9 44 persons (8 men and 36 women) interviewed in 40 interviews.

situation. My primary thematic focus lay on working-class female migrants from rural areas and the suburbs of (post)industrial cities in Romania employed as domestic workers, with the interviews concentrating on their strategies for social protection. The intergenerational stories appearing in many of these interviews did not form part of the initial research design but emerged as a consequence of topics occurring naturally during the fieldwork. It was a snowball sample with several non-connected gatekeepers as starting points. I collected data on the migrants' own life and work experiences, and to a lesser degree on those of their parents and grandparents as narrated by them. This inspired a further revisionary reading of ethnographies as well as historical and anthropological literature on the transition to socialism in rural Romania according to the method of "following the story"[10] – the same way in which we "follow the people" in multi-sided ethnographies. The perspective adopted in this article thus goes beyond methodological nationalism, which a priori treats the nation state as a natural "container of social life" and thus as the nexus of research.[11] Not taking this point of view for granted does not mean dismissing the nation state's influence on people's lives, however. Both perspectives assumed in this chapter – that of global labour history[12] and that of the global anthropology of labour[13] – reject the notion of a categorically positive connotation of mobility. The employed approach globalises labour studies, concentrating on the "interconnected world as its point of departure"[14] and trying to identify a "big picture in small details".[15] All interviews were conducted by me; the names used in the text are pseudonyms.

10 George Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95–117.

11 Biao Xiang, "Beyond Methodological Nationalism and Epistemological Behaviouralism: Drawing Illustrations from Migrations within and from China," *Population, Space and Place* 22,7 (2016): 669–680.

12 Andreas Eckert, ed., *Global Histories of Work* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

13 Sharryn Kasmir and August Carbonella, eds., *Blood and Fire: Toward a Global Anthropology of Labor* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

14 Andreas Eckert, "Why All the Fuss about Global Labor History?" in *Global Histories of Work*, ed. Andreas Eckert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 8.

15 Marcel van der Linden, "The Promise and Challenges of Global Labor History", in *Global Histories of Work,* ed. Andreas Eckert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

Key concepts: Social reproduction, coercion, im/mobility, and dispossession

The concept of the social reproductive regime[16] refers to the general systemic framework of organising, maintaining, redistributing, and managing "the ensemble of activities through which people secure the conditions for their future existence".[17] This regime is culturally constructed and supported by traditions, beliefs, customs, and/or laws, and it can be horizontally organised or coercively imposed (directly through the use of force, or structurally by creating conditions that severely limit people's choices). In modern societies, regimes of social reproduction are regulated by public policies and conditioned by capitalism's general imperative to deprive the potential and actual labour force of alternative ways of reproduction besides selling its labour power on the market for the minimum possible wage.

The mechanism eliminating these alternatives is a progressive dispossession. Drawing on Marx's concept of primitive accumulation, which refers to the dispossession of peasants with regard to land as a precondition for capitalism, David Harvey theorises capitalist accumulation as an ongoing process of "accumulation by dispossession" based on privatisation, commoditisation, and corporatisation of formerly public goods.[18] Among these are universities, public utilities, and entitlements to welfare and national health care. Tania Murray Li expands this definition to rural dispossession – for example, the seizure of land by the state or state-supported corporations and the dispossession of small-scale farmers due to their

16 Yige Dong, "Spinners or Sitters? Regimes of Social Reproduction and Urban Chinese Workers' Employment Choices," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 61,2–3 (2020): 200–216. In feminist literature, which began with criticism of the centrality of 'productive' work and the lack of recognition of other contributions to society by families and communities, the term 'social reproduction' still often refers to care work in the household that is necessary for workers' basic reproduction and thus indirectly for the accumulation of capital, which requires 'productive' work. In this article, 'social reproduction' encompasses work that could be perceived as reproductive (supposedly mostly performed in the private sphere) as well as work considered productive (supposedly only performed in the public sphere) in economic analyses without separating the two. However, I use the term "social-reproductive labour" strictly in reference to what economist nomenclature defines as the labour needed to reproduce the worker (nourishment, cleaning, transportation, etc.).

17 Robert John Foster, *Social Reproduction and History in Melanesia: Mortuary Ritual, Gift Exchange, and Custom in the Tanga Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

18 David Harvey, "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession," in *Socialist Register 2004: The New Imperial Challenge*, ed. Leo Panitch and Collin Leys (London: Merlin, 2004).

exposure to global competition from agricultural systems.[19] I employ the term here with reference to both the communist collectivisation in post-war Romania and the decollectivisation and other neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Both shared the same aim: to withdraw property from individual people's control and further exploit labour.[20]

What the word 'coercive' means in this chapter differs depending on the historical period. Coercive recruitment to work in collectives is distinct from the more diluted and structurally enforced restriction of choices to working in the domestic sector.[21] Labour coercion can only be understood within its specific historical context that offers a defined set of alternatives for workers' reproduction – in other words, coercion is a social mechanism. Following Evelyn Nakano Glenn, coercion is defined here as "physical, economic, social, or moral pressure used to induce someone to do something".[22] This definition explains the forms of coercion that historically and presently induce women to "assume responsibility for caring for family members" and have "tracked poor, racial minority, and immigrant women into positions entailing caring for others".[23] Glenn explains that "[t]he forms of coercion have varied in degree, directness, and explicitness but nonetheless have served to constrain and direct women's choices; the net consequence of restricted choice has been to keep caring labour 'cheap,' that is, free (in the case of family care labour) or low waged (in the case of paid care labour)."[24] In the same vein, Marcel van der Linden argues for the need to "dissect coerced labour", stating that most definitions implicitly distinguish between what would be considered 'free' labour and what would be considered coerced labour, with the latter loosely defined as being "similar to slavery".[25] As Van der Linden explains, this lack of differentiation of various forms of coercive labour and the assumption that wage labour is free labour do not help to inform public policies for tackling the problem of coercion. He distinguishes two fundamental forms of coercion: constrained choice and physical compulsion. Both will be visible in this chapter. Following Hadas Weiss, compulsion (understood here as a synonym of coercion) in

19 Tania Murray Li, "To Make Live or Let Die? Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus Populations," *Antipode* 41 (2010): 66–93.

20 Ivan Szelényi, ed., *Privatizing the Land: Rural Political Economy in Post-Communist Societies* (London: Routledge, 1998).

21 It is nevertheless worth remembering that in the case of wage work relations, the mere entrance into such work has always been related to constrained choices, as proletarians – or the proletariat as a class – cannot escape it.

22 Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 6.

23 Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 5.

24 Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 5.

25 Van der Linden, "Promise and Challenges," 294.

social reproduction means "the actions of all members of society being carried out under the domination of something external to them. The domination is 'structural'; that is, enforced not by people but by structures and institutions (. . .)".[26]

The final key term employed in this chapter is 'mobility' (along with 'immobility', understood as the lack of possibilities to choose to move). It has attracted much scholarly interest in recent decades in a world characterised by constant movement. With the *mobility turn* or the *new mobilities paradigm*, im/mobilities have become not just an object of study but also an analytical lens in social theory.[27] Although the term can refer to many things – the mobility (or lack thereof) not only of people but also of ideas and identity, or social mobility (upward or downward) – I focus here on spatial im/mobility: the movement respectively absence of movement of people from one geographic location to another.

As mobility studies appeared in consequence of criticism of a sedentary vision of society and an academic focus on territory and structures,[28] they paved the way towards a more fluid perspective.[29] Noel Salazar points out, however, that this context made mobility studies take a positive view of mobility for granted and assign a negative connotation to sedentarism. He argues that mobility studies thus have a bias towards valuing movement as inherently good – a stance influenced by neoliberal ideology and in line with its interests.[30] And as Cristiana Bastos, Andre Novoa, and Salazar remind us, Marx theorised long ago that a reserve of mobile labour is necessary to keep wages as low as possible for capital accumulation.[31] Historical studies show that the mobilisation of coerced work was often a mechanism of the intense exploitation of human labour. The colonial conquests and the dispossessions and slavery associated with them invariably required and intensified labour mobility. As the late David Graeber has argued, the history of the expansion of imperialism and capitalism (also understood as a transformation of slavery) can be

26 Hadas Weiss, "Social Reproduction," Cambridge Encyclopedia of Social Anthropology, accessed 2 November 2021, https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/social-reproduction.

27 James Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2000).

28 James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

29 Cristina Bastos, Andre Novoa, and Noel B. Salazar, "Mobile Labour: Introduction," *Mobilities* 16,2 (2021): 155–163, here 156.

30 Noel Salazar, "Theorizing Mobility through Concepts and Figures," *Tempo Social* 30 (2018): 153–168.

31 Bastos, Novoa, and Salazar, "Mobile Labour," 156.

seen as a history of forced mobilisations of labour power from one place to another and its subsequent immobilisation at the respective destination.[32]

Im/mobility and coercion in changing social reproductive regimes

On the following pages, I will explore the interplay between coercion and labour im/mobilities in the Romanian transition to a socialist social reproductive regime, focusing on the process of the collectivisation of agriculture that significantly affected the grandparents of Romanian domestic workers in Castellón. I will start by briefly sketching the preceding regime of social reproduction in Romania as a foundation for understanding what the transition to socialism beginning in 1947 changed in terms of im/mobilisation and coercion of the labour force.

From peasants to workers

Before the abolition of serfdom at the start of the second half of the nineteenth century in various territories of what would later become Romania, the labour force was subject to a considerable amount of forced mobility. Serfs could be "moved at will from one village to another in which the lord needed more labor".[33] As Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery explain, the end of serfdom and patronage relations, the introduction of taxation, and finally the land reform of 1921[34] which distributed land among the peasants introduced more spatial stability for those working the land. One of the workers I interviewed in Castellón de la Plana explained how this access to land had affected the way peasants like her great-grandmother could reproduce themselves:

> My [great]-grandmother, since she was little, used to go to work, gather fruits, or take care of the goats, she used to tell me. And it was like this: The day's pay was a cup. It was a

32 David Graeber, "Turning Modes of Production Inside Out: Or, Why Capitalism is a Transformation of Slavery," *Critique of Anthropology*, 26,1 (2006): 61–85.

33 Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture 1949–1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 89.

34 The king's fear of revolution due to increasing discontent among peasants owing to inequalities of land possession led to agrarian reform laws between 1917 and 1921 that allowed the expropriation of large estates belonging to the crown, boyars, churches, and foreign landlords and distribution of this land among peasants.

> typical model, a cup full of corn – the pay of the day. You ate the corn dough and that was it. Money was not the medium of exchange then. [. . .] She worked for a Boyar, a type of feudal class . . . Later [when they acquired the land][. . .], they had animals, the basics . . . chickens, pigs, cows, horses – those who had a horse then were quite privileged – sheep . . . the basic animals of the Dâmbovița province.[35]

In the period before communist collectivisation, rootedness in a permanent location was thus increasing in Romanian villages. It was a time when many Romanian peasants lived a humble life but controlled their own labour. According to this and other testimonies, many owned animals and a piece of land, and they had collective resources—the commons—at their disposal. They primarily farmed for self-consumption, with market exchange occurring only on a small scale. According to Kligman and Verdery's study on the significance of communist collectivisation for these peasants' social reproduction and identity,[36] the shift towards collective farming entailed a decrease in autonomy for many people as compared to the previous period. Autonomy – meaning freedom from coercive labour – was an important social value, and many had the material conditions to enjoy it. Even though the social structure of Romanian villages prior to collectivisation was based on myriad hierarchies and inequalities, most "[p]eople used to do what they pleased, as they had their own land and plough. They weren't used to taking orders. You could work today and feast tomorrow. There used to be many fewer days of full work in a year."[37] This view, however, does not consider the gender perspective and the care work morally and naturally assigned to women. As Romanians in Castellón testify, as long as the land was the main source of food, children were cared for in the household by their parents – mostly by women and grandparents. Ageing parents were cared for by their children, and a larger share of the burden of this care lay on daughters, while the men were the first to inherit the land. Nevertheless, as a family unit, people were more independent from external factors, and this autonomy was a crucial value. Following Kligman and Verdery's study, being hardworking and exercising initiative was a way of earning the respect of others as well as generating self-esteem: To "work for

35 Marcela, 34 years old, daughter of a Romanian domestic worker. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2018.

36 Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants under Siege,* 89.

37 Liviu Chelcea, "'Here in Reviga, There Was Nobody to Wage the Class Struggle': Collectivization in Reviga, Bărăgan Plain (Bucharest Region)," in *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949–1962*, ed. Constantin Iordachi and Dorin Dobrincu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 417.

oneself as much as possible, not for others – to control one's labour process" was a key aspiration.[38]

Communist collectivisation (1949–1962): Creating the *navetiști* class

In 1947, a pro-Soviet communist government was installed in Romania, with anyone opposing it risking prison or transfer to a labour camp. Collectivisation was implemented by force by the Romanian Communist Party, modelled on the Soviet collectivisation process and following the advice of Soviet experts. This included imposing strict control over labour mobility and a completely new social reproductive regime. Between 1949 and 1962, the land was appropriated by the state and peasants were recruited to join the ranks of the newly emerging proletariat[39] in collectives, factories, or other spaces of wage work. From one point of view, this represented a reversal with regard to the previous period of increased permanence of location, as people went from working in their villages to being forced to seek employment in urban factories. As Teodora, another interviewee, explains:

> I'm from a small village in Romania, in the past people weren't buying things. They were doing everything at home. It wasn't like now that you go to the shop and buy something. People had enough at home to survive. And during communism [. . .] this started to change. When I was 16 years old, all my siblings were already born, and I had to leave my mother's village in search of work.[40]

Sometimes people like Teodora had to leave their villages and move to where they could find wage work, while others were forced to accept long commutes to their workplaces. The latter were called *navetiști* ('commuters') in Romanian. Dispossessed of their land and other sources providing autonomous livelihood, they had to travel between their rural living areas and centres of work like collective farms and urban factories. In communist Romania, spatial im/mobility was a crucial focus of the state. Ciprian Cirniala, who has studied Romanian border policies in the period from 1964 to 1989 (between 1967 and 1989, Romania was governed

38 Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants under Siege*, 100.

39 A proper 'working class' did not exist in Romania at the time, since it was (and still is) mostly a rural country. It was inhabited by peasants and small landowners, the majority of which had at least a hectare of land.

40 Teodora, 55 years old, domestic worker paid by the hour and part-time porter. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2019.

by the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu), argues that while "the police were authorized to encourage and administer desired mobilities, they also occupied a crucial position in restricting and eliminating alternative forms of mobility that were considered a threat to the government."[41] State security was the official reason for closing the national borders, exerting control over transnational mobility, and restricting domestic mobility between different regions of the country. In this way, specific "corridors" within which the labour force had to move, along with limited possibilities for other kinds of movement, were established. Beatrice von Hirschhausen stresses the difference between Romanian *navetismul*[42] ('commuting'), which involved hundreds of thousands of village workers, and the general phenomenon of commuting to work in other contexts:

> In socialist Romania, it was not a question of city dwellers setting out in search of a lifestyle that matched their aspirations further and further away in rural locations; rather the industrial combines went into the villages to find their labor force; the process did not stem from individual motivation on the contrary, companies had to organize collective transportation for their workers. And above all the state made the whole mission a political and ideological campaign.[43]

In communist Romania, commuting was centrally planned and imposed by the state. The process of labour commodification and the enforcement of compulsory mobility to workplaces simultaneously implied close control over workers' bodies, time, and spatial limits.[44] Prior to the collectivisation, peasant reproduction had been rooted in the village; there had been no reason for the inhabitants of rural areas to move elsewhere and work for others. This absence of a need for spatial mobility was perceived as progress in terms of peasants' rights, since moving around for work was linked to dependency (in the sense of lords commanding their serfs according to their labour needs) and a lower rank in social hierarchies. Only very poor people actually wanted to join the collectives. This is how Marcela,

41 Ciprian Cirniala, "Power and Mobilities in Socialist Romania 1964–89," in *Mobilities in Socialist and Post-Socialist States*, ed. Kathy Burrell and Kathrin Hörschelmann (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

42 Sometimes also referred to as "navetism", an English adaptation of the Romanian word *navetismul*.

43 Beatrice von Hirschhausen, "The Collapse of 'Navetismul' and the Redefinition of Town-Country Relations in Romania: The Example of Arad County," in *Romania: Migration, Socio-Economic Transformation and Perspectives of Regional Development*, ed. Wilfried Heller (Munich: Südosteuropa Gesellschaft, 1998), 257.

44 David A. Kideckel, *Getting By in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). A similar process in Hungary was described in Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

another interviewee, explains why her kinsfolk were not eager to work in collectives or factories:

> [. . .] and the factories, I remember that my mother was telling me that she was 16 years old when she started to work in the eighties. My father's parents were already working there, so I imagine they had been there already, but it depended on the distance . . . my father, when he started, he walked an hour and a half through the mountains. And then rode 30 minutes on a bus. Some people preferred to work their own land, if it allowed them to maintain themselves . . . they did not know a lot about the pension systems and stuff like that, it was your children who took care of you [when you grew older].[45]

The creation of a proletariat was thus a coercive process, as most peasants did not want to abandon their previous livelihoods – the entire ideological and forcible apparatus of the state had to be applied to impose the new social reproductive regime.[46] As Sanda Borşa has explained, the communist regime in Romania used collectivisation to subjugate the rural population, employing tools including manipulation, persuasion, and various coercive means like imprisonment, blackmail, and economic pressure.[47] Drawing on extensive ethnographic material from a collaborative project, Verdery and Kligman explain in detail this process of "persuasive coercion" comprising physical violence along with numerous strategies to create a new state of mind among the peasantry and convince them to give up their land and join the collective farms.[48] Among the persuasive techniques used during the Romanian collectivisation campaign between 1949 and 1962, they cite modelling by example (showing peasants successful collectives in Romania or the Soviet Union or tagging persons exhibiting "antisocialist" behaviour), cultural propaganda in films and literature, denunciation of those who resisted via letters and petitions, and finally the fomenting of class warfare by pitting one group of peasants against another. Physical violence accompanied all of these instruments of coercion and was used as the "ultimate argument". Verdery and Kligman offer the following testimony to illustrate this:

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45 Marcela, 34 years old, daughter of a Romanian domestic worker. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2018.

46 Katherine Verdery, "Abusive Cadres in a Voracious Party-State: Romanian Collectivization in the 1950s" (Seattle: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2009), accessed 18 November 2021, https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2009_822-15g_Verdery.pdf.

47 Sanda Borşa, *Between Propaganda and Repression: The Collectivization of the Romanian Agriculture and the Metamorphoses of the Rural World (1949–1962)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2013).

48 Katherine Verdery and Gail Kligman, "How Communist Cadres Persuaded Romanian Peasants to Give Up Their Land," *East European Politics and Societies* 25,2 (2011): 361–387.

> Then comrade Moraru [a party secretary] said: "You listened to what I had to say, but know that, whether you want it or not, there will be a collective! If I have to bang your head against the walls, we'll have a collective!" [. . .] On Monday evening a car came, and they picked up two chiaburs [kulaks], two poor peasants, and a middle peasant, and took them away . . . [T]hey came back on Tuesday. They were horribly beaten up.[49]

Recruitment into wage labour relations through forced mobility and coercion was the principal tool for the political goal of implementing a wholly new social reproductive order. Policies designed by the Soviet Union and implemented by socialist nation states were designed to complete the parcellation of agricultural land in order to increase the food supply by raising productivity according to a scientifically designed modernisation project. Collectivisation in Romania was presented as a replacement for the traditional semi-feudal economic relations in rural parts of the country before 1949. However, it also eliminated the relatively autonomous way of life most peasants enjoyed before its implementation, as discussed above. For this change to happen, the state had to coercively dispossess the peasantry. The compulsion in this context was direct, as it was based on physical violence by the police, but the overall picture of the coercive process becomes more apparent when we compare the two different regimes of social reproduction: The people were simply devoid of any choice. Reproduction based on kinship relations, access to communal resources, and control over one's own labour while working the land for self-consumption and small marketing was replaced with imposed wage work as the only form of social reproduction – in exchange for social protection by the state in the form of pensions or the performance of part of the required care work previously provided mostly by women.

From protected to dispossessed workers

The neoliberal reforms beginning in Romania in the 1980s entailed a significant change in labour mobility patterns and the nature of recruitment to certain labour sectors, including domestic work, in the sense of structural creation of a lack of alternatives. While coercion applied in the recruitment to collectives and factories during communism was legally sanctioned and forcefully imposed by the state apparatus, the character of coercion in the context of labour recruitment

49 Cited in Verdery and Kligman, "Communist Cadres," 361. Original source: Camelia Moraru, Constantin Moraru, and Veronica Vasilov, *Stenogramele şedinţelor Biroului Politic şi ale Secretariatului Comitetului Central al PMR*, 3, 1950–1951 (Bucharest: Arhivele Naţionale ale României, 2004), 542.

and spatial im/mobility after 1989 was shaped by the interplay of individual agency with structural constraints creating scarce possibilities to secure reproduction. In the following, I will explain how the depletion of social reproduction opportunities caused by the neoliberal reforms pressured workers into moving abroad to look for jobs – in the case of women, specifically in domestic work. Furthermore, I will show that after leaving the country, Romanian women faced new forms of immobilisation.

Neoliberal dispossession and the structural creation of potential migrants

Starting in the 1970s, external pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank forced the Romanian authorities to begin liberalising the economy.[50] Following his condemnation of the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, dictator Ceausescu received financial support from the IMF and the World Bank to facilitate rapid industrialisation. In order to repay this external debt, he implemented austerity measures that drastically reduced the population's living standards.[51] Further neoliberal reforms after 1989 were also influenced by international pressure and transnational ties between domestic policy stakeholders and external advocates of neoliberalism.[52] New policies for the economic transformation from socialism to neoliberalism brought a new wave of dispossession for the working class and – as had been the case with the previous communist policies – significantly changed the existing regime of social reproduction: People were no longer wage workers with a guaranteed job and a right to social protection. While their income and access to state-provided social benefits still depended on their relation to salaried work, they were no longer assured. Privatisation of state-owned enterprises along with decollectivisation and massive job cuts left many workers in a situation where neither the market nor the state could guarantee access to social protection and thus to the means for social reproduction. Under these circumstances, the *navetiști* were the first to lose

50 After it had previously been one of the most loyal countries to the Soviet Union in the Eastern Bloc, Ceauşescu began to lead Romania towards independence from Soviet foreign policy and closer to the United States starting in the late 1960s, as reflected in his economic policies.

51 Ramona Dumitriu and Razyan Stefanescu, "External Debt Management in Romania," MPRA Paper 52475 (University Library of Munich, 2013), accessed 8 August 2022, https://ideas.repec.org/p/pra/mprapa/52475.html.

52 Cornel Ban, *Ruling Ideas: How Global Neoliberalism Goes Local* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 66–98.

their jobs.[53] My conversation with Rodica and Florin, a domestic worker and agricultural worker in Castellón, illustrates the context of this period in which post-socialist workers suffered from feelings of impotence and a lack of opportunities to earn a living:

> Florin [slightly irritated, interrupting to answer the question posed to Rodica]: People had to find work! In Târgoviște she worked in a factory that made machines for the oil probes.
>
> Rodica: I worked there with my father.
>
> Florin: There, in the centre, in the very centre where there is a Kaufland [German supermarket chain] now and all of this . . . There was this factory. And it was closed. So of course . . . How many were you there?
>
> Rodica: I don't know . . . 2,000 . . . 3,000 . . .
>
> Rodica: And there, where my father-in-law worked . . . how many were there? Maybe 5,000. So imagine that in the nineties they closed these factories, 8,000 jobs. 8,000 people in the fucking street in Târgoviște. And there was nothing. Nothing . . . Have you ever seen something like this?[54]

Many working-class Romanians like Caterina felt they had no means and no chance of building a future in Romania:

> When the revolution came, they closed everything [the factories, collectives, and other centres of work]. And it was like . . . if you don't have money, you don't have the right to live.[55]

Women became especially vulnerable in this situation. During communism, women had been involved in the process of creating a proletariat, and as a result they had actively engaged in wage work in collectives and factories while the state provided care services. In the 1990s, the combination of conservative gender discourses and neoliberal economic transformation repositioned women primarily as carers rather than workers.[56] The withdrawal of the state and high unemployment rates forced women back into unpaid care work at home.

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53 C. M. Hann, *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2001).

54 Rodica, 54 years old, domestic worker, and Florin, 55, agricultural worker. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2018.

55 Caterina, 53 years old, domestic worker. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2019.

56 Tatjana Thelen, Andrew Cartwright, and Thomas Sikor, "Local State and Social Security in Rural Communities: A New Research Agenda and the Example of Postsocialist Europe," *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* 105 (2008).

Many unemployed also found themselves having to return to working the land for self-consumption. Romanians in Castellón explain that it was primarily women who worked in the household while men continued to provide income from wage labour. This explains why many women have larger gaps in their contributions to social security and therefore no entitlement to a pension in their old age. Massive job cuts and the feeling that the working class had been abandoned by the state led to the creation of a new class of potential migrants.[57] Katherine Verdery explains the role of decollectivisation in this process: The restitution of private land ownership in the context of the increasing difference between production costs and product prices did not allow the inhabitants of villages to work their land profitably. Therefore, she argues, many people from rural areas emigrated primarily to Italy and Spain, joining the global workforce as victims of the transformation of Eastern European socialism.[58]

Shortly after the national borders opened in 1989, a mostly irregular migration of post-socialist workers began. When Romania initiated the process of accession to the European Union (EU) and eventually became a member in 2007, this entailed further structural adjustments to the economy that made social reproduction even more difficult for both the inhabitants of rural areas and the working class. New Eastern European members of the EU are excluded from the Common Agricultural Policy that subsidises agriculture. For this reason, Romania was unable to raise protectionist tariffs in favour of its own production, and as a result was flooded with cheaper agricultural products from the European Union. Another condition of accession to the EU is that the state essentially cannot create jobs. According to the neoliberal premises of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, employment policies depend on fiscal and monetary rules like inflation control and reduction of public debt.

In this context of an absence of state intervention to improve people's social protection, international mobility for work increased dramatically around 2000, when regulations for obtaining residency and work permits for Romanian citizens in the EU countries were eased.[59] Limited access to social protection and the disappearing possibilities of future social reproduction for many Romanian workers created a coercive set of circumstances that led to increased international mobility. To some of my informants in Castellón, emigration seemed the only survival strategy, while for others it offered a way to improve their social status and mitigate future

57 Remus Gabriel Anghel, *Romanians in Western Europe: Migration, Status Dilemmas, and Transnational Connections* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013).

58 Verdery, Katherine. "The Rural Contribution to Emigration in 1990s Romania," *Sociologie Românească* 7,3 (2009): 21–36.

59 Anghel, *Romanians in Western Europe*.

economic uncertainty. Finally, my study of female workers joining the ranks of the new global care class – the Romanian-born domestic workers in Castellón whom my fieldwork was focused on – illustrates how this international mobility generated new forms of immobilisation in some cases. This will be the topic of the following section.

Romanian women in Spain as the immobile global carers

Neoliberal dispossession caused millions of post-socialist Eastern European workers to "go global" – in other words, they moved beyond the borders of their nation states to wherever they were welcome as cheap labour. Many lower-class women, especially from rural areas, became domestic workers in Western and Southwest European countries. Their work abroad could result in forms of empowerment, as some of them gained economic independence after many years of unemployment. However, the case of Romanian migrants to Castellón shows that it could also mean new dependencies and vulnerabilities, and that the increased geographical mobility could be accompanied by a process of subsequent spatial immobilisation. This immobilisation is coercive in the sense that a structurally generated lack of alternatives for social reproduction curtails these migrants' choices.

In the context of an intensifying care crisis, the Spanish labour market funnels low-skilled female migrants into domestic work as cleaners and carers for elderly and dependent people. For many women arriving in Spain from abroad – especially those above the age of 50 – it is one of very few job opportunities open to them. In addition, the vulnerabilities of persons moving abroad in search of social protection are reproduced in such transnational settings, causing new forms of immobilisation for these working women. Statistics show that care industry in Spain is characterised by poor labour conditions and low salaries; care work is often performed informally and without contracts.[60] The historical underestimation of domestic work as not being "real work" (as it was not considered "productive") means that it has generally received limited interest from the labour movement. Its essentialisation as "women's work" and corresponding dismissal by the welfare state has contributed to creating the lack of social protection suffered by persons working in the care sector.[61]

60 María Offenhenden and Sílvia Bofill-Poch, "Esenciales pero Invisibles: Trabajadoras de Hogar y Cuidados Durante la Pandemia," in *Cuidar a Mayores y Dependientes en Tiempo de la Covid-19*, ed. Dolores Comas-d'Argemir and Sílvia Bofill-Poch (Valencia: Tirana Humanidades, 2022).

61 Silvia Federici, *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2021). This situation has been changing in Spain during recent years, however.

The expansion of household work as the main source of social care provision was encouraged over the past three decades in Spain, where care has traditionally been provided within the family.[62] In 1985, the rights and responsibilities of all domestic workers were defined in a royal decree establishing a "special regime" to which they contribute – in contrast to the "general regime" applying to other kinds of workers. This special regime allows for flexible schedules as well as stipulating that labour contracts can be written or established verbally, and that care work does not include unemployment benefits or paid leave for illness or accidents. Currently, domestic work in Spain and Italy represents 27.6% of all of this type of employment within the EU.[63] Countries like Spain take advantage of the low social recognition of domestic work to keep care cheap thanks to female migrants from more disadvantaged regions where the welfare state is even weaker. 72.2% of domestic workers in Spain are foreigners, with 46.15% coming from Latin American countries and 30.77% from Eastern Europe.[64] Most of the latter are from Romania, with smaller numbers coming from Ukraine and Poland. All of these data refer only to the employees officially registered with the social security system. Labour unions estimate that around 30% of domestic workers in Spain are not registered,[65] while Romanians in Castellón de la Plana – reflecting on the people they know personally – generally estimate this number at around 80%.

Joining the ranks of the global care class working in Spain creates new forms of immobilisation for the workers living abroad. The stays of domestic workers in Castellón frequently last longer than initially planned; they find themselves "stuck" in the role of emigrants due to their limited possibilities for social reproduction in their countries of origin. Many domestic workers not only perform reproductive and care work in Spain – they also participate in enabling the reproduction of their adult children in Romania, mitigating the weaknesses of the Romanian job market and the inadequate welfare system. If they were to return, they would likely deprive their children of the financial resources they need to continue their studies, as many young men and women depend on the income provided by their parents

62 Margarita León, "Migration and Care Work in Spain: The Domestic Sector Revisited," *Social Policy and Society* 9,3 (2010): 409–418.

63 Unión General de Trabajadores, "Trabajo doméstico y de cuidados para empleadores particulares," report by the Sindicato Unión General de Trabajadores, Department of Migrations (2019), accessed 2 November 2021, https://www.ugt.es/sites/default/files/04-09_informe_trabajo_domestico_y_de_cuidados_para_empleadores_particulares.pdf.

64 Sara González Aparicio, "El trabajo doméstico en España: radiografía de los problemas sociales, económicos y laborales que se esconden detrás del sector hogares" (PhD thesis, Comillas Pontifical University 2019).

65 Unión General de Trabajadores, "Trabajo doméstico."

or other immediate family members abroad. The prolongation of the emigration of global care workers is thus owed in part to the needs of the children they leave behind: the cost of studies, rent, and maintaining the standard of living in larger cities where the universities are located. Teodora explains it in the following words:

> AK: Do you have any friends who are domestic workers? I'd like to talk to them.
>
> Teodora: Friends . . . . close friends no . . . as they don't go out very often. They are very lonely. They meet only with other domestic workers. They have very little free time.
>
> AK: Why do they work like that?
>
> Teodora: To send money to their family. This is something I can't understand. I couldn't live without my kids. This is the case with my sister. She works in Spain and her kids are in Romania. She sends them money. [. . .] Her first son is a doctor, a dentist, he has just completed his studies, the other one the same, a dentist, he is finishing his studies. The youngest one is a musician, he likes music [. . .].
>
> AK: But why does she send them money if they are already adults and have studies?
>
> Teodora: They've just finished their undergraduate studies. Everything they earn, they spend, life is very expensive in Romania. He has studied so much, and they pay him 200 euros . . . [66]

Parents extend their stay to enable the social mobility of their children or simply maintain them, as the latter often find it difficult to make ends meet despite their education. Some domestic workers in Castellón seek formal employment in order to contribute to social security and aggregate their contribution periods in Romania and Spain, thereby ensuring entitlement to a state pension.[67] This is because long periods of unemployment after 1989 have deprived them of the entitlement to receive a pension in Romania, or at least made the pension they would receive insufficient for a decent living. Nevertheless, as their labour niche is highly informalised, they end up struggling to find legal work that would allow them to return home with a secure retirement income. Employers refuse to legalise their jobs to avoid paying taxes for their work. In fact, whether these persons have a legal contract at all, and whether all the hours they actually work are recognised

66 Teodora, 55 years old, domestic worker paid by the hour and part-time porter. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2019.

67 A deeper analysis of this case can be found in Angelina Kussy and Ester Serra Mingot, "Securing Retirement by Intra-European Migration: Older Eastern Women's Transnational Struggle for Formal Social Protection" (forthcoming).

in such a contract, generally depends on the goodwill of the employer. Nina is an exceptional case among those I interviewed or met in Castellón, as she works as a part-time cleaner because her husband earns more money and has a stable job. She stopped looking for a formal job for the same reason, as she hopes to retire together with her husband and share his pension. Her statements summarise the power imbalance between domestic workers and their employers in Spain:

> Nina: I don't have a contract. I'm not employed. Because they are different flats [laughs].
>
> AK: But . . . you don't . . . you don't arrange it somehow on your own [to have social security insurance]?
>
> Nina: No, they didn't let me. I wanted that, a while ago. My husband was informed. But I . . . what I have heard . . . because I asked them . . . I told them "I will take care of myself alone". But I was told that I needed . . . 3 signatures [from the employers]? Or something like that? To justify where I work.
>
> AK: Yes . . .
>
> Nina: And I couldn't talk them into signing.[68]

Live-in carers residing in the same home as their employer experience a high degree of immobilisation. According to Spanish law, they are to be given free time with the possibility of leaving the home – but only for two hours per day and 36 consecutive hours on weekends. In practice, some employers want them at their full disposal almost permanently, and the regulations are often ignored as a result. Physical enclosure in the employer's house restricts workers' spatial mobility, and the permanent obligation to be available does not allow them to seek or be trained for other kinds of work. Almost all their vital life is spent working, and they spend almost all their time in the employer's home.

The case of Romanian women in Spain illustrates how paid care work often becomes a form of coerced labour, as domestic workers practically do not have the choice not to work. Discrimination based on gender, class, and the status of being a foreigner in Spain has returned these women to a position of caring for others – a position they previously held as unpaid and unprotected carers in their own households in post-socialist Romania. Even though their work is now remunerated, it is coercive in the sense that they have practically no other options for work or occupational mobility. This situation does not differ significantly from that of domestic

68 Nina, 42 years old, domestic worker paid by the hour. Interviewed in Castellón de la Plana, 2020.

servants performing care work in pre-industrial times. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn has discussed, recruitment to care tasks has historically always relied on direct or indirect coercion. Close similarities to the historical examples she cites can be observed in contemporary Castellón, where women are employed mostly in domestic work and men in construction, factories, or agriculture:

> An integral aspect of systems of labor coercion, whether formal slavery, indenture, debt bondage, convict leasing, or other forms of compulsion, was appropriation of not only men's and women's productive labor but also women's reproductive labor – that is, caring labor. Whereas men in subordinated groups were commonly compelled to perform hard physical labor in agriculture, construction, and mining, women and girls were directed into domestic service, where they performed caring labor for their social superiors.[69]

The lack of alternatives for social reproduction, either for themselves in their old age or for their children, creates the coercive conditions for Romanian women to be recruited into non-desired employment, providing a labour force to meet the growing demand for care work. A structurally generated lack of alternatives for social reproduction constitutes the coercive mechanism forcing economically vulnerable women into domestic work. Migrant domestic workers thus fill in the cracks in state- or market-based welfare systems in both their country of origin and their destination country, either by providing paid reproductive work or by maintaining their family members remaining in Romania. This allows the Spanish welfare system to keep care provision as inexpensive as possible, while the Romanian state is liberated from the duty of providing social protection to its citizens and can maintain social wages at a low level. The result of this mechanism is the emergence of a new global regime of stratified social reproduction, as Shellee Collen calls it.[70] She defines it as a regime in which care needs (in the sense of social reproduction needs) are met by exploiting social inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, or class. In this system, the middle and upper classes buy the care work of others while other peoples' care needs remain unmet. The 'care corridor' between Romania and Spain is only one of the avenues along which this extraction of care – its flow from poorer to richer countries – is currently taking place.

69 Glenn, *Forced to Care*, 36.

70 Shellee Collen, "Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York," in *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*, ed. Ellen Lewin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 380.

Conclusion

The present-day global regime of social reproduction, which increasingly bases care work on the exploitation of female migrants, is preceded by a longer historical process of progressive dispossessions. The dispossession of peasants of their land and forms of autonomous reproduction, along with the establishment of wage work as essentially the only way to maintain reproduction capabilities, during the era of Romanian state communism was followed by the deprivation of the working class of state social protection through neoliberal economic reforms, thereby creating the conditions for the current labour and mobility regime of transnational domestic care work. It is coercive in the sense that post-socialist women were left with very few choices regarding their own and their children's reproduction, as well as in that the markets of the destination countries relegate them to care work by offering practically no other opportunities.

The biographies of Romanian domestic workers living in Spain, analysed together with those of the generation of their grandparents, show that the increasing geographical mobility of younger generations can be accompanied by a simultaneous process of immobilisation and labour exploitation; they reveal how coercion and im/mobilisation allow the state and the capitalist market to exert control over social reproduction. This appears as an entangled development of capitalist exploitation increasing over time in this part of the world by way of an ongoing process of dispossession.

Violently imposed by the communist state, the collectivisation of agriculture and the overall push for modernisation in Romania constituted a process analogous to what Marx called "primitive accumulation". Relatively autonomous peasants reproducing their own and their family's lives were dispossessed of their means of subsistence and forced into wage labour in exchange for guaranteed state social protection. This coercive process simultaneously required spatial mobilisation to collectives and factories as well as immobilisation by way of restricting this movement to concrete 'corridors' between regions determined by the state and prohibiting people from crossing the Romanian national borders. A new regime of social reproduction based on a dependence on wage work was thus established. The newly created working class was subsequently dispossessed again by the neoliberal reforms a few decades later. The neoliberal regime of social reproduction – which should perhaps instead be called a depletion of social reproduction – created a class of potential migrants. This twofold dispossession was a necessary precondition for the current manifestation of 'globalised post-socialism' in the form of transnational migration from Eastern to Western (or Southwestern) Europe. In the current era of an ageing population and the associated social care crisis means that many of the people doubly dispossessed in this manner are forced to join the ranks

of what I describe as the "global care class". The discriminatory character of this work, undervalued and invisible in our societies as 'non-productive women's work' and therefore lacking full labour rights, creates new forms of immobilisation by preventing migrants from returning. In the case of live-in domestic workers, where almost all vital time is spent working and physical mobility is limited to the employer's house, it can even be harshly exploitative.

Different historical periods exhibit the same dynamics of human experience: Being shifted from place to place as a labour force to allow further capital accumulation. The interlacing of im/mobilities and labour coercion in the context of existing possibilities for social reproduction helps to explain the political mechanism of labour coercion: It shows how compulsion, im/mobilisation, and changing social reproductive regimes interact to promote processes that increase control over the dispossessed workers of the world and facilitate their exploitation.

Thomas Nail

Afterword: Coercion and Historical Patterns of Motion

Why should human organisms and their cultural patterns of motion be fundamentally different than other natural patterns? Human bodies have the same fractal patterns in their heartbeats, breathing, eye movements, vascular systems, metabolisms, speech,[1] and nested brainwave frequencies.[2] Much of human culture is also fractal, as I will show in a moment. This finding makes sense if we think of humans as part of the broader tendency of matter to spread out and dissipate energy on Earth. But this is often not the starting point of much Euro-Western thought, which remains largely anthropocentric. Euro-Western thinking tends to treat human consciousness as the *exception* to the laws of nature. But culture and knowledge are not immaterial or ahistorical: Like everything else in the universe, they tend to spread out and diversify over time and space along fractal lines. Even – and perhaps especially so – when they are not *trying* to make fractal patterns.[3]

For instance, the infrastructure of cities and their transport and supply networks – such as the total length of electrical lines, roads, gas stations, and water and gas lines – is all fractal. Just like enormous trees, the frequency of branching city roads and fuel lines increases at smaller scales.[4] Urban space viewed in this way looks analogous to the cardiovascular and respiratory systems or the vasculature of plants and trees. Michael Batty and Paul Longley have shown in their book *Fractal Cities* that municipalities throughout history and across geographies tend to spread out in specifically fractal geometries.[5] Mathematician Ron Eglash has also shown how pervasive fractal patterns such as branching and recursion

1 Richard F. Voss and John Clarke, "'1/f Noise' in Music and Speech," *Nature* 258 (1975): 317–318.

2 Klaus Linkenkaer-Hansen, Vadim V. Nikouline, J. Matias Palva, and Risto J. Ilmoniemi, "Long-Range Temporal Correlations and Scaling Behavior in Human Brain Oscillations," *Journal of Neuroscience* 21,4 (2001): 1370–1377.

3 A fractal is a self-similar pattern, such as a tree whose forking patterns repeat in its branches, twigs, and leaf veins.

4 Geoffrey West, *Scale: The Universal Laws of Life, Growth, and Death in Organisms, Cities, and Companies* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 273.

5 See Michael Batty and Paul Longley, *Fractal Cities: A Geometry of Form and Function* (London: Academic, 1994).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137155-010

across scales have been in African art and architecture – as well as the anti-fractal effects of European colonisation on African cities and art.[6]

If we were to look at a time-lapse image of how human culture and knowledge have spread, we would see them emerge via peoples' branching movements and circulations through the fractal geometries of villages and cities. When observed over larger timescales, humans are in continuous movement – going to work, to eat, to shop, to sites of entertainment, and back home – always following fractal urban and rural transport networks.

This human mobility drives cultural interaction and innovation as well as weaving together the structure, organisation, and dynamics of social and infrastructural networks. Physicist Geoffrey West has done incredible work to show how cultural engagement and innovation is anchored in the physical flow architectures of fractal city networks. These physical networks facilitate and constrain the number of interactions an average urban dweller can sustain in a city.[7] They are also the reason why the pattern of human mobility within urban areas across time and geography tends to have a fractal scale. For instance, most people tend to visit places closer to them more frequently than more distant places, in a specifically fractal proportion.[8]

In short, the shape of cultural innovation and transmission is rooted in the hidden flow patterns of fractal mobility. As American historian Lewis Mumford wrote, "[t]he chief function of the city is to convert power into form, energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity."[9] One of the key historical drivers of social and cultural innovation has been the *freedom to move* widely and encounter different ways of living and knowing. This is in fact what the Greek word *theoria* literally meant: to journey to neighbouring villages and listen to their stories. Athenians would return home and either adopt, reject, or innovate in response to what they had heard from others. For the Greeks, theory was a *performative* and *relational* way to learn and improvise new ways of knowing.

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6 Ron Eglash, *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

7 Geoffrey West, *Scale*, 320–321.

8 Geoffrey West, *Scale*, 346–352. "Up to 1800, a nearly universal constant of cities through history is that the diameter of their central core is no more than 5 kilometers which is roughly the walking speed of the average person (5 km an hour). [. . .] This surprising observation of the approximately one-hour invariant that communal human beings have spent traveling each day, whether they lived in ancient Rome, a medieval town, a Greek village, or twentieth-century New York, has become known as Marchetti's constant, even though it was originally discovered by Zahavi."

9 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformation, and Its Prospects* (London: Penguin Books in association with Martin Secker & Warburg, 1991), 571.

Free movement – ideally supported by mutual hospitality or at least not open hostility between peoples – tends to create bifurcations or branches in linguistic and cultural patterns. Historically, most human groups tended to seek out ways to *distinguish* themselves from others. They built on what they learned from people they encountered – and just like language family trees branch and spread out into parent and sibling languages, human cultures branched away from one another. This is called cultural *schismogenesis*, a term coined by British anthropologist Gregory Bateson to describe how cultures innovate relationally in response to others. From a kinetic perspective, we might also refer to it as *dendrogenesis* to highlight the branching and fractal patterns of cultural bifurcation.

From a material and thermodynamic perspective, cultural bifurcations in language, society, and knowledge are also some of the ways in which human animals have most strongly diversified their dissipation of energy on the planet. The more different ways of human knowing and being exist, the more ways there are of dissipating energy that are appropriate and responsive to their places. As British archaeologist David Wengrow puts it: "Instead of assuming the existence of stable evolutionary types, this approach starts from the position that institutions crystallize through historical encounters among societies. Internal social contradictions are worked out in dialogue with neighboring value systems."[10] Schismogenesis is a historical process that restricts how many cultural traits can be passed down through mimicry before branching off in new directions. In short, it is the playful and experimental source of all the patterns of cultural movement.

For example, although there is much we do not know about Palaeolithic humans, including their cultural and religious myths, we know that they used very similar tools, shared a system of 32 signs engraved on caves throughout Africa and Europe,[11] played similar musical instruments, used similar ornaments in funeral rites, and at certain points travelled very long distances.[12] By contrast, the differences between Palaeolithic cultures are not radical differences played out in isolation: Rather, they are small divergences from one another as groups branched out from some shared or common cultural behaviours. Recent studies

10 David Wengrow and David Graeber, "'Many Seasons Ago': Slavery and Its Rejection among Foragers on the Pacific Coast of North America." *American Anthropologist* 120, 2 (2018): 237–249.

11 Genevieve von Petzinger, *The First Signs: Unlocking the Mysteries of the World's Oldest Symbols* (New York: Atria Books, 2016).

12 For a deeper analysis of similarities and differences between Palaeolithic cultures, see Natasha Reynolds and Felix Riede, "House of Cards: Cultural Taxonomy and the Study of the European Upper Palaeolithic," *Antiquity* 371 (2019): 1350–1358. My point here is only that there are broad similarities. See also Isabell Schmidt and Andreas Zimmermann, "Population Dynamics and Socio-spatial Organization of the Aurignacian: Scalable Quantitative Demographic Data for Western and Central Europe," *PLoS ONE* 14,2 (2019): e0211562.

of hunter-gatherers even indicate a kind of 'cosmopolitanism' of long-range travel and exchange in African, Australian, and North American groups.[13] Refuting the stereotype of hunter-gatherers as isolated local groups, studies now show that much larger networks existed than many people have assumed.

However, beginning around 12,000 BCE, archaeologists are able to discern the clear emergence of distinct cultural zones among Mesolithic humans. Some of these people primarily hunted large mammal herds while others settled in fishing villages on the coast, and still others primarily gathered acorns. Focusing on different eating habits and geographies, they invented many new and very different ways of preparing and eating wild foods. In this way, the Paleolithic tap root branched out into a fan of diverse culture areas that remained in regular communication and exchange with one another.

Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that many of these hunter-gatherer societies did not have a single fixed form of society but alternated between several distinct patterns of motion. They followed the migrations of woolly mammoths, steppe bison, and reindeer as well as seasonal patterns of fish runs and nut harvests. During the late summer and fall, many groups would gather *centripetally* in a single location to share the abundance of wild foods as well as engaging in complex rituals, creating art and monuments, and trading minerals, shells, and furs. Evidence of these seasonal events can be found in places like Dolní Věstonice in the Czech Republic, or in the great rock shelters of the Périgord region of France.[14]

Archaeologists have shown that these seasonal patterns are behind the impressive megalithic structures of Göbekli Tepe located in present-day Turkey and inhabited from 9500 to 8000 BCE.[15] There, small distinct groups of foragers from around the periphery gathered in a single location to process massive quantities of nuts, cereal grasses, and meats for an enormous feast. During this seasonal festival, they would construct enormous temporary structures requiring massive amounts of organised labour, then fill them in with the leftovers from the feast

13 Douglas W. Bird et al., "Variability in the Organization and Size of Hunter-Gatherer Groups: Foragers Do Not Live in Small-Scale Societies," *Journal of Human Evolution* 131 (2019): 96–108. See also Kim Hill et al., "Co-residence Patterns in Hunter-Gatherer Societies Show Unique Human Social Structure," *Science* 331 (2011): 1286–1289. Elizabeth Tooker, "Clans and Moieties in North America," Current Anthropology 12,3 (1971): 357–376: "This was one reason for the North Americans' famous development of sign language. It is interesting that in either case, one is dealing with systems of totemic clans: raising the question of whether such systems are themselves typically forms of long-distance organization."

14 See David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 87–88.

15 See Graeber and Wengrow, *Dawn of Everything*, ch. 3.

and spread out again *centrifugally* to the periphery in their small separate hunting groups.

Something similar happened at Stonehenge in Britain between 3000 and 2000 BCE. Between midsummer solstice and winter solstice, people from all around the periphery would convene at the site to create a series of temporary monuments dedicated to the ancestors of a Neolithic aristocracy.[16] Perhaps there were stricter hierarchies between people during this season, and even a centralised organisation of labour; we do not know. But if such a central power did exist, it did not last long before the site was left empty for the other half of the year. After gathering, feasting, and building, the people would again spread out from this genealogical and geographical centre into a series of groups, each moving *in tension* together while separating from the others. Individuals in the groups were also free to leave and travel widely or join other groups, however – meaning that there was also an *elastic* movement of individuals, expanding and contracting local groups relatively freely.

To summarise, from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Neolithic, hunter-gatherers alternated seasonally between four patterns of social motion rather than permanently remaining in one particular pattern. This is not as historically unusual as it may sound. Anthropological evidence from the Nambikwara in South America and the Kwakiutl on Canada's Northwest Coast shows that they adopted similar seasonal patterns of social motion.[17] However, over the course of the Mesolithic, some human groups became increasingly 'stuck' in permanent agricultural villages – and eventually around 2000 BCE in Sumer, in centrally organised political states.

There is no historical necessity for all human societies to eventually become stuck in a single pattern of motion. There is also no reason why they must remain fixed in either hierarchical or egalitarian modes. The ancient city of Taosi in China, for example, grew from a small village in 2300 BCE into a powerfully hierarchical city with massive walls, roads, rigid segregation between commoners and the elite, and a palace. Three hundred years later, there seems to have been a political revolution during which these hierarchical divisions were abandoned in favour of more egalitarian distributions that lasted two or three centuries. The city's population grew significantly after this egalitarian transition, suggesting relative social stability. In another example of such change, the ancient Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacan was largely authoritarian for three hundred years before

16 For a detailed survey and interpretation of the archaeology of Stonehenge, including the results of recent fieldwork, see Mike Parker Pearson, *Stonehenge: Exploring the Greatest Stone Age Mystery* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

17 For a survey of this literature, see Graeber and Wengrow, *Dawn of Everything*, 98–111.

suddenly shifting course around 300 AD to a more equal distribution "of the city's resources and the establishment of a kind of 'collective governance'."[18]

In other words, almost as often as humans settled down in prehistory and banded together in agricultural villages or states, they abandoned farming and the state again[19] – that is, until the frequency of social pattern shifting began to slow down significantly in some places more than in others. Specifically, towards the end of the Neolithic, more and more societies in the Near East began to stay in the same place for longer periods of time.

In my books, I have tried to trace the general outline of a geographic tendency of Western and Near Eastern societies to become socially stuck in a specific series of dominant patterns. Interestingly, I have found that this series of patterns from the European Neolithic to the contemporary also mirrors the seasonal patterns of many Paleolithic hunter-gatherers from centripetal to centrifugal, to tensional, to elastic – but over a longer time span.

Centripetal movements gather from a periphery to a central region, while centrifugal ones spread outward in all directions from a centre. Tensional patterns move together and hold apart like the orbits of planets in our solar system, and elastic patterns expand and contract around an optimal range of motion. I have tried to show in my political books that these patterns in Europe and the Near East roughly characterise the dominant patterns of motion of Neolithic farmers, ancient states, mediaeval kingdoms, and modern nineteenth- and twentieth-century economies respectively.[20]

So if we were to map all the physical movements made by human bodies throughout human history, scurrying like ants around their hills, we would see that they follow a branching fractal pattern made of these four patterns of motion. They gather to centres, expand outward, then fragment into distinct orbits whose populations expand and contract in waves of mobility. These movements are punctuated by various disruptions and crises, but the general tendency would be to multiply and spread out, occasionally getting stuck along the way. The patterns also inevitably shape human culture and knowledge in the arts, sciences,

18 See Réne Millon, "Social Relations at Ancient Teotihuacan," in *The Valley of Mexico: Studies in Pre-Hispanic Ecology and Society*, ed. Eric R. Wolf (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 205–248. George L. Cowgill, "State and Society at Teotihuacan, Mexico," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 129–161, here 155–156. Tom Froese, Carlos Gershenson, and Linda R. Manzanilla, "Can Government Be Self-Organized? A Mathematical Model of the Collective Social Organization of Ancient Teotihuacan, Central Mexico," *PLoS ONE* 9,10: e109966.

19 This is a big argument, the evidence for which I cannot reproduce here, but is argued at length in James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), and Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*.

20 See Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

and politics – or at least that is what I have been trying to show for the past decade in my research.

My argument is that these patterns of cultural knowledge are not merely a by-product of quantitative fractal scaling 'laws'. Ways of knowing and narratives of growth in the history of art, science, politics, and ontology are just as much the source as they are the shape of these historical patterns. Fractal scaling laws are quantifications of cultural activity, not a priori laws of culture or nature – and natural and cultural fractals are ranges, proportions, and distributions rather than rules that follow a strict mathematical formula. For instance, the ontological descriptions of the cosmos as a heavenly sphere and the resulting political belief in the centralised rule of divine emperors and kings that was common in the ancient West and Near East are partly causes and partly effects of ancient circular and centrifugal city plans. One was not the exclusive cause of the other; rather, they emerged alongside each other simultaneously and relationally.

But human culture is fractal in another sense as well. Individual people making art, doing science, practising politics, or describing ontologies are iterating the same cultural patterns happening at larger geographic and temporal scales. For instance, the use of metal for statue making, logical deduction, political states, and spherical cosmologies all follow a distinctly centrifugal pattern of motion around the ancient Near East and West over thousands of years. Each domain of cultural knowledge of this era iterates the centrifugal pattern happening in the larger urban space and ancient time period.

From a time-lapsed bird's-eye view, we could watch an ancient city like Sumer spread outward centrifugally from a central administrative point into the periphery through warfare, urban growth, and colonisation. Then, if we zoomed in on Sumerian astronomy, artistic innovations, or mythology, we would see the same centrifugal pattern at work. And if we zoomed out, we would see the same pattern in effect across a larger geography and longer time period extending beyond Sumer as well. Going back in time geologically, we would even encounter this pattern in cosmic and planetary history. In this way, human cultural activity does in its own way what the rest of nature has been doing for much longer.[21] Everything iterates these self-similar patterns in its own way and on its own scale.

21 By changing my definition of knowledge to be something done or performed, it includes non-human actions as well. Since I define "culture" as a set of particular ways of knowing, this means that non-humans also have cultures. See Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Earth* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021) for a philosophy comparing mineral, atmospheric, vegetal, and animal ways of knowing.

Natural-cultural patterns of motion can and have occurred in many different ways that do not line up neatly with classical anthropological and philosophical categories such as states, chiefdoms, bands, capitalism, egalitarianism, and so on. This is because many patterns are often mixed together and overlaid, shifting into and out of metastable social states. It is a lot of work to track all these patterns as they influence a society – and much easier to invent idealist social categories like 'states', assuming this captures what is important about them. But I increasingly find that the study of 'political ideologies' is itself ideological and explains nothing about the performative and schismogenetic processes that make and reproduce cultures.

Therefore, the focus of my historical work has been to examine how certain patterns dominated others in a certain geography over a certain period. Specifically, I examine Near Eastern and Western cultures from the Neolithic to the present. Humans seem to have become stuck in certain patterns for large stretches of time during this period, and they have often used these patterns as weapons against others around the world, forcing them into getting stuck as well. But one of the problems with becoming stuck in one pattern of motion and trying to apply it all over the world is that this ignores the geographical and historical specificity of energy dissipation. In fact, increasing the frequency of pattern alternation and geographical diversity of patterns tends to increase cultural and ecological diversity, while enforcing a single pattern for everyone tends to destroy it. The result has been ecological devastation and increased human misery for most.

I am not saying Western civilisation is *unnatural* to have become stuck and forced others to do so too. Illness is just as natural as health. From a kinetic and energetic perspective, Western civilisation has been like a series of diseases in which various natural patterns of movement have become calcified and spread, slowing down cultural and planetary metabolisms and schismogenesis.

For instance, if we think of cultural history like a branching tree, we can see that throughout most of human history, people have alternated fairly quickly and freely between social patterns – like a branch that fans out into twigs, leaves, and veins to catch the sunshine in spring and then dies back in the winter. Each human cultural formation added a little something to the biomass of the tree, but mostly died back and regrew each season. However, during a relatively small and recent portion of human history, a certain branch has grown too strong too fast, sucking the energy from other areas of the tree. This one pattern refuses to die back. It has metastasised to the whole tree so that new growth only happens on one branch, which has become so engorged that it is in danger of snapping off

the tree. But no single branch could ever dissipate as much energy as the entire tree working together.[22]

This is not really a metaphor. Energetically speaking, culture does what nature does at a smaller scale. Metabolic patterns rise and fall through natural history. Organisms invade others and disease spreads in similarly fractal ways. However, in the case of capitalist growth, there has been a *super-exponential* rate of pattern growth resulting in enormous ecocide and epistemicide.[23] For those who want to live following any other pattern or mix of patterns in the great energetic pluriverse of human cultural production, we have got to get un-stuck from this dominant scheme.

Cultural patterns are not reducible to any particular social expression of them. For instance, there are many ways that Western civilization could dissipate energy – it did not have to entail empires, slavery, colonialism, or anthropocentrism. Energy can spread out in many different fashions. For example, just because a culture is structured centrifugally does not mean it must believe in a transcendent God. It just means that some aspect of it moves from a centre of some kind toward a periphery. Nor is there any reason why centrifugal motion must be the dominant pattern, or why it would have to be the dominant pattern for hundreds of years. Studying the rise and fall of these dominant patterns has been the focus of my research.

One of the key contributions of my kinetic approach to history is to demystify the belief that human culture is the product of metaphysical deities, ideal principles or values, or natural moral hierarchies. Western historians have mistakenly attributed the source and justification of cultural activity to various metaphysical forces or laws. But in the philosophy of movement I propose, it is the belief in such laws, principles, and forces itself that needs to be explained, and this is why I have studied some of the larger material and entropic patterns running through it. I am not trying to be reductionist, however – there are no ironclad laws of human culture. I think of kinetic patterns as emergent tendencies or historical trends we can see so far. There is no fine-grained determinism in my theory of history beyond the emergent entropy of our universe and its tendency to distribute itself in mostly fractal-like patterns. However – and unfortunately – Western culture has understood its material situation backward: It has forgotten that it is no more than a pattern in motion in a dissipative planetary system, and instead has sought out fixed and often metaphysical explanations for the order of things.

22 For the energetic details of this argument, see Nail, *Theory of the Earth*.

23 I use the term "epistemicide" following Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

The belief in a prior order of things is an immensely dangerous one because it makes people act as though the *products* of culture are retroactively caused by hidden forces behind the *process* of creation. This was Karl Marx's critical insight about the structure of religion, idealism, and capitalism: They are cultural processes that posit their origins beyond the world or history and make them sound inevitable. In other words, these are stories for getting stuck – the kinds of stories that tend to make people feel enslaved by the inevitability of some unalterable causal power. They also tend to make cultures less willing to change and more willing to impose their patterns on others. Finally, and ironically, privileging the products of knowledge over their kinetic processes often results in diminished attention to the importance of the material conditions that truly support the cultural production process. For instance, capitalism destroys its workers and the environment because it treats them as externalities to the laws of profit.

Cultural patterns are also metastable states, however. A metastable state is sustained by a relative balance of incoming and outgoing energy moving through it. We find these states everywhere in nature: in storm systems, water currents, and all living systems. By incorporating change and feedback into their patterns of motion, metastable systems adapt and persist. "A reed before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall," as Geoffrey Chaucer wrote.[24] Social metabolism is no different.

We live on a metastable planet. Rock cycles, water cycles, nitrogen cycles, life cycles, and even solar cycles all interweave with one another to resist all kinds of terrestrial and cosmic perturbations. However, most of Western civilisation has not – and still does not – see things this way. It has acted much more like an oak than a reed. But the more human groups resist natural feedback and transformation, the more unstable their societies become in the face of perturbations like pandemics.

In short, one of the main theses of my kinetic theory of history is a thermodynamic one. All planetary systems emerge and survive by increasing collective dissipation, not by reducing it. There are many reasons why civilisations fall, but one of them is often that they have understood the world upside-down. They have not taken seriously the primacy of movement and the patterns of motion that shape human knowledge and connect humans to natural patterns more broadly. The obsession with stasis, prior orders, ideal entities, and hierarchical

24 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (New York: Penguin, 1971). "The hard and strong will fall, the soft and weak will overcome" as the *Tao Te Ching* says. Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (London: Vintage, 1972), section 76.

thinking in particular is a major error that has led Western culture to be increasingly destructive.

What does the movement-oriented approach show us? It shows us that human animals have spread out and increased their rate of dissipation as a species following the same general patterns of other natural processes. Whether humans know it or not, planetary energy dissipates *through* human cultures and knowledges. It is a dangerous error to think that human culture is not part of nature or entirely free to shape its history. From a broad enough perspective, we can see that its patterns are fractal iterations of other natural patterns.

And what is the point of this realisation? My hope is that it is a story with some diagnostic or therapeutic value. Perhaps if we look at things from a different vantage point, we will be capable of seeing what we could not see before. But if the West keeps telling stories that get people stuck in a single pattern of motion that they then proceed to wield against the world, most of us – or perhaps all of us – will not be around much longer.

It is not all doom and gloom though. The history of human knowledge is full of creativity, metastability, and joyful dissipation. There are vastly more social experiments than have been recorded in European archives, and there is as much to carry forward and heal with as there are poisons and diseases to leave behind. Let us carry forward the spirit of *dissipative experimentation* and leave behind the sad disease of *upside-down reasoning* that fuels capitalism, colonialism, and domination.

The present volume of collected essays shows well the false contrast of mobility and immobility. Instead, there are only relative scales and cycles of social *circulation*. Even when Mexican farmers demand the right to stay home instead of being forced to migrate to the US for work, this requires mobilisation to find land, work, and solidarity locally.

Indeed, the very existence of 'labour' in capitalist societies is fundamentally coercive, and this cannot be omitted from our stories about it. Marx calls the coercive displacement of workers "primitive accumulation." Capitalism was only possible as a historical formation because people were initially displaced from their means of subsistence: Peasants moved to the cities and worked for wages in large numbers as a result of their land being stolen from them. Colonialism, then, was the spread of this primitive accumulation across the planet.

But what is coercion? In broad terms, social coercion is the historical product of societies that have become stuck in one pattern of motion: When people naturally deviate from their social pattern, coercion is required to force them back into it. In this way, we might think of coercion as the historical antipode of schismogenesis as I have described it above. In this sense, the relative mixture of

coercion and schismogenesis defines a society, for no mobility is *entirely* free or *entirely* coerced. There is always resistance.

I call the political figure of schismogenesis "the migrant". Migrants in history are often called "nomads", "barbarians", "vagabonds", or "workers" depending on the larger pattern of social motion that names them. They are always figures who constitute and shape societies through their motion – but they are also typically defined as expendable exceptions by the dominant groups of those societies. This includes the kulaks in Estonia, German miners in Italy, Romanian care workers in Spain, slaves traded by the Belgians, domestic workers in Ottoman Turkey, convict labourers in Denmark, and seasonal Icelandic workers. Migrants help to compose societies, but they are often marginalized as if they were not important. The basic strokes of coerced mobility are as old as the first societies that became stuck in a single pattern of motion, but modern capitalist societies have taken things to a whole new level. Capitalism transforms human activity into labour by stealing the means of production. Now, vast sectors of societies (unevenly affected by global capitalism) are proletarian servants forced to follow expanding and contracting market imperatives.

Moving forward, the essays in this book can serve as a guide to thinking about labour mobility and its inextricable coercive dimensions.

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