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POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF BANNING TEMPORARY
EMPLOYMENT IN THE GERMAN MEAT INDUSTRY

The Case of Hungarian Precarious Workers

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Master's thesis SOCM04 30 credits

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Supervisor: Jan Mewes

ABSTRACT

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The German meat industry is a popular labour market destination for unskilled Eastern and Middle European workers. The precarious employment and housing conditions, exacerbated by a staggering number of COVID-19 infections, received immense media attention in 2020. Given the urgency of this issue, the German government introduced new measures targeting the sector with special attention paid to subcontractor companies. Utilising Beck's risk society thesis with a focus on his individualization thesis and adopting a critical theory perspective, this paper explores how certain risk positions structure and get structured by social relations of production. For this purpose, I took a sample of ten semi-structured interviews with Hungarian regular and temporary workers, and a subcontractor company representative operating in the German meat industry. Using Katz's critical analytical framework I outline the categories of individual survival tactics in response to the experienced insecurities and inherited conflictual relations. What becomes apparent in this study is that Hungarian workers face quasi-uniform commonplace issues regardless of their employment type. Precarious conditions often do not stem exclusively from the nature of subcontractors but also from the exploitative firm practices of the meat companies themselves and their hostile atmosphere, which fuel inherited conflicts and interior fragmentation among workers.

Keywords: risk society thesis, individualization thesis, individual survival strategies, German meat industry, precariat, migrant workers.

Popular Science Summary

Fear, Abuse and Exploitation: German Meat Industry Caught In The Crossfire due to Thousands of Migrant Workers' Infection With Coronavirus.

The German Meat industry has received immense media attention in 2020 due to enabling the highest number of Coronavirus infections in Europe. Tönnies factory the biggest slaughterhouse in Europe employs around 7000 workers and more than 1,550 tested positive for Covid-19. Even though the numbers are shocking this issue appeared to be dwarfed by the vulnerable and exploited conditions these migrant workers arriving mainly from Central and Eastern Europe in hope of a better life have to face on a daily basis: Living squeezed into overcrowded hostels where even often eleven people have to share the same bathroom and kitchen in exchange for high rental fees. Working ten to twelve hours next to the running conveyor belts for minimum wage in a hostile environment where they are they are intimidated by the team leaders tyrannical behaviours while deal with the constant fear of being fired any time. The subcontracting system is considered to be the main cause of violations of workers' rights and social dumping thus the newly introduced to Occupational Health and Safety act targeted the elimination of those. In the past years there were many attempts to better the migrant labourers' situation however no real improvement has been made. In consequence, the abandoned workers are employing individual survival strategies in an environment where they have to confront many risks and insecurities which are fuelled by many factors such as cruel treatment and lack of German skills. This leads to a situation where they are attempting to defend themselves by being mistrustful, suspicious and competitive with their fellow workers thus they are facing with same issues alone in a highly fragmented atmosphere. The survival strategies they utilize might better their day to day life to a small extent but most of the cases these rather solidify their vulnerable and exploited positions and regenerate their isolation and negating the possibility of real empowerment and collective action taking against the unjust and exploitative system in which they are embedded. It is thus necessary to have a closer look at those factors and practices which reproduce their situation and those as well which might break this loop of uncertainty. By this it becomes apparent what can we expect from the newly introduced measures; are they going to make a real difference this time? The upcoming study intends to find the answer to this question.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the EU's "eastward enlargements" after 2004 (Menz, 2010, p. 982), the German meat industry has welcomed an enormous inflow of unskilled labourers mainly from Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria (Kühnel, 2017). These labourers have been facing severe exploitations and injustices for more than a decade, so this population is challenged by a great deal of precariousness. This sector attracted huge international publicity in 2020 as in Tönnies, which is one of Germany's largest meat processing plants, more than 1,500 people had tested positive for COVID-19 (Nack, 2020). As a result, poor working, housing, and employment conditions came to light, and the German government had to take action representing the proportional protection of these workers. As a consequence, from January 2021, a new law (Arbeitsschutzkontrollgesetz) has been introduced principally targeting subcontractor companies considered to be the main source of migrant workers' exploitation.

In response, this paper examines the situation of Hungarian migrant workers, both subcontracted and regular ones, operating in the meat industry sector to reveal the potential flaws of the new law's harshest point aiming to abolish subcontractor companies. For that reason, I utilise the risk society thesis (Beck, 1992) with a focus on individualization thesis (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and its inherent characteristics observed through a critical lens to explore how certain risk positions structure and get structured by social relations of production (Curran, 2013a). Additionally to this theoretical landscape I use Katz's critical analytical framework (Katz, 2004) supplemented with my own concept to unmask the categories of individual survival strategies applied by Hungarian workers in response to the experienced characteristic types of insecurities in their precarious state of existence (Standing, 2011). Throughout my study I encountered further relevant kinds of work related insecurities therefore I supplement Standing's insecurities with mines in order to provide a more fruitful analysis of the complex processes regarding the Hungarian workers' situation. With the above listed theories and by the results of ten in depth semi-structured interviews I intend to find answers to the following questions:

1. What risks and insecurities do Hungarian migrant workers confront and what risk management strategies they utilize in order to avoid these, especially in a time where uncertainty is multiplied by the presence of a disease exerting its influence on all spheres

of life? That is, briefly: What is the shared knowledge, values, and practices among these workers shaped by uncertainty?

2. How do the risk management strategies of these workers bring about social production and reproduction of their vulnerable powerless position?
3. Which areas and factors amplify uncertainty as well as vulnerability and uphold the present exploitative power relations, and which ones hold a potential to challenge these relationships?

In the procedure of unfolding my answers in response to the above listed three questions, I gradually explore whether the newly introduced measure of banning temporary work in the German meat industry will have the potential to significantly better Hungarian workers' life. Therefore in the first part of my analysis, I will disentangle comparatively both temporary and directly employed narratives. Although what becomes apparent through my results is that workers' share nearly identical insecurities in both groups, and their possibilities of survival is rather dependent on their individual competencies and possibilities to be able to manoeuvre in their everyday lives. These manoeuvring strategies stemming from their various capabilities can be grouped as reservation, resilience, rework and resistance. In the second part of my analysis it is unfolded how most of these strategies rarely serve more than these precarious workers' day to day survival and stagnant situation, often further strengthening fragmentation and hostility therefore only reproducing ongoing exploitative processes. However, some elements of these strategies such as skill reproduction, networking and awareness of relevant pieces of information have the potential to strengthen their mobility power or their collective bargaining power which therefore can better their situation. Nevertheless, in the last part those characteristic factors are scrutinized which provide a fertile ground for the flourishing of workers' vulnerable and easily exploited position such as: long and unpredictable working hours, team leaders' tyrannical positions and overcrowded hostels. Furthermore those factors as well explored which could hold the potential to weed out such precariousness generating elements, for example: a central labour union by providing workers with necessary information on their mother tongue and raise their attention to potential pitfalls they are likely to face with and advice how to handle those before beginning their operations in Germany. These results clearly show that in my observed case the highly exploitative relations of production that workers have to face with originate from the meat industry's overall characteristics and the general neglect of information providence to workers about their rights and not purely from the subcontractors' presence on the market.

The potential limitations of this study are the lack of on-sight observations, and those relations I reveal are potentially influenced by other latent factors as well. Finally, my study does not focus on further points of the newly introduced law which could enrich this paper with a more holistic view. However, I aim to focus especially on the nearly complete ban of subcontractor companies since those receive the most attention being blamed for migrant workers' exploited and uncertain situation.

II. BACKGROUND

In this section of my study, I wish to familiarize my reader with the history of the German meat industry and the developed measures around it up until now whereby it becomes apparent that despite appearances not much has been done. Furthermore, I intend to have a closer look at my case, namely the Hungarian migrant workers to provide a better picture of their situation.

II.1. HISTORY OF PRECARIOUS WORK AMONG CEE WORKERS IN THE GERMAN MEAT INDUSTRY

Communism crashed with the wall of Berlin in 1989 and the structure of the modern capitalist system commenced to take shape. The privatization of the enterprises owned by the state anterior was taking place just as the deregulation of the national economy. In Parallel, international trade liberalized providing the momentum of a new era where all that exists is organized around a global neoliberalist market. The multinational companies spread across the globe and inaugurated the absorption of both natural and human resources in the periphery and semi-periphery countries (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2013, p. 22). Eastern and Western Europe could finally initiate the approach towards each other and in 1993 by the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union, the Single Market became complete with the 'four freedoms': movement of goods, services, people and money. The neoliberal path of European integration became nearly complete on the first of May in 2004 by the enlargement of the European Union when among many six countries of the former Eastern bloc obtained EU membership (Bohle, 2006, p. 57).

In 2018, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) reported 17.6 million EU-28 movers inside the EU, from which 12.9 million EU movers were working age (20-64 years), furthermore, it is important to mention the additional 1.5 million cross-border workers in the EU as well. There are more than 3 million temporary agency workers in the EU, and many of them are low-skilled workers (Eurostat, 2020). The population statistics latest developments

confirmed that intra-EU mobility numbers still continue to grow. In 2018 three-quarters of EU-28 movers were residing mainly in the following five countries: Germany, the UK, Spain, Italy and France and approximately half of all EU-28 movers were living in Germany or the UK (Eurostat, 2020). The International Organization for Migration reported that by 2019 after the United States of America Germany was the second main destination country for international immigrants and their number increased over the years significantly from 8.9 million in 2000 to 13.1 million in 2019 (IOM, 2020).

Germany is worth mentioning not only owing to its enticement for immigrants but among other things due to belonging to the utmost meat producers in the EU. It was leading the number of produced pork in the EU with 59.4 million pigs slaughtered amounting to 23% of the EU total (Eurostat, 2020). Germany also retained the highest number of companies dealing with the processing and the marketing of meat and fish in Europe in 2016 with over 14.700 companies located in the country. Its meat processing industry generated revenues of roughly 21 billion euros in 2016 (Statista, 2020). The European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT, 2020) has reported that In Germany, approximately 110,000 workers currently are employed in the meat sector, around 30% of these are employed through subcontractors. These workers employed by subcontractor companies are almost without exception migrant and cross-border workers flow from Central and Eastern European countries. In big meat companies (e.g. Danish Crown, Tonnies, Westfleisch, Vion) approximately 80%-90% of the workers' total workforce are employed through this business practice (EFFAT, 2020, p. 7).

European Union precarious migrant workers are over-represented, mainly in the construction sector, pig slaughtering and care work.

Legal obscurities and loopholes in existing frameworks on intra-EU mobility have created a complex system in which firms employ posted workers or migrant workers via temporary agencies to reduce labour costs and in which migrant workers face varying degrees of substandard employment conditions. (Cremers, 2011; Wagner, 2015, as both cited in Wagner, 2017, p. 183).

Migrant workers employed temporarily in the German meat industry were given particular attention both from national/international NGOs (Polish Social Council, 2017; ILO, 2005; EFFAT, 2020) and researchers consequently the sector has been assessed meticulously for a long time now as a result of the extensive replacement of regular jobs since the EU's eastward

expansion after 2004 (Menz, 2010, p. 982). The sector has gradually introduced legal restrictions and nuanced improvements yet between 2004 and 2015 it was nearly pristine: “From 2004 until 2015 the majority of the subcontractors were companies based in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Workers were usually posted in the framework of the freedom to provide services within the EU (Art. 56 TFEU)” (EFFAT, 2020, p. 8). Since the minimum wage was not introduced in Germany within the sector agreements between trade unions and employers were steering the wages yet these did not apply to the subcontracted migrant workers employed by companies outside these associations (Menz 2010, p. 984). The EFFAT emphasized that within this time interval the law on posted workers did not apply to the meat sector at all, therefore, the workers were guarded by the terms and conditions of the home country (EFFAT, 2020, p. 8). One would assume that many things changed after 2015 yet the sector is still highly dependent on migrant workers with various kinds of contracts such as employed through “abusive subcontracting practices like temporary agency workers, posted workers or forced to accept (bogus) self-employed status” (EFFAT, 2020, p. 3) the working, housing and employment situation of an enormous proportion of meat industry workers are sadly lugubrious. However what has alternated is that most of the subcontracted migrant workers have been employed by national subcontractors thus holding a German contract, wherefore their labour relations could be controlled by German law *exempli gratia*: working-time, health and safety provisions, remuneration. Yet as the European Federation of Food and Agriculture Trade Union sums up the ongoing situation: “No real improvement has been made. And the reason is that the subcontracting system - the main cause of violations of workers’ rights and social dumping - still applies” (EFFAT, 2020, p. 8).

II.2. ONGOING PROCESSES

In 2020 the German meat industry has received immense media attention by enabling the highest number of Covid-19 infections among its workers in Europe due to poor working, housing and employment conditions. Subcontractor companies are considered to be the main reason of these poor conditions for almost two decades due to the social dumping they have brought about (EFFAT, 2020, p. 4) The role of these companies are multifaceted: they get in touch with the potential workers, employ them, organize their accommodation, arrange their salaries and so on by which facilitating the operation of the meat companies one side and on the other “The use of subcontracting firms allow meat companies to cut costs and sidestep any liability in case of violation of workers’ rights, evasion and avoidance of remuneration levels, social security contributions and corporate taxations” (EFFAT, 2020, p. 20). In the past several

enactments of measures intended to control these operations and thus improve the safety and health of the most vulnerable even though not so successfully. The Covid-19 generated attention by the crisis in this sector and the pressure from NGG (Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten) has necessitated the Federal Government to propose long-term solutions regarding the case as dismal and highly exploitative conditions became apparent and thus the call for further restrictions as well. This November the German government's parties have finally come to an agreement regarding the new Occupational Health and Safety Control Act (Arbeitsschutzkontrollgesetz) which will be presented for approval to the parliament in mid-December (Deutsche Welle, 2020). In short, the new law aspires to negate the delegation of responsibility in terms of the workers' welfare from the meat factories to subcontractors, therefore, banning the use of temporary workers from which companies with less than 50 employees will qualify for an exemption. Furthermore, meat corporations will be monitored more thoroughly concerning several aspects. The new law will come into force from January of 2021. Already many criticisms targeted the restrictions asserting those are not far-reaching enough (Schulz, 2020).

II.3. THE CASE OF HUNGARIAN WORKERS

In my post-soviet country home country, Hungary, after 1989 inequalities began to grow with the infiltration of marketization into all spheres of life unemployment, became legitimized as well as privatization thus existential security transformed gradually into uncertainty with expulsions from housing, insecure education, and increasing difficulty to access healthcare. This issue has further deepened after 2010 as I had experienced in the past years a massive emigration furthermore the gradual withdrawal of Viktor Orban's government from public support to serve the flexibilisation of labour: labour rights protection has been mutilated thus transformed radically the power relations of employment where those who are unskilled and easily replaceable got especially exposed to vulnerability. The newly introduced law in 2013 attacked the sources of collective protection such as labour right unions, collective agreements, facilitating the dismissal of workers, unceasingly modifying based on momentary interests the rules of employment and pension system thus further increasing the tyranny of increasing capital. Social welfare furthermore became so radically low that it does not reach even the two-third of the minimal subsistence level furthermore considering the civil society enemy and rendering it impossible further increasing the number of the needy left without assistance. (Ferge, 2012, p. 125) In 2018 December the Government of Hungary passed a controversial law on overtime this measure later became famous as the "slave law" it has contained among

other things that the employer could require people to work up to 400 hours of mandatory overtime this was well serving the international capital especially the German car industry and the declining labour force (IOM, 2020). These injustices of uncontrolled exploitation have fuelled the general sentiment and public demonstrations erupted in the capital city wherein I participated as well. This background of mine provided me with the entry and interest to research the topic as the above-mentioned measures have negated the livelihood of many and forced them to leave their families and home in search for subsistence. In 2010 the number of citizens emigrating annually from Hungary grew from 7318 to nearly 24.000 in 2018 (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2020). Based on the UN's study and the IOM's report, it can be concluded that the most popular destination of Hungarian emigrants is Germany (IOM, 2019; Marian, 2016).

III. THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

I intend to begin this section by approaching from a 'theoretical distance' by presenting the current global neoliberalism as it exerts a great influence on migrant workers' situation concerning their embeddedness in it. Neoliberal hegemony is characterized by delivering eluding and protective regulations and redistributive state interventions in opposition with former welfare states. Instead of de-regulation re-regulation is present substituting the old rules (Slavnic, 2010; Standing 2011). These regulations are "replacing taxing and redistribution and effectively eliminating institutional and social obstacles to the commodification, or re-commodification, of labour, money and nature" (Schierup & Ålund, 2013, p. 7). A symptom of it includes a global trend of migrant precarisation and labour flexibilisation within the frame of 'managed migration' where neoliberal governments serve the demands of the employers claiming cheap and flexible labour. The relevance of flexibilization is its multifaceted function that is decreasing production cost, fragmentize workers' collective identity and increase employers' surveillance (Schierup & Ålund, 2013; Standing, 2011). Three types of flexibilization are differentiated: Numerical flexibility is facilitating the dismissal of workers thus constituting the core element of temporarily employed migrant precariats. Functional flexibility enables firms to alter the workers between tasks, positions and workplaces more easily. Lastly, wage flexibility presents the widening wage gap between those of the regularly employed and the temporary workers regarding money wages and the lack of social income that is the latter lacks "bonuses, paid medical leave, medical insurance, paid holidays, crèches, subsidised transport, subsidised housing and much else" (Standing, 2011, p. 41). The migrant

precarious worker is affected by all three forms of flexibilization the consequence of which is the confrontation with a great degree of diverse labour related insecurities such as labour market insecurity — lack of sufficient income-earning opportunities at the macro level; employment insecurity — the absence of protection against arbitrary dismissal; job insecurity— an inability to retain niche employment, or achieve upward mobility; work insecurity— vulnerability against accidents and illness at work, limits on working time, unsociable hours; skill reproduction insecurity— lack of opportunity to gain skills through employment training and use competencies; income insecurity— non-guarantee of sufficient and stable income; representation insecurity— shortage of possessing a collective voice in the labour market (Standing, 2011, p. 10). Throughout my study, I encountered two more kinds of insecurities that I wish to delineate: inhabitancy insecurity— permanent possibility to lose housing or be repositioned from one place to another in a relatively short time; interpersonal insecurity— vigilance for social threat and the interpretation of interpersonal events in a threatening way (Lemay & Dudley, 2009, p. 1672).

Collective organization among migrants is sparse due to the above listed insecure employment relations that restrain possibilities for collective or individual resistance. Therefore alternatively workers often prefer to utilise individual survival strategies which promote ameliorated or in other cases only stagnating or stabilized life circumstances. Katz in her book introduced a framework for these practices concerning the economic structuring and restructuring in children's everyday life. These counter-hegemonic practices constitute those creative strategies that are used by the actors to stay afloat or create new conditions or possibilities in day to day life. The boundaries are blurred between these autonomous initiatives and the passages are nearly imperceptible (Katz, 2004, p. 152). The brief definition of these strategizing tactics are as follows: resilience — restorative and strengthening acts; rework —

Materially improve someone's position, though do so within the confines of existing social and power relations. It is driven by explicit recognition of problematic conditions and to offer focused, often pragmatic, responses to them furthermore make and remake social facts and collective identities, but not so much interested in challenging hegemonic power relations. (Katz, 2004, p. 247)

It is learnt by experience how to build networks, utilise resources, to plan and explore strategic job moves. These practices contribute to the workers' so called mobility power (Smith, 2006, p. 391). Rework strategy and mobility power are highly interrelated, as to able to apply reworking strategies mobility power is necessary. For instance, by building out networks one

is more likely to be able to manoeuvre between jobs thus increasing his or her income. Resistance—draw on and produce a critical consciousness to fight and remedy historically and geographically particular conditions of exploitation and oppression (Katz, 2004, p. 251). In the next section presenting previous studies I further elaborate on these concepts to make them more graspable. During my interviews, I encountered another individual survival method that I called: reservation; to indicate those practices which have a limiting condition for bettering one's life as it only serves to preserve that position in which the person is at the moment, that is to avoid the possibility of position deterioration. Hence this method is to be placed before resilience and could not be considered in any form as any degree of resistance only a widespread method of survival. Further demarcation has to be made between reservation, resilience and rework, resistance tactics regarding their level of consciousness as these are limited in case of the former two and while the latter pair (re)produce a more critical and oppositional consciousness of power imbalances (Katz, 2004, p. 256). It is important to mention that there is an overlap between these categories and the demarcation is blurred in some cases as it is visible later on in my study. These practices are great pragmatic examples of Beck's individualisation thesis as actors left alone are attempting to construct their DIY biographies, which I unfold in a bit.

Ulrich Beck has flipped the term risk society in 1992 where he outlined the characteristics of the emergent socio-economic era – a second modernity: “the reflexive modernization of industrial society” (Beck 1992, p. 12). His main argument is that, in second modernity, economic inequalities have, as a side effect of heightened development of wealth production initiated in the Fordist era, been replaced by risk inequalities. The distribution of risk is inversely proportional to the distribution of wealth that is “wealth accumulates at the top, while risks accumulate at the bottom” (Beck 1992, p. 32). By this token risk strengthens and not abolishes class society:

Poverty attracts an unfortunate abundance of risks. Such as risk from becoming unemployed, risks from stress, radiation and toxic chemicals are higher for those in the lower social strata and those who face with the threat of income loss seem to have better risk tolerance. By contrast, the wealthy (in income, power, or education) can purchase safety and freedom from risk (Beck 1992, p. 35).

On the other hand, the globalization of risk has equalizing a so-called “boomerang effect” owing to which not even the rich and powerful can escape risks as the impact of endangering nature by hazardous industries is unavoidable “while poverty is hierarchic, smog is democratic”

(Beck 1992, p. 36). In consequence risk positions cannot be understood anymore as class positions, but instead, they transform and replace those. The distributional logic of risk is just one key dimension of risk society while another important element of reflexive modernization is that it dissolved the traditional peculiarities of the industrial welfare societies of the West: “Class culture and consciousness, gender and family roles. It dissolves these forms of the conscience collective, on which depend and to which refer the social and political organizations and institutions in industrial society” (Beck, 1992, p. 87). Not only in the West but also in countries which have welcomed the Western ways of life (former GDR, countries of the Eastern Bloc etc.) lost the guidance of the traditional and precarious freedom entered the stage in its place where everyone’s shoulders are ridden by the burden to decide for themselves as existing institutions have collapsed and certainties are gone: “In the most public and the most private ways we are helplessly becoming high-wire dancers in the circus tent. And many of us fall” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 2). That is, the first aspect of individualization is the disintegration of previously existing social norms and forms and the second is the new modes of a life controlled by the welfare state, its networks of regulations, institutions and the job market instead of religion, tradition or the state: “From pension rights to insurance protection, from educational grants to tax rates: all these are institutional reference points marking out the horizon within which modern thinking, planning and action must take place” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 2). Therefore it is important to note that individualization does not mean subjective existence in a vacuum yet a highly complex life where the actor has to choose from among various possibilities at every step taken and his/her actions are guided by services and incentive stimuli such as student grants, mortgage reliefs and other social benefits provided by the welfare state. An active effort has to be taken to win in the stakes race for limited resources each day thereupon people are building up their own ‘elective biographies’. In the tyranny of possibilities the ‘homo optionis’ rather experiences Durkheim’s anomie instead of autonomy due to normlessness owing to “the lack of regulation, unrestricted play of individual or collective self-interest” (Durkheim, 1984, p. xx) that is the missing boundaries, the ever regenerating wishes and lack of disciplinary social barriers give birth to the alienated citizens.

This perspective allows us to observe the turbulent relationship between the society and the individual from the individuals’ perspective as it assumes that collective units of meaning and action ceased to exist and has been replaced by “the ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 22). Beck outlines in fifteen points how one’s life gets expressed in a runaway world as follows: Due to highly differentiated society people

are integrated only partly based on their temporary fragmented aspects such as student, car driver, voter etc. and they are enforced to organize their life on their own by the norms of the welfare state mediated by the educational system, labour market, public benefits etc. This bringing forth the paradox of institutional individualism where people are left alone with the same problems (even across borders) to be solved for which in order to succeed they have to be faster, nimbler and more creative day by day than other the others while the possibility of the DIY biographical stumble is omnipresent. In the occurrence of any failure, the person who slipped is to be blamed and the stumbling block is not anymore considered to be a social problem yet rather the aftermath of individual inefficiencies in decision making or non-decision making, capacities or incapacities, achievements or defeats thus social inequalities among the employees of the individualized society come to be redefined “in terms of an individualization of social risks” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 39). The multilocal transnationality of the life of one’s own (the globalization of biographies) is a further reason for the hollowing out of national sovereignty and the obsolescence of nation-based sociology:

The unity of national state and national society comes unstuck; new relations of power and competition, conflict and intersection, take shape between, on the one hand, national states and actors, and on the other hand, transnational actors, identities, social spaces, situations and processes. (Beck, 2000, p. 21)

People in this situation are ‘placepolygamous’ having relations to several places at once which generates complex contradictory processes inducing new conflicts and separation forms. By this token Beck again considers the irrelevance of sociological units of observation such as gender, class and family as these are squeezed within the frame of the national state. This all leads also to detraditionalization which means that traditions become chosen or invented through decisions and experiences in the place of old classifications, consequently, the individual creates hybrid identities in hybrid cultures within which intersections and conflicts appear. These lives in a runaway world stemming from the mixture of “globalization, detraditionalization and individualization” result in an experimental and reflexive life where it is not sure what to believe in and what is the right way to concert motherhood with politics and public activities and work, it has to be figured out by constantly filtering of contradictory information and discourses which has to be rethought constantly. (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 27) In response growing scepticism and tension between trust and mistrust comes by no surprise, the principle of “nothing is sacred” is a universalizing one true alike for all spheres of life (Giddens, 1996, p. 42) In the risk society paradoxically while we are becoming

increasingly dependent on expert systems, science has lost much aura of its authority and the opinion of experts is no longer considered the only legitimate pathway to knowledge and truth. The relation of risk and trust is converse: in a highly trustful environment, the risk is generally low while where trust is low the level of risk tends to be higher. In reflexive modernity, trust is important to be considered from the perspective of interpersonal relations as well not only regarding intimate relationships but friendships and other trust relations as well since those became mutual, flexible and reciprocal disenthralled from traditional framework becoming “new we orientations” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 27). A situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it is called pure relationship (Giddens, 1992, p. 58). The above mentioned is highly relevant in the inspection of how does the migrant precariat being highly exposed to multifaceted risk navigate in the global life of one’s own in deciding what and who trust in an unfamiliar environment.

Even though Beck’s line of reasoning -built around the idea that in the social structure of the global life with the individualization of classes, ethnic groups, nuclear families and normal female biographies in a traditional nationally fixed sense become zombie categories - was widely criticized because of rejecting the relevance of class to understand social realities, it deprives the possibility of studying inequalities by providing no alternative concept in exchange, it still provides a breeding ground for critical theorists. Dean Curran offered an expedient alternative to observe the relation of risk and class in response to Beck: Contemporary social relations continue to represent the idea of first modernity regarding the relation between class position and income wealth differentials determining the possibilities of acquiring goods and related life changes, however, the emergence of risk society seems to rather intensify these relations by adding the distributions of bads as well to the picture. Therefore class differentials will bear heightened relevance since wealth differentials will be the primary means to avoid social risks (Curran, 2013a, p. 46). That is, for Beck the heightened social-material processes of risk generation and exposure act as replacements for existing class-based processes of social structuration while, the ‘critical theory of class relations’ proposed by Curren conceives these heightened social-material process of risk as additional sites of class structuration which may intensify class differentials and the social sources of suffering and deprivation. Highlighting the importance of these increasingly consequential sites of class structuration (in which class relations both structure and are structured by these processes of risk generation and distribution)

does not deny the importance of other relations affecting risk inequality (Curran, 2013b, p. 77). Beck realizes in his response that Curran introduced the concept of risk class “to radicalize the class distribution of risk” and to chart who will be “able to occupy areas less exposed to risk and who will have little choice but to occupy areas that are exposed to the brunt of the fact of the risk society” (Beck 2013, p. 68).

For instance in the case of my study risk class provides an important frame of reference as those of the studied population are belonging to the lower strata working migrant class which predetermines their habitus: the zone and the way of living that defines “things to do or not to do” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53) that is common values, beliefs and risks to be tackled which I believe plays a significant role in reproducing their social position, hindering upward mobility and determining life-chances even as risks grow. Thus it is interesting to consider the discursive relation in terms of how one’s economic power structures risk exposure and how risk exposure shapes economic power position. How are risk and vulnerability related to each other? This is an important consideration in understanding how risk has the potentiality in intensifying inequalities as it is highly relevant to see how those occupying favourable risk positions are enjoying the highest economical safety while those being in unfortunate risk positions are impoverished and highly vulnerable. To find an answer to this it is first of all it is important to grasp what is to be considered a risk. By Beck, it is defined as the anticipation of a future catastrophe in the present and how that possible catastrophe that could occur in the future is to be prevented by its anticipation in the present (Beck, 2013, p. 69). Thus it might be possible that individual risk management practices of the migrant precariat reproduce power imbalances, therefore, solidifying the migrant workers’ vulnerable position or based on previous research we must consider those survival strategies alike holding the potential of challenging particular material social practices.

The life of one’s own, seen in this way, is a radically non-identical life. While culture which was previously defined by traditions, today it must be defined as an area of freedom which protects each group of individuals and can produce and defend its own individualization. To be more specific, culture is the field in which we assert that we can live together, equal yet different (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 27). Thus to develop sociological knowledge on risks it implies to contextualize risks as those are not the result beyond society, yet contrary the result of how actors, located in specific social settings, understand and manage certain phenomena (Lidskog & Sundqvist, 2012, p. 1003).

IV. RELEVANT RESEARCH

Studies and reports in this section include two kinds of workers employed both by subcontractor companies: temporary and posted workers as those bear identical patterns of precariousness due to operating in a system of production organized the same way except some nuances however those have no significant impact on their level vulnerability, in consequence, I call in this section all labourers subcontracted or temporary migrant workers. Furthermore, subcontractor companies which are mediating migrant workers to the meat companies are called as intermediary companies as well later on. I begin with studies and reports which are scrutinizing subcontracted workers' situation then I continue with papers which were covering theoretical frameworks identical with my study and thus highly relevant.

The working and living conditions of temporary workers are signalized hazardous and considered to be highly problematic: rundown apartments, broken or defective work tools and ineffective protective gears are just one of many examples (Polish Social Council, 2017; EFFAT, 2020; Voivozeanu, 2019). Analogously delineated living circumstances listed in the subcontractor provided dormitories as labourers have to lodge in overcrowded places where there are shared bathrooms and up to five-six people living between the walls of one object (EFFAT, 2020, p. 8). The subcontracting system is deemed responsible for the catastrophic working and living conditions since by the intermediaries the meat companies can easily cut costs and circumvent liabilities in any event of violation of workers' rights: "evasion and avoidance of remuneration levels, social security contributions and corporate taxations" (EFFAT, 2020, p. 8). From a broader perspective, however, what is rather considered to be problematic is the neoliberal hegemony of the EU treating the nationalities of the new member states as "second class members" therefore neglecting their rights of EU citizenship under the process of free movement and labour flexibilization (Bohle, 2006, p. 58). The above-mentioned factors facilitated the meat industry's sector to be struck the most by Covid-19 in terms of the lack of possibility for social distancing, lack of inspections, ventilation and personal protective equipment (EFFAT, 2020, p. 6). The workers' situation can be considered extremely precarious because they are doubly dependent on their employer, as long as losing their job would mean the loss of their accommodation at the same time as well (EFFAT, 2020; Polish Social Council, 2017; Voivozeanu, 2019). Since they expect to be fired any time or positioned to another job they lack employment security. Additionally outlined issue around the temporary workers that further increases their pendulousness is the organization of the concentrated processes

necessary for the migration process by the intermediary companies in consequence of which the workers are unaccustomed with the regulatory framework of the arrival country, decreasing the degree of their protection (Voivozeanu, 2019, p. 91). However often not just the workers are unfamiliar with the relevant legal frameworks yet official authorities might stand helplessly on the event of labour right violations due to their insufficient awareness that labour rights violations “may actually constitute a breach of criminal law” (Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 9). The above-stated fact came to light due to the state authorities importing to consider issues such as non-wage payment and unsafe working conditions only as questions to be handled only between the employer and the employee (Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 9).

Often due to the long working hours and further deductions, the subcontracted labourers’ income can be considered to be less than minimum wage (EFFAT, 2020; Voivozeanu, 2019, Polish Social Council, 2017). Compared to those of the directly employed wage disparities are significant: “Subcontracted workers earn on average 40% to 50% less than meat workers directly employed by meat companies” (EFFAT, 2020). However disparities might be presented even in the salary of the same person throughout different months, this fluctuation from month to month can mean a salary on average between 6€ and 8€ per hour plus the further deductions (Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 4).

Temporary migrant workers are often abandoned for instance it is ‘commonly in the construction sector that a subcontractor is hired to perform the task and uses an intermediary to find workers, the employer paid the workers an advance and then lagged behind on the following payments. Therefore any attempt to enforce the payments legally were usually unsuccessful’ (Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 4), Further encumbers the vulnerable situation of some temporarily employed migrant workers that the contract they sign is not written in their native language (Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 10). Therefore often receiving legal assistance is not an option for them. Trade unions would have the potential to guard the employees and some developments were reached by some migrant workers who managed to establish a worker’s council at a subcontracting firm in the meat processing sector with the support of: “the NGG (Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten) union in co-operation with the DGB-project Faire Mobilität [Fair Mobility] (Faire Mobilität, 2016, cited in Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 11). However, this, unfortunately, cannot be considered a representative case generally the subcontracted migrant workers are attempting to outbrave the meat or construction industries’ high bargaining power and in these cases, unions are eliminated from bringing to fruition any

collective action, therefore, they fail to protect the labourers in adversarial situations (Voivozeanu, 2019; Bernsten, 2016). Trade union efforts to integrate and represent migrant workers are now embedded in industries that have experienced radical growth in precarious employment, rapid weakening of unions, and widespread workforce segmentation of indigenous as well as migrant workers (Wagner, 2017, p. 158). In consequence: “Most workers interviewed deemed it not worthwhile to join a union” (Bernsten, 2016, p. 9). This seems to be well supported on a statistical ground likewise as the number of company employee members of trade unions has been decreasing reportedly (Polish Social Council, 2017, p. 4). Correspondingly presented by the results of an ILO project: “Trade union membership and collective bargaining coverage, the share of employees working in companies with a works council has decreased rapidly in recent decades” (Wagner, 2017, p. 160). As a consequence, workers, which are left alone segregated, prefer to utilize individual strategies in spite of collective action thus the author came to the final conclusion that the level of precarity is inversely proportional with the amount of time spent in one particular job enabling the construction of more mobile and powerful DIY biographies (Voivozeanu, 2019, p. 96).

Another author drew the similar inference and built his research on the idea that cross-border precarious employment is not shaped only by changes in regulations and employment practices because it looks upon workers as passive resources or commodities only. Therefore reworking labour practices were scrutinized, among construction workers at the Netherlands, paying attention rather to migrant workers’ individual agency vis-à-vis collective agency as from that perspective workers are believed to be disempowered and just passively accepting exploitation thus overlooking diminutive gradual processes the outcomes of which might be small yet they enable meaningful changes in the labourers’ life: “Migrants cope, survive and strategize in various ways within often oppressive (low-wage) labour markets still we have little knowledge about migrants’ agency, more need to be known about their survival (coping) and resistance strategies” (Bernsten, 2016, p. 2). The study is based on Cindy Katz’s one-way critical theorist resilience, resistance and reworking framework originally developed to understand different forms, intentions and consequences of children’s behaviour when they reject to act as they are told in an environment overwhelmed by transformations due to the incorporation into the global neoliberalist system (Katz, 2014, p. xi). The Workers’ resilience strategies ensue from social networks based and shared experiences furthermore they strive to make well-informed decisions by browsing a firms’ reputation. Furthermore, those companies enjoy vantage where their friends worked before, thus social networks make life more liveable and provide assistance

when a problem might emerge (Bernsten, 2016, p. 11). Reworking strategies comprise (as a response to limited job security and temporariness) disloyalty, flexibility and opportunistic manoeuvring on the job market “a pragmatic response to problematic conditions or a way to create strategic rewards” (Bernsten, 2016, p. 12). Another strategy is reducing working effort as a conscious attempt to undermine the profitability of the labour process (Bernsten, 2016; Voivozeanu, 2019). Resistance strategies are improving the workers’ bargaining power for instance by forming work brigades with colleagues and reclaiming their power thanks to their critical consciousness (Bernsten, 2016, p. 13). Other sources described migrant workers identically: “the precaritized worker is a cunning deceitful, persistent, opportunistic, imaginative trickster responding to an enforced imperative to be cynical, energetic, attractive, and pragmatic” (Schierup & Ålund, 2013, p. 4). This tolerant characteristic of the worker might be well motivated by their dual frame of reference whereby they compare employment terms abroad with job opportunities at home: “The stigmatized status of bottom-level work impinges differently on the immigrants, who operate with a dual frame of reference, judging conditions ‘here’ by the standards ‘back home’” (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003, p. 9).

An additional study with a likewise approach scrutinized the individualised risk perception of people vis a vis class perspective along the lines of Beck’s risk society theory arguing that due to the social-economic changes in late modernity the protection of institutions, traditional bonds and social structures ceased to exist. In response to this reflexivity enabled individuals to navigate and manage the aftereffect of individualisation and the ubiquitousness of risk. Henceforth the aim of this study was to record people’s perceptions of a range of social risks which encompassed: “job loss, declining income, having serious accidents, becoming seriously ill” (Cebulla, 2007, p. 132). The results presented that risk perception has not (yet) been ‘declassified’ as fear of income decline or job loss is the most strongly correlated with the social class position, while fear from serious illness or accident is correlated both by class and social support network. The extent to which class or individualisation exerts a significant influence depends on the type or nature of the risk event furthermore the perceived or experienced ability to control a risk event, including the scope for managing the aftermath of risk events through effective coping mechanisms. Risk perceptions are “‘mollified’ by social and support networks, and the social rules that facilitate interaction and the construction of support networks at times of crisis” (Cebulla, 2007, p. 145). Eventually, the study concludes the necessity for risk theory to discriminate more explicitly between social risks, regarding their potential controllability and the scope for their practical and ideological privatisation (Cebulla, 2007, p. 145). The

previously unfolded research provides relevant assistance in terms of disparate risk factors and relation of the perception of those with other external elements such as trust relations, social embeddedness vis á vis loneliness etc. Furthermore, it draws attention to be opened to consider various types of risks emerging in the actor's life.

V. DATA AND METHOD

This paper strives to find answers to three questions: What risks and insecurities do Hungarian migrant workers confront and what strategies they utilize in order to avoid these especially in a time where uncertainty is multiplied by the presence of a disease exerting its influence on all spheres of life? In the second section, I wish to further scrutinize their case based on the extracted results intending to find an answer to the following question. How do the risk management strategies of these workers bring about social production and reproduction of their vulnerable powerless position? And finally: Which are those areas and factors that amplify uncertainty and vulnerability and therefore uphold the present exploitative power relations and what are those which have the potential to challenge them?

In order to be able to find an answer to these questions In this study, I wish to develop a comprehensive explanatory understanding of the case of both temporary and regular Hungarian workers operating in the German meat industry for the purpose of discovering whether the newly introduced measures targeting subcontractor companies by nearly banning meat processing plants to employ temporary workers are far-reaching enough. Thus the overarching aim of this paper is to analyse and explain the reality of those precarious Hungarian workers striving to make a living in the German meat industry by applying a social constructivist interpretive framework. By my ontological stance, I wish to explore the diverse perspectives the workers developed through their lived experiences during their operation in Germany interacting with many actors such as their fellow workers, employers, team leaders and wider social environment. This way it can be understood what leads workers survival strategies in response to certain insecurities and possibilities. This information I wish to access by listening to narratives of various perspectives: firstly those who are the beneficiaries of the new law: temporary Hungarian workers and a representative of a subcontractor company furthermore regular Hungarian workers among whom there are translators and team leaders as well in the population.

It became apparent in the previous chapter on Hungarian workers that I am Hungarian citizen myself who has been observing the unjust governmental processes going on in Hungary for a long time. Seeing how (not only) unskilled workers are getting gradually more and more poor and vulnerable due to exploitative governmental measures taken over their heads serving well the interest of international capital has involuntarily drawn my attention to the precarious circumstances of those who are trying to escape the suffocating environment yet face with similarly precarious circumstances abroad by exploited alike by interests of international companies. Thus I have to admit that I got emotionally involved during the conduction of this study as it became visible that these workers still better appreciate their current highly uncertain and exploited situation than what is waiting for them at home yet they are as Beck said high wire dancers in the most severe form, thus this might reflect on my study.

As workers are often isolated from the host country's society while being highly exposed to their employers it was not an option to approach them from that side as that way they would have been likely getting discouraged to share information causing any potential inconvenience to their employer. Therefore I have joined Facebook groups where more than 100.000 Hungarian people living in Germany were members. I recruited my sample by picking comments and posts randomly in connection with the meat industry and contacted my potential respondent by writing them on Facebook. I was trying to employ a snowball sampling method however it was only partly successful since even though I received many contacts a significant proportion ignored my contacting requests. Even during this phase, I could make inceptive observations about those workers operating in the meat industry thus based on both primary and secondary data I can ascertain that my population is typical in the bigger framework of precarious workers.

In this study in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with different Hungarian actors involved in the process of meat production: Their jobs were mostly to chop up meat at a conveyor belt or to slaughter or to package the processed products often they were included in more than one process. This sector was chosen due to its high proportion of temporary workers from CEE and more importantly Hungarians furthermore because of the ongoing transformational processes around it as it made this research highly relevant. Ten respondents constituted my population overseeing the ongoing processes in the German meat industry from different perspectives such as temporary workers', subcontractors', regular workers' furthermore translators' and team leaders'. All workers' country of origin is Hungary and their

age ranges between 23 and 60 years old and they are currently living in Germany, however, two of them are temporarily unemployed. Most of them are unskilled workers and some are skilled workers furthermore five of them are males and five females.

During the process of my study, I was highly concerned to respect ethical benchmarks inasmuch as my population's significant part was in a vulnerable situation. On that note firstly I disclosed the purpose of my study and if they agreed to participate in my interviews I have shared my consent form (See Appendix) with them which I asked to read carefully and let me know if they don't agree with something. I have asked them whether they would like to sign the agreement online to which all respondent were opened however due to technical issues 3 respondents could not provide me with their signature. The respondents' names were masked by applying nicknames.

Choosing one to one semi-structured interviews as a data-gathering method has many reasons: in order to evaluate the potential impact of the newly introduced law I have to understand the individual's biographical accounts, their experiences of processes within the studied social unit (Sayer, 2011) furthermore their strategizing survival responses to these factors reproducing or challenging the power relations of production. This dialectical complexity could not be revealed quantitatively. A reason for choosing one to one interviewing instead of group interviewing is because of the sensitivity of the topic as many workers might not uncloak inconveniences, fearful emotions, financial difficulties. By the same token, plus due to its the hard to reach feature I have chosen to conduct my interviews online as it in all likelihood helped to create a less threatening, comfortable environment consequently the interviewees were in greater ease to discuss their sensitive issues (Creswell, 2013, p. 160). Furthermore, due to Covid-19 avoiding potentially endangering my respondents was an ethical must. Interviewee data is not intended to be representative of the migrant workers in the meat industry in Germany, it rather aims to generate qualitative insights into the perceptions and behaviours of these Hungarian workers in response to exploitative uncertainty as risk perception is contextually relevant to make sense of (Lidskog & Sundqvist, 2012, p. 1003). I was interested in the respondents' past, present and future plans furthermore different locations and situations in their current life abroad in which they are experiencing different social interactions, I was lastly interested what conclusions do they make from those and in what ways it influences their attitudes and strategizing behaviours.

The interviews have been transcribed fully, first in Hungarian and then got translated to English. I was using thematic analysis coded in NVivo 11 through which I was using multiple levels of

abstraction circularly developed starting with the reading of the raw data many times and listing it into categories in the first cycle applying attribute, versus, descriptive and sub coding. In the second phase, I was searching for themes, reviewing them and at the end determining their relations.

Measures were taken to maximize credibility in form of source triangulation by collecting data from multiple participants and using multiple sources of information such as interviews and documentation of official reports as well. However, there are still some potential limitations. Due to the current circumstance due to ethical considerations and increased difficulty to realise it I could not make on sight observations. I intended to compensate for this deficiency by representing as many perspectives as possible, yet my study still misses the voice of meat company representatives.

VI. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the first section of my analysis, I assess what issues and risks the interviewed precarious Hungarian workers encounter and what strategies they utilize in order to avoid or handle these exclusively now when Covid-19 amplifies uncertainties in all segments of life.

This part is structured (temporary workers and regular workers separately) into three main chronological sections: First of all, I contemplate to have a closer look at the workers' past, such as why they moved abroad, whether alone or with family they arrived and what skills and information they possessed, furthermore experiences and knowledge they acquired abroad before their present job. This I find to be important as it positions the workers' situation into an incipient frame which might determine to a high extent their future prosperities furthermore their current values and beliefs how they approach other people, potential employers etc. The next section is about to unfold the workers' current position and experiences in the meat industry furthermore their living conditions and private life. I dissected how their general workdays are carried out, what factors they find to be problematic and how their current situation affects the interviewed precariat workers' social relations abroad, whether there is anyone they can go out with, trust, turn to with their problems. Another element I find to be highly relevant is how Covid-19 influenced both their working and living circumstances. Further on I find I find it important to analyse how the subcontractor sees the workers and how workers consider subcontractors. Finally, I intend to have a glimpse at how these workers future prospects.

In order to provide essential participant information I attribute coded for gender, language proficiency, age, the reason of relocation, length of residency, worksite and current financial state (See Table 1.)

In the second part of my analysis, I wish to further discuss the discursive relationship between the workers' experiences and how their evolved habitus in response solidified their vulnerable positions or improved it.

As the last part, I highlight those factors that function as the momentum of aggravating or potentially facilitating the workers' situation.

NAME	EMPLOYMENT	AGE	GENDER	"CLASS"	JOB	LINGUISTIC SKILLS	LENGTH OF RESIDENCE	FINANCIAL STATE
Stephanie	N/A	N/A	Female	N/A	Subcontractor Representative	German	3 years	N/A
John	Directly employed	31-40	Male	Skilled Worker	Department Leader	German, English	8 years	Stable
Andrew	Directly employed	23-30	Male	Skilled Worker	Department Leader	German, English	6 years	Stable
Pal	Directly employed	23-30	Male	Skilled Worker	Translator and meat processor	German	3 years	Stable
Lara	Directly employed	23-30	Female	Unskilled Worker	Meat Processing, packaging	German	3 years	Stable
Roberta	Directly employed	51-60	Female	Unskilled Worker	Meat Processing, packaging	French	5 years	Have no savings
Charlie	Subcontracted	51-60	Male	Unskilled Worker	Meat Processing, packaging	Hungarian	6 month	Have no savings
Suzzie	Subcontracted	51-60	Female	Unskilled Worker	Meat Processing, packaging	Hungarian	2 years	Have no savings
Joe	Subcontracted	23-30	Male	Unskilled Worker	Meat Processing, packaging	Hungarian	2 years	Have no savings
Ursula	Subcontracted	51-60	Female	Unskilled Worker	Meat Processing, packaging	Hungarian	1 year	Have no savings

Table 1. Attributes of research participants.

Note: The author's own illustration.

VI.1. ATTRIBUTES AND PAST EXPERIENCES

Regular workers

The age of the directly employed ranged between 23-60 years old yet they were mostly in their twenties and only one of them did not speak German. The workers have been living in Germany from three to eight years and it was rare that they had previous jobs outside the meat industry. Mostly they are skilled workers yet from other labour market segments. They were mostly relying on their social networks to receive information about the employer company before moving to Germany from weak ties (such as the receptionist on the interviewees' workplace) through relatively strong ties such as ex workmate or acquaintance working there, to strong ties such as boyfriend already working at the company. Surprisingly it was not typical that the workers made further research on the company thus they were mainly entrusting the mediated information. Among the directly employed Hungarian workers, the main reason to leave their homeland and try their luck in Germany was to provide existential safety dependent on their age either to their own selves or to their intended children "as it would not be possible in Hungary" or pay their mortgage or collect enough money to buy a house. In many of the cases, those who belonged to the age category between 23-30 followed their partners to Germany or were followed by their partners in few months-years, as these were squarely planned in advance.

Two workers were employed through subcontractor companies beforehand, and then they continued their work at the same meat plant when they got employed directly approximately after 1-2 years. Their comparative experiences are highly valuable as by them we can see in one person what they found or find to be problematic and whether subcontractors provided anything valuable that facilitated their operation abroad in any way. Both of them could manage to switch to direct employment because of their social ties one of them due to her boyfriend already working at the company and the other (Roberta) due to speaking French could communicate with the main chef of the factory who was well embedded in the company so he could speak for her. This situation was extremely interesting because all the workers who were working at this company got sent away and repositioned to another meat plant Roberta as well at first yet due to her connection and language skill could manage to rework her position regarding both material matters and stability.

Compared to the previous study (Bernsten, 2016) I would say that most of the workers lack browsing beforehand beginning the cooperation with their new employer as a resilience strategy

but identically to the previous founding they will use their network to make informed decisions however for this German language skills are almost indispensable, I will further elaborate on this later on.

Subcontracted workers

The Subcontracted workers' age varied between 23-60 years, yet these workers were mainly in their presenium, i.e. the life stage that precedes old age, as their age is between 51-60 years. None of the interviewees in this group spoke German or any language besides their mother tongue. Their residence time in Germany is shorter than for the other group between 6 months and 2 years. All the workers are unskilled and were doing easy to hard physical work previously in their homeland. Most of the workers had previous experiences abroad for instance in the Czech Republic, in the Netherlands or in Germany as well in the meat industry or lighter physical jobs next to the conveyor belt or seasonal work. They read about their current jobs' opportunity through different job search portals or received the information from weak social ties. They experienced many frauds or has not received help when it was needed, thus they gathered many negative experiences regarding their human relations before beginning their operations at the current company. In the words of Suzie:

We had friends there at the first company. But we were very disappointed in them so we vowed to never let anyone close to us again. [...] Of course, when it comes to smoking a cigarette and talking together during the break, okay, but it's a different relationship again, for example, letting myself to tell them anything that makes me vulnerable.... I shouldn't do that. (Suzie, p. 50:1770)

Thus what they have learnt is to not trust anyone and that they can rely only on themselves. Similarly to the other group, they have not gathered information about the companies which were about to employ them. They were happy to get a job so they just grasped the chance without considering it as they were in serious need. This seemed to be a quite widespread practice when I asked Joe how he knew whether the intermediary was reliable "From nowhere. It was only blind luck. As I experienced about 50% of the workers are relying merely on blind luck" (Joe, p. 61:2163) he responded.

Half of my respondents in this category moved to Germany by themselves or together with their pair getting employed by the same company at the same time yet their families such as their children (already grown-ups) stayed at home. The couples moved abroad because they got divorced previously so they thought starting a new life abroad would be beneficial as they were

left with no real estate or anything of big value, therefore, they wanted to collect money to buy an apartment.

In this group, resilience strategies were not present in this part of my interviewee's narratives except the fact of moving abroad to make a better living instead they employed reservation strategies in order to avoid the worsening of their positions by practising mistrustful attitude towards other people.

VI.2. PRESENT

This section of my paper is divided into four chunks: working conditions, living conditions and the experienced impact of COVID-19 and employers'/employees' perspectives on the subcontractor company.

VI.2.1. WORK ENVIRONMENT

Regular workers

The regularly hired Hungarian workers were employed in different positions. Some of them have been overseeing the work processes in their department, such as packaging within the meat processor plant, organisational planning and development of goods storage, consignment stocks, i.e. commissioning. The rest of the workers' jobs were to process meat at a conveyor belt, chop up the meat and package it, or for some of them to slaughter the animals as well. Many workers who spoke German were informally responsible for translation as well yet without any financial compensation as they admitted it.

Depending on the size of the companies, the work pace and workload is determined: In smaller meat plants the speed of work is more humane than in bigger ones. All workers expressed their discontent about the long working hours which is between ten to twelve hours even though in their contracts eight hours were determined. In previous studies (EFFAT, 2020; Voivozeanu, 2019; Polish Social Council, 2017) earning less than minimum wage due to extreme amount of overtime was associated with temporary workers however, in this case, it is visible that is a common practice throughout many companies in the meat industry.

Despite the fact that many of them were handing in their complaint for the purpose of this problem to the management no improvement has taken place. The workers check-in and out electronically at the beginning and end of the day, therefore, overtime could be followed up

easily, however meat plants “have their ways of playing with the work time”(Lara, p. 27:951) to which I will return subsequently. Directly employed labourers are not paid overtime in general however seldom receive paid holidays in compensation. Notwithstanding this occurs very rarely as in a year they obtain one-one extra day off scattered, which is not the equivalent (majorly less) of the worked overtime furthermore they cannot choose when to use those days off and not they are not even told in advance when they can go on these “holidays”, merely at the end of the day, the information is provided that they can stay at home tomorrow, in consequence, they cannot plan anything in advance, thus their day is unpredictable. In the words of Roberta:

Last time I got fed up and left at 3 p.m. Because I asked the secretary how many hours are we expected to work in a week and she said 42. But then every day we work 10-12 hours daily and our overtime is just piling up for which they don't pay you to know. We have a monthly fixed 2000 euro gross salary and the tale you know... how it is sold for us is that we have a fixed salary because when we work less we receive the same amount still. But the thing is that we never work less. Or when you have so much overtime then they might say to don't come in the next day, but it happens only two times a year maximum. And what can I do with that free day when he tells me on Tuesday that I don't have to come in on Wednesday. I have no chance to plan. (Roberta, p. 37:1303)

That is, in this sense my interviewees experience work insecurity as over-work is not seemed to be controlled or usefully compensated in any sense. Some people in response started to play with their work time by going on significantly more breaks than the allowed daily three. This form of strategizing belongs to the category of reworking as it consciously fights against the unfair employment relation and reacts in a pragmatic way by tricking those and thus improving their material position since they work less for the same salary. However, they act only within the confines of existing social and power relations therefore they don't seem to challenge the significantly ongoing exploitative attitude of the employer. What is more unfortunately this strategizing behaviour results in the escalation of bad working relationships since it generates conflicts. Lara gave an account of the phenomenon as follows:

[...] Or for instance, they cheat with the breaks as well. Officially we have two breaks plus a short one a day and we have to check-in and out from and to the break and the truth is that the Romanian colleagues don't really like to do that. Therefore if they don't use the chips their overtime is increasing more than ours. This I have indicated to the management because it is unfair with the others. Then there was a bit of slap on the wrist but its impact lasted for 2 days and everything began again. There are colleagues who have a maximum of 3 breaks a day and some other people take out all their breaks already at 9 am and we start working at 7 am. Which means that they go on 8-9 brakes on a workday. This is one of the biggest generators of conflict. (Lara, p. 29:1013)

My interviewees reported a highly hostile environment on various levels, after versus coding I got the following results: Everyday conflicts appear highlighted with Romanian nationals, with Hungarians and with other workers. Germans are considered to be hostile by those in higher positions “because they act like the untouchables” (John, p. 12:430) furthermore the most serious conflicts emerge from the team leaders’ tyrannical behaviour. The phenomena of conflicts among transnational actors and identities with given nationalities are stretched out onwards as those present conspicuously Beck’s term: detraditionalization where hybrid identities in hybrid cultures intersect and give rise to conflicts (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 27). The presence of Hungarian irredentism stemming from a 100 years old national historic conflict. By definition, this encompasses “any political effort to unite ethnically, historically, or geographically related segments of a population in adjacent countries within a common political framework” (Chazan, 1991, p. 385). In the case of many Hungarian citizens, this has been generating deeply rooted antipathy transmitted from mother to son towards Romanians since by signing Treaty of Trianon in 1920 Hungary has lost two-third of its territory and the land of Erdély which became subject to the control of the Romanian government with 1,3 million Hungarians (Molnár, 2001). This a somewhat nationalistic attitude appeared to be imprinted into those workers whom I interviewed nearly without exception (both regularly and temporarily employed) and thus providing a fertile ground for conflicts with Romanian workers at the workplace. The most radical manifestation of this example erupted into physical violence as John depicted it:

Recently, some Romanian workers appeared, but personally, I have no problem with them. Of course, there were some guys who were shouting dirty Romanians at them, but these guys got beaten up so they stopped... (laughter) they had to give that up. (John, p. 13:467)

Charlie’s words well summarize how most of my interviewees considered Romanians, they believed they were “lazy”, ”stupid”, ”fools”, “ignorant”, their culture is considered to be “weaker” and so on. While these old conflicts are clearly apparent that one could contemplate to be rooted in patriotism the fact that without exception the interviewed Hungarian workers considered other Hungarians their enemies brings to light the intertwining of the decrepit inherited values and the new cosmopolitan migrant workers’ in single individuals as now one has to compete for survival with its own kin in an alien land where dog eat dog. Many of them repeated like an alleged universal truth: “Here a Hungarian is a wolf to another”. It manifested itself in many ways based on the reports: when assistance was needed those who were believed to be friends turned away and celebrated the failure of the narrator, ill-wishers were successfully

machinating to thwart others, or purposeful competing is capable of being seen since who earns more, who has a bigger car, who could climb higher is a never-ending war sentiment between these workers. In consequence, these people become alienated from those with whom they could unite and collectively represent themselves. Lara gave an account of it as follows when I asked her about her relationship with other Hungarian people:

It is zero. At our company in the part where I am working, there are seven Hungarians and I talk with four of them.

BT: That's a pretty good ratio. And how would you circumscribe your relation with them?

We started as friends at the beginning but soon we had to realise that they are not good people. [...] For instance, if we had just 10 euro more in our pockets than them then it was a problem for them. Or if they had a two years older car then that was the problem. So the point is if things were going better for us even just for a few months then they did not like that. And then they were telling us that we are boasting. And when things were going better for them then they were showing off and making us feel that they are better than us. And it was like that not just with them but with a lot of people here. Hungarian people are the enemies of each other. There is no togetherness what would one expect when they meet with their own Nationals abroad. They don't even want to say hi on the street. (Lara, p. 31:180)

Compared to their fellow citizens, Germans were generally perceived to be more welcoming (except in higher positions) as those are the potential redeemer of their upward mobility thus those lower in the hierarchy endeavour to cultivate a good relationship with them. Therefore people who can work among German people instead of Hungarians consider themselves lucky, or prefer to go out with them instead of their own nationalities because “they don’t begin with asking how much you earn”. Networking with German nationalities is somewhere between resilience and rework strategy for the reason that it fortifies the worker’s position and embeddedness, accordingly potentially bettering one’s power position and potential income although this is obviously not possible without acquiring the language.

This hostile environment is further impassioned by the fact that thefts of belongings such as cigarettes, money, ID cards frequently occur at the workplace from bags and pockets left unattended in the canteen and in other opened places, therefore, everyone is suspicious about the other. This suspicion and the “everyone is enemy” attitude is fuelled by a key role namely the team leaders’ as those are in direct everyday contact with the workers yet positioned higher in the hierarchy and they show a predilection for bullying them in many ways. I call this phenomenon the team leaders’ tyranny because they have a seemingly closed arbitrary bubble

in the section where they are overseeing work processes. Firstly, they are verbally abusing workers as they “are not talking to people but shouting at them, and giving orders in an offensive and a vulgar, disgusting way” (Joe, p. 66: 2335) secondly they are abusing workers even physically as one of my respondents depicted it:

[...] we don't speak German. So when you want to communicate you have to do that drastically. For instance, last time I was working with Anton one of the team leaders because we were, of course, doing overtime and so he stepped next to me to pack the meat together on the trays but it is not because I was slow [...] and then Anton was not telling me to step aside so he can do his part as well but pushed me away instead and then for the second time he hit me on the side so strong that I got so angry that I slapped him on the face. I wouldn't have slapped him on the face though if I could tell him that he cannot act like that with anyone and especially not with a 50 years old lady. So he started to shout that he is going to get me kicked out so on the next day I handed in my termination. (Roberta, p. 39:1343)

This quote points to a range of patterns that figure repeatedly in my material. Firstly, there is the already discussed pattern of physical abuse. Secondly, the tyrannical position of the team leaders where they can easily fire people no matter what the origin of the problem is thus they are acciting an environment where employment insecurity is present: As they lack “protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, the imposition of costs on employers for failing to adhere to rules and soon” (Standing, 2011, p. 10). Thirdly, another source of conflict is the lack of German language skills. In consequence, the worker is more exposed to losing his or her job because if in their response they don't (cannot even really) serve the taste of the team leader the person can get fired, thus the possibility of communication is certainly essential. “If they try to explain calmly their problem then the team leaders might think about the case and after a few days might admit that the worker was right in a part” (Lara, p. 30:1052). From another perspective on this case, the shortage of German language skills makes the worker more vulnerable as she cannot stand up and defend him or herself in case of unwarrantable dismissal.

A further cause of rivalry is the fact that workers are accepted without any skills furthermore the company does not provide sufficient training ahead of commencing the job on site. The consequence of this is not just an increased number of conflicts yet a more vulnerable position regarding arbitrary dismissal. What is intriguing that failures stemming from these factors such as lacking skills are not considered to be a systemic problem for which responsible institutions ought to find a solution but rather the matter of individual responsibility. Which justifies Beck's

idea that social risks become individualized and in the fresh value system one has duty to oneself in building its own elective biographies (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 38).

I was curious to ask what difference those labourers witnessed in the quality of employment who were hired both directly and through subcontractors previously. I have received the following answer: “Financially there is much difference, but not really regarding the work. (...) Regarding money and the holidays, there is a difference otherwise no” – said Lara. The two ex-subcontracted respondents gave an account of approximately 400 Euro wage gap in their past and present revenue furthermore now they have four extra days off. By contrast to previous studies (Voivozeanu, 2019; EFFAT, 2020) my respondents did not mention that they were experiencing differentiated treatment at their workplaces and even now that there are still workers employed through the firma, i.e. subcontractor company, at their workplaces they don't see any sign of it. However, John reported that conflicts might appear between those of the directly employed and the subcontracted due to wage differences:

Those who came through the intermediary companies began with many disadvantages... Because their salary was significantly worse, and it has generated many tensions. And it caused a lot of trouble so after half a year the company gave up on this project. (John, p.11:402)

Subcontracted workers

Here all workers were being included in the same process of production which is: butchering (in case of males), chopping up meat and packaging it.

Here work phase and intensity did not vary as most of the workers were operating in bigger meat factories thus they rehearsed a physically highly demanding work process.

What those of the regularly employed did not mention was income insecurity which was apparent in this group. Similarly to the previous study (Polish Social Council, 2017), it was reported here as well that some of the temporary workers don't know what the amount of their wage will be in the upcoming month. Furthermore, some labourers get a better salary and some get worse, some get compensation for fuel expenses and some don't and in this, my respondents could not find any logic. The variance in their salary was unreasonably high as their wage was fluctuating between 50% of the agreed salary and 1800Euro monthly. This form of wage flexibilization achingly intensifies the feeling of uncertainty which I believe has a positive impact on considering others as “enemies” if we just consider the case of the above examples

in the other group where bitter rivalry was going on among those who had stable incomes alike. One of my respondents attempted to improve her situation by taking action in form of visiting the office of the firma (subcontractor) and demanding the salary that was agreed in her contract. The response she received was described as follows:

*A lot of times it was like that we said we weren't going to work until these things are settled. We went into the office to clarify this. But by noon we were already back to work. Can you imagine? [...] He easily calls us idiots and sends us back to our f**** mother just not in Hungarian but in Turkish. (Suzie, p. 57:2048)*

What is interesting to see however that the subcontracted workers salary on paper was higher than for the other group as these workers were expected to receive 1700-1800 euro while the others only 1400 euro.

Identically to their counterparts temporary workers reported to work 10-12 hours daily sometimes even on weekends yet it could be chosen freely, however they don't seem to receive their overtime wage either. What was dissimilar however is their commuting time as they accounted to travel 2-3 hours daily therefore their average day often took place as Charlie presented it.

If someone gets up at three in the morning to travel 100 kilometres to go work by company bus and then finish with work at around five or six o'clock in the afternoon. What do you think when he gets to the hostel, for what does he have time and energy for? He washes and cooks dinner because you can't live on sandwich. Then, by the time the evening comes, and you need to rest.... An hour's journey there and one hour back. (Charlie, p. 45:1056)

The situation is further aggravated by the same symptom just as in the case of the directly employed workers which is the fact that working time is unpredictable and they are not informed beforehand about the overdue overtime thus it can be quite a surprise at the end of the day:

When you think you're going home at about 2:30 3 o'clock tired as hell thinking about to finally take off the protective equipment, they say we'll stay a little longer and then it'll be 4:00 or even 5:30 or 6:00 when you can finally go home. (Charlie, p. 44:1025)

These factors manifestly sabotage any intent to improve language or other skills or to build out interpersonal relations by which segregation and thus loneliness could be reduced, moreover reportedly it leads to so harsh time poverty since they are often unable to even wash their clothes. From this example we can well see how one insecurity gives rise to another since the

lack of work security (that is nothing is limiting and controlling working time) causes skill reproduction insecurity as workers have no chance to gain further skills or just to improve their current competencies by which constantly and incrementally drifting apart from acquiring any form of mobility power.

Another symptom of work insecurity (as there is no protection against accidents) they experience worth mentioning is the inconvenience caused by the subcontractor if they get injured (which is very common owing to the strenuous physical labour) or are taken ill. There are three possible treatments I was told: the respondent gets dismissed, (employment insecurity) the subcontractor pesters the man until he chooses to quit, and the subcontractor knocks on the door of the indisposed every day and forces him/ her back to work as soon as possible.

Conflicts appear due to exactly the same factors as in the case of regular employees, however, in some cases the seriousness of these are more significant here. The team leaders are a substantial source of employment insecurity here just as well, however, the workers' a priori uncertain position makes their tyrannical power even more remarkable. They are dictating an unbelievable work pace and psychological pressure by shouting unceasingly "tempo! tempo! tempo!" while rough communication and humiliation are apparently present everywhere.

They are keeping people in fear consecutively by taking notes about the labourers without telling them what is considered to be the problem with the quality of their opifex, thus they constantly expect to be fired:

[...] There are cameras too, outside they are watching who is working. Next to us have stood two bosses who also wrote up our names. And we don't know why. But luckily they did not fire us. We really don't know why they wrote up our names. (Suzie, p. 54:1927)

Furthermore, they are presenting to the workers how things should be done in "slow-motion" (Suzie, p. 54:1947) for instance how to slice the ham perfectly while in reality, the conveyor belt is running rapidly hence they are further increasing the feeling of insufficiency in workers. Furthermore "little bosses" have personal favourites who then receive easier jobs, by way of example they don't have to operate in the refrigerated storage and they temporarily don't have to fear arbitrary dismissal. The impact of this occurrence is intense job insecurity which is the endeavouring workman cannot be able to grasp the way to reach upward mobility that is direct employment and better salary. In consequence, the already divided environment is further fragmented as those who are positioned temporarily in better positions are striving to secure

their place thus considering fellow workmates as incompetents who can endanger that. Hence any collective action or bargaining is impossible to emerge against serious injustices as everyone is afraid of the other. Joe explained it thusly:

There are a lot of people abroad with whom it's not a good idea to openly show that you have an opinion about the injustices because then they immediately like a snitch talk to the boss and then the next day you receive a phone call that you're fired. (Joe, p. 64:2278)

In this manner filled with fear labourers rather prefer to engage in reservation strategies such as flexibility, endurance and silence or inner talk: “That’s when I am really pumped up but I can’t tell her I would get kicked out then I’m just telling myself.” (Suzie, p. 55:1951)

I try to work without conflict. You shouldn't stand out. We should work together but if you start looking ... others will look at it with caution that's what you set up here to organize. And it is not possible to join forces with everyone. (Charlie, p. 47:1661)

If the workers try to turn to the management for help in case of arbitrary dismissal they don't receive any help, furthermore if the team leaders' word holds against the workers no matter their number the credit is given to him or her, what is even more shocking that there are cameras positioned in the workspace for further surveillance yet not even the records are followed up when needed. The upcoming sentence of Suzie well represented the above-presented elements of the situation:

Of course, they could watch the video if they wanted to but they are not used to do that. They don't care at all. If the little boss says that you are not working well and no matter how much the people around you say that you have done everything and there is nothing wrong with your work. Not even then. You are just fired and that's it. If you're not sympathetic, you'll still be fired. I don't know what it depends on. Whom they keep, who gets kicked out, who gets more payout, who gets less ... I don't know. This is a disaster. (Suzie, p. 54:1933)

As a consequence, many of my interviewees gave an account of feeling worthless as no one seemed to care about them. It appeared to lead to apathy, not caring or worrying anymore just doing the work as long as they can or on the other side, it caused the accumulation of a long time unexpressed frustration which exploded at the end in severe violence.

*In Germany last year in October I was working at the company with nine more people and the team leader was acting f***** disgustingly, it was a f***** retard and his tactic was that if you had a bad day then he had ten times worse and when you had a good day it was ten times better for him. He was a real cockroach. And often he was overacting so much that he talked to people as you would not talk even to your dog. And the funny thing*

was that he had no filters and he was not respecting anyone. For instance, if he worked with someone in the past who was his boss but by the time they got on to the same level he showed no respect ...he was humiliating and hurting that person just like the others. So there was this colleague and at the lunch, he drank a few beers and shots to collect all his courage and when he went back he attacked this guy with a knife who almost died. And then he said: "Thank you for the past 2 years which was pure hell because of you". And imagine that they left this person to continue leading teams even after that happened in order to motivate people to work better. Well, it's everything but not motivation. (Joe, p. 66:2332)

From this story, it is apparent that employers purposefully employ or require from the team leaders to treat their inferiors inhumanely hence this way there is more work less talk. By the same token, a latent or maybe manifest function of this is such a high level of alienation and fragmentation that the person is left alone completely in an environment where everyone is expected to be an enemy. This way the precarious workers' situation I find to be incrementally uncertain and thus detrimental inasmuch as they operate in an unknown country's unknown system within which in an unknown company where most of their colleagues don't speak their language and they are consciously instigated against them and they are against the others. This leads to the state that Schierup in his previous study described very well:

The precaritised worker is vulnerable, hyperactive and restless, exposed to constant anxiety and affective exhaustion due to 'emotional exploitation, with emotional intelligence as an important element for the control of employability and multiple dependencies' in social situations marked by uncertainty and flux, and connected with livelihood strategies breaching conventional divides between work and employment, community and multiplex social networks. (Schierup & Ålund, 2013, p. 4)

VI.2.2. LIVING CONDITIONS

Regular workers

Regular workers are reportedly living with their families in an apartment or renting a room alone. However, at the beginning many of them were inhabiting accommodations that were organized by their employer, thus after many years, they could manage to move into their private rental. What admittedly assisted them to switch and improve their living environment was their social network, language skills, and supreme preference to import their families into the country. Keeping the family as close as possible reportedly often results in a paradox situation as many workers keep commuting thus being incapable of improving in the host country as long as their families are at home and cannot move to Germany because the workman cannot afford to move into a private apartment as he does not have the necessary network,

savings and language skills hence they continue to live separated from their family and solidly concreted into a rootless flexible state.

And basically, this circle could be done infinitely forever. A lot of people I have encountered are doing this lifestyle, who were living like this... They went to Germany... Then took back home the money for their family, they lived it up. I met with many people who live in Germany for more than 10 years and they could not show up anything no savings nothing.
(Joe, p. 61:2178)

No matter whether subcontractors or direct employers provided accommodation to them previously the living circumstances in these hostels, container houses or accommodations within the meat plant were exactly having the same attributes where temporary workers are living at the moment hence I can surely state in opposition with previous studies (EFFAT, 2020; Polish Social Council, 2017; Voivozeanu, 2019) and reports that not only the subcontracting firms are responsible for insufficient living circumstances. I continue this with the scrutinization of the subcontracted workers' living conditions in the upcoming section.

Subcontracted workers

The intermediary company advances the rental fee which is around 200-300 Euro to its workers which get deducted from their first wage and then in every month their overdue lease. This makes it possible for the workers to try their luck without start-up capital. The workers are dwelling in hostels which are provided by their employer. In return living conditions leave much to be desired: In one hostel between six and eleven people are accommodated (this is significantly more than in the EFFAT, 2020 report where five to six people were reported to live in one object) while in one room generally two but in special cases even three individuals sleep together who are strangers to each other thus they have no private space. Unsurprisingly overcrowded accommodation leads to many inconveniences and conflicts: dirt, theft, non-match with roommates and trouble with accessing kitchen and laundry. Workers are exposed here to subcontractors, house-mates, and apartment owners alike. The latter is a remarkable supporter of workers' vulnerability as the owners try to maximize their profit as well for instance by closing down the laundry and asking money for its usage or they tend to abuse their power position for instance in one hostel the doors could not be closed thus my interviewee got robbed and even after the case she was not allowed to install a lock. Here is the reason why:

The owner of the house himself won't let you close it because he walks into your room too [...] Of course, he doesn't come when you're home. But when you work. If I leave anything

outside then I like it if it is there where I left it. But it's not like that when I go home and my stuff is nowhere to be found. But it's interesting because there was a place where I couldn't pack out because I had no space at all. And we put our stuff on top of each other, I covered them with some clothes, because we had to go take care of the papers, but by the time we got home the clothes had already been taken off my bag. I tried to put everything in my bag that I didn't want to take with me because I was afraid it would be stolen from the company. And then, after all, they steal from my room.... So it doesn't matter where you put it ... Unfortunately. (Suzie, p. 57:2032)

This quotation well represents another common problem, which is horrible living circumstances: shared bathroom and kitchen mentioned in the 2020 report of EFFAT does not appear to be that harsh as sleeping without a mattress, tiny private space for couples non for lonely workers, lack of furniture where they can store their clothing, lack of blanket for longer period of time, had to live in a cellar with a huge metal door as an entrance and dirty mouldy walls are more serious problems as often the owner of the estate is not willing to renovate the apartment due to being aware that it is getting harder and harder to find accommodation to workers for intermediaries or other employers, furthermore reaching improvement is slow and hard because the owner and subcontractor might pass to each other the responsibility of taking action.

Temporary employees live among those with whom they work therefore in addition to over crowdedness the same hostile environment they have to face at “home” as well, therefore, the two are nearly inseparable by this fact we can confidently state that these workmen and women barely have any private life; they are squeezed even closer with their “enemies’ than at the meat plant. One accounted impact of this is persistent frustration that can end up even in severe physical violence. For instance, as the extendedly anatomized quotation of Joe presented how his ex-workmate stabbed their “little boss” in his deep distress however what was not included in that part is that the two employees were inhabiting the same hostel thus never-ending verbal abuse led to this outcome. Living in these closed worlds’ further segregates these migrant workers from the local community first of all because they don’t have any connection points with outer society, secondly, they don’t have a calm private space where they can sit and be absorbed in learning, the background noise is buzzing unceasingly. These hostels repudiate and swallow people at the same time as they negate any possibility of differentiating between the atmosphere of the work environment and their free time.

VI.2.3. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The presence of the pandemic and the impact of the measures in response exerted serious burden on the Hungarian workers operating in the German meat industry. In this section, Beck's statement that "while poverty is hierarchic, smog is democratic" (Beck 1992, p. 36) appears to get disproven. While both groups of workers experienced intensified labour related insecurity and physical vulnerability due to their powerless position the aftermath of the pandemic hit significantly harder the more vulnerable who are therefore occupying worse risk positions. This finding is in line with many previous studies challenging this idea of Beck (Scott, 2000; Curran, 2018)

Regular Workers

Those labourers who are employed directly faced with the implications of the pandemic in their workplace in two segments: salary and tougher physical challenge (the latter I will unfold together with the subcontracted workers as their experience in this regard is alike). Despite the fact that their workload and working hours did not decrease that is they are still doing overtime daily significantly less salary they commenced to receive. All my respondents in this group reported that the meat companies by which they are employed changed their employment contract to Kurzarbeit. Officially Kurzarbeit is meant to support those who lost their job due to recession or forced to work less thus it should partially compensate for the loss of the employees' earnings. The workers are entitled to receive this form of social assistance if their employer has to cut regular working hours due to its exacerbated economic situation. (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2020) This is how it appears in practice:

As I see they like to play a bit with the overtime. Actually, not a bit but a lot. Because they record completely different hours than what we work actually. For instance, since there is coronavirus we had to write our overtime for ourselves because our contract has changed from full employment to Kurzarbeit. Which means that by the new contract we were expected to work only 28 hours weekly. [...] So they figured out that they will give us overtime when we exceed the 28 hours. I was expected to get about 120 hours of overtime salary instead I got only 45 hours back. (Lara: p. 27:951)

An employee who could navigate on the labour market due to his widespread social network employed reworking strategy: Expressed his dissatisfaction towards the exploitative method and being aware of his essential position as the leader of the department handed in his termination and is about to begin his work at a new company for better wage and fair working hours. Even though, the actor was openly resisting against the exploitative act he hasn't made

any alteration on the present power relations. Other employees were trying to restore the order by applying resilience strategy that is, they turned to the labour union within their company to get their case revised and then compensated, however, nothing has happened, due to the fact that they had no other possibilities but to accept their situation.

Subcontracted workers

In this group, workers experienced temporary job loss, fluctuating salaries and inhabitancy insecurity due to getting repositioned many times from their hostels when one of their housemates got infected. The couple who had to move to another place due to this were sceptical about the case as their employer did not present any official document, yet it caused many inconveniences to them as they were squeezed into a significantly smaller place. Those who have temporarily lost their job received no social support so they started to live up their reserves waiting in their hostel for change. Double dependency mentioned in previous studies (EFFAT, 2020; Polish Social Council, 2017; Voivozeanu, 2019) got more vividly apparent here as those who were waiting in their hostels for employment were counting their days until they have to leave the apartment and return to their homes with empty pockets.

Owing to working in an environment where keeping one and a half meter distance is not possible furthermore the frequency of testing is dependent on the will of the employer (as all my respondents report proved totally differing testing habits) the presence of Covid-19 exerts double base of potential health imperilment apropos of meat industry workers in one case due to the obvious chance of getting infected and the possible adverse complications of that and in the other case thanks to the necessity to wear a mask during the ten to twelve hours of work time. In the latter it induces numerous physiological alterations when doing a physically demanding job with facemasks: “1) Metabolic shift; 2) cardiorespiratory stress; 3) excretory system altercations; 4) Immune mechanism; 5) Brain and nervous system” (Chandrasekaran & Fernandes, 2020, p. 2). That is, the muscles’ and every other organs’ oxygen supplies get damaged as the amount of oxygen in the blood vessels get reduced while the need for oxygen intake increases as the worker inhales increased amount of carbon dioxide by breathing in used air while butchering or chopping up meat rapidly next to the running conveyor belt. Due to this process, the blood’s ph.-value gets rather acidic hence the immune system’s cells efficiency decreases this results in weekend immune system resilience against infections. Furthermore, blood flow decreases in the brain potentially causing headache, double vision and light-headedness. Finally, reduced oxygen and increased carbon dioxide level impacts the kidney’s

blood flow as well by reducing its functions thus decreasing urine output. In sum, the aforementioned effects of doing physically demanding work while wearing a face mask are potential risk factors for kidney and cardiovascular diseases. I found this important to unfold because my interviewees' complained and expressed their worry that working this way is damaging to their health since it appeared to be sensibly physically challenging for them. This leads to an interesting part if we wish to figure out what these workers consider to be a risk in relation to Covid-19. And why wouldn't we? The following quotations will reflect the general perspective of those of the interviewed by Pal and Charlie:

*Some people earn a bunch of money with this. And I'm sure as well more people died due to starvation then due to the virus. I don't know what they want... Maybe they are just checking how stupid people are really. And then they realize people are stupid as f***. [...] But this huge hassle is a struggle especially for us that we cannot go home... due to quarantine and these kinds of tests and those kinds of tests... (Pal, p. 20:69)*

Day and night mask. It should always be used, very pleasant... you can imagine how much. Mask and hair net these should be worn constantly. Work more hours in this... After a quarter of an hour or half an hour, you have clean mist inside the mask. Not simple. And I also noticed that it is not good for our body. I'm sure wearing a mask will lead to a health problem in the long run... But if it is being forced. [...] I think all this is exaggerated by the media. It's all an exaggerated lie. They just want to create fear in people. That is the point. This whole thing is just politics and economy. This comes in handy for some for their business, just not for the simple working people. I don't even know what a coronavirus is. 90% of it is a bluff. More and more people are realizing that this is fake. From China they have brought it to all over the world, to here... oh leave it... (Charlie, p. 46:1609)

Meat factory workers are incredibly exposed to potential infections, due to lacking the opportunity to keep distance while they are daily surrounded by enormous amounts of people. Yet, here we can see that based on their lived experiences and suffered inconveniences constructed my respondents' scepticism towards COVID-19. That is, they don't consider it as a potential danger rather see it as the cause of deprivation generated by those of the economically powerful. This is not a surprise since they face more serious risks daily where their survival is at stake. The presence of the pandemic is a risk for them yet least of all regarding their health rather financially and existentially. Which is understandable since if we compare the severity and the perceptibility of the two risk factors it becomes apparent that in one case their survival is at stake while in the other case a distant questionable "invention" which worth case scenario might result in runny nose and coughing. The presence of Covid-19 caused them increased exploitation, financial and existential instability and unfair power relations became more visible serving the interests of the powerful. Furthermore, already present inconveniences

such as painful work demand, missing social relationships such as relatives and friends in a lonely state of existence became more intolerable. Moreover, this phenomenon of scepticism is a great representation Beck's individualization thesis stating that people are living in risk society an experimental reflexive life where it is not certain what to believe as truth has to be figured out by constantly filtering of contradictory information and discourses which has to be rethought unceasingly (Beck, 2001, p. 27). Thus scepticism and mistrust are growing due to the apparent tension between trust and mistrust the relation of which is inverted as in a highly trustful environment the risk is commonly low while where trust is low the level of risk tends to be higher.

VI.2.4. SUBCONTRACTOR COMPANIES

In this section, I intend to see the relation of workers and the subcontractors that is how they consider the operation of the other side furthermore in which ways the latter holds back or assists the Hungarian workers' integration or upward mobility.

My interviewee - Stephanie was working as a translator and organizer around the processes of mediating workers that are arranging paperwork and everyday nuances around housing, taxation, transportation and issues around employment thus she oversees many processes both closely and its complexity. The company, where she is employed, works with around thirty companies in Germany and internationally. My main interest was to unfold how she sees the attitude of workers and the problems they have to face in order to get a more complex picture of their situation. Furthermore, I was curious about the role of the intermediaries in workers' day to day life, here as well in order to see both sides of the coin I asked subcontracted labourers as well, I will begin with this part.

The subcontractor provides accommodation, prepay, and salary to its workers. The company deducts its operation fee from the employees' salary thus they receive significantly less wage than they would by being directly employed, however, it is not always the case (as the interviews proved it as well) The company bargains the apartment owners as well which often causes slow improvement processes when problems emerge as owners wish to exploit their position as possible. There is a huge fluctuation at the company reportedly there are only two to three workers who have been working to this company for years. Subcontracted workers tend to stay between their probation time is up and a few years. There are two reasons for living the company: personal development and moving back to Hungary. Due to high fluctuation and

emergent conflicts between workers people often get repositioned within the country which demands a lot of work from the company. What is considered to be a systematic problem causing bad reputation to the subcontractors and exacerbating the situation of workers is that there are many subcontractor companies emerging and declining rapidly furthermore that there is no national wide system controlling their operations yet it varies county to county.

The workers considered subcontractors companies to be highly exploitative due to deducting significant proportion of their wages while supervising them closely and firing them easily. What I find to be interesting that many of the workers are not aware of what is included in the contract that they sign as it is not provided to them on their mother language thus they don't know for instance the operation fee of the subcontractor company to which they work, or sometimes it turns out afterwards that they are not even directly employed. However, intermediaries play an essential role to enable the workers' to start their life in the host country. Roberta explained her experience as follows:

The intermediary company arranged us a furnished accommodation with the internet, it made it possible to get into the factory and assisted with the official administration processes. Alone we wouldn't have been able to start here as no one spoke German. I am still at that bank where the intermediary company helped me to open an account... now I will have to organize many things to my self like an adult. Now that I am directly employed I had to find an apartment to my self, register myself on the address, yet if I got kicked out from work I should not leave my home. Now I am paying the same amount of money that I had to pay to an intermediary for a room where two or three of us had to sleep together.
(Roberta, p. 40:1396)

Based on the provided information by the subcontractor company workers are considered to face exactly the same problems they gave an account of: overcrowded accommodation generates conflict furthermore nationality-based conflicts between Hungarians and Romanians. More than two or three Hungarian people cannot be accommodated together as it often ends up in conflicts due to which someone has to be repositioned. It is a long and very hard process for workers to acclimatize they often stay isolated from the surrounding environment due to the above-mentioned reasons and among many more that they don't speak the language:

Stephanie: And of course they don't speak German, a lot of them stay in hostels, they don't want to have a fixed address... They just want to go home, sit in the corner in their room, they don't look around, go out from the house.

BT: Is it frequent?

Stephanie: Yes a lot. Until we encourage them to go get to know the word, the neighbourhood sees how helpful people are... It takes a minimum of 3 months to reduce homesickness, to realize why they are here. They meet with a lot of psychic issues here and they have to win over that. Lot of them get confused with the paperwork. Why they need to tax German people, why they have to pay health insurance etc. That's not what they were expecting when they came to Germany. (No information provided to them at all no one knows anything) (Stephanie, p. 4:137)

The last part of the quotation further highlights how much workers are not familiar with the German system of taxation, insurance, registration and so on.

The main takeaway of this section is the undeniable priority to assure that workers are provided with and understand all factors that have an impact on their new life: contracts, tax system, rights, insurances and so on. Because in the next section we will see that due to lacking these essential pieces of information workers feel deceived, hopeless and abandoned by authorities as those are unable to assist them or they don't even try to seek as they project in advance that their case is already lost.

A previously mentioned study highlighted only that due to subcontractor companies organizing the whole migration process the workers are "unaccustomed with the regulatory framework of the arrival country" (Voivozeanu, 2019, p. 91) which therefore decreases the degree of their protection. It missed to see that without this assistance these labourers would not be able to begin their workmanship in the host country, therefore, the source of the problem is not the arrangement of the whole migration process but the lack of nationwide assurance that workers are provided with all the information on their mother tongue, drawing their attention to potential pitfalls and sources of misunderstandings and thus vulnerabilities and more importantly to whom they can turn to with their problems. In their current situation workers are left alone to investigate and calculate their way in an alien environment where the smallest mistake may result in incremental loss. As they are struggling to strategize on their own to develop their DIY biographies and they are repeatedly coming against the wall by which gradually drifting into institutional mistrust while their needfulness is incrementally increasing.

VI.3. FUTURE PROSPECTS

Regular employees

Those who are occupying stable positions with widespread social networks have the possibility to navigate and improve their positions by navigating between companies. Others due to their

lack of possibilities have no other choice but to tolerate injustices however they plan to switch workplace once they will have the opportunity. Even though there were attempts taken against the arbitrary remuneration workers don't know to whom they could turn beside the company's labour union with their problem furthermore after their unsuccessful endeavour they don't trust in the assistance of the authorities. Therefore as mentioned above reservation strategy is applied as they know they can swallow or leave:

It has happened not only with me so we went with the others to the manager and the gentleman replied to our inquiry that according to him everything is totally fine and fair. So we can't do much with it. We can accept it and keep our place or we can rebel and so they tell us to search for another place to work. (Lara, p. 27:962)

Subcontracted workers

Those who are unemployed at present are searching for new jobs with large forces and despite their incrementally precaritized position they rather prefer to tolerate their situation than to choose to move back to Hungary due to living in "placepolygamy" enabling the previously mentioned dual frame of reference by comparing their home life with the current one. The reasons behind their stay are the chance for a better salary if once re-employed furthermore the calmer atmosphere and neat public environment and safety.

Who are being employed at the moment yet facing with the problem of income insecurity due to radically fluctuating remuneration are trying to find a way to a, individually bargain stable wage with their employer b, in case of failure with their resilience strategy they seek legal assistance, however, they have only second-hand information about to whom they could turn. Furthermore, they are sceptical to be provided with assistance:

They don't really help much supposedly. I heard that. They promise to help, and these firms are already protected because they have been reported several times so they are prepared for that. And with all the things that if you send the tax office, for example, they are prepared for them as well. They know which accounting to show. Yet my paycheck, for example, doesn't match the amount that was promised me and what's on the paper. [...] We would achieve something if we videotaped the way we get beaten up like the guy who was beaten by the firma manager. (Suzie, p. 57, 2056)

Workers have lost their trust in institutions (Voivozeanu, 2019; Bernsten, 2016) being responsible for providing justice and guiding their welfare in both groups of Hungarian workers. People are left alone against powerful corporations no matter whether those are subcontractors or meat companies by which their risk position alters uncontrollably simply based on their luck

and individual competencies to solve their problems. I believe that the exploration of those factors should be targeted which purposefully consolidates the inherited and developed habitus of workers which keeps them isolated from each other and their environment in which they aim to get embedded thus negating the personal development and bottom-up organisation of workers' collectivity and thus their representation security. I will highlight these elements in the following sections.

In response to my first research question, I briefly summarize: Both temporary and regular labourer's daily face many risks and issues. In the comparison diagram below (Figure 1.) I have visualized those elements both groups have to struggle within their day to day lives, feelings, attitudes, strategy types and stabilizing factors as well. The workers reportedly face the following risks on a daily basis: i) employment insecurity due to ever-present danger of arbitrary dismissals, ii) work insecurity due to the lack of a limit on working time, iii) the lack of protection against accidents and other adverse effects, which, in turn, brings about iv) adverse effects on health. Those workers who are inhabiting accommodations provided by the employers are v) experiencing housing insecurity and, related to that, health insecurity.

Moreover, the pandemic has led to income insecurity as the workers now receive significantly less salary for the same ten to twelve hours of working time. My interviewee's do not possess any collective voice as they are operating in a highly divided and hostile environment, thus they have to face representation insecurity as well as interpersonal insecurity since they ever expect from their fellow workers to undermine their positions that is they are alert for social threat and they consider many of their encountered events in a threatening way. In order to deal with these insecurities, they mostly employ reservation strategies, trying to secure their positions and to avoid dismissal. They engage in resilience strategies as well where they intend to restore their income or stabilize their position. They use reworking in order to increase their income or be able to more easily navigate between workplaces. Finally, resistance strategies appear the most rarely as they lack collective bargaining power and information about their possibilities.

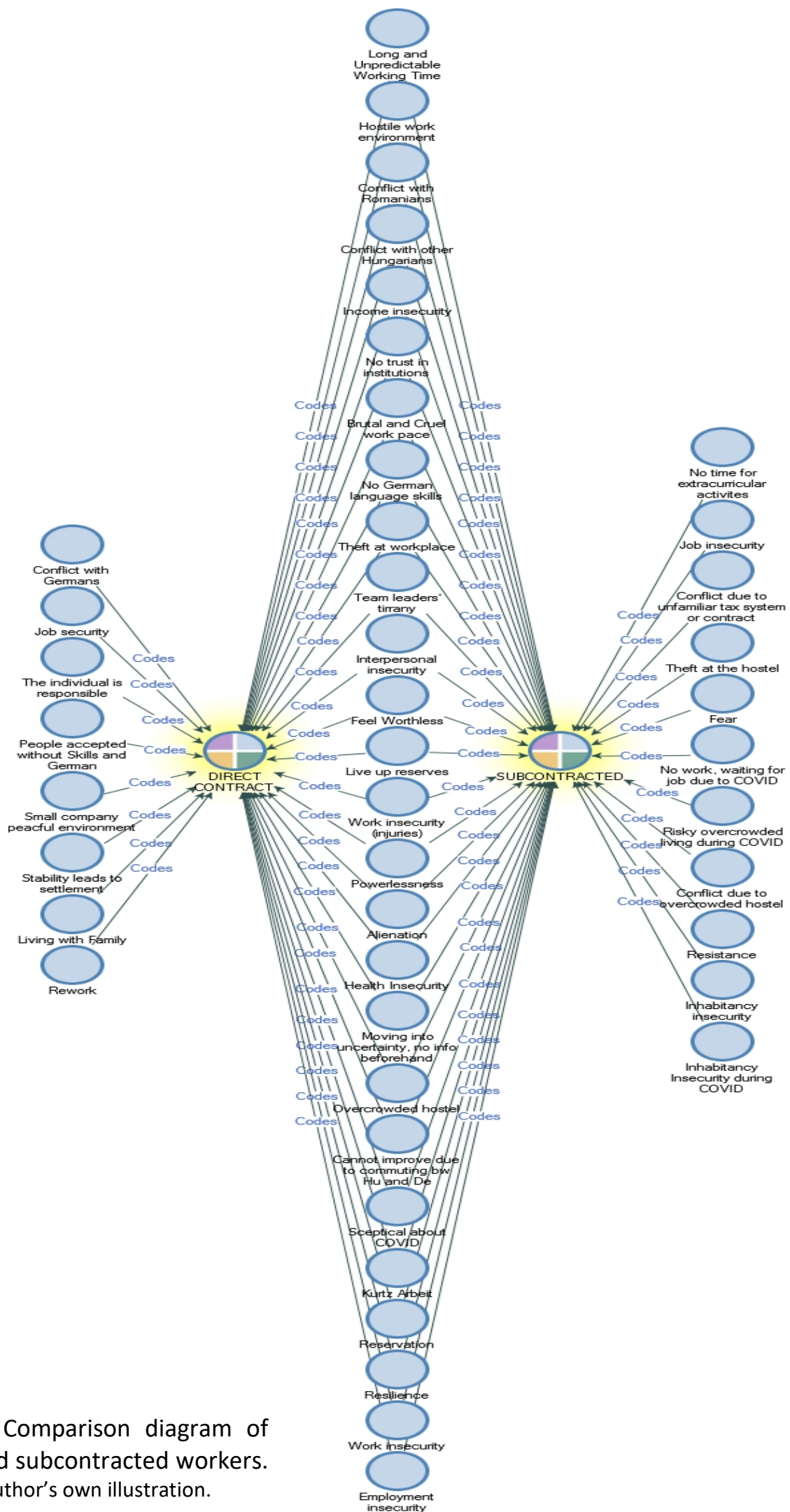


Figure 1. Comparison diagram of regular and subcontracted workers.
 Note: The author's own illustration.

VI.4. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In this section, I will disentangle how varying individual risk management strategies contribute to the production and reproduction of their vulnerable powerless position or which are those holding a potentiality to challenge ongoing exploitative relations on production depending on workers' positions and the concomitants of those. Individual survival strategies are great pragmatic manifestations of Beck's individualisation hypothesis where actors are left alone segregated in the tyranny of possibilities with no choice left but to construct their own elective biographies demanding them to "think, calculate, plan, adjust, negotiate, define, and revoke" ever incessantly. (Beck, 2002, p.6) Thus collective action got substituted by the utilization of individual strategies determined by the position and the inherent mobility power of the actors furthermore their attitudes shaped by past and present experiences. As demonstrated in the previous sections four kinds of survival tactics are utilized: reservation, resilience, rework and resistance.

What became apparent in line with the previous studies (Standing, 2011; Cebulla, 2007; Giddens, 1996) is that the most common characteristic attitudes of the interviewed Hungarian precarious workers are fear, anxiety, distrust, scepticism and hostility towards their rival comrade. Furthermore, flexibility in an anomic state segregated from those with whom they are occupying the same powerless positions and operating in the same physical space day to day and thus coping with the same challenges yet alone. They are suspicious, fearful and anxious due to their insecure, vulnerable and thus unpredictable position. Therefore, they are mostly endeavouring to work hard and invisible as the most fearful risk they face is the loss of their employment and thus consequently the loss of their accommodation in many cases while the chances of finding a new job in a short time are nearly zero and highly dependent on luck.

What undoubtedly plays the most significant role in their segregated, powerless and easily exploitable state where they are left alone to find their own ways of survival is their lack of German language skills and thus their inability to establish new interpersonal relations, acquire information and assistance in any case, elucidating their perspectives emergent conflicts, misunderstandings and arbitrary situations. Thus they are often incapable of utilising mobility power and realising agreement with those and supporting each other with those being in the same boat with them and thus practising collective bargaining power.

Therefore many of them don't wish more than the stabilization of their current position hence reservation strategies appear to be the most frequently applied techniques of survival. Self-evidently these are having the strongest reproductive power as people tolerate and swallow flexibly and durably in silence the challenges they face in this case and welcome everything with hostility and mistrust which might challenge it and worsen their chances. In consequence, the chances for collective alliances are inhibited.

Resilience strategies require some extent of settling into the new environment and getting familiar with the narrow surrounding: This way the labourers may be brave enough to attempt to raise their voice against experienced injustices in order to restore what they got used to (before Covid t.ex.), unfortunately mainly unsuccessfully. Further, they might begin to realise the indispensable need to learn German and begin to network with a closer environment in order to fortify their position. In this case, the workers are not yet completely familiar with the operations of the wider labour market environment in which they wish to be embedded which proves the previous researcher's idea (Cindy Katz,2004) that a line has to be drawn between this strategy and rework based on the level of consciousness.

Networking is a periphery practice balancing on the line between resilience and rework. I believe it is important to consider in deciding what position the worker is in and what is the aim of the act furthermore how far-reaching those new interpersonal relations are. For instance, if a directly employed person is striving to keep a good relationship with all the team leaders and other workers at the workplace then that person is engaging in a resilience strategy endeavouring to consolidate and facilitate that position in which they are embedded. If this act is performed by a temporary worker then we can talk about a rework strategy as this way she or he can reach direct employment and thus stability and better salary. Similarly, switching to a new workplace is a rework strategy as well by switching from an oppressive and unfair circumstance into a potentially more humane one for better remuneration as well. This is however highly encumbered if the person does not speak German and unfamiliar with the local labour market. These kinds of strategies likely to have a positive impact on individual mobility power and potentially on the reduction of the level of segregation as well by which increasing the possibility of collective bargaining power. Reworking, however, has a potential counterproductive form as well if we consider the just mentioned two factors as it contributes to decreasing group cohesion, create a hostile environment and undermine mobility power as well. Its only function is to facilitate day to day life and increase income. Let's exemplify it

with a previously quoted instance: When someone is cheating regarding the number of breaks then that person generates fragmentation between those who respect the rules and thus feel to be working instead of others as well and the cheaters. Thus in this form, the worker reproduces hostile norms towards one another and eliminates chances for cohesion.

The example or resistance strategy in the study of Bernsten (2016) presented the case of a worker who got familiar with the Dutch regulatory system and institutional framework in response to his employer who did not want to provide him sick pay after breaking his arm so he threatened his employer with informing the Dutch authorities so he got sick leave yet less. However, due to lacking bargaining power he accepted it. In the case presented in my study temporary workers are just guessing where to get help from and doubting even that they can get any against their employer who pays their wages arbitrarily as they are totally unfamiliar with the German regulatory framework and this is the overall picture about those Hungarian workers whom I interviewed. A successful resistance technique was rehearsed however where even though the employee was not familiar with the local labour market nor the regulations controlling it he still achieved success in fighting against abusive and exploitative treatment when it got recorded how he got beaten by the head of the subcontractor company when he demanded his salary. This story was echoing on Facebook among the migrant workers, then received huge media attention and eventually got to the authorities as well which resulted in the compensation of the individual, wider supervision of subcontractors and more encouraged temporary workers to stand up for themselves and more successes as an outcome of the combination of the latter and increasingly bad reputation and heightened attention (Timmermans & Clevers, 2020). So in addition to the previous studies (Katz, 2004; Bernsten, 2016) I might add that in order to engage in resistance strategy the lack of information and understanding of how the job market operates can be replaced by information transmission to a huge audience thus increasing the likelihood that the relevant authorities will a) receive the information and b) be pressured to take action due to public awareness. What the interviewed group of people was lacking is cohesion, something that ultimately would provide the greatest source of bargaining power. In the next section, I will list those factors that oppress these possibilities and thus should be targeted with the intention of enabling bottom-up processes of improvement among workers in the meat industry.

This part has represented Currans' critical perspective on risk society as he considers "heightened social-material process of risks as additional sites of class structuration which may intensify class differentials and the social sources of suffering and deprivation" (Curran, 2013b, p. 77). That is, in my case, we saw how these factors inducing vulnerability and uncertainty of risk and deprivation causing fear, scepticism, hopelessness, hostility etc. are structured by the workers' powerless positions and gets structured by their ways of strategizing for survival in response to those.

VI.5. CONSOLIDATING & AMPLIFYING FACTORS OF EXPLOITATIVE RELATIONS

What became apparent up until now is that in order to improve one's position in the labour market against the present exploitative power relations and thus the decrease the amount of daily risks the possibility of networking, collectivity and possessing the necessary pieces of information having an impact on the workers' life is crucial. These are commonly unavailable without acquiring language skills in the host country. Hereby I wish to observe those factors diminishing these possibilities and thus upholding the radically unbalanced power relations of production and the inherent risk positions. The most dreaded fear of workers is losing their jobs or facing declining income. The possibility of arbitrary dismissal however is ever-present due to team leaders' tyrannical positions among both temporary and regular workers. What is present only for subcontracted workers is the additional fear to be dismissed by their subcontractors for instance in the case of accidental injury or decreased workload. Thus due to these factors (team leaders, subcontractors), those who are living in worker hostels constantly face with inhabitancy insecurity as well. The possibility to eliminate these risks by practising bargaining power or avoiding them by switching the workplace (mobility power) is prevented by the lack of interpersonal security and representation security. I must mention again that these are hardly possible without acquiring German language skills or giving voice to workers in other ways. The possibility of acquiring these skills and thus interpersonal and representation security as well are hindered by the long and unpredictable working hours, lack of skill reproduction security and overcrowded living conditions. Interpersonal security and thus the possibility of networking and inherent pieces of information is undermined by the quality of the team leaders' operations and personal preferences as those are generating an uncertain environment where people are forced to turn against each other or to assume unceasingly that anyone can be a "snitch" or a malicious person. The last factor I mention here is not an amplifying factor but something which is missing a lot as it could provide a voice to the

voiceless and information to those who are suffering from information deficit and thus become paralysed. Representation security could be reached by an independent institution such as a centralised nationwide trade union being responsible or oblige employers to provide all migrant workers with those pieces of information on their mother tongue which are necessary for them to navigate in the host country (and many more) and strive to counterbalance their limited abilities. By lacking these workers face many disappointments as responsible authorities cannot assist with their issues thus they lose their trust in these institutions and get even more segregated and exposed to arbitrary exploitative acts.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper intended to unfold in three parts a) those risks and insecurities that Hungarian migrant workers confront and the strategies they utilize in order to handle these. b) how the risk management strategies of these workers bring about social production and reproduction of their vulnerable powerless position. c) which areas and factors amplify uncertainty and vulnerability and therefore uphold the present exploitative power relations and what are those which have the potential to challenge them. I developed a comprehensive explanatory understanding of the case of both temporary and regular Hungarian workers operating in the German meat industry for the purpose of discovering whether the newly introduced measures of the Occupational Health and Safety Control Act (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2020) targeting subcontractor companies by nearly banning meat processing plants to employ temporary workers are far-reaching enough.

It became apparent that even though subcontractors cause a great deal of exploitation and vulnerability to their employees' regular workers are facing with nearly just as problematic circumstances as their pairs of comparison since they experience many risks and insecurities such as employment insecurity, work insecurity, health insecurity, income insecurity, interpersonal insecurity and representation insecurity which got even more severe due to the Covid pandemic induced circumstances. In response, the interviewed workers engage in several survival strategies in line with their possibilities and developed norms and values such as reservation, resilience, rework and resistance strategies. These strategies mainly serve to secure their unstable positions and thus reproduce present power relations. Others in more limited cases enable the power of mobility by navigating or repositioning themselves on the labour market which might have the potential to challenge present exploitative relations yet the main target is to better their own possibilities. The most crucial factors on an individual level to reach

improvement are networking and being familiar with the necessary pieces of information (such as regulatory frameworks, rights, whom to turn with emerging problems, what is included in the contract and what are the potential pitfalls) for which the possession of German language skills are indispensable or central labour unions providing services on the workers' mother tongue and hearing their voice could substitute this deficiency till a certain level. These crucial factors for individual improvement could further strengthen the workers' collective power because the levels of uncertainty would decrease and in turn these workers' constant fear of and hostility towards each other as well. I believe that there is a mutual dynamic relationship between the individual and collective power which can reciprocally strengthen each other. These however are prevented by many factors being common among the meat companies in which my respondents operate. They face with "inherited conflicts " which provides a distrustful attitude and hostile base and alienation from each other in their operations such as conflicts with their fellow countryman and with Romanians as well due to historical conflicts hence Hungarian migrant workers embrace many conflicts due to their detraditionalized cosmopolitan life. This is further fuelled by the tyrannical positions of the team leaders consolidated by the attitude of divide et impera, long and unpredictable working hours, lack of skill reproduction securities, overcrowded accommodations and in case of the temporary workers by subcontractors.

Contrary to previous studies, I did not find the subcontractor companies to be the main source of the workers' vulnerable positions, therefore, I am sceptical that banning subcontractors companies would eliminate several exploitative and uncertainty generating practices. However, my study was not meant to be representative therefore this might only provide rich in-depth material for later studies. We could see and previous studies as well by workers' dual frame of reference that despite their current circumstances workers still rather prefer to stay in Germany than to move back to their home countries where they face with even worse existential circumstances and by banning subcontractors these workers will come by eventualities harder to look for a better life in Germany, which is the main destination country of Hungarians workers as we could see it from the presented statistics. Many problems in addition to the aforementioned unaccustomedness emerge from the lack of providing workers with essential pieces of information on their mother tongue before their arrival, which I believe should be a first step priority as it could prevent many misunderstandings and later institutional mistrust further isolating workers from any potential institutional assistance.

My study provided many results in line with previous studies however I believe it has disentangled many mutual dynamic relations and offered further insight by unfolding the regular workers' circumstances in comparison with those of the temporarily employed and provided further insight by concerting Hungarian migrant workers' habitus with those factors that reproduce insecure environment and eliminate chances of improvement such as the team leaders' tyrannical operations is a great example. Over and above it became apparent throughout my research that workers' individual survival strategies can be further divided base on their contra productivity to collectivity and that even within one type different levels of consciousness are possible. Lastly, using the combination of risk and critical theory was somewhat of a novelty as well in this area.

However, I believe this study has many limitations. First of all that it is missing on sight observations which would have the potential to provide a deeper insight into the case, yet due to the current circumstances, it was not possible due to safety consideration. However, I was endeavouring to compensate for this deficiency by taking measures in order to maximize credibility in form source triangulation by collecting data from multiple participants such as a subcontractor representative, team leaders, translators, temporary and regular workers in order to gain a more complex insight, yet one deficiency is in this list that it lacks the voice of meat-company representatives. Furthermore, I used multiple sources of information such as interviews and documentation of official reports as well.

The second limitation of my study is the lack of scrutinizing the potential limitations and strength of the further points of the newly introduced measures. Notwithstanding this imperfection might provide the possibility for further research on this topic and potentially outline the direction for further quantitative studies as I have unfolded why my respondents prefer to use certain survival tactics, how norms and values vary or not across different segments in response to the circumstantial characteristics of the meat industry in which they operate. A quantitative study could dig deeper into these topics to see segment wide trends in the German meat industry employing migrant workers.

To further provide potentially fertile ground for the conception of later studies in this topic I finish my thesis by an interrogative quotation: How can the longing for self-determination be brought into harmony with the equally important longing for shared community? How can one simultaneously be individualistic and merge with the group? How might the variety of voices

which vie within each of us in a confusing world be combined into a political statement and action pointing beyond the present day (Beck, 2002, p. 158)?

VIII. APPENDIX

VIII.1. WORKERS' INTERVIEW GUIDE

Warm-Up Questions:

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PAST and demographics

TOPIC	QUESTION	FOLLOW UP
Original occupation/ Previous jobs (home/abroad)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you tell me what your original occupation is? • How long have you been abroad? • Have you done any other work abroad? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Kind of jobs?
Reasons for working abroad preparation and risk assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you choose to move abroad? • How did you get information about the company? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you know the company was safe? • How did you feel before moving out?
Age, gender, marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you mind telling me your age? • Do you have a family at home? /Are you married? 	

PRESENT

TOPIC	QUESTION	FOLLOW UP
Time spent in the current job/ contract type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been working in the current job? • Can I ask what kind of contract do you have? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you in direct employment with the company where you work or are you employed by a company at home which directed you to the work? • Do you travel home often? That is work for a month and be at home for two weeks?
Level of loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you go out by yourself? • How much do you feel alone? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there other natives around? • How much do you know about the people around yourself? • Are there any possibilities to go out together? • Is there anyone you can trust?
Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me how many hours and days do you work? • Can I ask how do you consider your salary in comparison with German citizens? • Are there problems, issues or conflicts that should be solved at the workplace? • Have you ever experienced at your workplace or in the worker hostel worrisome or dangerous factors or events? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it more or less than what was agreed? • What can you do to better this unfairness? • How do you think these could be solved/ to whom would you turn with it? • What do you think could be the outcome of you trying to solve this problem?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any examples in the past?
Living Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are you living now? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people are living there? • How are the living conditions? • Can you trust the people there?
Corona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did COVID has changed working and living conditions? 	
Relations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the main company see the intermediary company? • How does the intermediary company see the workers? • How do the workers see the intermediary and the big company? 	

FUTURE

Future plans	What are your plans for the future? Why would you go home or stay?	
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VIII.2. SUBCONTRACTOR COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE – International intermediary company – Paperwork side.

CURRENT JOB:

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT JOB?

INTRODUCTORY PART	
How did you get to Germany?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you decide to move abroad?
How long have you been living abroad?	
What kind of jobs have you done before in Germany?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of experiences did you have? +/- Mik voltak a tapasztalataid ezekkel?
PRESENT	
What is your current job?	Mi a jelenlegi foglalkozásod?
What should we know about this intermediary company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many companies do they work with? How many subcontractors do they have? Hány embert foglalkoztatnak? Do they provide hostel as well to the workers? How are these hostels?
What do you know about the employees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How big is the fluctuation at the company? How long do people stay in general? What kind of feedback do you get from the workers? How do you see the relation of workers towards each other? Hungarian with Hungarian or Hungarian with specific nationalities? What do you think about the workers? What kinds have you been in contact with or heard about? What kind of problems do you think they face? How is the relation of the mediator company and the workers?
Feedbacks from companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of feedback do you get from the companies where your workers are employed?
Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you consider as problematic things at the company? (for instance in the organization, communication, fairness) What do you think could be a solution? What do you know about other subcontractor companies?
FUTURE	
Have you heard about that subcontractors might cease to exist in Germany?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What might be the reason for that?

VIII.3. CONSENT FORM

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF BANNING TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT IN THE GERMAN MEAT INDUSTRY: The Case of Hungarian Precarious Workers

Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand what my participation involves as it has been presented previously.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in...[list all forum in which you plan to use the data from the interview: dissertation, conference presentation, published papers etc.].
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in [specify location, security arrangements and who has access to data] until [specific relevant period – for students this will be until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation].
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for [specific relevant period – for students this will be two years from the date of the exam board].
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.
- Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

Signature of research participant

Date:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher

Date:

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