CHAPTER 22

A "Special Category of Women" in Austria and Internationally

Migrant Women Workers, Trade Union Activists, and the Textile Industry, 1960s to 1980s

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Abstract

At the beginning of the 1960s, Austria joined Western and Northern European states in recruiting temporary migrant workers. While the European "guestworker" and migrant labour regimes have been subject to multiple studies in the last 40 years, migrant women have rarely been at the centre of these investigations, although their specific issues have comprised a facet of the international labour movement since the 1970s. Female migrant workers faced a double marginalization in the labour movement, both as migrants and as women. By analysing printed source material, archival documents, and interviews with women trade unionists, this chapter examines this specific double marginalization; how gender, class, and ethnicity shaped the labour activism of domestic and migrant working women; and how the international, national, and local levels interacted in the context of the deindustrialization of the Austrian textile industry.*

Keywords

Austria – deindustrialization – gender – labour migration – textile industry – trade unions

In 1981, in the International Labour Organization (ILO) news bulletin *Women at Work*, Yugoslav politician Vida Tomšič[1] pointed out that over 30 percent of

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1 Mateja Jeraj, "Vida Tomšič," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca

the Yugoslav workers employed abroad were women. She went on to show how women workers differed from their male counterparts by region of origin, type of education, and age structure, and outlined various measures that would be taken in Yugoslavia to support these women – and their families – before leaving and after returning: "Special attention is devoted to the specific problems of women in connection with maternity."[2] The memories of Slobodanka Kudlaček-Ritopečki, a Serbo-Croatian interpreter at the Chamber of Labour for Vienna in the 1970s correspond with these assertions. On the one hand, pregnancy was a period that made migrant women workers particularly vulnerable to exploitation,[3] and on the other hand, policies related to the raising of children were a particularly harsh instrument of the Austrian labour migration regime. "But as an individual woman, there wasn't much you could do," she noted on this pivotal issue.[4] Kudlaček-Ritopečki arrived in 1972, at the peak of workers' recruitment abroad for work in Austrian industries such as construction or the textile and garment sector with a large proportion of women being hired.[5] While agreements to promote the rights of migrant workers as well as (working) women were already being advanced at the international level in the 1960s,[6] an increased awareness of the differences between women became prominent in the late 1970s and early 1980s[7] – which also was, probably not coincidentally, the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women.[8] As historian Eileen Boris argued recently, it was in this period that a "construction of a category within a category, 'women in developing countries,' as the

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de Haan, Krasimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 575–579.

2 Vida Tomšič, "Women as Migrant Workers from Yugoslavia," *Women at Work: An ILO News Bulletin,* no. 1 (1981): 12.

3 Institut für Historische Sozialforschung (IHSF), Archive, Chamber of Labour, Vienna, "Ausschüsse für Frauenarbeit und Familienpolitik, 1963–1994," Minutes of a meeting between trade unionists and functionaries of the Chambers of Labour concerning the consultation on the amendment of the Maternity Protection Act, 9 November 1971, 11–13.

4 Slobodanka Kudlaček-Ritopečki, interview by Veronika Helfert, 18 November 2021, transcript with the author, audio, 22:16. All translations from German into English are by the author.

5 Eleonore Kofman et al., *Gender and International Migration in Europe: Employment, Welfare and Politics* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 3–8.

6 Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 339–379.

7 Eleonore Kofman, "Female 'Birds of Passage' a Decade Later: Gender and Immigration in the European Union," *International Migration Review* 33, no. 2 (1999): 269–270.

8 Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann, "Introduction" to *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 10–11.

other of the woman worker" became hegemonic in ILO policy papers.[9] The assessments of activists in and from Yugoslavia,[10] both in Austria as well as at the international level indicated that issues affecting women workers, in general, proved even more precarious for migrant women and were purposefully instrumentalized by migration regimes such as that in Austria. Female immigrant workers faced a double marginalization as migrants and as women, not only in the labour market but also in relation to trade unions and the state. The concept of double marginalization is based on the insight that categories of social inequalities are "interlocking" and "interactive";[11] an understanding that has produced rich theoretical and empirical scholarship since the 1980s under the term *intersectionality*.[12]

While the European "guestworker" and migrant labour regimes have been subject to multiple studies in the last 40 years, migrant women have rarely been at the centre of investigation, although their specific issues have been present in the international labour movement since the 1970s. This chapter explores the relationship between women migrant workers from mainly Yugoslavia and, to a lesser degree, Turkey and Austrian trade unionists from the 1960s to the 1980s, a period first shaped by rising labour demand and subsequently by rationalization and deindustrialization. Moreover, by analysing printed source materials such as company newspapers, minutes from the Trade Union Women's Congress, and yearly reports of trade union branches, as well as archival documents and by conducting interviews with women trade unionists, the interconnections of the local, national, and international levels will be examined. This chapter's first section depicts labour migration and the effect of deindustrialization on the workforce and trade unionism in the Austrian textile and garment industry. It highlights the working conditions in a sector that

9 Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker: Precarious Labor and the Fight for Global Standards, 1919–2019* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 91.

10 The perspective of the sending country will not be discussed. See, however, Brigitte Le Normand, *Citizens without Borders: Yugoslavia and Its Migrant Workers in Western Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

11 Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs* 18, no. 1 (1992): 1.

12 While authors in the US such as bell hooks or Angela Davis already voiced their critique of feminist and Marxist writers as excluding the histories and experiences of Black and marginalized women, the term "intersectionality" was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum,* no. 5 (1989): 139–167. On the development of the term see: Sara Salem, "Intersectionality and its Discontents: Intersectionality as Traveling Theory," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 25, no. 4 (2018): 403–418.

was overwhelmingly dependent on women and migrant workers. The second section places the Austrian labour migration regime ("*Gastarbeitsregime*")[13] in a historical and international context. In this context, the Austrian model of regulating temporary contract work,[14] with its strong involvement of trade unions and workers' representatives, proves to be particularly protectionist. The ILO's debates on the special protection of female labour migrants since the mid-1970s hardly appear in the policies. This is no coincidence, as the following section argues, given that labour migration has been misconstrued as male with the result of marginalizing migrant women in policies, trade union movements, and, ultimately, in historiographic discourse. Our analysis of the activities of Austrian women trade unionists in works councils and as top-level functionaries in the Austrian Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers Union (Gewerkschaft Textil, Bekleidung, Leder; TBL) as well as the women's local and national departments of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB) reveals that especially those from regions with a significant textile industry, particularly in Vorarlberg, spoke out very early against the admission of foreign workers. They identified the "guestworker problem" as one of the central problems of working women. This section traces organized labour's vacillation between institutional exclusion and the selective inclusion of migrant (male) workers as "guestworker spokespersons." The double marginalization in the labour movement in conjunction with the structural racism of the Austrian labour migration regime reduced activism to precarious spaces as will be explored in the last section.

1 Labour Migration, Deindustrialization and Rationalization in the Textile Industry

The Austrian textile industry centred in Vorarlberg, Lower Austria, and Tyrol had a long history of internal and international labour migration since the nineteenth century.[15] After the Second World War, the economic situation

13 Kenneth Horvath, *Die Logik der Entrechtung: Sicherheits- und Nutzendiskurse im österreichischen Migrationsregime* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2014), 129–159.

14 Mahua Sarkar, "Introduction" to *Work Out of Place* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018), 3.

15 Sylvia Hahn, "Migration und Ökonomie: Über den Zusammenhang von Industrialisierung, Deindustrialisierung und Zuwanderung," in *"Vom selben Schlag": Migration und Integration im niederösterreichischen Industrieviertel*, ed. Thomas Schmidinger (Wiener Neustadt: Verein Alltag Verlag, 2008), 15–31.

and labour market conditions were tense. Since the Austrian state considered young, unskilled women as a surplus population that was not needed for the economy, these women subsequently looked for work in Switzerland, Germany, or Great Britain.[16] Due to higher wages and better job opportunities, many of those who lived in the Austrian-Swiss and Austrian-German border regions crossed the border (*Grenzgänger*).[17] Both locally and in global perspective, the textile industry's workforce was shaped by migration. To maximize profits, companies in the Global North, initially in the 1950s and 1960s, sought to bring in temporary migrant labour, then changed to outsource part of the production to countries such as Yugoslavia or Hungary and, in a further step, relocated production to the Global South.[18]

The working conditions in the labour-intensive textile industry became increasingly strenuous in the face of relentless economic pressure. The textile industry was characterized by numerous high occupational strains: heavy physical work, often one-sided exposure, noise, dust, the stress involved in doing piecework and night as well as shift work – and it was also one of the worst-paying industries.[19] Piecework wages were common in many companies, as were complicated systems that calculated wages based on performance, length of employment, absenteeism, etc. According to a study from the 1980s, far more women than men worked on piecework wages, as indicated by a distribution of 66 percent in contrast to 21 percent.[20]

The piecework system rested on competition among workers that often created boundaries based on gender, age, or origin. Austrian workers, for example, referred to temporary migrant workers as "piecework pushers" (*Akkordtreiber*) because they knew they would only be doing the work for a short time and

16 IIHS Amsterdam, ILO 93, Report on requirements on foreign manpower and on resources available for emigration in European countries, 7. With thanks to Olga Gnydiuk. Ute Sonnleitner, Anita Ziegenhofer, and Karin M. Schmidlechner, "Aufbruch als Chance: Steirische Arbeitsmigration in die Schweiz 1945–1955," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes*, no. 11 (2014): 56.

17 Felix Butschek, "Österreichische Arbeitskräfte im Ausland," *Monatsberichte des österreichischen Instituts für Wirtschaftsforschung* 37, no. 10 (1964): 389–394.

18 Beth English, "Global Women's Work: Historical Perspectives on the Textile and Garment Industries," *Journal of International Affairs* 67, no. 1 (2013): 67–82; Chiara Bonfiglioli, *Women and Industry in the Balkans: The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav Textile Sector* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020), 87–95.

19 Dieter Bichlbauer, Ingrid Frassine, and Angelika Laburda, *Arbeitsbedingungen und Gesundheit der Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter in der Textilindustrie* (Vienna: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 1988), 8–12.

20 Bichlbauer, Frassine, and Laburda, *Arbeitsbedingungen*, 164.

therefore wanted to get the most money out of it.[21] The resentment of Austrian workers in this regard did not necessarily correspond to reality – not least because many labour migrants only returned to their countries of origin after long periods or ultimately remained in Austria. (Austrian) workers in the industry protested against evaluation systems that were not comprehensible, targets that could not be met due to technical problems and poor organization, errors in accounting, and individual discrimination. Abuses regularly occurred, and it was not always easy for works councils to determine whether the wages paid correctly corresponded to the performed work.[22] Due to the high level of physical exertion that the work entailed, older female workers experienced a drop in performance and thus lower wages that were only rarely compensated through "loyalty bonuses." This contrasts with the experiences of older male colleagues as men could more easily have careers within the company or be transferred to less strenuous jobs once their performance decreased. Furthermore, they generally tended to work in departments with hourly rather than piecework wages.[23] Many textile companies worked with two-shift or three-shift schedules and working hours were sometimes scheduled to accommodate the care duties of women workers.[24] In regions where childcare facilities were inadequate, as in Vorarlberg, the shift system offered many families the opportunity to share childcare between spouses.[25] Therefore, textile trade unionists protested when some employers, referring to global competition, urged the introduction of a four-shift schedule and Sunday work as this would further complicate the precarious balancing act of factory work, housework and (sparse) free time.

The international fluctuations in the textile sector, especially the 1940s and 1950s up-and downswings, also affected the Austrian producers. In the 1960s,

21 Maria Madlener, Greter Starzer, and Josef Weidenholzer, *Die Situation der Fabrikarbeiterin in Oberösterreich: Erfahrungsberichte vom Studientag am 15. März 1980 an der Universität Linz* (Vienna/Graz: Leykam, 1980), 27–28.

22 Bichlbauer, Frassine, and Laburda, *Arbeitsbedingungen,* 131–139; see also Andrea Nogler-Stark, interview by Veronika Helfert, 10 February 2022, transcript with the author, audio. The long-standing women's chairwoman of the TBL, Nogler-Stark, was a member and then chairwoman of the works council at the Vorarlberg textile company Huber Tricot from 1986 to 2019. In company newspapers such as the *Dreihammer: Zeitschrift für die Mitarbeiter der F. M. Hämmerle Textilwerke AG Dornbirn – Feldkirch – Wien*, comprehensive explanations of the composition of wages were published in Serbo-Croatian and Turkish in the 1980s.

23 Bichlbauer, Frassine, and Laburda, *Arbeitsbedingungen*, 118–119.

24 Vorarlberger Wirtschaftsarchiv, Feldkirch, A/9615, Arbeitszeitenvergleichssammlung des Textilunternehmers Franz M. Rhomberg.

25 Nogler-Stark, interview; Bichlbauer, Frassine, and Laburda, *Arbeitsbedingungen,* 119.

with steadier growth and a simultaneous shortage of workers, the industry became unable to meet domestic demand and failed to be competitive in the world market. Companies reacted by increasing rationalization and investment in modern high-output machinery on the one hand, and by recruiting workers from abroad on the other hand.[26] Upon achieving full (male) employment, the booming economies of Western Europe sought to meet labour needs by recruiting foreign workers,[27] only to use them as a manoeuvring mass in times of economic crises and rising unemployment rates among domestic workers, or by increasing the participation of women in the labour market. Within Europe, labour migrants moved from the South to the North.[28]

With the advent of labour migration under the "guestworker" scheme, migrant working men and women filled the lower-paid, unskilled jobs in the industry (usually "women's jobs"), while non-migrant women workers moved on to other sectors.[29] When the global economic crisis of the 1970s hit the Austrian textile industry particularly hard, this had a major impact on women's jobs which subsequently affected migrant women differently from Austrian women. Studies have shown how deindustrialization enforced social inequalities and had different effects depending on gender, class, race and/or ethnicity.[30] Many of the big textile companies went bankrupt or closed their production sites in Austria (e.g., Vöslauer Kammgarn filed for bankruptcy in 1978).[31] Despite various attempts to counter these developments, including the consolidation of individual companies (*Textillösung Ost* and *Textillösung West*), the pressure of global economic trends could only be relieved in the short term. Only a few, such as F. M. Hämmerle, survived to the mid-2000s, or are still operating by having moved most of their production sites abroad.

26 Franz Rauter, *Das Fremdarbeiterproblem in Innsbrucker Textil- und Bekleidungsbetrieben* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1972), 12.

27 Herman Obdeijn, "Les migrations vers l'Europe: Un mouvement d'émancipation du Tiers Monde," in *Les migrations du travail en Europe*, ed. Klaus Morgenroth (Bern: Lang, 2003), 36.

28 James F. Hollifield, *Immigrants, Markets, and States: The Political Economy of Postwar Europe* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15.

29 Erika Thurner, *Der "goldene Westen"? Arbeitszuwanderung nach Vorarlberg seit 1945* (Bregenz: Vorarlberger Autoren Gesellschaft, 1997), 24.

30 Tim Strangleman, James Rhodes, and Sherry Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class, and Memory," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (2013): 7–22.

31 Doris Schwaiger, "Krisenstrategien industrieller Unternehmungen und ihre wirtschaftsgeographischen Auswirkungen: Versuche zur Sanierung einer Textilindustrie im Rahmen der Textillösung Ost" (Diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1984), 1–23.

During these relocations and restructuring processes, migrant workers (both male and female) and women workers were fired first.

Work in the textile and garment industry was also affected by technologization and rationalization.[32] In her report to the ÖGB women's congress in 1983, Maria Metzker, head of the ÖGB women's department, warned that indeed the "technologization of women's workplaces" particularly in the textile industry will not only lead to a shift in women's employment but also to a decrease of women's participation in the workforce; a problem with "unforeseen abysses."[33] Since the 1970s, a continuous loss of workplaces in the textile and garment industry amounted to a yearly decrease of 3 percent in garment making until 1983.[34] Between 1977 and 1983, 25 percent of all jobs in the textile industry and 23 percent in the garment industry were lost. Between 1983 and 1987, the unemployment rate of women rose by 43 percent, whereas that of men only increased by 14 percent.[35] In 1976, for the first time, more women were employed as white-collar workers than as blue-collar workers at a national level.[36] In parallel, textile unionists lost their prominent influence in the trade union movement and with the deindustrialization processes, union membership continuously declined.

2 The Austrian Labour Migration Regime in a European Context

The movement of labour to industrial centres, which had shaped European societies since the seventeenth century,[37] was disrupted by the First World War. In the new nation-states, labour migration subsequently became an urgent issue for industries, governments, and national as well as international labour movements.[38] After the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918, the

32 "New Technologies and Women's Jobs," *Women at Work*, no. 2 (1980): 5–6.

33 Maria Metzker, Report on the Activities of the Women's Department, in *Stenographisches Protokoll: 9. Frauenkongreß des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes vom 18. bis 20. Mai 1983*, ed. ÖGB Frauenabteilung (Vienna: ÖGB-Verlag, 1983), 32.

34 Debate contribution by Anneliese Pulkrab (Gewerkschaft TBL), in *9. Frauenkongreß des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes*, 137.

35 Hilde Seiler, Report on the Activities of the Women's Department, in *Stenographisches Protokoll: 10. ÖGB-Frauenkongreß vom 2. bis 4. Juni 1987,* ed. ÖGB Frauenabteilung (Vienna: ÖGB-Verlag, 1987), 34.

36 "Die Frau am Arbeitsmarkt," in *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften: Bericht über das Jahr 1976* (Vienna: ÖGB-Verlag), 3–11.

37 Sylvia Hahn, *Migration – Arbeit – Geschlecht: Arbeitsmigration in Mitteleuropa vom 17. bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2008), 157–244.

38 Ahmet Akgündüz, "Guest Worker Migration in Post-War Europe (1946–1974): An Analytical Appraisal," in *An Introduction to International Migration Studies: European*

traditional short-distance internal migrations of seasonal labour on which many sectors – agriculture in particular – relied, now involved crossing state borders and became international migrations. However, protectionist laws, especially the Domestic Worker Protection Act (*Inlandarbeiterschutzgesetz*) of 1925, closed off the Austrian labour market to non-Austrian citizens.[39] Austria's labour migration regime was characterized by the involvement of various interest groups. Since the First World War and, similarly, after 1945 mainly social democratic politicians and trade unionists insisted on state regulation of employment permits for foreign citizens to prevent exploitation of workers and disadvantages for domestic workers. In this context, anti-Slavic resentments also comprised part of the argument.[40] Such attitudes already characterized the standpoints of the Austrian delegates during the debates on labour migration at the congresses of the Second International (see Chapter 11 in this volume).[41]

After the end of the Second World War, especially since the 1950s, international labour mobility to Western Europe increased considerably.[42] Most states resumed labour regimes and migrants embarked on their routes. While West and North European states aimed for controlled recruitment of workers in South European countries, non-state-regulated migration paths via tourist visas and individual job searches were commonplace throughout Europe.[43] As described by Simon Goeke in his study on West Germany,[44] the official recruitment paths for migrant workers were only one of the multiple entryways to segments of the labour markets.[45]

Perspectives, ed. Marco Martinello and Jan Rath (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 182–186.

39 Jessica Richter, "Das österreichische Inlandarbeiterschutzgesetz von 1925 und die LandarbeiterInnen: Zur Organisation des 'nationalisierten' Arbeitsmarkts," in *Rural History Yearbook / Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raums*, no. 15 (2018): 281–296.

40 Horvath, *Die Logik der Entrechtung*, 173.

41 Lucas Poy, "La Segunda Internacional y la cuestión de las migraciones a comienzos del siglo XX," *Revista Izquierdas*, no. 50 (2021): 1–23.

42 Klaus J. Bade, "L'Europe, continent d'immigration: Migrations et intégration à la fin du XXe siècle," in Morgenroth, *Les migrations du travail,* 4–5.

43 Christoph Rass, "Temporary Labour Migration and State-Run Recruitment of Foreign Workers in Europe, 1919–1975: A New Migration Regime?," *International Review of Social History* 57, no. 20 (2012): 191–224.

44 Simon Goeke, "*Wir sind alle Fremdarbeiter!" Gewerkschaften, migrantische Kämpfe und soziale Bewegungen in Westdeutschland 1960–1980* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020).

45 *Gastarbeiter in österreichischen Betrieben*, ed. Verein für ökonomische und soziologische Studien (Vienna: 1972), 6.

Although it was more of an emigration country in the 1950s, Austria joined states such as Germany and Switzerland in establishing a "guestworker programme" targeting recruitment for specific economic sectors within the framework of the *Raab-Olah-Agreement* of 1961/1962[46] whereby labour recruitment agreements were concluded with Spain, Yugoslavia, and Turkey.[47] These programmes served to maintain control over the sectors and periods of employment, thereby "immigrants who could be made to leave"[48] as Cindy Hahamovitch put it. While in countries with a colonial past, such as France or Great Britain, this heritage and associated legislation framed the specifics of the immigration regimes,[49] in Austria the legacies of the Habsburg Empire and the national socialist past framed both labour migration and labour activism.[50] The newly recruited migrant workers arrived in a post-Nazi (*postnazistisch*) and post-genocidal society that had until recently benefited from the exploitation of forced labour.[51] In short, national socialist legacies and legal continuities shaped the Austrian labour migration regime.[52] The "guestworker programme" of the Second Austrian Republic, founded in 1945, continued interwar policies but also took "international standards of labour migration" into account.[53] These programmes consisted of an annual quota (*Kontingente*) of labourers to be recruited for specific industries, negotiated and established by trade unions and employer representatives. They mandated compulsory health examinations before recruitment, the provision of housing by employers, a rotation

46 This agreement formalized the social partnership in Austria comprising cooperative relationships between employers' and employees' associations such as the ÖGB, the Chamber of Labour or the employers' Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer*) with the aim of preventing conflicts through consensus building.

47 Anne Unterwurzacher, "'The Other Colleagues': Labor Migration at the Glanzstoff-Fabrik in St. Pölten from 1962 to 1975," in *Migration in Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof and Dirk Rupnow (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2017), 139–159.

48 Cindy Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective," *Labor History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 72.

49 Hollifield, *Immigrants,* 38.

50 Continuities are visible even on the architectural level as the – often desolate – tenements for migrant textile workers in the nineteenth century were re-used 100 years later for "guestworkers." Sylvia Hahn, "Migration und Ökonomie."

51 Dirk Rupnow, "Deprovincializing Contemporary Austrian History: Plädoyer für eine transnationale Geschichte Österreichs als Migrationsgesellschaft," *zeitgeschichte* 40, no. 1 (2013): 12.

52 Vida Bakondy and Renée Winter, "Schweigen und Profitieren: Überlegungen zur Fortwirkung von Strukturen nationalsozialistischer Zwangsarbeit nach 1945," in Schmidinger, *"Vom selben Schlag,"* 57–64.

53 Rass, "Temporary Labour Migration," 200.

principle – i.e., the issuance of work permits limited to one year – and the prohibition of employing recruited workers during strikes.[54]

When, as a consequence of the economic crisis of 1973, European states discontinued labour recruitment on the international labour market,[55] the Austrian Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals (*Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz*) of 1975 aimed at regulating and reducing the migrant workforce. Labour migrants contested the laws but received almost no support from the trade unions.[56] Roughly at the same time, in 1977, several members of the Council of Europe agreed on a convention on migrant workers (European Treaty Series No. 93) aiming to ensure that workers, who were nationals of member states "are treated no less favourably than workers who are nationals of the receiving state in all aspects of living and working conditions."[57] The convention highlighted problem areas such as violations of the rights of migrant workers during their recruitment and in their working and living conditions (housing, family reunions, education or unemployment) and social rights.[58] The Convention Concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (No. 143) of the ILO of 1975 and the ILO Migrant Workers Recommendation (No. 151) aimed even more strongly towards equal treatment of domestic and foreign workers. However, Austria neither signed the ILO's nor the Council of Europe's Convention (during the period under review)[59] and Austrian workers' representatives expressed reservations, particularly regarding the right

54 Sylvia Hahn, "Geschichte der Arbeitsmigration in Österreich," in *50 Jahre jugoslawische Gastarbeit in Österreich*, ed. Ali Özbaş, Joachim Hainzl, and Handan Özbaş (Graz: Clio, 2016), 32. For a historical overview, see Hahn, *Migration – Arbeit – Geschlecht*, 139–155.

55 Among others, see Mirjana Morokvasic, "Birds of Passage are also Women," *International Migration Review* 18, no. 4 (1984): 888.

56 August Gächter, "Die Einwanderung aus der Türkei und was aus ihr wird," in *50 Jahre türkische Gast (?) Arbeit in Österreich: Wissenschaftliche Analysen – Lebensgeschichten / Avusturya'da 50 yıllık misafir (?) işçi: bilimsel analizler – hayat hikayeleri*, ed. Ali Özbaş, Joachim Hainzl, and Handan Özbaş (Graz: Leykam, 2014), 50.

57 European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers / Convention Européenne Relative au Statut Juridique du Travailleur Migrant, European Treaty Series no. 93, December 1977.

58 Emmanuel Comte, *The History of the European Migration Regime: Germany's Strategic Hegemony* (London/New York: Routledge, 2018).

59 Stefan Rosenmayer, "Die öffentlich-rechtliche Stellung von Gastarbeitern, insbesondere das Aufenthaltsrecht," in *Ausländische Arbeitskräfte in Österreich*, ed. Hannes Wimmer (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 1986), 95–97.

of migrant workers to run for office in interest groups as outlined in the ILO Convention No. 143 and Recommendation 151.[60]

These international policy instruments of the late 1970s addressed the unequal treatment of workers due to citizenship but made little reference to the circumstances of women. Within the ILO, for example, no conventions and recommendations on the issues of migrant women workers were produced until 1990, apart from policies against trafficking women and girls and for the rights of the family members of migrant workers.[61]

Only instruments concerning women included them as the "special category of women" and the European Commission called migrant women "disadvantaged women," together with "single-parent families, single women, immigrant women, women returning to the labour market after a career break, physically and mentally handicapped women, self-employed women."[62] As late as 1980, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the "Recommendation concerning migrant women calling for effective equality of opportunity and treatment with national women and advocating special measures in their favour."[63] Five years earlier, the ILO's "Plan of Action with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers" (1975) adopted measures to promote the equal participation of women in the (national) workforce. Policymakers and labour representatives should "ensure adequate and appropriate attention to all special categories of women who may encounter particular difficulties, such as migrant women who are frequently the victims of discrimination and exploitation and who also run social risks"[64] – a clause that had been proposed by the workers' members in the Committee on Equality for Women Workers, among them the head of the ÖGB women's department, Maria Metzker.[65]

60 IHSF Archive, Chamber of Labour, Vienna, AC SV/AUS 2.1.5.24/K/R1: "Ausschüsse für Sozialpolitik, 1963–1994," Summary minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Committee, 10 May 1976, 4.

61 Sonya Michel, "Mothers Working Abroad: Migrant Women Caregivers and the ILO, 1980s-2010s," in Boris, Hoehtker, and Zimmermann, *Women's ILO,* 321–323.

62 "Commission of the European Communities: Medium-Term Community Programme, 1986–90," *Women at Work*, no. 1 (1986): 65.

63 "Council of Europe: Recommendation Concerning Migrant Women," *Women at Work*, no. 1 (1980): 50.

64 "Resolution on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers," *Women at Work*, no. 2 (1977): 22.

65 "Eighth Item on the Agenda: Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers, Report of the Committee on Equality for Women Workers," *International Labour Conference 60th Session, Geneva, 1975, Records of the Proceedings,* 776–777.

3 The Misconstruction of Labour Migration as a Male Phenomenon

For a long period, Yugoslavian citizens accounted for the largest group of migrant workers in Austria, with a share of 76.4 percent (66,400 persons) in 1970.[66] Although most labour migrants in the 1960s and 1970s were men, the proportion of women was higher than assumed in public narratives and frequently repeated in scholarship. In the 1970s, according to Sylvia Hahn, 35 percent of Yugoslav migrants were female, which increased to up to 40 percent in the 1980s.[67] Even if women entered Austria as relatives or wives, they still sought employment and thus need to be considered within the context of labour migration.[68] Significantly, employment rates among migrant women were higher than among Austrian women: In 1971, for example, the employment rate was 80 percent for Yugoslav women as compared to 48 percent for Austrian women. Migrants were primarily employed as unskilled workers, leading to shifts in the gender ratios in certain sectors and the emergence of an ethnically divided labour market.[69] An example from the historic Vöslauer Kammgarn AG – a worsted yarn factory near Vienna – illustrates this development. While the proportion of women among Austrian nationals employed fell from 74 to 69 percent between 1965 and 1974, the proportion of migrant women in the company's workforce remained stable at approximately 50 percent with, however, a peak of around 60 percent during the recession period from 1966 to 1968.[70] The number of Austrian citizens among the company's workforce decreased from 2,344 (91.4 percent) to 910 (68.7 percent) from 1965 to 1975. In 1973 – the year in which the highest number of migrant workers were recruited – migrant workers accounted for 50.6 percent of all workers.[71]

66 Caroline Hornstein Tomić and Katica Ivanda Jurčević, "Gäste auf Zeit – Grenzgänger – transkulturelle Vermittler: Identitätsbildung in der Migration," in *Gast:arbeit: Gehen – Bleiben – Zurückkehren: Positionen zur Arbeitsmigration im Raum Ex-Jugoslawien*, ed. Jörn Nuber and Angelika Welebil (Vienna: Edition Art Science, 2012), 177.

67 Hahn, "Geschichte der Arbeitsmigration," 33; Tomšič, "Women as Migrant Workers from Yugoslavia," 12.

68 Christiane Harzig, "Immigration Policies: A Gendered Historical Comparison," in *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries I: Gender on the Move*, ed. Mirjana Morokvasic, Umut Erel, and Kyoko Shinozaki (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2003), 48–54.

69 Stefanie Mayer, "Migration & Labor Markets: Political Discourse in Austria," in *Debating Migration: Political Discourse on Labor Immigration in Historical Perspective*, ed. Stefanie Mayer and Mikael Span (Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 2009), 37–40.

70 Akgündüz, "Guest Worker Migration," 186.

71 Percentages calculated from the numbers provided in Ulla Fischer-Westhauser, "Actien-Gesellschaft der Vöslauer Kammgarn-Fabrik: Ein Beispiel alter österreichischer Industriegeschichte" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1994), Appendix 45–47. Note that the numbers refer to blue-collar workers and not to all employees at the Kammgarn AG.

The Vöslauer Kammgarn is representative of the textile industry as a whole: At the beginning of the 1970s between 40 and 60 percent of the workers in the sector were migrants.[72]

However, despite these indications, it is not possible to present exact numbers of foreign women employed in the textile and garment industry, since the statistics rarely noted gender ratios.[73] The Austrian census of 1981, for the first time, registered the gender of labour migrants.[74] While the annual reports of the women's departments of the trade unions monitored and documented women's employment rates, they did not provide the numbers of non-Austrian female nationals with the exception of the years 1965 and 1966 when approximately 20 percent of the 34,098 and 49,102 recruited workers were women.[75] Subsequently, the data concerning the women employed included non-Austrian citizens without further specification and the total number of "guestworkers" was provided without any gender specification. Only the reports of the ÖGB women's committee in Vorarlberg continuously show the proportion of women among labour migrants, which amounted to one-third throughout the 1970s. However, the published data does show that economic sectors with a high percentage of female labour were among those which recruited large numbers of labour migrants – in particular, the textile and garment industry in Vorarlberg and elsewhere in Austria.[76]

The absence of data shows to what degree the cliché of guestworker migration as being a largely male phenomenon has hampered research.[77] Only a few studies from the late 1960s onwards focused on the lives of women "guestworkers,"[78] and few journalists such as Henriette Werner or Ilse Beheim wrote on

72 Friedrich Fürstenberg, "Die Integration von Gastarbeitern in unsere Gesellschaft," in *Die Problematik der Gastarbeiter: Enquete der Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Oberösterreich und des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes* (Linz: Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Oberösterreich, 1973), 15.

73 Among others, see Erich Lehner, "Die Gastarbeiter im Rahmen des österreichischen Arbeitsmarktes," in *Die Problematik der Gastarbeiter.*

74 August Gächter, "50 Jahre jugoslawische Gastarbeit in Österreich" in Özbaş, Hainzl, and Özbaş, *50 Jahre jugoslawische Gastarbeit in Österreich*, 50.

75 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1965)*, 3; and *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1966)*, 3.

76 Ilse Beheim, "Die Gastarbeiterin in Österreich," *Arbeit und Wirtschaft* 23, no. 12 (December 1969): 53.

77 Elisabeth Koch et al., "Migrationsforschung und Geschlecht: Über den Wandel von Darstellungen von Migrantinnen," in Nuber and Welebil, *Gast:arbeit,* 313; María do Mar Castro Varela and Dimitria Clayton, eds., *Migration, Gender, Arbeitsmarkt: Neue Beiträge zu Frauen und Globalisierung* (Königstein/Taunus: Helmer Verlag, 2003); Morokvasic, "Birds of Passage," 899–900.

78 Koch et al., "Migrationsforschung und Geschlecht."

the issue in leading trade union publications, such as "Arbeit und Wirtschaft."[79] However, the publications usually focused less on the specific multiple burdens faced by migrant women workers than on racist stereotypes that attributed the issues arising from unequal job opportunities to a supposedly more patriarchal culture of origin.[80] Migration and gender scholar Eleonore Kofman has aptly called this tendency the "orientalizing of immigrant women."[81] This also concerns texts that criticized prejudices of the majority society and that portrayed the difficult working and living conditions in Austria.

To conclude: Reinforced by the pictorial representation and the linguistic reduction to the generic masculine (characteristic of the German language) in most publications on migrant workers, women workers only appeared sporadically in the scholarly and public sphere, historiography included, and, if mentioned, female migration was primarily associated with care workers and domestic servants.

4 The Double Marginalization of Migrant Women Workers in Trade Unionism

Once Austria became a receiving country of labour migration in the 1960s – after post-war emigration from Austria had abated – trade union attitudes were ambivalent. On the one hand, trade unions across West and North European countries voiced concerns that migrant workers would reduce the influence of trade unions and endanger the gains made in labour rights by acting as competitors in the labour market.[82] On the other hand – to counteract such a development – the unions established a variety of information and service offers and recruited migrant workers as members.[83] As "organizations aiming to regulate and mitigate competitive relations among workers in the labor market,"[84] the ÖGB and its branch unions sought to prevent unequal

79 Beheim, "Die Gastarbeiterin," 53–55; Henriette Werner, "Gastarbeiter," *Arbeit und Wirtschaft* 19, no. 9 (September 1965): 19.

80 For a similar insight, see Morokvasic, "Birds of Passage," 889.

81 Kofman, "Female 'Birds of Passage'," 285.

82 Johan Svanberg, "International Trade-Unionism and Migration: European Integration and the Post-War 'Free' Movement of Labour," *Labor History* 62, no. 5–6 (2021): 671–687.

83 Jan Kreisky, "Migration und Gewerkschaft: Skizze einer widerspruchvollen und wechselhaften Geschichte," in *Wissenschaft über Gewerkschaft: Analysen und Perspektiven*, ed. Brigitte Pellar (Vienna: ÖGB-Verlag), 171–172; Hannes Wimmer, "Zur Ausländerbeschäftigungspolitik in Österreich," in Wimmer, *Ausländische Arbeitskräfte*, 18–26.

84 Julia Soul, "Local Unions in a Transnational Movement: The Role of Mexican Unions in the Making of International Networks," *Labor and Society* 22, (2019): 26.

treatment of domestic and foreign workers and thus avoid negative impacts on labour standards and wage development. However, they also frequently adopted a protectionist position against the recruitment of migrant workers. As early as 1955 – before the recruitment agreements – the ÖGB women's conference in Vorarlberg protested against an "intended taking in of women workers from abroad (*Fremdarbeiterinnen*) for the Vorarlberg textile industry"[85] and presented a motion to that intent at the national women's congress in the same year. The motion was only adopted after discussion and with some opposing votes and abstentions.[86] In 1961, the Vorarlberg women trade unionists demanded a law to regulate the employment of foreign citizens and also wanted co-determination regarding the number of foreign women recruited.[87] The issue remained present at their and other Austrian states' (*Länder*) conferences until the late 1960s, especially among trade union women in Tyrol.[88] A leading Vorarlberg unionist, Lotte Eß, became the first female vice-president of the Chamber of Labour for Vorarlberg in 1967 and like Grete Rehor, another prominent textile unionist and Austrian Minister of Social Affairs from 1966 to 1970, she pursued exclusionary policies. The union women wanted to reduce the number of foreign workers, which they labelled the "guestworker problem" (*Gastarbeiterproblem*), and to improve the vocational training of girls and young women, as well as their employment opportunities and the medical infrastructure in rural areas.[89] Rehor, a member of the conservative Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP), successfully advocated for more difficult access to the payment (and stricter control) of family allowances for migrant workers,[90] a sensitive field to ensure strict migration policies.

The "guestworker problem" (*Gastarbeiterproblem*) found institutional expression in the trade union system through the establishment of special committees at the state level, in the Chambers of Labour or in individual trade unions. The Vorarlberg textile trade union established such committees in the late 1960s and the regional Chamber of Labour in the late 1970s.[91] Unfortunately, no minutes of the committee meetings have been preserved or are accessible

85 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften* (*1955*), 24.

86 *Stenographisches Protokoll: 2. Frauenkongreß des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes: 14. und 15. Oktober 1955*, ed. ÖGB Frauenabteilung (Vienna: ÖGB-Verlag, 1955), 184–185.

87 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften* (*1961*), 54.

88 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften* (*1962*), 46–47; *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften* (*1969*), 50.

89 Report from Vorarlberg, compiled by Lotte Eß, *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften* (*1982*), 76–78.

90 Karl von Vogelsang Archive, Vienna, File no. 2586.

91 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften* (*1980*), 74.

and the printed reports of the TBL, for example, mainly contain information on the quotas of migrant workers in various sectors and do not reveal whether other topics were discussed. Migrants had, at best, a minor role in these committees, constituting a maximum of 46 percent, and finally, from 1980 to 1989, a mere 20 percent in the labour migration committee (*Gastarbeiterausschuss*) of the ÖGB in Vorarlberg. Among the migrant members, there were never more than two women, and sometimes none.[92]

This peripheral presence reflected the ÖGB position until the 1990s: "Austrian works councils are quite capable of imparting their knowledge to the foreigners, they could do this much better than if the foreigners themselves elected works councils."[93] Trade union functionaries understood their role as being to advise and represent all colleagues equally, albeit without the representation of workers of non-Austrian citizenship, who received the right to vote in works council elections in 1976 but could not stand for office.[94]

In some companies, however, "guestworker spokespersons" (*Gastarbeitersprecher*) could be appointed. Their task was to help with matters related to the workplace and, in addition, with issues specific to migrant workers, such as passport extensions. The ÖGB in Vorarlberg offered special courses for Yugoslav and Turkish spokespersons in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to "avoid difficulties between works councils and foreign workers, which are rooted partly in the language."[95] The training sessions covered general Austrian labour law, specific legislation such as the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, issues around leave from work and vacations, wage tax issues, various social security topics, and German language courses. While publications suggest that only men served as spokespersons, the reports show that (a few) women were enrolled in these courses in some years.[96]

The Austrian state, in its turn, considerably restricted the possibilities of political articulation for non-citizens and, in addition to the limitation on voting rights, participation in demonstrations was curtailed. Foreign citizens were not allowed to act as organizers, overseers, or leaders of a public assembly.[97]

92 Information compiled from the reports of the ÖGB in Vorarlberg published between 1980 and 1989.

93 *Problematik der Gastarbeiter*, 65–66.

94 Kurt Prokop, "Die Gastarbeiter aus der Sicht der Arbeitnehmer," in *Problematik der Gastarbeiter*, 53–62; Kreisky, "Migration und Gewerkschaft," 174–175.

95 *Bericht 1977*, ed. ÖGB Vorarlberg (Vienna: ÖGB-Verlag, 1977), 20.

96 ÖGB Vorarlberg, *Bericht 1977*, 20–21, 24.

97 Hüsseyin Uz, "Organisation gegen Isolation: Migrantische Selbstorganisation zwischen Interessensvertretung und Parallelgesellschaft," in Schmidinger, *"Vom selben Schlag,"* 221–222.

These mechanisms of exclusion, together with the fact that until the mid-2000s only Austrian citizens were allowed to be elected as works council members, reinforced the division between the trade union movement and workers without Austrian citizenship.[98] For Austrians, membership in a works council was often a first step towards a trade union career.

Many trade unionists considered migrant workers difficult to organize, notwithstanding all evidence to the contrary. Very few – such as former anti-fascist resistance fighter and socialist journalist Henriette Werner[99] – took into consideration that precarious employment conditions (caused by fixed-term employment contracts with great dependence on the employer) made labour activism harder for migrant workers. Attempts to agitate in the languages of migrant workers, beyond the publication of certain trade union information, are not recorded. Resentment among many works councils against the "enemies of organized workers,"[100] as migrant workers were sometimes called, was evident.[101]

Thus, all evidence supports the hypothesis of the double marginalization of migrant women in the structures of trade unions and Chambers of Labour. In the few areas in which migrant workers were able to assume formal functions, women were either barely present or not represented at all while in the organizational structures created for and by union women, the issues of labour migrants were only discussed in "a discourse of problems."[102] Interpreter Slobodanka Kudlaček-Ritopečki did not recall any contacts with trade union women's representatives during her years of work, and the minutes of the committee of women's work in the Chamber of Labour in Vienna as well as of the ÖGB women's congresses show almost no contributions regarding the topic.[103]

98 The right of foreign citizens to stand as candidates in elections to the Chamber of Labour and works councils was pushed through by migrant activists who took legal action all the way to the European Court of Justice and the UN Human Rights Committee. Franz Fischill, "Antidiskriminierung: MigrantInnen in der Gewerkschaft," accessed 28 February 2022, https://www.oegb.at/themen/gleichstellung/antidiskriminierung/migrantinnen-in-der-gewerkschaft.

99 "Kotlan-Werner, Henriette," accessed 28 February 2022, http://biografia.sabiado.at/kotlan-werner-henriette/.

100 Werner, "Gastarbeiter," 20.

101 Also see the remarks in Madlener, Starzer, and Weidenholzer, *Die Situation der Fabrikarbeiterin,* 21; Hans Peter Martin, *Nachtschicht: Eine Vorarlberger Betriebsreportage*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Sensen-Verlag, 1979), 25–26.

102 Svanberg, "International Trade-Unionism and Migration," 684.

103 Kudlaček-Ritopečki, interview. Similarly, the native textile unionists I interviewed could not recall having been in contact or especially engaged with women labour migrants, also see Nogler-Stark, interview; Sophie Bauer, interview by Veronika Helfert, 6 October 2021,

5 Precarious Spaces of Activism

The problems caused by the extremely restrictive Austrian legislation regarding works council elections and the positions taken by the trade union movement did concern the textile industry. In some companies, such as the large Austrian textile manufacturer F. M. Hämmerle, female white-collar workers were voted into the blue-collar works councils, since "the many foreign workers in our production units do not have the right to stand for election, it is very difficult to find suitable candidates for the works council."[104] Women trade unionists also pointed to the fact that it was difficult to hold works council elections in companies with an 80 percent non-Austrian workforce such as F. M. Hämmerle.[105]

Organizing required resources: time, networks, language, and other skills. And since the nineteenth century, women trade unionists had pointed out that involvement was challenging for many women regardless of their background because of the allocation of family responsibilities. "You'll rarely find a works council who can be present full-time and who is married and has a family to take care of," noted an anonymous woman trade unionist in 1980: "That's just not happening."[106] This was even more difficult for migrant women on short employment contracts or, if on longer contracts, who had only been working in the company for a short time.[107] A close reading of the company newspaper of F. M. Hämmerle reveals that it was only in 1989 that two women were elected as works council members. Most likely they were Yugoslav migrant workers and could only stand for election after having acquired Austrian citizenship.[108]

The activities that were undertaken in several locations throughout Austria by the ÖGB, its trade unions, and the Chambers of Labour to organize "the foreign colleagues as members,"[109] included providing information in

transcript with the author, audio; IHSF Archive, Chamber of Labour, Vienna, "Ausschüsse für Frauenarbeit," 3 Boxes.

104 "Vier Frauen im Betriebsrat stellen ihren Mann," *Dreihammer* 35, no. 1 (January/February 1982).

105 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1973)*, 53; "Wir sprechen mit Erich Mauracher," *Der Aufstieg: Organ der Gewerkschaft der Textil-, Bekleidungs-, und Lederarbeiter*, no. 7/8 (July/August 1974): 10.

106 Madlener, Starzer, and Weidenholzer, *Die Situation der Fabrikarbeiterin*, 52.

107 See the discussions in *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1963)*, 59; and *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1965)*, 60.

108 *Dreihammer* 41, no. 4 (October/November/December 1988): 11; *Dreihammer* 42, no. 1 (January/February/March 1989): 5.

109 Prokop, "Die Gastarbeiter," 61.

Serbo-Croatian, Turkish – and less frequently in Italian – and hiring interpreters with weekly office hours.[110] This service continued in the 1970s as "a large proportion of the appearing guest workers are women."[111] However, there were limits to what the interpreters could do, since they were not allowed to undertake independent consultations. Nevertheless, some of them, like Slobodanka Kudlaček-Ritopečki, acquired extensive knowledge over time that supported migrant women in their claims.[112]

Other initiatives of the late 1980s followed models introduced in Germany and Australia, and in Vienna and Vorarlberg, foreigners' counselling centres (*Ausländerberatungsstellen*) were founded, or co-founded, by migrant actors themselves. The respective association in Vorarlberg did include representatives from the trade unions and the regional Chamber of Labour but worked independently. It offered extensive counselling and support in Turkish and Serbo-Croatian. The association, which existed from 1986 to 2000, fundamentally changed its character when, in the mid-1990s, it was assigned to the regional office of the Public Employment Service in Vorarlberg.[113] More far-reaching, albeit short-term, attempts to compensate for the lack of suffrage rights for foreign citizens at the municipal level were realized in the 1990s in the form of foreigners' advisory committees (*Migrantenbeiräte/Ausländerbeiräte*). Such councils were also introduced in other countries with varying degrees of autonomy and decision-making power.[114]

However, to deal with issues of daily life and political participation, many migrant women organized autonomously, and associations of various kinds – sports, cultural or even political – were an essential component of their activism whereby clubs such as *Jedinstvo Bečˇ* played an important role in establishing and maintaining socio-political networks.[115] Some of these activities were funded by the ÖGB.[116] In their leisure time, migrant women workers were often involved in activities to foster the culture of their countries of origin. The circulation of knowledge and everyday support formed part of this activism – often

110 For example, *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1972)*, 52.

111 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1972)*, 62.

112 Kudlaček-Ritopečki, interview.

113 Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Bregenz, Ausländerberatungsstelle, 3 Boxes.

114 Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Bregenz, Ausländerberatungsstelle, Box 3, Initiative für AusländerInnenbeiräte in Vorarlberg, "AusländerInnen-/ImmigrantInnen-/Minderheitenbeiräte, Infopaket."

115 Lutger Pries, *Internationale Migration* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2015), 34.

116 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften (1976)*, 57. An event in cooperation with Radio-TV Zagreb in Vorarlberg in 1977 was, for example, attended by 2,600 people. ÖGB Vorarlberg, *Bericht 1977*, 24.

complementing or even taking over parts of the responsibilities of state institutions, such as school education or finding help in dealing with authorities. Due to the limited time resources, the investment in such activities competed with the level of involvement in labour activism. In this context, Ljubomir Bratić also argues that these associations had a difficult position at the intersection of different fields of interest. Mainly founded as grassroots organizations in the late 1960s by Yugoslav workers themselves, they experienced a boom in the 1970s and were supported by the institutions and governments of both countries involved.[117] In contrast, the associations established by and for Turkish migrant women mainly started to emerge in the 1980s.[118] While the Austrian labour migration regime, with its institutional racism and sexism, left women migrant workers little room for manoeuvre, they did show agency as translators, advisors, or in self-organized activities – all of which were performed on a voluntary and unpaid basis alongside their wage and care work.

6 A "Special Category of Women": Conclusion

Since the 1970s, the ILO has repeatedly pointed to the fact that indeed "special categories" of women exist, "who, because of their special characteristics, are experiencing not only common problems but also specific difficulties due to their socio-economic condition, age, minority status or a combination of these factors."[119] The UN Decade of Women brought the issue of migrant women into the focus of social scientists and labour activists at the international level, addressing – in addition to their class exploitation – the double discrimination they faced as women and as migrants.[120] Earlier migrant women had been understood as a problem category together with older female workers or young

117 Ljubomir Bratić, "Der Name Jugo," in Özbaş, Hainzl, and Özbaş, *50 Jahre jugoslawische Gastarbeit*, 68–71; Verena Lorber, "'Jeden Samstag und Sonntag haben wir im Klub verbracht': Die Beschäftigungssituation und das Alltagsleben von jugoslawischen Arbeitsmigrantinnen in der Steiermark von 1960 bis 1919," in Özbaş, Hainzl, and Özbaş, *50 Jahre jugoslawische Gastarbeit*, 130–140; Ljubomir Bratić, "Soziopolitische Netzwerke der MigrantInnen aus der ehemaligen Sozialistischen Föderativen Republik Jugoslawien (SFRJ) in Österreich," in *Österreichischer Migrations- und Integrationsbericht: Demographische Entwicklungen – sozioökonomische Strukturen – rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen*, ed. Heinz Fassmann and Irene Stacher (Klagenfurt/Celovec: Verlag Drava, 2003), 385–409.

118 Hüseyin A. Şimşek, *50 Jahre Migration aus der Türkei nach Österreich* (Vienna: Lit-Verlag, 2017), 402–417.

119 "Special Categories," *Women at Work*, no. 2 (1985): 17.

120 Morokvasic, "Birds of Passage," 891.

people; as a "special category," a deviation from the norm of the male (non-migratory) worker, but also from the woman worker – who in herself is already a "special category" of worker.

The "special category of women," or the "other of the women worker," to use the words of Eileen Boris, appeared not only in public discourse in Austria but also in the writings of socialist journalists and publications of sociologists. Although women trade unionists – especially in the top echelons – certainly followed the international discussions and social science studies, this, according to the accessible publications and minutes, had no impact on daily policymaking and trade union work. On the contrary, the trade unions' active opposition to labour migration and their ambivalent policies and organizational strategies shaped attitudes toward domestic and migrant workers alike. The exclusionary access of female TBL trade unionists, especially in Vorarlberg, was intensified by the pressure on jobs during the restructuring processes since the 1970s. Resolutions adopted at the international level found little or no echo in the women's departments of the Austrian Chambers of Labour and trade unions. The vulnerable position of migrant women workers was rarely addressed publicly, with one exception being the intervention of trade unionist Gabriele Traxler in the 1988 parliamentary debate on the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals in which she highlighted the multiple burdens of care work and wage work and the often-precarious working conditions.[121] The concept of "the special category of women" has not been a major subject of debate among Austrian trade unionists. However, if women were already subject to ongoing exclusion in the trade unions, even in those sectors in which they constituted the majority of workers, this affected migrant women all the more. Under the double marginalization in the Austrian institutionalized labour movement, their concerns were not given attention in the specific women's committees of trade union organizations nor in the bodies that dealt with the concerns of migrant workers. Under the government's restrictive labour migration regime, they also faced difficulties in articulating their interests within social partnership institutions. The spaces of their activism – be it on an institutional level or in self-organized spaces – remained highly precarious. However, some still circumvented all restrictions and dealt with concrete matters of their own everyday life, as illustrated by examples of activism in migrant workers' clubs or foreigners' counselling centres.

121 Stenographic minutes, Austrian Parliament, XVIIth legislative period, 59th session, 21 April 1988, 6802–6803.