CHAPTER 15

Agricultural Labour Regimes of Im_Mobilisation

On the Legacies of Internal and External Colonisation within Europe

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We tend to forget that the lowest proletariat in a colonizing country always has a sub-proletariat from the colonized country, and this reality outlasts colonization.

– CHRIS MARKER, Le Joli Mai, 1962

1 Introduction

The development towards large-scale production zones in Spain and Italy has been described as the “Californization of the Mediterranean agriculture.” Following worker uprisings in Southern Spain and Southern Italy, surveys pointed to the prison-like working conditions in large-scale vegetable and fruit production. The best known examples are the monitored reception centres, tent cities, informal “ghettos” and shanty towns in Calabria and Apulia and the “prisons of plastic” in Almería. Less widely discussed are the production areas in the meat processing industry, such as the precarious working and living conditions in huge slaughterhouses in Lower Saxony in Germany. Workers have protested these conditions. Most of those who find themselves “trapped”

in these food production zones come from Africa, Latin America, Asia and “Eastern” Europe. Labour arrangements are based on differing legal statuses, but working and living conditions are almost always highly exploitative and subject to control. While, overall, the European agricultural sector is marked by a change from small-scale farms to large-scale companies – affecting regions across Europe in very different ways – one common tendency is to increasingly employ workers from around the globe on a precarious, short-term basis.

This chapter explores a central paradox that affects the most marginalised workers and that has characterised labour and mobility regimes in the agricultural sector in Europe from the late nineteenth century onwards. On the one hand, labour regimes in agriculture and within the globalised agri-food industry carry an element of confinement, as they are marked by prison-like living and working conditions. On the other hand, these regimes are characterised by “very mobile” and “flexible” workers. This “hypermobility” means that workers regularly change labour arrangements, often working on different farms, in different factories or even in different countries, depending on their citizenship and legal/international status. I access the current labour and living conditions of the most marginalised workers through a post- and decolonial reading of what I call “differentiated regimes of im_mobilisation.” These regimes of im_mobilisation consist of formal organised regimes that come with quotas, bilateral agreements and further bureaucratic rules and regulations. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Nielson have argued that “differential inclusion” is a crucial element that must be kept in mind “to account for the actual operation

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4 Among others, see Stefania Prandi, Oro rosso: Fragole, pomodori, molestie e sfruttamento nel Mediterraneo (Cagli: Settenove, 2018).
8 “Im_mobilisation” is intended to question the dichotomous separation between “being trapped” on the one hand and “being hypermobile” on the other and to show that the transitions are fluid and not contradictory. So, it is not a situation of either/or; it is both/and. Immobility is not just a counterpart to hypermobility – both are the counterpart to the free movement of people.
of the migration regime in the making in Europe.” They thereby point to the effects of the illegalisation of migration and how states include people while creating “the conditions under which a racial divide is inscribed within the composition of labour and citizenship.” To situate this divide within global history and power relations, scholars such as Aníbal Quijano and Manuela Boatcă have put forward the notions of the “coloniality of power” and the “coloniality of citizenship.” They refer to the establishment of an economic structure involving the abduction and transatlantic enslavement of people during European expansion and external colonisation – which was based on the radical divide of the labour force – and argue that this was the foundation of modern capitalism. Crucial to this order was the hierarchical division of people: those without any compensation whose labour was ruthlessly exploited and those whose work was waged, but who were still exploited. The creation of this global inequality was based on the newly emerged idea of “race” – a fiction that became a structuring principle in thought and affect and impacted the way societies were organised. The racist notion of biologically and culturally based differences enabled the division of people into those who were afforded rights and those who were denied rights. The concept of coloniality refers to the transmission of these racial power relations into the present times. In the same vein, Kien Nghi Ha builds a strong argument by showing that we cannot look at current labour migration in Germany without understanding the ways that labour and migration policies developed within Imperial Germany. In his analysis, he points to the need to look at the entanglements of external and internal colonisation within Europe. Building on these implications, and thus on insights from critical border studies and post- and decolonial thought, I aim to show how today’s agricultural regimes in Europe carry the inherent logic of mobilisation and immobilisation along intersectional access or lack of access to rights. Furthermore, I argue that present agricultural labour


regimes and their supposedly neoliberal transformations are in fact marked by “coloniality of labor,”\textsuperscript{13} and, thus, by power relations that date back to the mid-fifteenth century and derive from external colonisation and from semi-colonial power relations inside Europe.\textsuperscript{14} My main argument and intervention is to prove that current differentiated regimes of im_mobilisation must be situated in the histories of imperial Europe, so as to recognise how power relations and the racialised/ethnicised international division of labour evolved within and outside of imperial Europe. I am thus interested in both continuities and changes between and within colonial and post/neocolonial agricultural labour regimes \textit{in} Europe.

I first trace the development of worker recruitment in Europe and elaborate on how European colonisation impacted migration and labour recruitment in industrialising regions. Given my focus, a comprehensive panorama of all European countries and their specificities is not within the scope of this section. Here, I focus only on the development of state-enforced regimes of labour rotation as part of internal colonisation in Prussia, beginning in the early twentieth century. I then analyse current differentiated labour regimes of im_mobilisation in food production in Europe. I will show how the obverse logics of confinement and hypermobility are related to the coloniality of labour and elaborate on the political economy of the (re)productive sphere and the related political infrastructure.

\section*{The Development of (Agricultural) Worker Recruitment Systems in Europe}

In this section, I roughly map the way in which migration patterns in Europe changed as a result of colonisation and state policies on labour migration and worker recruitment. I then focus on agricultural worker rotation regimes in Prussia and look in detail at policies of internal colonisation and the racialising discourses involved.

Until the mid-twentieth century, Europe was a continent of emigration. In addition to internal European migration, from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, some fifty million people left Europe to live in settler


\textsuperscript{14} Boatcă, “Coloniality of Labor.”
societies, with about thirty million of these people emigrating to the United States.\footnote{Heinz Fassmann and Rainer Münz, \textit{Migration in Europa: Historische Entwicklung, aktuelle Trends und politische Reaktionen} (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1996). Other sources count around fifty-five million people from “Eastern” Europe alone that moved to the US between 1846 and 1945, of which eventually 30–40 per cent returned. See Tara Zahra, \textit{The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World} (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016).} Migration patterns in Europe changed in the 1950s during the process of decolonisation. From the 1940s, European settlers, colonial officials and soldiers returned to their colonising European home countries, followed by those that had been colonised. The largest (return) migrations took place in the 1950s and 1960s and led, for example, from India, Kenya and Malaysia to Great Britain; from North Africa to France and Italy; from Indonesia to the Netherlands; and from the Congo to Belgium. In the mid-1970s, postcolonial (return) migration also occurred in Portugal. According to estimations, between 5.5 and 8.5 million people arrived in Europe in the course of postcolonial (return) migrations.\footnote{Klaus Jürgen Bade, \textit{Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart} (Munich: Beck, 2000).}

Since the First World War heralded the end of the free international labour market, state-organised, -regulated and -controlled labour migration increased within Europe, such as, for instance, from Italy to France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany and Austria.\footnote{Sergio Bologna, “Kontinuität und Zäsur in der Geschichte der italienischen Migrationsarbeit,” in \textit{Proletarier der ‘Achse’: Sozialgeschichte der italienischen Fremdarbeit in NS-Deutschland 1937 bis 1943}, ed. Cesare Bermani, Sergio Bologna, and Brunello Mantelli (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), 3ff.} As early as 1931, Switzerland introduced the \textit{Saisonnierstatut} (statute for seasonal workers), which regulated short-term residence permits for workers from abroad until 2002.\footnote{See “Federal Law on the Residence and Settlement of Foreigners of March 26, 1931”; Patrick Auderset, Charles Magnin, and Rosa Brux, \textit{Nous, saisonniers, saisonnières ... Genève 1931–2019} (Genève: Archives contestataires, 2019).} Germany followed soon after and signed its first bilateral agreement with Italy as early as 1937, during Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.\footnote{Bologna, “Kontinuität und Zäsur,” 43ff.} It was primarily intended to fill the need for workers in agriculture and later it became important for the sectors connected to the arms industry.\footnote{Brunello Mantelli, “Zwischen Strukturwandel auf dem Arbeitsmarkt und Kriegswirtschaft: Die Anwerbung der italienischen Arbeiter für das ‘Dritte Reich’ und die Achse Berlin-Rom 1938–1943,” in \textit{Proletarier der ‘Achse’: Sozialgeschichte der italienischen Fremdarbeit in NS-Deutschland 1937 bis 1943}, ed. Cesare Bermani, Sergio Bologna, and Brunello Mantelli (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), 259ff, 273, 386.}
In the UK, a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme was implemented in 1945 and was aimed at bringing in young people during the labour-intensive months. Designed to be a cultural exchange arrangement, this programme was for agricultural students from across Europe and later emerged as a way of recruiting agricultural workers to fill labour market demands.21

The most extensive migrations into Europe after the Second World War were into the prospering industrialised regions north of the Alps and the Pyrenees, that became immigration regions as a result of the targeted recruitment of so-called guest workers from the Southern European peripheries.22 The rapidly growing economy and Fordist industrial production were in need of “cheap” and “low-skilled” labour. This led to the intensive recruitment of workers into “Western” and “Northern” Europe and the development of bilateral agreements based on state interests, supposedly those of the so-called receiving and sending countries.23 The latter aimed to outsource poverty while benefitting from workers’ remittances. By the early 1970s, practically all industrialising European countries had developed some sort of systematic recruitment of workers from abroad for so-called lower skilled labour.24

In the first phase of “guest worker” migration, Italy was an important country of origin of workers. Further recruitment agreements were subsequently set up with Spain, Greece, Portugal, the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia. Building on this network of bilateral recruitment agreements, a labour migration regime emerged, involving a core of up to twenty countries. The geographical expansion of this migration regime and the intensity of recruitment peaked between 1967 and 1972.25 In France, for example, the largest groups of workers came from Portugal, Spain and Italy as well as from the North African Maghreb states. Germany initially mainly recruited workers from Italy, then

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21 Erica Consterdine and Sahizer Samuk, “Closing the Seasonal Agricultural Workers’ Scheme: A Triple Loss” (working paper no. 83, University of Sussex, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, 2015), 4.
switched to Turkey and the former Yugoslavia from the end of the 1960s. In the
Netherlands, immigration from Turkey and Morocco was most common.\footnote{Klaus J. Bade and Michael Bommes, “Migration und politische Kultur im ‘Nicht-Einwanderungsland,'” in \textit{Migrationsreport 2000: Fakten – Analysen – Perspektiven}, ed. Klaus J. Bade and Rainer Münz (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2000), 333ff.}
At the beginning of the 1970s, many countries stopped recruiting workers from abroad, which put an end to the extensive institutionalisation of labour migration in Europe. Over fifteen million people had come to “Western,” “Central” and “Northern” European countries by 1975.\footnote{Corrado Bonifazi, “Evolution of Regional Patterns of International Migration in Europe,” in \textit{International Migration in Europe: New Trends and New Methods of Analysis}, ed. Corrado Bonifazi et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 107–28.} In the period between 1960 and 1973, a total of about thirty million people were registered.\footnote{Rass, \textit{Institutionalisierungsprozesse}, 9.} To sum up: the main migration movements in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century up until the 1970s were marked by postcolonial migration and the development of systematic labour migration policies. While the former was a mix of return migration and immigration after decolonisation with the perspective of permanent (re)settlement, the latter was intended to be short-term and dependent on labour market needs.

Kien Nghi Ha has argued that state policies of labour migration in Europe can be roughly divided into two phases. In the first phase, from the nineteenth century until the First World War, it was primarily the European semi-peripheries that served as recruitment areas. In the phase after the Second World War, recruitment areas were increasingly extended to the postcolonial world to satisfy the growing demand for workers. This tendency encompasses all colonising European countries, although the specific characteristics and implementation of labour migration differed for each country. In the 1950s, workers from England’s so-called “Irish backyard” had been supplemented and, in the most marginalised labour areas, even almost completely replaced by workers from South Asia and the Caribbean. France had traditionally recruited workers from the peripheral areas of Spain and Italy and later turned to recruit workers from the formerly colonised francophone societies in Africa.\footnote{Rass, \textit{Institutionalisierungsprozesse}, 25.}

In the next section, I will focus on the recruitment of agricultural workers in Prussia, as this provides important insights into internal colonisation policies in Europe. Here, it is worth mentioning that, in the period leading up to the First World War, the German Reich became the second-largest labour importing country in the world after the US. In 1910, the German Reich counted...
1.26 million workers from abroad, two-thirds of which came from the Polish regions of Austria-Hungary and Russia.\(^\text{30}\)

### 2.1 Agricultural Workers from Abroad Before, During and After Imperial Germany

In this subsection, I trace the way labour migration policies in Germany were informed by colonial and capitalist logic. Specifically, I trace how this specific logic was kept alive by a racist and patriarchal mindset. Thus, I argue that colonial discourses that shaped imperial conquest over people and land outside of Europe shaped labour migration policies in Europe and manifested as a paradox of hyper-constrained hypermobility. Analysing different systems of coercive labour relations over the centuries in Europe (first/second slavery and first/second serfdom), Manuale Boațcă, building on Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory, points to the development of “quasi-colonial relationships” between “Eastern” and “Western” Europe. Already in the mid-fifteenth century, as raw materials from “Eastern” Europe were extracted by “Western” Europe, these power relations went hand in hand with rural coercive labour in “Eastern” Europe.\(^\text{31}\) The latter provided food and raw materials to the former, and the majority of the rural population in the exploited regions became part of the supply infrastructure for “Western” Europe.\(^\text{32}\) Within this historical context, Manuela Boațcă expanded the understanding of the “coloniality of labor” to encompass “the complex relationships between co-existing, but not contradictory modes of labor control.”\(^\text{33}\) Adding to Aníbal Quijano’s understanding of continuities between colonial and postcolonial structures of domination as “coloniality of power,” Boațcă makes an important point about power relations within Europe:

That there should be clear limits to the comparability of chattel slavery and serf labor as second slavery and second serfdom, respectively, does not mean that one should disregard obvious parallels, nor that the search for a common denominator is misguided. With respect to the social and economic consequences of the abolition of the respective labor regimes in both regions under scrutiny, it is helpful to consider them as instances


\(^{33}\) Boațcă, “Coloniality of Labor,” 312.
of the coloniality of labor of global capitalism. As a framework for studying the continuities between structures of domination, coloniality of labor could help analyze the ongoing link between labor forms and specific racial groups after the abolition of slavery in the Americas as well as the pauperization of both freed slaves and freed serfs in the Americas and Eastern Europe without tying these processes to a specific type or stage of slavery or serfdom.\textsuperscript{34}

This quasi-colonial division of labour between “Eastern” and “Western” Europe primarily consisted of providing raw materials and foodstuffs. As society moved towards industrialisation, these power relations evolved to comprise the flow of workers. Due to their coercive characteristics and racialising qualities, these flows, I argue, were also marked by a “coloniality of labour.” The case of Imperial Germany illuminates this point.

Labour recruitment to Prussia from eastern neighbouring regions, was already widespread throughout the nineteenth century, especially for agricultural work, leading historians to refer to these semi-peripheral regions as the “recruitment areas” of Prussia.\textsuperscript{35} In the 1890s, for example, three-quarters of all labour placements in Germany were carried out by commercial agents, some of whom kept up to half of the workers’ wages for their services.\textsuperscript{36} Ruthenians and Polish workers from Galicia could be recruited officially, as no statutory ban on recruitment existed. By contrast, in Russia, commercial recruitment was banned and foreign agents were not officially allowed to recruit workers within the country. However, recruitment still took place informally and reached such an extent that the historian Klaus J. Bade has referred to these regions as the “free hunting grounds” (\textit{freie Jagdgebiete}) of Prussia.

It is important to understand the rules and regulations that were in place and the way that labour recruitment developed along state-controlled labour rotation regimes at that time. In 1907, Imperial Germany implemented the \textit{Karenzzeit-Regelung} (waiting period regulation), thereby introducing a rotation system that formed the basis of later “guest worker” policies.\textsuperscript{37} Within

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{34} Boatcă, “Coloniality of Labor,” 312.
\bibitem{36} Bade, \textit{Auswanderer}, 460–61.
\bibitem{37} Klaus Jürgen Bade, “‘Billig und willig’ – Die ausländischen Wanderarbeiter im kaiserlichen Deutschland,” in \textit{Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland: Migration}
\end{thebibliography}
In this context, a system of bureaucratic rules and regulations was developed to closely control labour mobility and recruitment. Central to this was the *Legitimationszwang* and the *Rückkehrzwang*. *Legitimationszwang* meant, above all, that immigration was strictly regulated. This means that work and residence permits were issued for a limited period of time and had to be reapplied for annually. Workers were separated into work units according to gender, and worker’s children were generally forbidden to enter the country. Pregnancy was considered a breach of contract and was a reason to be expelled from Germany.\(^\text{38}\) The *Rückkehrzwang* meant that the workers had to leave Germany at the end of the season and spend the obligatory “waiting period” (*Karenzzeit*) in winter outside the country.\(^\text{39}\) The combination of *Legitimationszwang* and *Rückkehrzwang* meant both mobilisation and immobilisation for the workers at the same time: the *Arbeiterlegitimationskarte* (workers’ identification card) had nothing in common with a visa but revealed the dual purpose of the *Legitimationszwang*: its function was to block permanent immigration while sustaining the back-and-forth transnational movement of workers. The immobilisation of workers was ensured by binding them to the workplace for the duration of the employment contract and residence permit. The reason for such a strict regulation was the fight against breach of contract by workers from abroad. Therefore, the *Arbeiterlegitimationskarte* carried two names, that of the worker and that of the employer to whom the worker remained bound for the specified period of time. In case of breach of contract, the worker was expelled from the country. The residence permit was thus tied to a specific employer, which meant that a change of employment, if a person did not agree with the working conditions or received a better offer, was forbidden, unless the previous employer gave his consent. While the worker had no right to leave, the employer could dismiss the worker at any time, for example, due to “poor work performance.”\(^\text{40}\) The “ordered rotation” applied to “unskilled” workers, such as agricultural workers from Poland (Russian Poland, Galicia), who represented the largest group of workers. The *Rückkehrzwang* did not apply

\(^{38}\) Bade, *Auswanderer*, 462.


\(^{40}\) Bade, *Auswanderer*, 462ff.
to workers from other countries, such as those from Italy who represented the second-largest group.

These differentiated policies of rotation developed as a very complex system characterised by rigid rules and regulations. They were accompanied by a flexible sub-system of “exceptions in individual cases” that varied among government districts and served the interests of employers and the national economy, but not the workers. For better control, the cards (Arbeiterlegitimationskarten) had different colours depending on workers' origin. Polish workers received the “red Polish card,” Italian workers received a green card, those from Belgium received a blue one, and so on. The cards of the agricultural workers additionally bore a broad, coloured longitudinal line and there were special cards such as the “potato digger card.” While the ever-increasing mobility of local agricultural workers and the exodus from agriculture became a mass phenomenon, workers from abroad were bound to their contracts. Thus, immobilisation became an institutionalised and highly controlled labour regime. So-called contract-breakers were on the police wanted list for deportation. This situation even increased the interest of agricultural employers from abroad, who were considered to be a “safe and cheap labour force” due to their precarious situation within the absence of labour laws. According to Kien Nghi Ha, these working relations within the rotation system materialised through the Legitimationskarte (identification card) and therefore contained “elements of temporary serfdom,” since neither freedom of contract nor freedom of movement existed and thus fundamental workers' rights were denied. Together with the Rückkehrzwang, this coercive relationship was not only an instrument of labour law but also of the police, as it provided the basis for the annual deportation of racially marked “foreigner Poles.” As a consequence, labour laws of forced flexibilisation and forced rotation of employment relations were subject to strict bureaucratic surveillance and control by authorities. Above all, this shows how flexibilisation and control in labour relations developed step by step in a way that aggregated their power. These regulations built the basis for preventing workers from leaving the country or for deporting them whenever necessary. The Nazis later made intensive use of exactly these policies. They could thus build their confinement practices of workers from abroad on a recruitment and migration infrastructure that had been developed, proved and tested for many decades. The “Eastern” European “hunting grounds” later changed as a result of the self-ignited world wars. Germany had to give up both

41 Bade, Auswanderer, 462ff.
42 Ha, “Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?” 75ff.
its non-European colonies and its Nazi territories, and, later, its traditional labour recruitment areas in “Eastern” Europe during the Cold War. As a result, it turned to the countries bordering the Mediterranean for worker recruitment.\textsuperscript{43} The Legitimationskarte existed from 1912 onward: it was first issued by the Deutsche Arbeiterzentrale in the Weimar Republic, since 1927 by the Reichsanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung and, finally, by the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit.\textsuperscript{44}

It is important to reflect upon how agricultural workers from “Eastern” Europe were seen within the colonial society in Prussia. Racialised as “born earth workers” (geborene Erdarbeiter) they were called “Wulacker” (from the German word wühlen, to grub) and even dehumanised as “low ranking Slavs.”\textsuperscript{45} While the colonial nations were establishing their rule in the colonies, Prussia employed workers from “Eastern” Europe under conditions that – following contemporary agricultural historians and recent historical work – amounted to the “existence of lawless wage slaves.”\textsuperscript{46} In addition, anti-migrant racism began to evolve during the nineteenth century, as workers from abroad were described as “floods” and “streams” flowing into Imperial Germany, thereby fuelling discourses of Überfremdung (racist-imbed fear of being swamped by foreigners). Scholars also contributed to these discourses in society; the sociologist Max Weber pointed to the danger of “polonisation” (“Polonisierung”) while expressing fear of a “slavic flood” (“slavische Überflutung”) of agricultural workers and a development that he described as a “cultural regression of several human ages.”\textsuperscript{47} Other scholars, such as Sartorius von Waltershausen, even linked the social position and the role of these workers in the German Reich to enslaved people in North America or the British West Indies and referred to workers from Italy as a “second-order working class” (“Arbeiterschicht zweiten Grades”). Meanwhile, other scientists, such as Max Sering – a German

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{43} Ha, “Erdarbeiter,” 25.
\bibitem{44} Ha, “Erdarbeiter,” 25.
\bibitem{47} Max Weber, Die Verhältnisse der Landarbeiter im ostelbischen Deutschland (Duncker & Humblot Reprints, 1892), 452; Max Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924), 504.
\end{thebibliography}
agricultural economist and one of the most influential national economists of his time – argued for the necessity of “inner colonisation,” thus the need to acquire colonies towards the east to be able to compete with the United States’ economy.48

This reveals the colonial mindset of the time, which was driving the appropriation of the labour force, as with land, towards the “East.” According to Kien Nghi Ha, the emergence of nation state migration policies during Imperial Germany cannot be seen as separate from the colonial policies of that time, as the ruling classes of the Wilhelminian colonial society shared nationalist, anti-Semitic, racist, social Darwinist, imperialist and militaristic ideologies.49 Thus, it is not surprising, that dehumanising colonial ideologies impacted all spheres of society, including labour migration policies. External and internal colonisation hence developed simultaneously in Imperial Germany and are both closely linked to the racialised/ethnicised exploitation of agricultural workers and land appropriation – both in the colonies and in Europe.

State policies of labour migration and the recruitment of workers from abroad represent a way of skimming off “human capital” from the peripheries while also outsourcing the reproduction of workers to other regions. This connection is particularly evident in the national economic cost-benefit calculation in Imperial Germany. The so-called “rearing costs” were to be skimmed on by these recruitment practices and appeared as “saved socialization and training costs” in the national budget during the guest worker era. It was calculated that a “guest worker” generated at least 20,000 Deutsche Mark (DM) per year for the national economy. In addition, billions of DM were surpluses for the German social security system, since the “guest workers” had no access to benefits.50 At the same time, Germany argued that the implementation of the “guest worker” schemes counted as development aid for the countries of origin and was thus a contribution to their European integration.51 In fact, the opposite took place, as the recruiting national economies received a workforce they did not have to (re)produce,52 thus saving costs. Instead, the countries of origin

48 Max Sering was a co-founder of the Society for the Promotion of Inner Colonisation (Gesellschaft zur Förderung der inneren Kolonisation) in 1912 and reflected on his approach in the journal “Archive for Inner Colonisation” (Archiv für innere Kolonisation). See Max Sering, Die innere Kolonisation im östlichen Deutschland (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1893).
49 Ha, “Erdarbeiter.”
50 Ha, “Erdarbeiter,” 23ff.
51 Herbert and Hunn, “Beschäftigung.”
52 (Re)productive work includes all working and caring relationships that produce current and future workers who undertake (re)productive work. It ranges from childbirth and
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had to bear the losses and costs for (re)production.\textsuperscript{53} The reduction of people to mere resources is also evident in the relationship between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, where Germany saw Italy as a “reservoir of manpower.”\textsuperscript{54}

According to Ha, just like discriminatory labour migration policies today, the labour migration policies that were developed in Imperial Germany can, therefore, be seen as “internal colonization,” and thus as a reversal of colonial forms of expansion, which allow for the appropriation of the productive power of “Europe’s internal others.” This follows a logic where migrating workers are defined and treated as “freely displaceable objects of consumption.”\textsuperscript{55} Thus, while the recruitment initiatives from after the Second World War also emanated from the sending states and the German side saw their role as offering a kind of development aid, the narrative of aiming to help also has to be put into the right genealogy.\textsuperscript{56} According to Madina Tlostanova, the “rhetoric of salvation [has continued to hide] the colonial logic of control, domination and suppression” throughout history up until today.\textsuperscript{57} In fact, the “guest worker” regime further implemented an ethnicised/racialised division of labour, accompanied by the marginalisation of workers from abroad. The introduction of a new “layer” of migrated workers into society (Unterschichtung) – which was built on centuries of colonial experiences both outside and within Imperial Germany – actually implemented an “underclass” (Unterklasse) or “ethclass” that enabled many German citizens on the lowest rung of the social ladder to rise professionally and socially. This is the way how a neocolonial division of labour was established inside Europe. This sub-proletarianisation created an ethnicised/racialised and underprivileged class within the agricultural labour market.\textsuperscript{58} Through various rules and regulations, the social upward mobility of migrated workers was made difficult or prevented. This logic was inscribed in

the upbringing of children to the care of workers after retiring from employment due to illness or old age. (Re)productive relationships include all of these, but are not limited to these tasks. They go far beyond human-to-human relations. For reflections on the political economy of (re)production, see Dina Bolokan, “Against Single Stories of ‘Left Behind’ and ‘Triple Win’: On Agricultural Care Chains and the Permanent Subsistence Crisis,” \textit{Frontiers in Sociology} 6 (2021): 1–20.

\textsuperscript{53} Ha, “Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?” 69.

\textsuperscript{54} Bologna, “Kontinuität und Zäsur,” 307.

\textsuperscript{55} Ha, “Erdarbeiter,” 28.


\textsuperscript{58} Ha, “Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?” 61ff., 74.
labour and migration laws with such regulations as the *Inländerprimat* (domestic primacy), that exist up until today. This legal primacy defines that workers holding German citizenship have priority over workers who do not hold German citizenship (or, EU citizens over non-EU citizens) when filling vacancies. Na thus concludes that, although important differences existed between *Wanderarbeiter* (Weimarer Republic), *Fremdarbeiter* (Nazi Germany) and *Gastarbeiter* (post-war Germany) (itinerant/migrant worker/forced labourer, “foreign worker” and “guest worker”), which should by no means be discarded, the main elements of “guest worker” schemes stem from the labour migration legislation of colonial Germany, and their traces can still be seen today.

In other words, we can argue that these continuities, which remain analytically important, are all characterised by regimes of im_mobilisation. They adapt to different historical and political conditions and change through time and space, but carry the inherent logic of the need to maintain an ethnicised/racialised subproletariat of those who are racialised/ethnicised by internal and external colonisation.

3 Neocolonial Labour Regimes of Im_mobilisation in the Agricultural/Agri-food Sector in the European Union

This section seeks to highlight patterns and general trends in the EU that allow us to understand the colonial entanglements of current mobility regimes that accompany agricultural labour relations. These regimes manage (i.e., channel, control, restrict and repress) agricultural workers’ movements, thus impacting workers’ choices, overall well-being and life conditions. These new regimes of rotation and of im_mobilisation reveal how coloniality is kept alive in the way that labour is organised.

Despite huge differences in implementation, temporary worker recruitment from abroad – according to quotas on seasonal/short-term labour arrangements – have become essential parts of the agricultural and agri-food sector in many places in the European Union. The Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, Greece, Italy, and Spain all introduced systematic recruitment of workers, including for the agricultural sector, before the beginning of the 2000s.\(^59\) This especially applies during harvesting and planting months for vegetable and fruit production, in the agri-food industry and, for large meat

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and fish processing factories. Though certain recruitment programmes have persisted over the decades, such as in France (for example, “the IMOs”), many European countries restricted migration policies in the 1970s and reintroduced recruitment programmes at the beginning of the 2000s. The return to temporary labour migration policies has been viewed as a partial resurrection of “guest worker” programmes. It can be stated that, as an overall dynamic throughout the last decades, policies of intense labour recruitment have alternated with political measures to reduce and limit labour migration. While the application of this dynamic varies among countries, the evolution of this dynamic can actually be traced back throughout the last centuries, as some insights I have given above illustrate. Nevertheless, the agricultural sector has always had a specific position within these policies: not only has this sector often been on the forefront when labour recruitment policies have been developed and implemented, but the agricultural sector has always had a special position when it came to guaranteeing the recruitment of workers from abroad in spite of overall restrictions.

When most North European states extended temporary labour migration permits after the Cold War, the southern EU member states followed suit. Thus, Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal also adopted policies to implement controlled and temporary labour migration – especially for agriculture – although the implementation varies and is very specific to each country. According to Plewa and Miller, the most obvious differences relate to the historical background and prior experiences with temporary labour migration policies. While

64 See Plewa and Miller, Postwar.
the “Northern” countries were among those that recruited workers during the “guest worker” era, the southern EU countries were among those affected by large-scale emigration. The lack of experience with temporary labour immigration in the southern EU countries led them to follow the “Northern” EU countries as points of reference. Therefore, Plewa and Miller argue that labour migration policies in “unexperienced” countries did not develop from a thorough analysis; instead they imitated the post-war “Western” and “Northern” European model of temporary labour migration. Thus, Italy and Spain pursued a policy of admitting seasonal workers in the post-Cold War period that is comparable to that of former “guest worker” policies in Germany, France and Switzerland, albeit on a much smaller scale.65

Apart from differences in scale and types of agricultural recruitment programmes for workers from abroad, the time-limited post-Cold War labour recruitment policies remain essentially very similar, and in some cases even the same, as was the case, for instance, for the post-Second World War Gastarbeiter regulations. The economic objectives of both the sending and the receiving countries are the determining factors for admission, whereas the interests and needs of the migrated workers are disregarded and their rights are generally extremely limited compared to locally born workers. Depending on the country where labour is performed and on the worker’s citizenship (EU/non-EU) the recruitment channel takes very different forms. In general, however, workers mostly have short-term employment contracts – if they have any at all – which are often tied to a specific geographical area, a specific occupation/sector or even to a specific employer.66 Strong dependencies on the employer are particularly significant because it is the employer who controls events surrounding migration and legal residence in the country. The latter power relation has been referred to in migration studies as “deportability,” a social and legal status that clearly reminds one of the above-mentioned serfdom-like labour and living conditions.67 The constant threat of deportation does not only apply to illegalised workers, but also includes the precarious situation of

65 Plewa and Miller, Postwar, 65.
66 See Plewa and Miller, Postwar, 59ff. Also, the implementation of bilateral agreements with Moldova in the framework of circular migration policies in the EU in 2009 at first allowed people only to work in Poland and only in the agricultural/agri-food sector. Due to recruitment and labour chains (workers from Poland are largely employed in the agricultural sector in wealthier European countries), the meat and fish processing industry lacks workers and compensates with workers from other countries such as Moldova and Ukraine. See Bolokan, “Recruitment Infrastructure.”
temporary employed workers who have to leave the country if they lose their job, no matter the reason of the employment termination.

While recurring, long-term labour relations within the agricultural sector exist and, in some cases, also allow workers from abroad to settle down where they perform wage labour, most agricultural working relations are structured in a way that does not allow settling down or legalising workers’ status. These agricultural labour regimes thus carry elements of hypermobility and of confinement at the same time. In what follows, I will give a few examples that show how different mobility patterns coexisted within regimes of im_mobilisation. This reveals that although the two “obverse” logics of confinement and hypermobility might appear contradictory, in fact they are inherent to these regimes and, therefore, constitute them.

3.1 Current Transnational and Transregional Rotation Regimes
Regimes of im_mobilisation can be transregional, where workers regularly change labour relations within the country, or they can be transnational, and marked by a regular crossing of national borders. In southern Italy, for example, the transregional regime can encompass picking citrus fruit in Calabria during the winter months, then working on strawberry plantations in Campania during spring, followed by harvesting tomatoes in Puglia or Basilicata in the summer. This rotation regime is especially relevant to illegalised workers and even more to those seeking asylum, who live mostly in informal, so-called ghettos and shanty towns or in state/NGO-run and monitored reception centres and tent cities. Many of the workers who live in these locations are of sub-Saharan African origin. While they have to be highly mobile and follow the different harvest cycles, they “found themselves ‘trapped’ in agriculture” – not least due to their status – and live in segregated spaces. After people from

former colonised regions have crossed the Mediterranean in search of a better life, while also trying to escape persecution, economic precarity or even war, the only possibility to enter Italy is set within the legal framework of applying for refugee status, which does not allow full access to labour and civil rights or a long-term perspective. This condition has been described as the “refugeeization” of the workforce” within the agricultural sector – a phenomenon that, according to Nick Dines and Enrica Rigo, and following Miguel Mellino, has to be situated within “postcolonial capitalism.”\footnote{Dines and Rigo, “Postcolonial Citizenship”; Lo Cascio and Perrotta, “Intertwinement”; and Miguel Mellino, Cittadinanze postcoloniali: Appartenenze, razza e razzismo in Europa e in Italia (Rome: Carocci, 2013), 11.} They thereby refer to the fact that “the hierarchization of the global workforce no longer corresponds simply to the classic international division of labour, but is also mirrored in the subaltern inclusion of migrants within the same European space.”\footnote{Dines and Rigo, “Postcolonial Citizenship,” 152.} In other cases, the rotation regimes are transnational. This especially applies to agricultural workers from “Eastern” Europe, mainly from Romania and Moldova, that represent the main workforce in Italy, as well as to workers from India, Morocco or Albania, who have officially been registered as holding a regular work contract in agriculture.\footnote{Workers from India mainly work in livestock farming: see Perrotta, “Agricultural Day Laborers,” 197; Lo Cascio and Perrotta, “Intertwinement.”} Thus, workers from Romania are most often employed on a seasonal basis.\footnote{Dines and Rigo, “Postcolonial Citizenship,” 152.} Due to the European citizenship of workers holding Romanian citizenship, labour arrangements and worker mobility are not limited to Italy, and agricultural workers regularly return to their place of origin. Although workers from “Eastern” Europe have privileged legal status, this does not necessarily lead to better labour relations or higher wages in Italy.

Analysing forms of mobility and resistance within the caporalato system in tomato farming in Puglia and Basilicata, Domenico Perotta observed that workers from Romania often work for lower wages than workers from Africa. One reason he assumes, among others, is that workers from Romania have “greater freedom” and, therefore, accept lower wages. He argues: “Their most powerful and profitable form of resistance is their mobility within Europe, their ability to ‘escape.’” According to Perotta, this results in the fact that workers from Romania seldom get involved in struggles around working conditions, whereas those from Africa with a precarious legal status, those that are “trapped” in this

\footnote{Dines and Rigo, “Postcolonial Citizenship,” 152.}
area, do engage in collective protest. In some ways, their social position seems to provide a better starting point for organising.

3.2 The Invisible Economy: Regimes of (Re)Production within Regimes of Im_mobilisation

This section aims to reflect on the “invisible economy.” This (re)productive sphere of the differentiated regimes of im_mobilisation is where the workforce is produced and reproduced, and that is key to capitalist surplus value.

Following migrant farm workers’ struggles, Irene Peano investigated reproductive labour and care within large-scale agribusiness on a local basis. In what she calls zones – in this case, the agro-industrial district of Foggia in south-eastern Italy – living and working conditions are segregated, racialised/ethnicised and gendered. Comparing the organisation of West-African shanty towns to “Eastern”-European settlements, Peano has shown that, while the shanty towns are mainly populated by single male farm workers, sub-Saharan African women engage in the reproduction of the labour force rather than in agricultural work. This can also include sex work, due to the lack of alternatives. Peano further concludes that “West-African women working as re/productive service providers in the zone are a few hundred with very high turnover rates just as their male counterparts.” When it comes to agricultural workers from “Eastern” Europe, who represent the majority, all genders are involved in agriculture. According to Peano, in Romani communities, who represent a large number of seasonal workers, women mostly travel with their next of kin. Most often, all are involved in agricultural labour, including children, and work under the same exploitative conditions as their colleagues from West-Africa. Additionally, she argues that women face a “double work regime,” as they are additionally responsible for tasks such as taking care of small children, cooking and washing. Hence, Peano concludes that different degrees of dependency and thus of exploitation exist that also depend on gender and on the position within “the care-commodity chains and their re/productive labour regimes.”

78 Peano, “Global Care-Commodity Chains.”
However, she also emphasises that, while different workers are differently exploited in the same place and “trapped” in segregated settlements, people can find community, solidarity and a space that allows for collective organising and mutual aid.\(^{79}\) So while living and working conditions within these labour regimes and “zones” are highly ethnicised/racialised and highly gendered, they also carry the “potential for non-commodified forms of care labour.”

This “invisible economy” also carries a transregional dimension. In my own studies, I have shown how workers’ families and communities that remain in their countries of origin are also part of this “invisible economy.” Many people who work in the European agricultural sector operate as smallholders in their places of origin. While they harvest abroad or work in the food processing industry, other people must take care of their social responsibilities towards friends, relatives and neighbours and their agricultural subsistence, leading to agricultural care and subsistence chains. These caring communities thus subsidise food production in the countries where their friends and relatives are employed.\(^{80}\)

3.3 **The Political Infrastructure of Being “Trapped” and Being Mobile**

The hierarchisation of workers has installed revolving doors in “fortress Europe,” including at the “Eastern” European borders. This “just-in-time” recruitment of workers becomes possible through different bilateral agreements, such as traineeship agreements, and through co-ethnic citizenship for those who are seen as “not-quite-European” but still “culturally compatible.”\(^{81}\) I will now elaborate on a number of regulations that keep workers “trapped” and hypermobile, thereby reproducing the hierarchisation of workers along colonial legacies.

One such example are “circular migration” policies. They serve as one of the European Union’s formal recruitment strategies for managing labour migration in low-wage sectors, such as in agriculture and agribusiness. Beginning in 2005, the EU developed Mobility Partnerships, based on which bilateral agreements between member states and non-EU-countries could be signed to


\(^{80}\) See Bolokan, “Against Single Stories.”

\(^{81}\) For more on “not-quite-European” discourses and Othering processes, see Manuela Boatcă, “Thinking Europe Otherwise: Lessons from the Caribbean,” *Current Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2021): 389–414; Bolokan, “Recruitment Infrastructure.”
facilitate rights-based “circular migration.”

Moldova was one of the first partnerships: a formal system of work relations between Moldova and Poland was put into place with this mobility partnership between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. On this legal basis, Poland offers Moldovan (non-EU citizens) temporary work for several months per year. Due to several regulations that have been implemented since 2006, workers from other countries can be employed in Poland without the need to obtain a work permit. This so-called simplified system allowed non-EU members and workers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus to work in Poland for three months within a six-month period. At first, this possibility was limited to the agricultural sector only – the sector most in need of a workforce – but it opened to all sectors over the following years. As Polish citizens emigrate or are regularly employed within the agricultural sector all over the European Union, this results in recruitment chains and a shortage of workers within the country. Thus, Poland currently has the highest numbers of incoming workers from abroad in the EU. Temporary workers on Polish farms and in the meat processing industry increasingly come from Ukraine, especially after the outbreak of war in 2014. It can be assumed that most of the workers recruited from Moldova work in the fish and meat processing industry. These workers are either employed on a temporary basis or regularly search for new labour arrangements due to very harsh labour conditions. They are thus forced to be mobile due to legal regulations or end up fleeing exploitation and refusing disastrous labour and living conditions in the hope of finding better, sustainable labour arrangements. This hypermobility – a life permanently on the move – heavily impacts workers’ health while, at the same time, resulting in their exclusion from social security, permanent health insurance and the possibility of early retirement. Still, such bilateral agreements based on “circular migration” policies are being promoted worldwide as a development strategy, following the colonial discourse of “aiming to help.” These agreements are supported by the World Bank as well as by many sending and receiving countries. Various projects exist that have been implemented as pilot projects to test “circular migration.” This, for example, allows

82 European Commission, Migration and Development: Some Concrete Orientations (2005); On Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Third Countries (2007).
83 Joint declaration on the mobility partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, 2005.
84 Marta Jaroszewicz, Migration from Ukraine to Poland: The Trend Stabilises (OSW Report, October 2018), 6.
85 Bolokan, “On Hypermobility.”
86 Bolokan, “On Hypermobility,” and see Monika Szołecza, “Regulating Movement.”
the recruitment of workers from Mauritius and Ghana to Italy, from Georgia to Germany, and from Morocco to Spain. Most programmes are in place in low-wage sectors, such as agriculture. In some cases recruitment programmes are highly gendered, such as in the case of Morocco, where women with at least one child at home are being recruited to make sure that agricultural workers will not overstay their contracts and will, instead, go back to their children.

Though the living and working relations in the agricultural sector in Southern Italy that Irene Peano refers to as “zones” are very specific, they reveal crucial patterns that are also relevant to labour conditions elsewhere in Europe. The large-scale greenhouses in Almería that are known as Spain’s “Seas of Plastic” and the living and working conditions in the meat processing industry, especially the large-scale slaughterhouses in Germany, are further examples of coexisting regimes of confinement and hypermobility. In these zones, workers are “trapped.” They are physically “trapped,” as they may lose their jobs if they leave these zones, and they are socially “trapped,” because of their discrimination and segregation from society, legal status and lack of alternative employment. At the same time, agricultural workers (and those responsible for (re)production within these zones) have to be constantly on the move; this hypermobility arises when either the agricultural working relation is of limited duration or their legal status is complicated and people need to move within or outside the country or even back home. In other cases, people decide to end the working relationship because of bad health relating to the highly exploitative conditions. What differs from place to place is the degree of confinement and the range of mobility. This is also applicable beyond the large-scale agribusiness “zones” and is represented within medium and small-scale agriculture, where workers from abroad are also temporarily employed. While long-term working relations do exist, a large majority of workers are only employed for several weeks or months at a time and, therefore, have to be constantly on the move. This concerns agricultural workers from abroad that

88 Ian Barnes and Cristina Cherino, “Circular Migration and New Modes of Governance: So What Are the Consequences?” in Państwo demokratyczne, prawnie i socjalne: Studia społeczne, polityczne i ekonomiczne (Krakow, Poland: Krakowska Akadem, 2014), 593.
89 Peano, “Global Care-Commodity Chains.”
90 Bolokan, “On Hypermobility.”
additionally have limited access to workers’ rights – if any at all – while the local labour force can find recurrent and stable agricultural labour relations. This preference for “local” workers is inscribed into labour and migration laws with the concept of *Inländerprimat* (domestic primacy). It is, furthermore, implemented in the European Union as a dual migration system that gives priority to EU citizens.

The resulting hierarchisation of workers maintains a gendered and ethnicised/racialised division of labour according to colonial legacies. As a consequence, the most precarious workers within the agricultural sector in Europe have to work under the status of “trainee,” “refugee” or “asylum seeker,” or, in the worst-case scenario, have to live under illegalised living and working conditions. This, again, mostly affects workers from regions that have previously been exploited by European colonisation – in Latin America, Africa and Asia – but in some cases also encompasses people from “Eastern” European countries inside and outside the EU, such as in the former Soviet regions. Today, workers from abroad are marginalised in a similar way, as the “guest worker” regime was accompanied by the introduction of a new lower class in society (*Unterschichtung*). The existence of an underclass (*Unterklass*) enables citizens of a country who find themselves on the lowest rung of the social ladder to rise professionally and socially, as the stratified underprivileged class takes over the jobs the workers holding citizenship can refuse.\(^{91}\)

Whether workers end up being trapped or hypermobile depends on their citizenship and legal and civil status, as well as on racialised and ethnicised forms of discrimination. How workers perceive a certain place and working relation is also bound to class, age, gender, sexuality, (dis)abilities and religion, leading to varying experiences of inclusion or exclusion. Hence, current labour and living conditions in large parts of the agricultural and agri-food sectors in Europe should be analysed as differentiated regimes of im_mobilisation that carry the inherent colonial logic of the transnational and transregional mobilisation of workers, such as their concurrent confinement/segregation.

### Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning, Kien Nghi Ha has argued that state policies of labour migration can be roughly divided into two phases: (1) from the nineteenth century to the First World War and (2) after the Second World War.

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\(^{91}\) Ha, “Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?” 74.
While, during the first phase, the inner-European semi-peripheries served as main recruitment areas, workers increasingly came from the postcolonial world in the second phase.\footnote{Ha, “Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?” 25.} This, of course, applies very differently to each European region depending on their role in colonisation and their later post-colonial (return) migrations. Following Kien Nghi Ha and with reference to the agricultural labour market, I argue that it is important to distinguish a third phase. This phase is characterised by the presence of workers from the postcolonial peripheries – though not necessarily with a historical colonial link to the receiving country (which, in some cases, distinguishes it even more from the second phase) – and from European semi-peripheral regions, especially those that became accessible again post 1991.\footnote{Between 1990 and 1997, over half of all migration to the European Union states came from formerly Communist Central and Eastern Europe. See Plewa and Miller, Postwar, 67.} The latter have once again become the main recruitment zone for agricultural workers, after these were lost after the Second World War and remained inaccessible during the Cold War. This is the reason that, for example, Ukraine has been referred to as “Europe's Mexico.”\footnote{Franck Düvell, “Ukraine: Europe’s Mexico?” Central East European Migration Country Report 1 (Oxford: University of Oxford, Centre for Migration, Policy and Society, 2007).} The crucial characteristic of the third phase is thus the existence of a very precarious (even illegalised) labour force, mainly consisting of workers from formerly colonised regions and “Eastern” Europe. While both are caught within differentiated regimes of im mobilisation, and are, therefore, marked by a “coloniality of labour,” it is, of course, crucial to note that these regimes cannot be equated with slavery or serfdom. I conclude, nevertheless, that these agricultural labour regimes in food production are structured by coloniality. In other words, coloniality is immanent to the differentiated and international division of (re)productive labour. This is because of the way in which this division and these regimes developed, in terms of the composition of the workforce, its racialising qualities and, above all, the position of the workers within the global economy. One of the most significant changes has been the way recruitment programmes are organised in the third phase. Instead of large-scale recruitment programmes such as in the guest worker era, multiple strategies and smaller recruitment programmes that target very specific local needs and interests are being applied. As I have shown, and as Plexa and Miller have also argued, macro admission programmes have been replaced by multiple microprogrammes.\footnote{Plewa and Miller, Postwar, 67.} I, therefore, agree with Hönekopps’ analysis that these changes to micro-policies have allowed national economies to better manage...
(i.e., control) migration.96 Still, people’s movements and illegalised statuses also reveal that they cannot be fully controlled. In future studies, it would be worth focusing on how the “coloniality of labour” is challenged within these difficult conditions, to gain insight into transregional and manifold resistance practices.

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