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DISSERTATION / DOCTORAL THESIS

Titel der Dissertation /Title of the Doctoral Thesis

„Facets of cross-border commuting in the Central European Region and the (re)production of Inequalities“

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, 2017 / Vienna 2017

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on the student
record sheet:

A 796310122

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt /
field of study as it appears on the student record sheet:

Soziologie

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Roland Verwiebe. He has always been eager to support me, integrate me into interesting research projects and provide me enough time, freedom and trust to let me work independently. Roland consistently supported me in growing academically and personally by endorsing me to collect international experiences. I highly appreciate this and I have never taken it for granted. Throughout my academic stays abroad, I gained different insights and perspectives on my field of research, I improved my language skills, I established new contacts and gained in confidence. Overall, Roland's faith in my abilities lifted me in many profound ways. I am very glad for having had the opportunity to learn from him and work with him for the entirety of my academic career up until now.

I would also like to thank two further members of the TRANSLAB project, Christoph Reinprecht and Raimund Haindorfer. Altogether as a team our particular competences and perspectives complemented each other very well and made it possible to point to various thematic areas of our research. It is important to note that Raimund's preceding study on cross-border commuters in Hungary supervised by Christoph served as the base for this project. His careful devotion of time, energy and expertise into the project proposal contributed substantially to its acceptance and permitted both of us to conduct our PhDs.

In terms of institutional assistance I would like to thank the University of Vienna for the KWA scholarship, the Faculty of Social Science for the IQMR summer school scholarship, editorial funding and funding for the ESA conference 2017, the OEAD for the Marietta Blau scholarship and the Theodor Körner Fonds for the dissertation price 2016.

Further acknowledgements go to Lena Stefflitsch for the careful English editing and to Laura Wichmann for the diligent typesetting of this thesis.

When it comes to emotional support I have to thank my family. My mother Gundi and my sister Pia have incessantly been there for me in times of doubt and discouragement (and there have been quite a few times). My father Herbert and my brother Lukas have

always been incredibly supportive (and also very proud even though Lukas hides it behind a casual facade at times).

Overall the best part of my time as a PhD student was the fieldwork. The persons I had the chance to talk to about their experiences and perspectives reminded me of the reason I want to be a sociologist: to delve deeply into unfamiliar life-worlds.

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1 List of Articles, Conference Talks and Media Contributions

1.1 Articles Submitted for the Doctoral Thesis

Wiesböck, Laura / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland (2016): Cross-Border Commuting and Transformational Dynamics in the Central European Region. What is the Link? In: Amelina, Anna / Horvath, Kenneth / Meeus, Bruno (eds.) An Interdisciplinary Anthology of Migration and Social Transformation: European Perspectives (187-200). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund (2016): The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? A Multi Method Study for the Case of the Central European Region. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (10): 1711-1724.

Wiesböck, Laura (2016): A Preferred Workforce? Employment Practices in the Central European Region Regarding East-West Cross-Border Labour Commuters. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 41 (4): 391-407.

Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland (2017): Crossing the Border for a Higher Status? Occupational Mobility of East-West Commuters in the Central European Region. *International Journal of Sociology* 47: 1-20.

Wiesböck, Laura (2017): Social and Spatial Constructions of Belonging of Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. *European Societies* - submitted 8 September 2017.

At the University of Vienna a thesis by published work has to consist of three published papers and one paper accepted for peer-review.

1.2 Additional Articles in this Field

Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund (2017): The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? A Multi Method Study for the Case of the Central European Region. In: Roos, Christof / Zaun, Natascha (eds.), *The Global Economic Crisis and Migration*. London: Routledge - forthcoming.

Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Wiesböck, Laura (2016): Economic Outcomes and Life Satisfaction of East-West Commuters in the Central European Region. In: Hsu, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph (eds.), *Migration and Integration: New Models for Mobility and Coexistence* (49-68). Vienna: Vienna University Press.

Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund / Wiesböck, Laura (2015): How to Succeed in a Transnational Labor Market. Job Search and Wages among Hungarian, Slovak and Czech Commuters in Austria. *International Migration Review* 49 (3): 1-36.

Verwiebe, Roland / Wiesböck, Laura / Teitzer, Roland (2014): New Forms of Intra-European Migration, Labour Market Dynamics and Social Inequality in Europe. In: Amelina, Anna / Vasilache, Andreas (eds.) *Mobile Inequalities in a Mobile Europe*. *Migration Letters*, Volume 11, Number 2, pp. 125-136.

Verwiebe, Roland / Troger, Tobias / Wiesböck, Laura / Teitzer, Roland / Fritsch, Nina-Sophie (2014): Austria - The Bastion of Calm? Stability and Change in Inequalities in Times of Welfare State Reforms and Employment Flexibilization. In: Salverda, Wiemer et al. (eds.) *Changing Inequalities and Societal Impacts in Rich Countries: Thirty Countries? Experiences* (71-95). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund (2014): Arbeitsmarktöffnung und Migration - Trends in Österreich. FORBA-Trendreport 1/2014: 20-21.

Verwiebe, Roland / Wiesböck, Laura / Teitzer, Roland (2013): Differentiation of Migration Patterns in Europe: Social Integration Amidst the Competing Societal Leitbilder of Enclosure of the Other, Acceptance and Encouragement of Migration. Salvatore, Armando / Schmidtke, Oliver / Trenz, Hans-Jörg (eds.) *Rethinking the Public Sphere through Transnationalizing Processes: Europe and Beyond* (211-232). Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wiesböck, Laura (2013): "A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe" by Black, Richard et.al. (eds.) (2010). In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies (JEMS).

1.3 Additional Articles during Doctoral Studies

Wiesböck, Laura / Wanka, Anna / Mayrhuber, Elisabeth Anne-Sophie / Alex, Brigitte / Kolland, Franz / Hutter, Hans Peter / Wallner, Peter / Arnberger, Arne / Eder, Renate / Kutalek, Ruth (2016): Heat Vulnerability, Poverty and Health Inequalities in Urban Migrant Communities: A Pilot Study from Vienna. In: Filho, Walter Leal / Azeiteiro, Ulisses / Alves, Fátima (eds.), *Climate Change and Health: Improving Resilience and Reducing Risks* (389-401). London/New York: Springer.

Wiesböck, Laura (2016): Das performierende Selbst im Hochschulsystem. *Feministische Studien* 34(1): 98-104.

Wiesböck, Laura (2015): Das performierende Selbst im Hochschulsystem. *Soziologiemagazin* 12: Bildung, Wissen und Eliten - Wissen als Kapital und Ressource (60-69).

1.4 Conference Presentations during Doctoral Studies

2017

Wiesböck, Laura: New Cleavages in the Low-Wage Labour Market of the Central European Region? Employment Practices in the Austrian Border Region. 13th Conference of the European Sociological Association, Athens, 29 August - 1 September 2017.

2016

Wiesböck, Laura: Facets of Cross-Border Commuting in the Central European Region. Tag des SoWi Doktorats, 25 November 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? WWTF Final Symposium Diversity and Identity, Vienna, 15-16 November 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: A Preferred Labour Force? Employment Practices in the Low-Wage Sector of the Austrian Border Region in regard to Commuters from Czech Republic,

Hungary and Slovakia. 4. Jahrestagung für Migrations- und Integrationsforschung, Vienna, 12-13 September 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? A Multi Method Study for the Case of the Central European Region. Third ISA Forum of Sociology, Vienna, 10-14 July 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: Cross-Border Labour Commuting in the Central European Region: Emerging Patterns and Implications. Third ISA Forum of Sociology, Vienna, 10-14 July 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: Cross-Border Labour Commuting in the Central European Region: Emerging Patterns and Implications. 23rd International Conference of Europeanists, Philadelphia, 14-16 April 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: Inner-European Labour Mobility - Perspectives and Challenges. New Europeans Oxford #3, Oxford, 25 February 2016.

2015

Wiesböck, Laura: Transnational Labour Activities and the Changing Notion of National Borders in the EU - Perspectives from Daily Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. COMPAS WIPS, Oxford University, 3 December 2015.

Wiesböck, Laura: Trans-border Labour Commuting in the Central European Region and its Social Effects. UACES Conference, Bilbao, 7-9 September 2015.

Wiesböck, Laura / Wanka, Anna: Heat Vulnerability, Poverty and Health Inequalities in Urban Migrant Communities: A Pilot Study from Vienna. World Symposium on Climate Change Adaption, Manchester, 2-4 September 2015.

2014

Wiesböck, Laura: East-West Trans-border labour commuting in the European Union and its Social Effects. Lessons from the Centropoe-region. 10th Annual Graduate Conference in Political Science, International Relations and Public Policy, Jerusalem, 9-12 December 2014.

Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Circular Labor Mobility in the Central European Region: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. MiReKoc 10th Year Symposium Committee, Istanbul, 20-21 November 2014.

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- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund: Unequal Opportunity Structures on the Central European labour market? Experiences from Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. Subregional International Conference: Cross-Border Migration and its Implications for the Central European Area, Bratislava, 6 November 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Circular Labor Mobility in the Central European Region: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. 3. Jahrestagung der Migrations- und Integrationsforschung in Österreich, Vienna, 22-23 September 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Circular Labor Mobility on the Central European Region: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. International Conference: 1989-2014 - Twenty-five Years After. What has happened to the Societies in Central and Southeast Europe since the Fall of the Iron Curtain? University of Graz, 18-20 September 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. 109th ASA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 16 August 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Intra-European Labor Mobility from Post-Socialist Countries: The Example of Hungarians, Slovaks and Czechs in Austria. 18th ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, 18 July 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Circular Labor Mobility in the Central European Region: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. 18th ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, 15 July 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland: Transnational Labour Markets and Recent Mobility Trends in Europe: The Case of the Central European Region. Collaborative Research Centre 597 "Transformations of the State", Panel 12: The Crisis of Europe. Fortification of Europe? University of Bremen, 4 April 2014.

2013

Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund: Applied Mixed-Methods - Researching New Facets of Cross-Border Labour Mobility in Central Europe. 5th Conference of the European Survey Research Association (ESRA), Ljubljana, 17 July 2013.

Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund: Job Finding and Labour Market Integration of Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. Marie Jahoda Summer School of Sociology 'Migration and Inequality', Vienna, 10 July 2013.

1.5 Media Contributions

Wiener Zeitung, Guest Commentary

"Quo vadis Beschäftigungsbonus?"

30 August 2017

Austrian Society for European Politics, Policy Brief

"Geht's der Wirtschaft gut, sollten wir Arbeitsmigration ganzheitlich betrachten"

30 August 2017

Ö1, Live Radio Interview

"Arbeitskräfte aus Osteuropa"

1 March 2017

Die Presse, Article

"Wir sind EU-Bürger zweiter Klasse"

5 February 2017

ORF Science, Guest Commentary

"EU-Lohndumping: Mythen und blinde Flecken"

30 January 2017

Wiener Zeitung, Article

"Grenzgänger am österreichischen Arbeitsmarkt"

25 January 2017

ORF Science, Article

"Die Zufriedenheit der Pendler"- with Roland Verwiebe and Raimund Haindorfer

2 February 2015

Research newsletter of the University of Vienna, Video Interview

"Grenzenlos arbeiten"- with Roland Verwiebe and Raimund Haindorfer

28 January 2015

2 Introduction

In 2004, the European Union expanded its territory by ten countries, which has been the most extensive enlargement of the EU to date. While some member states opened up their labour markets straight away to workers from the newly joined countries, Austria introduced a transitional period of seven years in which it gradually allowed access to its labour market. Before the final restrictions were lifted on 1 May, 2011, in the Austrian public discourse many concerns emerged in prospect of a potential threat of "flooding" of the labour market by "cheap workforce" and "displacement effects" through "social dumping" in the low-wage segment, particularly by citizens of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The geographical proximity and the higher wage levels in the Austrian border region make it an appealing labour market for workers residing in these areas. Despite a strong debate on the prospective consequences of opening the borders in the political and public sphere, there have been comparatively few studies that have investigated the structure of actual mobility patterns and its consequences in this transnational labour market.

This fact is relatively surprising, as it constitutes a particularly interesting field of research in many ways. First of all, the border regions of Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary altogether constitute a Euro-region called the Central European Region (CENTROPE). It is thus one of many political projects in the European Union that foster enhanced mobility to strengthen competitiveness and the regional business location. Secondly, CENTROPE comprises two capitals - Vienna and Bratislava - which is exceptional, given that most of the other inner-European border regions are located more peripherally. Due to the short distance between the places (e.g. someone may commute between Bratislava and Vienna in one hour), workers do not need to move their residency, which reflects the differentiation of movement patterns within the European Union: from once-in-a-lifetime migration to mobility as a life strategy. Lastly, historically the region has gone through a profound system change and societal transformations: from the Habsburg monarchy, to the fall of the Iron Curtain, and finally, to the EU-enlargement to the free movement of workers.

The aim of my PhD thesis is to provide a systematic reflection on the process of intensifying economic and social cooperation in the Central European region. The focus lies on cross-border commuters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary working in

Austria. Cross-border commuters are defined as persons who work in one country while residing in another to which they regularly return on a daily, weekly, monthly, or seasonal basis (Van Houtum and Gielis 2006).

The overall theoretical perspective adopted in my research lies in the field of social inequality with a particular focus on social stratification. Through the lens of social inequality-generating processes the doctoral thesis looks at the influencing factors systematically linking both labour markets and mobility in the Central European Region: the legal framework, the macro-economic context, the welfare state regime, the economic structure of the local region, employers' practices and commuters' life worlds. The analyses are based on official secondary data (EUROSTAT, National labour market statistics by the AMS and EU-SILC data), a retrospective longitudinal survey comprising 1,345 cross-border commuters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary with a reference group of 1,334 non-commuters, 20 expert interviews with mayors, EURES-employees, employers and trade unionists operating in this region and 10 narrative interviews with cross-border commuters.

The superordinate research question, that links all five publications of my dissertation, is: How do transnational labour practices in the Central European region relate to the (re)production of social inequalities? The aim is to shed light on causes, forms and changes of inequality on the transnational labour market of the Central European Region, specifically in regard to:

- The positioning of commuters in the local stratification system in terms of wages and life satisfaction (Wiesböck, Reinprecht, Haindorfer et al. 2016a),
- The effect of the crisis on upward wage mobility of cross-border commuters on the Austrian labour market (Wiesböck, Verwiebe, Reinprecht et al. 2016b),
- The contribution to and legitimization of commuters' (unequal) positioning in the stratification system by employers in the Austrian border region (Wiesböck 2016),
- The impact of cross-border commuting on workers' status in the sending region in regard to wage, class and occupation (Wiesböck and Verwiebe 2017) and
- Perceived inequalities by commuters between contesting social groups in the Central European Region (Wiesböck 2017).

My PhD thesis is written in English and originated in the context of the research project "TRANSLAB - Cross-Border Labour Mobility, Transnational Labour Markets and Social Differentiation in the Central European Region", funded by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund, headed by Prof. Roland Verwiebe and Prof. Christoph Reinprecht at the Department of Sociology, University of Vienna from August 2012 until May 2016. The format is a thesis by publication, comprising four published articles and one article sub-

mitted for peer review. A thesis by publication is a different format and requires different planning efforts than a monograph, in particular regarding the selection of publishers and the time-consuming review processes. The challenge is to point to different subject areas and to keep a high degree of distinction between the articles, while at the same time taking into account the superordinate research question. The applied dissemination strategy is oriented in such a way as to make the research outcomes accessible for a broad audience regarding the academic level, scholarly discipline and geographical outreach.

For the first paper the publishing house Amsterdam University Press was chosen, as it is well known for both publishing in the field of migration and integration as well as educational publishing for higher education. It is a peer-reviewed book chapter as part of the collected volume "An Interdisciplinary Anthology of Migration and Social Transformation: European Perspectives". The second paper is a contribution to the Special Issue "The Global Economic Crisis and Migration" in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.¹ The article has gone through a double blind peer review procedure. The journal was selected since JEMS has a long-standing interest in all forms of migration, its consequences and its implications for policy innovation, in particular within Europe. Given the focus of my research, it is crucial to spread the outcomes to an Austrian audience. Therefore, the third paper was published in the *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie (ÖZS)* as part of the Special Issue "A new transnational migration space in Central Europe". The fourth paper was published in the special issue "Central and Southeastern European Countries in transition" in the *International Journal of Sociology*, renowned for its cross-national and comparative social research. The fifth article is currently under review in *European Societies*. The journal publishes research on contemporary socioeconomic and socio-political challenges that European societies face.

The thesis is structured as follows: first, the need for research and core research questions are discussed. Then, the Central European region is presented. Based on this, the theoretical foundations of my thesis and the framework conditions structuring both labour market and mobility processes are described. Afterwards, the methodological approach is discussed and its limitations are critically reflected. Chapter eight constitutes the overview of the five articles of my thesis. In the final part, the concluding chapter returns to the superordinate research question thereby linking all five publications. Finally, the socio-political and scientific relevance of the outcomes of my dissertation is presented and an outlook to the need for further research based on the results is given.

¹ Based on the JEMS Special Issue the editors Christof Roos and Natascha Zaun were approached by Routledge for publishing the collection as an edited volume, since the work has been considered to deserve more attention. Hence the article will be published again as a book chapter in 2017.

3 Need for Research and Core Research Questions

Very little comprehensive information is available on the integration of cross-border commuters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary into the Austrian labour market. While there are a few articles dealing with the policy relevance, efforts and challenges of cross-border cooperation in CENTROPE (Giffinger and Hamedinger 2013, Hamedinger 2011, Sohn and Giffinger 2015), there has been little research with respect to the structure of actual mobility patterns within the Central European Region. Several studies have been carried out in the Central European Region on the intentions of workers to become mobile and find a job in Austria (Berger, Hofer, Miess et al. 2011, Fassmann and Hintermann 1997, Huber and Nowotny 2007, Nowotny 2011, Vavrečková 2003). However up until now there are no official statistics on cross-border commuting available in CENTROPE, which provide a detailed view on the life and working situation of cross-border commuters.

Existing studies have had a largely explorative character, a pertinent example being the study done by Lechner, Major, Matt et al. (2010) and Haindorfer (2013), who carried out biographical interviews with Hungarian commuters in Austria. Among other things, the studies point out the important role of social networks as a motivation in considering movements and in deciding to go ahead with it. The study also stresses the importance of qualifications for the integration into the labour market. Other studies using data from the Labour Force Survey (e.g. Fassmann 2008, Huber 2009) show that since 2004, despite institutional restrictions, movements have increased continuously within the Central European Region. Austria and in particular Vienna have been the most important destinations for commuters from Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republic.

From a sociological perspective it is particularly interesting where commuters are placed in the stratification system - both in Austria and in their residential region. Eastern European workers tend to fill the gaps in the bottom end of the labour market (Favell 2008). However, so far no substantive analyses on the placement of East-West commuters in the Central European Region have been conducted. Therefore, one aim of my thesis is to look closely at wages of commuters compared to locally residing natives and foreign-born and compared to non-commuters in their home-region. Furthermore, there is a substantial

gap in the research literature on potential effects of commuting on the placement in the stratification system in the residential region. Are there any status gains in terms of potential changes of individual occupational activities and wages from one region to another? While over the past two decades, the field of transnational labor research in the context of the EU has become more important, studies on wage mobility and occupational mobility as an outcome of transnational labor activities remain quite scarce. In the literature the analytical emphasis lies on wage effects in the receiving country (Baas, Brücker and Hauptmann 2010, Flake 2013, Friberg, Tronstad and Dølvik 2012, Lemos and Portes 2014). This is mainly due to the lack of longitudinal transnational data. Target populations as well as units of reference are still commonly defined in national terms, adhering to the notion that the 'nation state society is the natural social and political form of the modern world' (Wimmer and Schiller 2003: 217). Based on the retrospective longitudinal survey conducted in the course of the TRANSLAB project it is possible to analyze whether specific status changes occur in the course of transnational labor market activities in the Central European Region.

Moreover, changes in inequality in sending and receiving regions before, during and after the crisis are of relevance. Up until now few empirical studies have been concerned with post-crisis mobility trends in the form of East-West cross-border commuting (for exceptions see: Bahna 2014, Benton and Petrovic 2013, Galgóczi, Leschke and Watt 2012). Many authors describe the financial shocks as asymmetric since they resulted in significant differences in the output of distinct economies (Beine, Bourgeon and Bricongne 2013, Jauer, Liebig, Martin et al. 2014). This is particularly the case in the Central European Region. While the years 2008-2009 saw a radical drop in GDP growth rates for most EU economies and the EU-27 as a whole (Janicka and Kaczmarczyk 2016), Austria remained relatively unscathed by the effects of the crisis. As a result, one part of the thesis puts special emphasis on the effects of the crisis on (1) economic and social inequalities between the sub regions of CENTROPE, (2) labour mobility from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to Austria, (3) the change of the socio-economic composition of cross-border commuters and the mode of their labour market integration and (4) the extent of wage mobility among commuters.

Considering the regulation of transnational labour markets, there are several actors involved that have gained insufficient attention so far. Looking at the growing presence of mobile workers, most studies focus on the supply side, the motivation and expectations of workers, their skills, their use of social networks or how they construct their identity (Datta and Brickell 2009, Drinkwater and Garapich 2015, Main 2016, Parutis 2014, Ryan, Sales, Tilki et al. 2008). One objective of the thesis is to shed light on the role of demand-side factors, precisely on the process of employer recruitment. In the European context analyses in the field of employer practices have so far been primarily concerned with European mobile workers residing in the receiving country, with a strong focus on

the South-North movements, e.g. workers from East-European countries in the UK or Norway (Anderson, Ruhs, Spencer et al. 2006, Friberg et al. 2012, McDowell, Batnitzky and Dyer 2007, Scott 2013). In contrast, cross-border commuting is a type of mobility where employees work in another member state without moving their residence to the respective country. In CENTROPE commuters mostly reside in regions with lower costs of living and, at the same time, work in a country with higher wages. With regard to this issue, my thesis aims to investigate if employers make use of this particular situation in their attitudes and justifications towards hiring cross-border commuters. To what extent do employers contribute to and legitimise commuters' (unequal) positioning in the hierarchy system in the Austrian border region?

Lastly, the dissertation takes particular interest in the construction of spatial and social belonging as a form of subjective stratification of commuters in the Central European Region. Commuters' types of periodic occupational mobility across borders can be conceived as a transnational process that involves neither entirely leaving one's region of origin, nor definitely integrating in a host society, but rather as an intermediate process (Fassmann 2003: 438). Consequently, questions of belonging surge. In a politically unified Europe the uniqueness of national reference systems is being replaced by the ambiguity of a variety of different membership zones and negotiable territorial spaces (Bös 2000, Bös and Zimmer 2006). One core question posed in my thesis is whether commuting enhances a European sense of belonging. Apart from spatial relations in a sociological sense, belonging represents a particular type of social relation. How are commuters' everyday life social relations constituted? Are there any (new) perceived inequalities coming up between contesting social groups involved in the transnational labour market? These questions play a crucial role in the last paper of my thesis, in reference to Favell (2008), who has called for more micro level work on the human face of inner-European movements - the lives, experiences and networks of this new type of mobility in Europe.

4 Why the Central European Region?

Border regions are particularly revealing places for social research displaying many dimensions of difference, inequality and asymmetry - economic, political, cultural and social (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999: 596). In the wake of the prevalence of supranational spaces within the European Union ("Euro regions"), border regions act as laboratories of Europeanisation and as a tier in today's system of multilevel government. The creation of Euro regions has started a new era in international politics as institutional entrepreneurs,

as a model of international governance for regional actors contesting the nation state's traditional monopoly on foreign affairs and international politics (Perkmann 1999, Perkmann 2002). These administrative transnational border units are connected with several political visions such as a Europe without borders, a new regionalism, and a turn back to (imagined) common regional historical and regional cultural roots (Klatt and Herrmann 2011: 66).

The Central European Region (CENTROPE) is a notable construction of such a cross-border territory. In geographical terms CENTROPE consists of eight federal provinces, regions, and counties with a total population of about 6.6 million. The largest city in CENTROPE is Vienna, which has a population of 1.8 million and, alongside with Bratislava, is one of the two national centres of power in the region. This situation can be described as exceptional, considering that most other inner-European border regions are located more peripherally.

Figure 4.1: The Central European Region (CENTROPE)



Source: Arge Centrope. Reproduced by permission of City of Vienna.

The Austrian borderland to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary constitutes an instructive example of regional transnationalism with a specific historico-political context that has undergone profound system changes and societal transformations. A large part of the Central European nations were formed during the Habsburg Monarchy, as for instance the Austrian-Hungarian Empire (Hroch 2017). The function of the borders in CENTROPE has been highly varied throughout its history, reflecting not only relations between Austria and its neighbouring countries, but also changes in global geopolitics. The fall of the Iron Curtain profoundly altered the world's geopolitical landscape and created

a number of boundary disputes (Paasi 1999: 670). Subsequently the EU enlargement in 2004 and the removal of the last barriers to the free movement of labour in 2011 have brought about significant changes which in turn have led to new forms of interplay of economic, social, political and legal factors (Horvath 2012). Despite a considerable period of European integration the life chances in CENTROPE are still shaped by a strong territorial inequality in socio-economic terms (Haindorfer, Verwiebe, Reinprecht et al. 2016).

Since the opening of the border in 2011, the number of East-West commuters regularly crossing the border for work or education has been continuously rising (Wiesböck 2016). Already in 2009, a slight but steady increase in the number of workers from neighbouring countries began, from 11,591 commuters in 2008 to 14,465 in 2009 (Austrian Labour Market Service; own calculations). These numbers reflect the gradual opening of the labour market before the last barriers to free mobility were lifted. From then on, a steady increase of East-West cross-border workers can be observed. In 2013 there were 78,825 workers from Hungary (37,793), Slovakia (34,047) and the Czech Republic (6,985) registered on the Austrian labour market (Statistik Austria 2015).

This reorganisation of territoriality, borders and populations is a basic prerequisite for establishing a European societal space (Bartolini 2005). CENTROPE is one of many political projects in the European Union that foster enhanced mobility to strengthen competitiveness and the regional business location. Mobility of labour is one of the core aims of the CENTROPE Strategy 2013+, which emphasises commitment to a collaboration that ranges from research and innovation to human-capital development and spatial integration to culture and tourism (Centrope Agency 2012).

However, recent developments demonstrate a lack of collaboration or solidarity in a broader European sense, as was the case with Hungary when it refused to take refugees and sent several thousand refugees to the Austrian border, or with the introduction of the "employment bonus" on the Austrian labour market. Since July 1, 2017, the employment bonus enables an institutionalised preference system in the hiring process for unemployed Austrians against new entrants to the labor market. In concrete terms: For newly hired Austrian employees, the additional payroll costs can be reduced by half for three years. The bonus has so far entered into force without EU approval. Grants can be applied for, but the commitment still depends on whether the European Commission sees this as an indirect discrimination against Union citizens. Apart from this labour market measure, the interregional territory of European values is endangered due to the rise of nationalist public discourses along with the increasingly forceful voices of Euroscepticism.

Given these recent tendencies, the question arises whether the Central European region genuinely constitutes a region. This is an important question not only for current political developments, but also for conceptual reasons. In sociology it is crucial to critically reflect

upon the applied terminology. The danger in social research is to infiltrate pre-given concepts unreflectingly in the knowledge production. As a consequence it is necessary to ask: Is the Central European "Region" truly a multinational region or merely the sum of regions located in several nations? Is it nothing but an administrative unit, or is it also an economic, sociological and political reality? And first and foremost: what is a region? The number of definitions of regions is considerable and according to the field of research definitions differ and even contradict each other (Langenhove 2013: 475). In general a region has outlined geographical limits, a space distinct from others due to cohesiveness, an element of unity in diversity, e.g. economic territory, social territory, legal territory. It is a geopolitical construct and defined more in terms of "integration" (Tripathi 2015: 190). How socially integrated is CENTROPE and in which areas are boundaries of growing together? This constitutes an implicit research interest of my dissertation. Along these lines the thesis can also be regarded as an empirical reflection on the administrative unit of the Central European region.

5 Theoretical Foundations

An examination of the existing literature demonstrates that recent research on intra-European mobility has been examined predominantly from the standpoint of economics and population studies, whereas only few sociological analyses have been conducted in this respect. The prevalence of this research perspective is closely linked with political interests, but also embedded in a long-standing tradition. Although the field of migration has not given substantive attention within mainstream economic theory itself, nonetheless neoclassical economics have dominated scholarly thinking on migration for a long time (Haas 2008, Parnreiter 2000). Macro-economic explanations for migration were originally established in the context of economic development (Harris and Todaro 1970, Lewis 1954, Ranis and Fei 1961). In this sense migration is shaped by geographic differences in labour supply and demand and by the resulting differentials in wages between labour-rich versus capital-rich countries. In the micro-economic scheme individual actors choose to move to regions with the best labour market outcomes (Sjaastad 1962, Todaro 1969, Todaro and Maruszko 1987, Todaro 1989). The decision to migrate is based on a rational cost-benefit calculation leading actors to expect a positive monetary net return (Massey, Arango, Hugo et al. 1993). Mobile workers are anticipated to go where they are able to earn the highest wages, assuming free choice and full access to information, (Haas 2008). Now when looking at the conceptualization of cross-border commuting in CENTROPE this

paradigm lacks an explanation for why the flows of mobile workers are not notably higher, given the persisting wealth gaps and the small geographical distance. Furthermore, these approaches focus on economic factors, such as wage differences or unemployment, whereas social and linguistic barriers are not taken into consideration. Finally, there is no emphasis on the effects in the region of residency and region of work in terms of inequality.

The push-pull model can be considered as an individual choice and equilibrium model, and is, therefore, largely analogous to neo-classical micro models. In this model established by Everett S. Lee (1966) push factors are unfavourable circumstances in the region of origin, e.g. poor economic activity and lack of job opportunities, and pull factors are attractive components in another region. Along this line there are four main elements structuring decisions to move: factors associated with the area of origin, factors associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles and personal factors (Lee 1966: 46). Nevertheless, some authors argue that the push-pull framework is rather a descriptive model in which the different factors that play a role in migration decisions are enumerated in a relative arbitrary manner (Haas 2008: 9). In any case the model points to factors contributing to movements on the level of individual probability. By means of this perspective, it would be possible to hypothesise about the social structure of transnational workers. However, the effects on their placement in the social stratification system remain underinvestigated.

In the 1980s and 1990s the new economics of labour migration emerged as a critical response to neoclassical migration theory. Many assumptions of neoclassical economics have been challenged by this paradigm. One key argument is that decisions to migrate are not made by isolated individual actors, but by larger units of related people - typically families or households-in which people act collectively (Massey et al. 1993: 436). These collective actors do not only aim to maximise their expected income, but also to minimise risks and to loosen constraints associated with a variety of market failures, apart from those in the labor market (Katz and Stark 1986, Lauby and Stark , Stark and Levhari 1982, Stark 1984). While neo-classical economics start from the premise that people move abroad permanently to maximise lifetime earnings, the new economics of migration assume that they do so temporarily in order to overcome market deficiencies at home (Constant and Massey 2002). The quintessence of this theory is the inclusion of social dimensions and the temporality of migration. With regard to CENTROPE this theory would state that cross-border commuting is a temporary strategy that is bound to context of a household. Yet a large number of cross-border commuters conceptualise their transnational labour involvement as a life strategy, particularly due to the short distances. Again the focus lies on the dimension of decision-making in the process of migration. There is no modelling for how the placement of mobile workers in the stratification system in their region of origin and in their region of work is altered.

In contrast to neoclassical and new economic theory, both of which view international

mobility processes as a result of rational calculations in response to market forces, segmented or dual labor market theory sees immigration as demand-driven, built into the economic structure of advanced industrial societies (Massey, Arango, Hugo et al. 1994, Piore 1979, Reich, Gordon and Edwards 1973). The theory argues that there is a divide between the high-wage primary and low-wage secondary segments. The secondary sector is characterised by instability, short-term employment relationships, little prospect of promotion, low wages, low social prestige (Piore 1979). The separation of the labour market into segments is not accidental, but can rather be seen as a result of the enforcement of economic and political interests in the labor market process (Sengenberger 1978). Local workers avoid the secondary segment, which leads to a labour shortage. In order to overcome this shortage companies recruit immigrants who are willing to accept the conditions in this segment, because they consider their stay temporary and do not link their status with their occupation.

Overall, what we can see so far is that the presented economic frameworks study the determinants of labour mobility. The strength of theoretical models lies in the modelling of decision dimensions, which focus on factors influencing decisions to move within the principle of economic rationalism. Yet the main line of thought is not placed on the consequences of the movement of workers across borders and on their social positioning in the stratification system. ²

A fundamentally different interpretation of migration was provided by the world systems theory, which has its intellectual roots in Marxist political economy. Here migration is seen as a natural consequence of the economic globalization of the market economy, in which companies operate across national boundaries (Portes and Walton 1981, Sassen 1988, Wallerstein 1974). It argues that the expansion of the market-economy is directed from a small number of global cities (Castells 1989, Sassen 1991). These sites manage production processes that are increasingly decentralized, with labor-intensive operations being located in low-wage countries and capital-intensive processes being allocated to high-wage areas (Massey et al. 1994: 722). That puts downward pressure on wages and working conditions among lowly-skilled workers. Migration is considered to be a subsystem for the world-market, a "labour supply system" (Sassen 1988). Immigrants are attracted by global cities. The continual renewal of migration potentials is closely interrelated with capitalist expansion. In contrast to the previous theoretical concepts on migration, in the world systems theory social inequality plays a crucial role in a broader sense, that is how power, governance and capital are regulated in a global context. In this theory, however, the perspective on the concrete social stratification effects for mobile

² In recent economic literature there are a few empirical studies analyzing the impact of emigration on wages in the sending countries (e.g. Dustmann, Frattini and Rosso 2015, Elsner 2013a, Elsner 2013b, Mishra 2007), however they are conducted from the perspective of national economic development rather than social inequality.

workers remains underexplored.

In the last three decades we can observe intensifying scholarly efforts using the optic of transnational migration to understand movements of workers (Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer 2013, Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999, Vertovec 2009). Researchers in this field argue that migrants continue to be active in their homelands at the same time they became parts of the receiving countries (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). The focus lies on the cross-border extension of migrants' participation in familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes while becoming part in the places of settlement (Faist 2000, Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992, Guarnizo 1997, Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005, Levitt 2001). Overtime the combined efforts of those engaging in transnational activities can alter the economies, values and practices of entire regions (Kyle 2000, Levitt, DeWind and Vertovec 2003).

As Dahinden (2017) points out, some scholars have contributed to reformulations of theories of social inequalities in the transnational context by showing that the analysis and theorisation of such issues needs a framework outside "national containers" and by bringing together different modes of national incorporation within one framework (Nieswand 2011, Weiss 2005). In doing so a critique of methodological nationalism is uttered and relations of social inequality are put into a transnational context (Beck 2000, Beck 2007). Some recent transnational scholarships studied the social inequalities that emerge in transnational social spaces by considering how actors and their resources are positioned in relation to multiple spatial entities, which may be local, national, supranational, transnational or global (Pries 2008, Weiss 2005). Others have taken Bourdieu's theory of capital further by demonstrating that mobile workers navigate in social fields that are embedded in multiple societies characterized by status inconsistencies (Moret 2014, Nowicka 2013). These theoretical perspectives are valuable contributions in challenging the spatial assumptions of the concept of social inequality. With the help of these theories, it can be demonstrated that social research in this field is limited by the constraints of methodological nationalism when it comes to social inequality. However, this perspective also lacks a clarification where transnationally mobile workers are placed in the dominant stratification system. So far no emphasis has been put on the concretization of the effects of transnational commuting at the rate of social stratification in the region of work and the region of residency. What does the social structure look like within the transnational construct in concrete terms?

From a sociological perspective the consequences on the social groups involved in terms of inequality are of particular interest. The central sociological question on social inequality is that of the unequal distribution of opportunities, social positions and life chances, its causes, characteristics and legitimation (Hradil 2004, Schwinn 2007). Societies are made up of different social groups, each of which are in a competitive relationship around the distribution of central resources and scarce goods, e.g. income, prosperity, power and

prestige (Pries 2008: 4). In scholarly and sociopolitical terms, it is of crucial relevance whether there are significant shifts in the structural relations of inequality that can be attributed to the mobility and labour market integration processes.

This is particularly interesting in the case of cross-border commuters, who do not move their residency to the region of their workplace. This group of transnational workers cannot be assigned to classic international migration, but have to be seen as a flexible form of cross-border mobility. They are economically integrated in the receiving region, however, their families, their social environment and their status is based in the region of residency. Correspondingly, the demand or entitlement of participation in social, cultural or political terms is not necessarily given, in contrast to locally residing transnational workers.

From a theoretical standpoint it lacks a classic social stratification perspective on cross-border commuting. Following the argument of Pries (2008) in the Central European Region commuters' social position is placed in three different units: (1) in the Austrian system, where their main occupation is located, (2) in the region of residency, where their social environment is based and (3) in a transnational social space, in relation to other transnationally-mobile workers. My thesis is an attempt to shed light on the first two units and to point to facets of status mobility. First of all, it analyses the positioning of commuters in the Austrian local stratification system in terms of wages. In a second step, it examines the effects of the economic crisis on the chances of upward mobility of cross-border commuters on the Austrian labour market on an exemplary basis by means of their wages. Having established this basis, the thesis continues to study the contribution to and legitimization of commuters' (unequal) positioning in the stratification system by Austrian employers. With respect to the region of residency, facets of workers' status mobility in regard to wage, class and occupation will be evaluated. The final part looks at the perceived inequalities between various social groups in the Central European Region as an expression of subjective stratification.

6 Framework Conditions: Labour Market and Mobility

Conceptually the thesis explores the components structuring both labour market integration and outcomes in the Austrian border region and labour mobility processes of

persons from the border regions of Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. In order to do so, it must first be defined what a labour market is. According to Pries (2010: 120) a labour market is generally understood as specific norms and mechanisms of qualification, recruitment, work effort and remuneration, which impact typical inner and interorganizational patterns in people's horizontal and vertical labour mobility. With growing internationalisation of socialisation and as cross-border labour processes become increasingly important a general trend towards the internationalisation of labour structures can be observed. This is the case, as for more and more people a one-time or repeated change of their residence by crossing the border has become a genuine part of their life strategy. Above all permanent border crossing mobility schemes gain in importance (Pries 2010: 121).

Regarding inequality-generating processes in the Austrian border region it relevant to what extent potential ethnic penalties and inequalities on the labour market are due to the lack of the individual's human capital, social resources and language skills, and due to exclusionary discrimination processes. Therefore, my thesis aims to analyse the social processes that structure commuters' labour market integration in detail in order to uncover what accounts for the differences in stratification. Thereby always keeping in mind the framework conditions influencing both labor market and mobility processes.

On an institutional level labour market and mobility processes in the EU are closely interwoven with each other. A variety of policymakers advocate for measures to facilitate the movement of workers between their homelands and foreign workplaces to meet labour market shortages in the receiving countries. The EU has been strongly encouraging intra-European mobility through institutional programs since the early 1990s. Relevant factors in fostering intra-European movements have included the implementation of the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty on the freedom of movement, the recognition of foreign qualifications by EU member states and the development of a network of European employment offices (Findlay, King, Stam et al. 2006, Verwiebe, Mau, Seidel et al. 2010). This new mode of mobility management belongs to the flexibility paradigm that has prevailed in the European post-Fordist economies in the last few decades and is consistent with the idea that positions may be temporary both on the high and the low ends of the labour market (Venturini 2008). It appears to pose a limited- integration burden on destination countries while maximizing transnational transfers (Triandafyllidou 2013: 4).

Apart from the institutional level there are several structural dimensions influencing both labour market and mobility processes. My research has been concerned with analysing these factors from the sociological perspective of social inequality. These structural dimensions comprise the legal framework, the macro-economic context, welfare state regimes, the economic structure of the local region, employers' practices and life worlds. All aspects are interrelated and intersected with each other. In the following, I will go into detail on each dimension.

6.1 Legal Framework

The legal framework is crucial to the juridical regulation of labour and mobility. On 1 May, 2011, the last barriers to the free movement of labour were lifted in Austria after a transitional period of seven years. Citizens from A8³ countries were given the freedom to settle in another member state of the EU to seek employment according to their skills and qualifications. In doing so, national borders in the Central European Region lost much of their barrier function and moving between countries became remarkably simplified. This changing institutional setting serves as an initial point for the research. Legal circumstances can be one factor contributing to labour mobility, yet it is important to note that empirically cross-border labour had already been an ongoing practice long before the final restrictions were lifted (Wallace, Chmouliar and Sidorenko 1997). Commuting is not a recent phenomenon linked to the creation of the European common market (Terlouw 2012: 354). Large numbers of workers have already been present before May 2011 be it with work permits or in informal ways.

As an effect of the changing institutional setting and enhanced mobility a further legal factor coming up is the topic of social dumping. Social dumping implies unacceptably low wages or poor conditions of work (Friberg, Arnholzt, Eldring et al. 2014). The mechanism behind is to undercut established standards by recruiting workers from countries with substantially lower living conditions and pay rates (McGovern 2007, Woolfson, Thörnqvist and Sommers 2010). In the Austrian public discourse the rise in wage dumping practices and with it potential displacement effects for local workers have been discussed as a possible consequence of the opening of the labour market. However, so far we are confronted with a lack of adequate data on practices in this field. Therefore, one aim of the thesis is to look closely at (changing) labour standards in the Austrian border regions.

The framework of employment law and industrial relations can also serve as initial point for regime shopping, that is to say the selection of a country for inward investment by a multinational enterprise. Firms' localization strategies entail a choice among regulatory regimes (Ipsen 2017). In Europe there are still profound differences between national labour market regimes in terms of material labour standards and industrial relations institutions. This offers transnational firms the opportunity to target investment towards regimes where labour standards are the lowest and where regulatory institutions least restrict their management prerogatives (Traxler and Woitech 2000). That includes for instance processes of spatial relocation and outsourcing, leading to a fragmentation of employment and work due to labour processes being stretched over organizational boundaries and workforces being divided by different employment contracts and terms and con-

³ A8 countries include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

ditions (Flecker 2009). These aspects are highly relevant in the context of CENTROPE, but since my specific research interest lies on employment of transnational workers in the Austrian border region, they play a subordinate role in my thesis.

6.2 Macroeconomic Context

Another factor structuring labour markets and mobility is the macro-economic context. This comprises in particular wage differentials and wealth gaps. In CENTROPE there are still significant differences between regional household income, GDP level, poverty and unemployment rates (Wiesböck et al. 2016a). Commuters reside in regions with a lower cost of living and, at the same time, work in a region with higher wages. Higher incomes expected in countries of destination may induce people to move to those countries (Haller and Verwiebe 2016). Waldinger and Lichter (2003) refer to it as "dual frame of reference". Mobile workers assess their economic situation relative to the employment prospects and earning options encountered in their region of origin. Besides their wages another aspect of the dual frame of reference is the workers' willingness to accept conditions substantially below host country standards, since they are still superior to those back home (Piore 1979, Woolfson 2007).

The macro-economic context not only comprises wage differentials, but also the ongoing effects of the global economic crisis in 2008. The financial crisis has resulted in the strongest recession in the OECD countries since the Great Depression in the early 1930s and the 1970s oil shocks (Roos and Zaun 2016). Since March 2008 unemployment has been rising sharply in the European Union as a result of the global economic crisis (Eurostat 2009). The crisis has led to a polarization of the Eurozone labour markets (Syed Zwick and Syed 2017) and to changes in mobility patterns of workers throughout Europe. In terms of labor market effects we can differentiate impacts on:

- Types of employment, e.g. a decrease in paid employment opportunities, especially full-time paid employment (Lallement 2011),
- Sectors and branches, e.g. less formal employment opportunities in construction and manufacturing (Nistorescu and Ploscaru 2010) and
- Socio-demographic groups, e.g. lower job finding prospects for young or lowly educated people (Flek, Hála and Mysíková 2015, Wiesböck et al. 2016b).

Regarding mobility effects in the free mobility regime, unconstrained labour force flows are expected to respond to changing economic conditions in the sending and receiving countries (Janicka and Kaczmarczyk 2016). This is particularly the case in CENTROPE, as Austria is one of the few countries to remain relatively unscathed by the crisis. In

contrast, Hungary has shown such vulnerability to the global financial crisis that it has been forced to obtain external support from the IMF to avoid sovereign default and a collapse of the currency (Andor 2009). The labour market in the Czech Republic has been confronted with much lower job finding prospects of both prime-age and young unemployed in comparison to Austria (Flek and Mysíková 2015). Bahna (2014) showed for Slovakia that the rising popularity of care work in Austria was fueled primarily by the crisis induced unemployment rise, rather than by the Austrian legalisation policies. Therefore an essential concern of my thesis has been to empirically look at the effects of the crisis on mobility processes in CENTROPE.

6.3 Welfare State Regimes

Welfare state regimes have an influence on the labour market regarding mechanisms of income and employment security. Comparative welfare state research suggest that different regimes of income and employment security are crucial factors determining the level of unemployment (Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2005, Scharpf 2000) (Eichhorst und Konle-Seidl 2005). As a "conservative-corporatist state" (Esping-Anderson 1990) Austria has a "highly developed, albeit mainly employment related, social security system strongly based on the idea of status preservation of wage-earners" (Guger, Martina Agwi, Adolf Buxbaum et al. 2009). In corporatist welfare states benefits are tied to labour contracts, rather than residence or citizenship. In practice, however, recent tendencies show extended coverage to individuals with weak attachment to the labour market (Lindbeck 1998). In comparison to other European countries, the Austrian labor market is still quite regulated with relatively stable institutional structures. Nevertheless over the last 20 years, major changes have been observed in employment flexibilization. An increase in atypical employment, mainly part-time work, is the result (Obinger and Tálos 2009, Verwiebe, Reinprecht, Haindorfer et al. 2017). In sum cross-border commuters in the Austrian border regions are confronted with free mobility in a highly regulated labour market.

Mobility on a transnational labour market also leads to the question of the welfare state and mechanisms of social protection, such as retirement claims, sickness benefits, paid parental leave, and unemployment benefits. Public social protection is meant to ameliorate inequalities for everybody, mobile workers included, yet the logic of the welfare state calls for closure towards non-members (Faist 2017). Compared to other European countries the institutional complexity of the Austrian system impedes portability and can itself generate inequalities (Scheibelhofer, Balogh and Regös 2016). In the Austrian public discourse a lot attention was given to whether or not the welfare-state regime would attract unemployed workers from its neighbouring countries. The opening of the border

in May 2011 was discussed as a threat not only to jobs and the wage level, but also to social benefits provided by the welfare state. Empirically, no significant increase in unemployed workers from Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary relying on the Austrian social system has been observed (Wiesböck and Haindorfer 2014).

From a sociological perspective the questions of incentives for work are not only of economic nature embedded in the welfare state, but also relate to social norms (Lindbeck, Nyberg and Weibull 1999). In general, one may distinguish between social norms in favor of work and social norms against living off specific transfers, where some transfers may be accompanied by more social stigma than others (Moffitt 1983). Thus it becomes significant how unemployment is perceived in the local society and whether there is a social norm against living off other people and a corresponding normative pressure to earn one's income from work (Elster 1989: 121). While these aspects are important to consider when accounting for labour activity, in my thesis they will not be addressed given that the research focus lies on inequality-generating processes.

6.4 Economic Structure of the Local Region

The structure of dominating local sectors and branches is a further influential factor for labour market and mobility processes. The economic structure of the local region implies specific supply and demand conditions in the labor market, thus channeling the mobility of cross-border commuters in specific ways (Bittner, Hudler-Seitzberger and Neunteufl 2011, Van Houtum and Gielis 2006). When looking at the employment structure in each economic sector in the Austrian border regions, we can see that in all states a decrease in the manufacturing sector and an increase in the service sector has taken place over the last decade (Table 6.1).

This tendency empirically reflects the occupational structure of mobile workers in CENTROPE. In the Austrian border region 71.8 % of cross-border commuters from Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary work in the service sector, namely in wholesale and retail trade, gastronomy and accommodation, health service, social work and other personal services (Wiesböck and Verwiebe 2017). Many of these growing areas in the service sector (e.g. tourism, gastronomy or care) pay rather low wages despite the high labour requirements. Due to lower barriers they are easier to access than industrial production which is to a great extent organized by trade unions (Bittner et al. 2011, Traxler, Brandl and Glassner 2008).

This particular demand of workforce in certain sectors and branches may impact the inequality-generating process of dequalification. Eastern European workers tend to be over-concentrated at the end of occupational hierarchy (Wills, Datta, Evans et al. 2009).

Table 6.1: Employment by Economic Sector: Share of Total Employment Comparing 1995 / 2015 in %

	1995	2015
Vienna		
Agriculture and forestry	0,4	0,1
Manufacturing sector	22	13
Service Sector	75,7	85,2
Burgenland		
Agriculture and forestry	1,8	2,2
Manufacturing sector	32,8	25,6
Service Sector	61,8	69,6
Lower Austria		
Agriculture and forestry	1,3	1,2
Manufacturing sector	34,6	25,8
Service Sector	60,4	70,2

Source: WKO (2017)

Foreign workers are inclined to be mismatched to jobs requiring skill levels below their educational attainments (Dustmann, Frattini and Preston 2013). From a critical perspective of capitalist production relations, the process of dequalification is seen as a devaluation of labour power (Carchedi 1975). However, the important question here is to what extent this is an effect of discrimination, disadvantage or rather a "self-chosen" adaption strategy to the economic structure of the local region. As commuters are confronted with a dual frame of reference in their home region and the receiving region in terms of the wage-level and purchasing power parity, they might face occupational downward mobility while at the same time experiencing wage upward mobility in comparison to the former job in their home region. If the intentions behind mobility are primarily earning more money and improving the economic status in the home region, then occupational downward mobility might not be perceived as unequal or downgrading by commuters themselves (Wiesböck and Verwiebe 2017).

This assumption is particularly probable as the secondary labor market segment, in which mobile Eastern European workers are predominantly placed, is not only characterized by low wages and low security but also by low social prestige. Due to this reason, the segment is unattractive for local workers, as they are not only interested in securing their livelihood, but also in maintaining or increasing their social status (Piore 1979). For mobile workers, on the other hand, the identity-creating function of labour may not be of primary concern. Status is created mainly through economic gains in their home region, in other words, the social role is separated more strongly from the economic role.

Yet given the matching training systems in CENTROPE (e.g. in the construction branch or care) and the openness of certain low-wage segments to recruitment (e.g. there are no formal barriers as for instance in the public service) the opposite assumption is also

plausible, namely that the assessment and recognition of commuters' skills takes place without effects of dequalification. Whether or not this assumption applies to commuters in the Central European Region is assessed as part of my thesis.

6.5 Employer Practices

Employers play a crucial part in the regulation of opportunity structures and the distribution of workers. Their norms and mechanisms of qualification, recruitment, work effort and compensation are decisive for structuring employment chances on the labour market. Mobility can negatively affect labour regulation by dividing the working class along national, ethnic, linguistic and cultural lines (Scott 2013). This is the case when employers are aware of - and base some of their recruitment and employment decisions on - the employment prospects and earnings of mobile workers in their home country (Anderson et al. 2006). As a result, a central question addressed in my thesis is whether employers in CENTROPE make use of the discrepancies between earnings in the low-wage sector of the Austrian border region and the commuters' region of origin.

Previous studies have shown that employers view mobile workers as a better labour force than natives (Labrianidis and Sykas 2009, Stenning and Dawley 2009). Local workers were considered less reliable than foreign workers, unable to sustain the pace of work required and less willing to work unsociable shifts, especially when the work is temporary, seasonal or unpleasant with unsociable hours. Waldinger and Lichter (2003: 143) argue that the employers' approach is to find workers who "accept the management's wishes with the minimum of bridling" and that "suitability for subordination will be the crucial, if not determining, consideration". By applying this collective orientation and social pattern of interpretation, new power constellations and distribution conflicts can be created. According to (Harvey 2005: 168) "employers have historically used differentiations within the labour pool to divide and rule", as a fragmented working class has less potential for collective resistance.

These attitudes and practices are situated within the broader context of the flexibility paradigm. It acts as a rationalizing mechanism through which a capitalist pursuit of maximum surplus value acts in order to produce differential opportunities for mobile workers compared with local workers. The construction of an integrated European labour market strengthens the employers' power (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2016). A high demand in labour allows employers to "be more selective and, in the process, make subsequent worker control, management, and even workplace intensification easier" (Scott 2013: 1093). For that reason my thesis aims to provide answers as to whether new social hierarchies are developed in the placement of low-wage workers in the Austrian border region. This is especially pertinent on a sociopolitical level, as persisting inequalities between commuters

and locals would pose a serious threat to social cohesion and can become a major policy challenge (Guzi and Kahanec 2015).

6.6 Life-Worlds

Finally, on a micro level internal social structures and processes, as well as interrelations between various social groups involved are decisive factors for structuring mobility on a transnational labour market. This encompasses commuters' social capital and the role of social networks for their labour market integration. Recent literature on transnational labor markets has emphasized the role of social networks as a key to the effective transmission of information regarding work opportunities (Calvo-Armengol and Jackson 2004, Elrick and Lewandowska 2008). Recruiting new employees by means of current employees' social networks (Fernandez, Castilla and Moore 2000: 1290) is common practice and implies several advantages for employers, e.g. employees will tend to recommend qualified persons as their own reputation may be affected by referees' potentially poor performance (Fernandez et al. 2000: 1291).

However, transnational social relations can not only bring about benefits, but interactions on the Austrian labour market can also create new conflicts and differentiations. The project of European integration has added a layer of complexity as to how people relate to one another and decide who is included and excluded within their communities (Baban 2013: 217). As a result of the opening of the labour market, distributional conflicts over the allocation of resources between interest groups may arise. In the Central European Region, it is of particular interest whether new cleavages are forming within the low-wage sector of the Austrian labour market. This creation of new social hierarchies and divisions can be enforced through employers' efforts to undercut labour standards (Bernaciak 2015: 232).

On a broader level life-worlds comprise the question on the conditions and limits of the development of a European society. What is the relationship between institutional and social integration? How does crossing the border on a regular base influence the shaping of spatial and social belonging in CENTROPE? Borders order daily life practices, strengthening or belonging to, and identity with, places and groups, while at the same time perpetuating notions of difference and othering (Newman 2006). There seems to be evidence that daily commuters have a higher degree of separation from their professional role, their social role and, to a lesser degree, their sense of entitlement and belonging. Consequently, one part of my thesis will examine the link between cross-border practices and spatial and social constructions of belonging. These aspects relate to the empirical reflection of the administrative unit of the Central European region.

7 Methodological Approach

7.1 Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Data

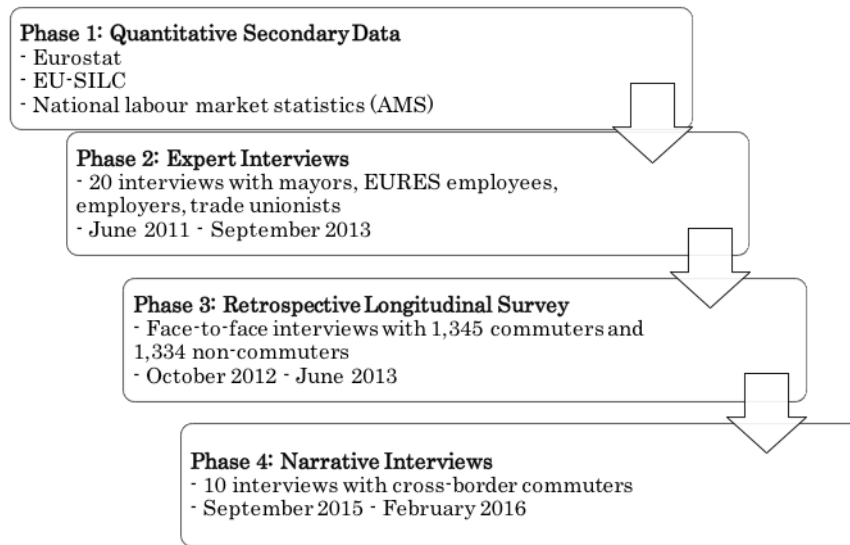
The use of mixed methods design is gaining importance in transnational labour market research. Many qualitative studies and a growing number of quantitative surveys intend to pay closer attention to cross-border lives and transnational practices (Fauser 2017). Up until now transnational quantitative methodologies have so far received less attention, particularly regarding the important question of how to integrate quantitative methods into transnational research (Horvath 2012). Target populations as well as units of reference are still commonly defined in national terms, following the premise that the "nation state society is the natural social and political form of the modern world" (Wimmer and Schiller 2003: 217). The longitudinal survey conducted in the course of the TRANSLAB project is designed to overcome these gaps.

The basis of the empirical analysis is formed by official secondary data from Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (EUROSTAT, National labour market statistics from the AMS and EU-SILC data) and by qualitative and quantitative primary data gained from the research project TRANSLAB. The main group that was studied are cross-border labour commuters in the north-eastern regions bordering Austria. The target population was studied using a standardized survey on employment trajectories and life course events. Furthermore, Hungarians, Slovaks and Czechs whose main place of residence is in their home region and who do not work across national borders were also studied as a reference group in the standardized survey. The main phase of the project was accompanied by an expert survey of EURES employees, business owners, local mayors and trade unionists in the border regions. In the final phase, 10 narrative interviews with commuters were conducted. In regard to the data collection the methods, the chronology and the sample strategy were determined at the preparation level of the study.

The data was studied with a fixed method design, where the use of quantitative and qualitative data is predetermined and planned at the start of the research process (Creswell and Clark 2011: 54). The mixed methods approach enables to enhance the "broad purposes of breadth and depth of the understanding of the specific research area" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007: 123). The goal of the mixed method research model is to

gain a comprehensive insight into the status-quo of commuters' labour market integration in CENTROPE, the outcomes are then complemented with a qualitative follow-up study that illustrates the context and consequences of their social reality. Therefore, the data is not collected, analysed and integrated simultaneously, but in multiple sequential phases of research that include multiple types of methods and different types of problems (Creswell and Clark 2011: 61). The combination of the methods provides contextual understanding coupled with broad relationships among variables not covered in the survey (Bryman 2006).

Figure 7.1: Mixed Methods Design



The mixed methods sequential explanatory design consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Creswell 2003). In this design the qualitative phase builds on the quantitative phase and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage in the study. First, quantitative data is collected and analysed to provide a general understanding of the research problem. Then, the qualitative data is collected and analysed in the second sequence to help explain, enhance, deepen or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase (Creswell and Clark 2011: 104). This design has also been referred to as qualitative follow-up approach (Morgan 1998). The complementarity of the two research themes seeks to illustrate and clarify the results from the quantitative data with the results from the qualitative data (Greene, Caracelli and Graham 1989).

The design has been chosen since it is useful to explain mechanisms and reasons behind trends indicated in quantitative data and to answer new questions based on the quantitative results that cannot be answered with quantitative data (Creswell and Clark 2011: 82). The methods here are used and understood as tools rather than broad traditions in rivalry with each other. The methodological rationale behind the design is complementarity, in other words using different methods to address the different parts of a phenomenon

or simply to obtain separate answers to a shared question. The overall philosophical assumptions behind this design change from post-positivist to constructivist: since the study begins quantitatively, the researcher begins to develop instruments, measure variables and assess statistical results (Creswell and Clark 2011: 83). In the qualitative phase there is a shift to using the assumptions of constructivism in terms of valuing multiple perspectives and in-depth description.

7.2 Expert Interviews

The starting point for the empirical data collection is the survey of experts. In relative terms, talking to experts in the exploratory phase of a project is a more efficient and concentrated method of collecting information than other data gathering processes, since it serves as a tool to get insights into practical insider knowledge (Bogner, Littig and Menz 2009b). Experts have special knowledge related to their professional field including implicit knowledge about maxims of action, rules of decision-making, collective orientations and social patterns of interpretation (Bogner et al. 2009a).

Altogether 20 expert interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2013 by the two PhD researchers of the TRANSLAB project, namely Raimund Haindorfer and me. The interviews were carried out across the border regions of the Central European Region. The sample consists of seven business owners, six local mayors, seven European Employment Agency (EURES) employees (two employees in Vienna were interviewed together) and two transnationally operating trade unionists (interviewed together as well). The experts have special knowledge related to their professional field including implicit knowledge about maxims of action, rules of decision-making, collective orientations and social patterns of interpretation (Bogner et al. 2009a). These experts are part of the field of action and constitute an important 'factor' regulating cross-border commuting in CENTROPE. The selection of representatives in different areas was based on their shared institutional and organizational context. A total of 18 interviews were carried out in German, one interview with a mayor in the Czech border region was conducted in the presence of a simultaneous interpreter, and one interview with a EURES-employee in the Slovakian border region was conducted in English.

All interviews covered important aspects of the social process of commuting, such as the structure and development of mobility processes within the Central European Region. This includes relevant legal and institutional frameworks for cross-border commuting, the specific role of the interviewees in the context of cross-border commuting, information on companies which hire commuters, possible short and medium term consequences (risks and opportunities) of the removal of the remaining barriers to free movement as well as

Table 7.1: Number of Interviewees per Representative Role and Border Region

Representative role	Area of action	AT	CZ	HU	SK
Mayor	Local governmental infrastructure	5	1	n/a	n/a
EURES employee	Job service through formal channel	4	1	1	1
Business owner	Job placement	7	-	-	-
Trade unionist	Representation and protection of labour law	2	-	-	-

n/a not available for an interview, *AT* Austria, *CZ* Czech Republic, *HU* Hungary, *SK* Slovakia

Source: Wiesböck (2016)

short and medium term scenarios for region. Even though the interviews were thematically predetermined, interviewees were given an opportunity to personally define their expertise and to assess what is relevant in the given context (Dexter 2006). For this reason, the main categories organising the empirical data differ from the initial guidelines.

The interviews were analyzed according to the interpretation scheme established by Meuser and Nagel (2009). The aim of the evaluation was to analyze and compare passages with similar topics spread throughout interviews. After the transcription, the interviews were paraphrased and ordered into thematic units. The passages from different interviews were then tied together. The final step of the analysis was the conceptualization and theoretical generalization of the material.

7.3 Retrospective Longitudinal Survey

From October 2012 to June 2013, the social research institute GfK Austria and its Central European partner institutes carried out face-to-face interviews with a total of 1,345 commuters to Austria and a reference group of 1,334 non-commuters. For each border region, approximately 400 interviews with commuters and approximately 400 interviews with the reference group of non-commuters were conducted. The interviews had a length of 45 minutes.

The interviewed subjects were employed at least twenty hours per week, were aged 21 to 65 and had their primary residence within regions bordering Austria, i.e. South Moravia (Czech Republic), Bratislava and Trnava (Slovakia), and Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas (Hungary). In order to adequately represent the regional structures of the respective countries of origin, communes were defined as sampling points on the basis of district-specific information and classes of commune size per clustering procedures. The resulting sample thus covered a large scope of urban centres, smaller towns and border region villages.

The standardized survey has been carried out simultaneously in all three border regions by the cooperation partner GfK. In the first phase, GfK tested the questionnaire developed by the TRANSLAB project team, using test surveys and adapted it further. In the course of the subsequent phase, GfK carried out the main quantitative survey in the native language of the respondents. Members of the research group have been selectively present on site in order to supervise the work conducted by the partner institute.

Only limited comprehensive information was available on the labor market integration of cross-border commuters in Austria. As the best available approximation, the subsample of commuters was gained via quota sampling, using labor market statistics of the Austrian Public Employment Service, which contains information on the gender and age patterns of Hungarian, Czech and Slovakian dependently employed workers in Austria who have their residence outside of Austria. In order to ensure systematic comparisons between mobile and non-mobile residents of the respective border regions in our study, the subsample of non-commuters was also based on quota-sampling, using quotas for gender, age and education on the basis of official labor market statistics (Labor Force Survey).

The survey instrument is divided into thematic modules and compiled information on reasons for cross-border commuting and non-commuting, current occupation and employment careers, geographical mobility, human capital, social demography, network integration and life satisfaction (Converse and Presser 2005). The questionnaires consist of closed questions as well as semi-open questions. One of the main objectives of the survey was to trace the employment careers of the respondents, using retrospective questions.

Alongside descriptive assessments, the analyses were based on binary logistic regression models and ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. In the logistic regression, the odds ratios and corresponding standard errors which are used to determine the probabilities for various risk groups of certain tested variables were reported, for instance chances for upward wage mobility in the Central European Region.

7.4 Narrative Interviews

The narrative interview is a form of unstructured, in-depth interview (Lamnek and Krell 2016, Schütze 1983). In this type of qualitative research, respondents are encouraged and stimulated to talk about significant events in their life. In the narrative interview respondents are expected to have a narrative in which, on the one hand, the orientation patterns of their actions become clear, while at the same time retrospective interpretations of these actions are generated. According to Stephens and Breheny (2013: 14) narrative is "a pervasive structure with which we comprehend and convey the experiences and meanings of events, account for our own and others' behaviour, and reveal ourselves to

others in the way in which we would like to be seen. In doing so, we also reveal something of the structure of our social world". The type of interview was chosen in accordance with the explorative research interest based on the quantitative results.

In total, 10 narrative interviews were conducted with commuters from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary to Austria between September 2015 and February 2016. Interviewees were aged between 26 and 63, started to commute on a daily basis during different border regimes between 1992 and 2015, in other words before the EU-enlargement 2004, during the gradual opening of the Austrian labour market and after the final restrictions were lifted in 2011. All interviews were conducted by me in German.

The aim of these narrative interviews is to reconstruct in an open and inductively oriented process the commuters' perspective on relevant spatial and social references of belonging that they experience in the transnational region they live and work. After the transcription, the interviews were paraphrased and organised into thematic units. The passages from different interviews were then combined. The final step of the analysis was the conceptualisation and theoretical generalization of central phenomena in the material (Schütze 1983). The relevant interview passages have been translated into English by the author. The qualitative data serves as both tool to add to predetermined concepts in the quantitative dataset and aid to gain an understanding of perceived emerging and maintaining social boundaries. It follows a sequential procedure with the goal to elaborate on and expand the findings of the quantitative method with the qualitative method (Creswell 2003: 16).

7.5 Limitations and Reflexivity in the Field

As with any empirical study, there are limitations concerning the dataset and methodology. The reader should bear in mind that the thesis is concentrated on formalised settings of the labour market. The focus of my research lies on dependently employed work relations on the formal labour market. While various types of self-employment and informal-employment play a major role in understanding the transnational labour market, they could not have been given sufficient attention in my thesis. Due to a lack of accessibility it was not possible to include the perspective of persons hiring commuters in non-formalized settings, e.g. in private households or agriculture. The expert interview with two transnationally acting trade unionists in this sample provides an insight into these settings. Additionally, according to the representative role and position of mayors and businessmen, disclosure of information was to some extent an issue, for instance when it came to the topic of potential wage-dumping effects. From the interviews with businessmen and mayors we did not receive relevant information on wage-dumping or

employment in the informal sector, namely jobs that are partially or fully outside government regulation, taxation, and public observation. However, the interviews with trade unionists again served as a tool to get an insight into this field.

As the best available approximation, the subsample of commuters in the quantitative survey has been gained via quota sampling, drawing on labor market statistics of the Austrian Public Employment Service. Based on this data, the TRANSLAB team used information on the gender and age patterns of Hungarian, Czech, and Slovakian employees in Austria who had their residence outside the country. In order to ensure systematic comparisons between mobile and non-mobile residents of the respective border regions, the subsample of non-commuters was also based on quota sampling (Verwiebe et al. 2017). Quota sampling is a non-probabilistic version of stratified sampling. Since the sample has not been chosen using random selection, it makes it difficult to determine possible sampling errors. Furthermore, a crucial limitation is the potential selection bias in qualitative research (Collier and Mahoney 1996). For example in the survey of experts certain individuals have been more likely to be selected for the study than others, primarily because of their willingness to participate.

Considering the subject of transferability or respectively theoretical generalization, it is important to note that the purpose of the study has not been to identify sociological universals, but to look at social groups as limited wholes situated in concrete spatiotemporal contexts (Kelle 2006: 305).

During the process of data collection and interpretation language has played a crucial role. Language is crucial for all research methods that aim at tracing the participants' generalised patterns of meaning and experience (Inheteven 2012). Qualitative interviewing in a multilingual field can raise several methodological problems. For example, not sharing the same mother tongue plays a part in the dynamics of the interviewing situation (Burgess 1986). In addition, the process of data analysis is affected, in my case in particular since I worked with interviews translated into English. This methodological reflection is of broad relevance as qualitative research is increasingly conducted in an international environment (Nikander 2008). Translation by itself is already an interpretive act, hence meaning may get lost in the translation process. The question of who performs the translation not only has epistemological implications, but the final product is also affected by how far the researcher chooses to involve a translator in research (Temple and Young 2004). Throughout my thesis converting data from one language to another required accuracy and proficiency. Potential issues of representation in the context of translation have been of concern throughout the entire process of interpretation.

Another aspect that has to be reflected is the interaction of the researcher with the social group under study. The process of knowledge production is embedded in power relations. Power has a role in the production of knowledge and, conversely, knowledge presumes

and constitutes power relations. The conduct of fieldwork is always contextual, relational and politicised. The process of selecting appropriate sites to conduct interviews alone constitutes multiple scales of spatial relations and meaning, which construct power and positionality of participants (Elwood and Martin 2000). Therefore, the locality of the interviews has always been proposed and chosen by the interviewed persons. Finally, the interaction of the researcher with the data plays a pivotal part in the research. This includes critical reflexive awareness of the researcher as knowledge producer, the positionality in the knowledge production and the personal relation to the observed subject or matter. The applied perspective in the thesis draws on a social constructionist approach, acknowledging that the research interview is an active interpersonal encounter in which knowledge is created rather than discovered (Kvale 1996).

8 Article Overview

Wiesböck, Laura / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland (2016): Cross-Border Commuting and Transformational Dynamics in the Central European Region. What is the Link? In: Amelina, Anna / Horvath, Kenneth / Meeus, Bruno (eds.) An Interdisciplinary Anthology of Migration and Social Transformation: European Perspectives (187-200). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Audience:	Students seeking to get an overview of a field of work
Limitations:	6.000 words

Chapter 12

Cross-Border Commuting and Transformational Dynamics in Europe: What Is the Link?

Laura Wiesböck, Christoph Reinprecht, Raimund Haindorfer
and Roland Verwiebe

12.1 Introduction

This chapter considers cross-border commuting as a form of mobility that is linked to social-transformation processes in multiple ways. Building on an ongoing empirical study of the Central European Region, the chapter discusses (1) cross-border commuting as an institutionalized form of labour mobility, (2) cross-border regions as political complexes with diverse histories, and (3) economic outcomes and life satisfaction of cross-border commuters in comparison with the resident population. Beyond the (potential) role and function of geographical mobility both for social differentiation and for minimizing regional disparities, the chapter examines how new legal and institutional realities shape mobility and social inequality, and what the emerging types and patterns of cross-border commuting strategies imply for socially and symbolically integrated intra-European transnational labour markets. To address the effects on social transformation, it is crucial to understand commuting practices against the background of changing regional and border dynamics in which cultural, political, and economic asymmetries play a significant role. This is particularly relevant for circular East–West mobility in the current intra-European context, which is often marked by long-lasting regional disparities. The emergence of Euroregions as new forms of cross-border governance is a crucial element for the institutionalization of such stimulated regional cooperation along the national borders within the EU. The Central European Region (Centroepe) is a notable example of this development: here the increasing cross-border commuting is framed in multiple ways by ongoing societal transformations resulting both from European enlargement processes and from the significant post-socialist reconfiguration of economic, political, and legal institutions.

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In the first part of the chapter we provide an overview of new patterns of labour circulation within the European Union. We will then introduce the promotion of intra-European mobility as a form of politically intended social transformation. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of Euroregions as institutionalized cross-border regions, showing how they contribute to the regional dimension of European integration. This is followed by some examples of borderlands in the EU, which are discussed on the basis of current empirical studies to illustrate our points, and an in-depth case study on Centrope. The chapter concludes with an outlook on further important research questions in this field.

12.2 Conceptualizing New Patterns of Temporary Movements Within Europe

There are a number of different conceptual tools available to describe current patterns of labour movements across EU borders. Traditional terminologies and distinctions used in studying these movement practices would not do justice to recent social changes, while the development of new vocabularies is still in its early stages (see e.g. Albert 1998: 56; Brettell and Hollifield 2008). First of all, we have to ask whether these types of movement are a form of *mobility* or a form of *migration*. According to Cresswell (2006), mobility can mean any type of territorial movement, migration just being one such type. While ‘mobility’ is predominantly conceptualized as a circular or temporary/short-term movement, ‘migration’ refers to permanent forms of settlement. However, empirical analysis of intra-EU movements shows that the old concept of migration, where individuals leave their country permanently, no longer applies (Mau et al. 2008). Rather, an increasing number of people go abroad for short periods of time to find seasonal employment or to commute across national borders on a regular basis (Mau and Büttner 2010). Given the predominance of short-term circulatory movement back and forth across borders as opposed to permanent one-way migration, it has been suggested that commuting is assigned to the concept of mobility rather than that of migration (Wallace 2002).

When it comes to the concepts covered by the umbrella term ‘mobility’, ‘*circular mobility*’ and ‘*temporary mobility*’ are often used interchangeably without regard to whether they refer to the same phenomenon or to different social and economic realities (Triandafyllidou 2013: 4). According to Vertovec (2007), circular mobility involves not only temporary stays and returns but repeated movement of the same person across borders. Newland et al. (2008) argue that circular mobility—as opposed to temporary mobility—involves both return and repetition, as well as continuous engagement in the sending and receiving countries. Vertovec (2007) also notes that in the early research on migration a wide range of terms was used to refer to mobility, including ‘repeat’, ‘rotating’, ‘multiple’, ‘cyclical’, and ‘shuttle migration’. Van Houtum and Gielis (2006), for example, propose that the term

'elastic migration' should be used to describe short-term transmigration across the Dutch–Belgian and the Dutch–German borders because the workplaces of the transmigrants under study were in the Netherlands, only a few kilometres from their homes in Belgium and Germany respectively. However, within the European Union *'circular mobility'* has become the accepted term to describe an intended and regulated form of labour movement. The current policy turn to circular-mobility policies stems primarily from the relatively recent recognition of the significance of migrant transnational practices (Vertovec 2007, Chaps. 15 and 16, in this volume). Circular-movement practices are based on and establish further transnational social networks. However, the concept has been criticized for its neoclassical approach because circular movements of workers usually occur in response to the swings of the markets and the changing needs of employers, and not so much because the labourers want to be mobile.

12.3 Inner-European Labour Circulation as a Politically Stimulated Process of Social Transformation

Transnational labour markets and enhanced mobility within these markets are often promoted in EU policy as the way forward. A variety of policymakers advocate measures to facilitate the movement of migrants between their homelands and foreign workplaces primarily to generate a win-win-win situation which benefits receiving countries by meeting labour market shortages, sending countries by guaranteeing remittances for development, and migrants by offering employment and control over the use of their wages (Constant et al. 2012).

The EU has been strongly encouraging intra-European mobility through institutional and cultural programmes since the early 1990s. Relevant factors in fostering intra-European movements have included the implementation of the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty on freedom of movement, the recognition of foreign qualifications by EU member states, the Erasmus and Socrates programmes, and the development of a network of European employment offices (Findlay et al. 2006; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Verwiebe et al. 2010). This new mode of migration management belongs to the flexibility paradigm that has prevailed in the European post-Fordist economies in the last few decades and is consistent with the idea that positions may be temporary both on the high and the low ends of the labour market (Venturini 2008). It appears to pose a limited-integration burden on destination countries while maximizing transnational transfers (Triandafyllidou 2013: 4).

The idea of European economic integration through mobility is also applied on a regional level. The European Commission strongly supports cross-border cooperation initiatives such as Euroregions. Euroregions are transnational administrative units that foster collaboration between subnational authorities in areas such as regional development, transport, local economy, cultural activities, and the environment. Although some of these initiatives date back to the 1950s, it was not until the

1990s that the number of cross-border regions in Europe increased significantly. Today there are virtually no local or regional authorities in border areas that are not involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives in some way or other (Perkmann 2003). Euroregions have started a new era in international politics as institutional entrepreneurs, as a model of international governance for regional actors contesting the nation state's traditional monopoly on foreign affairs and international politics (Perkmann 1999, 2002). The establishment of Euroregions is connected with several political visions such as a Europe without borders, a new regionalism, and a turn back to (imagined) common regional historical and regional cultural roots (Klatt and Herrmann 2011: 66). The 'integrationist' turn (Klatt and Herrmann 2011) in the academic research in this field has drawn attention to the rise of a new type of supranational governance that takes the forms of regional transnationalism (Perkmann 2003), border regions acting as pioneers and laboratories of European integration, and cross-border regions serving as a tier in today's system of multi-level government in the EU. Many Euroregions are active agents in the field of cross-border cooperation, which also includes enhanced labour mobility. In the following we will provide examples of major cross-border-commuting regions in Europe, some of which are political-institutional complexes with diverse histories or are constituted by multiple cross-border practices that are weakly institutionalized.

12.4 Some Examples of Major Cross-Border Regions in the European Union

The *Polish–German borderland* is a notable example of dynamic and consistent transnational movements of workers within the European Union. Miera (2008) notes that bilateral Polish–German migration regulations have had a crucial impact on the patterns of Polish migration to Germany: from long-term, legal settlement during the post-war era to an increase in commuter movements of legal and undocumented transmigrants after the 1990s. In 1993 the Pro Europa Viadrina Euroregion was founded. According to Miera, political-transformation processes in Eastern Europe have played an important role in shaping opportunity structures and different types of mobility for individual migrants. In his qualitative study on Polish domestic workers in Berlin, Cyrus (2008) shows that for most of the workers there is a functional separation between Berlin as territory of economic activity and Poland as their personal and emotional environment. However, in some cases friendships and relationships in Berlin are starting to develop. In the context of recent temporary labour migration from Poland to Germany, Kalter (2011) discusses the role of social capital as a relevant explanatory factor, making a strong argument that cross-border commuting in this region needs to be analysed as a social process in which social networks play a crucial part.

Another example of contemporary transnational labour markets within the EU is the *Danish–German border region* (van Houtum and Gielis 2006; Buch et al. 2009; Verwiebe et al. 2010; Strüver 2005a, b). The increase in cross-border commuting has been caused by labour market disparities in the region, which have led to significant differences between cross-border commuters on both sides of the border with respect to wages and main branches of employment (Buch et al. 2009). Most of the German commuters work in the construction and transportation sectors. In Denmark these branches pay much higher wages and generally have better working conditions than in the Northern German border region.

Yet another example is the border region between the *Netherlands and Germany*. Due to a housing shortage in the Netherlands, Dutch people began to move to German villages on the border while maintaining their jobs in the Netherlands (Strüver 2005b). The Belgian borderlands also attract Dutch transmigrants, mainly because of the fiscal climate in Belgium, which is more attractive than that in the Netherlands (van Houtum and Gielis 2006). Thus, what links both directions of short-distance migrations is first and foremost a cost-driven motivation. Yet the active and affective bond with the Netherlands remains very strong. If one considers the transformational effects of this cross-border region, one finds that there are challenges in urban planning on both sides of the border due to the increase in the number of Dutch people moving to Germany. The great demand for houses on the German side of the border has resulted in a rise of housing and land prices and a lack of affordable housing (van Houtum and Gielis 2006). German schools are confronted with an abundance of places for students, while Dutch schools are faced with a shortage of places.

The labour market of *Luxembourg* is a very interesting and instructive example of a transnational labour market (see Schmitz et al. 2012). As many as 50 % of those employed in Luxembourg's labour market are cross-border commuters, and for three decades their number has been on the rise (for example, in 1975 only 9 % were cross-border commuters), and now takes place in a labour market region that extends across four European countries (Schmitz et al. 2012: 6). While the Benelux-Middegebied Euroregion was founded as a transnational cooperation between Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands as far back as 1984, the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Rhin Euroregion was established in 1995 to collaborate with the border regions of Germany and France. Now, what can be said about the sociodemographic structure of commuters in this region? Transnational commuters come from a wide range of age groups (mostly 30–50-year-olds), occupations, and socioeconomic strata. Today nearly half of them are university graduates. The percentage of white-collar workers has risen sharply, while the percentage of those in skilled and unskilled manual occupations has decreased considerably. Interestingly, the rate of homeownership among commuters—described in de Gijssels and Janssen (2000) as a barrier to mobility—has risen.

The labour market of *Liechtenstein*, another rather small European country, is also characterized by a high number of commuters. About 46 % of those employed in Liechtenstein are cross-border commuters from neighbouring countries (Gottholmseder and Theurl 2007), and most of them are from the Austrian state of

Vorarlberg, one of the major regions of out-commuting in this part of Europe, not only to Liechtenstein but also to Switzerland, for example. Gottholmseder and Theurl (2007) ascribe these patterns to specific microeconomic characteristics of Liechtenstein's labour market, which include substantial differences in unemployment rates within the Bodensee region and the outstanding, extremely well-compensated employment positions for which Liechtenstein is known. Studer (2004) found that the average income in Liechtenstein is about twice as high as the average income in Vorarlberg, and Gottholmseder and Theurl (2007: 108) identified substantial differences in educational level—a large percentage of cross-border commuters are graduates of technical colleges.

Based on these brief descriptions of some major European borderlands, a number of factors that contribute to inner-European labour mobility patterns can be identified. First of all, institutional settings and restrictions have an influence on labour movements.¹ In addition, structural differences such as opportunity structures in the labour market, unemployment rates, and housing prices are push–pull factors in the mobility process. Historical patterns of cross-border cooperation and mobility also play an important role in fostering labour movements, and human, cultural, and social capital and sociodemographic characteristics can promote or limit processes of mobility. In the following section we will provide an in-depth look at the Central European Region (Centroe), an instructive example of a region with a specific historico-political context that has gone through a profound system change and (global) societal transformations.

12.5 Cross-Border Commuting and Transformational Perspectives in Centroe: A Case Study

The Central European Region is a distinct cultural area and political region consisting of eight federal provinces, regions, and counties with a total population of about 6.5 million. The largest city in Centroe is Vienna, which has a population of 1.8 million and, along with Bratislava, is one of the two national centres of power in the region. This is an exceptional situation in that most of the other inner-European border regions are located more peripherally Fig. 12.1.

Historically speaking, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU enlargement, and the removal of the last barriers to the free movement of labour have brought about significant changes which in turn have led to new forms of interplay of economic, social, political and legal factors (Horvath 2012). Since May 1, 2011, when the final transitional arrangements were lifted at the end of the 7-year transitional

¹ However, it should be noted that there are no reliable data on non-documented forms of mobility, so analysis of the increase in cross-border movement must rely primarily on data on documented, 'legal' movement practices.



Fig. 12.1 The Central European region

period, citizens of the A8 countries have had full access to labour markets across the EU-27.²

Commuting within the Central European Union is not a recent phenomenon linked to the creation of a European common market (Terlouw 2012: 354). Formal and informal circularity between the countries has existed for many decades, although under specific conditions in the period of state socialism, and with a *longue durée* of cross-border mobility which began during the time of the Habsburg Monarchy. However, Centrope is one of many political projects in the European Union that foster enhanced mobility to strengthen competitiveness and the regional business location. Mobility of labour is one of the core aims of the Centrope Strategy 2013+, which emphasizes commitment to a collaboration that ranges from research and innovation to human-capital development and spatial integration to culture and tourism (Centrope Agency 2012). This reflects the differentiation of movement patterns within the European Union: from once-in-a-lifetime migration to mobility as a life strategy. This development is also due to the short distances between the places; for example, someone may commute between Bratislava and Vienna, the two most populous metropolitan areas in Centrope in 1 h.

In 2009 a slight but steady increase in the number of commuters from neighbouring countries began. This indicates that the unification of the region was already taking place as a result of a gradual opening of the labour market (Commuter Treaty, Professional Employee Regulation 2008, Substitute Workforce Procedure) before people from the non-EU countries even had unrestricted access to the EU labour market. The increase in cross border activities can be attributed to the gradual opening of the borders. However, the relatively high social inequality between the Austrian

²All citizens from A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) were given the freedom to settle in other member states of the EU to seek employment according to their skills and qualifications.

Table 12.1 Regional statistics 2011

	Household income (€)	GDP per capita PPS (€)
Austria	19,800	32,300
Lower Austria	20,600	26,600
Vienna	19,800	41,300
Burgenland	19,400	21,700
Czech	10,200	20,300
Jihovýchod	9900	18,400
Slovakia	10,500	18,900
Bratislavský kraj	16,000	46,600
Západné Slovensko	10,700	18,100
Hungary	8600	16,900
Nyugat-Dunántúl	5600	17,100

Eurostat; household income: balance of primary income, net (uses), purchasing power standard based on final consumption per inhabitant; *GDP* Gross domestic product at current market prices, purchasing power standard per inhabitant

subregions and their neighbours continues to play an important role. Table 12.1 shows that there are still significant differences between household income and regional GDP levels.³

Very little comprehensive information is available on the integration of cross-border commuters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary into the Austrian labour market. The TRANSLAB research project of the University of Vienna was initiated to fill this gap in the research by building on the established ‘ethnosurvey’ methodology to collect data (see Massey 1987) and on associated, more recent applications adapted for the study of the European setting (see Kalter 2011; Wallace and Vincent 2007). Between October 2012 and June 2013 the Austrian branch of the consumer research group GfK and its Central European partner institutes conducted face-to-face interviews with 1345 commuters who worked in Austria and a reference group of 1334 non-commuters. Currently employed interviewees (at least 20 h a week) were aged 21–65 years and had their primary residence within regions bordering on Austria, such as South Moravia (Czech Republic), Bratislava and Trnava (Slovakia), and Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas (Hungary). Due to a lack of compatible transnational sampling schemes, the subsample of commuters used here is the best approximation available; it was obtained through quota sampling, based on labour market statistics provided by the Public Employment Service Austria.

The TRANSLAB data allows for a detailed analysis of the sociodemographic structure and major labour market characteristics of the cross-border commuters from Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic and for a comparison of natives and migrants in Austria. We compare migrants with commuters because their types

³ However, it should be noted that consumer good prices are relatively high compared with Austria.

of movement are very different from each other. Migrants have their main residence in Austria. Being a migrant does not necessarily imply long-term settlement, however, it indicates that the geographical and physical centre of one's life is in Austria. Cross-border commuters, by contrast, continue to live in their home country. Their main connection to Austria is their workplace, which is geographically separated from their personal lives. While most of the migrants in Austria live and work in urban areas, daily cross-border commuting mainly takes place in rural, peripheral territories.

The TRANSLAB study provides some interesting insights into the social composition of cross-border commuters in Centrope. Most of these commuters have *mid-level qualifications* (ISCED 3–4: 77 %). Low-skilled individuals make up a smaller percentage of cross-border commuters compared with migrant workers in Austria, and the percentage of academics among cross-border commuters is smaller than in all other comparison groups. The majority of cross-border commuters work in *service industries* (e.g. hospitality: 20 %, health care: 17 %) or in *construction* (17 %), with a very small group working in agriculture. The majority of cross-border commuters are *male* (57 % male, 43 % female), a finding consistent with the results of other recent studies (e.g. Drevon and Gerber 2012). Commuters are *relatively young*: 49 % are younger than 35, another 37 % are between 35 and 50 years of age, and only 14 % of the cross-border commuters are older than 50. This is consistent with the findings of Paci et al. (2010), who note that mobility in a cross-border labour market is a phenomenon characterized by young labour.

Due to the diverging forms of movement and different structural initial positions on the Austrian labour market, there are significant differences in real hourly wages and life satisfaction between commuters and migrants. Life Satisfaction has been an important issue in the recent research on the microconsequences of East–West migration/circular mobility in Europe. In particular, there has been considerable debate on whether migration or East–West circulation actually leads to improved quality of life as a result of more material resources being available to those who engage in it, given that occupational trajectories may not be optimal in all respects (Bălătescu 2007: 65; Bartram 2013). Therefore, indicators of life satisfaction and wage differences are important factors when it comes to drawing conclusions about social inequality and the distribution of life chances.

Table 12.2 shows that *cross-border commuters receive medium-level wages*. They earn more than twice as much as non-mobile employees in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. However, their wages are much lower than those of natives and migrants who work in Austria. This may be due to the relatively strong segregation within the Austrian labour market. Wages are comparatively low in a number of branches, especially in hospitality, retail, health care, and other social services. For example, the average wage of Austrian natives is €9.30 in hospitality and €9.85 in social services (Authors' calculations based on EU SILC 2012). This is clearly below the national average, and the wages of migrant workers in these branches are even lower. Another reason for the wage difference may be that work experience gained in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic is not given much credit in wage agreements.

Table 12.2 Wages and life satisfaction of natives, migrants (the ‘foreign-born’), and commuters in Austria compared with non-commuters, 2012/13

	EU-SILC Statistik Austria Data		TRANSLAB Data	
	Natives	Migrants ^a	Commuters	Non-commuters
Real hourly wages (median)	14.58*	11.56*	7.77	3.45*
N	4,091	727	1,004	955
Life satisfaction (mean) ^b	5.33*	4.96*	4.77	4.18*
N	4,076	688	1,322	1,286

EU-SILC Statistik Austria Data 2012; TRANSLAB survey 2012/13; Authors’ calculations based on data on workers between 21 and 65 years of age with a main job (minimum 20 hours/week) in Austria (without employers and family employees)

^aThe category ‘migrants’ comprises persons from the EU-27, former Yugoslavia (not including Slovenia), Turkey and all other countries

^b1=extremely dissatisfied, 6=extremely satisfied. For an appropriate comparison with the EU-SILC measurement of life satisfaction, we transformed the ten-point scale of the TRANSLAB survey into a six-point scale. Statistical differences to the group of cross-border commuters were tested by using Mood’s median-test (wages) and Games–Howell post-hoc-tests (life satisfaction); significance level: * $p < 0.05$

Cross-border commuters show a relatively high life satisfaction. Commuters in our study show a higher life satisfaction (4.77) than non-mobile employees in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic (4.18). This is consistent with findings of Bartram (2013), who notes that East–West-migrants are happier on average than Eastern Europeans who stay in their home country. The level of life satisfaction of cross-border commuters is comparable with those of migrants residing in Austria. Our results also indicate that, on average, natives are more satisfied with their lives (5.33) than migrants (4.96).

This brief case study has illustrated that within the European context, and especially within the nascent European polity, national societies have been challenged and fundamentally transformed, and that they are no longer independent entities but rather are closely interwoven and connected (Mau and Verwiebe 2010). Increasing flows of commodities, people, capital, information, and knowledge have profoundly changed the functions and significance of borders (O’Dowd 2002). The intensification of cross-border relations and partnerships resulting from institutional relationships has been leading to a de-bordering of the European territory (Perkmann 2003). For this reason, ‘methodological nationalism’, which equates ‘society’ with ‘nation state’, has been subject to considerable criticism (see in particular Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). In the politically unified Europe the uniqueness of national reference systems is being replaced by the ambiguity of a variety of different membership zones and negotiable territorial spaces (Bös 2000; Bös and Zimmer 2006). The ‘spatial connection of collective identities’ (Bach 2008) formed through the binding of nations is becoming increasingly insecure. State borders are undergoing a major transformation: during the time of nation states they functioned as conflict

and contact zones that separated territorial units, language, culture and identity borders. The abolition of Europe's internal borders since the implementation of the Schengen Agreement has transferred this exclusionary function to the EU's external borders (Eigmüller 2010).

12.6 Outlook

Recently, the new patterns of transnational commuting and their effects on socio-economic status, well-being, and emerging forms of transnational agency and belonging have been receiving increasing attention in migration research. From a sociological perspective, the conceptualization of new patterns of migration and mobility refers not only to the increasingly diversified practices of border crossing but also to the placement of migrants in the social stratification and cultural norm and value systems. Thus, key questions in sociological research include: Where are the newcomers placed in the dominant inequality system? What opportunities exist to leave socially assigned positions? How open is the dominant society to assimilate new conceptions of life and lifestyles? What can be done to let social conflicts result in social innovation rather than social aggression and exclusion? Traditionally, migration and integration processes have been explained by neoclassical economic theories (individual income maximization) and integration–assimilation theories. More recent approaches have defined migration as part of the linkages between societies, so migration research should be embedded in the study of globalization and social transformation to take into consideration the general (global) changes in social structures and social relationships (Castles 2010). Intra-European cross-border-mobility, particularly that along the line that used to separate the East and the West, is a prime example of such entanglement, and shows how useful it is to intersect migration theory and social theory. Therefore the contribution makes use of a politically driven social transformation perspective.

The question is whether institutionalization can help to transform the currently heterogeneous political and social area into a more homogeneous social, political, and legal space (see Bös and Zimmer 2006). However, analysis that focuses exclusively on processes of institutionalization and attempts at political control is not sufficient; instead, it is necessary to focus on the border regions themselves, considering that according to Mau (2006) the EU can best be understood in relation to its borders. Being the main places where the space of flows meets the space of places, border regions provide fertile ground to study the transformation of states in their struggle to control movements from transnational networks (O'Dowd 2002).

Future research should take different perspectives and focus on the effects on vulnerable groups in this process: mobile workers, but also certain groups of local residents. Until now, most of the research on migration and mobility has used the social-transformation perspective through the conceptual lens of development: the less developed sending region is being, and has to be, socially transformed, but no comprehensive analyses of the effects on local residents have been provided. The

lives of local non-migrants are also being transformed even though they do not themselves move. This could also be a focus of further research. Specifically, it might be worthwhile to take a closer look at potential transformational effects within the local labour market. In addition, there is considerable need to explore research questions such as the following: To what extent do commuters act as agents in institutional development? How do commuters spend their money (improvement of living standards, daily household expenses, employment-generating activities)? Does cross-border commuting contribute to a new rift within the rural low-wage labour market sector (e.g. due to higher language proficiency requirements in the service sector)? How do new institutional realities influence social inequalities within the sending and receiving communities? How does the transformation of the function of physical inner-European borders lead to the creation of new symbolic borders? The body of academic literature in this field is still rudimentarily established and lacks a comprehensive understanding. Future studies dealing with these questions would contribute to a better understanding of social-transformational consequences of cross-border commuting in the European Union.

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Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund (2016): The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? A Multi Method Study for the Case of the Central European Region. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (10): 1711-1724.

Audience:	Scholars with a focus on migration and its consequences
Limitations:	9.000 words
Impact Factor:	1.362 (2016)
DOI:	10.1080/1369183X.2016.1162354



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To cite this article: Laura Wiesböck, Roland Verwiebe, Christoph Reinprecht & Raimund Haindorfer (2016): The economic crisis as a driver of cross-border labour mobility? A multi-method perspective on the case of the Central European Region, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2016.1162354](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1162354)

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The economic crisis as a driver of cross-border labour mobility? A multi-method perspective on the case of the Central European Region

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses labour mobility from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to Austria during the period before and after the economic crisis of 2008/2009. Building up on the TRANSLAB research project, we illustrate various facets of the interregional labour market with a mixed methods approach using regional macro-economic data, national labour market statistics, 20 expert interviews and a longitudinal survey consisting of 1345 cross-border commuters who work in Austria. Empirically we demonstrate that, due to the gradual opening of the Austrian labour market from 2004 to 2011, flows of cross-border commuters have steadily increased. Since 2009 the social composition of cross-border commuters has changed as well. We can observe a growing number of workers seeking employment in Austria who have been most vulnerable during the crisis: the young, the lowly educated and female workers. Moreover, expert interviews show a rising and economically driven demand for employment in Austria.

KEYWORDS

Cross-border commuting;
Central European Region;
circular migration; East–West
mobility; transnational labour
market

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1. Introduction

Up-to-date empirical studies on post-crisis mobility trends in terms of East–West cross-border commuting remain quite scarce (exceptions include: Bahna 2014; Benton and Petrovic 2013; Galgóczi, Leschke, and Watt 2012). In order to fill this gap, this paper examines recent trends in East–West cross-border commuting in the EU before and after the financial crisis of 2008/2009. Building upon an on-going empirical study of the Central European Region (CENTROPE), the article discusses how the crisis has affected labour mobility flows from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to Austria. In this Euroregion – an institutionalised platform for cross-border coordination and cooperation – structural imbalances still exist and, according to the European Commission, mobility of labour is a crucial element for reducing regional disparities (Centrope 2012).¹ Cross-border commuting in CENTROPE is framed in multiple ways by on-going societal transformations resulting both from European enlargement processes and the post-socialist restructuring of economic, political and legal institutions. Cross-border commuting can be conceived as a multifaceted process within a rapidly changing

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environment and under the influence of several major factors.² For example, the gradual opening of the Austrian labour market from 2004 (to Malta and Cyprus) until 2011 (to Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary) has marked important transitions. Building up on a mixed-method approach, the present paper discusses various key aspects of cross-border commuting in CENTROPE before and after 2009. Thus, we seek to draw a comprehensive picture of the potential relation between the economic crisis and mobility processes. We pursue the following research questions:

- (1) How did the crisis affect economic and social inequalities between the subregions of CENTROPE?
- (2) How did the crisis affect labour mobility from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to Austria?
- (3) To what extent have the socio-economic composition of cross-border commuters and the mode of their labour market integration changed since 2008/2009?
- (4) To what extent has wage mobility among commuters been affected by the crisis in 2008/2009?

In order to answer these questions, we draw upon Eurostat regional macro-economic data (research question 1), national labour market statistics issued by the Austrian Unemployment Service (research question 2), 20 expert interviews (research question 2) and a longitudinal survey comprising 1345 cross-border commuters who work in Austria (research questions 3 and 4). The applied expert survey consists of 20 interviews conducted between 2011 and 2014 with European Employment Services (EURES) employees, business owners and local political leaders in the CENTROPE region. We further analyse a new retrospective longitudinal survey consisting of 1345 commuters from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia bordering on Austria that was collected in 2012/2013 within the TRANSLAB research project.

This article is structured as follows: in the first part, we provide an overview of the institutionalisation of labour mobility within the EU. We discuss Euroregions in terms of institutionalised cross-border spaces and how they contribute to the regional dimension of European integration. The paper proceeds with an introduction to CENTROPE and the methodological design of a case study to offer an example of this specific context. After illustrating the outcomes of our empirical study, we conclude with an outlook and further important research questions.

2. The crisis and intra-European labour circulation: economic and institutional perspectives

There is a large body of economic literature on migration and mobility dealing with for example the reasons for migration, the directionality and continuity of migrant flows or the utilisation of immigrant labour (Portes 1997). In this paper, we do not adopt one single theoretical model but rather aim to analyse cross-border commuting in times of economic crisis by taking several perspectives into consideration: according to neo-classical theory, migration is driven by geographic differences in labour supply and demand and by the resulting differentials in wages between labour-rich versus capital-rich countries

(Harris and Todaro 1970). While neo-classical economics assumes that people move abroad permanently to maximise lifetime earnings, the new economics of labour migration assumes that they do so temporarily to overcome market deficiencies at home (Constant and Massey 2002). The segmented or dual labour market theory argues that there is a divide between the high-wage primary and low-wage secondary segments in which immigrants are situated (Piore 1979). Here immigration is linked to structural labour market requirements. Workers are attracted through recruitment practices rather than wage offers. World system theory sees migration as a natural consequence of economic globalisation, whereby companies operate across national boundaries (Wallerstein 1974). New approaches involve in-depth studies at a micro-level, for example, by studying differences and similarities between migrants and non-migrants from similar contexts.

When seeking to understand how decisions to migrate are shaped by larger macro-level factors, it is essential to take political structures into account. The EU has been strongly encouraging intra-European mobility through institutional and cultural programmes since the early 1990s. Relevant factors in fostering intra-European movements have included the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty's freedom of movement provisions, recognition of foreign qualifications by the EU member states, the Erasmus and Socrates programmes and the development of a network of European employment offices (Findlay et al. 2006; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Verwiebe et al. 2010). This new mode of migration management corresponds to the flexibility paradigm which has prevailed in the European post-Fordist economies over the past decades (Venturini 2008). It appears to pose a limited integration burden on destination countries while maximising transnational transfers (Triandafyllidou 2013, 4). The main idea behind this process is to generate a 'win-win-win' situation, namely benefits for receiving countries by meeting labour market shortages, for sending countries through guaranteeing remittances for development and for migrants by offering employment and control over the use of their wages (Constant, Nottmeyer, and Zimmermann 2012). The old concept of migration in which individuals leave their country permanently no longer applies to the intra-European context (Favell 2008; Scott 2006; Verwiebe 2008). Rather, an increasing number of people go abroad for short periods of time to find seasonal employment or to commute across national borders on a regular basis (Mau and Büttner 2010). Transnational labour markets and enhanced mobility within these markets are often promoted as the way forward in EU policy to achieve economic integration. A variety of policymakers advocate measures to facilitate the movement of migrants between their homelands and foreign workplaces.³

The idea of European economic integration through mobility is also applied on a regional level. The European Commission strongly supports cross-border cooperation initiatives such as Euroregions (Centrop Agency 2012). Euroregions are transnational administrative units that foster collaborations between sub-national authorities in areas such as regional development, transport, local economy, cultural activities or the environment. Although some of these initiatives date back to the 1950s, most of these European cross-border regions were institutionalised in the 1990s. Today there are virtually no local or regional authorities in border areas that in one way or another are not involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives (Perkmann 2003). Euroregions have initiated a new era in international politics as institutional entrepreneurs, as a model of international governance for regional actors contesting the nation-state's monopoly on foreign affairs and

international politics (Perkmann 1999, 2002). The establishment of Euroregions is connected with such political visions as a Europe without borders, a new regionalism and a return to shared regional historical and cultural roots (Klatt and Herrmann 2011, 66). The ‘integrationist’ turn (Klatt and Herrmann 2011) in academic research in this field points to the rise of a new kind of supranational governance in the form of regional transnationalism (Perkmann 2003). Border regions act as pioneers and laboratories of European integration. Thus, they become an important tier in today’s system of multilevel government in the EU. Many Euroregions are active agents in the field of cross-border cooperation including enhanced labour mobility (Wiesböck et al. 2015). CENTROPE is a notable example of this development.

3. CENTROPE

CENTROPE is a distinct cultural area and political region consisting of eight federal provinces, regions and counties with a total population of approx. 6.5 million. The largest city in CENTROPE is Vienna, which has a population of 1.8 million and which, along with Bratislava, is one of the two national centres in the region. This is an exceptional situation in that most of the other intra-European border regions are located more peripherally (Figure 1).

Historically the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU enlargement and the removal of the last barriers to the free movement of labour have brought about significant changes which, in turn, have led to new forms of interplay between economic, social, political and legal factors (Horvath 2012). Since 1 May 2011, when the final transitional arrangements were lifted at the end of the seven-year transitional period, citizens of the A8 countries have had full access to labour markets across the EU-27.

Commuting within this part of Europe is not a recent phenomenon linked to the creation of the European common market (Terlouw 2012, 354). Formal and informal circularity between the countries have existed for many decades, albeit under specific conditions in the period of state socialism and with a longue history of cross-border mobility which began during the time of the Habsburg Monarchy (Verwiebe et al. 2015, 4). However, CENTROPE is one of many political projects in the EU that foster enhanced



Figure 1. CENTROPE. © Arge centrope. Reproduced by permission of City of Vienna.

mobility to strengthen competitiveness and the regional business location. Mobility of labour is one of the core aims of the CENTROPE Strategy 2013+, emphasising commitment to collaboration that ranges from research and innovation to human capital development, spatial integration and culture and tourism (Centrope Agency 2012). This reflects the differentiation of movement patterns within the EU: from once-in-a-lifetime migration to mobility as a life strategy. This development is also due to the relatively short distances within CENTROPE. For example, someone may easily commute between Bratislava and Vienna, the two most populous metropolitan areas in CENTROPE, within one hour's time.

Regarding the case study methodology, the TRANSLAB project builds on the established methods of 'ethnosurvey' data collection (Massey 1987) and on associated more recent applications for the European setting (Kalter 2011; Wallace and Vincent 2007). From October 2012 to June 2013, the social research department GfK Austria and its Central European partner institutes carried out face-to-face interviews with a total of 1345 commuters to Austria and a reference group consisting of 1334 non-commuters. By commuting, we understand a given individual's repeated and regular (daily, weekly, monthly or seasonal) movement across national borders. The currently employed interviewees (at least 20 hours a week) were age 21–65 and had their primary residence within regions bordering on Austria, for example, South Moravia (Czech Republic), Bratislava and Trnava (Slovakia), and Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas (Hungary). Considering the lack of appropriate transnational sampling schemes, the best available approximation was done with a subsample of commuters gained via quota sampling, drawing on labour market statistics of the Austrian Public Employment Service.

Additionally we conducted a survey among experts using a semi-structured interview guide. The aim of this step was to deepen the research group's knowledge of the proposed study object. We interviewed a total of 20 experts consisting of EURES employees ($N = 6$), business owners ($N = 7$) as well as local mayors ($N = 6$) and a trade union representative. The expert interviews covered important aspects of the social process of commuting within this special region, such as the structure and development of mobility processes within CENTROPE, including relevant legal and institutional frameworks for cross-border commuting; the role of the EURES agencies, business owners, local political leaders and administrative officials in cross-border commuting; information on companies (size, sector) that hire commuters; possible short- and medium-term consequences (risks and opportunities) of the removal of the remaining barriers to free movement in CENTROPE; and the short- and mid-term economic scenarios for this region. In the following discussion, we focus on the interviews with EURES employees as they, by virtue of their occupational position, have specialist knowledge regarding the specific social contexts surrounding the interregional labour market.

4. The economic context: changes in inequality in sending and receiving regions before, during and after the crisis

Regardless of the political and economic reintegration of the region, CENTROPE is still characterised by relatively high economic and social inequalities. Tables 1 and 2 show that significant differences maintain in terms of household income, regional gross domestic product (GDP) levels, unemployment and poverty.

Table 1. Regional statistics between 2000 and 2011: household income and GDP.

	Household income per capita (PPS)					GDP per capita (PPS)				
	2000	2006	2008	2009	2011	2000	2006	2008	2009	2011
Austria	15,400	18,400	19,200	18,800	19,800	25,100	29,700	31,100	29,500	32,300
Lower Austria	15,600	18,800	19,800	19,300	20,600	20,700	24,200	25,700	24,200	26,600
Vienna	17,300	19,200	19,700	19,200	19,800	34,600	39,300	40,300	38,300	41,300
Burgenland	13,900	17,800	18,700	18,400	19,400	16,600	19,800	20,500	19,900	21,700
Czech Republic	7000	9400	9600	9900	10,200	13,500	18,900	20,200	19,400	20,300
Jihovýchod	6700	9000	9400	9600	9900	12,100	16,800	18,100	17,600	18,400
Slovakia	5500	7800	9500	9500	10,500	9,500	14,900	18,100	17,000	18,900
Bratislavský kraj	8000	12,200	14,400	15,000	16,000	20,700	34,800	41,700	41,600	46,600
Západné Slovensko	5200	7700	9500	9400	10,700	9,000	14,800	17,300	16,000	18,100
Hungary	5600	8000	7900	7900	8600	10,300	14,900	15,900	15,300	16,900
Nyugat-Dunántúl	5800	7500	7900	8200	5600	11,600	15,000	15,500	14,300	17,100

Source: Eurostat (2015); *household income*: balance of primary net income, PPS based on consumption per inhabitant; *GDP*: gross domestic product in PPS per inhabitant.

Table 2. Regional statistics between 2000 and 2011: unemployment and poverty rate.

	Unemployment rate in %					Poverty rate in %				
	2000	2006	2008	2009	2013	2005	2006	2008	2009	2013
Austria	4.7	4.7	3.8	4.8	4.9	12.6	12.6	15.2	14.5	14.4
Lower Austria	4.8	4.0	3.4	4.3	4.5	12.9	12.1	10.9	10.1	12.0
Vienna	7.5	8.8	6.7	7.5	8.4	15.2	17.2	17.0	17.1	23.0
Burgenland	4.8	5.0	3.6	4.6	4.0	11.6	12.4	13.0	11.2	7.0
Czech Republic	8.8	7.1	4.4	6.7	6.7	10.4	9.9	9.0	8.6	9.8
Jihovýchod	7.1	7.1	4.0	6.5	6.8	8.2	8.3	9.0	8.5	6.6
Slovakia	19.1	13.4	9.5	12.0	14.2	13.3	11.6	10.9	11.0	13.0
Bratislavský kraj	7.5	4.6	3.4	4.6	6.4	7.8	7.3	6.9	6.5	8.0
Západné Slovensko	17.6	9.8	6.4	9.9	11.7	13.5	10.4	10.1	10.0	11.5
Hungary	6.6	7.5	7.8	10.0	10.9	13.5	15.9	12.4	12.4	14.3
Nyugat-Dunántúl	4.4	5.7	4.9	8.6	7.8	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Eurostat (2015); *unemployment*: percentage of working age population; *poverty*: at risk of poverty, percentage of population; poverty rate for Hungary only available for NUTS-1 region Dunántúl; poverty rate for Austria in 2013 based on Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria 2015a), not available via Eurostat; poverty rate on NUTS-2 level not available for period before 2005.

Overall, on a national level and in most of the subregions, *household income* (measured by individual consumption levels) has increased since the year 2000, while the income gap between the Austrian subregions and the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian subregions has decreased markedly during the last decade due to a catching-up process in the Eastern countries (GDP per capita has doubled, for example, in the Slovakian subregions) (see Table 1). Interestingly household income in the Austrian subregions decreased between 2008 and 2009 – the first two years of the economic crisis in Europe – which was not the case in the other subregions of CENTROPE. However, substantial differences between the countries have remained until recently: in 2011, household income in Austria was more than twice as high as that in Hungary, which has the lowest income level followed at close range by Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

We can observe a similar pattern regarding the development of regional GDP per capita in the purchasing power standard (PPS). The GDP in Austrian subregions was two to three times higher than in the other subregions in 2000. A catching-up process has been taking place in the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian subregions bordering Austria, with decreasing differences in GDP between 2000 and 2011. Moreover, the growth of

GDP per capita decelerated in all subregions of CENTROPE in the years after 2008. The most recent data of 2011 show that the areas in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have a per capita GDP around €18,000 (in PPS), with the exception of the region around Bratislava which has the highest per capita GDP in CENTROPE (€46,600). The Hungarian subregions have a GDP between €14,800 and €17,100. GDP in Austria varies between €21,700 (Burgenland) and €41,300 (Vienna).

The regional *unemployment* rates have changed during the last decade as well. There is a certain extent of catching-up due to improved levels of unemployment in the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian subregions of CENTROPE. However, since the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, unemployment in those subregions has quickly increased. In the Austrian subregions, a stabilisation (and partially a decline) in unemployment can be ascertained since 2008 on account of successful government stimuli which have avoided large-scale job losses. Interestingly, the *risk of poverty* in relation to the median income level of the national population in Austrian subregions is higher than in the neighbouring countries.⁴ Here again, we observe increasing levels of poverty in all subregions of CENTROPE. With the exception of Vienna, the increase is stronger in the subregions bordering Austria, thus leading to a gradual harmonisation of poverty rates in the entire region.

By and large, since the crisis in 2008, the structures of existing economic and social differences within CENTROPE have changed to some extent: (1) household income/consumption levels as well as GDP per capita have undergone a catching-up process within CENTROPE, which slowed down as of the economic crisis in 2008; (2) since 2008, unemployment has increased much more rapidly in the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian subregions than in the Austrian subregions; and (3) on the national level, poverty risks in Austria are higher than in the other countries. However, poverty risks in the subregions of CENTROPE have been gradually harmonised since 2008 due to a stronger increase in poverty in the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian subregions.

5. The scale of commuting: rising flows of and demand for labour post-crisis

How does the crisis affect cross-border commuting? Is there a relationship between the present (gradually decreasing) structural imbalances and the scale of cross-border commuting? Figure 2 provides an answer to these questions using available macro-data.

From 2009 a slight and steady increase in commuters from neighbouring countries has been taking place. This indicates that a reintegration of the region resulted from a gradual opening of the labour market (Commuter Treaty, Professional Employee Regulation 2008, Substitute Workforce Procedure) before the last barriers to free mobility were lifted in May 2011. Correspondingly we would argue that this steady increase in cross-border commuting cannot be solely attributed to the effects of the economic crisis but also has to be seen in the context of the changing legal framework and regional political reintegration.

The graphic provides insight into the dynamics of rising cross-border labour flows from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary to Austria. However, it is noteworthy that it only illustrates one part of social reality, as the Austrian Labour Market Service (AMS) data solely comprise dependently employed workers. Now, in order to describe the changing patterns and experiences of cross-border commuting during and after the crisis, we refer to the insights gained through expert interviews.

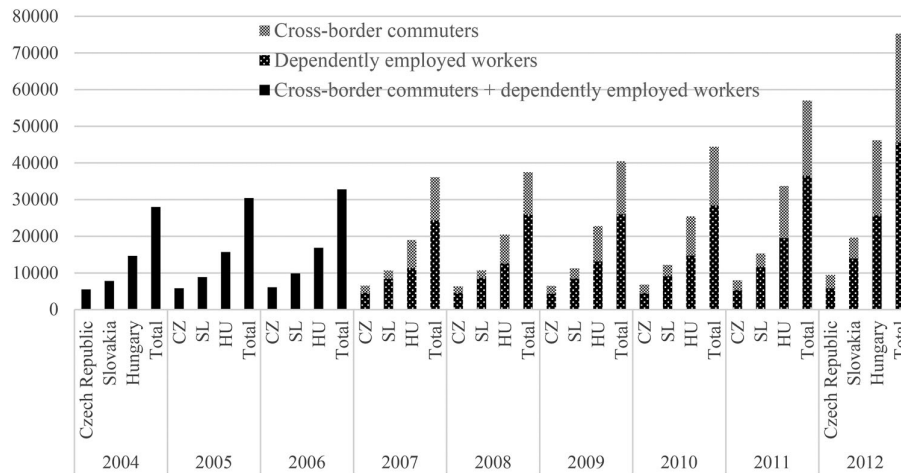


Figure 2. Cross-border commuters and dependently employed workers from Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic on the Austrian labour market (2004–2012).

Source: Austrian Labour Market Service (AMS); own calculations. The data are based on quarterly reports of the Austrian Social Insurance Carrier (HV) which keep records of workers in dependent employment. Marginally employed, self-employed, contractors, foreign-employed are not included. Cross-border commuters: Czech, Hungarian and Slovakian citizens working in Austria with primary residence in their home country. No detailed data available between 2004 and 2006.

According to a EURES employee in *Hungary*, the crisis explicitly initiated movements to find employment across the border for existential economic reasons.

There are a lot of people who fell into the credit trap. Many people in Hungary borrowed Swiss francs from a bank. A lot of them have pending execution proceedings, their houses have to be auctioned. There was even a case of a woman who had to put her two children into a foster home for the winter season. So there are a lot of hard fates. [...] To my opinion, the rising demand [for information on employment in Austria] is clearly related to the financial crisis and the wish to escape from Hungary. One can speak of economic refugees who see their last chance in employment in a foreign country. (EURES Employee, Hungary, June 2012)

This may emphasise the fact that Hungary has been hit particularly hard by the crisis (see [Table 2](#) for the increase in unemployment). Workers from Hungary commuting to Austria are on the rise: in Austria the number of newly registered Hungarians in 2011 (9000) was one and a half times higher than it had been a year earlier, doubling between 2010 and 2012 when it reached 13,000 (Statistik Austria 2015b). The increased demand for jobs for Hungarians is also reflected in the observations of an Austrian EURES employee. Yet according to his experience, there would be a plurality of reasons for recent mobility trends, such as current political developments:

There are also people who come from Sopron which is only 20 kilometres from here. They have been living there for decades but just recently lost their jobs because of the crisis or the new government in Hungary or because of something else. [...]. Hungary is a very, very special case. To some extent the economic development and the labour market situation certainly foster mobility. (EURES Employee, Austria, June 2012)

In this regard, it is important to note that, besides such macro-economic conditions as wage levels and unemployment rates, meso- and micro-factors, including transport infrastructure, urban structure in the border region and family and personal relations, also play an important role in affecting the flow of cross-border commuters. However, economic reasons are considered to be the most relevant drivers of workforce mobility.

Seeking employment in Austria for existential reasons is not only instigated by inhabitants of the border regions. The interviewed Hungarian EURES employee explained that the contemporary crisis has prompted new forms of mobility both across borders and internally:

A recent phenomenon, for about a year now, has been that a lot of people from Eastern Hungary are moving to Western Hungary because they perceive the border region as a steppingstone to the Austrian labour market. However, most of them are completely unprepared, they leave everything behind and arrive with just a backpack and a map in their hand, they do not collect any information before coming over. Most of them are forced to go back because the labour market in Burgenland is already full. It is no longer possible to find employment there. (EURES Employee, Hungary, June 2012)

Given this example, it becomes clear that commuting involves crucial social and personal costs and may lead to unsuccessful experiences. Besides the local employment situation, social networks and informal knowledge play a central role in defining commuters' labour market outcomes. In these terms, the political and legal vision of intra-European mobility fails to act as a universal remedy and the emerging European labour market is by large structured through social capital.

Overall, the EURES employee in Hungary noticed a rising demand for jobs in Austria; however, there were not enough vacancies in the lower wage labour market segment in the border region of Hungary and Austria. The demand was much higher than actual job prospects:

There are so many more people who try their luck than actual employments. People are being bounced back. Not everybody will get a job. There are a lot of people who want to work in Austria, but only a few manage to get a job. Nowadays employers can choose from an enormous pool of applicants, so they really can select the best people. I talked to an employer the other day and he said he receives about 400–500 emails for one single job offer. (EURES Employee, Hungary, June 2012)

These observations correspond with the macro-economic situation of Hungary. According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the country faced crucial difficulties after the transition from a socialist economy to a market economy in the early 1990s and especially during the financial crisis in 2008. This country has imposed strict austerity measures to meet the expectations of the EU as set out in the Maastricht criteria. Growth incentives have been announced with the aim of ensuring Hungary's compliance with the Europe 2020 objectives (Eurofound 2014). The high demand in labour allows employers to 'be more selective and, in the process, make subsequent worker control, management, and even workplace intensification easier' (Scott 2013, 1093).

In *Slovakia*, a EURES employee not only described the growing interest in finding employment across the borders after the labour market opening in 2011, but also emphasised the increasing extent of job offers and interregional collaboration:

It is much more work. Previously not so many people were coming here to ask. We also have more vacancies and our co-operation is stronger than it was before. And there are more problems of course because more people are working there and therefore more problems for my side. More and more people are asking me about jobs, accommodation, social security and so on. (EURES Employee, Slovakia, September 2012)

This is also reflected by a study of the European Vacancy Monitor: in 2010 the demand for jobs in Austria increased significantly, especially in wholesale and trade (European Commission 2015). In contrast to Hungary, Slovakia has seen profound economic and social transformation: moving from a centrally planned to a market-driven economy, it became the fastest growing EU economy in the years 2007, 2008 and 2010. This development is comparable to that of the *Czech Republic*: after the declines in export during the economic downturn in 2009, the Czech economy has slowly stabilised (Eurofound 2014).

From an entrepreneurial perspective, the rising demand for work on the interregional job market is largely welcomed. An Austrian businessman, head of a cleaning company in the border region of Lower Austria, Slovakia and Hungary, pointed out that he prefers cross-border commuters over unemployed locals. In his view, mobility due to existential economic reasons is positively connoted as it seemingly manifests in high motivation and work ethic:

As an Austrian it is not easy to say that, but by now I prefer a Hungarian or a Slovak over an Austrian. That's because they are eager to work. They act from necessity, as back home there are not a lot of opportunities. I call it 'hungry'. They really want to work. [...] I notice that the commitment and willingness are higher. You get a more committed and more intelligent worker than in Austria – for the same money. A worker who is able to speak German, who is glad to have a job and who is willing to compromise. (Businessman, Austria, September 2013)

This goes in line with the findings of Waldinger and Lichter (2003, 143) who argued that the employers' approach is to find workers who 'accept the management's wishes with the minimum of bridle' and that 'suitability for subordination will be the crucial, if not determining, consideration'. Summing up, the expert interviews reveal a dynamisation of labour-related movements within CENTROPE, while emphasising a diversification of risks during the last years. Furthermore the interviewees pointed out to the rising demand for jobs, which was partially indicated by the macro-data.

Building up on these insights, the next section discusses the following research question: To what extent has the socio-economic composition of cross-border commuters and the mode of their labour market integration changed after 2009? By reference to our longitudinal data, we discuss the educational levels, industrial sectors, genders and ages of commuters in Austria before and after the economic crisis of 2008/2009.

6. Changing characteristics of commuters: socio-demographic composition and wage mobility before and since the crisis

The present study provides several interesting insights in terms of the social composition of cross-border commuters in CENTROPE before and since the crisis. On average, cross-border commuters after the events of 2008 share the demographic characteristics of workers who proved most vulnerable during the crisis.

- (1) Relative youth: 62.1% of the commuters after 2009 are aged between 21 and 35 years compared to 29.8% before 2009. Only 7.7% of the cross-border commuters in CENTROPE are older than 50 after 2009. This is comparable to the study authored by Paci et al. (2010) who pointed out that mobility in a cross-border labour market is a phenomenon marked by younger individuals.
- (2) Lower levels of education: The proportion of lower-educated commuters has doubled from 5.4% to 11% after 2009. There has also been a slight increase on the higher end of educational spectrum from 12.9% to 15.3%. The majority of cross-border commuters still have intermediate qualifications.
- (3) Women: While before 2009 the ratio of female and male workers was 39.8% to 60.2%, there have been 44.5% female commuters as compared to 55.5% male commuters since then. Recent studies indicate that cross-border commuters are male rather than female (e.g. Drevon and Gerber 2012). However, women who had already been in disadvantaged positions in the labour market prior to the economic crisis are on average disproportionately more affected than men.
- (4) Mainly work in service jobs: Work in some areas of the service industries has strongly increased (e.g. trade, gastronomy) after 2009, with labour demand being quite high in these sectors of the Austrian economy. In the health industry, it has decreased but is still much higher than for all other groups of the Austrian labour market. A rather small and declining group found employment in agriculture. The share of cross-border commuters working in manufacturing and construction is decreasing as well over time and is lower than for the other labour groups in Table 3.

Based on the changing socio-economic composition and labour market characteristics of commuters, the following discussion focuses on their careers. To what extent has the wage mobility of cross-border commuters been affected by the events of the financial crisis? In order to discuss this question, Table 4 shows job changes related to upward and downward mobility in CENTROPE before and after 2009. Using the underlying TRANSLAB data, we compare wage mobility patterns among cross-border commuters who work in Austria with the Czech, Hungarian and Slovakian citizens who work on the local labour markets in the respective countries bordering Austria.

Table 4 shows that patterns of upward mobility have clearly changed during the last years. We observe much *more upward mobility* for those who work in Austria and less upward mobility for those who work in the Czech, Hungarian, Slovakian regions bordering Austria *since 2009*. Before the crisis the probability to gain higher wages through job mobility was equally distributed in all subregions of CENTROPE. Interestingly, downward wage mobility can be observed in much lower numbers in the region. However, it has increased for those who got a job in Austria after the crisis. A twofold movement can thus be identified: on the one hand, there is an improvement of opportunities for career advancement for cross-border commuters after the economic crisis and, on the other hand, there is a rise in financial risks of cross-border commuter who started a new job in Austria after 2009.

Using several logistic regression analyses, we finally compare wage upward mobility in the years before and after 2009. Table 5 includes a number of socio-demographic indicators, variables which capture the human capital of cross-border commuters (education/formal training, language command) and their social capital (near and far family

Table 3. Major labour market characteristics of natives, migrants ('foreign-born') and cross-border commuters in Austria before and since the crisis (2012/2013).

	Micro census data Austrian labour market			TRANSLAB data	
	Natives	EU-10	Turkish and ex-Yugoslavs	Cross-border commuters before 2009	Cross-border commuters after 2009
Education					
ISCED 0–2	8.2	5.0	37.6*	5.4*	11.0*
ISCED 3–4	69.9*	66.0*	56.8*	81.6*	73.6*
ISCED 5–6	21.9*	29.0*	5.7*	12.9*	15.3*
Industrial sector					
Agriculture and forestry	5.2*	1.5	0.3*	5.8*	2.2*
Manufacturing and construction	26.2	28.6	40.0*	26.5	22.6
Services	68.6	70.0	59.7*	67.7*	75.2*
Wholesale and retail trade	14.4*	8.9	14.0	7.7*	13.6*
Gastronomy and accommodation	4.4*	11.9	11.4*	15.3*	22.7*
Health service, social work	9.7*	12.6	8.4*	19.3*	15.5*
Other, personal services	40.2*	36.6*	25.9	25.4	23.4
Gender					
Female	44.0	52.0*	40.7	39.8*	44.5*
Male	56.0	48.0*	59.3	60.2*	55.5*
Age					
21–35 years	32.8*	36.3*	34.5*	29.8*	62.1*
36–50 years	44.8*	42.0	49.3*	47.4*	30.2*
51–65 years	22.4*	21.7*	16.2	22.8*	7.7*
N (unweighted)	13,225	280	1053	535	811

Source: Micro Census 2012, Labour Force Survey 2012; TRANSLAB survey 2012/2013; own calculations; data includes workers between 21 and 65 years of age with a main job (minimum 20 hours/week) in Austria; before/since the crisis: job entries until 12/2008 vs. after 01/2009; *statistical differences* of means to the group of cross-border commuters were tested by using Games-Howell *post hoc* tests, taking into account the inhomogeneity of variance and unequal group sizes (* $p < 0.05$).

ties, friendship with Austrians), the relevance of social networks for the job search in Austria, as well as variables covering the labour market sector in which cross-border commuters have found employment.

Empirically, this analysis indicates that some of the 'micro-patterns' of cross-border commuting have changed over the last years whilst others have remained stable:

Table 4. Wage mobility in CENTROPE before and since the crisis.

		Job in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia	Job in Austria	N
Wage upward mobility				
Mobility before 2009***	No	71.1	28.9	775
	Yes	51.9	48.1	646
Mobility since 2009***	No	44.9	55.1	713
	Yes	24.2	75.8	553
Total***	No	58.5	41.5	1488
	Yes	39.1	60.9	1199
Wage downward mobility				
Mobility before 2009**	No	61.9	38.1	1387
	Yes	82.4	17.6	34
Mobility since 2009***	No	34.4	65.6	1198
	Yes	61.8	38.2	68
Total***	No	49.1	50.9	2585
	Yes	68.6	31.4	102

Source: TRANSLAB survey 2012/2013; own calculations; data include workers between 21 and 65 years of age with a main job (minimum 20 hours/week) in Austria; before/since the crisis: job entries until 12/2008 vs. after 01/2009; ⁺ $p < .1$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 5. Logistic regression for cross-border commuters' wage mobility before and since the crisis (Exp (B)).

	Wage upward mobility before 2009	Wage upward mobility since 2009
Women	1.450	1.043
Age	1.040***	1.015 ⁺
Without formal training	0.267*	0.166***
University degree	1.225	0.938
Near family ties	0.595***	1.074
Far family ties	1.192	1.064
Friendships with Austrians	1.696*	1.736**
Job search via social network	1.194	1.416 ⁺
Gastronomy, hotel management	1.196	0.463**
Health industry and social work	1.063	0.790
Other, personal services	0.772	0.479*

Source: TRANSLAB survey 2012/2013; own calculations; data include workers between 21 and 65 years of age with a main job (minimum 20 hours/week) in Austria; regressions control for the following variables: nationality, region/locality of the job, form of commuting (daily vs. weekly commuting), German language command, previous working experience in Austria, various other branches, size of firm, wage based on collective bargaining, working time in Austria, marriage/familial status; before/since the crisis: job entries until 12/2008 vs. after 01/2009; ⁺ $p < .1$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; regressions parameters: odds ratios (Exp(B)), a positive effect of the odds ratios is expressed as $e^{\beta} > 1$ and a negative effect as $e^{\beta} < 1$.

- (1) Even if the number of female cross-border commuters is on the increase (see Table 3), no significant differences are observed between women and men regarding upward mobility chances.
- (2) The effects of age have remained stable over time and indicate that increasing age correlates positively with upward mobility chances.
- (3) Cross-border commuters without formal education have much lower and diminishing chances to realise wage upward mobility with a new job on the Austrian labour market (reference group: workers with intermediate qualifications). Interestingly, the regression analyses show no differences in this respect between the workers with intermediate qualifications and university degrees.
- (4) Social capital and the use of social networks for job search are partially important to explain the 'micro-patterns' of cross-border commuting in CENTROPE. Although no direct effect of near family and far family ties can be seen on wage upward mobility, the analyses show that friendships with Austrians clearly improve upward mobility chances. Moreover, the use of social network contacts for job searches on the Austrian labour market is also becoming more relevant. The effect on mobility has been significantly positive after the crisis, which was not the case before the year 2009.
- (5) Empirically we can also show that since the beginning of 2009, the chance to improve wages through cross-border commuting in such service branches as gastronomy and personal service has decreased. These are branches in which employment for cross-border commuters has increased over the past years (see Table 3) – accompanied, quite interestingly, by diminishing upward mobility chances.

7. Conclusion

The accession of the Central and Eastern European countries to the EU in May 2004 marked a crucial step in the history of European integration. An important consequence

was the free movement of capital, goods, services and people to and from Central Europe. CENTROPE is one of many political projects in the EU aimed to foster enhanced mobility in order to strengthen competitiveness among the regional economies. Since its foundation, one of the distinguishing features of the project of European integration has been the overcoming of internal borders. This objective has had remarkable outcomes in the history of cross-border co-operation, resulting in the creation of institutionalised co-operative structures known as Euroregions which receive financial support from the EU. However, given the fear of a massive influx of workers from the new member states with anticipated negative effects on the receiving countries' labour markets, Austria introduced transitional measures to restrict, to varying degrees, the right to work for EU8 citizens for a period of up to seven years (Galgóczy, Leschke, and Watt 2012, 5). The economic crisis has taken place at the time the Austrian labour market opened to workers from neighbouring Eastern European countries. Hence, there are several institutional factors that foster mobility in this region, making it a challenge to picture the effects of the crisis on cross-border labour commuting.

The aim of this paper was to outline changes that have occurred in the aftermath of the crisis in 2008/2009 in terms of (1) economic and social inequalities between the regions of CENTROPE, (2) labour mobility to Austria, (3) the socio-economic composition of cross-border commuters and finally (4) their wage mobility. In order to approximate this social reality, we built upon a mixed-method data base. The macro-data revealed that the financial crisis did not evoke a sharp decline in household income, GDP, unemployment and poverty rate differences in this region while, at the same time, the structural East–West gap in CENTROPE remains to exist. Moreover, there has been an increase in cross-border commuting after 2008 and various events have led to dynamised labour-related mobility in CENTROPE over the past years. Experts currently observe an even higher demand for employment in Austria that cannot be met by the local labour market. 'Pure' economic reasons are considered to be the most relevant drivers of workforce mobility in the post-crisis period. The opening of the borders has acted as a legal window to attempt to escape existential economic problems. All of these factors enable employers in core economies to select commuters from peripheral economies with higher levels of human capital than the locals because of the 'development gap' (Blanchflower, Saleheen, and Shadforth 2007). However, many mobile workers will accept initial downward mobility when moving to core economies, as they expect long-term class advancements (Scott 2013).

On average, most commuters share the demographic characteristics of the workers who have shown to be most vulnerable during the crisis: relative youth, lower and intermediate levels of education, employment in certain branches of the service industry. This was illustrated with descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses. The results suggest that commuter flows appear to be closely linked to the economic, political and social developments prevailing in the regions of origin, economic conditions in the receiving regions as well as the European legal framework, namely access to the full labour market. Overall cross-border commuting can be perceived as a prototypic example of versatile post-modern life concepts, as both multi-local and mobile (Wille 2012). The crisis can be seen as a crucial driver for cross-border mobility by addressing unemployment in the sending region. This is coherent with the policy objects to achieve mobility. At the same time, however, economic and financial crises often lead to a rise in protectionist attitudes.

How do local populations perceive new streams of commuters following the financial crisis? This could and should be the focus of further research in this field.

Notes

1. The establishment and institutionalisation of Euroregions are a core element of the EU Interreg Programme. This initiative aims to stimulate economic and political co-operation between regions in the EU. It is financed under the European Regional Development Fund. The theoretical foundation for these programmes is derived from economists like Mundell (1961), as well as other scholars, who made a substantial claim for the benefits of interregional integration and co-operation as early as in the 1950s and 1960s.
2. Research on cross-border commuting is a relatively new domain within migration studies. This is especially the case for European cross-border commuting (Verwiebe et al. 2015, 1). The EU defines cross-border commuters as people who work in one state while residing in another to which they usually return on a daily basis or at least once a week (Pierini 1997). We also use this definition in the present paper, yet expand this conceptualisation to encompass all types of regular weekly, monthly or seasonal commuting, as is common in current research on cross-border commuters (Houtum and Gielis 2006; Nerb et al. 2009). More than other ideal types of migration – including permanent, temporary or short-term migration – commuting is characterised by regular back and forth movements between regions of destination and origin (White and Ryan 2008, 1472). From the perspective of migration theory, *periodic occupational commuting across borders* can be conceived as a *variant of transnational migration* that results neither in definitely leaving one's region of origin, nor in definitely integrating in a host society, but rather in a precisely *intermediate process* (Fassmann 2003, 438).
3. Of particular note are the freedom of movement for employees and the mutual recognition of educational qualifications, which have been core elements of the European integration process. A decisive breakthrough for intra-European migration came with the Maastricht Treaty. It grants EU citizens freedom of movement and settlement and establishes the legal conditions for the unhindered mobility of EU citizens and the emergence of a transnational European labour market. Under the Maastricht Treaty, EU citizenship grants its holders a status fundamentally different from that of non-EU citizens. On the basis of the Maastricht Treaty, the status of EU citizen includes wide-reaching entitlements to equal treatment in their countries of residence. In addition to establishing the legal conditions for barrier-free migration, the EU has also introduced measures to boost mobility, including exchange programmes such as Erasmus or Socrates, while creating special institutions such as the European Employment Services (EURES) to promote employee mobility (Verwiebe et al. 2010, 276).
4. This difference applies predominantly to the use of national income distributions in defining poverty risks. For example, a clearly lower poverty risk threshold is drawn upon in the Czech Republic, with €4675 for an average household income in 2011 as compared to €13,084 in Austria.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Wiesböck, Laura (2016): A Preferred Workforce? Employment Practices in the Central European Region Regarding East-West Cross-Border Labour Commuters. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 41 (4): 391-407.

Audience:	Scholars in the field of sociology and neighbouring fields
Limitations:	45.000 characters including spaces
DOI:	10.1007/s11614-016-0245-3

A preferred workforce? Employment practices of East–West cross-border labour commuters in the Central European Region

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Abstract This paper deals with employment practices in the context of East–West cross-border commuting in the Central European Region (CENTROPE). The purpose of the analysis is to better understand the demand side of labour commuting from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to Austria. Methodologically, 20 expert interviews were conducted with mayors, business owners, European Employment Services (EURES) employees and trade unionists operating in the region between 2011 and 2013. The analysis provides comprehensive information about the practice of employers, in particular their preference towards commuters as a flexible workforce and their patterns of rationalization of this preference, e. g. by referring to the commuters' specific work behaviour or differences in their local resident labour market in terms of income levels and employment opportunities.

Keywords Cross-border commuting · Central European Region · CENTROPE · Transnational labour market · Inner-European labour mobility · Employment practices · Labour flexibility

Bevorzugte Arbeitskräfte? Über die Beschäftigungspraxis bei grenzübergreifendem Ost-West-Pendeln in der Europaregion Mitte

Zusammenfassung Der vorliegende Artikel befasst sich mit Beschäftigungspraktiken im Kontext von grenzübergreifendem Ost-West-Pendeln in der Europaregion Mitte (CENTROPE). Ziel der Auswertung ist es, ein umfassendes Verständnis über die Nachfrage nach Arbeitskräften, die aus den Grenzregionen von Tschechien,

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der Slowakei und Ungarn nach Österreich pendeln, zu erlangen. Zwischen 2011 und 2013 wurden dafür 20 Experteninterviews mit Bürgermeister, Unternehmensleitungen, Mitarbeitenden der Arbeitsmarktagentur EURES sowie transnational operierenden Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern geführt. Die Analyse liefert umfassende Einblicke in die Praktiken von Arbeitgebenden, im Besonderen ihre Präferenz für Pendelnde als flexible Arbeitskräfte. Diese Präferenz wird mit einer spezifischen Arbeitshaltung begründet, die von pendelnden Arbeitskräften ausgeht, wie auch mit den geringen Beschäftigungschancen und Lohnniveaus in deren Herkunftsregionen.

Schlüsselwörter Grenzübergreifendes Pendeln · Central European Region · CENTROPE · Transnationaler Arbeitsmarkt · Innereuropäische Arbeitsmobilität · Beschäftigungspraktiken · Arbeitsmarktflexibilität

1 Introduction

Since 1 May 2011, citizens of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary have had full access to the Austrian labour market. The geographical proximity and the higher wage levels in the Austrian border region make it an appealing labour market for commuters residing in these areas. Between the subregion at the border of Austria and the border regions of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary there is an ongoing structural asymmetry, which juxtaposes different economies with different histories of economic development (Wiesböck et al. 2016a). The introduction of a common institutional framework intends to diminish these asymmetries; however, up until now the relatively high social inequality between the Austrian subregions and their neighbours—in terms of household income, unemployment rate, poverty rate and regional gross domestic product (GDP) levels—continues to play an important role (Wiesböck et al. 2016b).

In order to understand the current structure of the transnational labour market, it should be noted that the introduction of a common legal framework and macro-economic indicators are only one part of a broader picture. There are several actors involved in regulating the market that have not gained attention so far. When looking at the growing presence of mobile workers, most studies focus on the supply side, the motivation and expectations of workers, their skills, their use of social networks or how they construct their identity (Datta and Brickell 2009; Drinkwater and Garapich 2015; Main 2016; Parutis 2014; Ryan et al. 2008). The aim of this paper is to shed light on the role of demand-side factors, in particular the process of employer recruitment of East–West cross-border commuters in the Central European Region (CENTROPE).

The heterogeneity across the regions and the diverse patterns of labour mobility have led to significant changes in employment structures. From a sociological perspective the consequences on the local labour market in terms of social inequality are of particular interest. Mobility can negatively affect labour regulation by dividing the working class along national, ethnic, linguistic and cultural lines (Scott 2013). According to Harvey (2005, p. 168), “employers have historically used differentiations within the labour pool to divide and rule”, as a fragmented working class

has less potential for collective resistance. Therefore, one purpose of this paper is to study whether there are new shifts produced within the low-wage sector of the Austrian border region.

East–West European mobile workers tend to fill the “bottom end” positions, meaning that they are overrepresented in employment associated with low wages, manual labour, instability and poor prospects for advancement (Favell 2008). This situation prompted scholars to focus on employer demand as a key determinant of attracting foreign workers. In the European context, analyses in the field of employer practices conducted so far primarily focus on European mobile workers residing in the receiving country, with a strong focus on the South–North movements, e. g. workers from East European countries in the UK or Norway (Anderson et al. 2006; Friberg 2012; McDowell et al. 2007; Scott 2013).

In contrast, cross-border commuting is a type of mobility where employees work in another member state without moving their residence to that particular country. It is understood as repeat movement of the same person across national borders on a regular basis. This seems to be compelling enough evidence to argue that, compared to other European mobile workers, daily commuters have a higher degree of separation from their professional role, their social role and, to a lesser degree, their sense of entitlement and belonging. Furthermore, commuters mostly reside in regions with a lower cost of living and, at the same time, work in a country with higher wages. Regarding this issue, the paper investigates whether employers make use of this particular situation in their attitudes towards and justification of hiring cross-border commuters.

The guiding research questions are: What are the employers’ attitudes towards hiring cross-border commuters? How do the employers justify these attitudes? Have new social hierarchies developed due to the placement of low-wage workers in the Austrian border region? In order to answer these questions, I have drawn upon an expert survey consisting of 20 interviews conducted with European Employment Services (EURES) employees, business owners, mayors and trade unionists in CENTROPE between 2011 and 2013. The interviews were carried out in the context of the TRANSLAB research project.

The overall structure of the study takes the form of four chapters: The first chapter provides a brief overview of the Central European Region as a supranational and interregional administrative unit. The following part is concerned with the data and methodology used for the study. The next section presents the main findings, focusing on employers’ hiring preferences and their rhetoric of legitimation. The paper concludes with an outlook, including potential future research questions in this field.

2 East–west commuting in the Central European Region

The Central European Region is a European region consisting of eight federal provinces, regions and counties with a total population of about 6.5 million. The largest city in CENTROPE is Vienna, which has a population of 1.8 million and, along with Bratislava, is one of the two national centres in the region. This is an



Fig. 1 The Central European Region

exceptional situation, in that most of the inner-European border regions are located more peripherally (Fig. 1).

Historically, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU enlargement and the removal of the final barriers to the free movement of labour have brought about significant changes, which, in turn, have led to new forms of interplay of economic, social, political and legal factors (Horvath 2012). Since 1 May 2011, when the final transitional arrangements were lifted at the end of the seven-year transitional period, citizens of the A8¹ countries have had full access to labour markets across the EU-27.

Already in 2009, a slight but steady increase in the number of workers from neighbouring countries began, from 11,591 commuters in 2008 to 14,465 in 2009 (Austrian Labour Market Service; own calculations). This reflects the gradual opening of the labour market before the last barriers to free mobility were lifted. From then on, a steady increase of East–West cross-border workers can be observed. In 2013 there were 78,825 workers from Hungary (37,793), Slovakia (34,047) and the Czech Republic (6985) registered on the Austrian labour market (Statistik Austria 2015). The rise in cross-border labour flows to Austria is expected to further continue in the future.

Commuting within the Central European Union is not a recent phenomenon linked to the creation of the European common market (Terlouw 2012, p. 354); formal and informal circularity between the countries has existed for many decades. This was, however, under specific conditions during a period of state socialism, with a *longue durée* of cross-border mobility, which began during the time of the Habsburg Monarchy. Today, CENTROPE is one of many political projects in the EU that foster enhanced mobility to strengthen competitiveness and the regional business location. It reflects the differentiation of movement patterns within the EU: from once-in-a-lifetime migration to mobility as a life strategy.

The Central European Region is one example of the rise of a new type of supranational governance that takes the form of regional transnationalism (Perkmann

¹ Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

2003). It is a regional project with a transnational dimension. Yet borders still demarcate different political economies and welfare states; legal, political and cultural traditions (Crouch 1999). Border regions provide examples of multilevel governance involving the European Commission, national states, local and regional authorities, intergovernmental commissions and a variety of nongovernmental agencies. However, the legal framework is only one of many institutions structuring the transnational labour market. Institutions here are understood as a set of implicit or explicit rules, norms, or contractual arrangements and organisations that govern market transactions (Freeman 1998, p. 4). During the recruitment and relocation of foreign workers, employers play a particularly important role, especially as they have a major influence on the transnational labour market through the rules and norms they create. Free mobility of workers affects the relationship of bargaining power between labour and capital by increasing the supply of actual and potential workers (Friberg and Eldring 2013). This paper aims to shed light on informal rules regarding practices and maxims of actions developed in this context.

3 Data and methods

20 expert interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2013 in the context of the TRANSLAB project. The experts have special knowledge related to their professional field, including implicit knowledge about maxims of action, rules of decision making, collective orientations and social patterns of interpretation (Bogner et al. 2009). The sample consists of seven business owners, six local mayors, seven European Employment Agency (EURES) employees (two employees in Vienna interviewed together) and two transnationally operating trade unionists (interviewed together). The interviews were carried out across the border regions of the Central European Region. The selection of representatives in different areas was based on their shared institutional and organisational context. These experts are part of the field of action and constitute an important “factor” regulating cross-border commuting in CENTROPE. The research interest of this paper is on the process of East–West cross-border labour commuting to Austria, therefore the focus of the sample lies on actors operating in this border region (Table 1).

All interviews covered important points of the social process of commuting, such as the structure and development of mobility processes within the Central European Region. This includes relevant legal and institutional frameworks for cross-border commuting, the specific role of the interviewees in the context of cross-border commuting, information on companies that hire commuters, possible short- and

Table 1 Number of interviewees per representative role and border region

Representative role	Area of action	AT	CZ	HU	SI
Mayor	Local governmental infrastructure	5	1	n/a	n/a
EURES employee	Job service through formal channel	4	1	1	1
Business owner	Job placement	7	–	–	–
Trade unionist	Representation and protection of labour law	2	–	–	–

n/a not available for an interview, *AT* Austria, *CZ* Czech Republic, *HU* Hungary, *SI* Slovakia

medium-term consequences (risks and opportunities) of removal of the remaining barriers to free movement and short- and midterm scenarios for the region. Even though the interviews were thematically prestructured, interviewees were given an opportunity to personally define their expertise and to assess what is relevant in the given context (Dexter 2006). For this reason, the main categories organising the empirical data differ from the initial guidelines.

Two independent researchers of the TRANSLAB project conducted the interviews. A total of 18 interviews were carried out in German, one interview with a mayor in the Czech border region was conducted in the presence of a simultaneous interpreter, and one interview with a EURES employee in the Slovakian border region was conducted in English.²

The interviews were analysed according to the interpretation scheme established by Meuser and Nagel (2009). The aim of the evaluation was to analyse and compare passages with similar topics spread throughout interviews. After the transcription, the interviews were paraphrased and ordered into thematic units. The passages from different interviews were then tied together. The final step of the analysis was the conceptualisation and theoretical generalisation of the material. In order to evaluate the meaning and significance of the statements, the context was always taken into account.

As with any empirical study, there are limitations concerning the dataset and methodology. The reader should bear in mind that the study is focused on formalised settings of the labour market. Due to a lack of accessibility, it was not possible to include the perspective of persons hiring commuters in nonformalised settings, e. g. in private households or agriculture. The expert interview with transnationally acting trade unionists in this sample provides an explorative insight into this setting. Due to the representative role and position of mayors and businessmen, disclosure of information was to some extent an issue, e. g. when it came to wage dumping effects.

4 Recruitment practices in the hiring process

4.1 Preference for cross-border commuters

The employers under study welcomed cross-border commuters as a new flexible labour force. An Austrian businessman, head of a cleaning company in the Austrian border region of Slovakia and Hungary, points out that he prefers cross-border commuters over local workers:

As an Austrian it is not easy to admit but I prefer a Hungarian or a Slovak over an Austrian. It is because they want to work. As there are not a lot of opportunities back home they act from necessity. I call it hungry. They really want to work. [...] I notice that the commitment and the willingness are higher.

² The researchers are aware of and critically reflect upon the fact that translation-related decisions have an impact on the validity of the research.

You get a more committed and more intelligent worker than in Austria—for the same money. A worker who is able to speak German, who is glad to have a job and who is willing to compromise. (Head of a cleaning company, Lower Austria, September 2013)

Here the employer declares his norms of decision-making that lead to a new social hierarchy between potential employees in the hiring process. At the same time as being generally positive about commuters, the employer interviewed expressed a negativity about Austrian nationals. This “good migrant worker” rhetoric is in line with various recent studies in this field (Scott 2013; Thompson et al. 2012). His image of Austrian workers builds the ground for his maxim of action. The businessman characterises negative ascriptions of work attitudes and characteristics of native-born workers, in particular those sent by the employment agency:

The process, if you are looking for somebody through the [Austrian] employment agency, is repulsive. So there are ten people coming. One smells of alcohol as soon as he enters the door. Another one has had a drinking problem and is bloated. Another one does not have any teeth anymore. And these kind of people hinder me. I mean, I also have a daily routine to follow. So then you struggle how to get rid of them. And then one of them will tell you: “Oh well, put a stamp on the sheet, you know how it works.” That’s what they want, right? Do I say yes? It is not right. I should rather note down that this person is not willing to work. But who is going to expose himself to that kind of confrontation? They [employment agency] don’t do it either. And should I? I should mess with them? So that he will tell everybody at the local tavern that the boss of the cleaning company is mad? (Head of a cleaning company, Lower Austria, September 2013)

The employer addresses the difficulty to attract and recruit local workforce for unskilled or semiskilled jobs. It is interesting to note that the comparison group the employer referred to comprises long-term unemployed persons sent through a formal channel, with low interest in settling in a job. The local inactive population is a different pool of labour in itself, segmented by gender, age, class, ethnicity, etc. Still, the main category of distinction made is Austrian versus commuters. Other businessmen in the survey shared the view that the Austrian workforce incorporates qualities that are to avoid in a worker, especially concerning the willingness to work:

[The opening of the border] I think it is good for everyone. For the Austrians it is not so bad either, to my mind. They get a little slap across the backside, so that they have to put forth more effort. In past times they were all rather relaxed, because they were thinking: “For them it is not easy anyway to find work at our place.” But it is not like that anymore, that is why—thank God—Austrians also have to make an effort and not only rest on the fact that they are Austrians. (Head of a restaurant, Burgenland, July 2013)

Based on this notion, compared to Austrians, the conditions for commuters in the job-placement process in this labour market segment are prestructured in a favourable way. This can be seen as a collective orientation and social pattern of

interpretation, and it goes in line with previous studies in which employers view foreigners as a better labour force than the natives (Labrianidis and Sykas 2009; Stenning and Dawley 2009). Research in this field has shown that local workers were seen as less reliable than migrants, unable to sustain the pace of work required and less willing to work unsociable shifts, especially when the work is temporary, seasonal or unpleasant with unsociable hours. When the owner of a café was asked about the Austrian workforce in the service sector, he shared this view:

I reckon that everybody says: “Come on, I wouldn’t work for that income” or “I don’t want to work at the weekend” or “I don’t want to work here nor there”. Well, as a service provider you have to provide services. That’s how it is. (Head of a café, Lower Austria, June 2013)

Along these lines, in terms of the entry into the low-wage labour market of the Austrian border region, commuters seem to have an advantage over local (unemployed) workers. However, within the group of commuters there is a high level of labour supply and competition. Employers in the sample had noticed a continually rising job demand, particularly since 2011. According to them, the job search is not only via official channels, but also and mainly by initiative applications or simply by showing up:

Since the free movement of labour we receive many, many job requests. Constantly. Mainly from Hungary. It is sheer madness; no day goes by without me writing the sentence: “At the moment we are not hiring, we wish you the best.” I suppose that every enterprise is confronted with that. (Head of a guesthouse and restaurant, Lower Austria, September 2013)

I have to say that a lot of people come without prior announcement, they simply walk through the door and say: “I want to mow the lawn here” or “I will do any work” or “I want to work here”. (Human resource manager at a state hospital, Lower Austria, September 2013)

Every day at least one or two people will come spontaneously to introduce themselves. They are from Slovakia or Hungary, but mainly Hungary. (Head of a cleaning company, Lower Austria, September 2013)

Recent findings in the field show consensus to these insights: inner-European labour mobility from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is often enhanced by personal social networks, “insider” support and speculative applications (Dobson and Sennikova 2007, p. 131). The transnational job search process takes place between the commuter and the employer, rather than via formal channels such as employment agencies. This is an important finding given that, in comparison, the negotiation process of job placement for Austrians in this labour market segment is highly systematised. The high labour supply raises the question whether it leads to structural disempowerment, which gives commuters weak negotiating positions vis-à-vis their employers (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010).

4.2 Culturalisation of work behaviour

Employer discretion over their preferred employees is associated with the adoption of nationality based “shorthand” over whom to employ (Wills et al. 2009). This “hiring queue” means that employers tend to adopt national stereotypes to determine the reliability of the potential recruit. When asked about the reasons for commuters being the preferred workforce, a number of employers had a sense of a “hiring queue”. When referring to a specific kind of work behaviour of cross-border commuters, a narrative along the line of obedience was constructed: either workers were considered as too obedient or not obedient enough. A human resource manager at a state hospital in Lower Austria complained about the obedient behaviour of Slovakian workers. He established an “us” and “them” narrative and explained “their” lack of self-initiative with the cultural argument of different socialisation:

I have to say that they are used to obedient behaviour. You can tell that they are legionaries, right? That they are not at home here, not related to the region. I always call it the “seven to three syndrome”: three on the dot and work ends for them. As I said, you should not colour everyone with the same brush but this generation is simply shaped differently by their upbringing. And of course it always depends on the person. But on a large scale they do what they are told. Self-initiative is not a skill that these ladies and gentlemen have acquired. (Human resource manager at a state hospital, Lower Austria, September 2013)

This statement has to be seen in the context of the branch and working field: for example, working with people in a hospital requires more interaction and altering personal behaviour and sensitivity to deal with unpredictable situations, which is more required than when working in predictable environments such as a factory (Hochschild 1983). In other words, the requirements for self-initiative are higher in this branch. That may be intensified by a potential lack of clear definition of the range of tasks the employee is supposed to work on. The contract of employment does not and cannot specify precisely the amount of effort to be expended and the degree of initiative to be displayed by the employee (Hyman 1989). It is further notable that, unlike other domestic employment fields (e. g. department stores or restaurants), progression and upward mobility in hospitals is not possible, which can contribute to less ambitious work behaviour. These aspects may contribute to the branch-specific impression of the human resource manager interviewed. Besides, the employer refers to a lack of connection with the regional context of the workplace. This absence of local connection is also considered to be problematic by the head of an automotive factory in Lower Austria:

I think the difference is certainly the commitment to the company. In our region, the commitment of [Austrian] workers is definitely stronger. Language might play a part in the whole thing, no question. Our people live here. Czech workers arrive in the morning and leave in the evening. Thus they only spend their working hours here in this country. So you don’t really get together with

them on different occasions. (Head of an automotive factory, Lower Austria, June 2012)

The passage reflects the struggle over the degree of employer control and alludes to the concept of managerial opportunism (Dibben et al. 2011, p. 4). The employer determines a lack of “getting together on different occasions” with cross-border commuters, thus a lack of engagement in roles outside their remit. It expresses the demand for flexibility beyond the bounds of agreement.

On the other side of the obedient work behaviour narrative, businessmen complained about the lack of the same: here the concept of pride was constructed as negatively interfering with work behaviour. The head of a guesthouse and restaurant on the border of Lower Austria and Slovakia considers Hungarian workers as more proud than Slovakian, meaning not as obedient:

The Hungarian minority is a little more proud. In general, Slovaks are messier and Hungarians are more proud. They don't make it easy for you to tell them what to do. There is some truth behind it. Just as Austrians are moaners. (Head of a guesthouse and restaurant, Lower Austria, September 2013)

The notion of pride was ascribed when the expected behaviour according to the place in the social hierarchy of the workplace was challenged. The label was also attributed to Czech workers by the head of a factory producing cables and wires for industrial applications in Vienna:

The Czechs, I believe, when you look at it from a stereotype perspective, are a rather proud nation likely to have issues when Austrians set the agenda. So their certain kind of attitude here and there can affect the outcome in a not-quite positive way. Right? I think one could generally say that. But of course there are individual people behind it. (Head of a factory producing cables and wires for industrial applications, Vienna, June 2013)

What is interesting is that, unlike in studies on European mobile workers, the notion of “hard-working nature” as a stereotypical national advantage did not come up in the interviews (Wills et al. 2009). The reliability and diligence of the workers was connected to an economic need (“hungry for work”) rather than inherent cultural traits. Submission and obedience as underlying categories, on the other hand, was omnipresent. That reflects organisation-determined aspects of the employment relationship (Dibben et al. 2011, p. 3): it is both an economic exchange (the agreement to exchange wages for work), and a power relationship (the employee's agreement to submit to the authority of the employer). The relationship between the employer and the employee is not only a sale of an amount of labour power, but it also involves issues such as managing expectations. A primary issue in the workplace is the ability of employers to personally control their workers. Social relations in the workplace are systems of control that employers use to ensure productivity. A particular demand by employers of low-skilled jobs is to find workers who are least likely to contest their authority. Therefore, it is not surprising that the businessmen's attitudes centre around behavioural or attitudinal traits.

4.3 Labour standards

When it comes to the wage level, the businessmen assessed the commuters' dual frame of reference, which puts the Austrian low-wage sector in a remarkably favourable perspective. Employers perceive commuters as workers who assess their economic situation relative to the options encountered in their region of origin (Waldinger and Lichter 2003, p. 179):

Of course the value is different. If I earn 1000 € here it equals to 1500 or 2000 € there, depending on the region of origin. (Head of a cleaning company, Lower Austria, September 2013)

[They commute to Austria] because they simply earn, I would say, at least double or even triple [of the income back home]. Minimum double income, minimum. If the worker is good. I mean, when I think of my cook, he earns approximately 1500 €. He would not earn that back home in a hundred years. That [wage level] does not even exist. (Head of a café, Lower Austria, June 2013)

This is the main difference to European mobile workers who (temporarily) reside in the receiving country, such as the Polish workers in London. Here, the employees work in another member state with a higher wage level without moving their residence to that country. Yet even if they do not commute on a daily basis—as most workers do according to the employers under study—but temporarily live in the place of work, the same argument was used:

I guess that [our waitresses] earn, well, in summer between 1500 and 1700 €, during wintertime maybe between 1300 and 1500. I do not offer any accommodation but they can eat for free. That is not nothing. However, I realise that they need around 500 € for an apartment here, even here in the province. And then if you think about it, it only remains maybe 1000 €. I mean, they cannot assume that they will save the whole income; it is simply not like that. I mean, times have changed too. And if you think about what they would earn back home, it is still a good reward. (Head of a guesthouse and restaurant, Lower Austria, September 2013)

All this suggests that employers are aware of—and base some of their recruitment and employment decisions on—commuters' employment prospects and earnings in their home country (Anderson et al. 2006). The employers recognise that the discrepancies between earnings in the low-wage sector of the Austrian border region and commuters' region of origin mean that commuters often put up with a trade-off between wages that are poor by Austrian standards but relatively high when compared to employment in commuters' region of origin.

Another aspect of the dual frame of reference besides wages is that workers may be willing to accept conditions substantially below host country standards, since they are still superior to those back home (Piore 1980; Woolfson 2007). What constitutes social standards and the respective social dumping can vary even between comparable countries faced with similar challenges (Arnholtz and Eldring

2015, p. 94). Usually it implies unacceptably low wages or poor conditions of work (Friberg et al. 2014). The mechanism behind this is to undercut established standards by recruiting workers from countries with substantially lower living conditions and pay rates (McGovern 2007; Woolfson et al. 2010). When it comes to the topic of social dumping, disclosure of information was a problem to some extent. Employers did not provide information on the topic nor did they confirm that this is not an issue in their organisation. For that reason, I draw on an interview with two trade unionists offering insights into practices in this field:

In agriculture what really matters is: who is cheaper will get the job. In the construction branch there are very, very shady practices. Well, I will only tell you about the very, very blatant ones. We know, for example, companies that complete their payroll accounting 100% properly, then transfer 100% of the proper wage to the account of their workers, so everything is done impeccably. And the next day the worker shows up with an envelope with 400 € inside to hand back to the employer. Of course given these kind of methods, it is very difficult to counteract. (Trade unionist, Burgenland, November 2012)

Now the regulatory function of trade unionists is to ensure that social standards are not undercut. However, due to hidden practices of employers to circumvent these standards, and due to the potential lack of knowledge of labour rights by the commuters, their regulatory influence is weakened. According to interviewees, there is also evidence that the changing legal framework resulting from opening of the labour market stimulated ways to avoid proper wage dispersal:

Before, in order to work as a Hungarian in Austria, you needed a work permit that was bound to fixed working hours. You had to work 40 h per week. A 40-hour week was indispensable and stipulated in the working contract. However, after the opening of the border, our partners and ourselves, in the course of the consultation process, we realised that many workers were re-registered to 20 h per week. For jobs that previously were done in 40 h. [...] And the problem is then that they are likely to continue working for 40 h while being officially registered for 20 h. (Trade unionist, Burgenland, November 2012)

In terms of institutionalization, social dumping practices can create new social hierarchies and divisions (Bernaciak 2015, p. 232). Efforts to undercut labour standards and evade the regulatory force of trade unionists are likely to exert downward pressure on not only the wages, but also on working conditions (ibid.). From the perspective and experience of a transnational trade union, this is already taking place. According to them, not only wage agreements are undermined but also various basic labour rights:

In the gastronomy sector very often there are problems with working hours, in particular with working overtime and issues in that matter. It is not properly accounted for. We also consistently see problems with maternity protection, especially in the case of waitresses. When they get pregnant, there are problems with their maternity rights. Certain regulations are not fulfilled, such as, for example, the use of tobacco, etc. It also happens very often that employees

who get pregnant are simply deregistered. That happens over and over again.
(Trade unionist, Burgenland, November 2012)

Over and over, the main category the trade unionists referred to when talking about working conditions is the branch. The established narrative of branches structuring conditions is highly relevant in this context. Many of the abovementioned practices are applied to low-wage labourers in the service sector in general (Kroon and Paauwe 2014). Therefore, it remains unclear whether these practices are only applied to commuters or also to local workers in the same branch, and to what extent there is a link to new legal frameworks in the course of the opening of the labour market in 2011. Yet the debate on the issue of wage dumping is driven by various factors. According to Friberg et al. (2014), it is not only native workers, in particular those in weak labour market positions, who fear that labour mobility may deteriorate wages and labour standards; a further concern is the medium-term viability of existing labour market institutions, as increasing inequality between ethnic and national groups poses a range of challenges to their functioning and legitimacy.

5 Outlook

This paper sheds light on the demand side of the transnational labour market of the Central European Region. It suggests that cross-border commuters have a dual role in the placement process in the Austrian border region. When it comes to entering the labour market, they have a better position in the hierarchy system compared to local low-wage workers. At the same time, however, there is a high level of competition and labour supply within the group of commuters, which may lead to weak negotiating positions towards potential employers. Therewith, the dual role of national origin in the labour market acts as a system of hierarchy and subordination at the same time (Friberg 2012).

The expert interviews further indicate that there is a high demand for jobs from workers from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia that is expressed particularly through informal channels, via initiative applications or by simply showing up without prior notice. Therefore, the flexible pool of foreign workers is easily accessible for employers. Austrian nationals, on the other hand, mainly apply through formal channels and are likely to have low interest in unskilled or semiskilled jobs. For this reason, the businessmen interviewed in the study stated a clear overall preference towards cross-border commuters as the desired workforce. Furthermore, the foreign-born are the preferred labour force because they are perceived as workers who assess the situation relative to the conditions and options encountered “back home” (Waldinger and Lichter 2003, p. 179). The commuters’ dual frame of reference puts the Austrian low-wage sector in a remarkably favourable perspective. It can serve as a tool to de-problematize exploitative work conditions (Maldonado 2009).

The employers’ attitudes are situated within the broader context of the flexibility paradigm. It acts as a rationalising mechanism through which a capitalist pursuit of maximum surplus value interacts to produce differential opportunities for cross-

border commuters compared with local workers. The construction of an integrated European labour market strengthens the employers' power (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2016). The research provides evidence that even if commuters work legally, they are nevertheless vulnerable to exploitation. This may not only have negative consequences on them but it is also likely to have consequences for Austrian nationals too. What may be in the best interest of employers is not always in the best interest of the local workforce or the economy as a whole. Persisting inequalities between commuters and locals will pose a serious threat to social cohesion in the receiving states and could become a major policy challenge (Guzi and Kahanec 2015). To fuel cooperation to preserve wages and labour rights in cross-border regions, particularly in sectors with high precarious employment, will be an ongoing challenge (Hammer 2010). Therefore the question how unions can regain influence in the social regulation of transnational employment is of high relevance and yet to be answered.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the full picture of the social reality regarding the hiring process of the East–West labour commuting in CENTROPE. This would require a study of all actors who establish and administer rules structuring the labour market, regardless of whether these are seen as formal or informal. Furthermore, no universal claims can be made from this study. However, the qualitative survey provides an explorative analysis of collective orientations and norms of actors in this field. The study offers important insights into the employers' role in structuring cross-border commuting in the Central European Region and emphasises the importance of qualitative research in the field of transnational labour markets. Furthermore, the finding of the study that job search strategies of commuters mainly involve addressing the employer directly via speculative applications or by simply showing up rather than going through formal channels, as is usually the case for Austrians, is of high relevance: it highlights the need to create methodological tools to capture transnational job demand expressed through various channels in order to get a fuller picture of ongoing dynamics in this field.

Clearly, further research will be required to address remaining questions. The present survey was intended to address representatives from various low-paid occupations as the labour market of the Austrian border region. For future studies it would be interesting to delve deeper into differences between certain branches (e. g. care, construction, cleaning, agriculture and hospitality). Furthermore, as migrants residing in Austria still earn comparably more than cross-border commuters in the same branch in the Austrian labour market (Verwiebe et al. 2015), it would be interesting to explore whether there are new cleavages arising within the low-wage sector—not only between locals and cross-border commuters, but also between migrants and cross-border commuters. Additionally, the stability and durability of work relationships between Austrian employers and cross-border commuters would be of great interest. Will businessmen tolerate wider margins of cooperation and weakened managerial authority when commuters gain extensive experience and company-specific skills? Very important is the question to what extent the stereotypical assumptions by employers about embodied attributes of foreign workers are adopted by the commuters. Finally, research on inequalities concerning socioeconomic char-

acteristics of cross-border commuters within the segmented labour market would be of great importance. This is especially the case for the role and effects of gender.

Open access funding provided by University of Vienna.

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Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland (2017): Crossing the Border for a Higher Status? Occupational Mobility of East-West Commuters in the Central European Region. *International Journal of Sociology* 47: 1-20.

Audience:	Scholars in the field of cross-national and comparative research in sociology
Limitations:	10.000 words
Impact Factor:	0.26 (2016)
DOI:	10.1080/00207659.2017.1335514



Crossing the Border for Higher Status? Occupational Mobility of East–West Commuters in the Central European Region

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This article discusses cross-border occupational mobility of workers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia who found employment in Austria. We illustrate this topic using data from a longitudinal survey on the employment careers of 1,347 cross-border commuters working in Austria conducted in the winter/spring of 2012/13. Empirically, we demonstrate that despite efforts to diminish structural inequalities between the regions, differences in unemployment and poverty rates continue to play a role. We further find that the majority of cross-border commuters have a different socioeconomic structure than locally residing Austrians overall commuters mostly show mid-level qualifications and work in branches with a high demand for labor (e.g., construction, gastronomy, health industry). Against this background, we pursue the following research question: to what extent are the patterns of occupational mobility of cross-border commuters in Austria influenced by sociodemographic factors, human capital, social capital, and labor market characteristics?

Keywords Central European Region; cross-border commuting; occupational mobility; transnational labor market; wage mobility

Investigating new facets of transnational labor markets has gained increasing attention in international migration research and an increasing body of empirical studies deals with the various facets of transnational labor markets (Fassmann and Kollár 1996; Gottholmseder and Theurl 2007; Lutz and Palenga-Möllenebeck 2011; Strüver 2005; Verwiebe et al. 2015). According to Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999: 219), labor markets are defined as transnational when they constitute “occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation.” Transnational labor markets bridge immigrants’ home and host societies and serve to realize the potential of

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job opportunities, higher income returns, and social mobility for transnational migrants (Yang 2006: 176).

Against that background this article deals with an emerging transnational labor market in the Central European Region (Centroe). Since May 1, 2011, when, at the end of the seven-year transitional period, the final barriers were lifted, citizens of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary received full access to the Austrian labor market. The transnational opportunity structures as well as the supply and demand of workforce in the Central European Region have been transformed ever since. We study Centroe's transnational labor market while focusing on key aspects of *cross-border commuting*, which has received comparatively little attention in academic research. What we do not know yet is whether transnational labor activities lead to an actual improvement of cross-border commuters' wages and occupation in comparison to their preceding job in the home country. So far no systematic studies in this field have been conducted. Until now the research literature on transnational labor activities and inequalities focus on sociodemographic differences such as gender, education, branches, or generational effects (e.g., Elrick and Lewandowska 2008; Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck 2011; Scott 2006). However, occupational mobility patterns in the course of cross-border commuting are of crucial societal relevance, particularly regarding path dependencies of early employment trajectories on later labor market outcomes but also in the context of regional divergence: the movement of workers from one European Union (EU) country to another has become an increasingly important adjustment mechanism for the European economy (European Commission 2015).

Cross-border commuters in the Central European Region are integrated in multiple social and economic systems. Their transnational involvement implies that their professional life is based in a different territory from their social environment. Given unequal wage levels and labor market conditions in the sending and receiving regions, the question arises whether and to what degree cross-border commuting is related to *occupational mobility*.¹ Our guiding research question in this study is: To what extent is the cross-border commuters' probability of upward wage mobility, upward class mobility, and changes in the occupational field in Austria influenced by sociodemographic factors, social capital, and labor market characteristics? With this analysis of three related but independent dimensions of occupational mobility and its micro logic we want to contribute to a better understanding of the various facets of possible status changes that are linked with cross-border commuting in the Central European Region.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The European Union is a specific mobility space shaped by its own institutional and legal regulations (Favell and Recchi 2009). One characteristic of this European space is that the social composition of the mobile population has been shaped over time by the process of European integration. In the 1960s and 1970s, the more developed European economies imported labor from Mediterranean countries, especially for lower-skilled jobs (Castles 2006: 742). The dominating form of migration was a permanent shift in one's place of residence. The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen a diversification of the patterns and forms of migration. We can observe an increase in the mobility of service-industry workers with diverse and often high-level qualifications, in temporal and circular migration, and in the variety of European regions from which mobile workers originate, including an

increase in movements from Eastern Europe (Braun and Arsene 2009: 29; Verwiebe, Wiesböck, and Teitzer 2014b: 127).

Although much research has been devoted to transnational migration and the differentiation of types of EU migration since the eastward enlargement (e.g., Kahanec and Zimmermann 2010), cross-border commuting as a specific form of geographic labor mobility has received less attention. Our analysis provides input to this field by focusing on mobility from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary to Austria. In this region there are 6.5 million inhabitants whose life chances—in spite of some economic catching up in the new member states—remain characterized by an East–West divide. This reflects a new intricate economic geography as Austria’s neighboring countries underwent a complex process of societal transformation to a free society and a market-based economy prior to their EU accession (Kahanec and Zimmermann 2010).

One of the main arguments for cross-border labor commuting is associated with push-and-pull factors related to regional differences in wages and employment opportunities (Knotter 2014). It is argued that the probability of mobility is positively related to the size of any income differential (Frigyes and Ward-Warmedinger 2006). Jennissen and Wilhelmina (2005) showed that gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has a positive effect and the unemployment rate has a negative effect on net migration in the EU. The focus of our study is not the reasons for mobility but whether commuters are actually able to improve their social status by the act of transnational commuting. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate the broad field of economic and sociological research concerning migration, which can be divided into three comprehensive areas: studies analyzing the decision processes leading to migration, studies dealing with the economic performance of mobile people in the destination country, and studies focusing on the economic impact of migration on the destination country (Fertig and Schmidt 2002: 7). Here we focus on the second field, but all fields are interrelated (e.g., understanding the composition of commuters is an important prerequisite for the analysis of their economic performances).

Our research is guided by several assumptions. We assume that processes of occupational mobility differ by *gender*. Recent studies on European cross-border labor mobility in Europe have shown that men are more willing to commute than women (Gottholmseder and Theurl 2007; Paci et al. 2010). Therefore, we expect men to have more extensive knowledge of the labor market in the region and thus more opportunities for the improvement of their status. Gender differences in terms of wages have frequently been shown in labor market and migration research (Giesecke and Verwiebe 2008; Livingston 2006; Zaiceva 2010). However, there is high demand for workers in certain female-dominated branches of the Austrian labor market—for example, care, health, and hospitality—with a higher wage level than comparable branches in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. This could lead to the opposite assumption that women have higher chances than men to improve their occupational status through cross-border commuting. Moreover, we suppose that young commuters have higher chances for status improvement. Paci et al. (2010) pointed out that mobility in a cross-border labor market is a phenomenon marked by younger individuals. As young commuters possess less prior work experience, they have a bigger scope and potential for status improvement. However, one could also argue that above all specific work experience is needed on the highly segmented and specialized Austrian labor market. This could lead to better mobility chances for older workers with more occupational experience.

We further expect that the level of *human capital* is crucial for the wages of cross-border commuters. There is theoretical and empirical evidence that wages rise with the level of education (Becker 1993). It has also been shown that adequate language skills lead to higher wages (Ferrer, Green, and Riddell 2006; Verwiebe et al. 2015). Moreover, cross-border commuters' occupational mobility patterns are influenced by the extent of usable social capital. *Social capital* can be defined as “investment and use of embedded resources in social relations for expected returns” (Lin 2000: 786). Such capital may compensate for the lack of core human capital (Waldinger, Lichter, and Ira 2003). As a focus of this study social networks are conceived as involving potentially valuable information that can be applied for processes of occupational mobility. In addition, *branches* play a role when it comes to occupational mobility patterns of cross-border commuters, as many growing areas in the service sector (e.g., hospitality, gastronomy, care) pay rather low wages in the presence of currently high labor demand and lower barriers to access than industrial production that is tightly organized by trade unions (Bittner, Hudler-Seitzberger, and Neunteufl 2011; Traxler et al. 2008; Verwiebe et al. 2014a). Finally, we assume that *the frequency of cross-border commuting* has an impact on occupational mobility chances. Seasonal commuting usually implies lower chances for status improvement, as the demand for workforce is limited to a certain season of the year. Weekly commuting is often associated with employment in private households, in particular in the field of care. Daily commuting, on the other hand, involves shorter distances and working on a regular base. We reason that in comparison with other forms of commuting, daily commuting is more likely to be linked to formal jobs and therefore more likely to enhance occupational mobility.

STATE OF THE RESEARCH: TRANSNATIONAL LABOR ACTIVITIES AND OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

Over the past two decades, the field of transnational labor research in the context of the EU has become more important (e.g., Ban 2012; Fassmann and Kollár 1996; Favell 2008; Kalter 2011; Recchi 2009; Strüver 2005; Verwiebe and Eder 2006; Verwiebe et al. 2014b). However, up-to-date studies on occupational mobility as an outcome of transnational labor activities remain scarce. In the literature the analytical emphasis in the field of *wage mobility* lies on wage effects in the receiving country, mainly due to the lack of longitudinal transnational data. For example research in this field focuses on effects of geographical labor mobility on wages in the destination region (Alsos and Eldring 2008; Baas, Brücker, and Hauptmann 2010; Friberg, Tronstad, and Dølvik 2012; Lemos and Portes 2014), wage assimilation of foreign-born workers to natives (Constant and Massey 2005; Kim 2013), wage mobility of immigrants within the destination country (Caparrós Ruiz 2014), intergenerational wage mobility of second-generation migrants (Flake 2013), or reservation wages of migrants, meaning the lowest wage rate at which a worker would be willing to accept a particular type of job (Constant et al. 2016). There is a substantial gap in the research literature on potential wage and status gains of geographical mobility itself in terms of the change of individual occupational activities from one region to another. This is particularly the case in the Central European Region.

In recent research there have been quite a few studies especially on upward mobility chances of immigrants in Spain. Simón, Ramos, and Sanromá (2014) demonstrated that the occupational status of immigrants in the Spanish labor market is substantially worse than in their countries of

origin. Stanek and Ramos (2013) analyzed determinants of occupational mobility recorded for immigrants between their last job in the region of origin and their first job in Spain. They found that ethnic segmentation in the Spanish labor market negatively affects the occupational mobility of immigrants. Furthermore, non-EU-15 immigrants in their study are at higher risk of downward mobility. According to their findings higher levels of education offer protection against downward mobility and increase the chance for upgrading. Lastly, contrary to the authors' presumptions, social support received from friends and relatives who reside in the destination country increases the risk of occupational downgrading. Vidal-Coso and Miret-Gamundi (2014) added the gender perspective and showed that female migrants to Spain are more likely to experience occupational downgrading at the time of migration than their male counterparts. Fernández-Macías et al. (2015) analyzed the crucial role of particular sectors (e.g., construction, cleaning) in determining occupational mobility patterns.

Most of the research in this field focuses on effects of long-term immigration, yet in our study we are interested in the patterns of short-term mobility on an emerging transnational labor market. A study conducted by Masso, Eamets, and Mõtsmees (2014) investigated the relation between temporary migration and upward mobility chances in Estonia. The authors studied whether temporary migration in a person's career is associated with upward movement in the occupational ladder in the long run and did not find any positive effect. The authors related their findings to the short-term nature of migration and the occupational downshifting abroad (e.g., during a short-term employment in Finland) as well as the specific segmentation of the Estonian labor market, which allows little upward mobility across educational and class boundaries. Similarly, Kogan and Weißmann (2013) argue that in Germany a strong horizontal and vertical segmentation of the labor market favors the concentration of short-term migrants in certain occupational niches—regardless of their previous occupation—and thus restricts upward mobility chances.

Overall we can see that in the field of transnational labor research in the EU there is a substantial lack of research on cross-border commuting that addresses geographical proximity of residency and workplace as well as different wage levels and purchasing power parities. In this article, we try to close this gap by taking the Central European Region as an example.² Based on the longitudinal data conducted in the course of the TRANSLAB project, we are able to analyze whether specific status changes occur in the course of these transnational labor market activities.

STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN REGION

On the institutional level, the Central European Region is an EU-designed cross-border region ("Euroregion") fostering enhanced mobility to strengthen competitiveness and the regional economy. However, the establishment of Euroregions is fundamentally connected with several political visions such as a Europe without borders, a new regionalism, and a turn back to (imagined) common regional historical and regional cultural roots (Klatt and Herrmann 2011: 66). In Centrope, mobility of labor is one of the core aims, emphasizing commitment to collaboration that ranges from research and innovation to human capital development, spatial integration, and culture and tourism. It reflects the differentiation of movement patterns within the EU: from once-in-a-lifetime migration to mobility as a life strategy. This development is



FIGURE 1 The Central European Region. *Source:* © ARGE CENTROPE. Reproduced by permission of City of Vienna.

also due to the relatively short distances within Centrope. For example, within one hour's time someone can easily commute between Bratislava and Vienna, the two most populous metropolitan areas in Centrope (Figure 1).³

Historically the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU enlargement, and the removal of the last barriers to the free movement of labor have brought about significant changes that, in turn, have led to new forms of interplay between economic, social, political, and legal factors (Haller and Verwiebe 2016; Horvath 2012). Since May 1, 2011, when the final barriers were lifted at the end of the seven-year transitional period, citizens of the A8 countries have had full access to labor markets across the EU-27.⁴

Cross-border commuting within this part of Europe is not a recent phenomenon linked to the creation of the European common market: formal and informal circularity between the countries has existed for many decades, albeit under specific conditions in the period of state socialism and with a long history of cross-border mobility that began during the time of the Habsburg monarchy (Haller and Verwiebe 2016; Verwiebe et al. 2015: 4). With regard to recent trends, already in 2009, a slight but steady increase in the number of workers from neighboring countries began, from 11,591 commuters working in Austria in 2008 to 14,465 in 2009 (Austrian Labor Market Service; authors' calculations). This reflects the gradual opening of the labor market before the last barriers to free mobility were lifted. From then on, a steady increase of East–West cross-border workers can be observed. In 2014, a total of 82,906 workers were registered on the Austrian labor market: from Hungary (39,886), from Slovakia (35,367), and from the Czech Republic (7,653) (Statistics Austria 2016).⁵ The rise in cross-border labor flows to Austria is expected to further continue in the future.

Concerning socioeconomic key data, labor market regulations, and the structures of welfare and educational systems, the region is still highly diverse; yet recent macro indicators show convergence in some areas. In Table 1 we display unemployment and poverty rates as well as household incomes for the subregions in the Central European Region since the year 2006.

In terms of the *unemployment rate* one can observe convergence within the Central European Region. In most parts of Austria, especially in Vienna, unemployment is on the increase. Interestingly in the Slovakian, Czech, and Hungarian parts of Centrope it is the other way around: unemployment is decreasing. This is mainly due to the economic development in the region. For example, Slovakia and the Czech Republic became two of the fastest growing

TABLE 1
Regional Statistics Between 2006 and 2015

	<i>Unemployment rate in percent</i>			<i>Poverty rate in percent</i>			<i>Household income per capita (PPS)</i>		
	2006	2012	2015	2006	2012	2015	2006	2012	2013
Austria	4.7	4.9	5.7	12.6	14.4	13.9	21,100	23,300	23,100
Lower Austria	4.0	4.6	5.2	12.1	9.9	9.0	21,600	24,100	24,000
Vienna	8.8	8.9	10.6	17.2	19.2	19.0	21,700	22,900	22,500
Burgenland	5.0	4.6	5.2	12.4	14.3	9.0	20,000	22,400	21,900
Czech Republic	7.1	7.0	5.0	9.9	9.6	9.7	11,400	12,300	12,500
Jihovýchod	7.1	7.6	4.9	8.3	7.0	7.9	10,500	11,900	12,400
Slovakia	13.4	14.0	11.5	11.6	13.2	12.3	8,700	11,600	12,200
Bratislavský kraj	4.6	5.7	5.7	7.3	6.3	7.3	15,900	21,500	22,300
Západné Slovensko	9.8	11.3	9.7	10.4	11.9	10.1	8,500	11,300	11,800
Hungary	7.5	11.0	6.8	15.9	14.3	14.9	9,000	9,500	9,800
Nyugat-Dunántúl	5.7	7.5	3.8	—	—	—	8,300	9,300	9,600

Source: Eurostat (2017).

Notes: *Unemployment*: percentage of working-age population (15 years and older); *poverty*: at risk of poverty, percentage of population; poverty rate for Hungary only available for NUTS-1 region Dunántúl; data for poverty rate for Austrian subregions 2012 and 2015 from Statistics Austria (2017) EU-SILC; household income: balance of primary income, net (uses), purchasing power standard (PPS) based on final consumption per inhabitant; data not available for 2015.

EU economies in the past decade with much higher GDP growth rates than in Austria (Eurofound 2017; OECD 2017). However, various (additional) factors influence the unemployment rate, rapid technological advances in particular sectors or demographic changes among others, and the level of unemployment benefits varies strongly between Austria on the one hand and Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic on the other.⁶

Using *household income* in purchasing power standard (PPS) as another example, there are still significant differences in household income between the Austrian, Slovakian, Czech, and Hungarian parts of Centrope. Yet in all neighboring regions of Austria, household incomes are increasing, thus leading to a gradual convergence of household income in the entire region. This development is most evident in Bratislava, where household income (€22,300 in PPS) reached the level of Vienna (€22,500 in PPS). In terms of *risks of poverty*,⁷ we observe decreasing or stable levels of poverty in all subregions of Centrope with the exception of Vienna, which has the highest concentration of people living in poverty in Centrope. There is no clear sign yet of a convergence of poverty risks in the region. And one also has to consider that the risk of poverty varies across subpopulations. For instance, women remain at a higher risk of poverty than men, even though the poverty rate of women is generally on the decline, falling faster than the EU-27 average (Fábián et al. 2014; Kahanec et al. 2014).

DATA, METHODS, SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Regarding the methodological design, the TRANSLAB project builds on the established methods of “ethnosurvey” data collection (Massey 1987) and on more recent associated applications for the European setting (Kalter 2011; Massey, Kalter, and Pren 2008; Mullan and

Frejka 1995; Wallace and Vincent 2007). From October 2012 to June 2013, the social research institute GfK Austria and its Central European partner institutes carried out face-to-face interviews with a total of 1,347 commuters to Austria and a reference group consisting of 1,340 noncommuters. By commuting, we understand a given individual's repeated and regular (daily, weekly, monthly, or seasonal) movement across national borders. The interviewees were currently employed (working at least 20 hours a week), were 21 to 65 years old, and had their primary residence within regions bordering on Austria, for example, South Moravia (Czech Republic), Bratislava and Trnava (Slovakia), and Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas (Hungary). The questionnaire collected information on reasons for cross-border commuting and noncommuting, current occupation, geographical mobility, human capital, network integration, and social demography. We further gathered detailed longitudinal information on the respondents' employment careers using retrospective questions.

To adequately represent the regional structures of the countries of origin, commuters were defined as sampling points on the basis of district-specific information and classes of commune sizes per clustering procedures. The resulting sample thus covered a large scope of urban centers (e.g., Bratislava, Brno, and Győr), smaller towns, and border region villages. Little comprehensive information was available on the labor market integration of cross-border commuters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary in Austria. As the best available approximation, we obtained the subsample of commuters via quota sampling, drawing on labor market statistics of the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS). Based on these data, we used information on the gender and age patterns of Hungarian, Czech, and Slovakian employees in Austria who had their residence outside of this country. To be able to ensure systematic comparisons between the mobile and nonmobile residents of the respective border regions in our sample, the subsample of noncommuters was also based on quota sampling. However, for this group, it was possible to elaborate detailed quotas for gender, age, and education on the basis of official statistics.⁸

Dependent Variables

Our survey contains detailed information on five job episodes: the current job of cross-border commuters in Austria and the last four jobs in their home region. We use this survey for several logistic regressions, which determine the probabilities for wage, class, and occupational mobility connected with cross-border commuting. The following dependent variables were used for our regression analyses: The dependent variable of *upward wage mobility* was computed from the difference between the monthly gross wage (in euros) of the current job in Austria and the last job outside of Austria. Wages were measured as ordered variable using more than 22 different wage brackets. Upward wage mobility means that a worker had to move up at least one wage bracket.⁹ The dependent variable *upward class mobility* is based on a class variable introduced by Featherman and Hauser (1978). Based on their work we use mobility between the 10 ISCO main groups as an indicator for class mobility.¹⁰ To calculate this variable, we compare the current job in Austria and the last job outside of Austria of the group under study. Our dependent variable *changes of the occupational field* is computed based on a comparison of the current and the last job categorized into 43 ISCO submajor groups, which are based on their similarity in terms of the skill level and skill specialization required for the jobs. In our analysis, the focus lies on commuters with no prior work experience in Austria.

Independent Variables

A number of key independent variables are used in our logistic regression analyses. Our models include sociodemographic indicators: *gender* (women = 1, men = 0), *marital status* (married or living in cohabitation = 1, all others = 0), and *age* (measured in years). We also captured the human capital of cross-border commuters (education, language command) and categorized the commuters' education applying a collapsed, three-ladder International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) scheme. We thus compare cross-border commuters with a *university degree* and those *without formal training* with a reference group of cross-border commuters with intermediate qualification. To scale our interviewees' German-language skills, we use a variable on self-reported German proficiency ranging from 1 to 5 ("no knowledge at all" to "very good knowledge") (van Tubergen and Kalmijn 2005). Based on this variable we calculated two binary variables ("German skills very good"; item 5), "German skills weak"; item 1 + item 2; the reference category for those variables is "German skills moderate"; item 3 + item 4.

To capture the social capital of cross-border commuters, our empirical analyses apply measurement concepts based on the Aguilera–Massey framework (2003). The *near family tie variable* measures the extent to which spouses, children, siblings, parents, and grandparents had at sometime gathered or were still gathering working experience in Austria. Within each of these kinship categories, our index adds one point whenever a family member was currently working in Austria and another if a family member had ever been working in this country, yielding an index range of 1 to 5. A similar index was calculated (ranging from 1 to 5) with the *far family tie variable* to measure social capital through relationships with other family members and relatives who were or had been working in Austria, that is, uncles/aunts, cousins, nephews/nieces, brothers/sisters/parents-in-law. The variable *Job search via social network* (Aguilera and Massey 2003) served to distinguish two different groups of cross-border commuters: first, commuters who had found their current main job in Austria through social networks, that is, the agency of family members, relatives, friends, and acquaintances; and second, those who had applied other job-finding methods, that is, individual applications, public or private recruitment agencies, entrance into self-employment, intrafirm job mobility by placing training positions, temporary or permanent relocation, promotion, or other methods. Finally, in regard to the relevance of social network characteristics, we use *friendship with an Austrian* (as a binary variable) to include a social capital indicator to account for any close connection (relationships based on trust) with locals.

Moreover, we include in our regression analyses a variable that measures the *ethnic composition of companies* in terms of the national belonging of workers. We used a concept developed by Falcón and Meléndez (2001) for the degree of ethnic workplace segregation and compare commuters who were employed in firms in which the majority of workers were coethnics with those who worked in firms composed of an ethnically diverse workforce. We also assessed the labor market characteristics of Centrope by distinguishing between the commuters' *industrial sector* as to wholesale and retail trade, agriculture and forestry, construction, manufacturing, gastronomy and accommodation, health services/social work, other personal services, and business-related services. Empirically, we focus our discussion on those branches that have attracted a higher number of commuters during past years (construction, gastronomy/hotels, wholesale/trade, health industry and social work, other personal services). The reference category includes employment in all other branches

(agriculture, manufacturing, business-related services). The analysis further includes a variable that captures the *frequency of commuting* (daily commuting vs. other forms of commuting) in order to control for specifics possibly connected with the respective type of commuting. In addition, our regression analyses control for the following variables: nationality, region/locality of the job, company size, wage based on collective bargaining, working time in Austria. Descriptive statistics for all independent and dependent variables can be found in the Appendix.

Sample

This study provides several interesting insights into the social composition of cross-border commuters in Centrope (see Table 2). Commuters in our study show mostly mid-level

TABLE 2
Major Labor Market Characteristics of Natives and Migrants (“Foreign-Born”) in Austria, 2012

	<i>Micro Census Data Austrian Labor Market (LFS)</i>					<i>TRANSLAB Data</i>	
	<i>Natives</i>	<i>EU-15</i>	<i>EU-10</i>	<i>Ex-Yug.</i>	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Commuter</i>	<i>Noncommuter</i>
Education							
ISCED 0–2	8.4	4.5	4.9	29.8	60.9	9.3	7.1
ISCED 3–4	70.3	53.5	67.3	64.2	35.1	76.9	72.5
ISCED 5–6	21.3	42.0	27.8	6.0	3.9	14.8	20.4
Industrial sector							
Agriculture and forestry	5.0	1.1	1.4	0.4	0.2	2.8	2.8
Industry and commerce							
Manufacturing	16.0	13.7	13.1	18.7	24.2	6.8	17.8
Construction	8.3	6.5	13.6	18.9	14.8	17.6	7.5
Other	1.5	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.7	1.0	2.5
Total	25.8	20.6	27.7	38.4	39.8	25.4	27.8
Services							
Wholesale and retail trade	15.0	15.6	8.4	14.1	12.5	12.1	10.7
Gastronomy and accommodation	4.6	9.4	13.3	10.4	14.7	19.2	5.6
Health service, social work	9.7	9.4	11.8	8.9	4.7	17.4	6.8
Other, personal services	39.9	43.9	37.4	27.9	28.2	23.0	46.2
Total	69.2	78.3	70.9	61.3	60.1	71.8	69.3
Firm size							
Small firm (≤ 10 employees)	33.5	33.0	42.7	27.4	28.6	26.9	22.8
Medium-size firm (11–49 employees)	27.5	22.7	26.4	30.5	25.6	52.6	41.0
Large firm (≥ 50 employees)	38.9	44.3	31.0	42.1	45.8	20.5	36.2
Gender							
Female	44.9	48.8	51.6	44.5	30.9	42.2	45.5
Male	55.1	51.2	48.4	55.5	69.1	57.8	54.5
Age							
21–35 years	32.5	35.6	36.2	32.4	38.9	47.8	38.4
36–50 years	45.0	45.2	42.3	49.4	50.5	37.7	38.8
51–65 years	22.5	19.2	21.5	18.3	10.5	14.5	22.8
<i>N</i>	60,652	2,529	1,230	3,352	1,372	1,347	1,340

Sources: Micro Census 2012, Labor Force Survey 2012; survey 2012/13; authors’ calculations; data include workers between 21 and 65 years old with a main job in Austria.

qualifications (ISCED 3–4: 77 percent). A relatively small proportion (9 percent) is qualified at a low level only, every seventh cross-border commuter is a university graduate. Thus, they proved significantly better qualified than ex-Yugoslav and Turkish-rooted migrants—traditionally the most important immigrant groups in Austria. However, cross-border commuters in our sample still show a lower qualification level than EU-15, EU-10 workers, and Austrian natives.

The majority of cross-border commuters in our study work in services (e.g., gastronomy: 19 percent; health: 17 percent) or in construction (18 percent), a comparatively small group works in agriculture or in manufacturing. Commuters in our sample set themselves clearly apart from natives, EU-10, and EU-15 migrants employed in Austria. Furthermore, commuters work mainly in medium-size firms (53 percent). This distinguishes them from all other labor market groups under investigation, who are clearly more frequently employed in large and small enterprises, as shown by the conducted statistical tests. Lastly, cross-border commuters in our study are relatively young: approximately 48 percent are younger than 35 and another 38 percent are between 35 and 50 years old. They are thus younger than any other comparison group. Only 14.5 percent of the cross-border commuters in the sample are older than 50.

These indicators point to the structure of a group that has so far received less attention on the part of transnational labor research in the EU. In the following we will examine the extent to which the commuters under study are able to improve their wages and occupational status through transnational labor activities.

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY: DO COMMUTERS IMPROVE THEIR STATUS?

Table 3 presents a descriptive overview of the patterns of upward mobility in the region under study. For this table, we calculated direct shifts between two jobs (the current job vs. the last job) and compared the wage, the class position, and the occupation of those two jobs of our cross-border commuters under study and a comparison group of workers who are employed in Slovakia, Hungary, or the Czech Republic. With the analysis of these three related but

TABLE 3
Wage and Class Mobility in the Central European Region

	<i>Upward wage mobility</i>	<i>Job in CZ, HU; SL</i>	<i>Job in Austria</i>	N
Total***	No	58.5%	41.5%	1,488
	Yes	39.1%	60.9%	1,199
	Upward class mobility	Job in CZ, HU; SL	Job in Austria	N
Total***	No	51.4%	48.6%	2,351
	Yes	39.3%	60.7%	336
	Change of occupation	Job in CZ, HU; SL	Job in Austria	N
Total	No	50.1%	49.9%	2,026
	Yes	49.2%	50.8%	661

Source: TRANSLAB survey 2012/13.

Notes: $N = 2,687$; authors' calculations; data include workers between 21 and 65 years old with a main job (minimum 20 hours/week) in Austria; mobility is measured as direct job shifts; we selected percentages from cross-tab rows; $+p < 0.1$; $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$; χ^2 test for upward wage mobility: 100.12, for upward class mobility: 17.02; for change of occupation: 38.51.

independent dimensions of occupational mobility we want to contribute to a better understanding of possible status changes that are linked with cross-border commuting.¹¹ Empirically, we observe a number of relevant findings:

- First, there is much *more upward wage mobility* for cross-border commuters who work in Austria and less upward mobility for those who continue working in the Czech, Hungarian, and Slovakian regions bordering Austria (60.9 percent vs. 39.1 percent of all wage upward changes).
- Second, we also observe better chances to improve the *class position* for those workers who take up a job in Austria compared to those who continue to work in their home regions in Slovakia, Hungary, or the Czech Republic (60.7 percent vs. 39.3 percent of all class upward changes).
- Third, roughly 25 percent of the workers who changed their jobs in the Central European Region also experienced a change of occupational field. Interestingly, this form of mobility is equally likely for transnationally mobile workers as well as for noncommuters (50.8 percent vs. 49.2 percent of all changes of the occupational field).
- Fourth, overall there is much more upward wage mobility ($N = 1,199$) than upward class mobility ($N = 336$) or occupational change ($N = 661$) in the Central European Region. This is observable for the local/national labor market as well as for cross-border labor market mobility.

Using several logistic regression analyses, in a last step we analyse upward wage mobility, upward class mobility, and changes in the occupational field of cross-border commuters working in Austria. Table 4 includes a number of sociodemographic indicators, variables that capture the human capital of cross-border commuters (education/formal training, language command) and their social capital (near and far family ties, friendship with Austrians), the relevance of social networks for the job search in Austria as well as variables that cover the characteristics of firms and sectors in which cross-border commuters found employment.

Based on these regressions, we can show a number of relevant insights into the patterns of cross-border commuting: (1) The patterns of cross-border commuting differ substantially between men and women. Although, we cannot report significant differences between women and men regarding upward wage mobility, women still change their occupation more often than men. Female commuters also improve their class position twice as often as men. By and large, these findings are more in line with our “alternative” gender hypothesis since our data do not show—as one could have assumed from existing research—that men “automatically” have better chances to improve their status through cross-border commuting. (2) The marital status of cross-border commuters is relevant as well. Those living in a partnership/marriage have a better chance to improve their wages through a job shift to Austria. (3) The effects of age are also significant and indicate that increasing age correlates positively with upward mobility chances. Again, this corresponds with our “alternative” age hypothesis and confirms the assumption that specific work experience is needed on the highly segmented Austrian labor market. (4) Cross-border commuters without formal education have lower chances of realizing upward wage mobility through a new job on the Austrian labor market (reference group: workers with intermediate qualifications), which confirms our guiding research assumptions. Our findings also indicate that cross-border commuters without formal qualifications change their occupation less

TABLE 4
Logistic Regression for Upward Wage Mobility, Upward Class Mobility, and Changes in the Occupational Field in the Central European Region

	<i>Upward wage mobility</i>	<i>Upward class mobility</i>	<i>Change in occupational field</i>
	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Women (ref. men)	1.158	2.312***	1.683**
Married or partnership (ref. other household types)	1.315*	1.265	1.215
Age in years	1.021**	1.019*	1.020**
Without formal training (ref. intermediate qualification)	0.170***	0.466	0.570 (+) ^(0.130)
University degree	1.042	0.978	0.761
German skills weak (ref. intermediate skills)	1.780*	1.004	1.261
German skills very good	0.665**	0.743	0.958
Near family ties	0.838+	1.179	1.122
Far family ties	1.102	1.111	1.052
Job search via social network (ref. other job search)	1.328*	1.215	1.282 (+) ^(0.110)
Friendship with Austrians (ref. no Austrian friends)	1.584**	0.777	0.807
Workers in firm mainly own nationals (ref. other firms)	0.964	1.625*	1.436*
Construction (ref. manufacturing, agriculture, business services)	0.923	0.513*	0.579*
Gastronomy, hotels	0.728+	0.584*	0.644*
Wholesale, trade	0.668+	0.557+	0.754
Health industry and social work	1.075	0.422**	0.522*
Other, personal services	0.680+	0.708	0.803
Daily commuting (ref. other forms of commuting)	3.353***	0.546*	0.696
<i>N</i>	1,347	1,347	1,347
<i>R</i> ²	0.222	0.173	0.170

Source: TRANSLAB survey 2012/13.

Notes: Authors' calculations; analysis includes workers between 20 and 65 years of age with a main job (minimum 20 hours/week) in Austria; regressions controls for the following variables: nationality, region/locality of the job, various other branches, size of firm, wage based on collective bargaining, working time in Austria; + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; regressions parameters: odds ratios ((Exp(B)), a positive effect of the odds ratios is expressed as $e^\beta > 1$ and a negative effect as $e^\beta < 1$.

often. The regression analyses show no differences between the workers with intermediate qualifications and those with university degrees in this respect. Moreover, the effects of German-language command are surprising at first sight, considering the results of the extensive research on the positive effects of language skills for the integration of migrants (e.g., Dávila and Mora 2000; Esser 1982, 2006; Riederer and Verwiebe 2015; van Tubergen and Kalmijn 2005). Our findings show a higher probability of wage gains for those with limited German skills (who tend to work in manual jobs). One possible explanation could be that the relative wage position makes a difference, whether upward wage mobility occurs also depends on the position in the occupational hierarchy from which a cross-border commuter starts (upward wage mobility seems to occur more often in lower areas). However, this result needs further research in our view.

(5) Social capital and the use of social networks for job search are partially important for the explanation of the patterns of cross-border commuting in Centrope. There is a negative effect of near family ties on upward wage mobility, in accordance with the theoretical argument of

authors like Granovetter (1974) and Aguilera and Massey (2003); this also confirms our assumptions from the theoretical part of the study. The analyses also show that friendships with Austrians improve wage upward mobility chances but have no further effects on the other two independent variables. With regard to our arguments in the theoretical section of the study, one could at least partially confirm the idea that social contacts and friendships with Austrian natives are beneficial for achievable wages since they represent bridges to the major ethnic group residing in the destination country. This form of social capital can broadly be referred to as “bridging social capital” (Putnam 2007). In addition, the use of social network contacts on the Austrian labor market is relevant. There is a significant positive effect on wage upward mobility and an increase in the likelihood of changes in the occupational field (although this effect is not highly significant). Finally, in terms of the relevance of social capital and social network, our analyses show that ethnic composition of the workplace matters as well. Those cross-border commuters employed in firms in which the majority of workers were coethnics have higher chances of upward class mobility and changes in their occupation (Falcón and Meléndez 2001). (6) We can show that the chance to increase the wage or class position through cross-border commuting in service branches like construction, gastronomy, trade, the health industry, and personal services are much lower than in other branches, confirming our theoretical assumptions. By the same token, employment in those branches is less often accompanied by a change of occupation for workers. Interestingly, these are the branches in which employment of cross-border commuters is important for the Austrian economy. (7) Finally, the frequency of commuting matters: As hypothesized, daily commuters have a much higher chance of improving their wages than workers who commute on a weekly or monthly schedule. However, this corresponds to lower chances of upward class mobility for daily cross-border commuters.

CONCLUSION

In this study we take a closer look at whether geographical mobility in the Central European Region is linked with occupational mobility. The study was designed to take Centroe as an example of a novel transnational European labor market reflecting the differentiation of movement patterns: from once-in-a-lifetime migration to mobility as a life strategy. Commuting here is a form of transnational mobility that results neither in definitely leaving one’s region of origin nor in definitely integrating in a host society, but in an intermediate process (Fassmann 2003: 438). Overall cross-border commuting can be perceived as a prototypic example of versatile postmodern life concepts, as both multilocal and mobile (Wille 2012).

It becomes clear that commuters settle into the dynamic of uneven experiences of occupational mobility as they start working in Austria. For example, in terms of *upward wage mobility* the young, the lowly educated, as well as commuters working in construction and various service branches are confronted with lower chances. On the other hand, there are significant wage benefits for daily commuters as well as cross-border commuters with Austrian friends. This indicates that the transnational labor market in the Central European Region is largely structured by social networks (Verwiebe et al. 2015; Wiesböck et al. 2016).

While the vast majority of cross-border commuters in our study show mid-level qualifications, the chance for some groups to improve their *occupational status* in Austria is lower than

for other groups. This is particularly the case for men, younger workers, daily commuters, and workers in construction as well as several key service branches. The important question in this regard is whether this is an effect of disadvantage or it is “self-chosen,” meaning that commuters might chose economic gains over the recognition of their qualification because their status is mainly constituted through their financial power in the region of origin. Commuters are confronted with a dual frame of reference in their home region and receiving region in terms of wage level and purchasing power parity. For them it is possible to experience occupational downward mobility while at the same time facing upward wage mobility compared to the former job in the home region. In this context, we should pose the question: Is this a problem and, if so, for whom? In other words it would be crucial to delve deeply into the intentions behind mobility. If it is primarily earning more money and improving the status in the home region, occupational downward mobility does not constitute a downgrading factor for commuters themselves. Therefore, it would be of great interest to include the subjective scale of expectations and motivations for mobility.

Against the background of our results, in future studies it would be interesting to examine whether commuting leads to a convergence or divergence of average wages over time in particular branches in the Austrian border region. In addition, further research in this field could focus on the impacts of cross-border commuting on economic and social inequality in the home societies. Does labor commuting lead to decreasing economic imbalances between sending and receiving regions? Do new potentials for cooperation and conflict arise between the participants in this transnational labor market? As we can see, the scale of this debate is extensive and multifaceted even at the local level. Further research in this field would contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics and implications of the transnational labor market in Centrope.

NOTES

1. Various aspects of occupational mobility processes attached to migration can be studied, for example, downward, upward, and lateral mobility in terms of class position or wage, changes in the occupational field, changes of industry affiliations, the duration of unemployment phases after migration among others. In this study we focus on three aspects: upward wage mobility, upward class mobility and changes in the occupational field.

2. According to Horvath (2012), this gap is also due to the issue that transnational quantitative methodologies have so far received little attention, particularly regarding the important question of how to integrate quantitative methods into transnational research. Target populations as well as units of reference are still commonly defined in national terms, along the line that the “nation state society is the natural social and political form of the modern world” (Wimmer and Schiller 2003: 217).

3. The region consists of eight federal provinces, regions, and counties with a total population of approximately 6.5 million.

4. The A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) joined the European Union during its 2004 enlargement.

5. The statistic includes dependently and independently employed people with citizenship of Hungary, Slovakia, or the Czech Republic registered on the Austrian labor market.

6. As a “conservative-corporatist state” (Esping-Anderson 1990), Austria has a highly developed social security system based on the idea of status preservation of wage earners (Obinger and Tálos 2009: 101). Labor market risks are strongly reduced by the country’s welfare system (Verwiebe et al. 2014a). Unemployment benefits are quite generous, especially in comparison to unemployment benefits in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, which established much more liberal welfare systems over the course of the past two decades (cf. Fábíán et al. 2014; Guger et al. 2009; Kahanec et al. 2014; Lakner and Tausz 2016; Ripka and Mareš 2016).

7. It should be mentioned that poverty measures on the basis of household income fail to capture other important dimensions of poverty (living standard) and to reflect subjective perceptions of well-being (Greeley 1994).

8. We are aware that our quota sample creates some limitations with regard to representativity. However, it was the best available option to conduct our study since no systematic knowledge was available on the social composition of the population of cross-border commuters at the time of the survey.

9. Thus, we calculated 1,199 wage upward mobilities through cross-border commuting, 73 percent percent of those included mobility over two brackets and more.

10. The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) is a project of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and provides a system for classifying and aggregating occupational information.

11. A skilled worker from Slovakia (e.g., a trained toolmaker) could work in a better-paid position in Austria, while changing the occupational field and experiencing downward class mobility as an unskilled construction worker.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1
Descriptive Statistics for Cross-Border Commuters

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Dependent variables					
Wage upward mobility	1,347	0	1	0.54	0.50
Wage upward mobility	1,347	0	1	0.15	0.36
Change of occupation	1,347	0	1	0.25	0.43
Independent variables					
Women	1,347	0	1	0.43	0.49
Married/cohabiting	1,347	0	1	0.63	0.48
Age in years	1,347	21.0	65.0	37.93	10.93
Low-level education (ISCED 0-2)	1,347	0	1	0.09	0.28
High-level education (ISCED 5-6)	1,347	0	1	0.14	0.35
German skills weak	1,347	0	1	0.08	0.27
German skills very good	1,347	0	1	0.32	0.47
Near family tie	1,347	1	5	0.40	0.64
Far family tie	1,347	1	5	0.40	0.70
Job finding via social network	1,347	0	1	0.63	0.48
Friendship with Austrian	1,347	0	1	0.71	0.45
Ethnic workplace segregation	1,347	0	1	0.22	0.41
Construction	1,347	0	1	0.17	0.37
Gastronomy	1,347	0	1	0.20	0.40
Wholesale and retail trade	1,347	0	1	0.11	0.32
Health services, social work	1,347	0	1	0.13	0.34
Other personal services	1,347	0	1	0.14	0.34
Daily cross-border commuting	1,347	0	1	0.58	0.49
Control variables					
National origin: Slovakia	1,347	0	1	0.37	0.48
National origin: Hungary	1,347	0	1	0.41	0.49
Firm size (below 10 workers)	1,347	0	1	0.26	0.44
Wage based on collective bargaining	1,347	0	1	0.41	0.49
Full-time employment (35 hours plus)	1,347	0	1	0.75	0.43
Weekly commuting	1,347	0	1	0.31	0.46
Labor market region Vienna	1,347	0	1	0.53	0.50
Labor market region Vienna other Austria parts	1,347	0	1	0.06	0.24

Source: TRANSLAB survey 2012/13; authors' calculations.

Wiesböck, Laura (2017): Spatial and Social Constructions of Belonging of Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. *European Societies*.

Audience:	Scholars in the field of sociological research on Europe
Limitations:	7.500 words
Impact Factor:	0.676 (2016)
Status:	Submitted 8 September 2017

European Societies



Spatial and social constructions of belonging of cross-border commuters in the Central European Region

Journal:	<i>European Societies</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	cross-border commuting, CENTROPE, social transformation, european belonging, post-socialism, european identity

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Spatial and social constructions of belonging of cross-border commuters in the Central European Region

This paper deals with constructions of spatial and social belonging in everyday cross-border practices. The focus lies on East-West commuters, who cross the borders of the Central European Region (CENTROPE) on a regular basis. This region is of particular interest as the role of the borders between Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary has been highly varied throughout history from the dissolution of the Soviet-Union in 1991 to the EU-enlargement in 2004 and to the removal of the last barriers to the free movement of labor in 2011. In a first step the paper will look at influencing factors on a European sense of belonging based on the retrospective longitudinal survey conducted in the research project XY comparing 1,347 commuters with 1,338 non-commuters. The results show that the likelihood of primarily identifying as European is linked to regular cross-border practices, informal social ties in the host country, language skills, educational level and national origin. In a second step, the outcomes of the quantitative survey were complemented by spatial narratives of commuters based on ten narrative interviews. This revealed that older respondents are prone to refer to post-socialist spatial concepts, in other words, former borders are still influential and have an impact on their perceptions today. Younger respondents, on the other hand, identify with a new trans-local space. In a third step, existing and emerging social boundaries are explored. The analysis shows three contesting social groups for commuters: non-commuters in their home region, Austrian locals and refugees.

Keywords: CENTROPE; cross-border commuting; European belonging; Euroregion; social transformation; post-socialism

Introduction

In the past 20 years, the concept of identity has played a central role in the study of European integration. The disappearance of internal borders between European Union member states and the enlargement of the EU have raised the question of whether these implementations will lead to the formation of a supra-national European identity (Arts and Halman, 2006). The idea and ideal of the EU is that individuals expand the scale of their identity to a supranational level in order that their borders are congruent with the EU (Madsen and van Naerssen, 2003). So far this construction of European identity seems to be rather fictitious. What "Europe" genuinely is has never been defined clearly and where it starts and ends has changed significantly over time depending on various power configurations and geographical alliances (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999).

Until recently Europe has presented itself as an entity without internal borders, while individual regions, as well as nations, maintain their distinctiveness (Schönwald, 2014). However, many inherited territorial structures of power in the European Union are currently being challenged, reconfigured or transcended (Brenner and Elden, 2009). Today we observe a crisis in European cooperation and a re-emergence of nationalist identity politics due to the enduring aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008 and the ongoing refugee influx.

So what influences do these developments have on spatial and social constructions of belonging in the border region of the Central European Region? This question constitutes the main interest of this paper. Border regions are particularly revealing places in the field of Europeanisation research displaying many dimensions of difference, inequality and asymmetry – economic, political, cultural and social (Anderson and O'dowd 1999: 596). In the wake of the prevalence of supranational spaces within the European Union ("Euroregions"), border regions may act as laboratories of Europeanisation¹ and as a tier in today's system of multilevel government.

The Central European Region (CENTROPE) is a notable archetype of aforementioned institutionalised cross-border territory. The Austrian borderland to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary constitutes an instructive example of regional transnationalism with a specific historico-political context, which has undergone profound system changes and societal transformations. This reorganisation of territoriality and borders is a basic prerequisite in the course of the establishment of a European societal space (Bartolini, 2005). In empirical terms, an alteration of the structure of population can be observed: Ever since the opening of the border in 2011 the number of East-west commuters regularly crossing the border for work or education has continuously been rising (Wiesböck, 2016; Verwiebe et al., 2017).

¹ Europeanisation here is understood as domestic change in which the EU is entirely or partially involved (Ladrech 2014).

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3 Regardless of the political reintegration of the region, CENTROPE is still characterised by
4 relatively high economic and social inequalities. Furthermore, the region is currently
5 confronted with a threat of disintegration. The free movement of workers is endangered, be it
6 in the public discussion in Austria on limiting labour market access to Eastern European
7 workers, in the rising nationalist rhetoric in Hungary or in tendencies to impose border
8 controls and restrictions as a result of the ongoing humanitarian crisis. As a consequence the
9 notion of the cooperative European cross-border region is challenged and the exclusionary
10 function of the border is revived in public discourse. Given these occurrences the research
11 questions of this paper are as follows:
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- 15 (1) What are the influencing factors for identifying as (Central) European in CENTROPE?
 - 16 (2) What role do (former) borders play in the spatial identity construction of commuters?
 - 17 (3) Which existing and emerging social boundaries do commuters experience?
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22 The empirical analyses are based on data from the research project XY on cross-border labour
23 commuting in the Central European Region consisting of a longitudinal survey of 1,347
24 commuters to Austria and a reference group of 1,338 non-commuters (research question 1) as
25 well as ten narrative interviews with commuters (research question 2 and 3).
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30 **Borders, Europeanisation and belonging**

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32 In order to analyse the impact of a nearby border on the European identity for those who live
33 close to it, the conceptual meaning of the border itself has to be looked at. Sociological
34 reflections on the border can be traced back to the work of Georg Simmel on the spatial order
35 of society. Simmel refers to the universal character of the border in social life. According to
36 him the border is not a spatial construction with sociological impacts but rather a sociological
37 construction that takes shape spatially (Simmel, 1992 [1908]). In other words, for Simmel the
38 border is just a symbol for what happens between human beings. Current approaches in the
39 social research literature recognise that borders are results and producers of social action, and
40 therefore outcomes of dynamic relationships. Here borders are a subject matter of
41 negotiations, structure behaviour and define who is included and who is excluded (Laube
42 2013). Conversely, it is actors who shape and reproduce borders, who obey their rules or
43 break them.
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50 In social research it is crucial to include the subject of communication and social interactions,
51 which are evoked by the border. In doing so, a spatial definition of the border can be provided
52 regardless of the national territory as social reciprocity emerging from human action. In this
53 paper borders are understood as sets of practices which are not restricted to geographical
54 border areas (Laube, 2013). Borders manifest themselves in various social, economic, cultural
55 administrative as well as political practices that may occur in a simultaneous and overlapping
56 manner (Paasi, 1999). Thus borders organize daily life practices, strengthening or belonging
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3 to and identifying with places and groups, while at the same time perpetuating notions of
4 difference and Othering (Paasi, 1999).

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6 The meaning of the border can change with the measures of inclusion and exclusion or
7 changes in regulation. This has been occurring in the EU to a large extent. There is probably
8 no other political entity in modern times where borders have been kept so undecided as those
9 of the European Union (Newman, 2006). This fact contributes to difficulties regarding
10 supranational identity constitution within Europe. According to (Langer, 2012) Europe could
11 not have survived after two World Wars, had Europeans not moved into a post-national
12 identity. Referring to a European identity and feeling “European” is seen as a successful
13 outcome of European integration. In this context, European identity is understood as “a
14 psycho-sociological or socio-political process of citizens’ attachment to the European space or
15 to the political community designed by integration” (Habermas, 2001).

16
17 In a sociological sense, identity represents a particular type of social relations (Eder 2009:
18 429). Any kind of identity is by definition social, be it in social forms such as couples,
19 families, associations, classes, regions, or ethnic groups (ibid.). Hence the political
20 community as a legal space with rights and duties itself is not sufficient to provoke
21 identification, since this process requires social and cultural meaning. “Creating” a European
22 identity is a challenge as Europe lacks the standard features of national identities such as a
23 common language and a shared history and tradition. The main difference to the national
24 model of national identity is that narrative borders are not congruent: economic, political and
25 cultural borders are not harmonised (ibid).

26
27 Furthermore, the project of the European Union is fundamentally elite-driven, spreading from
28 top to bottom. European identity was and continues to be constructed through the actions and
29 aims of national elites whose needs transcend national borders (Checkel and Katzenstein
30 2009; Cinpoes 2008). This emphasises the role of political elites in the top-down construction
31 of European identity (Wodak and Boukala 2015). It explains why identification with and
32 support for the construction of a united European community is higher among political and
33 social elites and lower at the grass-roots level (Duchesne, 2010).

34
35 Some scholars have argued that the different historical developments in Europe after the
36 Second World War, including the experience of socialism in the East and the transition away
37 from it, have led to fundamentally different political cultures and attitudes in the East and in
38 the West . This is why the increased social, economic, and political heterogeneity introduced
39 by the biggest EU enlargement could put a strain on the incipient collective European identity.

40
41 Ceka und Sojka (2016) have provided an empirical account of the state of European identity
42 after the eastern enlargement through a comparative analysis of affective European identity
43 (the emotional closeness or attachment) and cognitive European identity (the self-perception
44 as a member of a community) in the old and the new Central and Eastern European member
45 states. It shows that while the overall levels of cognitive European identification in the East
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3 are indeed lower than in the West, citizens from new member states are just as attached to
4 Europe as citizens from older member states. Most importantly, not only is there no
5 discernible difference in cognitive identification among young Europeans in the East and the
6 West, but the youngest in the East seem to be even more strongly attached to Europe than
7 their peers in the West.
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11 Apart from age and residence in old or new member states, many researchers came to the
12 conclusions that the capacity to sustain and spread people's identification with the EU relies
13 on the engine of cross-border interactions (Fligstein 2008). "Feeling European" is closely
14 related to moving across the EU (Roeder 2011; Rother et al. 2009; Verwiebe 2004). The main
15 interest of this paper is, to determine whether these findings are applicable for transnationally
16 mobile citizens in the Central European Region (CENTROPE). Before examining the results
17 from the analysis, the following passage provides a brief insight into the particularities of the
18 region under study.
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23 24 25 **Regional transnationalism in the Central Europe Region**

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27 The Central European Region (CENTROPE) is a distinct cultural area and political region
28 consisting of eight federal provinces, regions and counties with a total population of
29 approximately 6.5 million. The largest city in CENTROPE is Vienna, which has a population
30 of 1.8 million and which, along with Bratislava, is one of the two national centres in the
31 region. For this reason, it can be seen as an exceptional transnational integration project, since
32 borderlands in the EU are typically located in peripheral areas. In spite of some catching-up in
33 the new member states the life chances of the population in the Central European region are
34 characterised by a strong East-West divide in terms of wages and employment (Wiesböck et
35 al., 2016). Hence, East-West cross-border commuting serves as an important means for
36 improving individual standards of livings.
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42 In the course of the gradual labour market opening in Austria, a steady increase of East–West
43 cross-border workers can be observed (Ceka and Sojka, 2016). In 2013, there were 78,825
44 workers from Hungary (37,793), Slovakia (34,047) and the Czech Republic (6985) registered
45 on the Austrian labour market (Fligstein, 2008). The rise in cross-border labour flows to
46 Austria is expected to further continue in the future.
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51 **Figure 1. The Central European Region (CENTROPE)**

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53 Source: © Arge centroppe. Reproduced by permission of City of Vienna.
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57 The role of the borders in CENTROPE has been highly varied throughout its history
58 reflecting not only relations between Austria and its neighbouring countries but also changes
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3 in global geopolitics. The fall of the Iron Curtain has profoundly altered the world's
4 geopolitical landscape and created a number of boundary disputes (Paasi 1999: 670).

5
6 Recent developments such as the EU enlargement in 2004 or final opening of the border in
7 2011 strive to open up and permit free movement of capital and people. However, regional
8 partnerships are confronted with tensions. A number of current events demonstrate a lack of
9 collaboration or solidarity in a broader European sense, as was the case with Hungary refusing
10 to take refugees and sending several thousand displaced persons to the Austrian border.
11 Consequently, the interregional territory of European values is in danger and the increasingly
12 nationalist public discourses along with the increasingly forceful voices of Euroscepticism
13 may damage the perception of Europe.
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20 **Data and Methods**

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22 The study is based on empirical analyses using data from the research project XY on cross-
23 border labour commuting in the Central European Region. In a first step, a quantitative survey
24 on commuters is analysed regarding factors influencing "feeling (Central) European". In a
25 second step, the micro-logic of spatial identity construction was examined through 10
26 narrative interviews with commuters. Instead of deepening the quantitative results by looking
27 closer at the predetermined concept of European identity (e.g. Waechter 2016), the qualitative
28 perspective in this study emphasises the construction of spatial concepts and social boundaries
29 referred to and experienced by commuters themselves.
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34 The mixed methods approach follows a sequential procedure where the quantitative data is
35 collected and analysed first. The results are then integrated in the interpretation phase. The
36 aim of this design is to complement the findings of the quantitative method by the qualitative
37 method (Creswell 2003: 16) and thereby gain insights into the micro-logic behind the
38 indicators tested. The qualitative data serves as both tool to add to predetermined spatial
39 concepts in the quantitative dataset and to gain an explorative understanding in existing and
40 emerging social lines of demarcation.
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45 For the quantitative data face-to-face interviews with a total of 1,347 commuters to Austria
46 and a reference group of 1,338 non-commuters were carried out from October 2012 to June
47 2013. Interview subjects were employed at least twenty hours per week, were aged 21 to 65
48 and had their primary residence within regions bordering Austria, i.e. South Moravia (Czech
49 Republic), Bratislava and Trnava (Slovakia), and Győr-Ménfőcsanak and Vas (Hungary).
50 Only limited comprehensive information was available on the labor market integration of
51 cross-border commuters in Austria. As the best available approximation, the subsample of
52 commuters was gained via quota sampling, using labor market statistics of the Austrian Public
53 Employment Service, which contain information on the gender and age patterns of Hungarian,
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3 Czech and Slovakian dependently employed workers in Austria who have their residence
4 outside of Austria.

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6 Alongside with descriptive assessments, the analysis is based on a binary logistic regression
7 model that tests influencing factors for European belonging. *Feeling European* serves as
8 dependent variable comprising the response characteristics “European” and “Central
9 European” with the comparison group “Czech/Hungarian/Slovakian”, “Global citizen” and
10 “Other”². A number of variables are used as independent variables.

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14 Since the research literature suggests that people who are exposed to European influences in
15 the form of transnational work arrangements are more likely to identify with Europe (Miller et
16 al. 2012) *commuters* are compared to non-commuters. In the sample commuters are defined as
17 persons who perform their current main employment activity (at least 21 hours per week) in
18 Austria. Several recent studies show that younger persons are more likely to identify as
19 European due to a higher degree of personal experiences in the European space (Ceka und
20 Sojka 2016; Spannring et al. 2008). In order to measure this effect *age* in years is included as
21 metric variable in the model. Since the research also shows that women tend to be less
22 attached to European identity than men (Pichler 2008b), *women* are compared to men in the
23 sample.

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29 The social class, that is to say access to economic capital, is tested by the metric variable
30 *wage* representing the self-assessment of the monthly gross salary. Following the assumption
31 that the European Union is an elite-driven project (Citrin and Sides 2004), not only can
32 vertical distinctions in earnings be expected to account for a European affiliation, but also
33 higher educational achievements probably play a role in feeling European. The socio-
34 structural dimension *education* applies the International Standard Classification of Education
35 (ISCED) scheme. A binary variable was applied to include *tertiary education* (ISCED 5-6) in
36 comparison to mid- and lower educational levels as well as *primary education* (ISCED 1-2) in
37 comparison to mid- and higher educational levels.

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42 Glaser (2005) argues, that multilingualism plays a crucial role in helping Europeans develop a
43 European identity and to deconstruct existing cultural barriers. To scale the interviewees’
44 German language skills, a binary variable on self-reported *German proficiency*
45 comprehending “good” and “very good knowledge” is used in the model. So far studies
46 looking at the determinants for European identity have not include the social integration of the
47 respondents, meaning close connections with locals (e.g. Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001;
48 Pichler 2008b; Spannring et al. 2008). Hence *friendship with Austrians* is included as a binary
49 variable which depicts meeting Austrian friends several times a month minimum compared to
50 meeting Austrian friends once a month or less.

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57 ² The original question in the survey was: “Today it is often talked about Europe and European Integration. How
58 is it with you? Do you rather feel as Czech/Hungarian/Slovakian, as Central European, as European or as global
59 citizen?”

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3 Finally, the affective attachment to Europe is influenced by the national origin (Pichler,
4 2008b). National institutions have a strong impact on how people frame their perceptions of
5 Europe (Medrano 2003). For this reason persons with a *Hungarian* and *Slovakian* citizenship
6 are compared separately to respondents of all other national origins in the sample.
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9 In addition to the quantitative analysis an explorative study consisting of 10 narrative
10 interviews has been conducted from September 2015 to February 2016 with commuters from
11 the border regions of Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary to Austria. Interviewees were
12 aged between 26 and 63 and started to commute on a daily basis during different border
13 regimes between 1992 and 2015, in other words, before the EU-enlargement of 2004, during
14 the gradual opening of the Austrian labour market and after the final restrictions were lifted in
15 2011. All interviews have been conducted in German by the author.
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19 The narrative interview is a particularly suitable method to delve into commuters' categories
20 in the form of an unstructured, in-depth interview (Lamnek and Krell 2016; Schütze 1983).
21 During the qualitative research process respondents are encouraged to talk about significant
22 events in their life. All interviews were transcribed, then paraphrased and ordered into
23 thematic units (Ayres 2008). The relevant interview passages were translated into English by
24 the author and were then tied together. The final step of the analysis was the conceptualisation
25 and theoretical generalisation of the material. The interviews were analysed with regard to the
26 social and historical context of the respondents.
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32 33 34 **Transnational commuting and (Central) European Identity**

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36 To what extent does transnational commuting in CENTROPE influence "feeling (Central)
37 European"? Table 1 indicates that the majority of respondents - regardless of whether they
38 commute (~72%) or not (~81%) - refer to their national origin as primary entity of belonging.
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41 42 43 **Table 1: Primary entity of affiliation of commuters compared to non-commuters (in 44 percent)**

45 Source: XY data; own calculations;
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49 Commuters (~15%) consider themselves "primarily feeling European" almost twice as often
50 as non-commuters (~8%). Irrespective of whether we see Central Europe as a "construction"
51 or one of the presently (or formerly) existing European macro-regions, it shows that only 10%
52 of commuters identify as Central European and approximately 8% of non-commuters. About
53 2% of each group - commuters and non-commuters - refer to themselves as global citizens.
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57 In order to contextualise the descriptive outcomes, it is necessary to note that the relevance of
58 national identity varies at different stages of a country's history (Madsen and Van Naerssen
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2003). The data shows responses from 2012/13 before the European crisis in handling the refugee situation. The answers also have to be seen in the context of the questionnaire, as for instance regional or local options of identification were not offered.

What then are the factors contributing to feeling (Central) European? Is commuting the key determinant? In Table 2 it becomes apparent that there are significant effects of cross-border commuting on a European affiliation. Persons who work in Austria and reside in the border regions of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary are more likely to feel (Central) European than non-commuters in their home region. At the same time, the significance of the effect diminishes when accounting for German language proficiency and social ties in the local community. Close connections to Austrians makes it more than twice as likely to feel European, regardless of whether persons regularly commute or not. Therefore, informal social embeddedness in the host society have crucial effects on primarily identifying as European. Similar effects can be observed for German language proficiency, yet to a lesser extent. Additionally women are less prone to emotional attachment to the EU than men. One explanation could be the subordinate role women play in European politics, economy and culture (Epstein 2007). In any case the finding surfaces the need for more research in this field.

Table 2: Logistic regression for “Feeling (Central) European” (Exp (B))

Source: XY data; own calculations; $p < .1$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; regressions parameters: $p < .1$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; regressions parameters: odds ratios ((Exp(B)), a positive effect of the odds ratios is expressed as $e\beta > 1$ and a negative effect as $e\beta < 1$;

Higher educated respondents in the sample are more likely to declare themselves as (Central) European. Interestingly, it also shows that lower educated respondents are to an even stronger degree keen to feeling (Central) European. This can be due to the specific opportunities provided in this particular region: the creation of a common Central European space brings greater personal benefits for the group of people with lower levels of education, as for example the demand of employees is particularly high in in the low-wage sector of the Austrian border regions. Roeder (2011) and Kuhn (2012) find that cross-border practices have a stronger influence on structuring European identity among the lower educated, since the higher educated already have a large likelihood to self-classify as European. In other words: cross-border exchange can make up for educational differences in European identification (Recchi 2014). We further see that wage does not have any significant impact on primarily identifying as European. It is thus questionable if the assumption of attachment to the European Union as an “elite-driven project” applies in this particular region.

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3 As expected the likelihood for Hungarian citizens to refer to a sense of (Central) European
4 belonging is lower in comparison to all other national origins. If the “collective identity” of a
5 region is composed of the values of its political leaders, as Schimmelfennig und Sedelmeier
6 (2002) propose, then this is no surprising effect, given the traditional nationalist ideology in
7 Hungary. Persons with Slovakian citizenship on the other hand have higher chances to refer
8 themselves as European. In contrast to Hungary, Slovakia has seen profound economic and
9 social transformation: moving from a centrally planned to a market-driven economy, it
10 became the fastest growing EU economy in the years 2007, 2008 and 2010. Another potential
11 factor could be that residents of the capital Bratislava are included in the sample. Urban
12 residency may contribute to a stronger sense of belonging beyond national categories (Pichler,
13 2008b) and previous studies have shown particular high values in identification with Europe
14 in Bratislava (Spannring et al. 2008).

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20 The outcomes underline the social dimension in the shaping of (Central) European identity.
21 Transnational involvement in the form of commuting provides the opportunity to get in touch
22 with places and people in other European countries. Yet this alone does not sufficient to
23 enhance a European sense of belonging. We find strong effects for “connectedness” - in terms
24 of access to people (friendship) and communication (language proficiency) - determining
25 European identification in this region. In other words, genuine interaction and skills for
26 interaction with the local population are decisive factors for identifying as European.
27 Interestingly, in this region lower status groups do not respond negatively to European
28 identity. On the contrary, having a lower education level is the strongest determinant for
29 feeling (Central) European. This can be explained by the particular economic benefits
30 (Verhaegen et al. 2015) experienced by commuters with this educational background in
31 CENTROPE. Economic considerations are positively associated with European identity and
32 affect feelings of emotional attachment and belonging.

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40 Lastly, there is no reason to assume an opposition between national and European identity
41 (Bruter 2005) or that national identity inevitably hinders support for the EU. People can hold
42 multiple, non-conflicting identities (Risse 2010). Whereas nationalism (not national identity)
43 does hinder the development of a European identity (Cinpoes 2008). This can account for the
44 lower likelihood for Hungarian nationals to European attachment. European identity is
45 embedded in dominant national portrayals of Europe and therefore the likelihood to express
46 feeling European varies from country to country.

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50 Overall, we see that the statistical relationship between indicators of European identity is
51 quite complex. The analysis is constrained by the prescribed categories in the survey. In terms
52 to self-categorisation, an assessment of respondents’ “scaling of identity relevance” or
53 respectively an open question regarding belonging could have been insightful. Additionally, a
54 survey question on the reasons for identification with (Central) Europe could have provided a
55 deeper understanding of their attachment (e.g. EU institutions, free movement, history,
56 sovereignty, social system values etc.). Moreover, sociodemographic characteristics can only
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partially explain the construction of spatial identities. The formation of a geographical sense of belonging is an intricate process and subsequent questions on the micro-logic behind it have to be raised to complement the quantitative approach. For this reason the following part looks at spatial concepts and social boundaries commuters refer to themselves.

Cross-border practices and spatial constructions

While the fall of the Iron Curtain and the border regime of the European Union have changed perceptions of borders for commuters who have experienced the East-West system in their biographies, for them differences along this line of demarcation remain intact. Interviewees refer to changes in the course of the demise of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe as well as their replacement by market economies and more pluralist forms of government. The East-West system is being referred to with a sense of nostalgia³ particularly in terms of economic stability and job security:

“The way it is now is great, of course, it is no problem to come here but it has also had its good parts. I think there were not as many poor people like today. At least in our part. Here [in Austria], I don’t know, definitely not, but in our place there are a lot of poor people. In former times it was not like that. Everyone had to work, everyone had a job, every one accomplished something. But nowadays there are so many people who do not have a job, it is terrible. Back home in the east [of Slovakia] it is terrible, there are no factories. People do not have jobs there.” Cleaning woman, 63 years, SL

This reflects the bigger frame of the post-socialist economic transformations: rethinking work, money, the state and the interrelations between them (Chiorean 2015). Following the collapse of state-socialism there was a widespread belief that transition to a market economy via neo-liberal ‘shock therapy’ would lead to a quick closure of the wealth gap with the West (Sokol 2001). However, neo-liberal expectations of convergence under market conditions have not materialised. Instead, the ‘New Europe’ has been experiencing fragmentation and growing disparity between ‘West’ and ‘East’ and also within the ‘East’ itself (ibid.).

“There were also benefits. Back in the days all news was censored, previously screened, and now with all the information humans have to be very reasonable. But young people from lower social backgrounds are not very reasonable, they are at risk to be involved with drugs and prostitution. I can understand that the young want to leave from home because they do not have anything to do here, there are very little jobs and the payment is very bad. In former times all people were relatively equal. Differences as big as today did not exist. That was a tremendous difference [back then].” Orphanage care worker, 57 years, SL

These perceptions reveal the experiences enduring drastic transformations following the collapse of socialism in 1990. Individuals' activities, memory, social networks, and culturally specific values lead to uncertainty as a state of dynamic being (Buyandelgeriyn 2008). It

³ Nostalgia here must be understood as commentary on the present, or even as a form of resistance to the prevailing order Verhaegen S, Hooghe M and Quintelier E. (2014) European Identity and Support for European Integration: A Matter of Perceived Economic Benefits? *Kyklos* 67: 295-314..

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3 shows the gap between inherited values and patterns of social life (inherited identity) on the
4 one hand, and the targeted orientation to market economy and democratisation of politics
5 (development identity) on the other (Sundalic 2004). One could refer to it as nostalgia or as
6 institutional memory, as some societal areas have indeed deteriorated for citizens, e.g. in the
7 field of pensions or privatization. Nonetheless, it is important to note that these references are
8 made mainly in terms of economic rights. When it comes to political rights there are contrary
9 perceptions:
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13 “The East was limiting. You are not allowed to do this, you are not allowed to do that. Back then I had
14 long hair, which was officially forbidden.” Disability care worker, 62 years, HU
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16 The East-West ideological borders continue to matter as a category when it comes to the sense
17 of belonging. For example institutional and personal memory from the past remembering
18 images of the “advanced West” still play a role in the interviews and are particularly
19 expressed in terms of shopping and consumer good. It appears like there is a “permeable iron
20 curtain” (Laube und Roos 2010) among the generation growing up during the regime.
21 Consequently a lasting dichotomy between Eastern and Western blocs continues to exist and
22 recent narratives do not substitute the memorized separation. Boundaries here manifest
23 themselves in memories that produce, express and reproduce territoriality, therefore it can be
24 referred to as *post-socialist spatial concept*. For many the core values of socialism still remain
25 attractive and may appear even more attractive in light of today’s neoliberal economic
26 recession (Hann 2012: 1125).
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29 Younger interviewees, on the other hand, rather refer to a *trans-local spatial concept* and the
30 social construction of territory. Social ties and a social life are essential for belonging and
31 making territory integral. Local territorial communities have a considerable impact on the
32 formation of identity and on the character and the perception of the boundaries in
33 neighbouring countries (Kolossoff 2005: 617).
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37 “Yesterday I talked to a Slovakian friend of mine and we both agreed that we do not link out identity
38 with the border. For me Slovakia is neither a homogenous unit nor my identity-establishing territory. I
39 more identify with an area that inherits Vienna, Bratislava and the small mountain that is close to
40 Bratislava, because I am there quite often. And my friend confirmed: “That is exactly my area”, because
41 he is doing the same thing, he studies in Vienna and lives in Bratislava. On the contrary, other friends I
42 have who do not study in Vienna are much more in agreement with the border and that Slovakia is
43 different from Austria.” Graduate, 27 years, SL
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49 In this case cross-border practices that involve informal personal contacts have a favourable
50 effect on pluri-local identification. Positive interactions and experiences transmit a sense of
51 belonging and thus enhance identification beyond the national border (Teney et al. 2016:
52 2186). This is congruent with the quantitative findings in this paper. Transnational belonging
53 is an outcome of relational practices and social integration. Language plays an important role
54 in creating the activity space of residents and feelings of belonging. While the quantitative
55 results in this paper indicate a significant yet not strong effect for language proficiency on
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European identity, the interviewees name high linguistic competence as a crucial element for a sense of trans-local belonging. Language skills are a basic requirement for the access to the formal sector of the Austrian labour market segment. A language boundary, on the other hand, can serve as a means of exclusion or in other words, as a “cultural border”.

“Well for practical reasons it is better [that there are no border controls anymore], that is for sure. And the feeling is better, of course. Even between Czech Republic and Slovakia there are no border controls. And as a commuter, I do not feel or perceive it as two countries, really, even Slovakia and Czech Republic. It is two languages, two countries but if you commute daily, I don’t know, for me if you are able to speak the languages there is no difference.” Trainee Doctor, 26 years, SL

Younger commuters under study are oriented towards both the country of origin and the host society, thereby moving beyond the focus of the primacy of residential space. Alike their older counterparts they are pluri-locally situated, but according to them their experience in relation to the border, the connectedness to other locals as well as proficient language skills contribute to making the territory integral.

Overall, it becomes apparent that in the border region of CENTROPE space and belonging is embedded biographically and constructed in everyday practices. With respect to borders it is crucial to differentiate between spatial demarcation lines on several levels, e.g. local, regional, national, transnational, post- socialist etc. The following part complements this differentiation by looking at non-spatial lines of demarcation and new boundaries of social belonging.

The social construction of space: contesting social groups

The project of European integration has added a layer of complexity as to how people relate to one another and decide who is included and excluded within their communities (Šundalić, 2004). Cross-border territories comprise a field of confrontation for contesting social groups. The geopolitical “bordering” is manifested by identity politics (“us”/“them”) which reflects the production and reproduction of social relations. What kind of social boundaries are established and perceived by the commuters under study? The interviews show that three separating lines along this narrative exist. The first line of social demarcation is between *commuters and non-commuters*. Here belonging is not defined or assigned in regional terms but rather by status, in terms of economic resources and (demonstrative) consumerism.

“I try not to talk too much about the fact that I work in Austria, as I have lost a few friends due to that. They simply get jealous. There are people who also tried to find work here and did not succeed and if you are lucky and manage to find a job then you get cut off. You need to be aware of that and be a bit cautious.” Financial Specialist, 39 years, CZ

“The people who do not commute are definitely envious. But that is normal. I prefer thousand people who envy me over one person who pities me.” Disability care worker, 62 years, HU

“They say ‘Oh, he earns so much money’ but they themselves are not able to speak German nor do they have the professional knowledge” Machine Engineer, 58 years, HU

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3 Envy and resentment by non-commuters as well as the deterioration of their relations to
4 commuters are a consequence of ongoing processes of social differentiation (Haindorfer
5 2013). The ideology of “othering” often relates to questions of access to economic resources
6 and political power (Madsen and Van Naerssen 2003: 65). In most cases commuting involves
7 an increase in wealth in the home region and a higher life standard. In other words, it adds a
8 new dimension of social inequality. The border here acts as a symbolic demarcation of status.
9 While there are - in many cases - effects of downwards mobility in the receiving region in
10 terms of qualification, at the same time, effects of upwards mobility in the sending region in
11 terms of economic status can be perceived.
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16 The second line of social demarcation is between *commuters and local workers* in the
17 Austrian border region. Local workers are described as less ambitious or less qualified:
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19 “Austrians do not necessarily want to work in these businesses. They prefer to sit at home and receive
20 unemployment benefits” Waitress, 27 years, SL
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22 This social pattern of interpretation can be an adopted attitude of employers operating in this
23 region, who openly reveal their preference for foreign-born workers over 'native' labour
24 supply (Wiesböck 2016). Research in this field has shown that local workers were seen as less
25 reliable than migrants, unable to sustain the pace of work required and less willing to work
26 unsociable shifts, especially when the work is temporary, seasonal or unpleasant with
27 unsociable hours (Labrianidis and Sykas 2009; Stenning and Dawley 2009)). The interview
28 passage further reflects a certain need of legitimization for the commuters' formal position on
29 the transnational labour market. Apart from stereotype perceptions of local unemployed
30 workers new job authorities are perceived in the workplace:
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35 “In the beginning the Austrians [at the workplace] were very friendly, but those who had the least
36 professional knowledge wanted to be like kings: ‘You do this, you do that’. And when I did it, they just
37 stood there looking at how I am doing it, because they were not able to do the task themselves, as it was
38 very complicated. There were quite a few who were very friendly but some just thought that they are
39 above, though they did not even have as much expertise.” Machine Engineer, 58 years, HU
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43 Authority is a legitimate relation of domination and subjection and is connected to social
44 positions or roles (Smith 2002: 511). In this case, however, authority is decoupled from the
45 official position in the hierarchy. This indicates a crucial dimension of work inequality and
46 reflects the aim to reproduce status through exclusionary processes. It is noticeable that in
47 both interview passages a certain devaluation is expressed: the devaluation of work ethic of
48 unemployed Austrians by commuters or the (symbolic) devaluation of the foreign workforce
49 by Austrian workers.
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53 The third line of social demarcation in the interviews is between *commuters and refugees*. The
54 narrative interviews have been conducted during a time when several thousand refugees
55 crossed the Eastern borders to Austria which has led to long waiting hours and partial border
56 controls. The restrictive function of the geographical border from the past is still anchored in
57 the minds of commuters. Priorly borders were used to delimit the territorial possessions of
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3 sovereign states (Brunet-Jailly 2005). In the wake of multilevel governance in the European
4 Union, the unifying, symbolic, dividing and exclusionary role of the national border has been
5 loosened. However, as part of the refugee crisis borders were regulated more restrictively
6 again, which led to the evocation of insecurities:
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9 “We live in Valtice, I am very happy there and if it works out we would like to buy or build a house. It
10 is very suitable there. Only now with the refugees we are a bit scared how it will proceed. It is very
11 uncomfortable.” Financial Specialist, 39 years, CZ
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13 “I never wanted to move to Austria. I am born in Hungary and I am very happy where I live. We built a
14 house, we have cars and only a small loan. You can live well if you work in Austria. However now it is
15 very difficult to cross the border, we don’t know what is going to come up, how the situation in
16 Hungary will develop, what will happen to the refugees. I already told my wife I don’t want to lose my
17 job and if there is no other way then we could let our house, I rent an apartment in Austria and we move
18 out.” Sales manager, 42 years, HU
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21 It becomes clear that the function of the borders under study has rapidly (and temporarily)
22 changed. The arrival of large amounts of refugees crossing the border temporarily provoked a
23 revival of the barrier function that interviewees under study remember as limiting from the
24 past. Together with the critical political and economic situation in Hungary it can lead to a
25 shift in ideas of residential locality. Most interviewees under study claimed that they do not
26 want to move to Austria, since they would lose the benefits of making use of the respective
27 advantages of each side of the border. This notion is however challenged with the new arrival
28 of refugees, new political tensions and the fear of workplace loss.
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33 In general, the interviews illustrate that the practice of commuting also entails social tensions
34 and processes of social distinction. This is an important finding regarding the European
35 identity literature: mobility and transnational involvement itself does not automatically
36 increase the probability to identify as European. The statistical logic “mobility leads to higher
37 identification with Europe” is not suitable to grasp the underlying dynamics and complexity
38 of the process. Mobility also leads to conflict and negotiation processes between various
39 social groups. Transnational involvement enhances competition-oriented relations, new
40 hierarchical positions and power constellations. As a result, it is essential to closely examine
41 the micro-logic behind statistical measurements picturing the determinants of affective
42 attachment to the EU.
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48 Moreover, the results show that processes of constructing a sense of belonging require
49 ongoing processes of “othering”(Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002) and that the
50 (assigned) hierarchy of human identity is not only related to territory, but also to status. This
51 corresponds to the logic of identity construction: collective identity is produced by the social
52 construction of boundaries (Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995). Identity is relational and cannot
53 exist without creating boundaries. It involves drawing distinctions between what constitutes
54 the inside and the outside, with the definition of an in-group and an out-group, in other words:
55 The in-group’s need of an “Other”. As Simmel (1908) points out, it is not countries, not
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3 properties, not municipalities, nor rural districts that are limiting, but inhabitants who are
4 mutually exerting force. The interviews depict that demarcation processes to a great extent
5 take place in social interactions and not primarily along the territorial border.
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11 **Conclusion**

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14 This study underlines the relevance of the historic and everyday life context in the shaping of
15 spatial and social belonging in CENTROPE. The aim of the paper is to take a closer look at
16 (1) the sense of European belonging of people from the Czech Republic, Hungary and
17 Slovakia who cross the Austrian border on a regular basis (2) the extent to which (former)
18 borders have an impact on their spatial identity and (3) existing and emerging social
19 boundaries experienced by commuters in this region. The results show that almost twice as
20 many people who are involved in transnational labour activities identify as Europeans
21 (15,1%) compared to non-mobile residents (7,9%). Commuting has a significant effect on
22 primarily identifying as European, however, informal social ties in the host country,
23 educational level and national origin have an even stronger impact on feeling European.
24 Being socially embedded and having friends in Austria is a crucial factor in feeling a sense of
25 belonging beyond the national category. Furthermore, we see that the EU promotion of the
26 regional neighbourhood CENTROPE is most successful in pragmatic terms. The Central
27 European Union is rather an administrative than an affective construct, since only about 10%
28 of the commuters identify themselves primarily as “Central European”.
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36 The analysis of the narrative interviews indicates that constructions of spatial belongings are
37 embedded in biographies and experiences with the border. For older commuters who have
38 experienced the East-West system in their life course, the memorized border is of ongoing
39 relevance for their spatial construction of belonging, especially on a symbolic level. Here
40 economic (“class”) factors play a major role in experiencing nostalgia for socialism (Hann
41 2012: 1125). Younger commuters, on the other hand, who do not have long-time experiences
42 with the exclusionary function of the border rather point to a new trans-local space with
43 multiple forms of belonging both socially and professionally. The study shows that there is
44 not one dominant narrative, but that spatial and temporal constellations of history are
45 permanently undergoing change.
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51 Both the quantitative as well as the qualitative outcomes demonstrate the significance of the
52 social dimension in shaping of a sense of belonging. For instance informal relationships with
53 locals have such a strong influence on identifying as European that it diminishes the effect of
54 commuting. When looking at interactions with locals on the Austrian labour market, on the
55 other hand, it shows that new conflicts and differentiations can be created. Here cleavages
56 within the low-wage sector of the Austrian labour market between locals and commuters are
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3 indicated. In both directions processes of devaluation can be observed, either in form of
4 “Austrians with low work ethic” or as in “inferior foreign workers”. Moreover, we see the
5 creation of new symbolic class formations in the region of origin. Commuters economically
6 experience effects of upwards mobility in their home region compared to non-commuters. The
7 aim of the institutionalized European border region in Central Europe is to reduce inequalities
8 between regions. Yet the results point to new evolving lines of stratification within the region.
9 Recently the influx of refugees and with it the temporary reintroduction of the restrictive
10 function of the border has elicited shifting ideas on residency and belonging and created a
11 new line of social demarcation.
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16 In methodological terms the paper demonstrates that social structure has an impact on
17 identification with Europe. However, the socio-structural underpinnings of European identity
18 should be viewed as a starting point to look closely at the social reality behind those
19 indicators. The formation of spatial identity cannot be understood solely by quantitatively
20 analyzing pre-determined categories in surveys. Therefore, for future research it would be
21 important to challenge the territorial attribution of society on a data level, to collect
22 transnational data and to put the analytical focus on (additional) non-spatial categories.
23 Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to delve deeper into the role of discursive practices and
24 strategies in constructing identity and shaping supranational belonging. How can a political
25 discourse define or influence the position and role of particular borders (Kolossoff 2005:
26 628)? This would be particularly interesting in the context of today’s rising nationalist rhetoric
27 throughout Europe.
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The Central European Region (CENTROPE)

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Review Only

Table 1: Primary entity of affiliation of commuters compared to non-commuters (in percent)

	Commuters	Non-Commuters
Czech/Hungarian/Slovakian	72,2	81,2
Central European	9,7	7,9
European	15,1	7,9
Global Citizen	2,1	2,0
None of the above	0,8	0,8
N	1347	1338

Source: XY data; own calculations;

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Table 2: Logistic regression for “Feeling (Central) European” (Exp (B))

Commuter	1,636***	1,646***	0,846	1,042
Age	0,973***	0,975***	0,977***	0,977***
Women	0,718**	0,736**	0,741**	0,707**
High education		1,490**	1,384*	1,413*
Low education		4,931***	3,470**	2,782*
Wage		0,998	0,997	0,967
German proficiency			1,504**	1,431*
Friendship with Austrian			2,586***	2,347***
Hungary				0,515***
Slovakia				1,525***
Nagelkerke R ²	0,51	0,69	0,106	0,145

Source: XY data; own calculations; $p < .1$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; regressions parameters: $p < .1$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; regressions parameters: odds ratios ((Exp(B))), a positive effect of the odds ratios is expressed as $e\beta > 1$ and a negative effect as $e\beta < 1$;

9 Conclusion

How do transnational labour practices in the Central European region relate to the (re)production of social inequalities? The thesis at hand shows that transnational commuting affects the (re)production of social inequality in various ways. On an institutional level the declared goal in the Central European Region is to diminish structural macro-economic inequalities by enhancing labour mobility or the establishment of cross-border cooperation in the form of a Euroregion. In empirical terms, however, the relatively high social inequality between the regions continues to play a role. There are significant differences between regional GDP levels and poverty rate. With respect to the unemployment rate and the household income recent macro indicators show a convergence. Nevertheless, this effect is not necessarily connected to cross-border commuting, but can also result from various other factors, such as demographic changes, economic shifts or technological advances.

With regard to the positioning of commuters in the Austrian local stratification system, the analyses showed that cross-border commuters earn half of the wages of locally residing Austrians. This hierarchy and segmentation along the line of national origin and residential area takes place even within the same branch. However, compared to non-mobile employees in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, commuters earn twice as much. When looking at commuters' preceding jobs in the region of origin, it becomes apparent that chances for upward wage mobility are much higher than those of non-commuters. Here it is important to note that the crisis had lasting effects on the upward wage mobility. Since 2009, the chances for upward mobility for those who work in Austria were much higher than for those who work in the Czech, Hungarian, Slovakian regions bordering Austria. Before the crisis, the probability to gain higher wages through job mobility was equally distributed in all subregions of CENTROPE. Additionally, since the beginning of 2009, the chances to improve wages through cross-border commuting in service branches such as gastronomy and personal service have decreased. At the same time, these are branches in which employment for cross-border commuters has increased over the past years - accompanied by diminishing upward mobility chances. Furthermore, the outcomes indicate that a change of the occupational field is equally probable for transnationally mobile workers and for non-commuters (around 50 %). Overall, the results point to a dynamic of dissimilar experiences for commuters on the Austrian labour market.

The analysis of the expert interviews demonstrated the role of employers in the contribution to and legitimization of commuters' unequal positioning in the Austrian stratification system. The practice of employers reveals a preference towards commuters as a flexible workforce. The patterns employers use to rationalise this preference can be seen in the form of referring to the commuters' specific work behaviour or differences in their local resident labour market, as for example in terms of income levels or employment opportunities. Hence, the dual frame of reference serves as a legitimisation strategy for employers' remuneration system. The interviews indicate that cross-border commuters have a dual role in the placement process in the Austrian border region. When it comes to entering the labour market, they have a better position in the hierarchical system, compared to local low-wage workers. At the same time, however, there is a high level of competition and labour supply within the group of commuters, which may lead to weak negotiating positions towards potential employers. As a result, the dual role of national origin in the labour market acts as a system of hierarchy and subordination at the same time.

Moreover, with regard to the impact of cross-border commuting on workers' status in the region of residency, this thesis not only demonstrates that commuters are able to improve their economic position compared to non-commuters, but it also points to certain challenges regarding their social recognition. As a consequence the improved position in the stratification system can initiate feelings of envy, social tensions and processes of social exclusion by non-commuters in the region of residency. For labour commuters in CENTROPE crossing the borders on a regular basis means obtaining economic advantages, but not necessarily social advantages. When examining interactions with locals on the Austrian labour market, it was shown that new conflicts and differentiations surface. Here cleavages within the low-wage sector of the Austrian labour market between locals and commuters are indicated. The results point to new emerging lines of stratification within the region.

What is striking about the findings is that social capital and in particular informal social networks with Austrians are crucial for the positioning of commuters on the Austrian labour market. The analyses show that friendships with Austrians clearly improve their upward mobility chances. Moreover, the use of social network contacts for job searches on the Austrian labour market is becoming more relevant. At the same time, the transnational job search process is likely to take place between the commuter and the employer rather than through formal channels like employment agencies. This is an important finding given that the job placement process for Austrians in this particular labour market segment is highly systematised. In view of the high labour supply, the question can be raised whether this leads to a structural disempowerment, which gives commuters weak negotiating positions vis-à-vis their employers (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010).

Altogether these results show that while freedom of movement across borders for citizens of EU member states promises increased life chances in the 'common European space'

(Faist 2017), empirically, this is only true for certain social groups. As a result, new social inequalities arise between people who are able to profit from mobility chances and those who do not have the resources or capacities for it (Weiß and Berger 2008: 10). The axis of difference is not necessarily between persons who commute, persons who do not commute and locals, but between people who (are able to) use and establish mobile and transnational spaces and people for whom these spaces are not useable or who are not able to benefit from them.

In addition, the research provides evidence that even if commuters work legally they are nevertheless vulnerable to exploitation. Social dumping practices can create new social hierarchies and divisions (Bernaciak 2015: 232). This may not only have negative consequences on commuting workers, but is likely to have consequences for Austrian nationals as well. Efforts to undercut labour standards and evade the regulatory force of trade unionists are likely to exert downward pressure not only on wages but also on working conditions (*ibidem*). From the perspective and experience of the transnationally acting trade union, this practice is already taking place. Fueling cooperation in order to preserve wages and labour rights in cross-border regions, particularly in sectors with high precarious employment, will represent an ongoing challenge in the future. Therefore, the question of how unions can regain influence in the social regulation of transnational employment is highly relevant and yet to be answered.

10 Relevance and Outlook

When I started my dissertation, the dominating self-presentation of the EU and European politics at the time implied the general principles of unity, homogeneity and cohesion of Europe. This picture has changed dramatically over the years, especially in the Central European Region. The free movement of workers is endangered, be it in the public discussion in Austria on limiting labour market access to Eastern European workers or in the tendencies to impose border controls and restrictions resulting from the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The notion of the cooperative European cross-border region is challenged and the exclusionary function of the border is revived in public discourse (Wiesböck 2017). The newly introduced "employment bonus" can be seen as both a response to and an amplification of the gaps within the low-wage sector of the Austrian labour market between locals and commuters. Given these recent developments, systematic empirical analyses in this field become more and more important in sociopolitical terms. In academic terms, scholars can contribute to different fields of general social theory that go beyond mere descriptions of social realities by focusing on particular social processes through an inequality perspective - even with single case studies.

The research is of special importance for vulnerable groups in this process, that is to say for mobile workers themselves, but also for Austrian residents. Labour mobility is being promoted as a partial potential solution to several challenges surrounding contemporary migration. However, the context of this type of mobility and its effects on commuters have not been analysed comprehensively so far. From a sociological perspective, the conceptualisation of new patterns of mobility refers not only to the increasingly diversified practices of border crossing, but also to the placement of foreign workers in the social stratification as well as cultural norm and value systems. Thus, a key question in my thesis included the placement of newcomers in the dominant inequality system. This is particularly relevant as individuals share socio-economic relations with each other based on their position in the societal hierarchy system. Furthermore, scarce yet desirable resources that go along with transnational work involvement can be transformed into an advantage and power in the region of origin.

In the academic sphere, the study highlights the need to create methodological tools to capture transnational job demand expressed through various channels in order to get a more complete picture of the ongoing dynamics in this field. When looking at official

statistics the data mainly comprises non self-employed workers in jobs who are subject to social insurance contributions, hence, it only represents a part of the social reality. By conducting qualitative research, it is possible to get an insight into self-employed work, work in the informal sector, as well as into the demand for work from East-West commuters in the Central European Region.

Now what are the consequences of the findings for future research? First of all, it will continue to be a challenge to find adequate socio-spatial units of references. What is the most suitable unit of analysis? Is it a transnational societal space/unit of analysis? Do non-transnational types of societal units even exist? In other words: what exactly is the understanding of a societal space as transnational construction? Human social formations and processes have always been trans-border to a significant degree (Levitt and Khagram 2008). Socio-spatial configurations will continue to be a difficult task for academic research in this field. Additionally, further investigations should focus on the stability and durability of work relationships between Austrian employers and cross-border commuters. Will employers tolerate wider margins of co-operation and weakened managerial authority when commuters gain extensive experience and company-specific skills? Moreover, it would be interesting to examine whether commuting leads to a convergence or divergence of average wages over time in particular branches in the Austrian border region. In other words, is progression possible?

Furthermore, research on inequalities concerning socio-economic characteristics of cross-border commuters within the segmented labour market is required. This is especially the case for the role and effects of gender. A crucial contribution to the research literature would be to conduct a long-term study on generational effects. (How) do commuters transfer their social status and mobility aspirations to their children? Are there persistent intergenerational inequalities arising between mobile and non-mobile families?

As part of this research project the effects on and perspectives of local residents could not be considered comprehensively. Therefore, it would be of great interest to conduct a study focusing on the residential population in the Austrian border region, since local non-migrants' lives are also transformed even when they themselves do not move (Levitt 2001). Lastly, a critical examination on the terminology would be fruitful. There is a vast pool of concepts and established vocabularies in this field which does not do justice to recent social changes, while new vocabularies are only in the process of being devised and searched for (Albert 1998: 56), e.g. cross-border commuters or trans-border commuters? Transnational labour market or interregional labour market? (Labour) mobility, circular migration, temporary migration, rotate migration, cyclical migration, elastic migration (Van Houtum and Gielis 2006) or shuttle migration? A systematic review and critical examination of the established concepts would contribute to the theoretical discussion in this field.

In the long run it will be interesting to see how processes of technological change will alter the labour market in CENTROPE. During the next decade, we will be facing far-reaching transformations in the labour market because of the advancement of digitisation processes and automation technologies, and thus, a loss of jobs, especially in the service sector. The long-term consequences of this processes and its impact on social inequality will continue to keep academics and politicians busy.

11 Abstract

11.1 German

Die vorliegende Dissertation beschäftigt sich mit innereuropäischer Arbeitsmobilität aus der Perspektive von sozialer Ungleichheit und Sozialstruktur. Der Fokus liegt auf PendlerInnen, die in den Grenzregionen von Tschechien, Slowakei und Ungarn wohnen und in Österreich arbeiten. Das Forschungsinteresse konzentriert sich auf Ursachen und Formen von sozialer Ungleichheit als Konsequenz von transnationaler beruflicher Verankerung in der Central European Region (CENTROPE). Diese Region ist von besonderem Interesse, da sie eine lange Geschichte von grenzübergreifender Mobilität und gesellschaftlichem Austausch aufweist - von der Habsburg Monarchie zur Nachkriegszeit bis nach 1989. Einige Jahre nach dem Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs begann ein Prozess der europäischen Reintegration, der 2004 zum Beitritt der post-sozialistischen Länder zur EU geführt hat. Seit 1. Mai 2011 gewährt die Arbeitnehmerfreizügigkeit allen BürgerInnen das Ausüben einer Beschäftigung unter den gleichen Voraussetzungen wie Staatsangehörigen.

Die Fragestellung, die den fünf Publikationen meiner Doktorarbeit übergeordnet ist, lautet: Wie tragen transnationale berufliche Verankerungen in der Central European Region zu der (Re)Produktion von sozialer Ungleichheit bei? Um diese Frage zu beantworten, betrachtet die Dissertation systematische Einflussfaktoren, die gleichzeitig auf Arbeitsmärkte und Mobilitätsprozesse einwirken: rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen, der makroökonomische Kontext, wohlfahrtsstaatliche Regimes, die ökonomische Struktur lokaler Regionen, Arbeitgeberpraktiken und Lebenswelten von PendlerInnen.

Methodisch wird mit einem Mixed-Methods Ansatz gearbeitet, der die folgenden Daten umfasst:

- Regionale makroökonomische Sekundärdaten (EUROSTAT, nationale Arbeitsmarktstatistiken des AMS und EU-SILC Daten),
- ein retrospektiver Längsschnittdatensatz zu PendlerInnen (N=1,345) und nicht-PendlerInnen (N=1,334), die in den Grenzregionen von Tschechien, Slowakei und Ungarn wohnen,
- 20 Experteninterviews mit Angestellten des europäischen Stellenvermittlungs-

netzwerks EURES, ArbeitgeberInnen, transnational agierenden GewerkschafterInnen und BürgermeisterInnen in der Region und

- 10 narrative Interviews mit grenzübergreifenden PendlerInnen.

Die Daten wurden im Zuge des WWTF Forschungsprojekts TRANSLAB (2012-2016) am Institut für Soziologie der Universität Wien erhoben. Die Ergebnisse verweisen auf neu entstehende soziale Hierarchisierungen in der Region. Grenzübergreifende PendlerInnen erhalten den halben Lohn von lokal wohnhaften ÖsterreicherInnen, selbst wenn sie in derselben Branche tätig sind. Zudem sind sie besonders anfällig für Praktiken von Sozialdumping. Im Vergleich zu nicht-PendlerInnen in Tschechien, Slowakei und Ungarn verdienen sie allerdings doppelt so viel. Einhergehend mit dem gestiegenen Status können Gefühle von Neid, soziale Spannungen oder soziale Exklusionsprozesse in der Herkunftsregion aufkommen.

11.2 English

This dissertation examines intra-European labour mobility from the perspective of social inequality and social stratification. The focus lies on cross-border commuters from the border regions of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary who work in Austria. The aim is to shed light on causes and forms of changes in inequality as a consequence of transnational labour involvement in the Central European Region (CENTROPE). This region is of particular interest, as it has a long history of cross-border mobility and social exchange, from the Habsburg Monarchy to the postwar period and after 1989. Several years after the fall of the Iron Curtain a process of European re-integration began which led to the accession of post-socialist countries to the EU in 2004. Since May 1st, 2011, all citizens were given the freedom to seek employment according to their skills in Austria.

The superordinate research question that links all five publications of the doctoral thesis is: How do transnational labour practices in the Central European Region relate to the (re)production of social inequalities? In order to answer this question, the dissertation looks at influencing factors systematically linking both labour markets and mobility: the legal framework, the macro-economic context, the welfare state regime, the economic structure of the local region, employers' practices and commuters' life worlds.

In methodological terms a mixed method approach is applied which encompasses the following data:

- Secondary regional macro-economic data (EUROSTAT, National labour market statistics by the AMS and EU-SILC data),

- a retrospective longitudinal survey on commuters (N=1,345) and non-commuters (N=1,334) residing in the regions of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary bordering Austria,
- 20 expert interviews with European Employment Services (EURES) employees, business owners, trade unionists and local political leaders operating in this region and
- 10 narrative interviews with cross-border commuters.

The data was gained in the course of the research project TRANSLAB based at the Department of Sociology, University of Vienna, funded by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund WWTF (2012-2016). The results point to new emerging lines of stratification within the region. Cross-border commuters earn half of the wages of locally residing Austrians, even within the same branch of industry. Moreover the outcomes show that they are particularly vulnerable to social dumping practices. However, compared to non-mobile employees in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, commuters earn twice as much. As a consequence the improved status can initiate feelings of envy, social tensions and processes of social exclusion by non-commuters in the region of residency.

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EDUCATION

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|-------------------|---|
| 10/2012 - 09/2017 | University of Vienna
PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology |
| 10/2015 - 08/2016 | Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS),
Oxford University
Visiting Academic |
| 06/2015 | Maxwell School, University of Syracuse, USA
Summerschool of the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-
Method Research |
| 02/2013 - 03/2013 | The Graduate Center CUNY, New York City
Visiting Research Scholar |
| 10/2009 - 06/2012 | University of Vienna
MA Sociology, passed with distinction |
| 01/2007 - 06/2007 | UCL Université Catholique de Louvain La Neuve,
Belgium
Erasmus Exchange Semester |
| 10/2005 - 07/2009 | University of Vienna
BA Sociology |

CAREER

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| | University of Vienna - Department of Sociology |
| 10/2016 - 03/2018 | University Assistant (prae doc) at the Chair of Social
Stratification Research and Quantitative Methods |
| 04/2014 - 03/2017 | Scientific Researcher , Interdisciplinary Project "EthniCity-
Heat - Vulnerability of and Adaption Strategies for Migrant
Groups in Urban Heat Environments", funded by Climate and
Energy Fund |

08/2012 - 04/2016	Scientific Researcher (prae doc) , Project "TRANSLAB - Cross-Border Labour Mobility, Transnational Labour Markets and Social Differentiation in the Central European Region" funded by WWTF
02/2012 - 06/2013	Scientific Researcher , Project "Growing Inequalities' Impacts (GINI)", funded by 7th Framework Programme of the European Community
10/2011 - 10/2012	Scientific Research Assistant , Project "Career Entry Patterns of Young Migrant University Graduates in Austria", funded by Anniversary Fund of the City of Vienna for the Austrian Academy of Sciences
03/2011 - 08/2012	Student Assistant to Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe
04/2009 - 05/2009	Intern , National Economic & Social Rights Initiative, New York City Human Right to Housing Program, Project "Public Housing Residents in Post-Katrina New Orleans"
08/2007 - 11/2007	Intern , Medical University of Vienna, Deputy Rector's Office for Education: Evaluation and Quality Management

SCHOLARSHIPS & PRICES

04/2016	Theodor Körner Prize , Theodor Körner Fund
03/2016 - 08/2016	Marietta Blau Scholarship , Austrian Ministry of Science
01/2016 - 02/2016	KWA Scholarship , University of Vienna
06/2015	Scholarship for the IQMR Summer School , University of Syracuse
09/2011	Graduate scholarship , Chamber of Labour Vienna
01/2011	Merit scholarship , University of Vienna
01/2007 - 06/2007	Erasmus-Scholarship

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

10/2017 - 01/2018	SE "Sociology of Love", University of Vienna
05/2017	UE "Professionalisation of Scientific Literature Review", University of Vienna
10/2016 - 01/2017	VO "Structure and Development of Modern Societies: Changing Europe", University of Vienna, together with Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe
10/2016 - 01/2017	UE "Professionalisation of Scientific Literature Review", University of Vienna
10/2014	WS "Labour Mobility in Europe", Vienna University of Economics
03/2014 - 06/2014	UE "English Reading and Writing for Sociologists", University of Vienna
10/2012 - 06/2013	FPR "Researching Migration in Sociology I+II", University of Vienna together with Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe and MMag. Raimund Haindorfer
10/2011 - 01/2012	Tutorial to the lecture "Multivariate Analysis Methods" by Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe, University of Vienna

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

- Wiesböck, Laura (2017): Spatial and Social Constructions of Belonging of Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. *European Societies* - submitted.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland (2017): Crossing the Border for a Higher Status? Occupational Mobility of East-West Commuters in the Central European Region. *International Journal of Sociology* 47: 1-20.
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Book Chapters

Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Haindorfer, Raimund (2017): The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? A Multi Method Study for the Case of the Central European Region. In: Roos, Christof / Zaun, Natascha (eds.), *The Global Economic Crisis and Migration*. London: Routledge - forthcoming

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Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph / Wiesböck, Laura (2016): Economic Outcomes and Life Satisfaction of East-West Commuters in the Central European Region. In: Hsu, Roland / Reinprecht, Christoph (eds.), *Migration and Integration: New Models for Mobility and Coexistence (49-68)*. Vienna: Vienna University Press.

Wiesböck, Laura / Wanka, Anna / Mayrhuber, Elisabeth Anne-Sophie / Alex, Brigitte / Kolland, Franz / Hutter, Hans Peter / Wallner, Peter / Arnberger, Arne / Eder, Renate / Kutalek, Ruth (2016): Heat Vulnerability, Poverty and Health Inequalities in Urban Migrant Communities: A Pilot Study from Vienna. In: Filho, Walter Leal / Azeiteiro, Ulisses / Alves, Fma (eds.), *Climate Change and Health: Improving Resilience and Reducing Risks*. London/New York: Springer.

Verwiebe, Roland / Troger, Tobias / Wiesböck, Laura / Teitzer, Roland / Fritsch, Nina-Sophie (2014): Austria - The Bastion of Calm? Stability and Change in Inequalities in Times of Welfare State Reforms and Employment Flexibilization. In: Salverda, Wiemer et al. (eds.) *Changing Inequalities and Societal Impacts in Rich Countries: Thirty Countries' Experiences (71-95)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Verwiebe, Roland / Wiesböck, Laura / Teitzer, Roland (2013): Differentiation of Migration Patterns in Europe. Social Integration Amidst the Competing Societal Leitbilder of Enclosure of the Other, Acceptance and Encouragement of Migration. In: Salvatore, Armando, Schmidtke, Oliver and Trenz, Hans-Jörg (eds.) *Rethinking the Public Sphere through Transnationalizing Processes: Europe and Beyond (211-232)*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wiesböck, Laura (2011). Migration - Armut - Exklusion. Trend- und Strukturanalysen zur Ausgrenzung von MigrantInnen in Österreich. [Migration - Exclusion - Poverty. Trend - and Structure Analyses of the Exclusion of Immigrants in Austria] In: Verwiebe, Roland (ed.) Armut in Österreich [Poverty in Austria] (209-231). Vienna: Braumüller Verlag.

Reviews

Wiesböck, Laura (2013). A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe by Black, Richard et.al. (eds.) (2010). Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.

Research Reports

Verwiebe, Roland / Troger, Tobias / Wiesböck, Laura / Teitzer, Roland / Fritsch, Nina-Sophie (2013): Growing Inequalities and their Impacts in Austria. Country Report for the GINI Research Project. University of Vienna: Department of Sociology.

Thesis

Wiesböck, Laura (2012). Soziale Exklusion in Österreich - türkischstämmige Personen zwischen institutionellen Rahmenbedingungen, statistischen Fakten und gesellschaftlicher Wirklichkeit [Social Exclusion in Austria - Persons of Turkish Origin between Institutional Frameworks, Statistical Facts and Social Reality]. Vienna: Master Thesis.

Further contributions

Wiesböck, Laura (2015): Das performierende Selbst im Hochschulsystem [The Performing Self in the Higher Education System]. Soziologiemagazin 12: Bildung, Wissen und Eliten (60-69).

Wiesböck, Laura (2016): Das performierende Selbst im Hochschulsystem. Feministische Studien 34(1): 98-104.

Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund (2014): Arbeitsmarktöffnung und Migration - Trends in Österreich. FORBA-Trendreport 1/2014: 20-21.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Wiesböck, Laura: New Cleavages in the Low-Wage Labour Market of the Central European Region? Employment Practices in the Austrian Border Region. 13th Conference of the European Sociological Association, Athens, 29 August ? 1 September 2017.

Wiesböck, Laura: The Economic Crisis as a Driver of Cross-Border Labour Mobility? A Multi Method Study for the Central European Region. Third ISA Forum of Sociology, Vienna, 10-14 July 2016.

Wiesböck, Laura: Cross-Border Labour Commuting in the Central European Region: Emerging Patterns and Implications. 23rd International Conference of Europeanists,

Philadelphia, 14-16 April 2016.

- Wiesböck, Laura: Inner-European Labour Mobility - Perspectives and Challenges. New Europeans Oxford, Oxford, 25 February 2016.
- Wiesböck, Laura: Transnational Labour Activities and the Changing Notion of National Borders in the EU - Perspectives from Daily Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. COMPAS, Oxford University, 3 December 2015.
- Wiesböck, Laura: Trans-Border Labour Commuting in the Central European Region and its Social Effects. UACES Conference, Bilbao, 7-9 September 2015.
- Wiesböck, Laura: East-West Trans-Border Labour Commuting in the European Union and its Social Effects. Lessons from the Centroe-Region. 10th Annual Graduate Conference in Political Science, International Relations and Public Policy, Jerusalem, 9-12 December 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund: Circular Labor Mobility in the Central European Region: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. MiReKoc 10th Year Symposium Committee, Istanbul, 20-21 November 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund: Unequal Opportunity Structures on the Central European Labour Market? Experiences from Cross-Border Commuters from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in Austria. Subregional International Conference: Cross-Border Migration and its Implications for the Central European Area, Bratislava, 6 November 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Job Finding and Labor Market Outcomes of Cross-Border Commuters in the Central European Region. 109th ASA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 16 August 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund / Verwiebe, Roland: Intra-European Labor Mobility from Post-Socialist Countries: The Example of Hungarians, Slovaks and Czechs in Austria. 18th ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, 18 July 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Verwiebe, Roland: Transnational Labour Markets and Recent Mobility Trends in Europe: The Case of the Central European Region. Collaborative Research Centre 597 "Transformations of the State", University of Bremen, 4 April 2014.
- Wiesböck, Laura / Haindorfer, Raimund: Applied Mixed-Methods - Researching new Facets of Cross-Border Labour Mobility in Central Europe. 5th Conference of the European Survey Research Association (ESRA), Ljubljana, 17 July 2013.
- Wiesböck, Laura: Young Adults of Turkish Origin in Austria - Qualitative Examinations of Exclusion and Inequalities in Urban Context. Conference 'Migration, Ethnicity, and Urban Inequality in Europe', UCLA Los Angeles, 3 March 2012.

MEDIA COVERAGE

- 08/2017 **Der Standard**, Commentary
On the Market Value of the Leading Candidates
- 07/2017 **Wiener Zeitung**, Article
Anti-Intellectualism in Austria
- 07/2017 **Kurier**, Portrait
Gender Equality in Austria
- 05/2017 **Kunsthalle Wien**, Blog
Recognition - the Basis of Togetherness
- 03/2017 **Ö1 - Von Tag zu Tag**, Interview
Job Demand from Eastern Europe?
- 01/2017 **ORF Science**, Commentary
Wage dumping in the EU - Myths and Blind Spots
- 12/2016 **Political Critique**, Interview
The Good, the Bad and the Immigrant
- 11/2016 **Der Standard**, Commentary
Open letter to the "Wiener Linien"
- 01/2016 **Der Standard**, Commentary
Motherhood as Promotion - Four Questions to the Ministry of Family Affairs
- 09/2015 **Salzburger Nachrichten**, Commentary
Sociological Views on the Refugee Crisis
- 07/2015 **ORF Report**, Interview
Grexodus - Emigration from Greece
- 06/2015 **ORF Science Online / Ö1**, Interview
The Performing Self in the Higher Education System
- 02/2015 **ORF Science Online**, Interview
Cross-Border Labour Commuting in the Central European Union together with Roland Verwiebe and Raimund Haindorfer
- 05/2014 **dastandard.at**, Interview
History of Guest-Workers in Austria - 50 Years after the Agreements
- 02/2013 **Der Standard**, Commentary
Violence against Women - Bringing Light to the Debate

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

- 01/2017 "Supply Chains - Jewelries of Globalization?"
Organizer: Research Association "Gender and Agency"
Discussants: Sybille Hamann, Laura Wiesböck
Moderator: Eva Flicker
- 11/2016 "Refugees and Immigration: Burden or Enrichment?"
Organizer: Unruhestiftung Vienna
Discussants: Michael Landesmann, Regine Polak, Helmut Spudich, Beate Winkler, Laura Wiesböck
Moderator: Udo Bachmair
- 05/2016 "The Crisis of Democracy - Civil Society as New Form of Political Representation?"
Organizer: Wirtschaftspolitische Akademie
Discussants: Klaus Werner Lobo, Lisa Mittendrein, Feri Thierry
Moderator: Laura Wiesböck
- 10/2013 "Identities"
Organizer: Freespace Festival
Discussants: Barbara Reumler, Aleksandra Vedernjak-Barsegiani, Sophie Gnesda, Arash T. Riahi
Moderator: Laura Wiesböck
- 09/2013 "Diversity Management - Conceptionalisation and Implementation in Private and Public Organizations"
Organizer: Wirtschaftspolitische Akademie
Discussants: Traude Kogoj, Norbert Pauser, Vera Jauk
Moderator: Laura Wiesböck