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Papers and Wages: Identity Documents and Work in Habsburg Austria During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century¹

Sigrid Wadauer

Introduction

Global labour history emphasizes the fact that there is no universal, linear and unquestioned tendency towards ‘free’, documented wage labour in the modern world. There are and have always been various ways in which people made a living in the course of their lives, by alternating and combining jobs and forms of income as well as by performing formal and informal, waged and unwaged, remunerated and unremunerated forms of work and livelihood practices – and doing so more or less voluntarily or by force.² This in turn raises issues: how can we capture and measure the diversity of labour relations and forms of livelihood in a global or long-term historical perspective? And how can we determine and evaluate the importance of waged labour in a certain historical context?³ Data used for describing developments of work relations, wages and living standards raise many questions.⁴ Such evidence has been challenged by historical studies which investigate in detail the actual amount of wage

¹ This chapter is based on research which was initially funded by the Gerda-Henkel-Stiftung (AZ 52/V/18) and is now funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF (P32226-G29).

² See, just for example, Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World. Essays toward a Global Labour History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Andreas Eckert (2017), ‘Von der “freien Lohnarbeit” zum “informellen Sektor”’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43, no. 2: 297–307; Robert J. Steinfeld and Stanley L. Engermann, ‘Labour – Free or Coerced? A Historical Reassessment of Differences and Similarities’, in *Free and Unfree Labour. The Debate Continues*, eds. Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 1997), 107–26.

³ See, for example: Karin Hofmeester, Gijs Kessler and Christine Moll-Murata (2016), ‘Conquerors, Employers, and Arbiters: States and Shifts in Labour Relations 1500–2000’, *International Review of Social History*, 61, Special Issue: 1–26.

⁴ In respect to the Habsburg Empire, see for example: Tomas Cvrcek (2013), ‘Wages, Prices, and Living Standards in the Habsburg Empire, 1827–1910’, *The Journal of Economic History* 73, no. 1: 1–37.

workers received⁵ and how they made ends meet.⁶ In this framework, questions of categorization, distinction and hierarchization of the variety of practices and resources are likewise attracting increased interest (beginning with and often focusing on legal, scholarly and statistical categories).⁷ For it is obvious that in many interactions the differences between occupations or forms of income, between wage work and self-employment, or between work and other practices not acknowledged as work are often blurred and/or contested. Categories and distinctions are subject to, and the historical product of, consensus and conflict. Integrating both perspectives in a satisfying way, however, seems a problem that has not yet been solved.

My chapter takes identity- and work-documents for workers and servants (*Arbeits- und Dienstbotenbücher*) in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire (Cisleithania) as a starting point for discussing the relation between the formal categorization and the documentation of work and the forms of wages or livelihood. I will describe how categorization of work-relations and livelihood practices – as manifested in such documents – are reflected in different wages (amount, form, modes of payment or remuneration), in different options for action, in rights and (customary or formally granted) entitlements beyond actual work and wage and in different possibilities for claiming these rights. Wages are, after all, just one form of remuneration and one element in a person's or household's overall livelihood and status, even in the lives of wage workers.⁸ In order to assess variations and contrasts in the standards of living or the acknowledged value of work, it seems necessary to take the variety of available resources into consideration. I will sketch out the regulations and official reasoning behind such identity- and work-documents while also illustrating how they could be used practically (in accordance with or in violation to such regulations) in interactions of authorities, employers and workers/servants for establishing and negotiating wages, as well as the terms and conditions of work and any entitlements beyond wages.⁹ These identity papers manifest a formalization

⁵ See, for example: John Hatcher, 'Seven Centuries of Unreal Wages' in *Seven Centuries of Unreal Wages. The Unreliable Data, Sources and Methods that Have Been Used for Measuring Standards of Living in the Past*, eds. John Hatcher and Judy Z. Stephenson. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 15–70; Peter Scholliers and Vera Zamagni, 'Introduction' in *Labour's Reward. Real Wages and Economic Change in 19th- and 20th-century Europe*, eds. Peter Scholliers and Vera Zamagni (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), ix–xvii.

⁶ Craig Muldrew and Steven King, 'Cash, Wages and the Economy of Makeshifts in England, 1650–1800' in *Experiencing Wages. Social and Cultural Aspects of Wage Forms in Europe since 1500*, eds. Peter Scholliers and Leonard Schwarz (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 155–82.

⁷ A few examples of this are: Christian Topalov (2001), 'A Revolution in Representations of Work. The Emergence over the 19th Century of the Statistical Category "Occupied Population", in France, Great Britain and the United States', *Revue Française de Sociologie* 42, Supplement: 79–106; Theresa Wobbe (2012), 'Making up People. Berufsstatistische Klassifikation, geschlechtliche Kategorisierung und wirtschaftliche Inklusion um 1900 in Deutschland', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 41, no. 1: 41–57.

⁸ Today, the ILO speaks of 'decent work' and 'social protection floor'. See, for example the *World Social Protection Report 2020–22* (Geneva: ILO, 2021); *Report of the Director-General: Decent Work* (Geneva: ILO, 1999). It would be anachronistic to use these concepts in respect to the period which is in the focus of this paper. Nevertheless, workers and servants were well aware of differences in the rights attached to different labour relations.

⁹ On such questions, see for example Eric Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work-Load', in *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), 405–36; Leonard Schwarz (2007), 'Custom, Wages and Workload in England during Industrialization', *Past & Present*, no. 197: 143–75; Scholliers et al., *Experiencing Wages*.

of labour relations and in this respect an emerging new state policy. Yet, as I will show, neither were those new regulations and forms of identification enforced consequently, nor did they necessarily contradict (what might be perceived as) custom.

Papers

Written documents as a proof of identity, of occupation and of an orderly termination of employment were in use and a topic of regulations already in early modernity.¹⁰ Eighteenth-century writings portrayed them as a necessary means to fight breach of contract, to reduce job-mobility and lack of labour, to regulate wages and to suppress vagrancy.¹¹ In the nineteenth-century Habsburg Empire – in contrast to other countries like Germany¹² or France¹³ – the obligation to possess such papers was not abolished but extended to include ever more categories of wage labour and service.¹⁴ (These documents were in use in both parts of the empire; however, I am here exclusively addressing the kingdoms and lands represented in the Imperial Council.) Whereas the eighteenth century's *Kundschaften* (large one-page certificates issued by guilds) and *Wanderbücher* (booklets which replaced them from the 1830s on) had been mandatory only for journeymen on the tramp,¹⁵ the Trade Law of 1859, with which guilds were

¹⁰ Hugo Morgenstern, *Gesindewesen und Gesinderecht in Österreich* (Wien: Alfred Hölder, 1902), 22ff; Klaus Stopp, *Die Handwerkskundschaften mit Ortsansichten*. (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1982), vol. 1; on the history of identification in general, see Waltraud Heindl and Edith Saurer, eds. *Grenze und Staat. Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden gesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie (1750-1867)* (Wien: Böhlau, 2000); Valentin Groebner, *Der Schein der Person. Steckbrief, Ausweis und Kontrolle im Europa des Mittelalters*. (München: C.H. Beck, 2004); Jane Caplan and John Torpey, 'Introduction', in *Documenting Individual Identity. The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, eds. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1–12; Edward Higgs, *Identifying the English. A History of Personal Identification 1500 to the Present* (London: Continuum, 2011); Hilde Greefs and Anne Winter, eds. *Migration Policies and Materialities of Identification in European Cities. Papers and Gates, 1500s to 1930s* (London: Routledge, 2019); Keith Breckenridge and Simon Szreter, *Registration and Recognition. Documenting the Person in World History* (Oxford: British Academy and Oxford University Press, 2012); Ilse About, James Brown and Gayle Lonergan, eds. *Identification and Registration Practices in Transnational Perspective. People, Papers and Practices*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹¹ Morgenstern, *Gesindewesen*, 22ff.

¹² The Norddeutsche Bund abolished labour books in 1869 but reintroduced them 1878 for juvenile workers under the age of 21. Thorsten Keiser, *Vertragszwang und Vertragsfreiheit im Recht der Arbeit von der frühen Neuzeit bis in die Moderne*. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2013), 328.

¹³ Wilhelm Stieda, 'Arbeitsbuch', in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, eds. J. Conrad, C. Elster, W. Lexis and Edg. Loening, vol. 1. (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1890), 598–604; Martino Sacchi Landriani (2019), 'Rethinking the Livret d'ouvriers: Time, Space and "Free" Labor in Nineteenth Century France', *Labour History* 60, no. 6: 854–64; Alessandro Stanziani (2009), 'The Legal Status of Labour from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: Russia in a Comparative European Perspective', *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 3: 359–89.

¹⁴ They were abolished in the first years for the Republic of Austria. StGBL. 1919/106; the abolition of servants' booklets was slower and step by step, though. StGBL. 1920/101; BGBl. 1926/72.

¹⁵ 'Patent vom 24. Februar 1827. Aufhebung der Kundschaften, Zeugnisse, Wanderpässe für Handwerksge sellen und Arbeiter; Einführung der Wanderbücher', in *Seiner k. k. Majestät Franz des Ersten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des Österreichischen Kaiserstaates, mit Ausnahme von Ungarn und Siebenbürgen* (Wien: k. k. Hof- u. Staats-Aerialial-Druckerei, 1829), 231f; Kundmachung 231, in: *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen 1828*, 283–9.

abolished, stipulated *Arbeitsbücher* (workman's passports or labour booklets) for all skilled workers in workshops and factories, both men and women, whether travelling or not.¹⁶ In 1866 labour booklets were introduced for miners.¹⁷ The trade law reform of 1885¹⁸ extended the obligation to include all regularly employed workers, juvenile workers and apprentices (except higher employees), and a law of 1902¹⁹ added workers in railway construction. Servants' laws prescribed *Dienstbotenbücher* (servants' certificates or employment booklets) – similar in design and many aspects of usage – for both agricultural servants and domestic ones (almost exclusively women at the turn of the century).²⁰ Hence, in the course of the nineteenth century, these papers became more clearly regulated by authorities while they were also being generalized; they equated and at the same time distinguished multiple highly heterogeneous occupations, positions and labour relations, in both rural and urban areas.

These attempts to enforce such documents were understood as a continuation of repressive attitudes²¹ towards working or 'dangerous' classes, as well as attempts to control, discipline²² and closely monitor certain forms of mobility. This aspect of surveillance was openly articulated by public representatives and employers at the time. It was strongly criticized by workers' and servants' organizations in the late nineteenth century; they regarded these papers as mere instruments of coercion and as symbolizing inequality and humiliation.²³ In this spirit, historical research has interpreted such regulations predominantly as contradicting liberal tendencies in the late nineteenth-century migration regime.²⁴ In this chapter, however, I will highlight the ambivalence of this policy and show that these documents also displayed the commodification of labour (an aspect which became stronger during the nineteenth century, as Keiser has argued)²⁵ and the formalization of employment in the course of an emerging new state social policy.²⁶ It was

¹⁶ RGL. 1859/227, §74 and appendix.

¹⁷ RGL. 1866/72.

¹⁸ RGL. 1885/22.

¹⁹ RGL. 1902/156.

²⁰ Edm. O. Ehrenfreund and Franz Mráz, *Wiener Dienstrecht* (Wien: Manz, 1908); Morgenstern, *Gesindwesen*; Hugo Morgenstern, *Österreichisches Gesinderecht* (Wien: Manz, 1912).

²¹ Rudolf Brichta (1906), 'Das Dienstzeugnis. Eine gewerbepolitische Studie', *Juristische Blätter* XXXV, no. 10: 109–12; Isidor Ingwer, *Der sogenannte Arbeitsvertrag. Eine sozialpolitische Studie* (Wien: Verl. d. 'Österreichischen Metallarbeiter', 1895), 25.

²² Ehrenfreund, Mráz, *Dienstrecht*, 33; 'Die Abschaffung des Arbeitsbuches auf Grund des §14', *Allgemeiner Tiroler Anzeiger* 18.7.1914, 17.

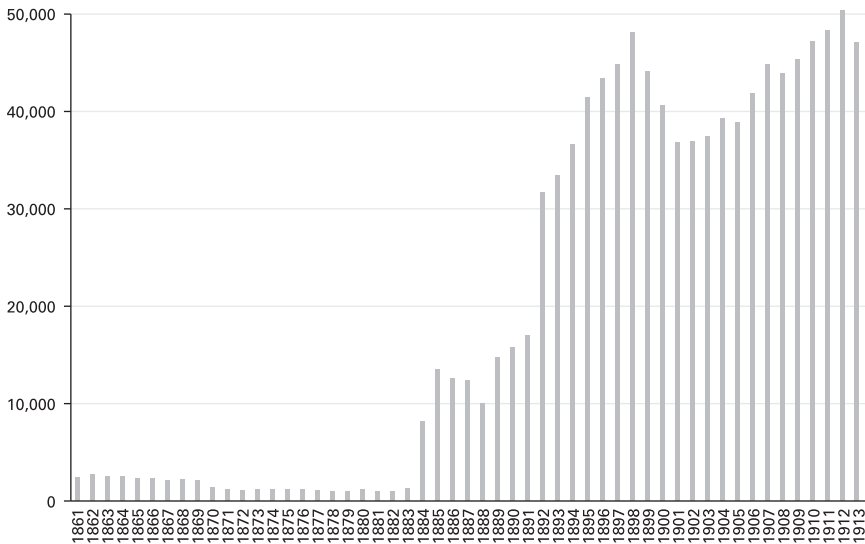
²³ On the reasoning in favour of or against such regulations, see Alfred Ebenhoch and Engelbert Pernerstorfer, eds. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Gewerbe-Enquête im österreichischen Abgeordnetenhaus samt geschichtlicher Einleitung und Anhang* (Wien: Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1893); 'Antrag des Abgeordneten Smitka, Palme und Genossen, betreffend die Beseitigung der Arbeitsbücher (Entlaßscheine, Seediensbücher)', *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrathes*, XXI Session, 1911, Beilage 70.

²⁴ For example Leo Lucassen, 'A many-Headed Monster: The Evolution of the Passport System in the Netherlands and Germany in the Long Nineteenth Century' in Caplan et al., eds. *Identity*, 235–55; Katrin Lehnert, *Die Un-Ordnung der Grenze. Mobiler Alltag zwischen Sachsen und Böhmen und die Produktion von Migration im 19. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2017), 207, 216.

²⁵ Keiser, *Vertragszwang*; on servants, see Thomas Pierson, *Das Gesinde und die Herausbildung moderner Privatrechtsprinzipien* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2016); Thomas Vormbaum, *Politik und Gesinderecht im 19. Jahrhundert (vornehmlich in Preußen 1810–1918)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1980).

²⁶ Writings on the *livret d'ouvrier* point out the ambivalent character of this paper. E.g. Simona Cerutti (2010), 'Travail, mobilité et légitimité. Suppliques au roi dans un société d'Ancien Régime (Turin, XVIIIe siècle)', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 65, no. 3: 571–611.

a development which went along with new social rights, but it was one which was certainly not linear and uncontested. Nor did it suggest an absence of coercion. The enforcement of regulations was slow and remained patchy until the papers were temporarily abolished in interwar Austria.²⁷ Graph 3.1 demonstrates how slow the issuing of labour booklets was to gain momentum, even in Vienna. I could not find similar complete statistics of servants' booklets.²⁸ Although labour booklets and servants' ones show many similarities, they were differently administered, monitored and discussed. When artisans and workers protested and argued that it was a violation of their dignity to own and carry around such booklets like servants or prostitutes,²⁹ they were referring to differences in status and therefore substantial differences in rights and entitlements.



Graph 3.1 Labour booklets issued in Vienna, 1861–1913.³⁰

²⁷ This is a similarity to France and Germany, see Stieda, *Arbeitsbuch*. Labour booklets were re-introduced during the Nazi regime: Karsten Linne, 'Von der Arbeitsvermittlung zum "Arbeitseinsatz". Zum Wandel der Arbeitsverwaltung 1933–1945' in *Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Marc Buggeln and Michael Wildt (Berlin: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg, 2014), 53–70.

²⁸ Between 1876 and 1892 between 10,000 and 5,800 servants' booklets (on average 6,800) were issued every year. Präsidium der k. k. Polizei-Direction, ed., *Die Polizeiverwaltung Wiens 1867–1892*.

²⁹ *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren über ihre Amtstätigkeit* 1886, 22; 1888, 56; 1909, CXXff. The annual reports *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren über ihre Amtstätigkeit* (Wien, Druck und Verlag der kaiserlich-königlichen Staatsdruckerei 1884–1916) are available on <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=bga&size=45&qid=8NOW3Q7BTUJP10L74FMHIS1OMFOKF8>; 'Das Arbeitsbuch', *Salzburger Wacht* 16.8.1911, 1.

³⁰ Source: *Administrations-Bericht des Wiener Bürgermeisters (Wien 1861–1866)* (available on <https://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/wbrobv/periodical/titleinfo/2041987>); *Die Gemeindeverwaltung der Reichshaupt und Residenzstadt Wien (Wien 1889–1919)* (available on <https://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/Drucke/periodical/titleinfo/609853>). Around 1870 there were about 130,000 workers in Vienna requiring a labour booklet; around 1900, there were approximately 455,000: Josef Ehmer, *Soziale Traditionen in Zeiten des Wandels. Arbeiter und Handwerker im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1994), 255; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien für das Jahr 1901* (Wien: Verlag des Wiener Magistrates, 1903), 68 (available on <https://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/wbrobv/periodical/titleinfo/2057276>).

Non-work, Job Search and Wages

Labour or servants' booklets – in theory – allowed an individual to be identified. In addition, these defined the type of work or employment and specified the occupation as well as certifying a person's professional training, work experiences and behaviour. Every post and employment had to be registered in the booklet, which also included work references (or summaries of work references, to be verified by the authorities, police or trade association). Apart from control and order, the official rationale emphasized that labour/servants' booklets in this specific form also served workers/servants because they conveniently combined all the necessary documents enabling them to move freely and search for work.³¹ I will start with this aspect, discussing how papers and documentation of employment were related to job search and how the ways of coping with periods of joblessness were related to wages. In which ways did papers predetermine the chances to find an appropriate post or just any job at all? To what extent did work seekers have the possibility to choose, be picky or negotiate the terms of employment?

Different types of papers enabled different modes of job search. They granted access to various different locations and facilities in which people on the move found shelter and support, and in which they received and exchanged information on open vacancies and work conditions, whether accurate or not. Certainly, there were always multiple ways to find employment and get information on open situations, depending on one's occupation and social context. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, searching for employment quite often included mobility on a local level (looking around – *Umschau*) or in a greater area (tramping – or *Wanderschaft*, *Walz*, as it was called in the context of crafts in the German-speaking area). Job fluctuation was high, the demand for labour variable. Neither roaming nor the problem of vagrancy lost importance in the course of industrialization.³² Such practices went along with a frequent need for and use of documents in various interactions with police, potential employers, innkeepers or local residents etc. Identity- and work-documents equipped with the necessary entries and permits to travel indicated that it was legitimate for an individual to be on the move. Proper papers evidenced a status and distinguished their holders from vagabonds and vagrants without decent work records – or without papers at all. The policy specified that individuals regarded as unreliable, work-shy or unemployable were not supposed to receive papers or travel permits in the first place.³³

Even if a person had no employment and no money in his/her pockets, entitlements linked to certain occupations could make a difference: unlike (formally) unskilled workers and servants, journeymen and (formally) skilled workers tramping in search

³¹ Moriz Ertl (1886), 'Bericht der k. k. Gewerbeinspektoren über ihre Amtsthätigkeit im Jahre 1884. Wien 1885,' *Statistische Monatschrift*, no. 12: 54–9.

³² See Sigrid Wadauer (2011), 'Establishing Distinctions: Unemployment Versus Vagrancy in Austria from the Late Nineteenth Century to 1938,' *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 1: 31–70; Beate Althammer, *Vagabunden. Eine Geschichte von Armut, Bettel und Mobilität im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung (1815-1933)* (Essen: Klartext, 2017).

³³ '22. Zur Hintanhaltung des Vagabunden-Unwesens' (1900), *Amtsblatt der k. und k. Reichshaupt- und Residenzstadt Wien*, no. 9: 5.

of work could still potentially rely on customary and/or statutory support from local shopkeepers or colleagues, trade associations, occupational organizations or unions.³⁴ Such support could comprise a stay in the trade association's lodge, an invitation for a drink or a meal, or money. The amount and binding character of such support varied substantially from trade to trade. Some trades allowed for more sedentariness whereas other, less common trades went along with a greater amount of mobility. Some trades were better organized than others. We can find considerable changes and even more diversification of trades throughout the nineteenth century.³⁵ Yet tramping was and remained a culturally and socially institutionalized practice in the life and 'career' of an artisan up to the twentieth century. A trade law reform of 1883 re-established a certificate of competence more broadly. A record of waged-work as a journeyman for some years – usually connected with mobility – remained a legal precondition for obtaining a permit to establish oneself as a self-employed master artisan.³⁶ The chances for becoming a master craftsman certainly varied, but overall the share of small workshops and companies remained high.

From a legal perspective a person with entitlement to such support, even in the most rudimentary amount, was not without subsistence and was not to be treated as a vagabond. A *viaticum* (or *Geschenk*) was thus not considered the same as alms. This distinction could be contested and was probably not always acknowledged by the police in practice, yet we can still find references to it even in interwar court records. Apart from these rather traditional and apparently often insufficient resources, identity documents and proof of previous, regular employment were also a prerequisite for getting access to new forms of support that had been established by authorities since the 1880s in the most industrialized lands of Cisleithania.³⁷ A network of wayfarers' relief stations (*Naturalverpflegsstationen* or *Herbergen*) provided board and shelter for one night as well as information on open positions for work seeking wayfarers.³⁸ (Similar facilities can be found in German countries and Switzerland.) Distinguishing and separating people who were considered out of work through no fault of their own from vagabonds was supposed to combat vagrancy and begging³⁹ and to reduce the

³⁴ *Die Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich, verfasst und herausgegeben vom statistischen Departement im k. k. Handelsministerium* (Wien: Hölder, 1898), 120, 224.

³⁵ Ehmer, *Soziale Traditionen*, 1994.

³⁶ Magdalena Pöschl (2010), 'Beständiges und Veränderliches im Gewerberecht – Entwicklung der GewO 1859 bis 2009', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsrecht*, no. 2: 64–74.

³⁷ Sigrid Wadauer, 'Tramping in Search of Work. Practices of Wayfarers and of Authorities (Austria 1880–1938)', in *The History of Labour Intermediation. Institutions and Finding Employment in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Sigrid Wadauer, Thomas Buchner and Alexander Mejschke (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 286–334.

³⁸ Sigrid Wadauer, Thomas Buchner and Alexander Mejschke, 'Introduction: Finding Work and Organizing Placement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *The History of Labour Intermediation*, eds. Wadauer, Buchner and Mejschke, 1–22; Irina Vana, *Gebrauchsweisen der öffentlichen Arbeitsvermittlung (Österreich 1889–1938)*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Vienna (2013).

³⁹ It seems unlikely that penniless wayfarers could get along without additional support from residents. Nevertheless, in my work on vagrancy in the interwar period I could hardly find cases of travellers with decent papers and entitlement to relief stations arrested by the police. Sigrid Wadauer, *Der Arbeit nachgehen? Auseinandersetzungen um Lebensunterhalt und Mobilität (Österreich 1880–1938)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2021).

costs of forced removals. This policy can also be understood as a step towards formalizing the status of a work-seeker in a more universal sense, independently of their age, gender, religious confession and occupation. It illustrates the beginning of a process of inventing and institutionalizing 'unemployment'.⁴⁰ It was also one step towards organizing a territorial, state-wide labour market, which included efforts to collect data on work seekers, job vacancies and placements; however, that knowledge at the time was rudimentary and patchy.

In practice, this policy still mainly involved formally trained, skilled labourers. Thus they tended to be younger, unmarried workers who travelled this way in search of work. Unskilled labourers, agricultural labourers and women were explicitly excluded from admission to the wayfarers' relief stations in most provinces. They supposedly were able to find posts more easily and unselectively without longer periods of search and travelling. This does not mean that these labourers or servants were not at all mobile; rather, they moved in distinctive ways, using different facilities, networks and forms of intermediation, like private placement services.⁴¹ In a local context, papers were apparently less relevant for job search and placement and less indispensable despite the regulations.⁴² Up to the twentieth century one can find frequent complaints about servants and workers – quite often local residents, women and juveniles – who did not possess the required documents or could not obtain them from the local authorities.⁴³

As a result, these first efforts to establish public labour intermediation indicated a hierarchy of work, either implicitly or explicitly evoking an interrelation between the acknowledged status of unemployment and vocation.⁴⁴ Yet these efforts were of limited

⁴⁰ Wadauer, 'Establishing Distinctions'; Christian Topalov, 'The Invention of Unemployment. Language, Classification and Social Reform 1880-1910', in *Comparing Social Welfare Systems in Europe*, vol. 1, *Oxford Conference, France – United Kingdom*, ed. Bruno Palier (N.p., 1994), 493–507; Paul T. Ringenbach, *Tramps and Reformers 1873-1916. The Discovery of Unemployment in New York*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973).

⁴¹ Jessica Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte. Auseinandersetzungen um den häuslichen Dienst in Österreich (Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1938)*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Vienna (2017); Raffaella Sarti (2014), 'Historians, Social Scientists, Servants, and Domestic Workers: Fifty Years of Research on Domestic Care Work', *International Review of Social History* 59, no. 2: 279–314; Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk and Silke Neunsinger, eds. *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁴² Licht emphasizes the importance of personal networks: Walter Licht, *Getting Work*. Philadelphia, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴³ These problems are mentioned year for year in the annual trade inspectors' reports. *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren über Ihre Amtstätigkeit im Jahr 1884-1916* (Wien: Kaiserlich und Königl. Staatsdruckerei, 1885-1919) (available on <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=bga>). Problems are also summarized in Bericht des sozialpolitischen Ausschusses betreffend eine über Antrag des Abgeordneten Dr. Freißler im Sinne des §33 G.O. an das Haus zu stellende Vorfrage, "ob die Regierung aufzufordern sei, eine Vorlage einzubringen, welche den Erlaß des Arbeitsbuches für erwachsene Arbeiter durch eine geeignete Legitimation vorsieht", *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrathes*, XXI Session, 1913, Beilage 1860.

⁴⁴ See Bénédicte Zimmermann, *Arbeitslosigkeit in Deutschland. Zur Entstehung einer sozialen Kategorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2006). Even after unemployment insurance was established in the interwar period, predominantly rural areas remained excluded from this policy. Vana, *Gebrauchsweisen*, 129.

range and efficiency. Even for the main target group, wayfarer's relief stations and public labour intermediation were not their first choices if better alternatives were available, such as inns or lodges of the Catholic journeymen's association. And such public interventions were not unreservedly welcomed by organized workers. After all, support and labour intermediation had an impact on wages and work conditions.⁴⁵ It could strengthen ones' (market) position⁴⁶: collectively, because intermediation and support could be used to set or enforce standards with selective placement, requests for mobility, strikes or boycotts; and individually, because support and intermediation enabled and directed mobility.⁴⁷ It allowed searching for work, travelling to places with better work conditions and accepting work selectively, within one's occupation – and not just any work, under any terms and conditions.⁴⁸

Public labour policy intervened and regulated but did not replace either informal networks or labour intermediation by trade associations, unions or workers associations (which requested their members using their placement).⁴⁹ Although identity- and work-documents issued by authorities were required and used in these contexts,⁵⁰ they were not the sole way to identify and be identified. As we can conclude from cases of conflict, fellow journeymen were identified in interactions and by appropriate behaviour.⁵¹ Trade and labourer's associations, which replaced the guilds and were obliged to provide labour intermediation, continued using their own documents and forms of registration, though not always in accordance with the regulations.⁵²

⁴⁵ Ad Knotter, 'From Placement Control to Control of the Unemployed. Trade Unions and Labour Market Intermediation in Western Europe in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,' in *Labour Intermediation* eds. Wadauer et al., 117–50.

⁴⁶ Hobsbawm, 'Custom', 413.

⁴⁷ Autobiographical accounts indicate that workers had some knowledge about wage levels in different towns and places: Sigrid Wadauer, *Die Tour der Gesellen. Mobilität und Biographie im Handwerk vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 268.

⁴⁸ Mohl put this in a nutshell: 'It is even worse – at least in respect to moral questions – for one who has to travel without money, and whose parents or relatives no longer care. He is forced to accept work in the very next place and has to accept any weekly wage he is offered. His few possessions get used up, he has no possibility to replace them, the wage is barely enough for basic needs, and he is forced either to beg to be able to move again or to return where he came from – after years without having seen or learned anything. In most occupations the weekly wage is so low that even with greatest thriftiness one can barely survive, much less save money to travel further.' Hugo von Mohl, 'Gekrönte Preisschrift. Wie können die Vortheile, welche durch das Wandern der Handwerksgesellen möglich sind, befördert und die dabey vorkommenden Nachtheile verhütet werden?' in *Kurze Darstellung einiger Handwerks-Mißbräuche, und Vorschläge, wie solche zu verbessern seyn könnten*. (Halle: Curtische Buchhandlung, 1800), 67–147, 81f. The quotes of German sources are translated by the author.

⁴⁹ *Die Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich*, chapters 'Arbeitsvermittlung bei den gewerblichen Genossenschaften in moderner Zeit' and 'Gewerkschaften und Arbeiterbildungsvereine'; Hans Hülber, *Weg und Ziel der Arbeitsvermittlung. Studie über das Arbeitsmarktgeschehen in Österreich von 1848 bis 1934* (Wien: Verlag des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 1965), 12.

⁵⁰ 'Was bei den Unternehmern Frechheit ist', *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 14.1.1902, 7f.

⁵¹ See, for example: Ludwig Funder, *Aus meinem Burschenleben. Gesellenwanderung und Brautwerbung eines Grazer Zuckerbäckers 1862-1869*, ed. Ernst Bruckmüller (Wien: Böhlau, 2000), 72. Sigrid Wadauer, 'Journeyman's Mobility and the Guild System: A Space of Possibilities Based on Central European Cases', in *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900–1900*, eds. Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis, (London: University of London Press, 2007), 169–86.

⁵² *Die Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich*, 126f, 129, 130, 133; *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren 1884*, 67f.

‘The most important travel document,’ the book printer Karl Steinhardt (a Social Democrat and later a Communist politician) wrote in his autobiographical account, ‘was the *Quittungsbuch* [a booklet with receipts, S.W.] in which all support received [from the book printers’ organization, S.W.] was documented. Vis-à-vis the authorities, this booklet served as legitimation, in order not to be treated as a vagabond.’⁵³ In this context, the author also pointed out another aspect, relevant for job search and wages: ‘The organisation of book printers,’ he wrote, ‘cared well for its travelling members [...] But the organization’s regulations required that the traveller had to accept a job offer. If he refused, he lost travel support.’⁵⁴ Neither public, professional nor private support for workers without employment was unconditional and unlimited. It was tied to a legal, statutory or moral and customary obligation not to quit or reject work without good reason.⁵⁵ In order not to lose support and the status of a work-seeker, one had to accept work eventually, either by consent or unwillingly.

Josef Jodlbauer – a Social Democratic baker journeymen – depicted these ‘rules of the game’⁵⁶ in his autobiographical account. He presented himself as combative and insubordinate. Yet, after a (much too) long period of travelling, there was no possibility for negotiation; he was only left with the choice between an undesirable position and criminalization. The relief station’s warden was explicitly threatening him with forced removal and the workhouse:

Rejecting [the job, S.W.] went along with the risk of losing the *Verpflegschein* [certificate necessary for admission at a relief station, S.W.] and – because this was noted in the booklet – he would not get a new one if he could not prove that he was employed in the meantime. He therefore asked what kind of dough was being produced and what amount of work was to be performed. The answer [of the master craftsman, S.W.] was: ‘Well, in my workshop, nobody has killed himself by working too much.’ The question concerning the wage was also answered in a revolting manner: the agreement would be made on Saturday, after a week and everybody had been satisfied with their wage up to that point. As Josef tried to ask something particular, the warden of the relief station interrupted him. ‘You – young man – you have not been working hard enough this year. Let’s go, quick.’⁵⁷

The author, while wanting to work, nonetheless emphasized how he was compelled to do so. In the same spirit, Julius Deutsch, a book printer who like Jodlbauer later became a Social Democratic politician, described the conflict between his desire to travel⁵⁸ and

⁵³ Karl Steinhardt, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Wiener Arbeiters*, ed. Manfred Mugrauer (Wien: Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft, 2013), 110.

⁵⁴ Steinhardt, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 110 and 111.

⁵⁵ Wadauer, *Die Tour der Gesellen*.

⁵⁶ Eric Hobsbawm: ‘Custom, Wages and Work-Load’, 405–36, 406.

⁵⁷ Jodlbauer writes of himself in third person: Josef Jodlbauer, *Ein Mensch zieht in die Welt. Selbstbiographie eines Altösterreicherers*, unpublished Typoskript, 1947–1948 (Dokumentation Lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen, University of Vienna), 118.

⁵⁸ Julius Deutsch, *Ein weiter Weg. Lebenserinnerungen*. (Zürich: Amalthea, 1960), 45.

his fear of being arrested and expelled from Germany to the Austrian Lands. He found a different solution to this dilemma:

I was happy when an old fellow journeyman offered to produce me a work certificate. He did it at a cheap rate. [...] Now I could present myself with more confidence. Additionally, I could find occasional work with farmers. When I could stay somewhere, I tried to make myself useful.⁵⁹

This narrative exemplifies further aspects of this topic: the author emphasized that the journeymen were not willing to work at any price. Nor did they like to work just anywhere. People did not move exclusively to work or merely out of necessity owing to joblessness, low wages, poor working conditions or other material motives. Getting around, working at the right places, and seeing the world could serve the reputation and status of a journeyman. Avoiding work in order to keep travelling, finding a way around the necessity to accept work – at least temporary, but not too long – was not generally stigmatized.⁶⁰ It could be even idealized,⁶¹ as part of a rite of passage for young men.⁶² This is visible even in accounts of politically organized writers, who depicted themselves as workers rather than as journeymen and who explicitly challenged any traditional or romantic notion of tramping.⁶³ ‘Every older locksmith knows what it counted at that time to have been in Hamburg,’ one German locksmith wrote:

Not because one could earn much more than elsewhere. No, the wages were not very high, but it was well-known that in Hamburg good work was done, custom and tradition was held in honour. There was no tolerance for dilletantes, [*Pfuscher*: an incompetent person, not formally trained or not belonging to the guild, S.W.] [...] flatterers or bootlickers. [...] Upright guild journeymen were trained there. [...] The spirit which today honours Hamburg’s labourers, the solidarity, was pronounced in old forms and ties; everywhere a locksmith was acknowledged as a real journeyman if he had been in Hamburg, even if he had been mainly hanging around at his digs than working at his vise.⁶⁴

Another aspect illustrated by these accounts is that not every temporary, occasional earning was relevant and registered in the booklet. Casual workers of the ‘lowest’, most ordinary kind, like day labourers etc., did not need a labour booklet at all.⁶⁵ Hence,

⁵⁹ Deutsch, *Ein weiter Weg*, 49; see also Jodlbauer, *Ein Mensch* 115.

⁶⁰ This might not apply to behaviour at the workplace. As Hobsbawm emphasizes, slacking was stigmatized. Hobsbawm, ‘Custom, Wages and Work-Load’, 411.

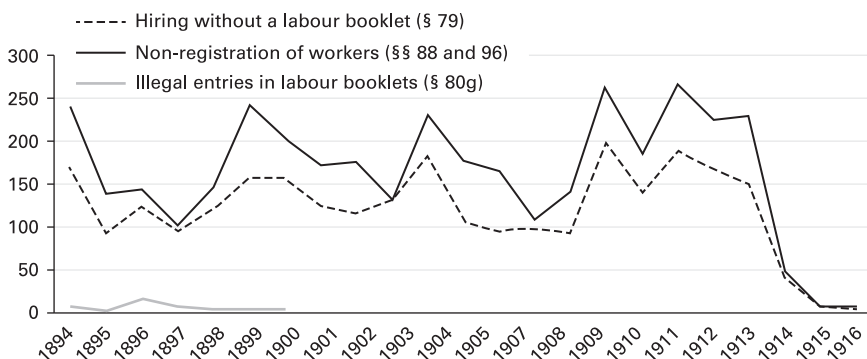
⁶¹ In some anarchists’ writings, vagrancy is evoked as voluntary avoidance of exploitation, e.g. in Erich Mühsam: ‘Boheme’, in *Ich bin verdammt zu warten in einem Bürgergarten*, vol. 2: *Literarische und politische Aufsätze*, ed. Wolfgang Haug (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1983), 30–5, 31.

⁶² Wadauer, *Die Tour der Gesellen*.

⁶³ On the different possibilities for practicing and representing journeymen’s travelling and work, see Wadauer, *Die Tour der Gesellen*.

⁶⁴ [Grillenberger Karl:] ‘Des Wanderburschen Freud und Leid. Von einem alten “Katzenkopf”’, *Der Wahre Jacob. Illustrierte humoristisch-satirische Zeitschrift*, no. 285, 22.6.1897: 2474–6, 2475f.

⁶⁵ Ebenhoch and Pernerstorfer, *Stenographisches Protokoll*, 144.



Graph 3.2 Formal charges (*Anzeigen*) filed by trade inspectors concerning labour booklets, 1894–1916.⁶⁶

these papers and the related obligatory forms of registration in companies and with local authorities foretell a difference, which nowadays is designated and established as a distinction of formal/informal work.⁶⁷ In this historical setting, however, it seems more appropriate to speak of regular and irregular work relations.⁶⁸

Contracts and Wages

Regular work required appropriate papers and registration (in the register of employers or that of local authorities).⁶⁹ Papers indicated that a person was in a position to make a contract, that he/she was an adult or was old enough for this type of work and had the consent of a legal caretaker.⁷⁰ Handing out the papers to the employer signified an

⁶⁶ These numbers are low, yet cases on labour booklets still involved up to 28.5 per cent of all formal complaints. Numbers dropped during the war because the regulations were not enforced. *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren* 1894, 6f; 1895, 4f; 1896, XXIVf; 1897, XXIIIff; 1898, XXf; 1899, XXXXVII; 1900, XXIVf; 1901, XLXf, LIIf; 1902, 74–79; 1903, Tabelle A, 56f; 1904, Tabelle A, LIV; 1905, Tabelle A, LXVII; 1906, LXXII, LXXVII; 1907, LXXVIIIff, LXXXIIIff; 1908, LXVIII, LXXIVf; 1909, Lf, LIVf; 1910, LVI–LIX; 1911, LXXIV–LXXVII; 1912, CII–CV; 1913, XII, LII–LVI; 1914, LIV–LIX; 1915, XLVI–XLIX, LIIIf; 1916, LX–LIII, LVIIIff; 1919, LXIVff; 1920, XXVIII–XXXI; 1921, XXIV–XXXVII, XXX; 1923, 26–31; 1924, 26–31; 1925, XX–XIII.

⁶⁷ The term was coined by Keith Hart (1973), 'Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* II, no. 1: 61–89.

⁶⁸ On this question see also: Thomas Buchner and Philip R. Hoffmann-Rehnitz, 'Introduction: Irregular Work and Shadow Economies as a Topic of Modern History – Problems and Possibilities', in *Shadow Economies and Irregular Work in Urban Europe. 16th to early 20th Centuries*, eds. Thomas Buchner and Philip R. Hoffmann-Rehnitz (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 3–36.

⁶⁹ Leo Verkauf, 'Arbeitsvertrag', in *Österreichisches Staatswörterbuch. Handbuch des gesamten österreichischen öffentlichen Rechtes*, eds. Ernst Mischler and Josef Ulbrich, 2nd edn, vol. 1 (Wien: Holder, 1905), 149–87. Trade inspectors' reports saw the usage of labour booklets as a symbol of respect towards the regulations. *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren* 1886, 22.

agreement.⁷¹ The worker's data had to be entered in the company's or workshop's register of workers. (Employment of servants had to be reported to and registered at the municipality.) Demanding papers (and wage amount) or returning papers signified the end of the contract. Papers suggested what the accurate type of contract was, whether the trade law or servants' statutes applied, what the basic conditions of employment were, and which authorities were in charge in case of disputes.⁷² A certificate of formal training, the categorization of occupation, the position in a previous job and the continuity of employment could have an impact on whether one got a job, a specific assignment or payment or whether one's earnings improved at one's position. The documentation of employment was also a legal requirement for a 'career' from an apprentice to becoming a journeyman and – as mentioned above – to becoming a self-employed master artisan.

Numerous complaints reported by trade inspectors and cases at trade courts highlight the practical relevance of papers (see graph 3.2).⁷³ We can find problems and conflicts concerning multiple aspects: having the wrong papers or missing papers; mixing up, losing or destroying papers; incorrect or missing entries regarding occupation or employment, forgeries etc.⁷⁴ At the same time, since it was not permitted to give explicitly bad references, the significance of job references – in respect to the assessment of someone's diligence, faithfulness and reliability – could easily be doubted. Identification and assessment of a worker/servant in the context of hiring was not exclusively based on papers, which had to be interpreted or made plausible and relevant in interactions with employers or foremen. In his autobiographical novel, Alfons Petzold sarcastically portrayed such interaction:

I quickly obeyed and handed over my papers, again with a deep bow, looking up shyly. [...] The boss took no notice of me; he was exclusively occupied with checking my labour booklet. [...] 'Well, my dear, you do not seem to possess a lot of talent or endurance. You only have two references over a year and have never

⁷⁰ Trade inspectors yearly reported violations of these law which varied regionally and according to branches. Trade inspectors mention forged data in order to avoid regulations on child labour. StGBI. 1919/292 stipulated work cards for children under the age of 14 years. On service, see Morgenstern, *Gesinderecht*, 38. Women did not necessarily need their husband's consent for working as servant. Yet, according to this author, it was seen as desirable.

⁷¹ Alois Heillinger, *Österreichisches Gewerberecht. Kommentar der Gewerbeordnung*, 3rd edn, eds. Michael Plachy and Alois Tischler (Wien: Manz, 1909). Emil Heller, *Das österreichische Gewerberecht mit Berücksichtigung der Gewerbenovelle vom 5. Februar 1907*, RGBl. Nr. 26. *Systematische Darstellung für die Praxis* (Wien: Manz, 1908).

⁷² Verkauf, *Arbeitsvertrag*, 149–87. On servants' contracts see Richter, *Die Produktion*, 41.

⁷³ *Sammlungen der Entscheidungen der k. k. Gewerbebeurtheiler*. (Wien: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1900–1920), e.g.: the decision Nr. 20/1899 concerns a worker who complained that in his certificate he was described as a 'Hilfsarbeiterin' (female unskilled worker) instead of a 'Schlosser' (locksmith). Other examples concerning categorization as skilled/unskilled worker can be found for example in the records of the provincial government of Lower Austria. NÖLA, Statthaltereil ÜW – XII, 1909, 2113; XII, 1911, 2488.

⁷⁴ *Aus dem Leben eines Handwerksburschen. Erinnerungen von Karl Ernst. Mit einem Geleitwort von Heinrich Hansjakob*, 3rd edn. (Neustadt im Schwarzwald: Karl Wehrle, 1912), 114ff.

been employed in an establishment like ours.' In my desperation I muttered some possible and impossible assertions of faithfulness, devotion and diligence, my laudable adaptability; I became a poet in listing all my deeds as a worker and ended with the recommendation of the lady who had sent me there. Whereupon the man's face brightened and he said patronisingly, 'Well, I'll give it a try with you.'⁷⁵

Other accounts in different settings, however, indicate that neither applicants nor papers were always checked thoroughly, e.g. when many workers were hired at the same time:

Searching for work took place in a primitive and – in comparison to present day's sentiments – undignified manner. At least an hour before start of work, bunches of male and female construction workers crowded in front of the construction site's offices in order to wait for the foreman, who usually made his way through the crowd or stood at the office door and took the offered labour books of those candidates who suited him. [...] Indeed, it has to be noticed that the year 1900 was a relatively good year for construction and consequently it was easier to find work. [...] Those workers who found mercy in the eyes of the main foreman were invited to the office with the words 'get in here'; there everyone had to sign the work rules presented by the construction site's clerk. One can imagine that at that time work rules were made without any representatives of workers and included only obligations and no rights. Even before we left the office, the main foremen gave us our first dressing down. 'With me, you have to work hard. Whoever I catch loafing will be kicked out of here. I hope you've got that.'⁷⁶

Wages are not addressed here by the author, at the time a fourteen-year-old masonry apprentice and later a president of the construction workers' union, who was apparently aiming to depict general circumstances with his narrative. His hopes of finding better work conditions in Vienna were destroyed. People did not always have an accurate knowledge about their chances to get a job or decent payment in another town.

Getting a certain position and wage was also not automatic, the result of one's documents and references. It was instead an object of negotiation or was even simply stated by the employer, either in advance or after a trial period (like in Jodlbauer's example, quoted before). Most accounts mention a one or two weeks work-period for determining the wage.⁷⁷ The workers then seem to have the choice to accept or leave. If there was no alternative to the job that was available, savings or other resources were required. Furthermore, a record of changing jobs too frequently was considered suspicious; it could lower the chances at obtaining a better job.

⁷⁵ Alfons Petzold, *Das rauhe Leben. Der Roman eines Menschen* [1920] (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1985), 332f; the labour booklet is also mentioned on pages 271, 304, and 307.

⁷⁶ Johann Böhm: *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Wien: Verlag des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 1961), 18f.

⁷⁷ *Aus dem Leben eines Handwerksburschen*, 258f; František Kebrdile, 'Meine Lebensgeschichte. Geboren 1825; in *Auf der Walz. Erinnerungen böhmischer Handwerksgelesen*, ed. Pavla Vošhalíková (Wien: Böhlau, 1994), 31–42, 36.

Work contracts and wage agreements could be made orally or in writing. (Legal sources mention the possibility of witnesses.) The availability and importance of written documentation varied according to the type and size of the enterprise, the length of contract and the wage form. Labour booklets for apprentices had to include the basic terms of their contracts: duration, payment, or provision of board and lodging. These long-term agreements were regarded as a specific kind of contract and more clearly a matter of public concern since they included the training of minors and, at least in theory, their education. Apart from that, there was no legal obligation to have written agreements,⁷⁸ but if written agreements were made, additional or contradictory oral agreements were regarded as irrelevant. Bigger companies had their own bureaucracy and documentation of wages (*Lohnlisten*), not always in accordance with the law. The lists of employed workers and of juvenile workers, as stipulated by the trade law, were often missing. Some factories handed out their status to the workers – sometimes even for a fee – and made them sign the rules on wages, working hours, possible wage reductions etc. In some factories the wage was noted on the receipt a worker received when he/she handed out the labour booklet. Some employers handed out *Tarif-Zettel*, sheets of paper documenting the wage agreement.⁷⁹ Wage booklets⁸⁰ documenting actual payment or reduction of wage were used in some factories and in mining. Entries on wages and advances can also be found in the servants⁸¹ and sometimes in the labour booklets.

Although a work contract was an individual agreement, categorization and documentation of employment and wage agreements mattered because in cases of conflict⁸² brought forward to the trade courts the fighting parties needed proof of an agreement (or lack of one).⁸³ If there was no individual agreement, wage, working hours, terms for quitting or dismissal and other terms of the contract were set according to the law⁸⁴ and local custom, as defined by the trade court which included both representatives of employers and workers. The wage defined as customary could vary considerably from region to region and in respect to occupation or gender. It was also the basis for calculating the allowance granted by insurances. Such accident and health insurances were established in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly

⁷⁸ This differs from regulations in other countries; on this question at an international level: 'Der XXVIII. Deutsche Juristentag. Kiel, 9. bis 12. September 1906', *Allgemeine österreichische Gerichtszeitung* 57, no. 37–9, 1906: 289–307; Sabine Rudischhauser, *Geregelte Verhältnisse. Eine Geschichte des Tarifvertragsrechts in Deutschland und Frankreich (1890–1918/19)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2016), 44.

⁷⁹ *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren 1894*, 54.

⁸⁰ 'Der erste Delegiertentag der Union aller keramischen Arbeiter Österreich-Ungarns', *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3.8.1896, 3f, 4.

⁸¹ Therese Meyer, *Dienstboten in Oberkärnten*, (Klagenfurt: Verlag des Kärntner Landesarchivs, 1993) 45; *Landesgesetzblatt Niederösterreich* 1922/141.

⁸² 'Wie bei den genossenschaftlichen Schiedsgerichten Recht gesprochen wird', *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 22.4.1898, 8; Ingwer mentions that companies tried to trick workers into signing agreements so that the workers would not understand what they were doing; Isidor Ingwer, *Die Rechtsstreitigkeiten vor dem Gewerbegerichte*, (Wien: Konegen, 1899), 156.

⁸³ Ingwer mentioned that companies often made no agreement at all. Ingwer, *Die Rechtsstreitigkeiten*, 62.

⁸⁴ Heiliger, *Österreichisches Gewerberecht*, 515; Karl Schreiber, 'Der Arbeitsvertrag nach heutigem österreichischem Privatrecht', *Allgemeine österreichische Gerichts-Zeitung* XXXVIII (NF XXIV), no. 7, 15.2.1887: 49–51, 49; Meyer, *Dienstboten in Oberkärnten*, 45.

concerning workers in trades and factories.⁸⁵ Servants and agricultural workers were not equally included for a long time thereafter.⁸⁶

An important issue was the amount of the wage. Collective agreements on wages – *Tarifverträge* – can be found in Cisleithania as of the 1890s, and an increasing number of agreements in various branches can be found from the 1900s on.⁸⁷ In domestic service, a minimum wage was defined after 1920.⁸⁸ At issue might also be the form and composition of remuneration (money, provision, board, bonuses, tips, refund of travel expenses etc.) as well as the frequency of payment. Collective wage agreements show how wages and wage forms varied in different branches or occupations; they also illustrate how time wage and piece rates could coexist and combine.⁸⁹ According to the trade law, payment in crafts and factories should principally consist of money, the usual payment period was one week, and the period of notice was two weeks.⁹⁰ Individual agreements on accommodation or payment in kind were allowed, yet the truck-system was prohibited. Nevertheless, there were frequent complaints of violations⁹¹: workers claimed that they had received vouchers instead of money, and that they had to eat at companies' canteens or buy at their shops. The most infamous example for the persistence of these illegal practices was the Viennese brickmakers, as conveyed by Victor Adler.⁹² In the late nineteenth century, a general prohibition of obligatory board and lodging in the employer's household was requested by workers, for it was apparently still customary in several branches.⁹³ In contrast to that, there was no legal objection to lodging and board being a regular part of servants' wages since servants were regarded as part of the household. A small amount of money paid or an advance received demonstrated the binding character of these contracts which were also often made for a longer period of time, at

⁸⁵ Emmerich Tálos and Karl Wörister, *Soziale Sicherung im Sozialstaat Österreich. Entwicklung – Herausforderungen – Strukturen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1994).

⁸⁶ Ernst Bruckmüller, Roman Sandgruber and Hannes Stekl, *Soziale Sicherheit im Nachziehverfahren. Die Einbeziehung der Bauern, Landarbeiter, Gewerbetreibenden und Hausgehilfen in das System der österreichischen Sozialversicherung* (Salzburg: Neugebauer, 1978).

⁸⁷ In the 1890s leather workers and book printers already had collective agreements on wages. Bakers, shoemakers and tailors soon followed. From 1904 to 1907 the number of agreements increased from 37 to 727. Julius Deutsch, *Die Tarifverträge in Österreich* (Wien: Hueber, 1908), 11ff, 16.

⁸⁸ Richter, *Die Produktion*, 126f.

⁸⁹ Hans Bayer, *Die Löhne der Arbeiterschaft in Wien und Niederösterreich* (Wien: Verlag d. Kammer f. Arbeiter u. Angestellte, 1936); Jürgen Kocka: *Arbeitsverhältnisse und Arbeiterexistenzen: Grundlagen der Klassenbildung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990), 489. As Zeitlin pointed out, Biernacki only refers to examples of time and piece wages, which support his hypothesis of a culturally based difference in systems of wages. Richard Biernacki, *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jonathan Zeitlin (1996), 'Review of The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914, by Richard Biernacki', *The American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6, 1770-1772.

⁹⁰ *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspektoren 1884*, 143.

⁹¹ Ingwer, *Rechtsstreitigkeiten*, 142, 149.

⁹² Victor Adler, 'Die Lage der Ziegelerbeiter', in *Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe*, ed. Parteivorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei Deutschösterreichs, vol. 4 (Victor Adler über Arbeiterschutz und Sozialreform) (Wien: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1925), 11-16, 12.

⁹³ 'Zur Lohnbewegung', *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 1.8.1890: 7; 'Allgemeine Rundschau', *Arbeiterwille* 6.9.1893: 4.

least in respect to agricultural servants.⁹⁴ (In trades and factories, long-term agreements are described as the exception rather than the rule.) From a critical perspective, service was described as modern slavery, e.g. by Adelheid Popp, who emphasizes the lack of dignity in this kind of work relation.⁹⁵

However, there was significant job fluctuation and people also often worked in various changing jobs, seasonally or in the course of their lives,⁹⁶ without frequently getting new documents appropriate to their work-relations and status as servant or worker. As mentioned before, many had no documents or the wrong kind, while others owned both a labour and a servants' booklet. At the same time, labour relations were not always clearly defined or categorized correctly. This seemed to concern primarily women, who according to trade inspectors' reports often received no papers at all, or servants' booklets instead of labour booklets. Women were also often falsely employed in trades as servants, implying that they had no entitlement to insurance for work accidents or illness. Frequently mentioned examples of contested categorizations are, for example: cooks, maids, laundresses and coachmen, occupations which were found in households or in companies, inns and workshops.⁹⁷ In such a case it was not decisive if he/she was equipped with a servants' booklet or labour booklet, as stated by a trade court in 1900. The characteristic of service, as the court decision put it, was to be hired to a humble kind of domestic or agricultural labour which goes along with admission in the employer's household and subordination to his supervision.⁹⁸ If a person was employed as a worker or servant had to be established in every individual case.

Another problem, manifest in many trade court cases, was that neither employers nor employees necessarily stuck to the initial agreement on work tasks and payments. Or: there was no consensus on the question of what the initial agreement was. Which leads us to the last issue of the options for quitting or leaving a post.

Wages and Notice

Although labour/servants' booklets were a means to establish, categorize and (in some cases) document a contract, they were also seen as a tool to stabilize and enforce it.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ 'Andere Dienstboten', *St. Pöltner Bote* 10.5.1877: 154. In the case of agricultural servants, such long-term agreements were rather desirable since they included shelter and board during wintertime: Norbert Ortmayr, 'Ländliches Gesinde in Oberösterreich 1918-1938', in *Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation in ländlichen Gesellschaften*, eds. Josef Ehmer and Michael Mitterauer, (Wien: Böhlau, 1986), 325-416.

⁹⁵ Adelheid Popp, *Haussklavinnen. Ein Beitrag zur Lage der Dienstmädchen* (Wien: Brand, 1912).

⁹⁶ Albert Randow (1887), 'Versuch einer Arbeiterstatistik für das Deutsche Reich und Oesterreich', *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reich* NF, no. 2, 595-636, 599.

⁹⁷ 'Aus Fabriken und Werkstätten' (1892), *Arbeiterinnenzeitung* no. 23: 3; there are manifold examples in the trade inspectors' reports, e.g.: 'Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren' 1885, 263 and 1913, CLXXVf. Or the 'Sammlungen der Entscheidungen der k. k. Gewerbeberichte' Nr. 128/1900, Nr. 129/1900, Nr. 574/1900, Nr. 1903/1901, Nr. 1847/1911. Wrong documents certainly did not mean that the regulations did not apply, as indicated by decision Nr. 809/1902.

⁹⁸ *Sammlungen der Entscheidungen der k. k. Gewerbeberichte* 1900, Nr. 128.

⁹⁹ Patricia Van den Eeckhout, 'Giving Notice: the Legitimate Way of Quitting and Firing (Ghent, 1877-1896)' in Scholliers et al., *Experiencing Wages*, 81-109.

‘The purpose of labour books is to protect the work contract against arbitrary actions from one side, either from the worker or the employer, as well as to instil in young people the serious character of a work contract and its obligations.’¹⁰⁰ Papers had to be handed out to the employer and kept in order so that workers and servants would be deterred from ‘running away’ before the period of termination was over, before a task was completed or before an advance was worked off. Employers were not allowed to employ a person who had not properly terminated previous employment. Nor were they supposed to lure away workers or servants from other employees.¹⁰¹ Options for quitting or dismissing someone before the agreed time were legally limited to a small number of serious reasons both for employers and workers/servants.¹⁰²

There were of course complaints and violations of regulations on both sides here as well. Nonetheless, violations had far more severe consequences for workers or servants than for employers. To settle a dispute required time and resources. A frequent complaint of workers and servants was that employers did not return the papers after termination of employment, as had been requested. Or – as mentioned before – employers provided no references, incorrect or negative ones, thereby ruining one’s work record and reputation or even hindering one from finding new regular employment. Court cases and trade inspectors’ reports document conflicts on the wording of the termination of employment. It could matter if, according to the job certificates, someone left or was dismissed by his/her own choice, or due to lack of work or other reasons. Another complaint was that employers entered secret marks into the booklets to brand workers as participants in strikes or May Day celebrations.¹⁰³ As mentioned above, just a work record of too many short time jobs or discontinuous employment could be enough to raise suspicions.

Nonetheless, many workers and servants simply left behind their documents or destroyed them and applied for new ones.¹⁰⁴ After all, not every employer asked for the obligatory papers and documentation of work experiences was not relevant for all kinds of employment. It was ambitious skilled workers and politically organized ones who had the most to gain or lose in this respect. Hence, labour booklets alone were apparently insufficient to discipline and stabilize employment or to prevent strikes, even in combination with the legal threat of fines, compensation, forced return to the workplace or arrest of up to three months for breach of contract (or, in case of servants, even physical punishment). According to trade inspectors’ reports, various forms of wage payment¹⁰⁵ were used to tie workers or servants to their jobs: advances,¹⁰⁶ withholding a share of the

¹⁰⁰ Heilinger, *Österreichisches Gewerberecht*, 526.

¹⁰¹ Alfred Böninger, *Die Bestrafung des Arbeitsvertragsbruchs der Arbeiter. Insbesondere der gewerblichen Arbeiter* (Tübingen: Verlag der H. Laupp’schen Buchhandlung, 1891), 56; Heilinger, *Österreichisches Gewerberecht*, 549.

¹⁰² Heilinger, *Österreichisches Gewerberecht*, 537, 541, 543, 545.

¹⁰³ Isidor Ingwer, *Zwei Fesseln des Koalitionsrechtes* (Wien: Verlag des österreichischen Metallarbeiterverbandes, 1912).

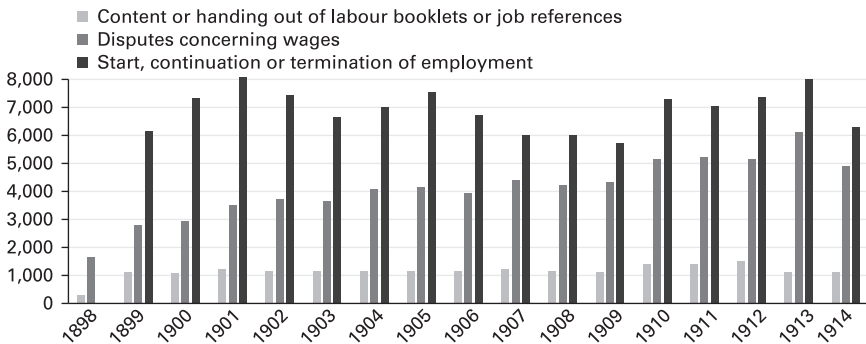
¹⁰⁴ For example Wenzel Holek, *Lebensgang eines deutsch-tschechischen Handarbeiters*, ed. Paul Göhre (Jena: Diederichs, 1909), 248; *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren 1884*, 217.

¹⁰⁵ On the forms of wages in general see, for example, Reinhold Reith, *Lohn und Leistung. Lohnformen im Gewerbe 1450-1900* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999).

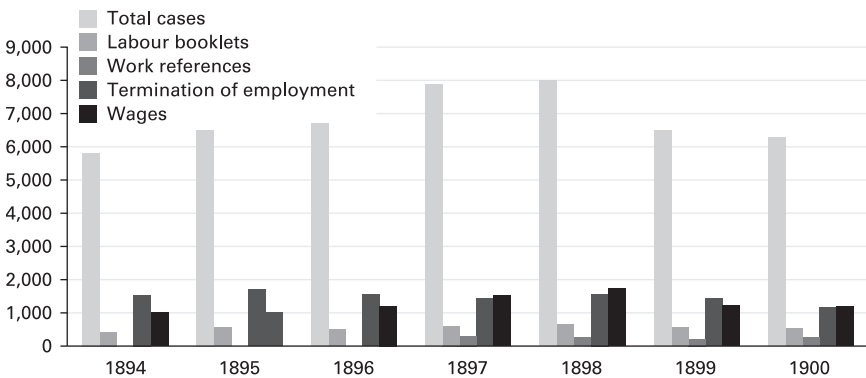
¹⁰⁶ *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspectoren 1885*, 29; Ebenhoch and Pernerstorfer, *Stenographisches Protokoll*, 211.

payment (*Stehgeld*), deposits (for values and possible damage), or extending periods of payment beyond the usual period of one or two weeks.¹⁰⁷ Agricultural servants were rewarded for staying in a situation for many years.

According to the statistics of complaints and trade court cases, conflicts regarding labour booklets occurred regularly but in smaller numbers, whereas disputes over wages (which often mentioned labour booklets) occurred in higher numbers. Most conflicts at trade court or brought forward to trade inspectors, though, seem to concern start, continuation and termination of work. Given the fact that the most common period of notice was two weeks, this seems remarkable. (See graphs 3.3 and 3.4; cases could concern more than one aspect, and if we look at singular cases, they were often



Graph 3.3 Issues at trade courts in Vienna, 1894–1900. (Selected topics. Cases could concern more than one topic.)¹⁰⁸



Graph 3.4 Workers' concerns brought forward to trade inspectors, 1894–1900 (Selected topics).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Bericht der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspektoren 1886*, 97, 253, 375.

¹⁰⁸ Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 1898–1914*.

¹⁰⁹ *Berichte der k. k. Gewerbe-Inspektoren 1894–1900*. Other concerns related to insurance, work conditions, work time, apprenticeship, strike, work regulations etc. In contrast to other countries, trade inspectors could not impose fines or release regulations. They were meant to provide advice and reports. However, they could also file charges with the authorities. *Arbeiterschutzgesetzgebung (Oesterreich-Ungarn)*. In: *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, vol. 1, 422–33, 430.

interrelated.) Unfortunately, it is not possible to tell to what extent these cases involved: dismissals or notice given by the worker, individual termination or collective actions. However, some data suggests that the majority of cases concerned workers' complaints on dismissals.¹¹⁰ Conflicts in domestic service were also numerous but less well documented, yet it was also more servants than employers who turned to the authorities with their complaints.¹¹¹

Conclusions: were the Papers Worth the Paper?

Work-documents manifested and potentially produced similarities, differences and hierarchies in work and labour relations. They were used to categorize, establish and terminate contracts. They indicated basic terms and conditions of labour relations. They could be used to control, discipline and enforce contracts in respect to wages or other aspects, not always in accordance with the regulations. The obligation to own and carry a labour/servants' booklet was often described as humiliating, and the disciplinary measures as inappropriate or unjust, by workers' and servants' organizations. However, documents also signified various basic – customary or statutory – rights, entitlements and options within and beyond employment. Categorization of work indicated which payment and remuneration (amount, kind, frequency) was regarded customary or appropriate. It also indicated varying options for a livelihood that went beyond wages and actual work, in case of illness or work accidents but also in the situation of joblessness and search for work. These were important options for the ability to negotiate a wage. Documented work experiences could also open up possibilities for better employment and wage or for receiving the permit to establish oneself as a master craftsman.

As I have highlighted, the enforcement of regulations remained fairly patchy throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Multiple sources allow us to reconstruct how such papers were used, abused and neglected. Several life accounts which mention such practices are available, but they are predominantly written by male, skilled, travelling and politically organized workers. It was they who, after all, could gain or lose much depending on their booklets and references. It was the politically organized workers who made such documents a symbol of coercion. Reports of trade inspectors and trade court cases permit us to reconstruct considerable variation in practices, regionally and in respect to branches, along with differences in how factories, workshops and households handled such matters. These reports likewise highlight how the distinctions between work and service, skilled and unskilled work – often related to gender – were in flux and often ambiguous, and how those distinctions – given the uneven rights associated with them – were manipulated and contested. Papers and rules did not describe; rather, they were a matter and means of conflict and struggle.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 1889*, 646 and 650.

¹¹¹ k. k. Polizei-Direction, ed. *Die Polizeiverwaltung Wiens 1877-1892*.

¹¹² As argued by Pierre Bourdieu, 'Das Recht und die Umgehung des Rechts', in *Pierre Bourdieu: Neue Perspektiven für die Soziologie der Wirtschaft*, eds. Michael Florian and Frank Hillebrandt (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 19–41.

The available reports document multiple violations and conflicts, while at the same time such observations and descriptions are the product of varying attempts to regulate, oversee and to enforce regulations. Status is not only reflected in wage differences.¹¹³ If we are talking about hierarchies and differences in living standards and in the value of work, I maintain that we have to include all these aspects.

¹¹³ Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work-Load', 408.

