

Romanian Labour Migration in the Context of EU Expansion

by

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DEDICATION PAGE

For Ilona Palkó

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Abstract

In response to shifting borders and radical changes in political and economic regimes, a great number of Hungarian Romanians left their homeland in the last century. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a Hungarian village in Romania, in this thesis I argue that the growing uncertainty in villagers' working lives, a result of the high unemployment accompanying post-socialist transformation, and ethnic and class based disadvantage in Romania, impels them to engage in pluriactivity in their livelihood strategies. This includes circular labour migration in Hungary and other European Union states. Economic inequalities within the expanded EU create an ethnically segmented labour market, in which working class Transylvanian Hungarians become associated with certain types of work, in this case, temporary and often undocumented jobs in the least desirable sectors of the economy.

List of Abbreviations Used

A2	Romania and Bulgaria
EU	European Union
EU15	EU member states, prior to 2004
EU8	EU accession countries in 2004
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PHARE	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
CAP	Agricultural production cooperative
CEEC	central eastern European Countries
CEE	central and eastern Europe
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NSP	National Responsibility Programme

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Chapter1 Introduction

I met Viktória and her husband László at their home, in the village of Mezőfalu¹, in Romania. They are both now retired, having spent their working lives close to home, working in the village agricultural cooperative and in a nearby factory. Even though they have spent their entire lives working in Romania, neither speaks Romanian. At home, they spend their time looking after their gardens and animals, including a vegetable garden, grape vines, chickens, and three pigs. However, even though they receive a pension and produce much of their subsistence needs at their home, this is not enough. Though nearing seventy, both have also taken on temporary work in a vineyard in Hungary, where they spend one month at a time, to supplement their meagre income. Work in the vineyard is hard, almost 11 hours a day, even more during harvest time, and there are few breaks. For their hard work, they earn about 2000Ft, the equivalent of only about \$10 a day and half a litre of wine at the end of each day. They explained that even during the period of the agriculture collective, they never experienced this level of “severity”. Even so, they feel compelled to work as temporary migrants in the vineyard saying, “if we didn’t have this income on the side we wouldn’t have been able to get this far.” Indeed, they show no sign of retiring from work altogether, and will continue to work as temporary farm labourers in Hungary, commuting one month each time to work at the vineyard.

Theirs is not an isolated case. In fact, temporary labour migration is a common practice for both pensioners like Vikória and László as well as youth in Mezőfalu. As a

¹ All personal and place names have been changed

result of the transformation from a centrally planned to a market based economy, with the collapse of the socialist state in 1989, each major pillar of their livelihoods has been disrupted, and villagers have had to expand the geographic range of their working lives. In the process of economic restructuring, more than 3.5 million jobs, including half of industrial jobs were lost (Horváth, 2007), while much of the formal employment that remained became flexible and unstable (Horváth, 2008). Furthermore, the agriculture co-operative, which supported both subsistence production as well as provided stable employment, was dismantled and lands were re-privatized, returned to individual owners (Ciupagea, Ilie, Neef, 2004). When the possibility to find work abroad became available to Romanians after 1990, many tried to find jobs in Hungary (Kiss, 2002). Later, as Romania entered the Schengen space in 2002 (Horváth, 2007), and as European Union (EU) states are increasingly opening their borders to workers from the east since Romania's accession in 2007, many ethnic Hungarians living in Romania have chosen to cross the border to enter Hungary, or other EU states, as temporary migrant workers.

In my research then, I wanted to discover first, the role of temporary labour migration in the livelihood strategies of the ethnic Hungarians living in Mezőfalva. In other words, what are all the ways that they manage to make a living in this time of increased precarity, and how does labour migration fit within this context? Second, given the many changes in labour and migration policies in Romania and its changing position within the EU policy framework since 1990, I designed my project to address whether, and if so, how the transborder migration of ethnic Hungarians living in Romania, has changed since EU accession. More specifically, I asked: how are temporary migrant workers situated in the Hungarian, EU, and Romanian labour market through changing

labour and migration policies? How do policies interact with the class and gender of migrants to shape migration pathways? And, to what extent is national or ethnic identification important in shaping migration decisions and destinations since EU accession? Finally, I questioned how useful the concept ‘culture of migration’ is in understanding the experience and decision making context of labour migrants. In sum, in this thesis I argue that ethnic Hungarians in Romania are experiencing the neoliberal reforms that accompany post-socialist transformation and EU accession as a form of dispossession. In the process of economic restructuring, villagers have been forced to contend with increasingly individualized ways of living, and growing uncertainty and precarity in their working lives that are marked by a gendered disadvantage for women. Villagers cope with these changes by engaging in circular migration and pluriactivity in their livelihood strategies. To address my research questions, I situate my research into three key areas in the theoretical literature, which I elaborate below: neoliberalism and dispossession; pluriactivity; and gendered disadvantage in labour markets and migration.

1.1 Neoliberalism and Dispossession

Neoliberalism is a term used to describe the process, beginning in the 1970s, where processes of capital accumulation began to be reorganized in such a way as to reduce state services and benefits, while funnelling greater investments in private industries than public activities (Harvey, 2003). At the same time, it is associated with mobility for capital as production is decentralized and crosses state borders. Mobility is facilitated for certain categories of people, namely for labour on the one hand and bearers of capital on the other (Barber, 2008). In other words, neoliberalism is not experienced in the same way by all people, everywhere in the world. It has given rise to a new

international division of labour, where certain citizens, for example those living in the global South, become certain types of labour for western economies (ibid.). In the process of neoliberal economic restructuring within a system of unequal states, a global hierarchy of nations is created and strengthened by migration policies which often work to situate migrants from countries lower in the hierarchy into more undesirable and precarious forms of employment in receiving state labour markets (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005).

Harvey (2003), updating Marx's definition of primitive or original accumulation, defined this as a process of accumulation by dispossession. To overcome periodic crises of overaccumulation that are endemic to the capitalist mode of production, capitalism always needs to look outside itself for lower cost inputs, including lower cost labour and production sites (ibid.). He argues that the initial processes identified by Marx as necessary to establish the capitalist relations of production are present and ongoing, in old and newer forms with the support of the state (ibid.). For example, as we have seen in the global South, many are compelled to migrate in search of work in the west as a result of earlier histories of colonialism, and imperialism, and more recently, structural adjustment policies, established through global institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and local elites, that have the effect of disrupting local livelihoods (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005).

In my research, I argue a similar process of accumulation by dispossession is at work in Romania and in Mezőfalva, since the collapse of the socialist state in 1989, and in the process leading up to and following EU accession in 2007. Villagers' ability to make a living in the domestic labour market is further disrupted, as Romania is incorporated

into the EU on unequal terms that require neo-liberal reforms through accession conditionality (Grabbe, 2002). Market reforms essentially have had the effect of creating a low cost reserve of labour and a lower cost site of production for the expanded EU market, while simultaneously removing state supports and benefits, including social services and employment. Because of the unequal economic and social conditions between European east and west, migrants are more likely to move westward in their search for better wages and a better quality of life (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010). As such, following Glick Schiller's (2009) model, in my research I positioned Mezőfalu as part of a "locality analysis", paying attention to how the village is interrelated with places and institutions locally, nationally, and globally, in particular its positioning within the EU.

1.2 Pluriactivity

In their study based in rural Spain, Narotzky and Smith's (2006) found households and individuals in the province of Alicante had experienced centuries of what they termed, "pluriactivity" (p.33). This was exacerbated in the 1980s, as a result of international changes in the economy, and neoliberal policy changes, including tax breaks and health and safety deregulations, that made the region more favourable to industries, but made local livelihoods ever more flexible and precarious (ibid.). Workers responded by moving between different types of livelihood strategies (including agriculture and industry), taking temporary work contracts, and even migrating to work in different villages and for different employers, to make a living in the growing climate of uncertainty (ibid.). Similarly, Barber (1996) identified a culture of "making do" in industrial Cape Breton, where because of low wages, workers engaged in a variety of livelihood strategies that worked to supplement each other, allowing people to get by.

The concept not only includes the formal economic activities, such as short-term employment, but all the ways that individuals and families made a living, including the unpaid domestic labour of women, social practices such as holding benefits and celebrations, living in multi-generational households, and informal transactions among friends and kin (ibid.). By engaging in a multiplicity of livelihood strategies, people were able to “make do” despite economic insecurities and low wages (ibid.).

One of the questions that shaped my research, was how villagers are able to make a living, and how temporary labour migration fits within their livelihood endeavours. Thus, I approached livelihood to include multiple activities, or the “daily task of piecing together a living” (Smith, 1991, p.13) within and outside of the formal economy (Piper, 2008). I studied temporary labour migration from the analytical framework suggested by Olwig and Sorensen (2002), as a form of “mobile livelihood”, just one of many ways that workers make a living but in a broader geographic sense. I found pluriactivity to characterize villagers’ working lives in Mezőfalva. To navigate the restructuring economy, individuals moved between employers, the informal and formal economy, while simultaneously producing for much of their subsistence needs at home. Temporary labour migration was another supplement to the many activities they engaged in to make a living. Pluriactivity was and remains necessary for villagers to mitigate the uncertainty created in the post-socialist transformation.

1.3 Gendered Labour Markets and Migration

Labour markets everywhere are organized hierarchically, or stratified according to various individual and structural characteristics (Piper, 2008). Like ethnicity, legal status, and skill level, gender is also an individual characteristic that is used to situate workers

into particular sectors of the labour market both at home, and also as they migrate for work abroad (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Gender, as a set of social relations, is embedded in all levels of social organization, including the economy, the state, education, and the work place, working to situate workers in sectors of the economy both in explicit, and taken for granted ways (ibid.). This situating of workers based on gender can occur both at the level of the state as it determines categories of entry and exit across its borders, and creates policies to suit its economic needs that can affect how non-government agencies and employers recruit workers for certain types of employment (Barber, 2008). State level policies, even when not explicitly gendered in themselves, affect men and women and their migration trajectories in different ways (Piper, 2008).

Gender discourses also shape how employers evaluate their potential hires; in many places, men and women are considered suited to different types of work. Because of the way a labour market is organized according to gender norms, migrant women can be situated, in the process of migration, into certain sectors of the labour market – such as domestic service, and the textile industry (Brettel, 2000). For example, Caraway (2006) found that because factory owners attributed different skills and attributes to men and women, perceiving women to be more suited to work that was “light” and “clean”, they hired more women in labour-intensive industries. In Canada, though both men and women apply to work as caregivers, agencies hire many more women because they believe women are better suited for care giving roles (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005). Preibisch and Santamaria (2006) found that women who apply to work in Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Works Program have to overcome gendered barriers raised by the state at home as well as Canada, where policies favour single women, and employers who

prefer to hire men, believing that women are not suited for farm labour. In this case, women are limited dually; to find work in Canada they have to overcome state policies as well as employers' conceptions of appropriate female work.

In my research then, I pay particular attention to how gender organizes livelihood endeavours inside and outside the home, such that women often end up with the majority of household tasks, and as they are associated with care work, face even greater uncertainty in the formal labour market. Neoliberal reforms have on the whole, proved to be more disadvantageous to women, who are required to bear the brunt of the unpaid work previously supported through the state (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005). Thus, I paid particular attention to how recent reforms have affected women's work inside and outside the home, as well as the discourses that established what was appropriate work for women and men. I also consider how state policies have created a gender disadvantage for women in the past, and how gender acts to structure migration flows along gendered lines, situating women and men into different types of employment not just at home in the domestic labour market, but also abroad.

1.4 Outline of Methods and Chapters

My research consisted of one month of ethnographic field work in the summer of 2010, in the village of Mezőfalu. The village is located in Mureş county Romania, a part of the region also known historically as Transylvania, and about 27 km away from the county seat, Tirgu Mureş. Established in the fourteenth century, the primary economic activity until the twentieth century had been agriculture. Although it is in Romania, Mureş county and Mezőfalu continue to have a significant Hungarian population. Transylvania has long been a multi-ethnic region of shifting borders, home mainly to

Hungarians, Romanians, and Germans. Most recently, after the Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920 at the end of the First World War, many Hungarians became Romanian citizens as Romania's borders moved farther west to include Transylvania (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2006). As of 2004, the Hungarian government estimates that 1 435 000 Hungarian speakers still lived in Romania (Kovács, 2006). Research participants informed me there were only about five Romanians living in the village at the time of my field work. In addition to participant observation, research consisted primarily of 25 semi-structured interviews with migrant workers past and present, but also with others who worked at home but were able to offer their experience of the economic situation in the region. I conducted all interviews entirely in Hungarian, and all translations are my own. Research participants included, in no particular order:

Anna: Has lived and worked all her life in Mezőfalu, including as a farm worker in the agricultural co-operative. Now retired, she continues to support herself through household production and *szatyor* (bag) making.

Sára: Worked in a camp ground in Hungary and most recently worked at a garden centre in England.

Matilda: Sára's mother

Éva: *Kirakat* (shop) owner. She worked abroad once in Hungary, but has been at home since she opened her business.

Judit: Currently living abroad but grew up and started her working life in Mezőfalu.

Margit: *kirakat* owner, has never worked abroad.

Mónika: Worked abroad as a domestic worker in the past, and most recently worked at an orchard with her husband in Holland.

Szilvia: After finishing high school, she worked at a cheese factory in Romania, and spent her summers working in Switzerland, but has now settled permanently in Switzerland.

Piroska: Works as a domestic worker in Hungary.

Katalin: Works as a domestic worker in Hungary.

Laura: First worked abroad as an au pair in France and Germany, but now permanently resides in Hungary.

Róza: Has taken up *szatyor* making as her full time job, working from home, and attending craft exhibits around the world.

Erika: Grocery store worker.

Teréz: Domestic worker in Hungary.

Eszter: Domestic worker in Hungary.

Zsófia: First to go abroad as a domestic worker. She began working at first in Hungary but now works in Germany and is pursuing a certificate in care work

Viktória: Works with her husband László on a vineyard in Hungary.

Edina: Domestic worker in Germany.

Klára: Domestic worker in Hungary.

Alíz: Domestic worker in Hungary, mother-in-law of Éva.

Kinga: Has worked temporary jobs in agriculture since graduating high school. Most recently, she was in Germany, and planned to go to the Czech Republic to work on another farm.

Rebeka: Kinga's cousin. She has never worked abroad, but plans to go with her cousin to the Czech Republic.

Márta: Retired, does not go abroad to work. She supports herself and her husband Péter through gardening, raising animals, and *szatyor* making.

Júlia: University student living in Tirgu Mureş.

Tamás: With the help of his wife and mother-in-law, he runs a *kirakat* and small grocery out of his home, which they supplement with gardening, raising animals, and working their fields; he and his wife both worked abroad in Hungary in their youth

Gábor: Works locally in the gas production industry.

Attila: In his 20s, he has worked several short term construction jobs in Romania after completing vocational high school. At the time of field work, he worked at a vineyard in Hungary.

Csaba: In his 20s, he works as an electrician in Hungary, where he lives permanently with his partner Laura.

Zoltán: Retired, but works on and off at the vineyard in Hungary. After leaving high school he worked at a fertilizer plant, then as a construction worker in Hungary.

László: Retired, works at a vineyard in Hungary with his wife Viktória.

István: Works at an auto mechanic in Austria on a temporary basis. Has earlier held various temporary jobs in Hungary.

Péter: Retired, works as a bus driver taking local factory workers to work on a part-time basis. Husband of Márta.

Pál: Anna's son. Currently unemployed, he studied carpentry at a vocational school but has since been laid off from work. He worked briefly in Hungary, but now spends his days at home doing odd jobs for friends and relatives.

In chapter two, I first describe the broad economic and political changes experienced by villagers since the 1940s, to Romania's entrance into the EU in 2007. I argue that despite the move to a market economy, these changes resulted not in a greater reliance on the formal economy, but on the continued importance of pluriactivity in villagers' livelihoods on an individual and household level (Narotzky & Smith, 2006; Williams, 2005). As other scholars of post-socialism have found (Kideckel, 2008; Bridger, & Pine, 1998), I argue that the greatest change since the beginning of post-socialist transformation is the increased level of uncertainty in villagers' working lives, as they are left to navigate the restructured economy without the support of the state.

In chapter three, I move on to describe how exactly it is that villagers are able to make a living at home, and describe the multiplicity of activities that households and individuals engage in. These include subsistence production, helping out of friends and family, and self-employment and working at home, that in combination provide enough resources to allow households to survive. I introduce the concept of *pótolás*, meaning "to supplement" or "add on", as the way that these different activities interact. I will also

show how livelihood strategies are divided by gender, leaving women with even greater uncertainty in their working lives, and the bulk of care giving labour and work around the home, tying this into the gender ideologies and policies produced by the socialist state (Verdery, 1996).

In chapter four, turning to the role of ethnic and national identification in temporary labour migration, I argue that although Hungarian Romanians are disadvantaged through linguistic exclusion. Many, especially of the older generation, have not learned to speak Romanian so there is a divide between city and country in terms of class. The countryside is primarily the place of residence for lower class workers (Szelényi, 1981), whereas Hungarians growing up in the city have greater levels of inter-ethnic interaction, higher quality education (Veres, 2006; Veres, 2002). As such, it is an interaction between class and ethnicity that truly creates a disadvantage for Hungarian Romanians in the labour market, rather than ethnicity alone. I trace the historical connections between class and ethnicity from the 1920s to the present to show how for Hungarians, the last century has been one of further dislocation, especially from positions of power in the Romanian labour market. I conclude that although ethnicity is an important part of their identity, given their greater class based constraints in the labour market, and the opening of EU borders, Hungarian Romanians will likely choose employment destinations based on wages rather than ethnic identities, and move to destinations beyond Hungary and farther west within the EU.

In chapter five, I go into further detail to describe migration trajectories. In particular, I approach migration as just another mode of livelihood in the full set of activities that workers engage in to make a living, inseparable from the social relations in

which it is embedded (Oliwig & Sorensen, 2002). To borrow Oliwig and Sorensen's terminology, I refer to migration as a form of "mobile livelihood" (ibid., p.9) to capture how social relations and livelihood generating strategies are carried out in different contexts, rather than creating an analytical separation between activities carried out closer to home and those pursued while abroad. In this chapter, I argue in fact that just as there is a great deal of uncertainty in villagers' working lives at home, the same is true for their experiences of employment abroad.

In fact, all of the temporary migrant workers I spoke with, and this is true for east European migrants in general, find themselves in the lowest paying and least desirable segments of the EU labour market (Favell, 2008). Some are even suspicious that west European states will put more restrictions on non-white immigrants, closing the borders to more visible immigrants from the South, given the availability of ethnically 'similar' migrants from east Europe (ibid.). Aside from the disruptions created through economic restructuring, how and why is it that Hungarian Romanians, regardless of their status in the domestic labour market, are situated into the worst segments of the EU labour market? In chapter six, I consider how Hungarian Romanian labour migrants are situated into the segmented labour market in the broader EU context. Here, I look at three levels of structuring frameworks that situate transborder migrants into the EU labour market. First, I put Romania into the context of a system of unequal nation states in the integrating EU single market. Approaching migration in a global power perspective (Glick Schiller, 2009) I frame my research to move beyond methodological nationalism, to look at how migration is shaped by relationships within a larger framework, the European Union. I argue that EU expansion is experienced akin to a process of

accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). I then look at a second level of structuring frameworks that situate Hungarian Romanians in the EU labour market; that is, the labour and migration policies in both sending and receiving states that situate migrants in categories that determine their relationship within the labour market, employers, and to the state (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005). I argue here that although many of the EU15 are worried about the impact of an influx of migrants from the east (Galgóczi, Leschke, Watta, 2009; Kvist, 2004), even those states that have imposed transitional agreements have included exceptions that allow certain categories of migrants to work within their borders, in order to fulfill certain sector specific shortages in their labour market (Favell, 2008; Butler, 2007). Finally, I argue that it is important not to forget that migrants, despite the constraining structures, are active decision makers, often very knowledgeable on migration and labour policies, how to navigate them to their best advantage, as well as the risks they might incur while abroad. In the final part of chapter six, I will describe the findings from my research that indicate how workers are well aware of their position within the broader EU labour market and its migration policies, as well as the risks and also the real benefits that migration can allow.

Finally, the drastic political and economic changes experienced by people in the process of post-socialist transformations have produced strong emotions, both positive and negative (Svašek, 2006). How have these changes in the political economy been experienced on a more personal and community level in Mezőfalva? In chapter seven, I explore research participants' emotional responses to the changing economy. I argue that although they are nostalgic for the past, they also recognize their exaggerations of how good things used to be, and so I argue that their comments are more criticisms of the way

things are, especially the uncertainty that they did not experience in the past, their fear for the future, and how they would like things to be (Velikonja, 2009; Kideckel, 2008). In the climate of uncertainty, unemployment, retreat of state support, and corruption, respondents also feel alienated in the individualizing market economy, and feelings of suspicion and mistrust are widespread.

In sum, the argument advanced in this thesis is that the years since 1989 have been experienced as growing uncertainty in villagers' working and personal lives. Abandoned by the state, which structured and supported their employment, the social life of the community, and their identities, they are left to fend for themselves, although unequipped to do so, in the market economy. EU expansion to include the post-socialist states in eastern Europe has thus far merely put even further strain on the region, and is experienced as accumulation by dispossession by workers in Mezőfalu. Economic restructuring and EU accession has drawn this group of displaced workers into the least desirable sectors of the growing EU labour market as temporary labour migrants, who have had to expand the geographic range of their working lives as a way to survive in these times of growing economic insecurity.

Chapter 2 Transformed Livelihoods: From Planning to Uncertainty

2.1 Introduction

In just one century, the inhabitants of Mezőfalva have lived through three border changes, two world wars, and three economic and political systems. EU accession is a continuation of the ongoing process of transformation from socialism to democracy and a free market economy. The effects of globalization, experienced as greater economic and social interconnectedness between the village, Romania, and the rest of Europe and the world, are not new phenomena. Although it seems the effects of economic globalization are being felt ever more strongly, especially since Romania's EU accession, even in periods of greater village isolation, people's everyday livelihoods have been deeply affected by these macro level changes in Romania and beyond. As such, with each of these transformations in political and economic conditions, people in Mezőfalva have had to adapt to secure a living. They have negotiated these structural changes by engaging in a variety of strategies, both inside and outside the formal economy, to secure their livelihood. Their working lives were and are characterized by what Narotzky and Smith (2006) called pluriactivity, wherein individuals and households pursued a wide range of occupations over their working lives as a means to adapt to changing circumstances.

In this chapter, I will outline the major changes that have occurred beginning with the late 1940s when the state began large scale nationalization and collectivization of industries and agriculture. I will argue that while in the years before transformation villagers' lives were marked by pluriactivity and hard work, their working lives inside and outside the household had a certain level of predictability and stability, supported and dependent as it was on the state, through the agricultural collective. Workers responded

to the structural changes that began with the establishment of the cooperatives and state socialism by pursuing multiple livelihood strategies that supplemented one another to allow them to make a living. The peasant household became a “diversified organization”, with different members entering different segments of the labour market (Chirot, 1978). Work opportunities later expanded to include factory work in the nearby towns, as the state embarked on heavy industrialization projects and set up state run industries in the towns. In the socialist period as well, the initial class divide between town and village was strengthened by state housing policies, establishing villagers as temporary migrant workers for city industries. Despite their low qualifications in comparison to city dwellers, state support ensured a stable, if difficult livelihood for villagers.

Since 1989, although there are continuities in many livelihood strategies, the two main pillars of local livelihood (the agricultural cooperative, and factory work in the nearby towns) have been disrupted, including the dismantling of state supported industry and the redistribution of cooperative lands. At the same time there has been a reduction in formal and stable work opportunities, the opening of Romania’s markets, as Romania is increasingly integrated into the EU policy framework and single market, has made the task of making a living even more difficult for villagers. The class divide between town and village, cemented during the socialist period, in conjunction with significant losses in low skill employment and a drop in wages, has left these former agricultural households at a significant disadvantage on the free labour market in the expanded EU.

2.2 Village Livelihoods from the 1940s to 1989

I begin my exploration of how Mezőfalu workers made a living with the 1940s, which was when the communist party finally took control of the state and the agricultural

cooperatives, which would become the pillar of the local economy, were formed. I chose to use this as the starting point for my analysis, first because the 1940s is the earliest period that villagers can remember, and so is more important because the experience and explanations of their working lives of the eldest workers is coloured by their experience during the period of the agricultural cooperative. Their memories of this period continue to shape their perceptions of the current economic situation, and their ability to “make do” (Barber, 1996) in the transformed political and economic context. Second, because the experience of the 1940s on is so important in shaping the perceptions of the eldest villagers, many who are also temporary migrant workers today, it provides the context for understanding the changes since the ultimate end of the socialist state in 1989. It is important to my central argument, that the difference between the socialist era experience of work and the post 1989 transformation is a change from planning to uncertainty in the experience of villagers’ working lives. First I will briefly describe how the political economy of the village changed in the 1940s, and how villagers made a living within these changing circumstances. Although the description here is not complete, limited as it is by the information I could gather during one month of fieldwork, the examples show that although they worked hard from an early age, because of the support of the state, through the agricultural cooperative and later through state supported industries, working lives were stable and predictable.

The socialist period in Romania began when a soviet-imposed government headed by Petru Groza took office March 1945 (Brubaker et al, 2006). In June 1948, the national assembly elected Romania’s first socialist constitution, which established the legal and institutional framework for social restructuring (Köpeczi, Makkai, Mócsy, Szász, &

Barta, 1986). Right away, they began the process of nationalizing the means of production, a process that took until 1950 (ibid.). The collectivization of agriculture began in 1949 and was complete by 1962 (ibid.). In Mezőfalu too, this meant that all tools, machinery, land, and animals became the property of the agricultural production cooperative (CAP), which in Anna's recollection was formed about 1955. This began a period of relative stability and predictability, as villagers' working lives were supported by the cooperative. At first workers were organized into workers' brigades, and responsibilities were assigned to them, overseen by the brigade leaders. Later, quotas were meted out to individuals, for example how much they would need to hoe or harvest and at the end of the day, and the brigade leader measured how much of the field was cultivated. The collective employed all villagers, including children. Judit remembered having to start to work on the fields when she was nine or ten, and bringing water or food she prepared at home to workers in the fields. In return for working on the cooperative lands, workers were paid at harvest in both cash and kind.

Research participants also told me about another major income generating activity, *szatyrozás*, or “bag making” pursued almost exclusively by women, which was also supported by the agricultural cooperative but completed at home. The word *szatyor* means bag, but *szatyrozás*, involves not just making bags but also items such as wall-hangings, table mats, doormats, and fruit and bread baskets from corn leaves (Tatár, 1996). This activity began in the 1940s, as a project sponsored by the Hungarian state as part of an initiative to help households improve their material conditions in the villages in the region through household work (ibid.). Village women had taken up making *szatyor* by the 1950s, at first a strategy pursued by young unmarried women but expanding to

include married women later on, as they moved away from spinning and weaving, which had become less profitable (Tatár, 1996). Szilvia, explaining its history told me that it started specifically as a women's pursuit, as an income generating activity to help them while the men were away at war during World War Two. Initially, women would harvest their own corn or go to one of the nearby villages and in return for harvesting corn, they could bring back the leaves, but later on they had to buy the corn leaves (ibid.). *Szatyor* making was an important income generating activity and although the work of making *szatyor* was done at home, it was a state supported enterprise, and therefore was still a stable and predictable source of income for a time. When Szilvia was young, she remembers that they had sold their work through the agricultural cooperative, which was responsible for setting out quotas with due dates to village women. Once the products were finished, the village women who did this craft would take them into the cooperative for quality inspection, and if they were deemed acceptable would be sent away with the order. They were required to tag each item, so that they could identify the person who made it, in case the quality was not acceptable to the buyer. Judit recalled that this was such a large industry that they made *szatyor* even in school during one of their classes. Although she is not certain where all the orders went, she realized at one time that their work had made it as far as the U.S.

Although work was organized around the cooperative, this in itself was never enough to ensure a household's livelihood. In the centrally planned economy, workers had to deal with constant shortages, and the at-home production of food and goods, as well as informal exchanges within social networks, allowed households to get by when supplies were uncertain (Neef & Adair, 2004). The Ceaușescu government had taken out

many loans from western banks to finance its costly industrialization program as well as several expensive construction projects, which also required imports of oil and raw materials (Smith, 2006). In its efforts to make debt payments in the 1980s, the government neglected consumer goods import and production (ibid). The functioning of the collectives and the industries required that workers sustain themselves at least in part through working their own small plot of land (Szelényi, 1981). In other words, there was a multiplicity of livelihood strategies carried out by villagers during the collective period, both inside and outside of the formal economy. Indeed, the functioning of the state regulated enterprises, in this case the collective farm, and later the industries, relied upon villagers producing for themselves in the informal economy, through household production such as producing for their own food needs on household plots (Rainnie, Smith, & Swain, 2006).

In all this pluriactivity however, the state run agricultural cooperative provided the main pillar for their livelihoods as it supported their access to formal income, as well as supporting and necessitating their private pursuits outside the formal economy. Even subsistence production was done on plots allocated by the cooperative and cultivated using the cooperative's agricultural implements and so was more stable and predictable. The agricultural collective allocated twenty five ares (just over half an acre) of land to each household for their own cultivation. As Judit informed me, they most often used this land to grow a different type of corn, because this eight row corn was more useful for gathering the corn leaves used to make *szatyor* than the hybrid corn grown on collective lands. They also grew potatoes, as well as hemp, from which the women wove textiles at home, for example to make blankets, pillow covers, and sacks. Thus the informal, or

household economy in which people produced for their own subsistence needs, was supported by and so also sustained the formal economy of the agricultural cooperative.

By the 1970s, Mezőfalú villagers had an additional work opportunity, as labourers at one of the state run factories in a nearby town. At the end of the 1950s, the Romanian Communist Party began a state wide rapid industrialization project (Köpeczi et al, 1986). They divided Transylvania into four industrial zones, one of which consisted of middle Transylvania, and the main towns surrounding Mezőfalú, including Tirgu Mureş. This zone became the production centre for 25 percent of Romania's energy, metal works and machinery manufacturing, 18.7 percent of the chemical industry, and 40 percent of the textile and leather industry (ibid.). From the mid 1960s, even more emphasis was put on the regional development of industry in the counties and the mechanization of agriculture, but still more than 50 percent of the county population lived in villages (Köpeczi et al, 1986). In fact, collectivization had reduced the need for labour power in the fields, which made these people newly available for work in the rapidly industrializing cities (Szelényi, 1981). 1977 statistics show that in Mureş county, out of the 295 191 active members of the Hungarian population, 106 010 worked in industry, 102 803 in agriculture, and 17 940 in construction (Köpeczi et al, 1986, p.1771). Rural households relied on one household member commuting to work in industry in a nearby town, while the other household members remained behind to work in subsistence farming, at home, or on the collective (Horváth, 2008). Horváth (2008) found in his study at another village in the region that about one third of the working village population commuted to work in a nearby town on a daily basis, showing the growing importance of industrial labour as a second pillar, next to the agricultural cooperative, in

supporting villagers' livelihoods. Judit, who lived in the village in the 1970s, confirmed this general trend. She recalled that the state established many factories during the communist period, beginning in the early 1970s, which helped households who could then rely not only on agricultural labour but, especially men, could work in the factory or construction. She listed the different industries that had developed in the area: in Sighișoara a ceramic factory; in Tirgu Mureș a computer factory, can factory, electronics, sugar, pharmaceuticals, and leather processing. She herself had commuted during the spring and summer to Tirgu Mureș. In her recollection, "in the morning when we went, the youth flooded out of the villages. Then, there were large buses and they were full."

However, the opening of industrial jobs and state policies further cemented the class divide between the city and the countryside. During the socialist period, because they were unable to afford the high cost of building a home in the city, and found it harder to obtain state subsidized housing, many industrial workers stayed at home and were commuters from their village home (Szelényi, 1981). They either stayed in their family house or built their own household in the village (*ibid.*). The producers remained behind, creating villages of unskilled industrial workers, producing a class difference between town and village, rather than a difference of proletariat and peasant (*ibid.*). Judit explained how this was the case in Mezőfalva as well. It was harder for her as a Hungarian, but more importantly, as a Hungarian from a rural background to obtain housing in the city. In this way, the class distribution of this part of Transylvania took on a characteristic wherein lower class, lower skilled labour lived in the countryside and commuted to work in the city. This was upheld by authorities who regulated mobility and dictated who could move into state subsidized housing blocks that were being built in

the rapidly industrializing city. The industries gave this group of workers an opportunity to augment the livelihood they made from working in agriculture. Szelényi (1981) likened this arrangement between town and village to that of nineteenth century slums of the industrial cities. The class divide between urban and village dwellers sharpened during the rapid industrialization during the socialist period. As Judit explained, “many youth went to Tirgu Mureş. The youth there went to university. The village youth made up for the labour shortage in the city.”

Even though villagers worked hard to make a living, their lives were characterized by certainty. In Márta's words:

Not that we didn't have hardship in the old regime too, but we were better able to make a living better. That little money had such strength that you did more with that small income twenty years ago than now when you get five times as much and you stay in one place. It has no value... Your job was given... it was given to everyone. You finished vocational school or high school, there you go, you were given a placement. It was obligatory. Everyone finished either a vocational school or high school, whoever finished in whatever domain, and we had contracts tied with the school... Everyone worked. Every child had a placement. You don't worry where you will go... there was no such thing as not having a job.

The socialist government's commitment to a program of full employment, pensions and other benefits, such as subsidies for food and housing and health care, and even recreational activities, often tied to workplaces before they were privatized, created a sense of stability, and regularity in workers' lives, and despite shortages, ensured that minimum needs were met (Kideckel, 2008). This situation changed however, after the beginning of Romania's transformation in 1989. If the socialist period was planned and working lives were predictable, after transition workers had to contend with increasing insecurity and uncertainty.

2.3 Economic Changes From 1989 to EU Accession and Beyond

The years since transformation have proved even more difficult for people from Mezőfalu as each major pillar of their livelihoods has been disrupted and they have been left to navigate the labour market without the support of the state. This has left their working lives uncertain. As Kideckel (2008) put it, post-socialism has left workers “in a no-man’s-land of uncertainties” (p.10), lost as they are without the structures that framed their working lives in the socialist past, which included state supports through subsidies and ideologies, and the very basis of their identities. In fact, the right to work had enjoyed a place of prominence in socialism (Fassmann, 1997). With so much state assistance in many aspects of life, such as social services, people were dependent on the state (Verdery, 1996). In fact, the state encouraged this attitude, presenting itself as a benevolent father uniting the labourers in their efforts to build a socialist society (ibid.). For example, factories in the towns of Făgăraş and Oraşul Victoria, which also oversaw the local government, organized worker’s social lives – they built apartment complexes, opened stores and clinics, and even organized sports teams, literary groups, and education for their workers (Kideckel, 2008)². Between 1948 and 1960, the government also embarked on a campaign to extend the network of schools, expanding compulsory education with the aim to counteract illiteracy, and established training programs tied to factories (Kideckel, 1993). As a result of this initiative, school attendance rose 300 percent between 1938 and 1960 (ibid.).

² Aside from the support provided by the agricultural cooperative (described above), I am not aware of what kind of social services, if any, existed in Mezőfalu itself, a subject that would require further field work.

Government led restructuring in the years post-transformation however, have erased most of the state support that workers relied on. First, the Land Reform Law of 1990 dismantled the state-operated farms and agricultural cooperatives, giving people back their lands (Ciupagea et al, 2004). However while they became property owners, this in itself did not mean they would be more prosperous – in fact, this important pillar of their livelihoods (agriculture) was entirely disrupted. First, as I mentioned above, many villagers had been directly employed by the cooperative, and had shared in the harvest of cooperatively held lands as well as been paid in cash. Second, the cooperative had not only allotted twenty five ares of land (just over half an acre) to each household where they could cultivate whatever they liked for their own use, workers were entitled to use the cooperative’s agricultural machinery to work this land. With the creation of private property then, not only have villagers lost access to their jobs in the cooperative but also the means to effectively cultivate their own lands. Few were able to purchase their own machinery as the start up cost was too prohibitive, and most people also did not have the expertise to understand how to operate and maintain farm equipment. Some who had learned these skills during the cooperative period have been able to purchase their own machines, and it has been common that many villagers rent their lands to these few people, who work their lands and in return take part of the yield for themselves, leaving the rest for the owners. Others have simply left their lands fallow, and although they were landowners, they were no better off than they were before. The return to subsistence farming was difficult for a labour force who had become used to factory labour in the towns, especially since the socialist government’s drive for industrialization

and neglect for agricultural development had left them with outdated machinery, unchanged since the 1950s (Kiss, 2002).

Even those who were able to make use of their lands are feeling the effects of economic restructuring, especially in the last few years. The transformation to a free market where individual land owners compete to sell their produce has also undermined their agricultural livelihoods, as they cannot compete with the influx of cheaper goods produced outside of Romania. Without a profitable market for their produce, the cost of inputs measured in labour hours, materials, and the resulting yield does not compare to the prices they would get for their produce on the market. Free market changes have flooded the local economy with foreign goods, ranging from essential food items to clothing, that are brought in from all over the world and are much cheaper than locally produced items. As such, workers are out of jobs, and because of the opening of Romania's markets to the EU single market, they are finding that their produce is of no value. Gábor explained to me his frustration with the Romania's market situation, and his inability to continue farming his lands:

It's not worth it to produce. They've defeated us with these western things. They've properly beat us down. I've just sold the pigs. Two years ago I would have got twice as much. Now no one needs them because you go to the market on Tuesday, they bring them from Hungary, Poland, Holland, and they sell it for less... you buy what costs less anyway. The Union... even with the Irish... it disrupted their agriculture. All I see is that truly now if you go to the store you can buy whatever you want, you just need money.

Because of the rising costs for production, the shrinking market for animals and produce grown at home, and the influx of cheaper goods from abroad, people also keep fewer animals in their courtyards, for their own consumption. It is not only locally produced agricultural products that can no longer compete on the free market. Éva explained to me

that items made locally out of wood and corn leaf no longer sell as well as the plastic toys she buys from Bucharest. The plastic toys, usually brought in from China in her understanding, are cheaper, about a third of the cost of the wooden and corn toys, so people opt to buy those instead. People I spoke with not only evaluated the effects of imported, plastic goods in economic terms. As I describe in chapter 7, people associate the material and economic changes, symbolized by the use of “fake”, manmade materials, in agriculture and elsewhere, with a general decline in the health and morality of society.

The transformations since 1989 have also seriously affected the second pillar of village livelihoods – employment in the formal economy, especially in local industries. Although the effect of transformation has varied in the former socialist states, certain commonalities do exist. That is, in each, after the transformation of the socialist structures, workers are faced with a move away from secure employment to high levels of unemployment, and insecure jobs in the formal economy (Rainnie et al, 2002). People are forced to move away from their former reliance on state provided jobs, contend with increasing wage differentiation, combined with overall drastic drops in the Gross Domestic Product (*ibid.*). In the period of economic restructuring, more than 3.5 million jobs, including half of all industrial jobs were lost (Horváth, 2007). In 1990, nation-wide there were 4.7 million persons working in industry, but by 2003 there were only 2 million; a renewed wave of privatization beginning in 1997 resulted in large-scale layoffs in industry once again (Surubaru, 2010). In some cases, factories mechanized thus reducing the number of employees they needed. This was equally true in Mureş county, affecting the factory workers in Mezőfalva. As Tamás explained, after 1989 the formerly state owned industries became public corporations, but often without changing

management. Others could not compete in the new market economy, so they either went under or were forced to make production and employment cuts. He recalls a time when many from the village, about 25 to 30 from his half of the village alone, were employed by a bakery in a nearby village; now, he estimates there are only five. The factories employ less people now (the ones that remain), but in the ones left behind, the work is almost intolerable. Sára explained for example that the glue factory still exists, but workers are breathing in the smell of the glue every day and do not get any compensation. As we were talking after the interview, her mother Matilda mentioned that she knows someone who worked there and had to leave because she could not stand the smell of the glue. Whereas in the 1970s, workers left every morning for their factory jobs in the cities by the bus load, now there are only mini taxis and as Judit explained, it is rare that someone goes to work in them.

Even where they are able to find work in the formal economy, most of the work available in the area tends to be unstable and flexible, especially for the youth (Horváth, 2008). For example, Attila explained his difficult search for work after he finished vocational high school at a nearby town: “I’ve been so many places, god help me. Everywhere. They don’t pay anywhere. They pay very little. It’s not worth it to work.” He went from job to job in the region, and as far as 200 km away in another Romanian city, to work in construction. These jobs were always informal, or “off the books”. He struggled to hold down employment, and finally chose to migrate because of a job opportunity he heard of from other villagers, who work on a vineyard in Hungary. Many of the men from the village also work in construction, which is another seasonal industry. As Éva explained, her husband works in construction but there was no work from

January to February because it was a long winter. According to Tamás, while during the warm months, work can be found in construction, and even teenagers, as young as grade seven and eight can be employed as day-labourers on construction sites, these jobs are not as available during the cold months, making it harder to endure the cold weather when heating costs create even more expenses. Tamás said, in worst case scenarios, families will huddle together in one room during the winter and survive on less food to make it through. Not only is work weather-dependent, the employers in construction do not pay regularly either; if it were not for Éva's *kirakat*, she explained they would have little access to cash. Tamás explained how people become discouraged by the situation in formal employment, especially the seasonal kind of formal employment they obtain (such as construction) because people come to expect that,

the contractors don't always pay because even they don't get their money in time... then people are always suffering a lack of cash and they see the situation as hopeless, that this person rips me off and this one rips me off because I go to work, I work off twenty days and he just pays five days, they say they didn't transfer the money – they'll do it next week.

After all the layoffs, he described the best way to get by was to combine disability pension with part-time work, but not all of it paid. Even if a person manages to secure formal employment, to supplement their low pensions, even this is unreliable and inadequately remunerated. He explained:

This was the best solution, to go and “take care of” things (by arranging disability pension), so there wouldn't be any gaps in employment. Because if they only write down that I worked, say, 25 years, and then they wait until they can go on old age pension, they would be left without money. But this way it's worth it, to go on disability pension. Everyone can get some kind of “illness”. You go to the doctor and the doctor determines that yes, there is a problem, you are unable to work. You are 50 percent unable to work. That person can't work now. But there are some who work officially even when they are on disability pension. They can go work four hours - the law allows this - in an officially claimed position. But then that's not four hours; in Romania four hours is really ten hours. If you go to

work, don't believe that someone will want to pay for four hours. Yes, if you go for six in the morning, until four or five in the afternoon. But no employer can allow themselves to hire a pensioner for just four hours. He'll pay your monthly wages, but will expect you to be there from morning to night. It's like that in every field.

He continued to explain that the problem with the work situation in the region is first and foremost that jobs are not stable: "Because the bottom line is that people work at such a business so that a year later there is still work. Not that you finish working one month and then it closes down."

In conjunction with the losses in agricultural production and stable formal employment, people have to deal with low wages and pensions. Even where people gain access to formal employment, a sentiment many expressed often was that this work was not worth it because of the low wages they received. In fact, Romania has one of the lowest wages in eastern Europe (Surubaru, 2010), only 600 RON, roughly \$200 Canadian, per month. Migrant workers often contrasted the pay they receive at home in relation to the cost of living, with the pay and cost of living in other EU states. For example, Sára explained how in England, her hourly wage is enough to cover the cost of her food for a day, but for an hour's wage here in Romania, that is not possible. Although companies, including manufacturing have moved to Romania from western Europe, they have not paid fair wages to their workers (Surubaru, 2010). Pensions too, are not enough to cover monthly expenses. For example, Katalin receives only about €30 disability pension per month, which she says is only enough to cover the cost of her electricity bill. Were she not able to work in Hungary as a domestic worker, she "would be finished". Similarly, Klára receives 400 RON (about \$133 Canadian) pension per month. Frustrated, she went on to say that that is not even enough to cover the cost of her

medicines, and the pay she earns as a domestic worker in Hungary is more even than a factory worker could earn in Romania. Mónika explained how the eldest pensioners, in comparison to the situation in Holland where she works, barely receive enough to live on and receive little support in their old age:

For today's elderly it's so hard. They worked for their entire life for the agricultural association but they don't get enough to be able to live in normal conditions. But there an elderly person knows, even if they don't live with their children, that when they are helpless, they can't cook, they can't clean, then they go to one of these social farms, not a retirement centre, where they cook and clean for them... and it's certain that everything will be in order. Here, never. And they don't need the young. Here if an old woman or anyone needs care, their children have jobs, they have to leave them there.

Pensioners receive very little income, and receive little other support in the rural areas. Furthermore, because of how difficult it is for the youth to stay behind and find decent paying employment, they are left to fend for themselves.

The changes following the end of the socialist government disrupted the two main pillars of villagers' livelihood and EU accession so far has only made getting by even harder. People unanimously interpreted Romania's EU accession as a move that helped the already rich, or for bigger businesses who have enough to afford the extra costs after the retreat of state support. For villagers and for their small businesses and small scale agricultural production, EU regulations mean increased costs and disruptions, which they are seldom able to afford. For example, Margit, who sells locally and regionally made handcrafted items out of a shop built into the front of her home. She complained that she now has to put labels on all her goods, for example for the children's toys made of wood, to indicate what age they are suitable for, materials used, etc. But for her, this is difficult because it is costly, and she has to take on all the costs of this herself. If she does not

start labeling her items, she risks being fined. She also has to worry about trademarks, because as different designs are being registered she worries about being fined if some of her items, including some that locals try to make out of corn leaves, are not trademarked and are similar to another item that has already been registered. In its efforts to combat fraud and protect intellectual property rights, which form an important part of the EU's mission of market expansion, unfortunately includes even the handmade items made in the village. Although at the moment, EU regulations have only made minor disruptions in household raising of animals, people are worried that these will soon also be implemented and they will not be allowed to raise their own animals for meat in their courtyards anymore, just as they are no longer allowed to drive their cows to pasture. As I will explain in chapter three, raising animals at home is a very important for subsistence, as people simply cannot afford to buy all their food, including meat, from the stores. According to the EU website, while reforms are meant to ensure food safety to protect consumer health, they are also aimed at “guaranteeing the smooth operation of the single market”. Although policies which inhibit local production may not be for the purpose of forcing these people to move further into dependence on the market economy, it is the end result. The more restrictions are put in place, the more people will have to rely on the store-bought goods, which at the moment, are out of reach because of a lack of access to formal, stable employment that ensures a stable supply of cash. It is hard not to interpret EU expansion in this case as a form of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003), in which as the EU free market expands into Romania in search of low cost labour and an outlet for its exports, people are forced into deeper reliance on the formal economy while they are removed from their own means of production.

EU accession and Romania's integration into the EU single market are part of a process beginning since the start of economic restructuring in 1989, that brought greater uncertainty to villagers' working lives. Without the support of the state, they are left to navigate the free market on their own, with few opportunities for stable employment. However precarious their livelihood may be, villagers still manage to get by in even these difficult times.

Chapter 3 Village Livelihoods Since Transformation: Navigating Uncertainty Through Pluriactivity and *Pótolás*

3.1 Introduction

With so much of the local economy disrupted by land reform, factory closures, high unemployment, low wages and pensions, the retreat of state assistance, and the move to a market economy within the EU single market, how are people able to get by? What I found was, that just as in the past, villagers must engage in a variety of activities, which in combination are just enough to ensure their livelihoods, and in some cases even produce a higher standard of living. The increased marketization of the economy after 1989 was not necessarily just a transition to capitalism, but also a move to a more plural economy, including not only a formal or market economy but also, as in the past, a household economy, including subsistence agriculture, gardening, raising household animals, and exchanging food and other items within social networks (Stănculescu, 2004; Williams, 2005). In fact, data from the New Democracies Barometer survey indicate that in Romania, from 1992 to 1998, the percentage of households relying on the formal economy continued to decline, accompanied by an increased reliance on unpaid work (Williams, 2005). In 1998, roughly half of households indicated that they relied on household production to secure their livelihood (ibid.). I found a similar situation in Mezőfalu. Research participants commonly use the word *pótolás*, meaning “to supplement” or “add on” to describe the various activities they do to make a living. At home in Romania, *pótolás* consists of different combinations of self-employment, seasonal and informal employment, subsistence gardening and raising animals, and to a lesser extent, cultivating fields. As Katalin described the situation at home, “no one rests here”. She was right. From what I observed, the daily task of piecing together a living

through pluriactivity and *pótolás* consisted of work from morning to night, people constantly looking for ways to cut household costs, generate cash income, and access the resources needed to make a living. Every little bit counts.

In this chapter, I will describe the various ways that villagers are able to making a living at home. Not all activities are equally divided however, as women take on more of the activities within the household, including care work, while men are more likely to take part in activities in the formal labour market, and that are considered heavy labour. As such, women have much more uncertain participation in formal employment, both at home and abroad. Within households, the elderly who rely on low state pensions, and women are disproportionately disadvantaged and face even more uncertainty in finding formal employment and making a living in Romania. In all of this pluriactivity however, including work at home and abroad, there is a common element of increased uncertainty that was not a characteristic of the socialist period.

3.2 Self-Employment and Working From Home

In response to significant losses in formal employment opportunities in the region that pay sufficiently and are stable, and without the resources to relocate and establish a new household elsewhere, some villagers have turned to running their own businesses out of their homes, which they combine with other traditional livelihood strategies to make a living. One of the most popular such strategy is to start a *kirakat*, which translates to “shop window” or “display” on the main road, taking advantage of the village’s location on a major highway, geared toward tourists passing through. In their *kirakat*, they sell mainly local handcrafted items, but as I mentioned in chapter two, more and more they are also moving to selling cheaper imported goods, for which they are finding there is

more demand. There are in total eighteen of these shops on the main road, and in Margit's estimation, this is how about one third of the village inhabitants survive. Another storeowner, Tamás, not only runs a *kirakat* out of his home, but also a small grocery store. He started his businesses from the money he earned as an informal worker in Hungary, where he was working in a Chinese store until a police raid, forced his return. Fortunately, by then he had enough money put aside that he and his wife could open their business. Tamás and his family are an excellent example of the kind of pluriactivity that is common in the village. In addition to running both stores, with the help of his wife and mother-in-law, his family has six hectares of fields, which they cultivate. They also keep animals in their courtyard for household consumption; a cow provides milk that they also sell to other villagers and they have a garden where they grow vegetables for their subsistence needs. The fields belong to his mother-in-law, and she manages their cultivation while he stays home with his wife and tends to the family businesses. In the garden they grow beans, alfalfa, corn, wheat, potatoes, and oats, which provide not only for their own needs, but also go to feeding the two cows, hens, and five pigs they keep in the courtyard. Managing all of their endeavours requires a lot of work. Between them, he and his wife work about 18 hours a day, opening the grocery store at six in the morning and closing at twelve at night, even on weekends. These 18 hours of work do not include the hours involved in tending to the animals and gardens.

Some people are enterprising enough to extend their activities into more informal types of self-employment. This type of work is not a formal business, and I use the term 'self-employment' for lack of a better way to describe these activities. For example, one woman I met runs a small clothing store in a small room off her courtyard. There is no

sign on the front gate, and I never noticed she had this business until Júlia mentioned that we should go visit her shop. However, it seems that people know about her small business just because they live there, and as she was out of the items we wanted to buy, I assume that her small shop may be doing quite well. Even less formally, I found out on my way home one day from a neighbour who was passing by, that Sára had just had visitors from England, who brought her a package of clothes and shoes to sell in the village. This neighbour was walking through the village, telling the men and women she met that Sára would be open for business the next day. I suspect that her visitors had brought her bags of used clothing, which she can sell to make a small profit in the village. This is not an uncommon practice. I also witnessed almost daily a local Roma woman carrying around sacks of used clothing, she went door to door trying to find buyers for her goods.

Szatyor making too is now an income generating activity completed at home. As I described in chapter two, during the socialist period, although women made *szatyor* at home, this small scale industry was a state supported initiative organized through the agricultural cooperative. Since the end of the cooperative however, recognizing the continued if diminished irregular demand for their products, people have tried to continue producing *szatyor* without any such formal organization. Many have tried to plant enough corn that would be sufficient for at-home production, while others buy their corn leaves from women in exchange for cash or labour (Tatár, 1996). At the time of writing, according to Tatár (1996) women would either sell their items in front of their houses to passersby, or through business intermediaries, especially from Korond, a nearby town. As I observed however, very few women sell their products individually like this, but

instead sell their wares to one of the many *kirakat* that have opened in the village since 1989. There are also business people who come and buy from the village, but not in the same quantity as before, and sales are not as certain. Whereas before women made *szatyor* for order, to meet quotas, now although they try to make things that are in demand on the market, they might have luck or not and sometimes things are not sold. After my interview with Sára, as I chatted with her mother Matilda and Anna, the topic of *szatyor* making came up. Sára's sister, Éva, who owns her own *kirakat* in the village, had just got an order for wine bottle covers, a common *szatyor* item, from a man who came to the village. Éva was in the process of letting village women know this order had to be filled, and they would make it when they find the time. For example, Matilda said she would start on this when she is done with hoeing in the fields. People who have more animals and fields to tend, reserve *szatyor* making to the winter, but if they only have a small garden they can also work on this in the summer. Thus, even if there is a specific quota, the demand for *szatyor* is now variable and one can never predict when they will be able to sell their work. *Szatyor* making has now become another form of *pótolás* that women undertake when they have free time that might bring in a little extra income - if they are lucky.

For Róza however, *szatyor* making has become her full time job, as well as that of her daughter and son-in-law. I met her in the courtyard of her house, where she runs the entire production process, from dying the corn leaves with local plant materials, to the making of the finished product. She has traveled through Europe, and even as far as the U.S., where she is invited to show her work at craft exhibitions, and where she is able to sell the flowers and many other items she has learned to make from corn leaves. Even

though she is successful, and is well known for her art, it is hard work. To meet the deadlines for exhibitions, which she attends every two weeks, she has to sometimes work sixteen hours a day. Although successfully self-employed, and although her life is somewhat less uncertain than for many, her work is emblematic of the kind of individual enterprise that many have had to take on to survive in uncertain times, and the change in work organization since the end of socialism. Some enterprising individuals are able to succeed with hard work, but the stability of work organized through the socialist state is replaced by “luck”, as István explained, and the free market. In such uncertain times, self-employment and working from home has become an important if still unstable livelihood strategy that allows some to get by.

3.3 Home Production and Helping Out

As I mentioned above, access to cash through formal employment or even irregular self-employment and working at home is not enough to meet basic subsistence needs. Research participants in Mezőfalu also rely heavily on the household economy, both to produce for themselves, but also when the opportunity arises to sell their produce in the local markets or to local shops in the village for a small cash flow. Although it seems that household production for household use has dropped, and will continue to drop because locally grown produce cannot compete with the influx of cheap goods from the EU (chapter one), households still do produce for themselves and some for sale at the farmer’s markets in the area.

Houses are generally built extending lengthwise and backwards from the street, meaning properties are long and narrow. The household garden plot is at the very back of the property, and often before this plot is a space where animals are kept. Most

commonly these animals are fowl, primarily chickens, which people keep for their eggs, but also for slaughter, and to a lesser extent ducks and geese. Less commonly, some keep one or more pigs. For example, at the time of my fieldwork, Anna and her son were raising one pig, which by December when it would be ready for slaughter, would have grown enough to provide enough meat for the two of them for at least a year, if not more. It is very common to slaughter a pig or more each year, depending on how many people are in the family, or an ox or goat or a lamb, which household members process at home. As I followed Anna around her property, she explained to me that the pig is fed ground corn that she grows in her own garden and grinds, to mix with oats and wheat flour and water. At other meals, they might feed their pig potatoes from last year's potato crop in her garden, or greens from the garden. She and her son had also bought a half a pig last year, which had lasted them for a year, after they had carefully processed the different cuts of meat, for example to make dried sausages and bacon, and saving some for later in the freezer. At dinner, I asked Anna about the meal she had prepared for us, curious as I was about how people are able to provide for themselves when money is so scarce. Everything – the meat, potatoes, and pickles, were grown at home. In her garden, Anna also grows grape vines, a few apple trees, raspberries, paprika, which they dry and grind into spice at home, onions, beets, parsley, carrots, lettuce, spinach, cabbage, and cucumber. Many things are then preserved to last through the winter – sauerkraut, pickled cucumbers, and jams, are all made at home and stored in the pantry. When I asked her why she grows so much food, she replied it was so that they would not have to buy from the store. Another day when I arrived at Anna's home, I found her making pasta from scratch. Curious, I asked her why she would make something that is a

relatively inexpensive food, and available at any grocery store in the village. She told me because they have flour, eggs from the chickens in the yard, this costs less, even if just a little. This way of thinking about everyday needs, to be as resourceful as possible and produce whatever they can at home is very common and another way that people supplement their livelihoods. For pensioners, producing food at home is essential for survival, because they have very little cash to buy food from the store, but also for wage earners, whose wages are too low to allow them to rely on store bought items for all their needs. As Klára explained, “really, if we didn’t have the garden, we wouldn’t be able to go shopping.” Although not as important now as it was in the socialist period, many also cultivate their fields. As Anna explained, the hoeing of fields has to be done at least twice in one season; this is most often done by hand, so it takes a long time to complete by doing a section each day during the growing season. To supplement their low pensions, even the eldest still work in their gardens and even in the fields, working their lands by hand for as long as they are able. Anna is a fairly typical example of the many villagers who do not have a reliable source of income, produce food for themselves in their gardens for their own consumption, and to feed their animals, which they raise, slaughter, and process for their household protein needs. Thus they are able to get by without relying on the market.

In fact, so reliant are people on home production that although there are some small grocery stores in the village itself, several people I interviewed expressed that they rarely visit these - unless they have access to cash, such as a *kirakat* owner would, or their time is taken up by self-employment or formal employment - except for buying the basic necessities that they cannot produce at home. Erika, who works in one of the

grocery stores, complained that even since the last year she has seen a huge decrease in profit, and people are buying much less – only bread, sugar, flour, and oil. Even after she lowered her prices to the lowest in the village, she found people would not buy. She said they come in to look around but cannot buy anything in the store. Now she has taken to ordering only enough meat to have a little of each kind on display in the deli section, but even that small amount it is hard to sell before the expiry date. Although I cannot be sure, part of the reason that many small grocery stores are suffering is also because of the arrival of chain superstores from western Europe, on the outskirts of the larger towns. István visits these often, as he has earned enough from his relatively well paying job as a migrant worker in Austria to afford a car and make the trip to the nearest town. So too, Gábor, who also can afford a car because of the better wages he receives from his job in gas production, prefers to visit the superstores every few weeks to stock up on the extra items he cannot grow at home. Prices are much lower in the superstores compared to the small groceries in Mezőfalva, where in order to keep afloat, storeowners have to keep higher prices and are unable to compete. As such, even where some may have access to cash, they may choose to save money by going farther to buy at the chain stores, leaving them to struggle owing to a falling customer base. However, gardening and raising animals seemed less common among those who work abroad. They do not have the time to care for gardens and animals because they are away so much, and with a flow of cash they are better able to afford the necessities from the store

What characterizes this kind of household provisioning is that work ends up being constant, for both pensioners and the unemployed who stay at home much of the time, and also for those who work elsewhere for wages but work at home to supplement their

meagre income. People are always working or looking for ways to provide for the household. What many people repeated was that to maintain household production (animals, gardens, sometimes their fields) required working morning to night. Every little bit supplements, makes survival possible or a little easier. Gardens and especially animals, require attention every day. Klára described her typical day: in the morning she has to care for the animals, giving them food, then afterwards they either go either to work in their garden, or to their field, where they have to finish hoeing a portion of the field each time. Then there is always work at home, cleaning and cooking, which she does herself. Even with the income supplement she earns from working as a caregiver in Hungary every other month, this is not sufficient that she and her husband, who stays home and tends to the household while she is away, can rely on buying all their food from the store. It is important to grow their own.

In the absence of local opportunities for formal employment, villagers also rely on helping each other out, even though many expressed that people are less helpful since the end of socialism. This help comes in the form of small cash loans amongst friends and relatives, borrowing household items, and helping out in different ways. For example, while I was there I heard several times people mentioning small loans they had made to people they knew in the village. Katalin explained that the reason for this is the lack of formal (bank) credit here. Another way I was told, but unable to confirm for myself, that storeowners help was to allow their customers to buy on credit. Customers leave their identity cards at the store, and the storeowner simply take their money when their pensions arrive. If they are on friendly terms, neighbours, friends, and relatives also help each other by sharing what they produce in their gardens, or other common household

items, or help each other with work around the home. Although unemployed, Pál very often found small jobs within the village. Known by his friends and relations as someone with skill in repairs and construction, he was often asked. At one time, he helped build a roof for one of his friends and neighbours; at another, a friend dropped by to ask him to help build a fence. These jobs are not often paid, but are just some examples of how people can help each other informally. Although they still feel that things are more individualistic these days, these types of labour exchange happen often enough that I noticed. Family members also help one another out by staying together in one household. Because they are unable to establish households of their own, it is very common to have three generation households. Houses tend to be divided into an upper and lower or front and back sections, which divided by separate entrances are very often used to house grandparents in one part (usually the lower room), and child, spouse, and grandchildren in the other section. This reduces the cost of living, and although they are likely to have separate finances, they help each other in household tasks such as gardening, tending to animals or fields.

3.4 Gendered Division of Labour

Work, whether inside or outside the household, is strongly divided by gender. Because of ideologies about what kinds of work women and men are most capable of, women face even more uncertainty in getting stable jobs in the formal economy, and are less encouraged to do so if an alternative job is available for a male in her household. Women overwhelmingly, are expected to do work inside the house and around the home, including caring for gardens and animals. If men participate in any of these activities, it is described, as Rebeka put it, as “helping out” the women, rather than taking on a

responsibility that should be equally theirs. Although women and men work together outside the home, women typically are expected to do double duty, doing housework, considered women's work as well.

State socialism is partly responsible for creating this dynamic. Although in its search for ever more labour to power its expanding labour intensive industries, the state encouraged women's participation in the labour force, official rhetoric and labour policy still created divisions between men and women (Verdery, 1996). In addition to emphasizing their role as producers, women were also represented as mothers and reproducers for the socialist state (Keough, 2006, citing Verdery, 2006). Despite their commitment to bring women into the labour force, household labour was still overwhelmingly female, in part because of notions of what constituted women's work and also because household work fell more often to pensioners, more of whom were women (Verdery, 1996). Furthermore, although women were to be equal as labourers, they were assigned postings that were considered appropriate for females, which included work in education, health and culture (Verdery, 1996). Service and agricultural jobs were represented as feminine, while heavy industry and the most heroic jobs were male (ibid.). In the 1980s, even more emphasis was put on women as caregivers; because of cutbacks in state provided child and elder care, but also because the state emphasized women's roles as mothers, women began moving out of formal employment (ibid.). In fact, the state went so far as to ensure that women could be at home and fulfill their duties as mothers. In 1973, the Central Committee of the Communist Party established guidelines for enterprises, which would ensure this; these included encouraging women to work more from home, part-time shifts, and earlier retirement for women with several children

(ibid.). Because of declining birth rates, the state encouraged reproduction and women as mothers, requiring gynecological exams to check for abortions, and instituting a “celibacy tax” on men and women without children. Strict penalties for abortion were also imposed and contraception was unavailable (ibid.). In other words, although on the one hand the socialist state talked of women as the equals of men, it also pushed them into less regular employment and re-emphasized their role as house workers.

Even in the post-socialist state, nationalist political discourse references putting women back into their proper roles, as caregivers, to undo the mistakes of the socialist state which disrupted the natural order (ibid.). The re-emphasis on women as mothers, who should stay at home is a common element in post-socialist societies in east central Europe (ibid.). Verdery (1996) argues that if capitalism relies on the unpaid caring work of women then this is even more necessary in post-socialist society, where care work has to be removed from the state and reinstated in the home, rendered invisible. If responsibility for care work is put back onto women in the household, the state avoids the extra costs associated with social services (ibid.).

As a result, strong gendered notions of work remain, and among the people I spoke with, housework is the domain of women. For example, when I asked a woman if men worked in the gardens, she said “My husband helps me. Not everyone, but he helps.” Men do work that is more “heavy” or difficult, involving caring for animals, such as feeding and cleaning, and working in the fields. During an interview with Márta and her husband Péter, I asked them about what kinds of work men and women do in Mezőfalva. Márta said that men, “have a lot of work because whoever has animals, by the time they feed them, it’s men’s work because it’s hard.” Working with machinery in the field,

considered hard and more difficult, is evaluated as men's work. Her husband Péter went on to explain that, "the men go out with the machines... that's harder work because the loading machine that makes these larger bales (of hay), 500 kg... it's hard physical labour. The women wouldn't manage that." I later asked Mónica what she thought about the gendered division of labour in the village and she explained that,

raising children is the work of women. It's not that work is divided, but that this is what people have inherited. They don't even think about it. In Holland it's not like this. The men take their share exactly the same. For example, the family where I am, the man cooks on Sundays. The children on Saturdays. It's so nice that the woman is a bit more free. They are amazed when they come here that the woman has to do everything – cooking, cleaning, etc, etc. But here it's how it is. This is women's, this is men's work. I think women have it much harder here, they have to take on more.

When I asked Rebeka whether the men help out at home she said,

Here in the village, a man who cooks and cleans... in terms of working, they work the same amount because the woman goes out to the field just the same as the man. Maybe the housework that the woman does at home supplements the more work that the man does out in the field... it's rare, the one that cleans. Maybe he helps out at home by cleaning potatoes, or takes in a pale of water for his wife, but in terms of cleaning, no.

In Eszter's household, the women are responsible for cooking and cleaning even when they are absent for long periods of time. Both Eszter and her daughter are absent much of the time, Eszter because she works as a caregiver in Hungary, and her daughter because she attends university in town. However, they still take on the bulk of household responsibilities. Eszter is careful to cook and put away food in the freezer for her husband and son before she leaves, and her daughter comes home every weekend to do additional cooking and cleaning. The idea that women should do housework is so strong that even in such a case where the women are away, they take on the burden.

The division of labour in formal employment also still seems to fall in line with the socialist state's ideas of men's and women's work, both at home in Romania and abroad. That is, women tend to dominate in care and service work while men dominate in manual labour. Rebeka and Kinga explained that in the village, among the village youth, a large group of the men work in construction, while the women work in bars and stores. Although my study is not based on a statistical sample, my interview data confirms this division of labour; all of the women I spoke with informally or interviewed had either held factory jobs in textiles or ceramics, had worked as book-keepers for the co-operative, or currently work as domestic workers abroad. In addition, some of the youth are pursuing careers in day care work or nursing. For the men, all of them had either worked in manual labour jobs such as construction, carpentry, and car repair, or worked in factories. The only sector where men's and women's work seemed to overlap was in agriculture, in which both men and women work when they go abroad.

Because women are so strongly associated with caring labour in the home, now, as in the past, women's employment in the formal labour market is less stable than that of men, and their livelihoods in the formal economy far more precarious. Women are much more likely than men to interrupt paid employment to stay at home and care for family members, putting them at a disadvantage if they later need to support themselves, for example in the case of divorce or death of their spouse. In explaining their work histories, several women described how they had initially left their jobs to raise their children. For example, Katalin, who has been working as a caregiver in Hungary, stopped working at her well-paid job in a ceramic factory once her children were born. Now that her children are grown and working themselves, she has started working in

Hungary to supplement her disability pension. Edina not only quit her job as a book-keeper for the agricultural collective to care for her young daughter, because as she said, her mother in law was too old to care for her, but later was not able to work as a caregiver in Germany as often because she needed to stay home to care for her aging father. This interruption in income affected not only her but also her daughter, who subsequently quit school where she was training to be a nurse, because they could no longer afford her tuition. Because of the lack of local opportunities, her daughter has not been able to secure employment to pay her expenses herself. Eszter also left her employment to care for her children when they were born.

Furthermore, in addition to being the first to leave formal work to care for the household, women are not expected to hold formal employment in Romania or abroad to the same degree as men. They are not expected to work unless it is necessary, meaning their parents' or husband's salary is not enough to support the household. Rebeka mentioned that the majority of people here in the village are not so poor that they require girls to also go abroad. Their parents have enough that they can pay for at least vocational schooling and then they can find work close to home. It is more likely that the men will go abroad to work, and the women will stay behind. Although this was contradicted by the fact that I spoke to so many women who worked abroad as caregivers and agricultural workers, whether or not this gendered divide is borne out in reality, in terms of migration, it is clear that they think in highly gender segmented terms about what type of work is associated with each gender. Women are more likely to stay at home if there is an opportunity for the husband to work, at home or abroad. They will then do most of the household tasks, as well as work in the gardens or the fields. Because

women's foothold in the formal economy is even more precarious than it is for men, leaving them with a double burden of work in the home, and uncertain employment in the formal economy.

3.5 Precarious Livelihoods

As I have described, villagers navigate the uncertainty that is post-socialism through engaging in a variety of activities that supplement one another, both inside the home and within the formal economy. Many have taken to formal and informal self-employment, and working from home to access much needed cash. In addition, many continue to rely on subsistence gardening, raising animals, and to a lesser extent cultivating their fields to provide for household needs in the absence of sufficient income, which does not allow them to rely on the market to provide for basic necessities. Only through hard work and this kind of pluriactivity are they able to get by when faced with the retreat of state support, high unemployment, unstable work opportunities, and low wages and pensions, which are characteristic of post-socialist Romania. There is however an additional factor that limits villagers' access to formal employment. In chapter four, I will turn to the question of ethnicity, to discuss if, or to what extent being Hungarian in Romania has disrupted villagers' working lives, especially in the post-socialist state.

Chapter 4 Intersections of Ethnicity, Class, and Livelihood in a Historical Context

4.1 Introduction

Thus far, I have focused on both macro and local level changes in the economy to argue that Mezőfalva workers' working lives are growing every more precarious and are marked by uncertainty since the end of the socialist state. However, their disadvantaged position in Romania and the EU context is not solely the result of these changes. This brings me to the topic of ethnicity, and in particular, the impact of ethnic identification on workers' success in the formal economy. In planning my research project, paying heed to Glick Schiller and Wimmer's (2003) warnings about methodological nationalism in the social sciences, I intended to move beyond these limits by not taking for granted the importance of ethnicity as a natural unit of analysis. Here, by using Glick Schiller's (2009) global power perspective instead, I broaden the field of research to include local, regional, national, and global institutions that shape the local political economy. However, much of my research prior to field work indicated that nationalism, nation-state borders and ethnicity were indeed important to Hungarians in Transylvania, especially affecting their experience of working abroad (Fox, 2003; Horváth, 2008; Kürti, 2001). Nation-state borders are particularly significant, given the several changes in Hungary and Romania's borders in the last century, which continue to be contentious issues among some research participants, as well as Hungarians and Romanians more broadly, especially in Transylvania. In addition, I also knew that Hungary was a popular destination for temporary migrant workers, as Hungarian Transylvanians benefited from the special provisions of the Status Law and the National Responsibility Programme (NSP), and as the Hungarian government tried to foster relations with Hungarians outside

of the borders of the Hungarian state (Horváth, 2007; Juhász, 2008). However, since EU accession, other EU states opened their borders to temporary workers from Romania (Horváth, 2007). As such, I decided to begin my research with the question, to what extent does ethnic identification provide the impetus for, and shape migration destinations, in the context of changing border and migration policies that accompany EU expansion?

In this chapter, I will argue that the motivation for and destination of temporary labour migration are affected by ethnicity in the form of both linguistic exclusion, which makes entry into education and the formal labour market more difficult for the Hungarian speaking people of Mezőfalu, and very real ethnic discrimination, especially during the socialist period, which may make temporary labour migration a more desirable option. However, despite a long history of ethnic discrimination in the region, I argue that rather than ethnicity per se it is more villagers' class and rural origins, which are both inseparable from ethnicity, that put them at a disadvantage in the labour market. I argue that expressions of ethnic conflict, and some claims that Hungarians are disadvantaged in Romania, are in part actually a way to express a more class based disadvantage that workers are experiencing as a result of market reforms since the end of socialism. Through drawing on a history extending farther back to the pre-socialist period, as well as everyday expressions and experiences I shared during my research, I will also argue that ethnicity is also used to limit the legitimacy of Romanians' and others' claims to living and working in the region. In other words, I argue that in addition to historical divisions, much of the animosity that people feel against other ethnic groups is the result of their precarious livelihood in the post-socialist transformation. Finally, in shaping

migration pathways, I argue that although some of the older migrant workers prefer to work in Hungary because they can speak the language, most interviewees expressed that higher wages are more important. Ethnic self identification is not likely to play a strong role in shaping migration pathways, unless, as in some cases, it means they are more likely to be hired. As EU borders open more in the future, I expect that Hungarian Romanians will take advantage of higher wages farther west in the EU.

4.2 Linguistic Exclusion

Even if today they are not explicitly disadvantaged as a minority in Romania, everyday experiences can be more difficult for the Hungarians of Mezőfalva because of an inability to comfortably speak Romanian. This also has implications for their ability to find work closer to home. I experienced the kind of humiliation and frustration that many, especially the older generation, have to face whenever they leave their Hungarian speaking village. I agreed to accompany Anna to town one day, for an appointment at the optometrist at the hospital. There was no receptionist, just a bustling hallway with doctors and nurses going in and out of the examination rooms. Anna and I both tried to stop several of the nurses and doctors as they rushed by, but all we got were irritated looks, no one wanting to stop and try to understand what we were saying. It was only by luck that a Hungarian doctor stopped and decided to take her papers and do the exam, even though he was not the doctor she had made the appointment with. While at the time this experience did not seem out of the ordinary, later I had to wonder, how difficult it would be to get by for someone who lived their entire life in Romania, held Romanian citizenship, and yet was unable to speak the official language of the state. As a visitor who did not speak Romanian, I was not as shocked as I could have been, because I

already felt like an outsider and someone who would not be understood. But on reflection, I realized how difficult and strange it is for someone to be in their home country and not be able to communicate when they need to access essential services in town. Margit remembered a similar experience of language difficulty of her own. She recalled how the day before, her husband had taken some people to Sighișoara to court. She had been so angered, because they had to hire a translator at their own expense. She said, Sighișoara is 35 percent Hungarian speaking, and so it should be the government's responsibility to provide a translator.³ She emphasized how important it was to be able to speak Romanian especially when dealing with official matters saying,

If you don't have knowledge of the Romanian language, then truly, that's nothing... you can't make your way anywhere... alright, let's say you speak somewhat, but it's not all the same when you're at a place like that. Or you go and you can't fill out an official paper because you don't have the opportunity to fill it out in Romanian.

She remembered another humiliating experience she had herself many years ago.

During the socialist period, she was once required to go home to the village to work in the field in the autumn for one week, and had to take a note to the factory in the town where she worked, to justify her absence. The book-keeper at the collective farm wrote her the note, but when she took it in to the factory the next day, everyone passed it around and had a good laugh because they found the clumsy Romanian it was written in so amusing.

³ As of 2001, Romanian law states that where ethnic minorities make up a minimum of 20 percent of the population, they have the right to communicate with local administration in their own language, and local authorities are required to hire minority language employees, and post public inscriptions in the minority language, in addition to Romanian (Brubaker et al, 2006).

The reality for many in the older generation, and some of the younger generation in the village, is that although they have spent their entire lives in Romania, they did not learn to speak the official language to the point where they could comfortably and without notice, communicate in day-to-day affairs. For young and old alike, the lack of motivation to learn another language, in the few Romanian classes offered at otherwise Hungarian language schools, the linguistic and ethnic isolation of the village, and the gulf between the quality of education and opportunity between rural and city schools, means that to this day, many do not speak the language of the country they live in. In the socialist period, the Romanian state guaranteed a minimum support for its minority ethnic groups, including the availability of minority language schools (German and Hungarian) for settlements with a minimum of twelve students per class (Verdery, 1983). Even today, although some may opt to attend Romanian schools in the city, formal schooling from elementary through high school, including the sole primary and elementary school in the village, continues to be available in Hungarian. Margit estimated that about 60 to 70 percent of the village population still does not speak Romanian. The elders often did not learn Romanian because of a lack of formal education. For example, Anna told me that she left school after finishing the fourth grade. It was during the second world war, and they did not have books to learn from, just notebooks to write on. She explained that she did not have a chance to learn Romanian – she learned the words, but not the language, meaning grammar conventions and real fluency. With minimal formal education and resources, she and others in her situation, could learn enough words to get by, but not how to speak. As in many other ways, this difference in opportunity depended also on gender. She said that there was less opportunity then for the women. She herself

married at eighteen, because as she said, there was nothing else for her to do. Her husband however, because he had fulfilled the mandatory army service and served for three years before they were married, had learned Romanian. This mandatory military service, which may have meant for many an opportunity to learn the language, and gain opportunity outside of the village, was available only to the men. Margit recalled how during the Ceaușescu years, the elders were so isolated that they did not leave the village. For example, the elder women made *szatyor*, but it was made for order, and all they had to do was complete the work at home and sell it directly on the street, or through traders. Her father also had completed only up to grade four. At that time, she said, they were happy enough if they could at least learn how to read, write, and basic arithmetic. Few of the elder generation went to school. Even if the younger generation (today's middle aged), had more formal education, much of this was likely conducted in Hungarian and they also had few opportunities to practice Romanian. If they left the village, it was only to work. As Margit's experience with the note shows, although she worked in the factory in town, she still did not speak Romanian well. Even today, she states that she is able to do some of the book-keeping for her shop herself, but she always takes it in to a book-keeper afterwards to make sure it is done correctly. Romanian is so different from Hungarian, she is afraid of making a mistake, of not writing something up correctly, so she needs this verification. Even in her experience, she says it was not enough that they learned those "few words" in first and second grade – they could not string them together to make sentences.

The younger generation faces similar linguistic disadvantage if they try to make a living or attend school outside of their Hungarian community. Margit, who mentioned

her own difficulties with the Romanian language, decided to send both her children to a Hungarian high school in Sighișoara, so that they would learn Romanian. Her daughter learned Romanian and was able to attend university, but even for her it was difficult in her first year. She had to study more than ever because she had to get used to learning in, what for her was essentially a foreign language. However, she says her son does not even want to think about learning Romanian because he does not like it, and now he is almost graduating from high school, and his minimal knowledge of Romanian will not serve him well in the Romanian labour market. He speaks English better than he does Romanian, in her opinion. She informed me that at each level of education until the post-secondary level, Hungarians study separately in Hungarian classes, even if they go to mixed Hungarian and Romanian schools, as her children did in Sighișoara. While I would argue that this is important, that the Hungarian minority is able to learn in their mother tongue, unless Hungarian students are provided with adequate Romanian language education, children who grow up in the countryside are left at a great disadvantage compared to Romanian youth, as well as Hungarian students who live in the cities. This is why Margit chose to send her children to study in the city. I asked her if there is any kind of state support for youth to learn Romanian and she said there is not. In fact, she had recently been speaking to the mayor about arranging some kind of exchange program for the youth, so that they could trade places with youth from Romanian villagers, to learn each other's language. The mayor looked into it but found that the conditions in the nearby Romanian villages were so poor that they would not send their children there. Without the opportunity for the youth to speak Romanian however, it is difficult for them to learn the language, because learning from a book is not enough. In her opinion, the youth can

only learn if they are given the opportunity to practice Romanian in their everyday life, and can talk to each other.

Attila's unsuccessful attempt at finding employment in construction is just one example of how Hungarian village youth can be at a disadvantage because of linguistic exclusion, and find it even harder to find formal employment. He recalled all the temporary construction jobs he had taken in Romania after finishing high school. Although he studied Romanian at school, this was not enough for him to be able to fully communicate with his employers on the construction sites. He said that he never learned Romanian in school because the teachers did not teach it well. This was a major setback for him, as he had to learn Romanian on the job. When he was at the construction site, he was asked to learn some Romanian, but only learned the words that were construction related and would help finish the job. Laura, who decided to leave home to work as an au pair, described her difficulties in traveling from Romania. She remembered leaving Romania for the first time, how afraid she was because she had something missing in her documents, and how worried she was about crossing the Romanian border – especially because she did not speak Romanian, and would not have been able to communicate should something have gone wrong. She would not even have had a way to get home if she had been left at the border. Laura's experience illustrates how many Hungarians, and especially rural Hungarians who live in the villages, are excluded in the country of their own citizenship. Something as simple as getting oriented, visiting the hospital, and handling government processes in the city, can be intimidating and humiliating, and can put them at a major disadvantage when they search for work in the formal economy.

The lack of knowledge of Romanian is only characteristic to the villages, and only in those villages which are completely of Hungarian ethnicity. For example, Alíz recalled how things were different in the village where she grew up, which was mixed ethnicity, both Hungarian and Romanian. She said,

there, there was no tension between the two nationalities. We knew each other's language. We sat together in front of their gates, and if it happened that there were more Hungarians, they spoke Hungarian; if there were more Romanians, they spoke Romanian.

Margit even felt that because her daughter speaks both Romanian and Hungarian fluently, now that she has attended a Romanian university, she will have a distinct advantage in finding work in Mureş county, where Mezőfalú is located, and where there is a significant Hungarian speaking population. It seems it is only if they do not speak Romanian that workers are at a disadvantage, but knowing both languages, as one would growing up and attending school in a city, one would not necessarily be at any more of a disadvantage than a Romanian. Thus, ethnic or linguistic disadvantage is not true for all Hungarians in Transylvania. It depends primarily on location, given the the poorer quality of instruction in the countryside, and because students have fewer chances to learn and speak Romanian, and even more importantly, on class.

4.3 Class and Rural Disadvantage in the Formal Economy

Even though Hungarians in Mezőfalú are disadvantaged by language barriers, the result of poor quality education, Hungarian language instruction, and inadequate interactions with Romanians, especially in the older generations, this can not be generalized to all Hungarians in Romania. In fact, a sharp divide exists in education and opportunity between city and country, and along class lines even among Transylvanian

Hungarians. While rural areas may be more divided along ethnic lines, there is considerably more interaction and intermarriage among Romanians and Hungarians in the city (Brubaker et al, 2006). Veres (2002) also found that working class Hungarians had fewer interactions with Romanians than did intellectuals or executives, as did Hungarians in mixed Hungarian Romanian communities. Furthermore, the quality of education in the villages is far behind what is found in the city. According to a study by Veres (2006), the most important factor determining whether youth continue their education is the settlement's level of urbanization. She cites the reason for this as an unequal opportunity. The smaller settlements have weaker quality education, and it is less likely that their parents had higher education or higher social status (ibid.).

Júlia, a Hungarian woman who lives in the city, also informed me of the great divide that exists between country and city. For example, Hungarians in the city interact with Romanians on a daily basis and grow up speaking Romanian as a second language. Mixed friendships and marriages are common. Although she informed me that even for her, having grown up with Romanian all her life, she is still not able to speak it with the same fluency as Hungarian (her formal education was in Hungarian), it does not automatically mark her as an outsider and she does not feel that her ethnicity has given her any trouble finding employment in the city. In her search for formal employment, what has proved to be more problematic is her gender, because of the high level of sexual harassment that many women are exposed to in their search for service industry and entry level jobs.

Szilvia, who is now living abroad, but whom I met while she was at home visiting friends and family, explained how she had wanted to study cosmetics after she graduated

from high school but there was no program in Hungarian nearby. Since the closest program was in Cluj-Napoca over one hundred kilometers away, which was too far for commuting, she could not afford to go because this would mean paying for living expenses in another city, in addition to her tuition fees. There were even fewer subsidized tuition programs available (only 30 seats), which she explained she had no chance of obtaining because they had already been taken by people “with connections” who paid for their place in school with bribes. She was limited on two dimensions; first by her lack of Romanian, which meant she could not attend the school closer to her home which had a program she was interested in attending (although not in Hungarian), but also and perhaps more importantly, by her class and rural position. Had she had sufficient funds to pay for her tuition, room and board in Cluj-Napoca, as well as the right connections and money to secure a position at the school, further education may not have been a problem. In my research, I am mindful of this difference and recognize that reports from my field site cannot be generalized to all Hungarians in Transylvania, as Mezóalu is a rural, working class, and predominantly Hungarian community. As such, their disadvantaged position in the Romanian labour market is not just the product of ethnicity, but the result of an intersection of their working class background, the disadvantage of living in relative isolation in a small village in the countryside, as well as their ethnicity.

Historically, ethnicity in Transylvania has never been a category associated only with language or identity. It has always been bound up with class relations. In the fifteenth century, more than ethnic identification, noble or non-noble status, and territorial association, was the central factor in intergroup relations (Verdery, 1983). For example,

the privileged estates or the nobility were associated with Hungarians, and even a Romanian who rose in the ranks would take on Hungarian traditions, and ethnic groups were more or less coexisted in harmony, each with its own position in the social and economic hierarchy, with Hungarians in the more privileged positions (ibid.). Prior to the transfer of Transylvania from Hungary to Romania in 1918, there was a divide between the urban and rural such that the cities in Transylvania consisted mostly of educated, property owning Hungarians who were enfranchised; the countryside consisted mainly of Romanians (Brubaker et al., 2006). Hungarians were over-represented in the upper and middle classes (Veres, 2006), meaning the Romanians were predominantly a group of peasants who had Hungarian landlords (Brubaker et al., 2006). County and local level administration was Hungarian even in areas that were majority Romanian (ibid.).

National identities did not come to the forefront until the early nineteenth century, by which time the relationship between class and ethnicity was well established (Verdery, 1983). What the Treaty of Trianon (which separated Transylvania from Hungary in 1920) did, was not just transform the political citizenship of a group of people, or change their minority status, but it also moved them from a position of being a numerical minority, albeit one with political, cultural, and economic dominance to one of a numerical minority, and the non subordinate group in their own territory (Köpeczi et al, 1986). The change in ownership helped the Romanian people in Transylvania socially, economically and culturally (ibid.). Following the transfer of ownership of Transylvania to Romania, the Romanian government started its own nationalizing campaign, much similar to the Hungarian one that preceded it. This shifted the ethnic-class structure such that Romanians began to increasingly occupy positions formerly occupied by Hungarians

(Veres, 2006). In addition, the government began to “Romanianize” secondary and postsecondary schools and nationalize state employment, which fostered the development of a Romanian middle class in the towns (Brubaker et al, 2006). Furthermore, the Romanian state instituted language testing that, while not excluding Hungarians outright, made their entrance into positions of public administration much more difficult, reducing their numbers. Even private firms were pressured by the state to hire more Romanians than Hungarians (ibid.). In addition, the Romanian state mandated Romanian language education in history and geography in Hungarian church schools, while at the same time expropriating church lands and subsidies, or otherwise closing schools. It was during this period of Romanian counter nationalizing that Transylvanian Hungarians started to think of themselves as distinct and to identify with Hungarians in Hungary (ibid.). Ethnic assimilation programs continued even into the socialist period.

Since Romania’s re-annexation of Transylvania in 1944 and the establishment of the communist government, Hungarian Transylvanians were subjected to the ethnic assimilation programme of the Romanian government (Kürti, 2001). Although initially they had set up the Autonomous Magyar Region in 1952, first touted as a triumph of Romania’s new socialist constitution, which sought to provide for ethnic equality, this was followed by changing boundaries, and the reorganization of the counties to lower the percentage of Hungarians in the areas most highly populated by Hungarians (ibid.). While formally committed to a homogenous state, the government still created differences among its citizens by controlling the allocation of resources, such that minorities were increasingly marginalized from positions of power (Veres, 2006). During the Ceaușescu Era, although the leader employed an official rhetoric that called for unity

of all ethnicities in a common future, to build a communist homeland, this essentially took away any status Hungarians had as a minority or a separate nationality (ibid.). In other words, citizen rights were still defined in ethnic terms, the ethnic terms however being that of the majority (unmarked) nation (Verdery, 1996). In 1959, the state amalgamated the Hungarian Bolyai University (located in Cluj Napoca) with the Romanian language Babeş University, to create Babeş-Bolyai University, through this move remaking the university from a Hungarian to a joint Romanian Hungarian institution. In addition, the secret police harassed and jailed teachers, cultural workers and leaders (ibid.). Hungarians began to try to leave Romania, or maintain ethnic identity at home (largely influenced by nationalism from Hungary) (ibid.). In 1968, the autonomous region was abolished and Hungarian grade schools were replaced with Romanian ones (ibid.). Following the rapid development schemes introduced by the state, aimed at reducing Romania's foreign debt, people faced shortages of food and energy, inflation, unattainable targets for production, rising prices for consumer goods, in the midst of politically mobilizing minorities, to which the Romanian state responded with an even more nationalistic stance by beginning programs of forced assimilation for Hungarians (and other) minorities (ibid.). These attempts included pressure on Hungarian cultural institutions such as churches, schools, publishers, and broadcasters (ibid). Thus since the end of the first world war, Hungarians in Romania have been on a steady course of marginalization from positions of power, and are over-represented in the lower classes due initially to Romanianization programmes after the first world war, as well as the policies of the communist governments. Using a modified version of the Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993) class schema, Veres (2006) found that proportionally

there are more Romanian than Hungarian intellectuals and leaders in Transylvania, despite the significant proportion of the population that they represent. However, she did not find differences in income between ethnic groups, pointing to the importance of class inequalities instead (ibid.). Ethnicity has never stood alone, but has always been connected to class, to create an ethnically segmented labour market.

Given that ethnicity and class both combine to situate rural Hungarians into the Romanian labour market, I found that research participants often used the language of ethnicity and ethnic discrimination to express their feelings of powerlessness and frustration with unemployment. Leach (1998) argued, based on a study in a predominantly white steelworker community in Hamilton Ontario, that workers expressed their feelings of insecurity, caused by growing instability in the steel industry, and the retreat of the state from welfare provision, by narrowing the boundaries of Canadian citizenship through references to a discourse of modernity. By limiting the group of people (Canadian citizens) to a more localized understanding, they imagined limits on who could legitimately make claims on the welfare state and access jobs, while proposing that they themselves were entitled to make such claims (ibid.). In other words, and of relevance to my argument here, identities and differences between people can either be emphasized or diminished, in a way that allows certain types of people to participate in a political struggle, while excluding other (ibid.). Hence, identities are shaped and expressed in particular relationships of economic power and exploitation (ibid.). While Leach writes about citizenship, I argue that the same phenomenon is occurring among some of the Hungarians in Mezölu, but with an expression of ethnicity rather than citizenship. Similarly, Verdery (1996) has argued that in Romania, ethnicity

has become a set of symbols used by workers to express the social dislocation they have experienced since the end of socialism. She uses the example of Jews, who are accused of bringing in Communism, and the Roma, who are often spoken of in negative ways, accused of getting rich without working (ibid.). She argues that neither Roma nor Jews are the problem per se. Underlying the issue is the dislocation that market reform has caused, which is what they have come to symbolize for many Romanians (ibid.). In the region, people seem to use the nation to explain how they are victims both socially and economically (Verdery, 1996). I would argue the same, that Hungarians I spoke with in Mezőfalu use Romanians and other ethnicities to symbolize markets and the economic dislocations of reform. Both are rooted not just in ethnicity but also in a class and rural social relations.

For example, every year on June 4th, Hungarians remember the day in 1920 when Transylvania was given to the Romanians after the First World War. In 2010, I watched the memorial on Duna TV, the nationalist television station that is especially popular among Hungarians outside of Hungary. June 4th was remembered by the program as a “national day of mourning”, showing images of a black flag of mourning, with a picture of “Great Hungary,” as it existed prior to the border changes of 1920. Anna, with whom I was watching the program, commented that they should redraw the country’s borders because “here we are humbled by the Romanians.” Pál, who joined us in watching the program then said,

Here Hungarians are kept down, they’re slaves. There’s no opportunity... Hungarians are the last... They (Romanians) don’t like to work, they rule – police, officials, they hold those positions, and, they’re moving in everywhere, crowding out the Hungarians.

As researchers (Fox, 2003; Horváth, 2008) have found, and as I heard from several people I interviewed, Transylvanian Hungarians do not actually feel a common solidarity with Hungarians in Hungary, and in fact have constructed a separate identity based on a feeling of superiority, created partly in response to the negative experiences of migrant workers in Hungary (Fox, 2003). Furthermore, some research participants I spoke with like to think of themselves as “true” Hungarians who speak a more “pure” form of Hungarian than people in the Hungarian state itself. In fact, so strong is their feeling of distinctness from Hungary, that a common way to refer to Transylvania, which I heard from Anna and Laura, is “*Erdélyország*.” *Ország*, meaning country, land, or state, is a suffix added to signify that *Erdély* (Transylvania), an independent state, is their home, not Romania or Hungary. Rather than a real wish to rejoin their co-ethnics in the Hungarian state, the Hungarians I spoke with during my research draw on such historical imagery, and use the language of ethnicity and nationalism, invoking the “Great Hungary” (the Kingdom of Hungary as it existed prior to the Treaty of Trianon), to express their wish to regain a position of ethnic privilege or at least equality that was lost after 1920, and as Pál’s comments show, to express frustration with unemployment in the region. It is telling that he not only highlighted that Romanians live in Transylvania, but that they are occupying desirable jobs and squeezing Hungarians out of the labour market.

Ethnicity was also highlighted in instances where people felt their products were at a disadvantage in relation to import goods, again to express workers’ frustration at being unable to succeed in the labour market. What they chose to highlight in these instances was where the competing items were coming from, or more specifically, the imagined ethnicity of the people who produced them. For example, Éva explained that

much of what she sells are plastic “Chinese things”, rather than locally made goods. Similarly, while Szilvia was explaining to me the history of *szatyor* making, she explained that the value of locally made goods has gone down recently because now there are “cheap Chinese things” on the market. Ethnic identity becomes marked or emphasized out of fear that local products cannot compete on the market, which means livelihoods are more precarious for some. The same way that migrant workers were excluded by some Hungarian citizens while working in Hungary, and accused of taking jobs from citizens, at home in Romania, Transylvanian Hungarians also used ethnicity to determine who has more or less entitlement to work and live in the state. For example, Éva told me that even now in Hungary, they are afraid that Transylvanian Hungarians will flood Hungary. In fact, this was part of the reason that the referendum to extend dual citizenship to Hungarians beyond the borders failed in 2004 (Kovács, 2006), and more broadly, the reason why so many of the EU15 are choosing to sign transitional agreements with newly acceded states (Kvist, 2004). She went on to say,

that’s what they’re afraid of, but there are so many immigrants in Hungary, every kind from Chinese to blacks, from everywhere. It’s the same here in Romania. There are so many Chinese here, and there’s so much Chinese products, that they’ve flooded the market, the businesses, the stores, everything.

Éva, worried of course about the success of her business, is coding market changes in ethnic terms – and highlighting especially the most visible differences. It is not coincidence that she chooses to emphasize “Chinese and Blacks”, who are more visibly different immigrants. She highlights how ridiculous it is that Hungarians should think about excluding Hungarians from Transylvania, when they have already allowed other workers in the country who are so much more different. In a way, she is circumscribing who is more or less legitimately entitled to work in Hungary based on

their ethnicity, in a situation where she fears being outcompeted on the market. Even if Hungarians were explicitly disadvantaged in the past by their ethnicity, and continue to be disadvantaged today by linguistic exclusion, ethnicity is only part of the explanation. Ethnicity and class are intertwined, and ethnicity is often used to code class based dissatisfaction in the labour market. If this is the case, how important is ethnic identification by itself, in shaping migration pathways?

4.4 Ethnicity and the Future of Migration

In my discussions with research participants, and in keeping with my argument above, I found that ethnicity by itself, and the potential disadvantages it brings for finding formal employment, is not the strongest motivator for temporary labour migration. Rather than ascriptions of ethnicity, it is the search for the highest wages that motivates workers to choose particular employment destinations. For example, when asked explicitly about how they felt about their ethnicity, many were quick to explain that they felt no particular animosity towards Romanians as a people. Szilvia stated that in her youth, she believed the village youth did not learn Romanian well because “they (the Romanians) were the cause of our suffering. Because this was a Hungarian area that Romania took away, so they were enemies... this hatred passed down generations.” She also added however that in her youth she had had Romanian friends – they went dancing together, watched movies, and the Romanians even learned Hungarian. Éva said,

Here there are some people who are racists. More so the elders. That’s what they know. There are some among the youth as well, and among the Romanians too there are some people who hate Hungarians. Since I’ve been on the road side, as I sell, I’ve met a lot of people who even though they are Romanian are very decent. It doesn’t matter that I’m Hungarian, because they know that this is a Hungarian village. But they’re very decent. In fact, what little they know, they try to speak

in Hungarian, however I speak Romanian, no problem, but they're fair. The majority of Romanians are very decent.

When I asked her whether being Hungarian in Romania was a disadvantage when searching for work she said, "no. Well you're a Romanian citizen, no. You can go to work anywhere." In fact, it seems that more than ethnicity, it was their class that respondents felt created disadvantage in their search for employment. This was especially true for the youth, who did not live through the worst years of ethnic discrimination under Ceaușescu, and who are still in the process of finding a place for themselves in the labour market. When I asked Éva what the treaty of Trianon meant to her, Éva said,

I don't believe that it interests any of them (the youth). The youth aren't interested in anything but having fun, going to discos, money, because of course if there's no money everyone goes crazy. Here money is the main thing. If you have money, good, if not, it's not good... Among the youths there are many who socialize with Romanians, and they get along well together. Many have Romanian friends, so that's really good.

This was reinforced by my conversations with village youths, including Kinga, Attila, and Júlia, who indicated that animosity with Romanians is not as important to them, and not as much a part of their daily experience. What matters more is money, and their ability to make a living. In other words, there is a difference too in age, in that ethnicity in itself, apart from its economic implications and disadvantages, is more an issue for the elders than it is for the youth. This is perhaps because of the real discrimination that the older generations lived through under socialism, especially during the Ceaușescu years, and for the very eldest, because they now have fewer opportunities to step outside the village and interact with Romanians. The youth however, as they search for work abroad and have more geographical mobility and social interactions in the nearby cities, have more opportunities to interact with Romanians, despite their initial disadvantage as

village youth. Even more than ethnicity, the greatest preoccupation people have is with the economy and securing their livelihoods. While some of the elderly may choose to work in Hungary because they can get by easier there, as they speak the official language, the youth appear willing to take advantage of the greater freedoms of movement that EU accession allows, and go farther abroad. For example, Klára had considered working as a domestic worker in Canada, but decided against it because the language barrier would be too much for her to bear at her age.

However, even if language barriers are not a problem for villagers who choose to work in Hungary, this in itself is not a sufficient motivating factor. Even with shared language and ethnicity with Hungarians in Hungary, I argue that ethnic identification is not the most important factor workers consider when they choose their destination. In a reversal of earlier trends, where Hungary was the most popular destination for Transylvanian Hungarians, owing to both benefits guaranteed through the Status Law and NSP, as well as the relative ease of communicating in Hungarian (Horváth, 2007; Juhász, 2008), it appears that with the opening of borders, the bravest migrants, and especially the youth are looking farther afield for work opportunities. What is more important is money, and in fact because of the discrimination migrant workers face in Hungary, it is not a desirable destination. Even if they receive Hungarian citizenship, putting them on an equal footing with Hungarians in Hungary, many would rather not go there to work. When I asked Klára about the benefits of dual citizenship she explained,

It's very good. Of course. For Transylvanian people. This would help all of the people living outside of the borders. Everyone is scaring the Hungarians that if we get dual citizenship we'll settle there – that's ridiculous! People from here do not want to settle there. Because you know what a trauma it is that you go over there and they don't say to you that you are a Transylvanian Hungarian, but a

Romanian. Here the Romanian says that we are homeless, and when we go to Hungary the Hungarians say we are Romanian.

Although Edina explained that she would rather go to Hungary because she can speak the language, few others, especially the youth I spoke with, were as concerned with language. What matters most is where they can earn the highest wages. When I asked István, he said that because of the EU, he believes people will start going even farther in search of work because it is not worth it to work in Hungary, in terms of wages. After Edina described how lonely it is for her to work as a domestic worker in Germany, where she is very lonely and is not able to speak German well, I asked her why she chooses to go beyond Hungary, given that there she can speak her own language. She explained, “because I know I can bear it. They pay more than in Hungary and I understand enough that what they ask of me I can understand, with difficulty, but I can manage better this way. It’s more worth it.” More important than ethnicity is the motivation to better one’s standard of living that shapes migration pathways and destinations. It is not ethnic disadvantage alone, but the way ethnicity interacts with class that creates the labour market disadvantage that compels many from Mezőfalu to search for work abroad.

4.5 Labour Migration in Context

Thus far, I have examined the many ways that workers in Mezőfalu find it difficult to make a living in Romania. In chapter two, I outlined the major economic and political changes that have taken place since the end of the socialist state that in a short period of time, completely disrupted the main pillars of village livelihoods. In chapter three, I went on to describe how, despite these changes, villagers are still able to make a living with a great deal of hard work through pluriactivity and *pótolás*. What

characterizes their livelihoods today however is a great deal of uncertainty, left as they are without the support of the state that had organized their working lives. In this chapter, I described how workers are not only disadvantaged in Romania because of the political and economic changes since the end of socialism, but also by the very fact of being Hungarian in a Romanian state. Without fluency in the official language, many have found it difficult to find work in the formal economy. However, I also found that research participants' complaints about their ethnic disadvantage, and about the encroachment of other groups in their market and territory, were not necessarily expressions of simple dislike of other ethnicities, but expressions of frustration about competition for already scarce resources and employment in Romania. Regardless however of the nuances behind expressions of ethnic discrimination, both expressed by and experienced by the workers I spoke with, the fact remains that they are disadvantaged in the labour market by not only their ethnicity, but also by their class and rural background, which limits education and opportunities that are more readily available in the city. Because of the many limits they face in making a living, many workers now engage in temporary labour migration in other EU states. In the three following chapters, I will discuss migration in greater detail. In chapter five, I will argue that migration is also just another form of *pótolás*, which extends the geographic range of workers' livelihood generating strategies. With few formal qualifications or the resources to obtain them, and the retreat of state support, villagers have become a 'reserve army of labour'⁴ for the least desirable jobs in the expanded EU, leaving people to continue lives marked

⁴ The unemployed surplus population of workers produced through the process of capital accumulation (Marx, 1990, p.784).

by pluriactivity but more uncertainty both in work at home and abroad, and a greater geographic range for their working lives.

Chapter 5 **Mobile Livelihoods: “Whoever is able, should go”**

5.1 Introduction

The quote for this chapter title is from an interview with István, who currently works as a temporary worker in Austria. I had asked him about the circumstances at home, and he responded by saying that here in Romania “there is no future”, and no jobs. He believes that if someone wants to have any hope of improving their life, they must try to look for work abroad. It is not surprising, given the success he has had from working abroad. The results of his higher income are readily visible – a new house and a car, and his wife is attending college. Unlike most of the houses in the village, which are older, often lack indoor plumbing, and are built next to the road, he built his new house, which was complete with modern amenities, on the outskirts of the village, on a large, quiet, property with a well kept front yard, a rarity in the village, where most household space is functional rather than recreational. Visiting his house, I felt like I had entered a different world. Now that I have described how villagers make a living at home in Romania, in this chapter I will move to show how migration fits into the livelihood strategies of workers in Mezőfalu. For many it is, as István described, an essential form of *pótolás* if they hope to make any improvements in their lives.

In the change from relative security, since the period of collective economy to the increase in market integration since 1989 and now especially, in the European Union, pluriactivity has not decreased or been replaced by further activity within the formal economy of paid employment. Indeed, as I have shown above, in this time of job losses and increased insecurity, households and individuals must undertake a variety of strategies to ensure survival. Migration is just one of these strategies, which became

popular across all eastern Europe after the regime changes began in 1989 (Fox, 2003). Although many resettled abroad permanently, many others found work through labour migration networks as temporary workers, which allowed them to improve their income, but not take on all the risks and costs of abandoning their homes (ibid.). What has changed since the opening of borders in 1989, and even further since Romania's accession and increasing integration within the EU, is the geographic range of livelihood possibilities, before limited to Romania, but now extending across national borders. It is most useful I think to think of migration as part of a set of strategies, a part of a "mobile livelihood", not limiting my understanding of livelihood to work done at home (Olwig and Sorensen, 2002). It is just one other form of *pótolás* undertaken by anyone who needs to supplement their pension, unemployment or unstable employment income, and subsistence gardening. As temporary migrants, workers maintain their household, and to some extent subsistence gardening, raising animals, and whatever other economic pursuit they can find, for the times they are at home. As such, migration supplements the totality of livelihood strategies, and fills the void left by economic restructuring, and the retreat of state owned enterprises, and with them, employment for the low-skilled workers in Mezőfalu. Unfortunately, even if it replaces earlier employment and even if it is higher paying employment closer to home, the uncertainty that characterizes their livelihoods at home is just as true for their experiences of working abroad.

5.2 A Brief Overview of Romanian Migration

Mobile livelihoods for workers in Mezőfalu are not new. As I described in chapter two, even before 1989 and EU integration, villagers migrated, albeit shorter distances, to nearby towns as factory workers and at other times, as Anna recalled, to pick

potatoes in another county. However, even as mobility and pluriactivity of livelihoods is not new, what has changed since the end of the socialist state is the distance that temporary labour migration covers. During the communist era, temporary labour migration that crossed state borders was rare unless organized by the state (Horváth, 2008). The Romanian government strictly controlled its borders, and legal emigration was undertaken mainly by Romania's ethnic minorities, for permanent moves abroad (ibid.). Before 1990, most emigrants from Romania were asylum seekers, seeking refuge during the increasingly difficult later years of the communist regime, and this flow of emigrants consisted mostly of ethnic minorities permanently relocating to states with which they had historic ties – Germans returning to Germany and especially after 1987, Hungarians moving to Hungary (Horváth, 2008). Since 1990, when the rules somewhat relaxed, and international travel permitted, many workers took advantage of liberalized border controls to leave Romania (Horváth, 2007.). For example, within three years of the end of the communist government, 190 687 people emigrated from Romania (Horváth, 2008.). Since 1990, as Romanians face fewer and fewer border restrictions in the EU, migration trajectories have been changing from initial moves to Israel, Turkey, Hungary (most of them ethnic Hungarians), and Germany between 1990 and 1995, to moves farther west to Italy and Spain (Horváth, 2007). Since 2002, as Romania has entered the Schengen space, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the UK are the most popular destinations (ibid.). Despite improvements in the domestic labour market, migration appears to be on the rise; in 2006, a survey reported that nine percent of adult Romanians planned to work abroad in the following year (Horváth, 2008). Remittances from labour migration represent a significant source of finances for Romania. In 2006, the National

Bank of Romania estimated that between €4.8-5.3 billion had been sent back to Romania from workers abroad (Horváth, 2007.). Today, many ethnic Hungarians living in Romania are among the regular temporary labour migrants, working in Hungary and other EU states, sending remittances to support their families at home. My research project focused on just such individuals, the temporary migrants past and present, who have gone abroad in search of work.

Although I do not have sufficient data to speculate on the extent of temporary labour migration in the village as a whole, I found that labour migration is a very common livelihood strategy in Mezőfalu. From my fieldwork, I found two main temporary migrant networks that arrange placements abroad, both of which provide undocumented jobs. Because of the relatively small size and close knit nature of the community, research participants indicated that in the context of these two networks, they either found their job through a friend, or being aware of individuals who migrate to a certain location, asked them for contact information for their employers, or for help in obtaining a placement. Both networks thus consist mainly of relatives and acquaintances. First, there is the network of middle aged women who travel to work as caregivers in Hungary, who find employment through friends passing on their information to their employers. Second, about twenty people migrate to a vineyard in Hungary. A few migrant workers I spoke with had obtained work outside of these networks, but again, within social connections extending outside the village. In addition, migration patterns largely follow the gendered ideologies of work I discussed in chapter three. Without exception, all of the domestic workers are women. Although women and men engage in

agricultural labour I do not have sufficient data to describe the gendered composition of labourers on these worksites.

5.3 The Class Component of Labour Migration

Because the possibilities for making a living closer to home have been dramatically reduced in the years since 1989, workers have had to expand the geographic range of their working lives. In accordance with the general trends, outward mobility from Romania has changed since the beginning of transformation. While initially this was a movement of the highly skilled, later it came to be a movement of predominantly low skilled rural migrants (Horváth, 2008). The same limitation in mobility, during the socialist period, that prevented rural industrial workers from permanently relocating in the cities closer to their places of employment, also limits their migration to that of temporary labour circuits today. The loss of industrial jobs transformed villagers from working class labourers, divided from the professional and managerial residents of the city (Szelényi, 1981), to a reserve army of labour for the expanded EU. While in the socialist period, a divide was created between the village and the city, the factory labourers staying behind to live in the villages, while the professionals and managers moved into the cities, to produce a labour force that commuted to the cities (Szelényi, 1981). With closer opportunities for work dismantled since the end of state socialism, labourers have been forced to go farther afield. However, under socialism period there was at least a working class supported by the state. Now with few formal and stable work opportunities in the region, village workers here and elsewhere in the region become a reserve army for the rest of Europe. After the transition to a market economy

however, which was accompanied by large scale closing of factories, rural migrants were the first to be fired (ibid.), and over the long-term, there were fewer positions available.

As expected, the economic restructuring associated with the end of socialism and more recently with EU accession has not uniformly affected the population, and their ability to make a living. Emigration disproportionately affects workers in rural areas, and more specifically the young, women, and those with low educational attainment (Surubaru, 2010). In other words, there is a class based element that divides migrant workers in the context of EU expansion, which as it integrates a system of unequal states, structures low and unskilled rural workers as a disposable mass of labourers to fill low skill, low paying, temporary jobs within the EU, while industry from the west migrates to former socialist states (like Romania) in search of lower cost inputs for production (ibid.). By the time Romanians no longer needed a visa to travel in the Schengen space, there were large decreases in population as a result of labour migration to the west, but again, the population of workers decreased 16.3 percent in the rural areas, compared to only 7.4 in the cities (ibid.).

In addition, few migrant workers or anyone else that I spoke with had high formal qualifications, which would give them a competitive edge in labour markets or a better paying job. The middle aged, who are not yet at the age of retirement, had at most finished vocational high school, learning a trade in which they are now few opportunities in the area. At least three of the women I interviewed had studied dressmaking, and had been employed in sewing/textiles after graduation, another had graduated and gone to work at a ceramic factory, while others had been employed as book-keepers at the cooperative, or as day care workers. Each of the men I spoke with, aside from the

storeowner, had been either in construction, factory work, or car repair. As such, this poorer group of unemployed workers has to remain temporary and working in the most undesirable positions because permanent worker status, and the benefits and security that that provides, is not at the moment attainable.

Because of their disadvantaged position, rural workers are more likely to migrate temporarily for work. The cost associated with migration, such as paying for accommodations and food, is too high relative to the amount of pay that migrants get for their work, especially if they then have to support a family. This makes permanent migration prohibitive. For example. Sára explained

If I can get back to that job, I would again have to live in rented accommodations so that's three 300 pounds, plus what I make is 1000 pounds, from that I lose 550, 600. Say if I were to take out my daughter, the eldest wouldn't go, but the little one I could take, I have this opportunity, I wouldn't be able to save anything there. If I pay all of it towards my rent and food. So I have no idea where to start.

It is only worth it for her she says, to stay a few years and come home for a month or two at a time and then leave, but she misses her children. However, she stated that the minimum wage in Romania is, by comparison, still too low for working at home to be worthwhile. Many research participants explained to me that they remain as temporary migrant workers not only out of homesickness, and the undesirability of their jobs, which tend to be very difficult, but also because they simply cannot justify a permanent move. Resettlement incurs too many costs and is not as financially lucrative as earning abroad and spending that money at home, where foreign currency has greater strength. This is true not just for international migration, but also permanent relocation within Romania, for example to find work in a nearby town. Sára explained how hard it was for her to find work at home, because of her residence in the countryside. Even if she were to find

work in Romania, in the city, for example working in a hotel or a restaurant as a cook, because of the cost of transportation (and sometimes impossibility of transportation as some shifts end after public transit stops running), and the prohibitive cost of establishing a permanent household in the city (given the low wages and the high cost of living), very little of her pay would be left over at the end of the month. Although taking such a job might be worth it to someone who already lives in the city, for someone living in a village, it is not worth the effort. For so much work and extra expenses, they will have very little left to live on.

5.4 Uncertainty in Migration

Although migration is important in ensuring a better quality of life, work abroad in itself is often taken on in uncertain and difficult conditions, is informally arranged and unregulated, offers little protection to the migrant worker, and is highly undesirable. Without exception, each informant I spoke with had taken work in Hungary that would be considered undesirable, low status, and insecure. Tamás recalled his first arrival in Budapest saying,

At first I went to a former classmate of mine, I had his address. When I dropped into Pest for the first time, I felt like when they take a Brazilian native to Wall Street in New York. Just like that, with just a pack on my back... And I worked in construction all summer and by the autumn the work became so dirty, my foot got infected. Someone took me into surgery on their own insurance card. After that, I racked my brain, why shouldn't I go to a fast food buffet to work because there I could get food. That didn't work out either. That's how I ended up working for a Chinese man, it was good there. It was clean.

He described how when he worked in Hungary he had taken “everything that we could say is harder, dirtier work,” including shoveling snow in the winter, construction in the

summer, and even in one case digging a toilet for a university researcher, which he described as a very degrading experience:

I went to dig a WC for a man, in the meantime it turned out I didn't even have to. They looked down on us, like 'you Romanians'... I went to one place, a scholar, a researcher at a university... there was a wooden toilet in the garden. He told me it was full. He told me to dig a two by two metre hole beside it. When I finished digging, to poke at it from the side so it would flow over. I dug out the new hole... but it was in vain. This kind of nothing work. When I sat in the car, I changed my clothes and I had a bag, in it I kept my work clothes and soap and a towel. A person always washes, so much sweat; then the man says I can only sit in the car after he spreads a piece of nylon. And he spread a sheet on my seat, that's how he took me back to Pest. He looked down on me. When we ate at the table, he at the camping table, and he brought me another one, so that I wouldn't eat with him, so I could be lower down a bit. It was a symbolic stratified society. But I needed the money.

The experience was difficult for him but he needed the money and so was willing to accept these jobs. With only informal networks available to them to secure employment abroad, and because of their willingness to work for lower wages (which are still more than what they could make working in Romania), they took on temporary and low paying jobs in Hungary. While working in Hungary, they experienced the kind of ethnic discrimination that Fox (2003) described. Zoltán, who had gone to Hungary to work in construction, had been refused water at a restaurant and called a "Transylvanian Gypsy", and Viktória and László also recalled being called "dirty Transylvanians" while working in Hungary. Klára was told by one of her employer's neighbours that she was taking Hungarian workers' jobs, who now have nowhere to work.

When Attila was looking for a job, he asked for the contact information of this place and arranged to go. Only a few migrant workers (István, who works at an auto repair shop in Austria, Mónika who works on an orchard in Holland, and Sára who works more permanently in England renting her own home while she is there) actually have

work contracts and some level of worker protection. Without legal protection, most are vulnerable to employers. Furthermore, when working in states other than Hungary, because they face language barriers, they are even less likely to understand or access their rights and entitlements, or have knowledge about the employer-employee terms of the working relationship as defined by their contracts and in labour laws, making it even more difficult to make demands (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010). Edina, who travels to Germany to work as a live in caregiver said:

The prices here, for groceries, are like in Germany. But they don't live on the same amount of money that we do here. It should be the same wages that they get there but when will that be? Because obviously, no one would go to Germany, or Hungary, if we had the same quality of life... I would find a job here and not go again. It's so hard for me to leave. I wouldn't leave here for good. I can't imagine living my life out there... I call home every day.

It wasn't easy, I don't wish it for anyone. Truly we suffer so much for that money... you need a lot of patience, a good nervous system beside someone sick like that. It's not desirable. But what should we do? We can't make that money here. We can't here... and there isn't any anyhow. I would gladly work. I told my daughter I don't wish to go to Germany; no bone in my body desires to go that far, three months away, but if there's no opportunity for now... this was most acceptable until now, in a financial perspective.

Edina's desire to stay at home is not an isolated case; I could list so many examples, especially from the women who work as domestic workers in Hungary and elsewhere, who do not like or wish to leave home, but feel it is their only option. Other women explained how they felt "locked in" while they were at work, because they are expected to be beside their charge twenty four hours a day, except in most cases a break for lunch and a few hours to themselves in the afternoon. Even with the break however, they are isolated and are eager to return to their friends and family at the end of the month. Several women also complained about the low quality and quantity of the food they received on the job. Although their food was provided by the host family, many women

complained that the food (mostly prepared meals) were not healthy, and Piroska even talked of losing weight every time she went to work, gaining it back every time she came home. Alíz felt the same way, saying

We eat what they bring. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's weak. A lot of the times, how do I put my spoon in it? Can I eat it? It's really weak food (lacking in nutrients). His daughters said that they wouldn't eat it... We really suffer for that small amount of money.

Kinga, who has worked abroad several times in agriculture said,

I was there in the winter, it was cold, I was cold. I had so many troubles, but you can still get used to it... There are times when you go in at 5 in the morning and they bring you out at 12 at night. It depends when and how many orders the company has. If there are many you have to finish. You can't go home until then. They won't let you.

Attila had a similar experience of uncertainty, while working in agriculture in Hungary.

Unfortunately, his pay is weather dependent. For example, this past time that he was abroad, it rained for two weeks and because they could not work in the rain, for those two weeks they were not paid. Later, while working he broke his wrist while on the job in the orchard, and of course had no option but to return home and face unemployment. Sára, who had earlier gone to Hungary to work in a campground explained how unpredictable and undesirable her work could be. She was only paid for seven or eight hours work, but said she consistently had to work 14, sometimes 16 hours without pay. Even though she had a contract, her boss paid no attention to formalities. Officially she was registered to work four hours, but that was only because he wanted to avoid paying the taxes on more work, but she was really employed for more than that. Although things are better now for her in England where she works in a garden centre (she is paid regularly, and she feels people there are respectful), even this job was a risk in the beginning. It started when she helped some visitors from England, who had car trouble; they started visiting her after

that, and she migrated when her friend promised to find her a job picking strawberries. She found out when she got there that all the positions had been filled. She ended up alone in London, without sufficient money to return home, but eventually she reached her friends and held various odd jobs until she found her regular employment at the garden centre. After finishing grade eight, Zoltán, who had started out as a worker first at a fertilizer factory, then as a construction worker when the factory closed, now continues to work as a temporary migrant even in his retirement. With no other option, he first went to Hungary without a plan. He slept three nights at the train station, and finally when he found a job in construction after being selected in Moscow Square in Budapest, a square notorious as a gathering place for undocumented workers, he injured his eye on the construction site and had to return home. Now even though he is retired, he still engages in the pluriactivity that is necessary for survival, including migration. Living in the same household with his children and grandchildren, he not only works in the family field and tends to the animals in the household courtyard, he also spends one and two months at a time working in a vineyard in Hungary. Although better than what they find in Romania, work abroad is highly undesirable. As László, who works with his wife in the vineyard in Hungary where so many other villagers also work, said even in the collective era there was not this kind of “severity”. Although he is able to meet the quotas on the vineyard, it is hard work. Migration always involves risk. Without a formal contract or plan, workers are risking everything – not getting paid, being mistreated, or ending up stranded. There is no security in their work. But with few other options, men and women feel compelled to find work with decent pay, and if that means working abroad in uncertain conditions, that is what they will do.

The strong inequalities that compel migration, migrants' reluctance at leaving home, and the hardships that migrant workers are faced with while working abroad, leads me to question the validity of Horváth's (2008) application of the concept 'culture of migration' to describe workers' motivations. Horváth (2008) argued that a component of what he calls the 'culture of migration' means workers use a different criteria to assess the costs and benefits of working at home, for example in farming, versus the costs and benefits of employment in migration. He went on to argue that ultimately, as this weighing of options continued to come out in favour of migration rather than more traditional practices, people eventually would lose interest entirely in older livelihood strategies and come to rely on migration (ibid). Furthermore, migration becomes a 'rite of passage', signaling workers' entry into adulthood (ibid.). Horváth's explanation privileges an idealized scenario over the stark realities of the very real material changes that migrants have had to contend with since the beginning of transformation. At issue is the loss of formal and stable employment opportunities, the lack of machinery and knowledge to make subsistence farming a viable option for all but those who have access to these technologies, and changes in regulations associated with Romania gaining entrance to the EU. In this changed climate, with local opportunities for work gone, and disadvantaged as they are by their working class rural background, migration is a strategy of survival that supplements other livelihood endeavours, rather than a 'rite of passage' or alternative, taken on for cultural reasons.

In a different perspective, Brettel (2000) argues for a combination of macro and micro levels of analysis, combining both structures that shape migrants' position in transnational fields of power, while also allowing for migrants' agency. Such analysis

may include the 'culture of migration', for example when using the household as the framework for analysis, but it simultaneously casts the migrant as a decision maker in a changing social and cultural context, in turn embedded in a larger economic framework. Barber (2010) similarly moves beyond a representation of Philippine migration as an either/or scenario, positive or negative, to explore the limited agency of migrants using the Janus metaphor. At the same time that migrants may view migration as a possibility for class mobility and opportunity, and empowerment, their movement is rooted in a history of colonial exploitation (ibid.). While giving primary explanatory power to the 'culture of migration', even Horváth (2008) acknowledged the economic constraints that youth face when completing their education and entering the transition to adulthood, a stage achieved when one enters the labour market and establishes their own household and family. Furthermore, he noticed a class difference in the 'culture of migration', wherein individuals from wealthier families were more likely to consider moves farther abroad, and poorer individuals more likely to consider moves to Hungary (ibid.). Similarly, Veres (2002) found significant differences in extent of social networks, depending on age and highest level of education completed. In addition, she found that Hungarian youth have fewer Romanians in their social networks than do their elders, which she hypothesizes may result in greater out-migration and settlement in Hungary in the future (Veres, 2002). In other words, it is important to keep in mind that the concept 'culture of migration' may not apply equal to all members of even a small, seemingly culturally homogenous community. Internal group differences based on age and class can be correlated with decisions to work abroad, and a 'culture of migration' explanation may

be insufficient to encompass all the variables that affect a would-be migrants' decision making context.

As Bauman (1998) argued, some people who move are “tourists”, and some are “vagabonds” – they move because they must, either because their livelihood has been taken away from them where they are, or because they have to move in search of a livelihood elsewhere. This contrast was brought close to home to me during an interview with László and his wife Viktória, who work in a vineyard in Hungary. László asked me where my plane arrived, because it happened to be that the vineyard they work at is just outside of Budapest, close to the airport. They watch the planes coming and going while they work on the field. While I was free to move, they move only when compelled, and it is not out of a ‘culture of migration’ but simply because it is so very difficult to make a living at home. Migration, although risky and difficult, is often the most effective way to make a living.

During the collective period, when people engaged in pluriactivity – they worked for the collective, cultivated their own personal plots of land, and produced *szatyor* for sale, under a labour process involving every member of the family from children to the elderly – there was relative stability and predictability, because livelihoods were organized and supported by the state or the agricultural cooperative. What has changed then, in the transformation since 1989 is that while pluriactivity has remained, getting by has become harder because without state planning and support, villagers must get by as individual households and contend with the uncertainties of the current situation with little support. Workers have to become more flexible, relying on temporary and unstable

jobs in the lowest paying sectors at home and abroad, while continuing to rely on livelihood strategies outside of the formal economy.

Chapter 6 Labour Market Segmentation in the European Union

6.1 Introduction

Until now, I have described the process of economic restructuring experienced by workers in Mezőfalva that has left them to lead precarious working lives marked by uncertainty at home and in migration. Here, I will examine, how and what the structuring frameworks are that act to situate workers as temporary migrants in the broader EU context, once they leave their village. As I described in chapter five, all of the temporary migrant workers I spoke with were employed in low paying, undesirable jobs at home and in other EU states, and I looked at how their working class and rural origins are part of the explanation, that constrained their opportunities at home and abroad in a variety of ways. However, migrants are not only limited by their class and rural origins. Hence I will look at three levels of structuring frameworks that also interact to situate migrants in the EU labour market.

At the first level, migrant workers are situated into the hierarchical labour market as they cross borders, depending on the position of their country of origin. Here I will consider the EU single market and significance of the process of Romania's EU accession, finalized in 2007, which involved a number of economic reforms in accordance with EU accession conditionality. These reforms, bolstered through aid tied to specific types of reform, placed Romania on a particular path of transformation following the collapse of the socialist state in 1989. The reforms have disadvantaged many of the villagers I spoke with by disrupting employment opportunities as well as flooding the market with foreign products with which locally produced items cannot compete. Without stable domestic employment or a market for their produce, workers

were forced to search for work farther abroad. As such, I argue that EU expansion brings with it processes experienced as accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003), after which workers are situated as migrant workers in the labour market of the EU, taking low paying and temporary positions in other EU states. Romania's position in the system of unequal states however, is not strong enough to determine where workers are situated in the labour market. At the second level, state policies on migration in both sending and receiving nations situate migrants into categories of workers, which affect their position relative to the state, as well as other citizens and non-citizens (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005). It appears that despite the EU's commitment to the free movement of labour, restrictive policies have the consequence of maintaining a reserve of temporary workers from eastern Europe to fill shortages in the domestic labour market, often in the least desirable types of jobs. However, even if their decisions are made within multiple structures of power, migrants are also agents who take initiative, and seek out work opportunities through well developed social networks leading to work opportunities abroad (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). A complex interaction of supranational positioning, state level policies, employer hiring practices, and individual characteristics interact in complex ways to shape labour and migration pathways.

6.2 An Integrating and Dividing Europe: Romania in the EU Context

In an increasingly globalizing world economy, not all states are positioned as equals. Citizens of some states, because of their histories of colonialism, imperialism, structural adjustment policies, underemployment and poverty, are under more pressure to emigrate, and move to other more favourably positioned states (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005).

In the broadest perspective then, workers are first positioned as labour migrants depending on the position of their state of origin in the global hierarchy of nation states (Brettel, 2000). Once on the move, they are available to fill the demand for cheaper sources of labour in certain segments of the labour market in wealthier nations, and because of their, and because of their social and economic disadvantage, they are more willing to accept these less desirable jobs in migrant receiving states (Lem & Barber, 2008). Positioning my research as part of the critique of methodological nationalism, I thus look at the way state borders and regional differences contribute to inequalities as workers engage in transborder migration (Faist & Glick Schiller, 2009). Just as there is a divide between economies in the global north and south, where as a result of unemployment, and economic, political, and environmental pressures, households in the global south rely on remittances acquired from working abroad (Bakan and Stasiulis, 2005), there is a similar divide between European east and west. Wealthier EU states both encourage emigration from the east through requiring and supporting economic restructuring that disrupts local livelihoods, and are also desirable destinations for migrant workers as the disparity in wages between the new and old EU countries is significant enough to drive out migration (Galgóczy et al, 2009). EU labour market expansion through the accession of east European states, goes hand in hand with migration policies that encourage circular migration, a part of a global trend towards neo-liberal state policies that create temporary, flexible workforces all over the world (Glick Schiller, 2009). The economic integration of the EU, premised on the free movement of capital, goods, services, and persons, means that with accession, workers can move farther afield to where their labour is in demand, and where wages even for unskilled

labour are higher than in the domestic labour market. Harvey (2003) has argued that Marx's original formulation of the concept of primitive accumulation, was not isolated to the origin of capitalist relations of production. He argued that it in fact continues to occur in new and old forms even today, as accumulation by dispossession, which includes as it did in the past, increased privatization of resources from public institutions and the retreat of state institutions such as those providing welfare and healthcare that earlier protected the working class (ibid.). I argue that EU expansion is experienced in Romania as a case of accumulation by dispossession, in which through the course of economic transformation led by the conditionality of EU accession criteria, Romania's market is being "opened up" to the European Union. Due to post-socialist transformation Romania's recently displaced workers are a new source of labour for older EU states, and a place of lower cost inputs for relocating manufacturing. Here I will position Mezőfalva within the broader context of the EU, by describing the EU single market, and the process and effects of Romania's 2007 accession on temporary labour migration.

First and foremost, EU accession means entry into an economic community, the common market of the EU. The EU was established in stages, following the Second World War mainly as a peace-keeping measure through economic ties (Pinder & Usherwood, 2007). By the second half of the 1950s however, the main policy agenda shifted towards the aim to create a common market, beginning first with the removal of barriers on quotas and tariffs for member states (ibid.). By the 1980s, in the general climate of neo-liberal economic ideals, policy makers looked to increased marketization and competition as the solution of high unemployment, inflation, and debt in European economies (ibid.). In response to these ideals, the first Schengen Agreement was signed

(1985), which independent of the EU, liberalized border control for signatory states (Wallace, 2005). The move toward free market reforms culminated in the creation of the Single European Act (signed 1986), which contained the EU's commitment to continue the program for the creation of the single market, but also how to accommodate future accession states into the EU framework (Young, 2005). After the end of the cold war, enlargement figured more prominently in EU as well as central and east European Country (CEEC) government plans (Sedelmeier, 2005).

In the case of eastern enlargement, accession means importantly that states are joining a common market under circumstances of economic inequality. The disparity between east and west in terms of wealth, quality of life, and competitiveness on the single market means that while eastern enlargement creates a more integrated Europe, it simultaneously creates internal divisions. Here I will briefly outline the process of Romania's accession and economic restructuring as it sought to fulfill the conditions for entry. After a period of relative economic isolation, especially during the latter years of the Ceaușescu government in Romania, during which the western governments sought to distance themselves from the repressive regime, Romania began the process of economic integration with the European Union (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2008). The road to the common market and EU accession began with the signing of trade and cooperation agreements, signed bilaterally between individual countries and the EU (Sedelmeier, 2005). It was decided at the G7 summit (1989) that the European Commission would organize transfers of aid money coming from the G24, as well as other international financial institutions and agencies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Paris Club (ibid.).

As the coordinator of these funds, both from itself and from the other financial institutions, the Commission was able to guide the process of transformation (Grabbe, 2006). This was followed by the implementation of the Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies program (PHARE), initially designed for Hungary and Poland but which from 1991 was also extended to Romania (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2008). This began a process of accession conditioned by adherence to entry requirements tied to funds supplied by these agencies, aimed at creating a market economy, not always in the favour of acceding states. Funds received by central and east European (CEE) states under the PHARE program were directed at projects aimed at market transformation, making the EU the entity that provided funds and determined the process of development according to its own criteria (Sedelmeier, 2005). In the process of accession, the EU has had an overwhelming control in restructuring acceding state public policies and institutions, not only through funding tied to specific changes but also, through the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office, in which for example civil servants are given placements in CEEC administrations and advise domestic civil servants (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). The Europe Agreement signed between Romania and the EU in 1993, implemented in 1995, for example, required Romania to liberalize trade in certain industries for the EU, but not the other way around (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2008). The Europe Agreements purpose to establish a free trade area within ten years of their creation (Grabbe, 2006). Furthermore, while the EU heavily subsidises its farmers, accession criteria require applicant states to reduce state involvement, even while members of the old EU states were able to fund ailing industries (Grabbe, 2002). From the beginning of the EU accession process,

implementation of the single market was an indisputable requirement for the CEECs, and the requirements were clearly laid out in the Single Market White Paper (1995) (Grabbe, 2005). The White Paper established legislation that liberalized trade in goods and services in the EU Single Market (Grabbe, 2006). Although not a legally binding document, CEE policy makers were eager to align their policy making with its stipulations, as it was a key piece that the Commission would use to assess the country's suitability for entry into the EU, making it important in guiding transformation in the CEE states (Grabbe, 2006).

The final decision to admit Romania into the EU came after the Copenhagen European Council, where the so called Copenhagen Criteria, a set of conditions that had to be met for CEE states to gain entry into the EU, were established (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2008). The criteria included a requirement for a liberalized market economy that would be able to compete within the EU common market (Sedelmeier, 2005). The 'pre-accession strategy', developed at the Essen European Council (1994) put in place specific measures to be taken by the CEE countries, but which were mainly focused on further economic liberalisation of trade (but leaving out the free movement of people) (Grabbe, 2006). However, the requirements of the pre-accession strategy had a strong influence on policy developments in the CEE (ibid.). The requirements for Romania's entry into the Union are both ill-defined and narrow in scope, even though there is a diversity of "market economies" within the old EU member states (Grabbe, 2002). As Grabbe (2006) notes, while this was true in the beginning, with the initial formulation of the Copenhagen criteria, by the time of the pre-accession strategies, conditions and criteria to be met were more specific, and largely determined by the

Commission. By the time of the creation of Accession Partnerships (1998), which contained even more specific EU criteria, increasing the role of the EU as opposed to the IFIs in conditioning reform, ensured that aid was tied to specific changes in the CEE states (although the CEE states themselves set up the mode of meeting criteria in the 'National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis') (ibid.). For Romania, criteria included privatizing two banks, privatizing state owned industries and agriculture, establishing agreements with International Financial Institutions, and negotiating foreign investment programs (ibid.). In other words, even if the EU was not directly specifying how to reform, accession criteria require a very specific type of market economy based on neoliberal reforms (Grabbe, 2002). Emphasis is placed on privatization, liberalization, and the retreat of the state from the economy to an extent that is not required for the EU15 (ibid.). Furthermore, the Commission required stricter adherence to the *acquis communautaire* (the body of EU law and legislation) than it did of its own existing members, with little chance of negotiation on the part of CEE states, and without commitments from the EU to the accession states in return (Grabbe, 2006). The assumption in the process being that the ideal path of development in the post-socialist states was the same as the EU criteria. Members of existing EU states were thus to be reassured that the addition of post-socialist states would not disrupt the functioning of the old EU members, who worried about an influx of migrant workers, and that accession would fit with existing visions of a proper social and economic setup (ibid.). In making my argument, I do not want to make it seem that I promote a model wherein the EU lays the rules and the CEE states are powerless; they of course also chose to follow, already planning as they were to create a capitalist market economy (Grabbe, 2006). However,

the case remains clear that in the process of accession, certain neoliberal requirements had to be met. The economic restructuring required in Romania as part of the criteria for EU accession has changed villagers' livelihood, and forced the state to emphasize the development of a free market at the expense of funding basic education and health care (Grabbe, 2002), institutions that would benefit the villagers I spoke with during my fieldwork.

These market reforms tied to EU accession are felt as increasing pressures at the village level by the people I spoke with at Mezőfalva. As I described in chapter two, they were disadvantaged by most reforms associated with the liberalization of the economy, and the privatization of industries and agriculture as stipulated by EU accession requirements after transformation. The negative effects of globalization, local produce and crafts being unable to compete with imports, meant a loss of livelihood opportunities and income in the region. Most recently, in an agreement negotiated with the IMF, EU, and World Bank, to qualify for a \$20 billion loan, the Romanian government planned to cut state pensions by 15 percent and wages by 25 percent. Although this decision was ruled illegal by the constitutional court, people I spoke with were very worried about the consequences to their livelihoods, given how small their incomes and pensions were already. Éva was furious with the way she felt EU money was being spent by the government, and the injustice of lowering pensions. She said,

The loans the country got from the European Union, they (politicians) all spent it, robbed it, pocketed it. What right do they have to take someone's retirement who paid tax for forty years to the state. But this is how it is.

It is understandable that loans and resulting reforms are viewed as robbery, because for villagers, despite loan transfers, there have been only decreases in resources and

employment as the state makes cuts in order to qualify for the loans, or to adjust the economy according to EU stipulations. Because of the push for reform, increased by Romania's position as an accession country in the European Union, and the gradual transformation to a market economy, making a living has been made more difficult. EU accession was met with skepticism and indifference at best, with either no perceived benefits or worry about its effect on the local economy. István expressed that in his opinion EU accession has only meant that two classes will emerge – one very rich and one very poor. In other words, the reforms and accession benefit some at the disadvantage of others. Piroška said,

When they announced that they will accept Romania into the Union, then again there was a cry of joy, that now things would be easier. Well, we've noticed that instead things are even worse because the austerity packages came. The one good thing is that we can go anywhere in the European Union without a visa and a passport, just with an identity card; but that the quality of life would have gotten a little bit better, we haven't noticed. And now that these deductions are coming, then there will be no benefit to us joining the Union.

She recognizes the connection between reform policies associated with EU accession and her own livelihood, in this case the wage and pension deductions proposed by the government. Other than the rare instances where workers expressed pride in their identity as hard workers, many of the migrant workers I interviewed had a sense that they were being used as cheap labour by the west. East European migrant workers in general are well aware of and have a sense of their exclusion and exploitation in the west, as they take undesirable jobs (Favell, 2008).

Once reforms implemented in the process of EU accession disrupt local livelihoods, a new group of labourers is made free to move on the labour market of the expanded EU. This freeing up of labourers has in fact been beneficial to western EU

states. Western European states are in fact experiencing labour shortages in some sectors and have a need for migrants from the east (Favell, 2008). In addition to requiring highly skilled workers, much of the shortages are in less desirable types of employment such as agricultural and domestic care, which domestic workers are increasingly less likely to fill (ibid.). For example, Norwegian farmers were faced with labour shortages because of high employment rates, and other better paying seasonal opportunities for domestic workers (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010). For this reason, since EU enlargement in 2004, they have had access to cheaper labour from eastern Europe, where because of the difference in welfare, standard of living, and social security between east and west (GDP levels in the EU8 are much lower than in the west), workers are willing to take on seasonal and short term work in Norway (ibid.). Because of economic differences between east and west, migrants are more likely to move west in search of relatively better wages and quality of life. (ibid.). These shortages are not being met by western European states, where even though there is freedom of movement, there has been no rise in the rate of intra-EU migration in western states since the 1970s, as development, funding, and welfare decrease differences between north and south in the west (ibid.). These states must then look to workers in the east, counting on the disparity in economic conditions between east and west, which provides the need for migration from the east. With the unequal distribution of wealth and power within the EU, workers are unequally situated in the global labour market of unequal nations. As it moves closer to its aim of a common market for the free movement of goods and people, the EU integrates but divides member states, as pressure to implement reforms aimed at liberalization of the market leave behind those unable to compete in the changed economic environment.

However, the simple fact that many east European, including Romanian, citizens are made available as migrant workers because they are displaced through economic restructuring of their local economies, is not sufficient to explain which position they end up in in the host labour market. In fact, regardless of their level of skill or education, east European migrants often end up in low paying and temporary work in agriculture, domestic work, or construction, when they migrate west to other EU states (Favell, 2008). This fact was confirmed in my own research, where jobs that people held while abroad were all manual labour jobs, most commonly factory work, agricultural, and domestic work. Even if migrants are leaving from a disadvantaged state, why are more ending up in the worst and lowest paying jobs in the EU?

6.3 Labour Migration Policy

The second level of structuring frameworks that situate transborder migrants into the labour market are labour and migration policies in both sending and receiving states. Policies that control migration flows produce types or categories of workers, and determine their relationships within the labour market and with employers in the receiving state (Anderson, 2010). Immigration controls produce different types of legality or categories of legal entry, that have different affects on a migrants' position in the labour market (ibid.), or create a status of illegality that increases workers' sense of fear, or deportability, and thus their docility and willingness to work, while simultaneously excluding them from benefits of the welfare state (De Genova, 2004). Immigration controls not only shape status through the mode of entry, but also the conditions of workers' stay, such as the length of time they are allowed to work in the receiving state (Anderson, 2010). The migration policies surrounding EU accession have had a

profound impact on situating eastern European workers in the EU labour market, and here I will consider the changes surrounding the process of accession in immigration controls in the EU and Hungary, which have had a profound impact on situating working class Transylvanian Hungarians as low skilled, temporary workers in the EU labour market.

Although freedom of mobility of people is considered one of the four freedoms of the EU common market, this does not yet entirely apply, to include a freedom to work without restriction in other EU states. Thus far, while freedom for the mobility for capital has been achieved, workers from recent accession states have not yet gained complete freedom to work within the EU. This however does not mean that workers are not on the move; it merely means that labour migration flows are unregulated, or undocumented, making some workers illegal, as they try to circumnavigate restrictions on movement, and in other cases, workers are allowed to move within restricted categories and quotas. While acceding EU countries saw ‘free movement’ as a right, this was not shared unanimously in the old EU15 (Galgóczy et al, 2009). At the time of accession all of the EU15 states, with the exception of Sweden, negotiated accession treaties for transition agreements which restrict workers from the newly acceded states to access their labour markets (European Commission, 2008). EU15 states debated whether or not to completely open their labour markets to workers from the new EU states because they worried about the possibility of high unemployment, and an excessive burden on state welfare, should they decide to admit workers from the east (ibid). Others worried that with the opportunity for cheaper wages in the east, their workplaces would relocate to the east in the search for cheaper production (ibid.). For example in response to these

concerns, the governments of the Netherlands and Denmark made an abrupt change in their policy on labour migration (Kvist, 2004). While earlier they had decided to open their markets, they finally decided to implement the transitional agreements (ibid.). In 2003, the Danish ministry of labour said in regards to this about turn in policy, which put more restrictions in incoming workers from the new EU states:

Danish employees can now sleep safely. EU enlargement will not result in undue pressure on wages. Firms can be happy that they will get access to labour from the new EU countries. And we can all be happy that we have put a fence around the Danish welfare schemes (Frederiksen, 2003, as cited in Kvist, 2004, p.302).

Despite these concerns, the overall impact of westward migration of new EU citizens has been beneficial to the EU15. Incoming migrant workers have in fact filled labour market shortages rather than taking jobs from nationals, and there appears to be no correlation between the transitional agreements and the number of migrant workers entering the labour market (Galóczi et al., 2009). Although protecting the welfare state is a benefit, from the perspective of a Danish citizen, it means that Denmark benefits from cheap migrant labour, but is not required to provide anything in return. In 2006 the European Commission recommended that nations reconsider, and the European Parliament that nations abolish transitional agreements, as they only contributed to creating more undocumented workers (ibid.). Furthermore, rather than replace nationals, studies have shown that migrants from the new accession states merely replaced former immigrant workers, who are more susceptible to competition from incoming workers than are citizens (ibid.). However, in many cases these restrictions are coupled with agreements to allow in specific categories of workers. Policies created both in Hungary and the EU have been tailored to suit the needs of receiving state labour markets by maintaining a temporary labour force, while trying to ensure that migrant workers do not

benefit from social welfare but fulfill roles that workers at home are less willing to take (Favell, 2008).

Recruitment policies of receiving states with sector specific labour market shortages are tailored to meeting these structural needs even in states that have signed transitional agreements. For example, in Norway the state established a seasonal immigration quota programme in 1990 (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010). Although Norway has not allowed Romanians free access to their labour market, the Directorate of Immigration issues work permits to Europeans (ibid.). In 2008, 79 000 such permits were issued; in 2007, 27 000 of these worked as short term workers in agriculture (ibid.). In the UK, A2 nationals (Bulgarians and Romanians) are treated separately from other applicants, including citizens of the A8 states, such that they can only work in UK as self-employed or seasonal workers (McKay, 2009). Similarly, Austria and Germany have had to make exceptions to their transitional agreements, both for certain professional jobs, but also jobs with low pay and difficult working conditions, such as domestic work (Galóczy et al, 2009). Favell (2008) argues that as this trend continues, western European economies will become similar to that of the US. wherein they will come to rely on immigrants to fill low skill sectors of the labour market such as manufacturing, agriculture, and service work. He also compares the situation to the flow of workers from Mexico to the US (ibid.). Just as the US. is simultaneously dependent on the lower cost, unskilled labour from Mexico, while at the same time trying to control this flow with increasing control at the border, western Europe requires workers from eastern Europe, but creates restrictions on movement (ibid.). The west benefits from a hard

working, “ethnically unproblematic” labour source who is more willing to work for low wages and little job security (ibid.).

Similar restrictions are in place for Romanians who wish to work in Hungary. I pay special attention to the Hungarian case because it has been a very popular destination for ethnic Hungarians living in Romania (Juhász, 2008). Here too, increasing restrictions on labour migration are coupled with policies that ensure migrants’ stays are temporary and suited to address shortages in the Hungarian labour market. In particular, it appears that the restrictive policies force many migrants to accept undocumented employment. Until 2007, ethnic Hungarians living in Romania had special status in Hungary through the Status Law and its 2005 replacement, the NSP (Butler, 2007). These benefits included educational, cultural, employment, social security, and healthcare benefits to Hungarians in neighbouring countries (ibid.). However, many have argued that while the Status Law extended certain benefits, its other purpose was to produce a supply of an easily integrated, flexible and often undocumented labour force that would not burden the welfare state through permanent resettlement (Butler, 2007; Fox, 2003). Workers were only allowed to work in Hungary for three months out of the year, and therefore often chose to take on undocumented employment to work for longer periods of time by working one month at a time, the time allowed for tourists visiting Hungary, to earn enough to support their households back home through financial remittances, or to take temporary work contracts (Fox, 2003). The NSP is also more explicitly geared to maintaining a temporary labour force, as it encourages would-be permanent residents to stay at home (Butler, 2007). The homeland programme package promotes economic development in the homelands of ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders, and another key

element speaks of integration and autonomy, or self-government within the context of EU integration. It seems the NSP is geared to maintaining a steady source of flexible labour that does not burden the welfare state, even though government rhetoric emphasizes the cultural unity of Hungarians across borders. Furthermore, Hungary has decided to impose transitional agreements, restricting the flow of labour migrants from Romania until 2013 (Horváth, 2007). In all, as the EU simultaneously expands its common market and as member states continue to put restrictions on the free movement of workers, eastern European, including Romanian workers are organized as a relatively cheap yet flexible labour force that will move to fill labour market shortages in undesirable segments of the western European labour market.

6.4 Ethnic Segmentation of the EU Labour Market

Not only is nationalism and national discourse used to express frustrations with market reforms and the disadvantages they bring, ethnic identifications are taken up in the process of fitting oneself into the labour market such that workers experience the labour market as ethnically segmented. In the process of labour mobilization, in which diverse groups of people are situated into hierarchical labour markets in the capitalist economy, ethnicities are set apart, ranked and given relative values (Wolf, 1982). As I described above, employers can take advantage of the disadvantaged position of certain types of citizens to ensure lower wages and rights for workers. Segments of the labour market become associated or wound up with a particular ethnicities and citizenships. In the case of Transylvanian Hungarians, ethnic segmentation is experienced such that they come to occupy the lowest status and least desirable jobs in the EU. During interviews, I noted several examples where workers stated they had been purposefully recruited in the

village because of their ethnicity, or differentiated by their employers based on their ethnicity and citizenship once they were at work. For example, Kinga, who worked as a temporary farm labourer in Germany stated,

In Germany for example, it's established who comes after whom. First come the Poles, then the Bulgarians, then the Romanians, then the Hungarian Hungarians, and after, we remain in the lowest level, the Hungarian Romanians. The Poles can get away with everything. It doesn't matter if they fight, one beats up the other. If trouble happens, the boss takes their side. They aren't fired as quickly, but they really let the Romanians and Hungarians go.

When I asked her why there is this kind of hierarchy, she said that it was because the Poles were the first who started working in Germany. They showed the Germans that they could work, and they sucked up a little to the bosses. It is interesting but not surprising, to note that all of these workers, regardless of where they fall in the hierarchy on the farm, are all from former communist states of central and eastern Europe. In addition, she noted that at the farm there are no German workers, because as she said "they wouldn't work for that amount of money... well, maybe for twice as much." She states that she is paid €4.5 per hour. Her cousin Rebeka, also present during the interview, commented that this is a good wage, to which Kinga replied that yes, for us this is a good wage, but not for them. Rebeka, who is also planning on joining her cousin on her next job at a farm in the Czech Republic agreed, saying "for that amount of money they wouldn't even get out of bed." Kinga clarified that the employer purposely recruits from Romania or Hungary because for them it is "more worth it" that way.

Sára, who now works temporarily in England at a garden centre, but started off as a migrant worker working on a camp site in Hungary, described how the workers there were divided along ethnic lines. The cook and her substitute were both Transylvanian while the server, receptionist, and administrator were Hungarian. In other words, the

front-of-line customer service employees were Hungarian, while the behind the scenes workers were Romanian. She herself was a cleaner, and along with the other Transylvanians, they performed the least desirable tasks like cleaning, cooking, and domestic work. As she indicated, she had found the advertisement for the job in the newspaper in Romania, and even now when she is browsing the want ads, she comes across the same employer advertising for her old job. Transylvanian Hungarians were specifically being recruited for the worst jobs at the camp site, even though she explained how much her boss disliked them. She said, “my boss, who from first light in the morning until it was dark at night, I worked for, hated Transylvanians but still he hired us as workers every year.”

Zsófia, who started domestic caregiver network in the village recalled how she had been asked by her employers in Hungary to recruit other women from her village. She stated that networks of friends want their parents taken care of at home because retirement centres are more expensive – in other words, hiring workers from eastern Europe is more affordable. Edina, who works as a caregiver in Germany elaborated on this important distinction. She informed me that there in Germany the wealthy put their elders in retirement centres - those people do not need to hire caregivers. She explained that it costs between €2500 and €3000 for Germans to put their aging parents in a retirement centre, so the wealthy are able to choose this option. However, she went on to explain that, “those people choose us who have more than a €1000 pension. From that they can pay us and some is left over for food. These are middle level families.” Workers from the poorer states, as for example the women in this village, are recruited by less well-to-do families in wealthier states, because they are more affordable. In this way,

ethnicity is equated with being a cheaper source of labour, a bargain, for those who live in wealthier European states.

Csaba, who works in Hungary as an electrician stated that in his experience in searching for work in Hungary, some employers ask for Transylvanians because they know that they will take the harder jobs and be more subservient; they will do more for less money. At other times, employers will say that they will not hire Transylvanians because they are not to be trusted, and they do not like them. In either case however, a certain ethnicity or citizenship is equated with being a particular type of labour, which influences employer hiring practices. This casting of certain groups as certain types of labour also affects worker self-identifications.

6.5 Isolation and Vulnerability of Foreign Workers

Ethnicity can divide the labour force in another way. Ethnicities can become associated with a segment of the labour market simply through long-term association. This association can be so strong that it shapes workers' self-identification. This is the case that villagers and other Hungarian Transylvanians faced when they took employment in Hungary. In a study of Hungarian Transylvanian migrant workers working in Hungary, Fox (2003) found that despite a shared language and ethnicity, the workers' physical and social isolation, positions in low status, low wage, often undocumented and degrading work, meant that the Transylvanian Hungarians constructed a self-identification distinct from Hungarians in Hungary. Simultaneously, they were set apart by the Hungarians themselves, who saw them as competition for already scarce work opportunities in Hungary, and used ethnic slurs to distinguish them such as labeling

them Romanian, Gypsy, and telling them to return home (ibid.). Because they felt excluded in Hungary, they developed another identity that placed them as separate from Hungarians in Hungary, and even went as far as arguing that they are more Hungarian, or true Hungarians as opposed to the hybrid Hungarians in Hungary (ibid.). I found the same phenomena at work in my research. In addition, some were quick to set themselves apart from Romanians, incorporating a sense of a strong work ethic as part of their national identity as Hungarians. Mónika argued,

... most Hungarians are working people. They like to work. They say that if a Hungarian living in Romania goes to Hungary, he goes to find work. The Romanian person, if he goes out, he's always looking for money. This is the difference. The Hungarian person always looks for work, the Romanian for money, he does business. He doesn't want to work, he wants to do business. We always look for where there are work opportunities so that we can work.

Just as Hungarian Transylvanians are disadvantaged in Romania because they are not fluent in Romanian, certain ethnicities are disadvantaged and end up in lower segments of the labour market also because of language barriers, which prevent them from interacting with the wider society and the possibility of learning about their rights, including situations where they are being paid below the legal minimum wage (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010). Kinga noted that because she does not speak German, it is possible that she has rights that she is not aware of or can claim, but because she is unable to communicate with her employers or to find out what these may be, she feels she may well be exploited. This disadvantage that she faces in the workplace with employers and co-workers can also be extended to a migrants' dealings in society in general. As EU citizens, workers are entitled to welfare benefits, however as Rye and Andrzejewska (2010) found in their study of migrant farm workers in Norway, very few knew about these possibilities, or knew how to access them, given the language barriers.

Furthermore, because migrant workers tend to communicate with co-workers who speak their own language and who may share the same low expectations of work, they may not see resistance or change as an option or even necessary (Rye and Andrzejewska, 2010).

Even if workers are able to speak the language, as is the case for Transylvanian Hungarians in Hungary, their working conditions may be physically and socially isolating, such that they are not able to interact with the wider society. For example as I described in chapter five, domestic workers I spoke with, and labour migrants in general, may work in isolating conditions and have little contact with people outside the households they work in, making collective demands for rights more difficult (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010; Barber, 2010). For example, when I asked Alíz what her experience was like in Hungary and how Hungarians there saw her as a Transylvanian, she replied: „I don't go out, I'm not used to going here and there. The closest store if I buy vegetables, fruits, rolls. The closest one. I am not so familiar that I could go farther, so that I could get to know them (the Hungarians).” In most cases, domestic workers simply do not have the time to think about their rights. Zsófia is only allowed a one or two hour break each day, which she was granted only after consistent demands, because her employer did not want her to leave the house. Otherwise she works from morning until at least nine at night. These working hours for domestic workers, as I found from my interviews, are not at all atypical. They simply have little time in their day to leave work and become familiar with their surroundings, or interact with the wider society, and they have few opportunities to make friends outside of their existing network of domestic workers. Furthermore, as Rye and Andrzejewska (2010) found, workers were afraid to make demands because employers told them that they would not hire them again the next

year. As there is such an abundant supply of labour coming in from the east, western employers can count on workers who are willing to accept lower wages and worse conditions, even if some demand more (ibid.). Because they need the money, workers are willing to accept the lower wages. This is based however in the huge economic disparity between east and west that I described above, in combination with the uneven mobility caused by labour market restrictions associated with EU accession.

6.6 Migrant Agency

While Romania's position in the EU market, immigration and border policies, as well as migrants' vulnerability and isolation on the job, all shape labour migration flows, it is also important to consider the role of migrant agency. Even if constrained by these structures of power, migrant workers are still active decision makers, who are often well informed and adept at navigating citizenship and migration policies, in some cases even circumventing restrictive policies with the help of their social networks. For example, Barber (2008) found that Filipino migrant women are "structured agents", who's decisions, though structured by policy shifts, colonial history, and the Philippines' current position in the global economy, have kept informed about changing citizenship and immigration policies in Canada through social networks, and recruiting and consulting agencies. They also engage in 'performed subordination' to self-represent in ways they know are more appealing to employers in Asian markets (ibid.). Workers are not only compelled to mobility or immobility in the process of capitalist restructuring, based on their class position, but in some cases are also agents who can mobilize collective action; they are both classed subjects and agents of history (Lem & Barber, 2010). Furthermore, working abroad, especially where one does not speak the language, and with few friends

or plans for formal work, requires bravery, and migrants are fully aware of the risks and policy restrictions such moves entail. Culic (2008) found that after the removal of visa requirements, there was no accompanying increase in the number of migrant workers (Culic, 2008). In addition, despite increasing restrictions aimed to limit undocumented workers from crossing the border, there was no accompanying decrease in the number of workers taking undocumented work in the EU (ibid.). Based in a study of Romanian and Moldovan migrant workers in the European Union, Culic (2008) found from ethnographic interviews with migrants that despite many of the restrictions placed at entry and exit within the EU, migrants were knowledgeable of legislation concerning immigration, work, and social protection, as well as the institutions and procedures for working in the countries of destination. They knew how to “correctly” answer the questions of authorities, and found ways to circumvent border controls both at entry and exit (ibid.). While the restrictions are different for the Hungarians I spoke with in my research, I found that they were equally knowledgeable and adept at navigating policies to their best advantage. For example, Mónica said that in Holland,

Romanians are not allowed to work, Hungarians can. It doesn't matter that we are now a member of the Union because it's always just the bad - when someone leaves Romania and does something bad, that's all they show in the media. That people from here are willing to accept every kind of work and finish it honourably, and work honestly, they don't know that anywhere. Of course they are prejudiced. My friends told me that in Holland, we should use the Hungarian identity card, not the Romanian passport... they stole, cheated, this is the truth. Maybe it wasn't even Romanians, because I think it was Gypsies.

She feels that she needs to emphasize her Hungarian identity in place of Romanian, because of the bad reputation it has in some places, but not only that, she also makes sure to put away her Romanian passport and use instead her Hungarian identification when

searching for work, because Romanians she says are not yet allowed to take work in Holland while Hungarian citizens are.

Temporary migrant workers also circumvented border controls with the help of social networks. In Mezőfalu, except for a few examples, most work is either found through networks of kin or acquaintances, or is undertaken in groups of kin and friends. In total, I interviewed eight women who were a part of the same network that started with Zsófia ten years ago. She lost her job working at a flower shop in Hungary, and was asked by a friend to work as a live-in domestic worker. Since then, she has helped other women, who then in turn help their friends, to find work as domestic workers in Hungary. She herself has now moved on to working in Germany and is pursuing a certificate in care work which will improve her income and work opportunities. The women help each other access jobs by switching with each other, usually one month at a time. Women learn through word of mouth, which households in Hungary are looking for care workers, and in this way jobs are passed along within this network of friends and kin back home. Until Romanians faced restrictions on their residence abroad, for example the three month restriction in Hungary, this method also allowed the women to circumvent border policies. By returning each month, none extended the legal limit of one month in Hungary, and although it meant shorter working periods in the course of the year, this allowed them each to work as much as they could without risking complications at the border. Within this network, the women are aware of the policies in place surrounding labour and migration, and negotiate these to their best advantage by helping one another out. Friends and acquaintances also help each other by passing along information about employers in agriculture, most prominently about the orchard in Hungary I described in

chapter five. However, while accruing advantages by circumventing border control policies with the help of these social networks, in the process they become ‘illegal’ or temporary workers, the most vulnerable sector of the labour market. Despite their skill and knowledge in navigating labour market policies in the EU, workers are willing to take the risk.

In my research I found that labour migration, even for highly undesirable jobs, was undertaken with full awareness of the difficulties workers would face on the job, the insecurity of the employment, and the relatively low wages. As I described in chapter five, the conditions of employment as caregivers are uncertain and often difficult to bear, with little protection from employer demands including long working hours, inadequate nutrition, and feelings of being ‘locked in’, which contributes to shorter term stays. However, many still chose to take on such employment, first, because regardless of how low the wages and how undesirable the employment, they assessed their opportunities in the domestic labour market and the pay they could get there, and employment abroad still seemed to have more benefits. Even the lowest wages in other EU states are greater than what any of them would earn in comparable employment at home. From their point of view then, if in either scenario they would have unsecure and difficult employment, it makes more sense to choose the same work that while farther away, gives them the chance of a higher income. Aside from allowing them a greater income, which they would not otherwise be able to earn in Romania, the income they earned abroad is used to improve their living standards, both through home renovations and also as a way to produce the capital needed to become self-employed. For example, László and Viktória have used their earnings to make improvements on their home, refurnishing the inside to

be more comfortable and up to date. Katalin has built a new addition to her house, which will be improved with the addition of a washroom once she earns more money from migration. Mónika and her husband are saving the money they earn in Holland to buy the house next door, which they plan to repair and start a bed and breakfast to bring tourism to the village. István has used his earnings from working in Austria to build a new and large house for his family. I want to emphasize that migrant workers are very much aware of where they are situated, and their position of disadvantage as cheap labour when they go abroad, as several of my conversations revealed, but they still do make the decision to go and it is helpful to have the extra income migration provides. Despite how much migration can help raise the living standards for those willing to take the risk, there are other social consequences to migration. After all, people's emotional and social experience both shapes and is shaped by the political economy, and the strategies they use to make a living. In the next chapter, I will look more closely at how perceptions of villagers have changed not just as a result of labour migration, but because of the drastic economic restructuring that shapes villagers' lives since the end of socialism.

Chapter 7 Social Change and Emotions in the Post-socialist Political Economy

7.1 Introduction

The drastic political and economic changes people have experienced in post-socialist transformations have been accompanied by strong emotions, both negative and positive, that have had an effect on people's political outlook and influence their actions (Svašek, 2006). There is a tension between political economy, subjectivity and emotions, and community, which means that the changes have not only affected how people go about their daily life and make a living. People respond to these changes on a much more personal level. A commonality among post-socialist societies is that the initial feelings of hope and euphoria that accompanied the collapse of socialism quickly subsided. Initially, people believed their lives would improve, they would be more prosperous, and in some cases they hoped for ethnic tolerance (ibid.). Unfortunately, for many people, including the people I spoke to in my research, things only seem to have become worse. While people had initially been excited and hopeful for a better future, in their current responses their emotions about their situation in Romania and the EU, and their outlook on the future are overwhelmingly negative. Overall, in the general climate of uncertainty, corruption, emerging class distinctions, unstable work, and high unemployment, which only seem to be getting worse, respondents have many reasons to worry and fewer reasons to hope. Like Heady and Miller (2006), I argue that negative emotions are not only the result of the severe economic conditions, but also of the drastic changes in the structures that organized villagers' working lives, inside and outside the home, and that had historically created a cohesive community. It is no surprise that when the taken-for-

granted, everyday experience of the way things are no longer holds true, and people are left to cope not just with hardship but seemingly endless uncertainty, their emotional response includes nostalgia for the past, growing feelings of isolation, mistrust, and fear for the future. I argue that these emotional responses are not only based in the real social and economic dislocation produced in the post-socialist transformation, but by referencing the past and criticizing the future, they are also criticisms of the way things are and what they are expected to be. In fact, nostalgia for the socialist past may not really be about the past at all, even though they use specific reference to the past, but merely the wish for a better present, which includes aspects they attribute to the past including safety, solidarity, and prosperity (Velikonja, 2009). They use the imagined past as a point of contrast to the uncertainty of today (Kideckel, 2008).

7.2 Post-socialist Nostalgia

Nostalgia is an emotion that has emerged in different studies of postsocialism (Heady & Miller, 2006). It is common for people, as they reminisce about the past, to claim that certain things were better during socialism (ibid.). As Piroška described,

In '89 when the regime fell, we thought it would be so good but maybe it's much worse than the way it was in the previous regime because then they required us to work and they ensured we had access to the minimum. But now, there is food but no money to buy it with. This is how it is. It's hard.

However, even when they remembered the past, I heard frequent contradictions between nostalgia for the socialist past combined with an acknowledgement of its hardships. The past is remembered as a time of greater stability, which is contrasted to the uncertainty experienced today. Yet some respondents acknowledge that the past was not perfect either. Teréz explained, there is no longer the same level of severity and danger that

there was back then. Now people have more freedom. Socialism was not easy either, as people had to deal with shortages, corruption, and human rights abuses. In addition, the official rhetoric valorizing the working class as the developers of the socialist state was also used as a means of social control, and workers were subordinated as a class to state and party managers (Kideckel, 2008). In other words, the past was not entirely a time of equality, plenty, and fraternity as some nostalgic reminiscences might have us believe. Some interview participants agreed, admitting that the past was not all good, even while they emphasized that it was better than the present. Éva remembered the ordered life in the socialist state saying, “Well in Ceaușescu’s time it wasn’t very good either. The only thing that was good is that there was order. When Ceaușescu said it was red, it was red. But now it’s not like that.” This quote expresses how the uncertainty which people have struggled with since the end of socialism causes them to be nostalgic for the past. This is understandable in Éva’s case. Her livelihood is very uncertain dependent as it is on declining tourism, which supports her *kirakat* business, and her husband’s seasonal and unstable employment as a construction worker. Even when people recognize there was hardship before, they recall that it was ordered, and gave them a certain level of certainty. But now, when things are both hard and uncertain, people are nostalgic for the past. What nostalgia for socialism expresses then is not a real past that was necessarily better than the present, but a hoped for present that is more stable, in which people can more easily make a living, where things seem more fair (Velikonja, 2009). It is fear of the present and the future, and the uncertainty that it means, that leads people to look backwards, even while acknowledging the hardships they experienced in the past.

Another sentiment I heard repeated many times over the course of my interviews is a sense that since the end of socialism, life has become more “fake” and as a consequence, unhealthy both physically and morally. In particular, respondents recalled that during socialism everything was “natural” and both people and the environment were healthier. Now however, as Katalin explained, things are “plastic”, no longer home-made from naturally derived materials grown by the people in the village, such as from hemp that was locally grown and processed at home to make clothes and blankets. People worried about the man-made materials, chemicals, and plastics not just because they are “fake” and not locally produced, but also because of their relation to what they perceive as a general decline in health in both people and animals. While at the time I did not think to ask about the use of chemicals in agricultural production during socialism, one recurring comment from respondents was a complaint about the use of chemicals and artificial fertilizers in gardens and fields. Katalin complained that people can no longer work as hard, the chickens are dying for an unknown reason, and people are getting sick, but before they used to work until they were eighty. In her eyes, the years since socialism are seen as a time of general decline in health. Without being able to verify these claims, I argue that it is not necessarily a real decline in health that may be at work here, although that is quite possible, since so many state social services have been withdrawn and people have few resources to afford adequate health care. For example Piroska has to migrate to work as a domestic worker in Hungary to earn enough each time to pay for her necessary surgeries, but because of the conditions of deprivation she experiences there, this also takes a toll on her health each time. Also, studies do indicate that the type of stress associated with economic uncertainty is associated with higher rates of heart disease

(Stone, 2000), as well as the prevalence of health problems and falling life expectancies among east central European workers (Kideckel, 2008). However, it is also possible, given how ubiquitous comments about declining health are, that people also express their general feelings of social and economic dislocation by talking about unhealthy “fake” materials and declining health. Kideckel (2008) found based on a study of former coal miners and chemical workers in Romania, that the former workers felt their bodies were under attack, and they blamed their illness on their powerlessness in the political and economic sphere. Workers felt that their health was directly and negatively affected by stresses associating with work, corruption, and national economic problems (ibid.). I argue that the same phenomenon is at work in Mezőfalu where people complain about declining health and environment.

Change from natural to manmade materials is not just the difference between natural and unnatural, it also signifies an erosion of values where being fake is synonymous with general decline in morality in post-socialist society. As Róza explained, because now there are plastic things, people have to go abroad to work because no one values the locally produced items that they used to be able to sell. This of course is not just nostalgia, but the reality of the open market, where locally made products cannot compete with imports, forcing many to abandon the traditions they grew up with and readjust their livelihoods to the restructured economy, which can be a difficult course to navigate. Although an isolated instance, Piroska very strongly tied the decline in economic certainty and livelihood in the region to a decline in stability and morality as well, saying:

Many youth work abroad, many with families. This is why there are many families pulling apart, many divorces. This is why children can't tend their

fathers, the morals of the youth are very corrupted, which brings with it drugs, everything one can see in the television. We can't even see a way out, that it could be better, because it isn't better. It's getting worse. When the factories, plants, everything disbanded, when the agricultural cooperative disbanded, which at the time they had built from our hard earned money, they built and now they demolish, so on what can the country build itself?

With their economic as well as social base disrupted at the end of socialism, many of the older generation find it difficult to adjust to the changes.

The nostalgia also combines with at times an unrealistic ideal of how good life is in the “West”, which I put in quotation marks because I think “West” stands for more of an ideal – modernity and wealth, rather than a geographical location. Verdery (2003) found that during the socialist era, people had an unrealistic image or myth of what life was like in the west, which they saw as a place of prosperity, unlike their own more restricted lives (Svašek, 2006). I found myself explaining several times that life is not always easy even in Canada, and poverty exists in the west as well. Sára told me:

There in England everyone is so happy, there there is no sadness. There's no such thing that I should be wondering whether or not I can pay the gas, whether I can buy that thing for my daughter. Everyone can buy everything for themselves. Everyone has two, three cars.

Anna responded to her comment saying, “in Romania everyone is so sad, serious. It's because of the situation.” Thus not only are people nostalgic for a past, describing it in more favourable terms than it was in actual reality, they imagine life outside of Romania, in the west in exaggerated positive terms. Both express their wishes for a better future and a criticism of the way things are in Romania in the present.

7.3 Corruption and Mistrust

Part of the reason why people may feel nostalgia for the past is because of the very real corruption that permeates many of the institutions that people access on a daily

basis, including finding employment and accessing health care. I got the sense that this kind of corruption is frustrating to people because it means an extra expense as they have to pay their way to services or jobs that otherwise should not have an out of pocket cost. This is especially difficult for people who are already cash poor, and also because it is frustrating, seen as not fair, that some are exempt from the rules, which makes it difficult for others to navigate the system. Unfortunately, although I did not have any firsthand experience to validate this myself, corruption seems not just to be an exaggeration born out of nostalgia for socialism, but a very real part of everyday life. The two cases I heard about personally involved the health care system and finding employment. For example, Gábor was worried about his daughter, who was just about to finish her nursing degree. According to him, if they had any hope of getting a decent job, for example at a hospital, he knew and was prepared to have to pay up to €2000 for his daughter to help her secure a position. Another example of this is the health care system, in which having to pay extra from everything from admittance to the hospital, to then having a bed, to nurses and doctors for their treatment seems to be fairly common. Laura told me that her mother has to visit the hospital twice a year for treatment for her arthritis, and every time, she has to pay to get a hospital bed. She explained that they “make you feel it if you don’t give them anything.”

Corruption is also a very real phenomenon in the government. At first, when I listened to Éva complain to me that politicians waste money by living in hotels and taking the money given to Romania from the EU for their own use, I thought she was just exaggerating, expressing her frustration with the fact that although money was given to the country by the EU, she saw no positive results because it only led to more

restructuring that had a negative effect on her livelihood. In fact, although my interpretation may hold true in some cases, this time she was not wrong. Accusations of corruption were an important issue both before and even after EU accession (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2008). The EU commission reported in 2003 that little progress had been made in combating corruption through policy, and that it remained widespread in all levels of society (ibid.). At this time, several ministers resigned after corruption accusations, including one case involving the husband and son of the minister of European Integration, who had been accused of embezzling as much as €150 000 from EU commission funds (ibid.). Despite this prominent case, few high profile suspects of corruption have been involved in investigations or brought to court (ibid.). On a more personal level, people have had to take advantage of corruption to survive. Many people currently on disabled pension had bribed doctors to sign the appropriate forms, to allow them to go on pension, even when they had no real disability. However, given that there were no jobs, and no other options, they were left with no other choice. Indeed, even now in retirement, they rely on their hard labour as migrant workers to supplement their small pensions, to survive. However, some do not look favourably on this practice. Piroska was very adamant in explaining that she could have chosen to go on pension in this fashion, but chose honesty instead, and so receives very little money. I cannot say whether people have any moral qualms about this, but knowing that they themselves are forced to partake in a corrupt system can only increase their feelings of general mistrust, as it reinforces a perception of general corruption in all levels of government, including social services. With so much unpredictability, not only in their livelihoods, but in the government and everyday services, it is no wonder that people are nostalgic for an

ordered past. However, it is not that they wish to return to the way things were in the past, as they do enjoy greater personal freedom and less outright ethnic discrimination, but that they wish for a better and fairer present and future in which the process of daily activities is more transparent and easier to navigate.

At other times however, I got the sense that people assume corruption even where it might not really exist. There appeared to be a general feeling of mistrust among people, who lament the loss of community they felt before the end of socialism⁵. In one sense, this general mistrust may be borne of the uncertainty and fear people experience as they navigate the restructured economy and cope, but also because of the way the restructured economy has pulled people apart, as they navigate the free market as individuals rather than members of the collective. Éva told me, “Here in Romania there is only deceit – everyone is lying, no one is trustworthy. They steal, cheat.” Given her comments about politicians wasting EU money, I asked, does this mean everyone in her opinion, or just the politicians? She answered, “of course, everyone... everyone is looking for a way to take advantage of the other.” I then asked her, is this because there is so much scarcity, and she said, “Yes. That’s why. We have no choice.” Because not even the bare minimum, in basic necessities such as food and income is ensured by the state, people have a sense of desperation.

Increased suspicion is also a response to the market economy and emerging individualism. People who are too successful or try to accumulate too many possessions or money are looked upon with suspicion. Tamás, who now runs a successful *kirakat* and grocery store out of his home, told me his nickname among the villagers is “the Jew.” He

⁵ I do not have adequate research to compare the social life of the village in the past and present, a topic that would require further research.

knows that people are jealous of everything he has achieved for himself, which indeed has been no small feat given his start as a migrant worker in Hungary. Since then however, not only has he managed to start up and run a successful business and manage his farm lands as well as his own gardens and animals around the house, with the help of his family, he has built a large new house in the village. He was careful to justify to me how he had earned what he had through his hard work and through carefully saving over the years, pulling out a calculator, and counting for me exactly how he had saved through making sacrifices over the years. The concern he had with justifying his success is a symptom of the fact that any kind of individual success is regarded with a suspicion and mistrust in the village. Márta and her husband Péter are similarly looked down on for their success. They are seen as being too greedy because they have so many animals at their household, including 16 grown pigs, as well as piglets, hens, chickens, and one cow for milking. Compared to other villagers this is quite a lot - no one else I visited had even close to this many household animals. Furthermore, many also expressed jealousy about the villagers who work in the local gas extraction industry, which by local standards provides a very decent income and stable employment, especially when contrasted with the relatively unstable, low paying employment that the rest of villagers have access to. Although this was not something I could confirm, they are also accused of having obtained their jobs by unfair means, which if true, only indicates the real uncertainty and corruption that people are forced to contend with, and if not, a symptom of the general mistrust and jealousy that people feel towards their more successful neighbours.

In one regard, this jealousy is not surprising, given that the cooperative had organized villagers lives both socially and economically, and their opportunities for

personal accumulation had been limited. As I described in chapter two, personal production was limited to small field and garden plots, and even that was dependent on co-operative machinery, as their own machinery and large animals were taken by the co-operative. In the socialist period, even though there was a divide between workers and the state and party managers, differences in income and employment within the working class were minimal (Kideckel, 2008). The large disparities in income are a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged since the end of socialism, and individuals are left to fend for themselves on the market. Not only that, there are simply fewer instances where villagers can come together and co-operate, creating a sense of cohesiveness and community. Aside from the church and the community centre, which only appears to be used on special occasions, but otherwise is closed and unattended, there does not appear to be a centre where people gather together. This represents a change from the past when people worked together in the fields for the agricultural cooperative, went to church together and, as Anna explained, even built houses for each other in work groups. It may be that because people are not able to see each other's behavior often enough, in such collective endeavours that existed in the past, there is no basis for trust (Heady & Miller, 2006). In my experience, generosity and helping out were limited to friends and neighbours, which in this argument, would be because they are more easily observed and relationships are easier to manage. Lockwood (1966) distinguishes between 'traditional proletarian' communities in which work is organized in relatively isolated solidary communities, in which social networks extend from relationships inside work to outside, and workers in capital-intensive and new industries, in which work is only a means to develop a fulfilling life in the home. In this latter experience, workers are isolated from

one another, focusing as they do on individual consumption and the home (ibid.). The same phenomenon may be at work in the village, where the collective work that organized worker's lives, is absent, and the sense of community has been lost.

Post-socialist transformation not only changed the economic context in which workers make a living, but the basis for their identities, which can also add to feelings of anxiety, alienation, and nostalgia for socialism. Because of economic changes, they not only lost their employment, but their very sense of self. This is because the work place not only provided a means of earning a living but was the institution that organized social and cultural relationships outside of work (Bridger & Pine, 1998). So strong was this identification with the organization of work, connected as it is to social and emotional values, that elsewhere workers have resisted neoliberal reforms to the collective economy (Gambold, 2010). Although under external pressure Moshkino farmers did reorganize to create a private company out of the collective farm, according to market principles, for the villagers themselves it acted more like a traditional collective that provided emotional and social support (ibid.). Also, unlike workers in the west, they were unprepared to deal with the idea of unemployment, a phenomenon few would have had any experience with in a state system committed to full employment (ibid.). Although I do not have direct evidence from my interviews, as it was not a topic that I anticipated when designing my research project, it is possible that a similar displacement that workers feel socially is also a factor in Mezőfalva. This helps to explain the overwhelming negative feelings of the villagers I spoke with. During socialism, workers, especially in Romania, were celebrated under a "cult of labour" (Kideckel, 2008). Although also a method of social control,

emphasizing work for the interests of the state, it also provided a rhetoric that made workers into heroes, builders of the Romanian state (ibid).

Now however, they are only faced with instability, difficult conditions, and low wages in the labour market. Left to their own devices, they construct more individual identities which are not necessarily tied to a sense of common class identity. Nor are they tied to relationships formed through work, as would have existed in the agricultural co-operative. Further, as Mollona (2009) argues, such individualization can lead to worker alienation. While during socialism people identified with work, their class identity was important, and sameness was encouraged. In post-socialism, they feel pressure to define themselves as individuals through consumerism (Kideckel, 2008). Once a person drops out of the network of interactions structured through the collective, as people are left to fend for themselves, they often drop out of the network completely (ibid.). Migration exacerbates the social distance as they become less known, and the basis for trust is lost (ibid.). Now that they all get by individually, it is understandable that people are less involved in each other's lives, and without that sense of familiarity and closeness, feelings of suspicion can result. It is to be remembered importantly that the transition is one from a collective organization to market and democracy, a more individualistic economic organization (Heady & Miller, 2006). Without a common worker identity or a common work experience, both inside and outside the work place, feelings of mistrust may be exacerbated.

Furthermore, even more differences can emerge among people in economic and social terms. While it would be too much to call this an emergence of class differences within the village, there are now noticeable divisions in wealth as some, but very few, are

able to build new homes, buy cars, or install conveniences such as running water and bathrooms in their homes. In fact a common complaint was the emergent individualism combined with a nostalgia for the community that existed in the past. As Klára put it, quoting Petőfi Sándor, a famous Hungarian poet, “locked gate, locked soul” is how it is these days. She went on to say, “Now they don’t help. Until now, they helped. In construction, everything.” Although she went on to say that it is not like it is in Hungary yet, where people lock their doors and you have to call ahead to visit. Katalin also emphasized that there is still a difference between how it is in Hungary where she works, and in the village, where she feels there is a community. People still greet each other on the street, and they are not individualistic. People still do sit in front of their gates and chat in the evenings. On several occasions the neighbor would drop in to chat or bring over something from her garden, and as I described in chapter three, people still rely on help from friends and family. However, research participants emphasized that it is not like it was in the past. Klára believes that the reason such individualism is emerging today is because of money, and because people are going abroad, where they learn to be more individualistic: “The people saw, they went abroad to work, they saw how things are abroad, where they lock their doors, they don’t let you in, it’s the same here.” Péter, repeating her sentiments told me, “here people are starting to become more individualistic; earlier, people got together, fifteen, twenty people went together to hoe in the fields. In the evenings, they sat at their gates to talk; but today not as much. They watch TV.” Piroska explained, “people have turned away from each other. There isn’t peace between them, the love that held them together. They’re more individualistic, they’ve run to money, they come and go, abroad, they go out for fun, and this hunt after

money...” In one sense, this is true. Not only are those who migrate abroad able to access a larger income, and use their remittances to renovate their homes, setting them apart materially from villagers who stay and work at home, their work also removes them for periods of times from social networks. While it is true that they can thus improve their material standard of living, the stability of their social lives, just like their working lives, become uncertain.

The same process of economic restructuring that has created uncertainty in villagers’ working lives has so affected villagers subjective experience that they feel isolated, insecure suspicious in their own community. As Katalin told me, “evil comes from poverty”, to explain how she felt that the change in the community is a result of the effects of the rapid changes in the last twenty years, which have had serious consequences for the people of Mezőfalu. The emphasis on flexibility, individual enterprise, and the retreat of state support that accompanied post-socialist transformation, and the reforms of the past twenty years associated with EU accession, have created not only precarious livelihoods, but precarity and uncertainty in the social life of the village.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Pluriactivity and the Role of Labour Migration

Despite the drastic changes experienced by Transylvanians in the last century, including changing borders and political and economic systems, certain aspects of village life in Mezőfalu have stayed the same. I have argued that now, as in the past, Mezőfalu villagers have had to engage in a variety of livelihood endeavours in order to secure a living. Borrowing from Narotzky and Smith (2006), I used the term *pluriactivity* to best describe how households, and individuals over the course of their lives, have engaged in multiple livelihood strategies to navigate the rapidly restructuring economy. Research participants spoke of each activity they engaged in as a form of *pótolás*, meaning “supplement”, to describe their livelihoods. During the socialist period, as they do now, villagers lived in multiple generation households where often one member commuted to work in a factory in one of the nearby rapidly industrializing towns, while others worked at home, or in the village agricultural cooperative. What has changed however, since the latter years and finally the collapse of the socialist state in 1989, is that Mezőfalu villagers have been left to navigate the uncertainty of the market economy without the support of the state, despite fewer opportunities for work in the local formal economy.

As making a living has become even more difficult in the last 20 years, villagers have had to expand the geographic range of their working lives. While in the past, some commuted to the nearby cities for days or even a season, to work in industry, today they go farther afield. To survive, many villagers have decided to take upon themselves the risks and uncertainties involved with circular migration to Hungary and other EU states, often accepting very undesirable working conditions and little compensation for their

hard work. I argued that circular labour migration's role within the full context of villagers' livelihood strategies is as another form of *pótolás* that is not enough on its own, but is one of many activities villagers engage in to supplement household income.

The effects of transformation and men's and women's role in livelihood strategies are strongly divided by gender. First, economic transformations are felt even more strongly by women. This is because of a socialist legacy during which policies were geared to sustaining women as part-time workers and primary care givers, and also because of gender norms today which associate women with caring labour and home work, hence they face even more uncertainty in the formal economy. Several women I spoke with had left their jobs in order to care for elderly relatives or children, making their livelihoods even more precarious. In migration, I also found that the older generation is strongly gender divided in the kind of work they pursue abroad. Without exception, all those who take on domestic work are women, although a few I spoke with also work in agriculture alongside the men. Men's work, with a few exceptions, is dominated by manual labour jobs – including construction and agricultural work.

8.2 Ethnicity and Migration

While paying heed to Glick Schiller and Wimmer's (2003) warnings about methodological nationalism in the social sciences, I also felt it necessary to examine the role of ethnic identification in shaping Mezőfalu villagers position in the local political economy, and in shaping their migration pathways. Given the importance of ethnic identity to research participants, their minority status, and the history of discrimination and general government encroachment on minority rights during the socialist period, to ignore ethnicity would have been irresponsible. However, I argued that in the present, in

the absence of outright discrimination, it is a combination of ethnicity and class, in the shape of rural working class origins that disadvantage the Hungarians in Mezőfalu in the local labour market. First, I found that despite living in Romania, many villagers are not sufficiently fluent in Romanian, which makes finding and holding formal employment more difficult. Their linguistic disadvantage is class based, as villagers have fewer opportunities to interact with Romanians, and the quality of education in the villages is much lower than that in the city. In addition, putting ethnicity into a historical context in which Hungarians have gradually fallen from their position as the privileged ethnicity since the transfer of Transylvania to Romania in 1920, I argue that expressions of ethnic discrimination also express class based frustrations on the part of Hungarians. Through circumscribing who is and is not a legitimate inhabitant of Transylvania, Hungarians circumscribe the group of people who are entitled to make claims on the state and have preferential access to the labour market in Romania.

Furthermore, I argued that despite the greater ease of working in Hungary, given a common language and culture and until recently Hungarian government policies that reached out to Hungarians outside its borders, many would rather take advantage of the opening borders of the EU to migrate even farther abroad. Aside from a few instances where respondents felt it would be too difficult to work in a country where they do not speak the language, rather than ethnic identification, it is higher wages that are the most important deciding factor for migrant work destinations.

8.3 Impacts of EU Expansion

Although often marked by huge celebrations, and heralded as the next step in the development of central and eastern Europe towards a more modern, “European” political

and economic system, I have argued that EU accession has in fact had a negative effect on the people of Mezőfalva. From the beginning, the process of EU accession meant political and economic restructuring according to accession conditionality. This framework places the villagers I spoke with at an even greater disadvantage in the expanding EU and as Romania is further integrated into a hierarchy of unequal states. Precipitating neoliberal policies that I have in mind are those that further privatization of resources and public institutions, such as welfare and healthcare institutions that formerly protected the working class. In addition, EU market expansion has flooded local markets with low cost goods, with which local producers cannot compete, and EU policies have introduced new food safety regulations that threaten subsistence farming, an essential component of local livelihoods. In essence, as a result of transformations since the end of socialism in 1989, and even further restructuring to meet the requirements for EU accession, villagers have been forced into ever greater dependence on the market economy, but without the means or state support to do so.

Furthermore, EU policies, while geared to encourage the mobility of capital, have thus far placed restrictions on the free movement of labour. In an effort to protect welfare programs, several EU15 states (with the exception of Sweden) are only allowing in specific categories of workers to fill labour market shortages in undesirable segments of the labour market that domestic workers are unwilling to fill. Mezőfalva villagers, displaced by economic and political reform, who were already disadvantaged during the socialist period, serving as a reserve of labour for the industrializing towns, have now become a cheaper source of labour for the expanding EU. Thus, I have argued that EU accession is experienced in Mezőfalva as an instance of accumulation by dispossession

(Harvey, 2003), where Romania and other recent accession states benefit the west as sites for lower cost production and workers, displaced through the reforms, and willing to work for lower wages and the least desirable jobs in western labour markets.

8.4 Directions for Future Research

One of the greatest shortcomings of my research was the limitations I faced with research participants' age. That is, many of my arguments and conclusions are based on interviews conducted mainly with older generations; only a few youth participated. This invites further research with more emphasis on the youngest generation of Hungarians in Romania, to assess how conditions may change in the future.

First, I wonder to what extent language barriers may or may not continue to affect the youth. As I described in chapter four, the older generation was at an even greater disadvantage in finding opportunities to learn Romanian, and also they were exposed to the worst of the discriminative policies of the socialist government from 1945 to 1989. However, only one of the youths I spoke with, Attila, is a permanent resident of Mezőfalva who does not speak Romanian. He has had greater difficulty in finding employment in Romania as a result. Laura, who also faced similar difficulties, now permanently resides in Hungary, while Júlia and Kinga are fluent in Romanian, as they split their time between the village and Tirgu Mureş. In addition, Éva, who is in her early 30s, among the youngest I interviewed, is comfortable speaking in Romanian with customers at her shop, even though she grew up and went to school in Mezőfalva. Although I would still argue that Hungarians are at a disadvantage in the domestic labour

market because of language barriers, further research might discover to what extent this problem will continue to affect the youth.

More research could also be done on the effects of labour migration on gender norms and the gendered division of labour in the village by including more youth as research participants. During interviews, several women also expressed frustration with the way work is divided at home, especially when they had experience abroad where gender norms can be quite different. I wonder then, whether the experience of migration may also change the way gender and work is divided in the village. Furthermore, in my research, I found that while older women worked in domestic care, this did not hold true for younger women. Except for Laura, who worked as an au pair for several years and found her job independently, that is not through the network of older women, the three other younger women I spoke with had been, or were planning to engage in labour migration. They had all worked or were planning to work in agriculture, an equally low-skilled sector but perhaps less typified by gender ideologies. None mentioned any plans to work in domestic care. Further research might explore how migration destinations for men and women are changing between generations.

Despite people's descriptions of growing individuality (chapter 7), I found that almost every person I interviewed lived in a multiple generation household, where even if they did not pool their incomes, each member contributed to household upkeep and family survival. However, I wonder, given the prevalence of labour migration, whether the multiple generation household will survive in the younger generations, and in the long term whether the youth will continue to return to the village in between work periods abroad rather than relocate permanently. In other words, further research with youth

could address how sustainable circular migration may or not be in the future. Finally, rather than accept that development according EU conditionality and EU expansion is equally beneficial to all workers in all European states, my research reveals the real life consequences of the economic restructuring that accompanies EU integration, in the livelihood strategies of a group of rural, working class, Hungarian Romanians. Further research on the impact of EU expansion and changing migration policies on local livelihoods is important at the current moment, when important and significant changes are altering the economic and political context for rural workers in Romania and the EU, especially as it is poised to continue on the path of enlargement.

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