

## **Move On or Stay Put? Migrant Life Strategies and Practices of Appropriation in the Case of the Recruited Workforce of the Synthetic Fiber Factory in St. Pölten (1964 – Present)**

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The sub-project “Move On or Stay Put” examines the history of the state regulated and organized labor migration from the mid-1960s onward through the case study of the Glanzstoff-Fabrik (synthetic fiber factory) in St. Pölten. An initial investigation into the personnel archives of the factory, which was shut down in 2008, revealed a broad range of individual patterns of migration: Some stayed shorter than agreed, others stayed longer than planned. Some took up and terminated their employment at the factory numerous times, while other colleagues worked there permanently from the outset, sometimes even through more than one generation in the same family. Others still migrated further after a temporary sojourn in St. Pölten, moving to Germany, the Netherlands, or to Switzerland, where they could earn a higher wage or enjoy less cumbersome working conditions. An initial part of the project therefore examines life strategies on a scale between permanent residence and further migration through specific examples.

The second part of the project focuses on remaining: The various forms in which the immigrants practically appropriated their surroundings will be explored. Of primary interest here is the ascertainment of the everyday realities faced by the immigrants; how they established themselves in situ. An initial inventory of the emergence of migrant infrastructures (associations, businesses, restaurants) is planned. The migratory aims and ambitions, which in some cases spanned more than one generation, their individual experiences, and their spheres of activity will be connected as closely as possible to the relevant temporal, local, and macro-contextual conditions. The aim is to demonstrate how these relationships were connected to specific possibilities of agency and life plans, and how these in turn transformed the local environment. Abstract concepts such as “guest labor”, settlement, familial fragmentation, transnational lifestyles, as well as pragmatic appropriation and establishment will thereby receive concrete form, allowing them to be presented in their various nuances.

This sub-project employs a broad mix of methodologies, combining archival research, narrative interviews, and collective interview formats (“memory workshops”).