

Keeping wages low :In France, no real labour shortage, but rationing of seasonal workers and occupational travelers during covid .

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Abstract This paper investigate the impact of covid on workers in non standard arrangements : seasonal workers using mobile housing (like vans or camping car) and occupational travellers in France. The issue of new itinerant workers, has emerged in the USA (with the term Workamper), but it exist in Europe, even in new sectors like wind industry. These workers have been prevented from circulating during covid, by different means, and some important market place for them , as touristic station, or outdoor markets, have been closed. Covid crisis have brought back to light rationing with containment and curfew. This concept has scarcely been integrated into economic theory. It is usually defined as a consequence of price rigidity, but it can be the cause of this rigidity. During this pandemic crisis, the rules of rationing are revealed on the seasonal job market . We conducted a sample survey among seasonal and travelers workers, in different sectors : showing reduction of the number of worked hours or unemployment during containment for the majority (not only in agriculture or tourism). Some others have been pushed to other markets to find jobs, while official statistics in agriculture shows the same level of hours of work declared by employers in 2019 and 2020. This paradox is caused by exacerbated issues linked to covid, but that are already well known by trade-unions : The employees are rationed during these crisis, not the employers (no real labour shortage), this is favored by the growing proportion

of precarious employees, in agriculture or industry. Among these precarious workers, there are migrants, posted workers from EU, and internal migrants, using temporary or mobile accommodation. Some of them met difficulties to get water during this period. The social construction of the undesirability of these itinerant workers makes it possible to maintain low wages and to justify the use of posted workers as soon as employers anticipate openings. In this case, the paper, using triangulation of statistics and ethnographic methods, argues that it is the rationing, coupled with socially constructed local shortage, which keeps the wage low,

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1) Anticipations and uncertainty under lockdown.

From May 20, 2020 French government, in order to avoid crop losses, and to secure food resources, extend the length of stay of temporary foreign workers, already present in France, and will remove entry restrictions on the territory for seasonal workers from inside or outside the European Union. There was a fear of a labor shortage, rationing employers, while European trade-unions worried about working conditions in agriculture (ETUC 2020). This measure was following the opening of a platform, on 2020 March, supposed to help recruiting and allocating local occasional workers to compensate a supposed lack of seasonal migrants (some announcements warned of 200 000 missing workers), with few success at the end.

However, statistical findings on agricultural work in France show that the first two quarters are the months when the demand for this type of worker is at its weakest point, because it is concentrated on summer and winter, for the mountain tourism (Aboubadra-Pauly, Artois, Le Ru., 2016; Depeyrot, Magnan, Michel, Laurent, 2019). The political and media announcements seemed alarmist, and in fact, in the end, there were no less working hours in agriculture if we follow the official data of the agricultural social mutuality (MSA).

The available data do not make it possible to distinguish between French seasonal workers in France, those from European Union, and those from third countries, and do not provide any information on the number of people employed by temporary employment agencies, because we only know the total volume of hours directly employed by agricultural enterprises.

Moreover, the term seasonal worker has several meaning. In a narrow legal sense, it covers the seasonal contract, but company can hire seasonal works from temporary agency or directly, with fixed-term

contracts. In this paper, we refer to official data aggregating seasonal and fixed-term contract in a same category.

On the business side, there have been production cuts in certain sectors, such as flowers, in particular due to lost sales, linked to the closure of restaurants and outdoor markets. At least 36% of farmers reported losses due to the pandemic, according to an Ipsos poll ”(Alonso Ugaglia et al. See, 2021), but there is no evidence of a repercussion of this loss on employment in the agricultural statistics published by the Mutualité sociale agricole (MSA) (figure 1).

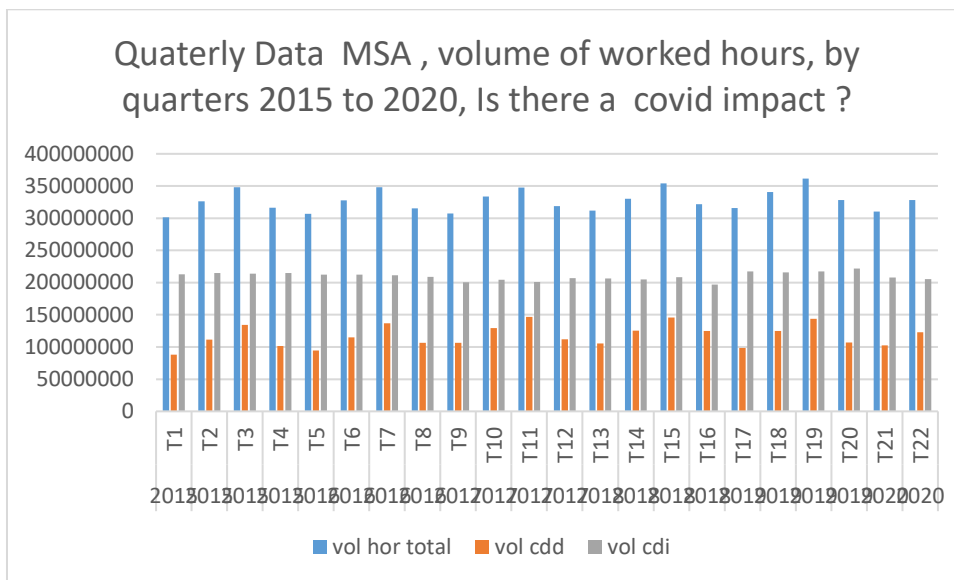


Figure 1

This is all the more striking, when one considers specific sectors, such as meat processing, which had experienced sudden changes in the composition of the workforce during previous crises, as shown by a focus on work (Figure 2). Numerous layoffs took place in the second quarter of 2008, drastically reducing the hourly volume on permanent contracts by 19.54%, while the share of fixed-term contracts and seasonal workers increased by 120%, before returning to its initial level and then starting to slowly decrease. In result, there as been an increase of the share of seasonal and temp workers, by the reduction of the number of permanent ones, which implies more flexibility and an intensification of work effort (Caroli, Gautié, Lamanthe ,2009). However, in the pork market alone, activity has not contracted in terms of volume and prices have increased compared to 2007 (notes on the condition of the auction market of Plérin,outlook 2008). An increase in both production costs and competitive pressures, while retailers relayed demand for higher level of quality from consumers, justified this adjustment

However, nothing like this can be read in 2020 (figure 2). In fact, according of the auction market of Plérin conjuncture note, in June, the drop in volume activity (number of pigs sold) was only 1.81% (auction pork market of Plérin outlook June 2020, p 3), prices had risen by 10% compared to 2019 (ibid p 1). On the other hand, a great uncertainty reigned on the market: it was the real disruption.

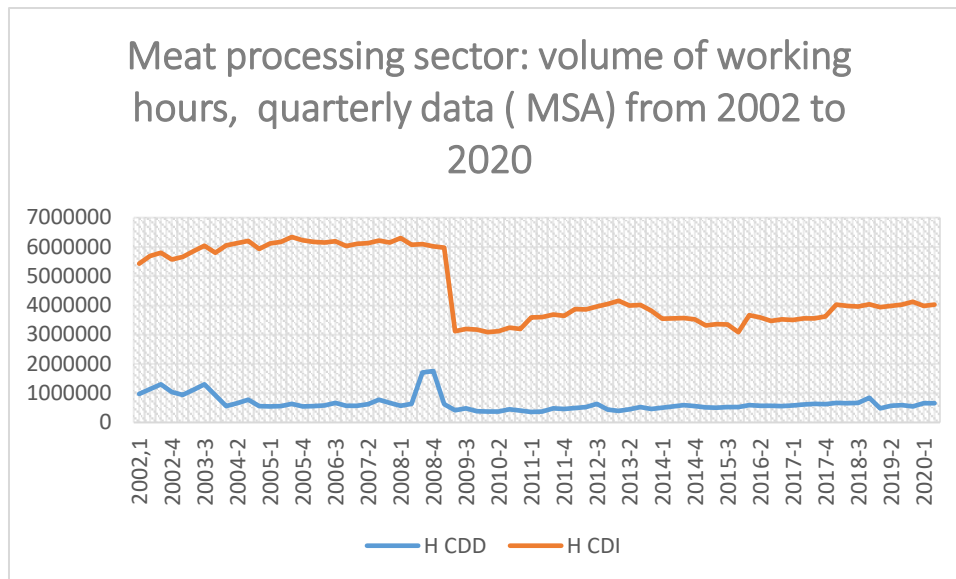


Figure 2

How to explain this apparent stability? On the one hand, it is compatible with the observation of a lower average volume of hours worked by domestic seasonal in comparison to foreign nationals, in normal times. It can hide a greater part of foreign nationals directly hired by agricultural enterprises, by substitution to local or itinerant seasonal workers.

The announcements of a possible labor shortage and the request for extension of length of posted worker's stay indicate that companies wanted to keep temporary migrant workers as a priority, because of the lower amounts of social security contributions. Only in second, they searched for the local or itinerant seasonal workers, despite the reductions and exemptions for people hired under seasonal contracts, extended by the French state during the crisis. Indeed, a special device known as To-De, exempt from social contributions employers hiring occasional employees, previously unemployed, or in integration, under seasonal contract, in a narrow legal sense, for a maximum duration of 8 months. These employees do not receive the 10% precariousness premium at the end of the contract, owed to temporary or fixed-term workers. As the amount of this prime is 10 % of gross total wage of the worker during the contract, it is a real earning drop. This 10% precarious bonus was denounced by employers as a competitive disadvantage compared to other European countries. Such a measure was clearly more efficient to increase the profitability of the sector, despite losses of sales, than to solve a labour shortage. The suppression of the precarious prime is justified by seasonality and recurrence: if intermittence is predictable, it is not a risk to compensate. This convention on the nature of hazard, justifying this pay rule, less favorable to employees, indicates that the companies are not afraid of workforce shortage for

the next seasons. This To-De system has been prolonged twice, first in November 2018, then in November 2020.

In conclusion, the employees are rationed during these crisis, not the employers (if there is no real labour shortage), this is favored by the growing proportion of precarious employees, in agriculture or industry. Among these precarious workers, there are migrants (Rye, O' Reilley 2021), posted workers from EU, and internal migrants, using temporary or mobile accommodation. The social construction of the undesirability of these itinerant workers makes it possible to maintain low wages and to justify the use of posted workers (Preibisch and Grez 2010), as another extra institutional tool of pressure (Arnholtz , Andersen 2018) as soon as employers anticipate openings

2 What is the situation of occupational seasonal travelers in France during Lockdown?

Methodology and first findings.

If the French institutional system is well known to be rather inclusive, it admit some margins, poorly regulated. Even in a coordinated market economy, there are some sectors where local and casual bargaining are more important than collective negotiations. This is linked to the existence of a dual labor market. In fact, before this dual market, there was the use of family-labour, who is declining (Mesini, Laurent 2015, Cochet 2017). Secondly came the dualism between permanent and non-permanent workforce. A growing part of non-permanent workers is outsourced, to temp agencies hiring in and out of the European Union (Rye, O' Reilley 2021), and there are seasonal workers, who are local, while others are itinerant workers, mostly waged workers but on some segments, piece-rate workers can be found. In certain seasonal occupations, the costs of mobility and temporary accommodation are borne by the workers themselves. This practice is not associated with a higher salary, but the use of mobile housing, in some case, gives an advantage to be hired. In certain other sectors, such as industry, it is the amount of bonuses for mobility and housing that can attract workers, sleeping in vans for example, because they can keep this bonus in addition to their salary. The issue of new itinerant workers has re-emerged in the USA, with the term Workamper, and Jessica Bruder 'book, but it exists in Europe (Le Marchand 2011). Even in Europe, it dates from at least the 19th century and has already been studied in the past, on certain sectors such as beet harvesting (Brunet 1951). It come now even in new sectors such as wind power. These itinerant workers have been prevented from circulating during covid, by different means, and some important market place for them, as touristic station, or outdoor markets, have been closed. Covid crisis have brought back in light rationing, going along with containment and curfew. While employers were alarmed about a labor shortage. On March 29, 2020, a seasonal wrote these lines on a facebook group dedicated to professional travelers (*saisonniers en habitat mobile*), which is similar to a virtual community :

"I don't understand, I can't find a job in the area where I am. In fact, producers are losing their outlets as they go along, I get the impression. Already no more (open air) market and apparently stores like

Grand Frais lose their sales and do not renew their purchases. For example, I had to harvest the asparagus, because they did not have the Poles, as usual and in fact, they tell me that, in the end, it is not worth it that I come, because they do not know what they are going to do with 30% of their harvest.”

It is a very impressive abstract of the conjuncture, an example of spontaneous disequilibrium economics analysis by those workers, supposed to be very flexible because they are occupational travelers. So, for a better understanding of covid crisis, we organized a sample survey mainly on this numerical social network (and others like *camtars peinars*). Partly because at that times, access to farms or plants was nearly impossible. We collected information and interpretations from seasonal workers themselves, most of them living in vans or caravans, or other mobile accommodation (tents, cars etc.), claiming this identity and this way of life, throughout the year or at least several months. A long-standing participation in the *Halem association* (for the inhabitants of ephemeral, mobile or light houses) has been of great help in getting in touch with unknown itinerant seasonal workers. Some of them, although sharing an identity of seasonal workers, were not employed in the sector where seasonal contracts are used, such as in transport-logistics or trade. Seasonal can mean intermittent, fixed-term contract, in this small world. First, we use, in a very classical way, a questionnaire. People could respond online, via a form, or write through messenger. One hundred and ten persons have filled out the form, while 38 written responses and sometimes begin to exchange via messenger. Two men requested a phone call to answers.

This provide us some quantitative data and some big chunks of quotation. The written words help us to understand how these workers have gone through the lockdown and their versions on the functioning of the labour market. The data on unemployment and living conditions sketch another story than the official statistics on work in agriculture.

Questionnaire:

Did you have serious problems accessing fluids (water, electricity, etc.) during confinement? If so, compared to normal periods, were these difficulties increased or equivalent?

Did you have increased parking difficulties during confinement?

In which sector do you operate? (ex :Tourism, Agriculture, Social work, Hospital, Health, Care Street arts, Circus, Commerce, Industry, Rope access technician , Buildings, Energy Others If you do not work in tourism, have you had greater difficulties in finding a job ? In the end, have you worked as many hours as in the seasons of previous years? With an equivalent number of contracts? With less contracts?

Your age for how long have you been seasonal in mobile housing?

First findings:

In a report from the French administration in 2016 (Aboubadra-Pauly, Artois, Le Ru 2020: p 27), the authors distinguished between young people, agricultural workers with seasonal contracts and “big”

seasonal workers for whom it is rather a “chosen” way of life, who are older, and have longer contracts, in sectors such as commerce and industry. In our sample, the average age for the agricultural sector is 28 years old, which is 3 years older than that of the occasional seasonal workers, 25 years old, according to the 2016 report. It is a little higher, 30 years old, for all sectors combined. The average age should not hide the heterogeneity: it is not only young people among professional travelers, we have people in their fifties or sixties who answered the survey. This entry of middle-aged people has been observed in agriculture (Depeyrot, Magnan, Michel, Laurent, 2019). In the sample, this evolution spread outside the agricultural sector: some people in their sixties worked in the social sector. But, by comparison with the description of the situation in the USA (as in Jessica Bruder's book), it is, for the moment, less linked to low pensions, than to an age effect, pushing young adults on the road to find work, more easily. Nevertheless, the progress of precariousness involves some elderly people in this way of life.

In the French case, this situation stems from what Nicole-Drancourt and Roulleau-Berger (2001, 2006) have problematized as the selective exclusion of young people from internal labor markets in big companies and their confinement in markets with competitive regulation. But the intermittence of employment has perhaps also been reinforced as a direct consequence of the formation of interconnected auction markets for certain agricultural products, such as strawberries or artichokes, or pork, which while keeping, slightly, prices high, requires rapid production adjustments. In these systems, rationing ultimately does not affect sellers or buyers, but seasonal workers. As we said before, the use of precarious work is also the result of other developments. Muller (Muller 2008) showed how the new sanitary standards in slaughterhouses caused jolts in production. However, these stoppages lead to intermittent work, and encourage the creation of a group of “nomadic” employees sleeping in motorhomes and working from one slaughterhouse to another. In general, the entry into risk society (Beck 1992), both social and health risks, weights on the younger employees.

The average seniority in this way of life and housing is of 7 years in the sample studied. According to testimonies from social workers, it was only three years, still a few years ago. This increase in the average duration of this passage through roaming and mobile housing, if confirmed, could come from the increased difficulties encountered by young people in stabilizing themselves in employment.

The result of the sample survey, among seasonal and travelers workers, in all sectors, shows reduction of the total of worked hours, or unemployment, during containment for a majority (not only in agriculture or tourism). Some others were pushed to other markets to find jobs. While, as we saw above, official statistics, in agriculture shows the same level of hours of work declared by employers in 2019 and 2020.

67.5% worked fewer hours than the previous year (proportion similar to those on intermittent entertainment), some saw their income drop drastically. Two said they had lost everything, including their trucks, due to the closure of outdoor markets, and were temporarily, but really, homeless. Of course, those who work in tourism or catering are the most affected, but itinerant traders too (some have lost everything), and even those who are in the construction industry, transport & logistics, rope access

technicians or professional divers have been partly unemployed. Almost 42% had problems with parking, others stopped at third parties, making it difficult to find a job. All these restrictions follow curfew and lockdown.

This testimony resume this result:

“Yes I agree, No I did not encounter more difficulties than usual for water, electricity is no longer part of my needs, as regards parking, it was complicated, the instructions for parking rights were not the same from one region to another, I am in the field of agriculture, and at this level it was more than complicated to find work, between the bosses who do not know what to do with their harvest, those who appeal to foreigners, and now there are even agencies that approach our bosses ... For an attractive price, European law ... and finally the bosses who resist, even if it means sacrificing themselves, so yes the confinement has hindered a lot of things for me and many others I think, I am 38 years old and almost 7 years of nomadism per year, in the agricultural season”.

Despite some apparent oppositions, seasonal travelers and temporary migrants can be hired through the same network. These categories of waged workers often overlap as these french former nomadic worker explains:

Since the end of 2018, I have been with the same boss, but since last year (start of confinement) it is difficult to find people to work. So I bring friends who are also in autonomous housing (truck and camper). Without that, my boss would have had a hard time, providing me with a team... As soon as I started, after 4 months while I was still on a tesa¹ contract, I acted as team leader. Then when winter 2019 arrived, he (my boss) couldn't find anyone for the pruning of vines. So I brought in a Spanish friend and her boyfriend who is French to her, and a friend of hers who came from Portugal for her part. So less than a year later at the first time with this boss I was already doing my teams with friends and friends of friends, if necessary. But always friends with autonomous housing.

One of the most invisible trade, where occupational travelers are the majority, is inland navigation. Among occupational travelers, some are not seasonal workers, it is especially the case for bargees. Housing on transport boat, coupled with the domestic basis of work organization on board, is a way of reducing labor-costs. The sector is made up of around 80% owner-operators, i.e. a barge owned by a family business. It is no more only family labour on the river, 20% of companies are ship-owners with employed staff/crew, well unionized in the transport sector, far less in the cruise one.

This other type of occupational travelers have been affected by the covid crisis. As said a representative of International Transport Federation, (ITF), the River Cruise sector business « *has been wiped out in 2020 and faces a very bleak 2021 even if COVID-19 is brought under more control* » (Steve Yandell ITF, interview in November 20). The problem has concerned the merchant inland navigation as well,

¹ A kind of fixed-term contract.

but only at the start of the European lockdown. It could have provoked a crew change crisis, as it occurred for seafarers, but it has been avoided. According to Myriam Chaffart, from the European Transport Federation (ETF): « *At the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic of course there were some issues with crew changes in Inland Water Transport in Europe. In view of the EU Directive on working times for Inland Navigation there is an absolute cap/maximum of 31 consecutive working days on board of a vessel. Only in the early weeks of the pandemic have there been some issues as national borders were closed. The navigating regulating bodies (Rhine Commission – CCNR and the Danube Commission) however responded quickly to the arising issues and produced attestations for vessels and their crew members to enable a swift border crossing.* » (interview November 20). In that special case, regulation authority has provide enabling and enhancing.

But, to a certain extent, be employed on a boat on different river basins, sometimes in a grey zone as a posted workers sketch a figure of interlope worker (interview French bargees février 2021). A boatwomen , former responsible at the CNBA, (chambre nationale de la batellerie artisanale or Chamber of french owner-operators), an institution which has been abolished , reported that on cruise vessel, some person were hired for working in floating hotel but were used to maneuver the boat, without professional certificates.

Interlopers is a concept coming from sociology of medias. It describe journalist working in media without coming from the inside of the institution, and without diploma of certificate of skill (Eldrige 2018, Belair-gagnon, Holton 2018) . But the origin of the term is rooted in maritime trade : an interloper ship was a merchant ship smuggling between different colonial monopoly zone. Interlopers can describe occupational travelers forced to work in different fields (agriculture, tourism, industry, care), always in a grey zone, with administration issues. For instance, in France, it may be very complicate to work some months under the agricultural regime, then under the showmen regime, or the artist ones. It can explain why there is few seasonal workers in France in pluri-activity : occupational border passages are not easy to go through. In fact, these workers are seen as interlopers, if not vagabonds. But, if the transition, even the recurrent transition between labor markets, is rather complicated, it exist.

7.5% of respondents say they work in several sectors, against 6.1% in France and 4.72 in the European Union, according to Eurostat. The health crisis has prompted some to retrain, despite the lack of transitional labour markets.

To understand this unemployment, invisible in official data , we have to collect testimonies on the situation of those labourers.

3) From Working without sanitation facilities to social construction of undesirability

Being prevented from moving was a great constrain for workers, which competitive advantage is that they usually bore the costs of mobility, moreover they were far from easy access to water and sometimes electricity.

Hello, I had not seen the message, not having found a job I moved to a hamlet using the savings, I am unemployed, I am looking for a job but nothing and I only have 40 € apl² suddenly I turn around 400/300 € per month I am 28 years old I have been working in the hotel and catering industry for 5 years I combine with agriculture to alternate the 2 seasons and not always do the same thing. And yes it's a hassle everything is measured, me (my van) I am 4m high I have access nowhere, the cemeteries shut off the water so too much hassle. And I don't intend to pay 12 € for 24 hours of electricity, I never go to the motorhome areas because too much concrete

ILO promote occupational safety and health (OSH), as a key component of decent work standards. Even in a rich country as France, OSH is not always guaranteed for everyone. It has been an issue during first lockdown (From 2020 March to June), for example for truckers, but for other itinerant workers as well.

Almost 42% of the people who responded to the survey had more problems with parking during lockdown, others parked their vans at third parties, making it difficult to find jobs.

Access to fluids was reduced for 36% of these workers. It should be noted that it is water, and never electricity, that is lacking. Is it easier to have electric current than water in France in the 21st century? If 72 % who avec difficulties to get water, mainly for showering and laundering, has been partly unemployed, to be employed did not implied to have access to these basic commodity.

As people from all sectors, including tourism, trade transport or industry, have reported problem to find water, and not only seasonal workers in small farms, it may not concern only rural areas.

Testimony

(Man 34) Good evening, in terms of availability of water, electricity, parking, no difference because being mobile (van) and very discreet, I fill up my water in cemeteries, like many others, for the current I have a sign solar and splitter coupler on my van, so autonomous all year round, and to park, either I have a great boss, or I sleep on the vineyard plot, or in a nearby forest, never camping or area of paid service, but I remain very discreet so as not to attract attention, on the work side, I am therefore currently in the vineyards for a service provider and indeed, we did work less time because some "chateaux" (wine firm) are suspicious, so we work in a small group being careful but more carefully than last summer, for the last question I am 34 years old and I have been a nomadic seasonal worker for 2 years. Small modification compared to my description of the mobile seasonal (facebook) group, at the time, I put, that I was in P... but I had to cross France to find work near B..., being in van helped me a lot.

(Woman ex nomadic seasonal, now permanent employee, after 4 years in caravan)

As for electricity, I have nothing more than a transformer that plugs into my car (which I hardly ever use) and a small solar panel at 5 euros ... for my mobile phone. As for water, i went to cemeteries or to

² Aide personnalisée au logement, Housing assistance

my bosses. And heated myself with gas. I used to park my caravan at my bosses place, or in the land of neighboring farmers, I managed to exchanging the parking fees for households or a day or two of work (maintenance of animals, grape harvest, gardening, magnetism ect ...). I am a great fan of barter.

It seems that, during lockdown, some basic worker rights have been forgotten. But, it is only an intensification, of what was happening on normal times. Right to shower on workplace is not acted. As right to sanitary facility is fundamental, these examples reminds us that precariousness can affect human rights.

This lack of sanitation equipment, including toilets and showers, is part of the social construction of the undesirability of these itinerant workers.

Testimony

“Hello I have been in mobile housing for 3 and a half years, since the covid, a lot of bosses have told me that they no longer have the right to accommodate seasonal workers in trucks or motorhomes. But the greatest difficulty remains when I am not working, the population calls the police, if I park near homes, and the gendarmerie tickets me if I park far from homes”.

This is an example of discrimination against young people. Young travelers are associated with ravers, fans of free parties, new age travelers or "dog punks", this perception provides arguments to prevent them from parking their vans and restrict their mobility, so it is less easy for them to find a job. One of the responders of the survey, although a young man too, told, by phone, that he was very upset of this association and was considering this stigma as an explanation of underemployment during lockdown and the covid crisis. This is an example of the entanglement between cultural and social issues, as it is for Roma, who are frequently other agricultural occupational travelers too.

4) Return on theory of shortage and rationing

By the end of the seventies,, sociologists could analyse the shortage of labour, like a social construction of employers, who were above all looking for a docile labour force.

Employers “were worried, not about intelligence or manual dexterity, but about worker co-operation. Responsibility, stability, trustworthiness - such are the qualities by which (reasonably enough) they wish to select and promote. (Blackburn and Mann, 1979, p. 280) . That was an explanation for the building of internal labour markets (ILM)

Then, Janos Kornai (Kornai 1980) used the concept of shortage to characterize socialist economies, while he pursued a dialogue with the macroeconomics of disequilibrium. So Kornai's ideas provide the theoretical basis for the study of internal labour market of state-owned enterprises in East and Central European countries, of that times (Stark 1986).

This is why, subsequently, this theoretical basis could be used for the analysis of problems within coordinated market economies. It was incorporated into a critique of the education system at the end of the twentieth century, and to allege an apparent inefficiency of education and training. Some authors, like Ralph Fevre, argued that the coexistence of higher wages for scarce skills and labor shortages (despite unemployment) was evidence against the idea of the shortage disappearing in a post-bureaucratic world, which has not been replaced by flexibility (Fèvre 1992,2007).

In some markets in particular, scarcity had in fact been an argument for globalization. This is obviously the case for the seafarers' labor market, which became globalized before regulation with the support of the ILO, known as the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC). Pricilla Leong (Leong 2012) nevertheless demonstrated that the shortage of sailors was an opinion on the state of the market, self-referenced, caught in a cascade of cross-citations of press articles, more than the result of objective surveys. In other words, it was a self-sustained convention which became self-fulfilling.

Marc Zune (Zune 2014) commented on the return of the theme of the labor shortage, in the management discourse, since the turn of the 2000s. He shows that the measurement of this shortage is very biased, that it is not based on a very robust methodology, and often on examples that are too specific to be meaningful. For this author, this is a social construction, based on questionable statistical conventions, and the aim of which is to support employers' demands for major deregulation or for a reform of the education system.

In agriculture, shortage does not come from a post-bureaucratic evolution, but happens in a post-domestic world, because it follows the decline of the family-labour use. There was, first, rise of waged workers, then precarious labour, before the theme of shortage become spread in public medias. Given the ease for employers to have recourse to seasonal workers in agriculture or tourism, these sectors help to demonstrate, that flexibility and shortage can coexist.

In agriculture, especially for vegetables and flowers many auction markets have been built since the eighties (Garcia 1986). One effect of these type of perfect and physical markets are that they support prices for producters. Is has been studied in other food markets as fish auction markets (Guillotreau, Jimenez-Toribio 2011). This result can be reinforced by the existence of minimum prices , as in Porc auction market of Plérin. So, when the total sales volume has fallen because of the closure of restaurants, open-air markets and flourish during covid lockdown, it is difficult to respond by lowering prices. Such downward price rigidity does not help sold out the market. Thus, employers in horticulture and market gardening, have to put pressure on the wage bill to preserve margins. If facts had following the standard markets frame, problems of transport and health risk should have lead to a rise in the earnings of waged workers, and because the total of hours have been almost the same that precedent year, the total payroll should have increased. But it is not the case, as seen in figure 3 and 4, neither for seasonal nor for permanent workers.

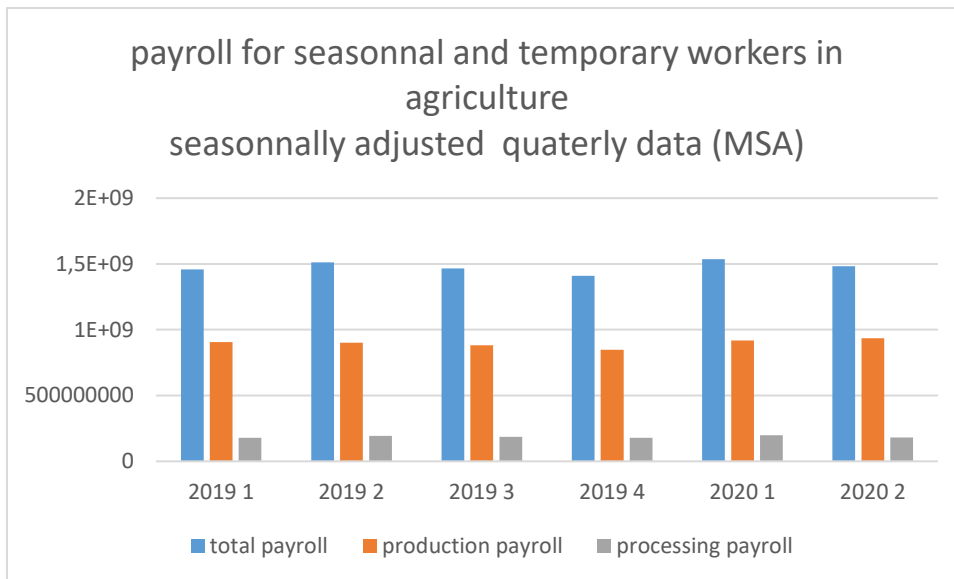


Figure 3

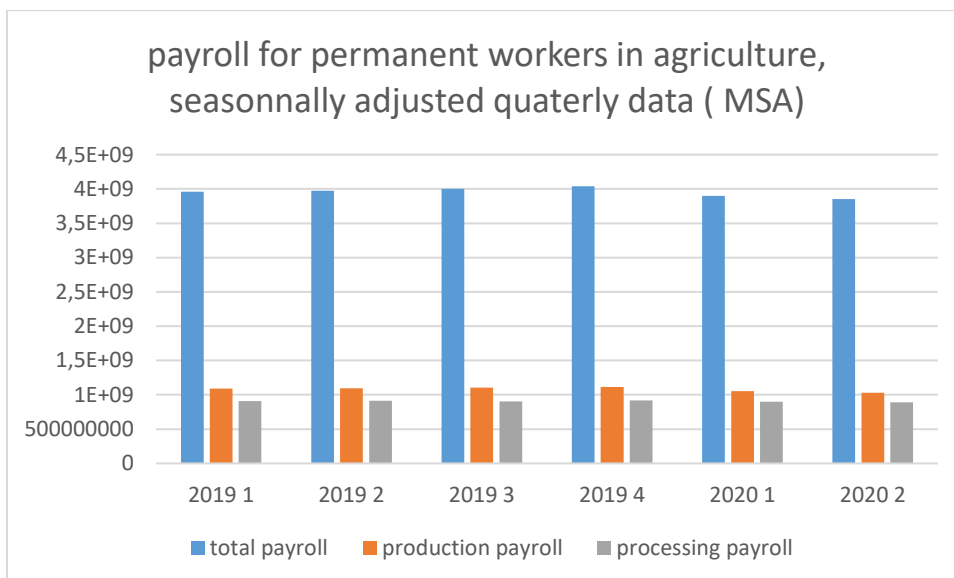


Figure 4

Moreover, partial unemployment benefits are included in payroll, but seasonal workers in agriculture were excluded from that compensation, it only concerns permanent employees. By 2020 May, some of this marginalised workers started an online petition to get this benefits, without success. Thus, this measure was, later, extended, for seasonal workers in tourism, especially winter tourism in the mountain.

From this point of view, the exemption of social contributions for seasonal contracts and the removal of the constraint for temporary foreign workers are complementary policies, who have kept the total wage bill nearly fixed, and have preserved the profitability of the sector.

“*Low wage and hard work conditions are the main reasons of labour shortage.*” (Caroli, Gautié, Alamanthe, 2009: p 15) in food processing sector, but it is not the only ones: shortage is a social constructed phenomenon. The shortage is an argument for allowing temporary immigrants work / posted workers, and is a tool of social control. The social rejection, combined with the invisibility, of occupational travellers, prevented from moving and parking their vans, has kept them at the frontier of unemployment, and has contribute to create an anticipation of shortage, if not real.

The phenomenon of the rationing during covid lockdown is a combined experience of insecurity (of parking, possibility to move) for travellers, of uncertainty for employers and workers (on the state of demand, on production and jobs) and finally of unsafety, (access to water, epidemic clusters) due to the pandemic, for migrants seasonal workers , itinerant labourers and their community. In south of France, many outbreaks of covid clusters have been identified among posted workers, (In Provence and Bouches du Rhone for examples), concentrated in poor substandard housing or camping (Mésini, Castracani, Décosse, Hellio, Moreno Nieto, et al..2020). During Covid, there is no structural change in the labor market, but intensification of restrictions and rationing . It demonstrate how for workers, even in developed countries, unsafety is a part of precarity and flexibility. In a coordinated market economy, as is France, for marginalized workers, arrangements without collective negotiations and rationing take the place of an income regulation system.

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