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1. Introduction

As contemporary society becomes increasingly connected, the necessity for various sectors to participate in cross-border activity has risen. The topics of migration and mobility are regularly researched within academia, but also occupy contemporary news media headlines. Despite this focus on migration, very little of the work produced deals with student migrants, though it is one of the fastest-growing categories of migration worldwide (King and Raghuram 2012). Student mobility and student migrants are integral aspects of internationalization. Within the European context, short-term, “credit mobility” (Brooks and Waters 2011) of EU or European Economic Area (EEA) students is common. Students, hoping to take advantage of the freedom of movement within Europe, participate in state-funded exchange programs such as Erasmus, which involve going abroad for one semester at a time. However, there is a second category of student mobility; within the field, “degree mobility” (ibid) refers to students who move to a new national context to complete a full study program. Though EU/EEA students also participate in degree mobility, over half the international students enrolled in European universities at the start of the 21st century were third-country nationals (non-EU/EEA) (ibid). These non-EU/EEA, degree-seeking student migrants are the focus of this thesis.

Internationalization has emerged as a means for nation-states to distinguish their national education system and ensure that graduates are prepared to enter a globally connected job market. Defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight 2004:11), internationalization of institutions of higher education can take many forms in addition to student mobility; including, but not limited to, institutional partnerships, and mobility of staff and faculty. It is a process that can be found in institutions all around the world but is differently interpreted and implemented depending on scale and location

(Proctor and Rumbley 2018). The various interpretations can lead to fragmentations in the application of internationalization efforts (Knight and de Wit 2018), with differences found between institutions in the same geographic location, subsequently shaping and reshaping the subjects of the internationalization policies. Third-country national student migrants are not only subject to national and institutional internationalization policies, but also state migration policy.

The interactions between internationalization policy and migration policy occur in different ways and to different extents depending on national context. In Australia, for example, education policy and migration policy are closely connected, with international students enrolling in degree programs as a means of gaining permanent residency and subsequently entering the labor market (Baas 2019; Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020). In countries such as the USA and the UK, internationalization policies are aimed at recruiting high fee-paying foreign students (Rivza and Teichler 2007). These students then have to contend with increasingly strict immigration policies both during their time as students, but also upon graduation (Beech 2018; Jordan, Kanno-Youngs, and Levin 2020).

Austria, though not one of the major receiving countries for student migrants, is the home to numerous institutions of higher education, and Vienna is a popular location for students from third countries to study (Musil and Reyhani 2012). Institutions of higher education in Vienna range in specialization from music, to business, to agriculture, while also participating in many joint degree programs. Consequently, the city and its universities attract students from all over the world with a diverse range of academic interests. The University of Vienna alone is the home institution of approximately 4,119 third-country national students completing either bachelor or master programs (UniVie Global Magazine 2019: 5). Additionally, efforts within Austria to internationalize these institutions have resulted in policy changes, at both the institutional and national levels, and new initiatives aimed at

making Vienna a more attractive location for a wide range of international students, including third-country nationals to practice education mobility.

For third-country national students in Austria, as with many student migrants in other areas of the world, their studentship is constructed and reconfigured by migration policy as well as internationalization efforts. In order to be a student, one must navigate the bureaucratic hurdles of migration to Austria, and to remain in Austria, one must maintain student status. Federal and institutional level internationalization policies influence the way that institutions of higher education handle international students, but it is state-level migration policy that ultimately determines a student's ability to study in a foreign country. Much of the existing work on internationalization and student migration focuses on *how* and *why* students choose to move (e.g. Brooks and Waters 2011; Beech 2015; Baas 2019). The aim of this study, however, is to understand the interaction and differential impacts of these two fields of policy – internationalization and migration – and how they shape the experience of third-country national students, particularly the ways in which their lives reflect the discourse and practices of internationalization at institutions of higher education.

The differential effects of the variety and scale of these two policy areas are illuminated through the combination of interviews and policy document exploration. I emphasize the intended versus practical effects of internationalization policies, and how they serve as an entry point to understanding the differential privileges and (in)accessibilities experienced by third-country national students. Considering the situation at two institutions in Vienna, I ultimately determine that regardless of the institutional support provided for third-country national students, migration policy is more prevalent in determining their studentship. It, therefore, has a greater impact on their perception of their place as student migrants and subsequently their experiences. As a secondary point of inquiry, the existence of an education migration industry in Austria is considered. I explore the way different actors

and policies present in the life of third-country national students function as gatekeepers, facilitators, or obstacles to their successful migration (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013) and participation in education mobility.

This thesis is structured by embedding ethnographic evidence collected through my research within thematic and theoretical frameworks. Following this introduction (Chapter 1), the second chapter provides insight into the methodological approaches used. It gives not only an overview of the methods but also an explanation as to why they were chosen and what purpose they serve. This chapter also provides a brief contextualization of the interviewees and my relationship with them. Within this discussion, I address my positionality as a third-country national student, and the potential effects it has had on the research. The next three chapters are a presentation of ethnographic evidence intertwined with theoretical concepts.

Chapter 3 deals with the (in)accessibilities and privileges that result from the implementation of internationalization strategies. Austria aims to make its mark on the global education stage through various means of internationalization. The trickle-down of internationalization policy from the federal to the institutional level and subsequently to implementation at the individual level is varied in its impacts. This question of privilege and accessibility also places some of the responsibility for gatekeeping student migrants in the hands of the universities. Depending on the institution, rather than recognizing the unique needs of different international students, and more specifically third-country national students, the policies are one-size-fits-all, resulting in feelings of exclusion and inadequacy on the part of the student migrants

Internationalization efforts, to varying degrees, lead to the creation of support systems for international students. Chapter 4 explores the support structures in place for third-country national students at both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts. Building on

theoretical concepts related to support stemming from institutional and private actors, I argue that in the absence of “official,” centralized support networks, third-country national students more readily seek out personal contacts for guidance. Within the chapter, the importance of support systems for third-country nationals is highlighted, while arguing that the location of support and its impact on student experience is a reflection of varied internationalization efforts.

Throughout the third and fourth chapters, the experience of third-country national students is shown to be highly dependent on the varied internationalization efforts at their institution, and the location of their support systems. The final chapter, however, presents the effects of Austrian migration policy and the construction of third-country national student migrants in Austria as independent of internationalization policy. Through the commonalities in the experience of all of the third-country national students with whom I spoke, I argue that migration policy has a disproportionate impact on the experiences of third-country national students and the ways it reflects internationalization and migration policy. First the process of becoming a student migrant and maintaining the status in Austria, as a third-country national is discussed. Then, relying heavily on ethnographic evidence, the concepts of waiting (Hage 2009) and power asymmetries are explored in the bureaucratic interactions of my interview partners.

As will be addressed in the next chapter, the research for this thesis took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than dedicate a separate chapter to discuss this, I have chosen to include a section on the pandemic in each of the thematic chapters. This allows for the conditions of the pandemic and its effects on third-country national students to be considered in relation to each aspect of their experience presented.

The results of the research ultimately reveal the existence of a disjointed relationship between the impacts of internationalization and migration policy on the third-country national

student experience. Students at the Academy of Fine Arts were the focus of many internationalization efforts and expressed awareness of being priorities for the institution, thanks to the existence of a central support system. Third-country national students at the University of Vienna felt as though they were on their own even with certain internationalization efforts meant to ease their ability to function within the educational institution. Despite these differences, the condition of being a student migrant in Vienna was the same for students at both institutions. Regardless of the focus of internationalization efforts and systems of support in place at institutions of education, the most significant factor affecting the third-country national student experience is the enactment of migration policy on the students in the form of bureaucratic interactions.

2. Methodological approaches

In order to address the condition of being a third-country national student in Vienna, Austria and learn more about the factors that impact their lives, the following research question framed this inquiry: how is the discourse and practice of internationalization at institutions of higher education reflected in the lived experiences of third-country national students? Following some preliminary research into existing literature on internationalization and student mobility (e.g. Brooks and Waters 2011; Beech 2018), two secondary research questions were created: How do the interactions between migration and internationalization policy affect student experience? What systems of support exist as a part of internationalization efforts at higher educational institutions and how do they impact student experience? In the course of this study, I employed several methods to address the research questions, including semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, and policy document analysis.

The majority of my fieldwork was carried out between March 2020 and July 2020. In order to allow for a consideration of the different trajectories of institutions located in the

same federal and provincial context, I focused my research on actors and policies affiliated with the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Vienna. Both institutions have a significant number of international students from third countries, as well as clearly defined international strategies. These strategies and the statistical information about the two institutions are easily accessible to the public, as is the contact information for institutional administrators. In total, I spoke with 12 interlocutors, 10 third-country national students, and two administrators.

Since Malinowski, participant observation has generally been considered a hallmark of anthropological methods. However, due to the nature of the research questions investigated, as well as the condition of the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, engaging in participant observation was not possible. Instead, following Gupta and Ferguson (1996) who suggest that “reading newspapers, analyzing government documents, observing activities of governing elites, and tracking the internal logic of transnational development agencies and corporations” (37) are just as important as the classical participant, analysis and use of secondary sources played a role in the methodology.

The use of secondary sources was particularly important when interviews were not possible for time and access reasons, as in the case of bureaucrats and policymakers. Policy documents led to a better understanding of the discourse of internationalization and its implementation at the higher education institutions in Vienna. The merit of studying policy through an anthropological lens as part of an inquiry is due in large part to the way that policy shapes social contexts and (power) relationships (Shore and Wright 1997, 2011; Wedel, Shore, Feldman and Lathrop 2005). I compiled several reports and policy documents related to internationalization initiatives and migration policy in Austria. These included the yearly international report from the University of Vienna, the internationalization strategies of both University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts, migration reports from the

Foreign Ministry, Ministry of the Interior, and the International Organization for Migration, and to a lesser extent the laws governing migration in Austria. Comparing the documents and the information elicited in the interviews, the goal was to understand the way the two interact to form subjectivities shaping the experiences of the students (Shore and Wright 1997, 2011).

In addition to secondary sources, interviews comprised the bulk of my data collection. Qualitative interviews come in a variety of forms “from highly formalized, structured and strictly time-limited interviews with individual people, to very casual unstructured conversations with several people” (Fontein 2014: 77). The style of interview should be adapted depending on the information it is meant to elicit and the relationship between the researcher and the informant. Bernard (2006) outlines some of the differences between interview types and the purpose of each. Based on his definitions, the majority of my interviews were a mix between unstructured, “based on a clear plan [I] keep constantly in mind, but are also characterized by a minimum of control over the people’s responses” (Bernard 2006: 211) and semi-structured, based on “a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order” (ibid). However, because a number of my interlocutors are also personal friends, there were often times when the lines between meeting socially and data collection were blurred, leading our casual conversations to morph into interviews (Fontein 2014). In these cases, the conversations were rarely recorded, but significant points were documented in the form of field notes after the interaction.

All of the interviews were conducted in English and recorded with the permission of the participants. Although I offered the non-native English speakers the option of speaking in German, they all agreed to continue in English. As mentioned, the interviews took place in June 2020, which was at the start of Austria easing the COVID-19 restrictions. I was able to meet five interviewees in person, but the other seven interviews took place over recorded video call platforms – specifically Skype and Zoom – to accommodate scheduling and health

concerns of myself and my interview partners. Although my interviewees represent a range of experiences, it is important to note that several of them did self-select to participate in my study based on a call for interview partners shared by myself and third parties.

Prior to conducting any interviews, I created two different protocols; one for the interviews with students and one for the administrators. Referring to the protocol kept the interviews grounded in the topics being researched, but also allowed the flexibility to switch the order of questions based on the responses of my interview partner (Bernard 2006). Some interviewees focused on their experience with the MA35, applying for a residence permit and others spoke more in depth about their process of becoming a student in Vienna. In the case of the administrators, these were more formal and structured than those with students.

Once all the interviews were complete, they were completely transcribed using a service¹ to ease the process. To analyze the data, the transcripts were coded to identify segments of meaning (Linneberg and Korsgaard 2019) upon which the themes underlying my arguments are based. Due to the high volume of content to be coded, I used Atlas.ti, a data analysis program to ease the process and better visualize the data. I followed a grounded theory approach in my analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Saldana 2016), allowing the development of theories and themes based on the data collected in my interviews, rather than searching for pre-determined topics. Beginning with inductive, in vivo coding, my codes were based on the words of my interviewees (Saldana 2016; Linneberg and Korsgaard 2019). Subsequent rounds of coding led to the abstraction of the initial codes, grouping them by the similarity of theme. The themes used stemmed from a combination of inductive and deductive coding (Linneberg and Korsgaard 2019), where patterns were identified both in the responses from the interviewees and grouped based on common themes in literature on student mobility, internationalization, and migration. Overall, my codes could be sorted into

¹ Transcribe.wreally

broad categories including “internationalization efforts and priorities,” “bureaucratic hurdles,” “academic life,” and “support systems,” which are the foundation of the organization of the discussion.

Throughout my research and analysis, especially when looking for interview partners, it was necessary to reflect on my positionality as a researcher. As an American student in Vienna, I have much in common with the students I interviewed. Many of my initial interlocutors are personal contacts – classmates and friends –, made thanks to our shared circumstance as third-country national students in Vienna. This resulted in several of my interviews being extensions of previous conversations, and the interviewees speaking to me openly based on longer-term relationships. They were not guarded in expressing their frustration and disappointment in the residence permit or university process, because they knew that I had been through similar situations. The boundaries between my role as personal contact and researcher were blurred but ultimately led to productive interviews, building upon shared experiences.

The students I interviewed that were not personal contacts were surprised to find out that I, as an American, had experiences similar to theirs. They assumed that there was a hierarchy of privilege giving Americans eased access to migration in Austria. While this may be the case in some sectors of migration in Austria, there is no privilege awarded American students based on their nationality. Tural, Miguel, and Irina did not realize that I was required to hold the same documentation as them in order to study in Vienna. Once this similarity was established, they opened up, speaking more informally about their experiences both at their academic institution and with the migration authorities. However, in some cases, such as with Jane, regardless of the parallels in our lives, there was a hesitance to say anything critical about the university or the authorities. In these instances, my position as researcher superseded any commonalities we shared.

My dual role as insider and researcher also influenced my interactions with the university administrators. In addition to sharing common experiences with the third-country national students, I also work in an administrative role at Central European University in Vienna. Though I had not yet started when I conducted the interviews, I was familiar with select aspects of internationalization and the place of CEU within the field of higher education in Vienna. After sharing this with the administrators, they took the interview as an opportunity to hear my opinion on the questions as well, turning it into a reciprocal exchange. Simultaneously, they chose their words carefully and requested I not use any response that was more than an objective explanation of institutional processes, especially their comments on my experiences.

Despite my position as a member of the group investigated, I have tried to remain as objective as possible. Though I relate to many of the experiences shared by the interlocutors, I chose not to include my own story here. I contributed very little during my interviews waiting until the end to share my experiences, if at all. Through hyper-awareness of my relationship to specific interlocutors and the condition of being a third-country national student migrant and higher education administrator myself, I have attempted to account for any influences this may have had on my interviewees or results.

2.1 Ethnographic context

When referencing my interview partners – students and administrators – throughout this thesis, their identities have been anonymized. For the students, prior to the interviews, I promised to keep their identities anonymous. Though the content of my questions was relatively neutral, I did not want their real names to be associated with any potentially sensitive information shared. The names chosen for the students are used throughout the course of my analysis, enabling individual stories to be more easily followed than if they had

simply been given a number. The administrators, on the other hand, were adamant that their identities be completely concealed because they did not want any opinions or politically charged statements made to be affiliated with them or their offices.

This section serves as short biographies of each of my interview partners. I describe the conditions under which I interviewed each interlocutor and describe how I first met them. It is hoped that providing this ethnographic context will supplement their stories as presented in the thematic chapters and clarify not only how and why they were interviewed, but also my personal connection to each person. Though I interviewed the two administrators towards the start of my data collection period, I have chosen to first introduce all of the students, so as to better delineate their different roles.

Sally Jones:

Sally was the first person I interviewed for this thesis. The interview took place on the 1st of June 2020, she and I met at a café to get coffee before the interview but decided to talk in a park across the street because we were both wary of the newly lifted COVID-19 restrictions. We had to pause the interview halfway through because it began to rain, and we moved inside the café to finish. Sally is from the USA and is completing her master's degree in Social, Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna. Not only was Sally the first person I interviewed, but she was also one of the first people I met when I started my MA degree, and we have been friends for the duration of our studies. She readily volunteered to participate in an interview when I asked several third-country national friends to speak with me. The information provided here stems both from our interview and past conversations.

Sally originally came to Austria in 2013 as an English Teaching Assistant through a program funded by the Ministry of Education. During this time, she lived in Vienna and had her first experiences with Austrian migration authorities. After leaving for a few years and living both abroad and back in the USA, Sally decided to return to Vienna in 2017 partially

for personal reasons, but also to pursue a master's degree. She chose Vienna not only because she was familiar with the city, but also for the low tuition cost compared to the USA, and the opportunity for her to complete a degree in English at the University of Vienna. My interview with Sally focused on her experience navigating the university system and the difficulties she faced when she first began her studies.

Jane Peters:

While looking for interview partners during the COVID-19 lockdown, I posted a call for participants in several Facebook groups. Jane saw my post and emailed me, offering to let me interview her. She was interested in the topic of my thesis as it was summarized in the Facebook post and wanted to help by sharing her experience. She was nervous about the types of questions I wanted to ask, so requested to see the topics in advance. To ensure she did not prepare answers, I sent her a summary of the topics. We met on the 2nd of June 2020 at the same park where I interviewed Sally. Jane is also an American completing her master's degree at the University of Vienna. She is studying Economics and is in the first year of her program, which is in English.

Jane first came to Vienna when taking a year off work to travel. She liked it so much that she decided to stay, having heard about the inexpensive, but high-quality nature of the programs at the University of Vienna. Though she has been in Vienna on and off for two years, she has only renewed her residence permit once, which was during the pandemic. As a non-German speaker, Jane spoke at length about the challenges this posed for her in Austria, particularly in her residence permit applications, with which she relies on her partner for assistance. She expressed a desire for more support on bureaucratic matters from the university, as well as more guidance with regard to her program of study. However, she also recognized that the low tuition fees play a role in the absence of extensive support systems since there are limited funds to allocate for such services.

Michael Johnson:

Michael, an American, is another personal contact of mine, who agreed to be interviewed. Though I have known him the longest out of all the interviewees, we are not close friends. He and I originally met through mutual friends in Graz in 2016, where he was an English Teaching Assistant. We stayed in touch after that and spent time working together before the pandemic. Michael and I met in the same park where I interviewed Sally and Jane, on the 4th of June 2020. As with Sally, the biographical background shared is a mix of information from both the interview and our previous conversations.

Michael is a master's student in Political Science at the University of Vienna. He began studying in the fall of 2018 following two years spent living in Graz as an English Teaching Assistant. He chose to move to Vienna to study because the application process was easier than at the University of Graz, which was his first choice. Michael had always known he wanted to pursue a master's and after two years of living in Austria decided he would take advantage of the low tuition fees and his German knowledge to study. During the interview, Michael discussed the challenges he faced both academically and socially as a result of participating in a German-language program. He excels in German, but still faces difficulties in interactions at the university. Due to his many years in Austria, Michael has low expectations when it comes to bureaucratic matters, but still finds himself frustrated when he is given conflicting information in the process of renewing his residence permit.

John Winter:

Yet another personal contact of mine, John met me at my apartment on the 7th of June 2020 for an interview. Though John also studies Social, Cultural Anthropology, he and I originally met in 2017 through a mutual friend. They had studied abroad together in Vienna in 2015, which was the first time that he came to Austria. We re-met in 2019 when we had a class together at the University of Vienna. Following this, he and I were work colleagues

along with Michael. He agreed to be interviewed as a favor to me and to share his experience as a third-country national student.

John came back to Vienna as an au pair from 2016 – 2017. Knowing he wanted to stay in Austria, John decided to study. He chose to change his field from art to the social sciences, so he enrolled in the bachelor's program for Social, Cultural Anthropology. During this time, he switched from an au pair residence permit to a student one and spent much of the year waiting for it to be approved. Luckily it was not rejected, and he has had relatively smooth renewal applications since then. However, John described the difficulty he has each year ensuring that he either has a job or enough money in his bank account to fulfill his residence permit requirements. He anticipates more difficulty than usual in his next renewal because his job was negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Laura Arnold:

I met with Laura, an American, at her apartment on the 14th of June 2020. She and I have known each other since having a class together in May 2019. She is a master's student in the Social, Cultural Anthropology department at the University of Vienna. As with my other contacts, she agreed to participate in an interview with me to support my thesis research. Although we have known each other socially for a while, much of the biographical information Laura shared with me in her interview was new.

Laura first came to Austria in 2015 to participate in a semester abroad in Salzburg. In 2017, Laura returned to Austria as an au pair in Vienna, during which she met her partner. This was one of the motivating factors for her to decide to pursue a master's degree following her au pair year, although she spent six months back in the USA between the end of her au pair year and the start of her studies. Laura's partner holds a bachelor's degree in Social, Cultural Anthropology and told Laura about the opportunity to pursue a degree in English in the department, guiding her through much of the university process. When she returned to

Austria in 2019, Laura faced difficulties in her residence permit application process. At first, she was denied the permit and had to appeal the decision with the help of ÖH lawyers. This hurdle has influenced the way Laura approaches many of her bureaucratic interactions since the initial permit.

Zeynep Arslan:

After I struggled to find contacts at the Academy of Fine Arts, the administrator I spoke with shared my call for participants with a mailing list of third-country national students. Zeynep responded to my request and volunteered to participate in an interview. She, understandably, was not comfortable meeting in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, we spoke via a Skype video call on the 17th of June 2020.

Originally from Istanbul, Zeynep attended a German high school, which opened the door for her to attend university in Vienna without the difficulties in proving qualifications that many third-country national students face. She moved to Vienna in 2013 upon acceptance to the Academy of Fine Arts, after almost beginning a program in Italy. She has been studying architecture at the Academy for six years and recently began a degree in conceptual art as well. When Zeynep first started studying in Vienna, she was also enrolled in the bachelor's program in philosophy at the University of Vienna. Her experience at the two institutions afforded her an interesting perspective and resulted in her offering comparisons of the institutions throughout our interview.

As part of her architecture program, Zeynep chose to spend a semester away, during which her residence permit expired. When she returned to the Academy of Fine Arts, ineligible for a renewal, she had to apply for an initial permit again. Her application was rejected, and rather than taking her case to court in Austria, she returned to Turkey for a semester while waiting to reapply. This experience changed her perspective on how welcome she is in Vienna and the differences that exist between her and her EU/EEA friends and

colleagues. Zeynep is working on an art project related to foreigners in Austria, which was one of the reasons she answered my call for interviewees. She asked to exchange ideas and information we had both collected. Despite the difficulties she has faced, Zeynep has built a life in Vienna and plans to stay following the completion of her studies.

Miguel Hernandez:

Miguel is a sculpture student at the Academy of Fine Arts, who originally comes from Mexico. He, like Zeynep, contacted me after being sent my call for participants by someone at the Academy of Fine Arts. He and I were originally supposed to meet in person for the interview, but I had to postpone the meeting due to a cold I did not want to pass on to him. We rescheduled our meeting for a Skype call on the 18th of June 2020. It was a bit difficult to understand because Miguel participated from his phone while in transit to his studio, but I did not want to impose on more of his time, so made the best of it. Though I have anonymized Miguel to be consistent, he would not have minded me using his real name. He has a YouTube channel that functions as a video diary and creative space, where – with my permission – he posted the recording of our interview.

Miguel decided to move to Vienna to attend the Academy of Fine Arts, expecting to work with a specific instructor who is well-known in his field. Unfortunately, the professor left prior to the start of Miguel's studies, which led him to have second thoughts about remaining in Vienna after facing residence permit difficulties. Before coming to Vienna, Miguel lived and studied in Germany, which he described as an easier place to be a foreign student. He is considering whether he would prefer to return to the small German city he previously lived in, as he is still enrolled in a degree program there, and feels as though he has more access to certain aspects of society – like the labor market – as a third-country national in Germany.

Much of my interview with Miguel focused on topics of privilege and disadvantage. He joked about getting married to ease his residence permit process and grant him the right to work in Austria. He struggles to support himself and fulfill the financial requirements of maintaining a student residence permit. One of the reasons that Miguel reached out to participate in my interviews, is because of his experience having a residence permit denied. He wanted to share his story of rejection, but also praise the support he received from the Student Welcome Center at the Academy of Fine Arts.

Irina Petrova:

Irina is a Russian design student at the Academy of Fine Arts. She reached out to me as a result of the emailed call for participants sent out by the Academy. She was not comfortable meeting in person due to concern about the COVID-19 pandemic, so we had a video call via Skype on the 18th of June 2020. She was nervous at the beginning of the interview, but once I told her that I was also a third-country national student, she opened up to me.

Irina is in the first year of her program at the Academy of Fine Arts but had already completed university education in Russia and spent some years working in the field of graphic design. She chose to come to the Academy because of its reputation in the art world and to avoid language requirements at other prestigious art academies. During our interview, Irina expressed appreciation for the support of the administration and her fellow students at the Academy, but she also highlighted aspects of her life in Vienna that made her feel like an outsider. Irina was the spokesperson for a group of third-country national students at the Academy who petitioned the Rectorate for access to scholarships and grants that were previously limited to EU/EEA students.

Tural Mammadov:

Tural is the youngest student I interviewed, only in the first semester of his bachelor's at the University of Vienna. Tural contacted me after a colleague sent my participant call in a Whatsapp group for a course they shared. Tural is a Sinology student, and began his degree in the Summer Semester 2020, the majority of which took place online due to the pandemic. He and I met via Skype video call on the 23rd of June 2020.

In preparation for our meeting, Tural put together a timeline of his university and residence permit application processes. He originally applied to start studying at the University of Vienna in the winter semester of 2018, but due to multiple residence permit rejections, he was subjected to a lengthy period of waiting, which he endured for the opportunity to study in Vienna. Tural had already shared his story with an Austrian news outlet but felt they did not do the difficulties he faced justice, so he wanted to share his story with me as well. We spent a lot of time discussing not only his residence permit process but the obstacles he faced in finding a job both before and during the pandemic. Tural's experience as a student is defined by the pandemic more than anyone else, because the majority of his first, and only, semester was spent in lockdown.

Bora Shehu:

Bora and I met during a class we took together at the University of Vienna where she also studies Social, Cultural Anthropology. We are not close friends but have been in academic and social situations together. I remembered she had told me once about her time as a third-country national student, so I reached out to her to see if she would grant me an interview. Due to her busy schedule, we decided to meet via Skype late in the evening on the 29th of June 2020, after she got home from work.

Bora is originally from Albania but has been in Vienna as a student for nearly ten years. Though she started a bachelor's degree in Albania, she decided to move to Austria to study, hoping for a better education and because her cousin was already located in Vienna.

She completed the bachelor's program in political science before deciding to switch fields to do an English-language program in the Social, Cultural Anthropology department. She spoke in depth about the difference between the two programs, both in terms of instructors and students. Her experiences were integral to understanding the varied conditions within the University of Vienna. Bora has fallen behind in her studies due to her job with the Albanian delegation to an international organization but hopes she will be able to maintain her student residence permit with the hopes of switching to a work permit once she graduates.

Administrators:

Anna Müller is an administrator at the University of Vienna. I was put in contact with her after emailing several general university addresses of offices that I hoped would be involved in student mobility or third-country national student support. She had not been in her position long but has spent her career in similar positions at other institutions. She asked to remain anonymous because she did not want her personal opinions associated with her position. During our Skype interview on the 8th of June, she regularly requested that comments not be associated with her in the final thesis. I have complied with this request to the best of my ability and credit only specific, factual information about internationalization efforts and projects at the University of Vienna to her.

Julia Brunner, an administrator at the Academy of Fine Arts, agreed to be interviewed via a similar process to Ms. Müller. I found several general email addresses related to international students on the Academy of Fine Arts website and was directed to her. She has been in her position for a couple of years but also worked in similar roles at other institutions before starting at the Academy. Upon request, I provided Ms. Brunner with an outline of topics and questions in advance of our Zoom meeting on the 9th of June 2020. I did not want her to over-prepare but felt I needed to accommodate her request to underscore my appreciation for providing me with an interview. Ms. Brunner has direct contact with students

at the Academy, so she was able to provide insight from her perspective, but also based on anecdotes of third-country national students she has been in contact with. Since she was sharing personal stories and her experiences as well as facts about internationalization at the Academy, Ms. Brunner requested that she be anonymized as much as possible. Again, I have done my best to ensure that her identity is concealed, while still using her insight to guide my research.

3. (In)accessibility and Internationalization: Institutional Priorities and Privileged Students

In order to begin to understand the ways third-country national students experience is constructed by internationalization efforts and the subjectivities they create; it is necessary to explore the concept of internationalization and the way it is enacted in Vienna.

Internationalization of higher education “tends to address an increase of border-crossing activities amidst a more or less persistence of national systems of higher education [...]

Internationalisation is often discussed in relation to physical mobility, academic cooperation, and academic knowledge transfer as well as international education” (Teichler 2004: 7).

Students, instructors, and research move between academic systems, and the role of internationalization is to create an environment that both eases this movement and harnesses it to the institutions’ benefit. This chapter explores this notion within the context of Vienna.

First, the efforts and rationale for internationalization in Austria are presented narrowing focus from federal education policy to the specific initiatives enacted at the two institutions being considered, arguing that the differential translations of the federal policy illuminate institutional priorities. Then, taking the experiences and stories of my interviewees as a starting point, I explore the implementation of internationalization efforts at the individual level. Here, I argue that the efforts, rather than easing the access of international

education for third-country national students, function as processes of (in)accessibility and privilege that construct the students' experience both academically and socially.

3.1 Internationalization strategies at the University of Vienna and Academy of Fine Arts: varied understandings

Though the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts are both public institutions of higher education in Vienna, they have significant differences. The University of Vienna is a much larger institution with 90,000 students and 178 degree-programs in a wide range of subjects covering natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and beyond (univie.ac.at). The Academy of Fine Arts, on the other hand, is the home institution to approximately 1,500 students and offers degree programs grounded in the production of art across a variety of media (akbild.ac.at). The differences in the size and breadth of curricula at the two institutions have an impact on the way they handle internationalization, especially efforts regarding third-country national students.

Austria is not the only nation going through the process of internationalization of its higher education. The policies in place on the federal and institutional levels, though in some ways unique, can also be located within broader global trends in higher education. Competition and prestige on a global scale are common incentives to internationalize higher educational institutions (e.g. Rivza and Teichler 2007; Brooks and Waters 2011; Knight and de Wit 2018), and the goals and initiatives described in the Austrian plans, which will be highlighted below, align with current trends. Additionally, the differential nature of the policies in place on national versus institutional scales parallel the situation in many European countries (Rivza and Teichler 2007).

When analyzing the internationalization strategies employed by the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts, there is a wide variety of actors and stakeholders that must be taken into consideration. It is difficult to fully understand the effects of a strategy or

policy without exploring both the creators and subjects of it as well as the ways (if at all) they interact. Stakeholders can vary from institution to institution, but generally include the Ministry of Education at the top, an international office responsible for outlining and implementing internationalization activities, various administrators, and of course students. Both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts have International Offices, but the Academy of Fine Arts also has the Student Welcome Center, which is deeply involved with third-country national students at the institution. To a lesser extent, but still relevant to public institutions, is the consideration of Austrian taxpayers, who fund the educational system and the role they play in influencing policy considerations. This section presents the various priorities of the internationalization strategies as interpreted by different actors, providing a basis for the occurrences of (in)accessibility and privilege discussed later.

3.1.1 Priorities according to the documents

The internationalization of higher education takes place at various scales, in multiple forms, and under the influence of a variety of actors (Brooks and Waters 2011; Knight and de Wit 2018; Yang 2018). In Austria, the internationalization strategies of specific educational institutions are based upon the broader strategy as outlined by the *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Forschung und Wissenschaft* (Federal Ministry of Education, Research and Knowledge)². In the most recent *Gesamtösterreichische Universitätsentwicklungsplan 2022-2027* (GUEP) the ministry emphasizes its desire to develop the reputation of Austria and its universities on a global scale. Within the broad plan, one of the objectives is to increase internationalization and mobility at Austrian universities, including internationalizing curricula and teaching. This builds upon the previous GUEP (2019-2024), that prioritized

² Moving forward to be referred to as Ministry of Education or BMBWF in citations (previously BMBFWF).

internationalization both through research and through the development of institutional strategies (BMWFW 2017, BMBWF 2019).

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of various internationalization efforts in solidifying Austria as a significant location for research and education. Specifically, the GUEP 2022-2027 states:

Für die Sicherung des Bildungs-, Wissenschafts- und Forschungsstandortes Österreich sind umfassend ausgebildete und mit internationalen und interkulturellen Kompetenzen ausgestattete Hochschulabsolventinnen und -absolventen eine unabdingbare Voraussetzung [...] Exzellente Leistungen in Forschung/EEK und Lehre sind nur in einem offenen, international ausgerichteten Hochschul- und Forschungsraum möglich. Dementsprechend ist eine strategiegeleitete Internationalisierung eine wesentliche Voraussetzung dafür, dass sich die Universitäten optimal im internationalen Wettbewerb der besten Köpfe und Ideen positionieren, um als attraktiver Kooperationspartner wahrgenommen zu werden und damit auch einen sichtbaren Beitrag zur globalen Wissensproduktion zu leisten. (BMBWF 2019: 25-26).

In order to secure Austria's position as a location for education, science, and research, university graduates with comprehensive education and international and intercultural skills are an indispensable prerequisite [...] Excellent performance in research/development and opening up of the arts and teaching is only possible in an open, internationally oriented university and research environment. Accordingly, a strategically guided internationalization is an essential prerequisite for the universities to optimally position themselves in the international competition for the best minds and ideas, and in order to be perceived as attractive cooperation partners, thus making a visible contribution to global knowledge production. (ibid, translated by author)

The ministry views internationalization as a means to raise Austria's status on a global scale, recognizing the need for diversity and openness within higher education in order to attract and produce the best thinkers and knowledge. These guiding objectives can be traced in the policies functioning as the framework for internationalization at the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts.

Though the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts are the institutions at the center of this inquiry, it is also necessary to address the wider field of international education in Vienna. In 2019 the Central European University opened its Vienna campus to students for the first time. CEU has a reputation for recruiting students from a wide range of

national backgrounds, referred to by the Ministry of Education as one of the most international universities worldwide (BMBWF 2020). The institution's move to Vienna aligns with the Education Ministry's hope to put Austria at the forefront of global education.

According to the Education Minister Heinz Faßmann:

Es ist sehr erfreulich, dass unsere gemeinsamen Bemühungen der renommierten Central European University ein neues Zuhause zu bieten, geglückt sind. Mein Ressort hat die CEU von Anfang an unterstützt, sich in den Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsstandort Wien einzugliedern und Kooperationspotenziale mit heimischen Einrichtungen zu nützen. Das werden wir auch weiterhin tun (BMBWF 1 October 2020).

It is very gratifying that our joint efforts to offer the renowned Central European University a new home have been successful. From the very beginning, my department has supported CEU in its efforts to integrate into Vienna as a university and science location, and to take advantage of the potential for cooperation with local institutions. We will continue to do this (ibid, translated by author).

Despite its reputation as a significant player in the field of international higher education and the excitement with which the Ministry of Education and Faßmann discuss the move, CEU, and its students have faced many obstacles in the transition to Vienna. One of the most significant challenges has been ensuring proper documentation for students from third countries hoping to participate in academic programs, reflecting the same difficulties faced by third-country national students at the other institutions being considered.

Whereas the Federal Ministry's strategic plan for universities is all-encompassing and considers internationalization as one of many means to improve Austria's standing in the world of higher education, the plans and policies of the institutions are more specific in their goals and the initiatives necessary to achieve them. The University of Vienna's current internationalization plan stems from 2018 and emphasizes that its efforts are threefold: "Strengthening the university's research profile and research quality through international collaboration [...] Enhancing the overall quality of education through internationalization at home and abroad [...] Contributing to strong international involvement in research and education through the internationalization of service missions" (International Office 2018:

2|3). These general goals are also broken down further into concrete steps the university plans to take. The internationalization of research includes building partnerships with other universities, encouraging researchers to work on projects with their peers around the world, and attracting high-profile academics to Vienna (ibid: 3|4). The internationalization of education focuses heavily on mobility on the part of students and instructors, as well as broadening curricula in terms of content and language, and recruiting international students (ibid: 3|4-4|5). Finally, the internationalization of services encompasses staff mobility, increasing English competency of staff, and providing more English-language information for international students (ibid: 4|5). It is clear how the University of Vienna translated these specific goals and strategies from the general plan provided by the Ministry of Education, solidifying the steps the institution can take to increase the status of Austria as a location known for higher education.

In comparison to the University of Vienna's internationalization plan, the Academy of Fine Arts' International Strategy 2014-2021 is grounded in the state of the university at the time of its production. The Academy recognizes the significant number of international students enrolled in its study programs as "regular students" (as opposed to exchange students), which the strategy writers attribute to the increased offering of English-language programs among other strategic measures (Academy of Fine Arts 2014). The plan also notes, however, that the high number of international students at the institution, while valued for their contribution to "internationalization at home" (Beelen and Jones 2015), also leads to fewer outwardly mobile students (Academy of Fine Arts 2014). In order to refocus the internationalization efforts at the Academy of Fine Arts, the internationalization strategy, similar to that of the University of Vienna, outlines three major goals: "Development of a network for art universities with similar/comparable profiles [...] Challenging the Eurocentric/modernity concept of the arts [...] The Academy of Fine Arts plans to intensify

its exchanges” (ibid). Though the goals look very different from those of the University of Vienna, some of the steps, such as increased English knowledge of faculty and staff and bilingual programs of study are similar. Additionally, despite being developed long before the current university development plan from the Ministry of Education (2019), this strategy also addresses some of the necessary steps to bring the Austrian university system onto the world stage.

The concept of internationalization at home is commonly found in literature and strategic plans related to the internationalization of higher education. It was frequently mentioned by both of the administrators with whom I spoke, as they described their understanding of the internationalization efforts at the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts. Internationalization at home is not necessarily the opposite of internationalization abroad, rather they can be understood as interdependent (Knight 2006 cited in Beelen and Jones 2015). Where internationalization abroad deals with cross-border activities, the concept of internationalization at home “is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Beelen and Jones 2015: 69). Though this is not the only definition of internationalization at home that exists, its development and explanation as laid out by the authors most closely aligns with my understanding of the concept as used by my interview partners and the internationalization documents in Austria.

The internationalization efforts laid out in these two strategies can be understood as concretizations and translations at the institutional level of the plans constructed by policymakers at the federal level. It is also important to note, however, that these documents function merely as guidelines. Regardless of what they describe as the strategic plans and initiatives of internationalization at the institution, there is still the question of implementation. The written policies, as presented, are only one dimension of

internationalization in terms of its effects on the experience of third-country nationals. The understanding of the priorities of internationalization and the description of actual efforts by university administrators provide deeper insight into how the process is handled at an institutional level.

3.1.2 Priorities according to administrators

Despite the codification of internationalization policies into institutional-specific documents, the priorities of each institution can be more clearly understood through the eyes of administrators responsible for implementing the strategies. The practical application of the strategies provides a different entry point into understanding the effects of the internationalization discourse on the experience of third-country national students. The administrators from the University of Vienna and the Academy of fine arts each emphasize different aspects of internationalization at their institution, but those they mention can be traced at least in part to the strategies discussed above.

At the University of Vienna, the administrator interviewed spoke in depth about the development and maintenance of strategic partnerships as a high priority of the university. This reflects the goals stated in the strategy documents to increase the internationalization of research. She described the importance of outgoing mobility for instructors and other institutional relationships to the notoriety of the university:

[There are] mobility programs for researchers, for teaching staff, with universities both in Europe and outside Europe. [There] are also cooperation agreements, that each university has - different types of contracts with other universities. For example, Erasmus contracts [...] but also bilateral contracts with universities outside Europe, and a newer phenomenon in internationalization is strategic partnerships, and [the University of Vienna] has 5 strategic partners with universities outside Europe. (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020).

Participating in strategic partnerships allows the University of Vienna to draw on resources from other institutions to support its efforts in gaining prestige. The partnerships are also important for the internationalization of research because they are a set framework within

which faculty and other researchers at the university can produce high-quality work that is recognized on a global scale.

Beyond strategic partnerships as a means of internationalizing research, the administrator was also able to provide insight into the connection between research and the efforts made to internationalize education, as described in the strategic plan. One of the areas she discussed was the mobility of instructors. The opportunity to work and network at universities outside of Austria allows for the building and strengthening of research partnerships and increased collaboration in scientific publication. Instructor mobility means that the University of Vienna can host lecturers from partner institutions, but also be a more attractive teaching location for renowned professors, as identified in the internationalization policy. The one hurdle identified by the administrator in the internationalization of teaching – and therefore curricula and research – through recruitment of international instructors is the language barrier:

Teaching is semi-internationalized, because the working language is still German, and [the university does] recruit a lot of professors from Germany or other German-speaking countries. Of course, [there is] a policy of recruiting non-German speaking professors, but they are required to learn German within three years (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020).

The recruitment of non-German speaking professors further aligns with the internationalization plan as elaborated in the written documents, where the importance of foreign language course offerings is a key aspect of internationalizing curricula. The university thereby not only attracts global talent but also enables its students to “gain international experience at home” (International Office 2018: 3|4) through instruction by a professor from a different academic context. Bora underscored the importance of visiting professors saying she felt like she could have been in Lisbon or Madrid or London when she had courses taught by visiting professors (Bora, 29th June 2020). Students who are not able to

participate in mobility during the course of their degree are able to participate in courses as if they were attending a foreign university.

Ms. Müller further acknowledged the benefit of international students and student mobility as a form of internationalization at home (Beelen and Jones 2015). However, she placed a greater emphasis on European mobility through frameworks such as the Erasmus program, rather than through recruiting third-country national students. She highlighted the importance of grounding these efforts in cooperation within the region, noting “[the University of Vienna is] very much a central European University and it's very important to be embedded in the region we are in” (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020). This sentiment follows the same rationale for the creation of programs like the Erasmus program and other more regional exchange networks, which is to promote the unity of Europe without undermining the sovereignty of any specific nation (Rivza and Teichler 2007; Brooks and Waters 2011). Cooperation with other central European institutions allows the University of Vienna to build and foster a network where there is at least a baseline of commonality in region and history, allowing easing the exchange of students and instructors. Though the new presence of CEU in Vienna would seem to be a prime opportunity for cooperation, new partnerships or teaching agreements between the private and public institutions were not mentioned.

The focus that the administrator put on being embedded in the region is indicative of European trends in student mobility. Rather than working to recruit third-country national students, or those participating in degree mobility, there is a much greater emphasis placed on the participation in European-focused short-term mobility programs (Rivza and Teichler 2007). Though the Ministry of Education wants to internationalize Austrian educational institutions, Ms. Müller explained that the recruitment of third-country national students was not yet a priority for the University of Vienna – compared to at institutions struggling to attract students domestically – because there are enough Austrian students still interested in

the study programs (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020). Further, though third-country national students at public institutions in Austria are required to pay higher tuition fees than EU/EEA students, the majority of the cost of their education is subsidized by Austrian taxes, which, as in many other European countries, can lead to a reluctance to support unlimited mobility of foreign students (Rivza and Teichler 2007: 471). According to the administrator, this signifies an additional obligation for the university to focus on educating Austrian students and pursuing internationalization efforts that benefit them, such as internationalization of the curricula. The loss of university places for local students is recognized as a potential negative impact of internationalization (Brooks and Waters 2011) but is not acknowledged as a concern in the internationalization documents from either the ministry or the institutions.

While the priorities of the University of Vienna were clearly focused on the internationalization of research and curricula, and to a lesser extent of embedding itself in the region via European exchanges, the focus of internationalization efforts as described by the administrator from the Academy of Fine Arts was very different. She reiterated the importance of internationalization at home in the form of degree programs that are accessible to non-German speakers, allowing the Austrian students to experience an international setting via classmates rather than mobility:

They have lots of these English-speaking programs. Also, [they] tried to offer more bilingual [options], to offer for example our lectures and classes in English, even if the study programs are not in English (Ms. Brunner, 9th June 2020).

The Academy of Fine Arts already attracts students from around the world because of its prestige as an art university, but the option to take courses or complete whole degree programs in English shows that international students are a priority. The existence of English language courses is also a direct consequence of internationalization as laid out by the strategic plan in 2014, and functions to internationalize the student body as opposed to research and curricula as found at the University of Vienna.

Beyond the language of instruction as a means to make study at the Academy more accessible to international students, it also has structures in place that emphasize the importance of third-country national students to their internationalization efforts. The administrator describes the prestige attached to the presence of international students at the Academy:

It's also important to have a certain diversity and to [...] be international is really important. And international doesn't mean that there are some German students and some students from Eastern European countries [...] [there are] students from about 70 different countries or something, all over the world. So, this is something [the Academy] really is proud of and needs to work for as well. So, it's not just [the Academy is] happy they come, but also [it] wants to support them (Ms. Brunner 9th June 2020).

As noted in the international strategy, 40% of students at the Academy of Fine Arts are international, and Ms. Brunner further underlined maintaining their presence as a priority. The efforts to support the students take several different forms; one significant effort, which shows that international, degree-seeking students are a priority, is the existence of the Student Welcome Center. This office supports students from before they apply to the institution, through their application process both for the university and for residence permits, and throughout their time as students. The difference in approach to student mobility at the Academy of Fine Arts compared to the University of Vienna further demonstrates the institutional autonomy in focusing internationalization efforts. If the Ministry of Education's strategy was interpreted and applied the same by all institutions in Austria, there would not be discrepancies in the approach to third-country national students at the two institutions being considered. Therefore, the varied interpretations are important for exploring the institutional effect on student experience.

Understanding the policy as it is written, both at the national and institutional levels is only the first step in understanding the way it constructs the third-country national student experience. To truly discern the effects of the internationalization policies at the individual

level, the question of what students and administrators “make of it” (Shore and Wright 2011) must be asked. Where the internationalization strategies of each institution laid the framework for the priorities and practices of internationalization at each university, the practical efforts described by the administrators are important to build a full picture. As with any type of policy, there can be a discrepancy or variation between what is present in a written document and how the policy is enacted or enforced in practice. Interrogating this “emic versus etic” (ibid) understanding is necessary to analyze the subjectivities it creates. The administrators’ insight into the priorities of the institutions regarding internationalization and the concrete steps they discuss further illuminate how third-country national students experience internationalization during their time at university.

3.2 Internationalization and the student experience

Since the purpose of this inquiry is to answer the question of how discourse and practices of internationalization affect and construct the third-country national student experience, it is necessary to consider the goals of the institutional and federal strategies as they are enacted at the university on a day to day basis, and how the students interpret the impacts in their experience. Though few of the students interviewed were able to recognize explicit internationalization efforts at play in their interactions and daily activities as they moved through the universities, that does not mean they do not exist. Their stories contain anecdotes that pertain to both successful and unsuccessful – in terms of the intended outcomes aligning with the actual outcomes – implementation of the strategic plans and priorities as relayed by the administrators. These practical applications of internationalization efforts, I argue, lead to varied (in)accessibility and privileges within the context of the universities. Though the institutions pride themselves on hosting many international students, the conditions for third-country national students are significantly different from EU/EEA

students who are participating in what Teichler (2004) refers to as “mobility light.” As will be discussed in the following sections, the lack of common history, background, and social practices can separate the third-country national students from each other and other international students.

3.2.1 Internationalization of services

Within the University of Vienna’s internationalization strategy, and to a lesser extent within that of the Academy of Fine Arts, the internationalization of services is considered an important initiative to increase the status of Austria as an important player in higher education. The focus of this effort includes easing the navigation of university processes through increased availability of information in English (International Office 2018, Academy of Fine Arts 2014). This is an important first step in recruiting foreign students and creating a welcoming environment for non-German speakers hoping to study in Vienna.

One of the services that is most widely used by prospective and current students at the University of Vienna is the university website. For many of the students I spoke to, their first step when searching for information was to consult the university’s website. Though the majority of pages are available in both German and English, the navigation of the site was confusing, and the English pages were not always the same as those in German:

[T]he website was not very clear [...] my poor German doesn’t help, because a lot of the information on the website, for example, is only in German. Or, if you click the English one, it takes you somewhere else. So, the language thing is not super helpful, and it doesn’t feel geared towards international students (Sally, 1st June 2020).

[T]he only resources offered to students is the information that is available on the website. I assume the information there can be improved, I don’t know how difficult it is for non-European or international students to read the information (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020).

Superficially, the presence of information on the website in English is a positive result of the internationalization of services for international, and particularly third-country national students. However, the difficulty in navigation expressed by Sally, a native-English speaker,

and the uncertainty expressed by Ms. Müller in international students' ability to read the site point to the potential privilege inherent in using the website as a reliable source. An international student who does not have English or German as a first or even second language would likely have trouble accessing the information necessary to apply, enroll, and participate in the university.

Beyond the websites, English plays an important role in the internationalization of services within the administration. This includes the employees working in the Admissions Office, in the Directorates of Studies, and other support offices. If non-German speaking students are not able to interact with the parties responsible for answering questions about curriculum, study documents, or study requirements, they are disadvantaged in their pursuit of a degree. Students at both the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Vienna expressed their differing experiences with the English abilities of administrators:

I think in the Registrar's office [at the Academy of Fine Arts] they never talk [in] English. So, I mean, I worked as a tutor for the Erasmus students, and they were just coming back crying because they were, I mean almost none of them spoke German, and in the Registrar's office, they were mad like "don't speak English to us!" (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

I wanted to sit down with an administrator and ask questions about how things work at the university [...] I emailed the administration office [directorate of studies], and they let me come in and have a conversation with her [in English] (Laura, 14th June 2020).

Despite the stated focus on supporting international students participating in credit and degree mobility at the Academy, foreign students still struggled with communication. This again points to the ways in which select international students (third-country or otherwise) are privileged through eased access to education mobility in Vienna. The University of Vienna, on the other hand, although it has no central support system for third-country national students, was able to provide degree-related information to an English-speaking student in her first language. The power implications of language use in institutions will be further considered in the context of bureaucratic offices in the chapter dedicated to

bureaucracy and migration, however, the discrepancies between pushing for increased foreign language use at the universities and the actual abilities of the staff reveals a privileging of students with specific language abilities.

3.2.3 Internationalization of education

The area of internationalization of education is one of the largest categories covered in the international strategies of both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts. It covers a broad range of initiatives and goals related to topics such as student and instructor mobility, curricula, and language of teaching and degree programs. This, even more so than the other types of internationalization covered in the plans and discussed by the administrators, plays a role in the construction of the third-country national experience. The impact of internationalization of education, or lack thereof, can be found in the everyday classroom and study-related conditions and interactions the students confront. The differential results of these efforts on the part of the universities further highlight the varied accessibilities and privileges granted by internationalization, in some cases leading third-country national students to feel like outsiders.

One of the main goals of the Academy of Fine Arts, as laid out in their international strategy, is moving beyond a Eurocentric concept of the arts (Academy of Fine Arts 2014) through internationalization of the curricula. According to many of the third-country national students I spoke with, this goal is being achieved within their courses. All of the students spoke highly of the openness to the diverse ideas and backgrounds of each student at the Academy:

I think the Academy really tries to cover and give a voice to the minorities, so there are a lot of lectures in that case. And there is a huge post-colonial department [...] And in conceptual art class it's anyway a totally political class, and we just discuss about every country's matters (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

This is a form of internationalization of curricula because it offers more than just a western understanding of knowledge and education and allows for a breadth of ideas to be considered in the classroom. If students and instructors at the Academy are open to a wide array of ideas, they are successfully participating in “internationalization at home” (Beelen and Jones 2015), and providing a welcoming atmosphere to their international students, further marking the students as a priority of the internationalization efforts.

In contrast to the Academy’s open classrooms, students at the University of Vienna expressed frustration at the privileging of certain types of students, or assumptions made about them in relation to the content covered in their courses. The way a topic is approached within academia can be contingent upon national context. International students, because they come from different academic traditions, often relate to topics differently than students studying in their home country. The difference can be attributed to both matters of whether a student is participating in “vertical” or “horizontal” mobility (Rivza and Teichler 2007) or simply coming from a different national context (e.g. USA to Austria). This manifested itself in two different ways within the experiences of my interview partners; either as an assumption of preexisting knowledge, or the cause of feeling behind in a course:

[S]ometimes I feel thrown into one, like, small group that is America and I don't know how they're defining it, and they expect me to like speak with some sort of extra authority on the topic. That doesn't make much sense and they wouldn't, I know my peers wouldn't find acceptable if it was applied in another situation or to another country or region (John, 7th June 2020).

[T]here’ve been instances, I guess, where professors have asked like where people are from, like all in the class. Sometimes then later they'll bring up a topic and be like “Oh do you have anything to say about this because you're from here?” (Laura, 14th June 2020)

I remember that I didn't have a lot of information, and maybe this is the part where my nationality and my background came through. So, it took me more time to study and to read extra articles or an extra book just to be at the same level as the other people in class (Bora, 29th June 2020).

The backgrounds of international students were highlighted and acknowledged when they served a pedagogical purpose to instructors, but occasionally attention was drawn to the student's difference in a way that made them feel uncomfortable. The selective appreciation of different perspectives points to the privilege granted to students from certain global or academic backgrounds. For students who felt behind because of their nationality or previous academic experience, the access to course content was limited. In both instances, the shortcomings of the University of Vienna's internationalization of education can be seen. On the one hand, students feel marked as outsiders through the expectation to function as the mouthpiece of their nation, and on the other hand, the feeling stems from the lack of common academic history of their classmates³.

According to its international plan, the Academy of Fine Arts has an extremely high number of international students, which Ms. Brunner highlighted as a point of pride. They even developed the Student Welcome Center as a support system for all students but particularly aimed at guiding international students through the application and enrolment process. Despite the emphasis on maintaining a diverse student body, particularly as a means to increase internationalization at home, some support efforts leave third-country national students feeling like second-class students. The most significant area where students felt they had unequal access to support was related to finances⁴:

Most of the scholarships are for the EU students, and like this is like a nice understanding that they say, "oh it's not only for Austrians," but then they exclude someone again. So, it's really hard to find a sponsorship as an artist (Zeynep, 17th June 2020)

³ This seems to be particularly true in the Social, Cultural Anthropology department, where all three of these students are completing their degrees.

⁴ Access to financial support is a common hurdle for international students around the world. In the US context, for example, foreign students are generally not eligible for financial aid and are therefore required to pay full tuition.

When you realize that there are people that don't need to worry how to pay rent [...] That's the kind of freaky part about being in a disadvantage [...] It isn't my fault to have a Mexican passport and that it doesn't give me anything here. It shouldn't give me anything. I just advocate for more fairness in being allowed to do stuff and get grants and apply for stuff. There're no scholarships I can apply to. The Academy has a couple of scholarships for like good students and like, well since you need to [be] European just to apply for that stuff for example (Miguel, 18th June 2020).

[There's] not a lot of possibilities for funding as well, because it's a lot of scholarships and grants and foundations and so on, which work only for European students and local artists for example. And sometimes you feel yourself kind of, ok, I'm a bit excluded from this (Irina, 18th June 2020).

Scholarships are a concrete means by which the Academy can reward students who are progressing successfully in their programs, particularly at an art institution where the materials necessary to participate are expensive and to be purchased at the students' expense. Though the funding opportunities are not limited to Austrian students, they still exclude a large portion of the international student population. That select students were excluded from applying for financial support underscores a privileging one part of the student body over another, despite pride in having high diversity as a result of internationalization efforts. The bureaucratic implications of the inaccessibility of financial support, lead the university to act as a gatekeeper limiting who has access to the means to be a student.

Despite concerted efforts at both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts to increase offerings in English as a means of catering to non-German speaking students, language continued to function as a means of exclusion (Duchene, Moyer and Roberts 2013) at both institutions. Students at the University of Vienna participating in English-language programs were still required to submit proof of German proficiency in order to apply. Even those studying in German described classroom interactions when non-native speakers were admonished for participating in the language of the course further leading to feelings of being an "other":

The fact that you need such high German, like C1 in order to even do the [removed for anonymity] program, which I've taken all in English except for one German class,

which I chose to do, and I wouldn't have had to. It doesn't feel very welcoming to the majority of the world other than Germans, or Swiss (Sally, 1st June 2020).

[O]ne instance that clearly sticks out in my mind, was we had to give presentations on our research topics in a class, and another non-native speaker, who in my opinion was a much stronger speaker than I was, the teacher told them that they need to find native German-speaking friends in order to make their German better (Michael, 4th June 2020).

Michael and his other classmate broke the stereotype of international students relying on English (Brooks and Waters 2011) but were not met with appreciation by the instructor, further highlighting their condition as foreign students. In Sally's case, the requirement of German proficiency, even in a majorly English-taught program, privileges international students from a very specific background, namely those who had access to German courses and the time and money to participate in them. Despite a program seeming accessible to a wider spectrum of people as a result of internationalization, it in fact leads non-German speakers to feel like outsiders. The University of Vienna included increased foreign language proficiency – not only English – of students and instructors in its internationalization strategy (International Office 2018). However, the attitudes and realities of language use experienced by my interviewees highlight the tension between foreign language as positive and accepted, and national language as an aspect of “institutional identity” (Duchene, Moyer, and Roberts 2013), which is problematic to efforts aimed at internationalizing curricula through offering non-German courses.

At the Academy of Fine Arts, language proficiency did not lead to students feeling like outsiders in the classroom. On the contrary, the policy of not requiring German knowledge for admission led to a much more linguistically diverse student body. However, one of my interview partners discussed her feelings of being an outsider due to unfamiliarity with the German language and other Austrian practices:

I would say that there is a certain distance, kind of you cannot participate in the whole thing which is going on around [you]. Again, probably it on the basis of kind of language and maybe cultural differences, but also because of the understanding of the

like habits or yeah, I mean the style of life and the different conditions, for example for sure European students feel much more relaxed (Irina, 18th June 2020).

It is one thing to be able to participate in the academic side of university life because internationalization efforts have created a classroom setting conducive to students from different educational and global backgrounds. However, if the openness does not extend beyond the classroom, international students begin to feel socially excluded. While the Academy tries to support students from a wide range of backgrounds by offering an abundance of English-language courses and programs as well as waiving a German requirement, the lack of language skills still impacts the student experience.

The social side of being an international student is another important aspect that constructs the overall experience. According to existing literature on international student mobility and internationalization, foreign students generally build greater social ties to one another rather than with students from their nation of study (Brooks and Waters 2011; Beech 2015; Montgomery and McDowell 2008). The University of Vienna emphasized efforts to support internationalization at home via the student body, in which international students attending courses at the university function as a means for Austrian students to experience international education without going abroad (Beelen and Jones 2015). Despite this initiative listed as a priority in the internationalization strategy, the third-country national students I spoke with recounted difficulty building friendships with their classmates:

I felt like the odd man out. And I sort of like had conversations with people here and there, but people never like cared to get to know me or anything (Laura, 14th June 2020).

[Other students were] I wouldn't say not friendly, but they were more like, they kept their distances. And they had their own groups, and it was very difficult for me to find someone to hang out [with] (Bora, 29th June 2020).

Though the social lives of its students are not necessarily the purview of a university or its administration, stronger efforts to support third-country national students or to further increase international student participation would change the dynamic and result in more

successful internationalization of the student body. Bora, whose experience is described above, was speaking mainly about her social experience as a bachelor's student. She described a much more open and welcoming atmosphere in her master's program, which is a dual degree program that attracts many foreign students. The feeling of being a social outsider simply compounded the third-country national student's feelings of unbalanced accessibility and privilege.

3.3 Internationalization and COVID-19: impacts on (in)accessibility

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted virtually every aspect of life during the period in which my research took place. The administrators at both institutions discussed several ways in which internationalization and mobility initiatives had to be postponed or rethought in the wake of global lockdowns and travel restrictions. Measures taken by the higher educational institutions in Austria impacted the outcomes of existing internationalization efforts, which in turn led to third-country national students expressing changes in the ways they experienced (in)accessibility and privilege.

Mobility was one of the aspects of internationalization most immediately affected during the pandemic. Members of the University of Vienna and Academy of Fine Arts communities who were studying abroad faced the decision on whether to remain in their host country or return to Austria, and international students and instructors in Vienna faced similar difficulties. The University of Vienna received an influx of questions from current Erasmus students about completing periods of mobility, and from prospective participants asking about going abroad in the near future. Despite the difficulties of the Summer Semester 2020, hope remained that some mobility would be possible for the upcoming semester, even if it would be limited to neighboring countries, specifically Germany (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020). This sentiment was echoed by the administrator at the Academy of Fine Arts who expressed

concern that there would be a decrease in third-country national students in the Winter Semester 2020 due to the inability to acquire documentation (Ms. Brunner, 9th June 2020)⁵. Though the institutions are not purposefully privileging international students from EU/EEA countries, the nature of internationalization of the student body as it pertains to incoming third-country national students is no longer accessible due to the pandemic.

The international degree-seeking students at the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts, who play an important role in internationalization at home, were unequally impacted as a result of COVID-19. Very early on in the pandemic, the Austrian government required all institutions of higher education to close their doors and switch to distance learning. Participation in courses in a foreign language, whether German or English, suddenly had another layer of complexity when held in a digital format. Zeynep described her evaluation of the added difficulties for international students saying:

I mean, I think the language barrier became even stronger with Zoom, I mean or digital stuff (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

Degree programs in English were an effort to internationalize curricula at both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts. Though originally meant to make attendance at the institutions more accessible, during COVID-19 digital learning had the opposite effect, complicating the experience of third-country national students who were faced with a new academic hurdle.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion: dissonant internationalization plans and practices

The existence of varied accessibilities and privileges highlighted in the interviews and their juxtaposition with the codified internationalization plans can be understood as a problematic condition of the institutions. According to Brooks and Waters:

⁵ As of October 2020, there are still limitations on travel to Austria from third countries, and Austrian embassies and consulates around the world remain closed meaning that entry visa and residence permit applications cannot be submitted (BMEIA).

Early work often problematized the international student, drawing on a deficit model in which difficulties with language, study skills and adapting to cultural norms were attributed to the individual and used to explain poor academic performance. More recently, emphasis has come to be placed, instead, on the host institution and its responsibility for adapting to the needs of a diverse student body, recognizing that overseas students cannot be treated as a homogenous block (Brooks and Waters 2011: 150).

The experiences described above align with Brooks and Waters' presentation of new ways of viewing international students. Internationalization policies, particularly at the federal level, need to be generalized in order to allow individual institutions to adapt based on their needs. For the University of Vienna, there was an emphasis on internationalization at home – via internationalization of curricula and to a lesser extent the student body – and internationalization of research through strategic partnerships. Unfortunately, for the third-country national students interviewed, though internationalization efforts made it more possible for them to participate in degree programs at the university, many of their day-to-day experiences indicated the need for internationalization to better address their condition. This could take multiple forms, including implementation of an internationalization strategy focused on student experience, or the creation of better support systems, leveling the playing field in terms of accessibility and privilege. Though in some respects the Academy of Fine Arts was arguably more successful in implementing their internationalization plans in a way that the actual consequences matched the intended effects, there were still instances where students felt as though the efforts were misdirected in terms of granting access for all students.

As can be seen throughout this chapter, the conceptualization and implementation of internationalization efforts and strategies can vary greatly. The necessity of comprehensive plans for internationalization taking the students into consideration is a common theme in evaluations of strategies at higher education institutions, “the mere presence of many international students on campuses does not equal internationalization; for international

students to add to a university's mission of global engagement, they must be integrated with domestic students both inside and outside of the classroom through meaningful collaborations" (de Witt 2011 cited in Urban and Palmer 2014: 307). In many cases discussed in this chapter, the hope was that internationalization would occur passively thanks to third-country national students participating in the degree programs. With each narrowing of scale; from the plans of the Ministry of Education to the international strategies of the universities, to the areas of internationalization discussed by administrators, and finally the experienced effects of internationalization by the third-country national students, the relationship between the intended strategies and the results differs. These variations in turn construct the experience of third-country national students, particularly in relation to their (education) institutional interactions. This chapter focused on the day to day experiences of third-country national students as a result of internationalization efforts, and the policies guiding them. Though the internationalization strategies laid out by the Ministry of Education and the institutional strategies had elements highlighting the importance of third-country national students. In practice, however, the realization of the efforts resulted in select students being afforded more or less accessibility or privilege at the institutions. The following chapter explores non-academic services and support systems provided by the universities, considering the way their existence, or lack thereof, affect student experience.

4. Locating Systems of Support

Third-country national students in Vienna are regularly faced with educational and bureaucratic scenarios that they are required to navigate. Oftentimes, these can be daunting and confusing tasks. Naturally, students seek out support wherever they can find it. Occasionally, that is in the form of institutional actors, systems, and services provided by the universities, but more often support is found via personal contacts and connections within

students' existing social networks. This chapter explores these systems of support and their relationship to internationalization efforts and the student experience.

As noted in the previous chapter regarding internationalization efforts, the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Vienna not only have different priorities outlined in their international strategies, but the realization of those plans have different effects on the student experience. The Academy of Fine Arts has a more clearly defined aim to recruit and support international, and particularly third-country national, students, which results in more concrete efforts to create support systems for them. In the case of third-country national students at the University of Vienna, who are a welcome by-product of internationalization efforts – but not the focus – the institutional support systems are not as well-developed. In situations where the institutional support systems are deemed insufficient by the students, they are more likely to reach out to personal contacts or seek support from non-institutional sources. The following sections locate and explore these support systems as described by third country-national students. First, the support systems present at the institutions are identified and the types of support they offer are discussed. Then the role of personal contacts and self-sought information is presented with a discussion of the role of social networks in internationalization and the lives of international students. Finally, as with all of the thematic chapters, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in relation to their impacts on the students' support networks.

4.1 Institutional support systems: University of Vienna vs Academy of Fine Arts

4.1.1 Who provides the support?

Both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts have international, degree-seeking students from non-EU/EEA countries; however, they have different means and systems in place for supporting those students in both educational and bureaucratic

matters. According to Basford and Riemsdijk (2017), who studied the role of institutions (educational and otherwise) on the experience of student migrants in Norway, “the quality of support available [...] varies widely by university and academic department” (7). This aligns with the experiences of students in Vienna, where the primary source of support is very much dependent on the institution, as well as what course of study a given third-country national is pursuing. The medium of support varies from information on the university websites to offices responsible for supporting students, to student unions offering advice and legal assistance.

At the University of Vienna, the support services are decentralized, meaning rather than third-country nationals communicating with one office to ask questions regarding admissions, curriculum, or residence status, they must seek out information from multiple sources. When asked about the systems in place at the University of Vienna, Ms. Müller, acknowledged that though she could see the benefits of a unified approach, this did not currently exist at the university:

[They] don't have them it's as easy as that. I know the ÖH are thinking of building up such a support system [...] But Uni Wien doesn't really have that. It's decentralized [...] it's either SPL [Directorate of Studies] or the admissions office [...] I know that the doctoral schools do have resources for international students, for recruiting them but also for helping them move to Austria, find a flat, find accommodation and so on, but that type of resource doesn't exist for masters students and definitely not for bachelors students (Ms. Müller, 8th June 2020).

Though the University of Vienna has an International Office that is closely involved with the university's internationalization efforts, it does not function as a point of contact for third-country national students practicing degree mobility. Several of the University of Vienna students with whom I spoke had contacted the office with questions, only to be referred to other offices or towards the website. Depending on which offices the students subsequently reached out to, they had varied success in getting support in answering their questions regarding university or bureaucracy in Vienna. The admissions office was responsive and

answered questions regarding application documents and provided documentation to students for residence permit purposes (Tural, 23rd June 2020). Laura and Sally were able to turn to their program's Directorate of Studies for answers to curricular questions, but students still faced confusion on where to turn for advice about how to apply for residence permits or the expectations for course work.

The Academy of Fine Arts on the other hand, as might be expected from their focus on foreign students as an internationalization measure, has a very concrete and unified support system in place for students. Though a recent measure, the Student Welcome Center at the Academy offers comprehensive support for third-country national students. It has services that range from application assistance before a student enrolls to bureaucratic guidance whenever students apply for or renew residence permits:

[W]e are a very international university. The Student Welcome Center focuses on the support, information, and counseling for international students [...] In all areas like general study information, detailed information during the studies as well, and practical questions like living in Vienna, insurance questions and so on. And also, for example, for new students coming to Austria, for the residence permit and visa questions (Ms. Brunner, 9th June 2020).

In addition to all of the tasks mentioned by Ms. Brunner, the Student Welcome Center also holds orientation sessions, provides welcome guides, and is available for check-ins with any students who need help adjusting to life as a student at the Academy. The impact of the office is clear from discussions with Academy students, who all mentioned having turned to the office for support, generally bureaucratic, at one point or another.

Having a clear point of contact for questions significantly impacted the experience of Academy of Fine Arts students. While University of Vienna students had to gather information from multiple sources and offices, Academy students knew exactly where to turn and the advice they were receiving was constantly in a feedback loop, undergoing adjustment based on the experiences of their peers. The Student Welcome Center, in this way functions as a facilitator in the education-migration industry (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013).

It supports students from the time they decide to apply to the academy until they graduate. The Student Welcome Center, beyond advising students on application materials assists them in obtaining the necessary documentation for travel visas to Austria in order to take the entrance exam. In her work on the education migration industry in the UK, Suzanne Beech attributes similar facilitating functions to recruitment agents who “offer a wide range of services including help with visas and travel, English language testing, accommodation and counselling” (Beech 2018: 613). Though the Student Welcome Center is directly affiliated with the Academy of Fine Arts, whereas the agents described by Beech are private actors paid to assist student migrants, they serve similar purposes. The Student Welcome Center provides information on academic and bureaucratic aspects of being a student in Vienna and eases the migration process for third-country nationals.

4.1.2 What support is provided?

Since “the availability of financial aid may mitigate the stress experienced by international students” (Basford and Riemsdijk 2017: 9), the existence of financial support has a significant impact on third-country national students and the ways in which their experience in Vienna is constructed. As discussed in the previous chapter, Academy students felt excluded and disadvantaged because they are not eligible to apply for many of the scholarships advertised as open for international students. The possibility for third-country national students to turn to their institutions for financial assistance influences the extent to which they consider the university itself as a location of support. The importance of finances to the legal domain of studentship in Austria will be further discussed in the following chapter about bureaucratic uncertainty, whereas this section explores scholarships and grants as forms of institutional support.

In Vienna, third-country national students at public universities are expected to pay tuition, while Austrian and other EU/EEA students who complete their degrees in the

prescribed period of study are exempt from most fees (akbild.ac.at; univie.ac.at). The cost of tuition for third-country national students, except for those from a small list of “developing countries” is €746.92 per semester (in 2020), including the student union fees (univie.ac.at; akbild.ac.at). In order to support their students, the Academy of Fine Arts has several methods of relieving the financial burden of being a third-country national student in Vienna. This comes in the form of both tuition forgiveness, and an auction of student work that is used to provide scholarships for which third-country national students are eligible. Zeynep recognizes the uniqueness of these efforts and expresses appreciation for the initiative:

I mean, there is like an auction every January and they, I think they even raise up to €100,000 or something. And they make their own private scholarship for the students from the *Drittstaat* [third-country nationals], like non-European international students. That's the only Academy I know, the only place, or the only institution in Austria doing that [...] The Academy also started this "we're repaying that" campaign, so they're also repaying that 700-thingy [tuition fees] because they think it's unfair and they're also paying it from their own private budget of this auction, so to say (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

As a result of both tuition forgiveness and a special scholarship for third-country national students, the Academy of Fine Arts is able to remedy some of the feelings of inaccessibility stemming from ineligibility for other scholarships available only to EU/EEA students.

The question of financial support and the inequalities of access that occur in its absence is not unique to the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Vienna. In September 2020 a Peruvian student at the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna began a hunger strike in protest against increased tuition fees for third-country national students (Schmidt 23 September 2020). Though he was financially struggling, not paying the fees would result in the student losing his eligibility for a residence permit – for third-country national students, migration status is dependent on studentship, and studentship is dependent on migration status. He, like the third-country national students I interviewed, felt singled out as an “other” by the financial obligation to pay tuition fees without access to the scholarships and grants limited to EU/EEA students (ibid). In the case of the Academy of Applied Arts,

the ÖH supported this student's protest and petition for fee relief, resulting in a decision by the institution to waive tuition for the Winter Semester 2020 and explore further options for fee reductions (ibid). The decision of the Academy of Applied Arts to provide financial support in the form of waiving tuition fees is an indicator of the importance of the third-country nationals to the institution.

The University of Vienna on the other hand does not provide financial support for third-country national students, further reinforcing the low priority of recruiting and assisting students in the internationalization plans. Sally, however, notes that financial support is not only unavailable for third-country national students in terms of tuition. She feels that the University of Vienna fails in providing funding for students' academic endeavors, which could be considered fundamental to an internationalization of knowledge. She and a research partner had hoped to find funding to attend conferences in both Portugal and Croatia to present a paper but were told that there was no support available. Additionally, Sally expressed her frustration at the lack of paid Ph.D. positions at the University of Vienna, which would be her only option as a third-country national student facing difficulties in finding employment alongside her studies:

I've been trying to find funding for a Ph.D. for example, and I would guess that one key way of getting more international stuff, would be to get people to study or to pursue careers at your university from other countries. Actually, the U:Docs program, which funded PhDs previously, I think it ended in 2018. Like, there's no funding for Ph.D. students at Uni Wien anymore. Which I can't imagine, if you're an international student you need to have funding. Like you can't just live for free and pay the high tuition, by the way, €750/semester! (Sally, 1st June 2020).

In contrast to the Academy of Fine Arts, where financial support is used as a means to achieve one of the main goals of internationalization – maintaining an internationally diverse student body – the University of Vienna seems to not even support students who might contribute to the internationalization of knowledge and research. Due in part to this absence of funding, University of Vienna students feel as though they and their needs as third-country

national students are unimportant to the institution. Further causing them to seek support outside the institution.

Assistance navigating and overcoming bureaucratic hurdles is another recurrent point of support deemed necessary and welcomed by the students, as well as by Ms. Brunner from the Academy of Fine Arts. This, again, highlighted the differences in the support provided by the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts. Several University of Vienna students expressed that they would have liked some level of institutional guidance on bureaucratic matters, either via mass information dissemination or through individual support in applying for a residence permit (Jane, 2nd June 2020; Laura, 14th June 2020). Where the University of Vienna lacked support, the Academy of Fine Arts was repeatedly praised by students for the comprehensive and personal assistance that they received (Miguel, 18th June 2020; Irina 18th June 2020). Though the institutions differed greatly in the bureaucratic assistance for students provided by administrators, the student unions (ÖH) at both universities were acknowledged for providing important support for students on bureaucratic matters (Laura, 14th June 2020; Irina, 18th June 2020).

The Student Welcome Center, as the main institutional site of support at the Academy of Fine Arts, is the first place the students turn for information on navigating the Austrian bureaucracy. This was the case for finding out information such as what documents are necessary to apply for a residence permit, as well as if they ever faced any challenges or delays in their permits being processed. Irina talked about how well-supported she felt in her bureaucratic endeavors and that she always felt she had somewhere to turn for help, if needed. This sentiment was echoed by Miguel who spoke about an instance when he sought out the Student Welcome Center, whose employees got involved in his case and sent emails on his behalf:

The Academy are really providing good support for international students. So, there is a sort of even like extra effort for the third-country students as well. [...] A lot of times, so, in case if students would have a problem with the visa issues or like financial side or in order to [get] ECTS points and so on and so on. Even with laws they provide a kind of, I would say, a good support. I mean I don't have a lot of to compare with, but my experience was pretty good (Irina, 18th June 2020).

The Academy, the [Student Welcome Center], [...] helped me a lot, [they] continued to write people, and they checked my documents and they helped to put everything like really neatly organized, so that the MA35 would not reject my application (Miguel, 18th June 2020).

In addition to the appreciative anecdotes told by the students of the support they received from the Student Welcome Center, the administrator also shared a story of a student she knew who had been accompanied to the MA35 by a member of the institution's staff (Ms. Brunner, 9th June 2020). Though this was described as an isolated incident, it further shows the effort made by the Academy to support the third-country national students there, which in turn has a positive impact on the student experience.

The intricacies associated with the Austrian bureaucracy are difficult to negotiate as a third-country national, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Regardless of which institution the students I spoke to attended, they talked about the necessity of support in this area. On the institutional side, the student union (ÖH) representing each university was essential in providing bureaucratic support. For the students at the Academy of Fine Arts, the ÖH was more active and present in helping the students with any questions or concerns that arose. Laura, on the other hand, a student at the University of Vienna turned to the ÖH as a last resort when facing residence permit rejection:

When it was about the bureaucracy, they [the Academy] had people helping us and it's also students helping from the ÖH, from this what is it the ÖH, this student association, yeah, the union (Miguel, 18th June 2020).

The second group of help [after the Student Welcome Center] is ÖH. So, kind of, student department at the Academy where I can, in case if I didn't find any answer, I can apply and ask, and they really try to be helpful (Irina, 18th June 2020).

I went to the ÖH because they have lawyers and stuff there. And I wouldn't have known about this if it hadn't been for Anna⁶, because Anna was there and she was like, "It's ok, let's just go to the ÖH and show them the letter, and they'll know what to do." But I didn't know that. Like if I had been alone, I would have been like ok I guess I'm going home. Because they [MA35] said that I had to write an appeal like an official appeal with all this stuff. So, I went to the ÖH, and the guy there was so helpful, like he just took the letter and he was like "I got it, no worries, it's ok." Because I showed him what I had shown them, like the financial thing that I had shown them and then he said, "yeah well, you need this, this and this" (Laura, 14th June 2020).

Irina and Miguel were familiar with the function of the ÖH as a support system at the Academy that could help them with bureaucratic matters. This is likely because of the attention the Academy pays to ensure the success of their third-country national students.

Laura only learned of the existence of the ÖH as an institutional support system for bureaucratic matters from a personal contact. The extent to which the ÖH is present in the consciousness of third-country national students is entwined with the level to which the internationalization of the student body is a priority. Though the ÖH is separate from the central administration at each institution, it is still an institutionalized support system.

Therefore, the level of involvement of the ÖH in support of third-country national students in bureaucratic matters is indicative of the level of institutional support available at a given university.

Despite the extensive amount of support that the Academy of Fine Arts students received from the Student Welcome Center in terms of bureaucratic information and financial assistance, there were still areas that students felt were lacking. This could be in part due to the Academy trying to predict the needs of its students, who as individuals cannot always be lumped into a homogenous group (Brooks and Waters 2011). Though Irina felt confident in the support she received regarding Austrian bureaucracy and how to participate in academic

⁶ Anonymized

life at the Academy, she expressed the desire for more information on life in Austria beyond the confines of the Academy:

I would like to have some examples of how to even deal with your everyday life and kind of working processes and something like in this direction. Because yeah, inside the academy everything like more or less clear because if you start to use the system like online registration and so on, you pretty fast can catch up these things (Irina, 18th June 2020).

It is not that Irina felt unsupported, rather, since she received so much support in other aspects of her life as a third-country national student in Austria, she wanted more. Irina's experience makes it clear that the presence of third-country national students who have successfully navigated academic and bureaucratic processes is not the end point of internationalization (Urban and Palmer 2014). This is not to say that the types of support provided by the Academy as an institution were inadequate by any means. Rather, Irina felt as though she was over prepared for specific interactions and wanted the support to extend beyond her bureaucratic and academic spheres, allowing her to better fit into her new life in Vienna.

As already mentioned, there is a close connection between internationalization policy and migration policy regarding third-country national students. Without proper migration documentation, students are not able to participate in degree programs, and unless a third-country national is studying, they are not able to hold a student residence permit. It is in the interest of institutions hoping to internationalize their student body, or to employ third-country national students in other "internationalization at home" (Beelen and Jones 2015) initiatives, to provide support for these students. The coordination of bureaucratic and migration processes by institutions – through clear directives to students, supplying appropriate documentation, and offering financial support – reflects the extent to which international students are a priority. Though students expressed appreciation for the institutional support they received in navigating the Austrian education system, and the

opportunities for financial assistance, navigating migration policy is where they conveyed the need for the most guidance.

4.2 Beyond the institution: personal contacts and social networks as sites of support

When third-country national students felt as though they either did not have access to systems of support at their institution, or their needs were too specific to rely on the structures already in place, they often turned outside of the universities for assistance. Though not the sole source of support, social networks played a large part in providing extra-institutional guidance and “generating mobilities” (Beech 2015) by relaying information on accessing education and migration. As previously mentioned, the University of Vienna does not have a centralized resource for third-country national students seeking support on either academic or bureaucratic matters. This led to the majority of the stories about seeking assistance from personal contacts or other sources outside the university to stem from students enrolled there. However, there are few anecdotes from Academy of Fine Arts students who turned to students from similar backgrounds to answer specific questions.

Personal contacts are the most common alternative to university administrators or offices for students seeking information or support. They turned to friends and acquaintances, often from a similar national context to provide advice on bureaucratic and academic matters. As mentioned in the last section, had it not been for her partner, Laura would not have known that the ÖH was available to support her in appealing her rejected residence permit. Laura also turned to a former classmate from the USA for information on the process of applying for a residence permit in Vienna. Irina expressed a similar reliance on people from Russia, who were able to tell her about their experiences as Russians applying for student residence permits in Vienna. Sally, sought support from a friend already enrolled at the University of

Vienna to clarify the admissions process, which she found confusing despite following the steps available online:

There was this guy that I actually ran into at MQ who I went to university with, in Texas, that I found out went to Uni Wien. And then so when I was home in between my au pair [year] and now, I think I DM'd him on Instagram or something and was like can we FaceTime, and I can ask you all the things I need for a visa? And he was like fine, so I also got a whole list of things, and he also gave me some tips, like for example, I guess it says it on the website, but I guess it's not something you super think about, that you need for your passport [photo]for the visa it has to be from a passport place here and not from the US because the size is different and the regulations and whatever nitpicky things. And he told me make sure you do this and that and whatever. Which was super helpful, just like talking to another human being who has done it before was cool (Laura, 14th June 2020).

I'm trying to ask somebody [with] more experience, for example. Other people from my country who are already past the certain procedures and can give me advice how to deal with that (Irina, 18th June 2020).

I really had to rely heavily on my friend who's also an American and was doing a totally different program at Uni Wien, I really had to rely on her advice for the entire admissions process (Sally, 1st June 2020).

The active seeking out of information regarding how to study in a foreign country is common for students participating in degree mobility (Beech 2015). The possibility to hear the firsthand experiences of friends and acquaintances not only provided students with an opportunity to receive supplementary information they felt was not provided by their institution, it also allowed for more flexibility. The third-country national students could ask a question, hear a response, and then clarify or follow-up on the answer. In contrast to information found on a university website, or form responses to questions, assistance from personal contacts counters the tendency for international students to be treated as a homogenous group (Brooks and Waters 2011).

Third-country national students who did not have personal contacts to rely on for information, were still able to find support outside of the institutions. Often, students turned to internet forums or Facebook groups to pose and answer questions about being a student in Vienna and the process of applying for a residence permit. Tural, an Azerbaijani student

described his use of forums for post-Soviet nationals, because of the parallels between his experience and theirs:

I didn't have anyone here in Austria before. I didn't have any friends or someone like that, and there's not so many Azerbaijani students here, so I couldn't find one. [...] So usually most of the stuff I learned from the internet, they [have] a lot of forums of people who are applying to universities of Austria from post-Soviet countries. So usually the application process is kind of the same or similar (Tural, 23rd June 2020).

Similar to Tural, Jane, an American student at the University of Vienna, described reading through posts and comments in Facebook groups geared towards Americans and international students living in Vienna. If she ran into a problem with bureaucracy, or was confused by something at the university, she turned to these groups for answers, because she was able to crowd-source responses from people in similar situations (Jane, 2nd June 2020). Additionally, she and other interviewees described reading comments on Facebook posts posing questions related to their situation, which later helped guide their actions. In lieu of personal contacts, online forums and social networking sites provided students with better and more personalized support than they were able to get from the institutions.

Not only do third-country national students turn to personal contacts and other extra-institutional actors for assistance when they feel unsupported by their university, often they turn to their peers first regarding the administrative aspects of their degree. Again, the majority of students who discussed a preference for gathering information from friends and classmates were students at the University of Vienna. The topics they discussed ranged from changes in degree programs, application procedures, and even residence permit applications:

I nearly took credits that would not have worked for me, but then a classmate who's from Greece told me she had made the same mistake and had to add like an entire semester to her studies, because it's super unclear (Sally, 1st June 2020).

I don't think I really relied as much on the information from the university because it's often confusing, or you just can't find it until after the fact. I mostly relied on friends telling me what to do and where I should go to do them, and then using that information to find exactly what I need on the websites. Because it's there somewhere, but you just don't know where and how to word it. Yeah, so [for] that I mostly relied on friends (John, 7th June 2020).

They changed the program of philosophy and I have to do that [ask questions] at some point, but when I call, they just yell at me and they don't answer questions. They're just like just go there, just call them, and they don't ask precise questions, and this unreachable-ness of things, so I just decided to ask in the groups about stuff, but I never get into contact with the bureaucracy level of the University (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

When I navigated all this [university and immigration websites] and I didn't find all my answers, then my cousin who already was a student here came in place, and he wrote me a list of every letter that I needed to have and the whole procedure how it went, and actually he helped me with this. So, the institutions were not that helpful, and I don't know if this is the most Albanian thing to do, but we rely on others' experience better than the institutions or something (Bora, 29th June 2020).

The students expressed distrust in the institutions and therefore chose to rely on others' experiences and advice more readily than information or support from the university. It is likely that these feelings of distrust stem from not only the lack of clear support systems at the University of Vienna, but also the ways in which third-country nationals were made to feel like outsiders at the university as discussed in the previous chapter on internationalization.

The reliance on social networks and extra-institutional support systems in the absence of clear institutional pathways is commonplace for international students participating in degree mobility. Beech (2015) describes the importance of social networks in normalizing education mobility, therefore implicitly encouraging students to study in a foreign country. Knowing someone who has chosen to complete a degree abroad generally has a greater effect on a students' decision to also pursue education abroad than recruitment efforts from an institution. Once at a foreign university the “practical and academic aspects of support [from fellow students] are considered important by students [...] to function effectively in their new environment” (Montgomery and McDowell 2008: 460). For many of the third-country nationals whose stories are presented here, they turned to personal contacts in the absence of reliable channels of communication. According to Teichler (2004) internationalization is strongest when “international affairs are taken up in all arenas of decision-making and

administration” (9). The lack of institutional support systems is a result of weak internationalization. Students rely on support to navigate their studentship, and in circumstances where they cannot depend on institutional actors, they turn to their personal connections for guidance on how to access mobility and succeed as third-country national student migrants. Had students been able to get specific answers on topics, ranging from admission to enrolment, curricula, and finally migration policy, they would have had less need to turn to their social networks.

4.3 Pandemic shifts: impact of COVID-19 on support systems

In an exploration of the sites and systems of support available to and used by third-country national students, it is necessary to consider how they were affected within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown in Austria impacted accessibility to both institutional and personal systems of support that third-country nationals relied upon for assistance in the negotiation of academic and bureaucratic matters. This is not to say that third-country national students were the only students whose support systems changed in the wake of the pandemic, it is instead meant to acknowledge that throughout my research, the events played an important role in the construction of the experience of third-country national students.

Third-country national students in Vienna faced limitations on movement and interaction with close contacts to a much greater extent than their fellow students. Where Austrian students or even international students from the EU/EEA often had the option to return to their homes or countries of origin once lockdown and distance learning began, the students I spoke to expressed frustration that they could not do the same. Laura, who usually visits her family in the USA every summer, expressed concern that leaving Austria would

negatively affect her studies because the time difference would make online classes difficult, and there is no guarantee that she would be permitted to return to Austria:

I can't go home in the foreseeable future. Like usually I would go home in July, but I don't know when I can go home next, so that sucks a lot. And then if I go home, I don't know if I can come back because of the whole border situation, so that's another big thing that people here don't have to deal with. [...] I guess the fact that a lot of people got to go home, like I guess I could have gone home, but then I would be going to class at three in the morning or something like that. Like no, that doesn't make sense. So, like me, I had to stay here in the apartment when other people got to go home to the countryside or whatever (Laura, 14th June 2020).

Though her family was not necessarily the first place that Laura would turn for advice on how to navigate the University of Vienna or the Austrian immigration system, they still function as a support system. Similar to Laura's disappointment at the prospect of not returning home due to the pandemic, several other interviewees described heightened stress as a result of not being able to visit and interact with family.

The cancellation of in-person classes also limited students' access to the peers they rely on for support (see Montgomery and McDowell 2008). Bora told me a few stories about how her fellow students helped her better understand the structure of their program, and that she preferred impromptu conversations with classmates or instructors to structured meetings:

I don't like the fact that I cannot interact after class with other students, because that helped a lot, or even with the teacher, with the professors, so and that I think it was like a big minus in my own personal experience (Bora, 29th June 2020).

Under normal circumstances, students often exchange ideas and frustrations about courses before or after class meetings. With online learning, most opportunities for casual conversation disappeared, leaving students without their classmates as a support resource.

The few areas of institutional support that were available to students at the University of Vienna were also affected by the pandemic. Students could still contact the administrative offices and the ÖH for advice and information, however, there were no opportunities for in-person meetings. Additionally, though not mentioned above, one integral part of being a student is the ability to use university facilities. This more than any other institutional aspect

was affected by the pandemic and as a result, impacted the experience of students at both the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Vienna. Students went from having printers, study spaces, libraries, and other resources supporting their studies, to not being allowed to enter university buildings and being confined to their homes for online classes:

I really depended a lot, I think, on university resources, like printing. [...] like if I [had] been from Austria, for example, I could just get a printer from my parents or like I don't know, I feel like resources, in general, are just easier to come by if you're in the place where you grew up. But I basically had to like not print anything for 2 months that we were locked down and then I finally paid €100 for a brand-new printer, because I was going insane because I really rely on the printer. And also, just like studying in university buildings (Sally, 1st June 2020).

I think a lot of not European students don't have really good living conditions in general, because they are mostly used to "ok, let's go to the library and study there" so they are probably living in small dorms or small apartments because they cannot afford a bigger room; they don't have any space to study anymore (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

Both Sally and Zeynep highlight that they think limited access to university resources as a result of the pandemic is a greater hardship for third-country national students than others. Sally rightfully points out that many Austrian students in Vienna had the option of returning to their parents' homes during lockdown, or at the very least would have had better access to resources that she counted on the university to provide. Zeynep's point about smaller living quarters as a means to save money, not only further highlights students' reliance on institutional support in the form of facilities, it also alludes to the financial hurdles that third-country nationals face.

4.4 Chapter conclusion: locations of support and the effects on student Experience

Different types of support systems are available to third-country national students in Austria but where the students turn and for what type of help depends greatly on the institution at which they are completing their studies. The students at the Academy of Fine Arts, with the knowledge that they can turn to the Student Welcome Center for assistance

with a wide range of questions, were more likely to rely on institutional support systems. Students at the University of Vienna, on the other hand, indicated their appreciation for personal contacts who took the time to walk them through the processes of applying to university and for a residence permit. Despite the University of Vienna having some systems of support in place for third-country national students, the decentralized nature of the assistance made them less likely to rely on the institution.

The students interviewed from the Academy of Fine Arts expressed overall satisfaction and positive feelings towards their time as students. They had far less confusion about academic processes than those at the University of Vienna and were also confident that, when faced with bureaucratic questions, they had someone to contact and could expect, at a minimum, assistance in the form of documents being checked or emails being sent to the MA35. Though there are offices, such as the Admissions Office and the Directorate of Studies, at the University of Vienna offering support to students who have questions about academics and migration, they cannot always provide individualized guidance. The extent to which students were comfortable turning to the institution was highly varied and most of the productive experiences were attributed to specific administrators in the students' Directorates of Studies providing guidance on academic matters. Overall, however, the third-country national students at the University of Vienna described frustration and negative experiences stemming from their confusion about where to seek institutional support.

As shown throughout the chapter, the lack of centralized support at the institutions of higher education led to a greater reliance on information from personal contacts or other “lay” sources such as web forums. Not only were students able to more readily communicate with peers or peruse forums to acquire information “on-demand,” they were comforted by the experiences of others. Sally was able to avoid delaying her studies because a classmate explained a confusing point in the curriculum to her, and Laura avoided being turned away

by the MA35 for submitting an incorrectly sized photo. Even if personal contacts were not experts in Austrian migration policy, and could only speak from their own experiences, it gave students comfort to know they were not alone in their frustration. Though the Admissions Office or the Student Welcome center provided official document lists to students applying for their residency permit, it was peers who could give tips on how to best present proof of financial means or subletting contracts. Although many aspects of life, especially from a migration standpoint, as a third-country national student in Vienna are a gamble, students found comfort in shared experiences with their friends and peers. This trust in peers, and the evaluation of their guidance as a more useful support system, points to these personal relationships and self-sought sites of advice as playing a greater role in the construction of student experience than institutional actors.

The institutional support system present at the Academy of Fine Arts – in the form of the Student Welcome Center – has a significant impact on the experience of the third-country national students who are enrolled there. The office and the services it provides can be understood as a direct outcome of the internationalization efforts implemented by the university in hopes to maintain its reputation as an internationally diverse institution. Though this site of support exists and is used and appreciated by students, it does not lead to an overall difference in the experience of being a third-country national student in Austria in comparison to students at the University of Vienna. Within the context of the educational institution, the internationalization efforts resulting in certain systems of support for third-country national students – centralized or decentralized – are reflected in the student experience and where students turn for help. However, the bureaucratic hurdles that students face as a result of migration policy lead to extreme conditions of stress and uncertainty despite concrete support structures. Thus, within the migration context and at bureaucratic

institutions, students at the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Vienna experience similar stress and frustration as a result of their interactions.

5. Inconsistency, Uncertainty and Stress: A Bureaucratic Gamble

These are stupid bureaucratic things! Why should it make you feel like that, it does make you feel like that, because if you get a visa for one year then you are stressed for that visa four months every year and [...]when I interviewed people they also said they are really stressed that they cannot concentrate on their studies, and if you get a student visa then you have to also show some ECTS that you did last semester. You also cannot do that and then they're double stressed. This is really the reality (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

This chapter explores the notions of inconsistency and uncertainty as a result of bureaucracy and considers their effect on the student experience. I argue that the migration policies and laws governing third-country national students and their individual experiences with bureaucracy in Vienna play a more significant role in constructing their experience than the internationalization factors at the institutional level. Through consideration of the power asymmetries present in the bureaucratic interactions of my interviewees, as presented in this chapter, juxtaposed with the internationalization efforts and sites of support previously discussed, this chapter also argues that there exists a disconnect not only at the different scales of policy but between migration and internationalization policies themselves. Alongside the stories shared by interviewees, this chapter utilizes literature related to bureaucracy and the interactions between migration and internationalization.

Though the experience of third-country national students is deeply affected by their interactions at the institutional level in their respective universities, an integral part of being a student migrant takes place in the bureaucratic sphere. Without proper documentation, third-country national students are not able to participate in higher education. As noted by Brooks and Waters in their work on student migration and internationalization of higher education; “[w]hile there are plenty of policies that aim to encourage students to pursue higher education

abroad, there are no such policies that seek to protect them during such stays” (Brooks and Waters 2011: 43). This chapter builds off the previous discussion of the role of internationalization efforts and the university sphere in shaping student experience. I argue that regardless of the institution and its internationalization policies, the bureaucratic nature of being a student migrant has an impact on the construction of the third-country national student experience that is greater, and longer-lasting, than that of internationalization. Tracing the laws and policies governing student migrants and considering their interactions with these policies and those who enforce them reveals the constant negotiation of inconsistency, uncertainty, and stress that third-country national students undergo throughout their time at university in Austria.

5.1 Student migration in Austria: an overview

Austria is an attractive location for students from all over the world to come and study. Its location in central Europe, long-standing history and reputation as a cultural capital, and Vienna’s status as the world’s most livable city (Economist Intelligence Unit) all play a role in attracting foreign students. For third-country national students, one of the biggest draws to study in Austria is the low tuition fees. However, for these student migrants to be able to study in Vienna, there is often a lengthy process between deciding to pursue a degree and being able to start studying. These students have numerous limitations placed on them due to their status as third-country nationals.

Students must first apply for a place in a degree program, which entails demonstrating language skills and qualifications to participate. This is done by showing either previous studies in the subject or the equivalence of an Austrian *Matura* (high school finishing exams), students who cannot prove equivalence are seen as less prepared for education than those who went through the national education system (Teichler 2004). Requiring student migrants

to prove their qualifications prior to admission, is a means of diffusing responsibility for migration control to various institutions, and results in the admissions office acting as a gatekeeper (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013; Beech 2018). Once accepted to an institution of higher education, a student can begin the process of applying for a residence permit, allowing the holder to remain in Austria for one year to participate in the degree program. The residence permit for students does not only grant access for a student migrant to study in Austria but also carries implications for many other areas of life and plays a significant role in the interactions that students have with the Austrian state. The specifics regarding these experiences will be detailed below, following a discussion of the legal framework and discourses surrounding student migration in Austria.

Within the last decade, there have been several changes made to the laws and policies governing student migrants in Austria. In some ways, these can be understood as efforts to improve the condition of these students, but in others, they continue to act as a hindrance to those hoping to pursue degrees. Some of the perceived loosening of migration laws for students has been instigated by the goal of the BMBWF “to broaden the regional diversity and establish a more varied regional distribution of third-country students coming to Austria, especially students from countries/regions of strategic importance for the Austrian economy, industry, science and research” (Musil and Reyhani 2012: 41). This can be understood within the context of internationalization, which highlights the perceived connection, at least on a pure policy level, between it and migration.

One of the most significant policy changes is located in the policy regarding labor market access for third-country national students both while they are studying, as well as beyond graduation. Non-EU students are currently (2020) permitted to work up to 20 hours per week during the course of their studies, without being subjected to a labor market test. This applies to students at any point in their higher education and is a recent change

stemming from 2017, in effect since 2018, when the weekly working limit was increased from 10 to 20 hours per week for bachelor's degree students to align with the regulations governing masters and doctoral students (§4 AusIBG). Despite this apparent easing, there are still bureaucratic hurdles to be negotiated in order to access the labor market as a student, which was raised as a concern in multiple interviews. The *Beschäftigungsbewilligung* (work permission), the impact of which will be discussed in the following section, is required before a third-country national is permitted to take on employment (ibid). Additionally, the path from student migrant to labor migrant has also undergone changes, such as the extension of the post-graduation job-search period from six months to one year (§64 NAG), as an attempt to further incentivize third-country national students to study in Austria. This overview of changes will be discussed in further detail at the end of the chapter when considering the relationship between migration and internationalization policy.

Beyond changes made to migration policy aimed to make coming to Austria to study a more attractive opportunity, it is important to understand the discourse surrounding third-country national student migrants. Discussions of student migrants can often be found in the context of skilled migration (e.g. Brooks and Waters 2011; Beech 2018). This same sentiment is expressed in reports on the situation of migration policy in Austria. In the mid-2000s, reports noted, “that Austria’s immigration system was too restrictive and not demand driven [...] the Austrian labour market is in need of foreign labour force, particularly highly skilled immigrants, due to labour shortages and the demographic development of the Austrian population” (IOM 2008: 14). This led to a more positive discourse regarding third-country national students, who “are covered by the Austrian strategy of attracting (highly) qualified labour force [...] the government has sought to ease the conditions for international students from third-countries to remain in the country upon graduation and search for a job” (Musil and Reyhani 2012: 11-12). According to the report, in theory, foreign students are viewed as

a benefit in Austria, which has led to attempts to improve conditions for them, in the hopes that they remain and contribute to the economy. These discourses do not necessarily align with the experiences of the third-country national students that will be presented in the following section. However, they are an important aspect in understanding the roots of the inconsistency felt by the interviewees, who see themselves as assets to Austria, but do not feel treated as such.

5.2 Obtaining and maintaining student status in Austria

5.2.1 Becoming a student

At first, the requirements to receive a student residence permit in Austria appear relatively straightforward. They include acceptance to an accredited higher educational institution, a valid passport, a birth certificate, proof of sufficient financial means (based on the Austrian minimum-income benefits for the year), a declaration of regular expenses, proof of accommodation in Austria, a police clearance certificate, and proof of health insurance⁷ (OeAD). Several of my interview partners went so far as to express their perception of the student residence permit as one of the easiest permits to attain within the Austrian migration system:

I was under the impression based on what I had heard from other people, that a student visa was the easiest visa to get for living in Austria, at least at first. So, I Googled it to see if it was true, and it seemed that that was the case (Sally, 1st June 2020).

[I]t just was convenient for me to come back here and be on a student visa and also get my Masters (Jane, 2nd June 2020).

[...]you can get in, and get a student visa, and be here (Laura, 14th June 2020).

⁷ Proving health coverage acceptable to the migration authorities in Austria has evolved in recent years. It is not sufficient to have travel insurance from a student's home country, rather they must show public or private insurance with coverage equivalent to Austrian public insurance. With the onset of COVID-19 for students applying for an initial permit who are not yet in Austria, an extra hurdle has arisen: namely finding short-term travel insurance that covers COVID-19.

Third-country national students described the ease with which they were able to inform themselves about the initial steps to become a student using online resources such as the OeAD website, the MA35 website, and migration.gv.at. The students from the Academy of Fine Arts additionally had access to individual assistance through their Student Welcome Center. The reality of fulfilling and continuing to fulfill these requirements throughout the course of a degree program is not as simple as it might seem from the list of documents, or the students' perceptions. Despite the abundance of resources the students accessed as a means of informing themselves, each of my interview partners expressed the contradiction between the practicality of maintaining student status and their initial impression of the student residence permit as easily attainable.

Some of the uncertainty and stress expressed by the third-country national students is rooted in this false impression they had that a student residence permit would be easy to attain. Although they were all granted an initial permit, they have struggled with various aspects of maintaining their status and expressed frustration at these difficulties. These feelings of frustration can be traced, in part, to the narrative described above: that they, as student migrants, are desired by Austria. A narrative that, in reality, is not reflected in their interactions with the bureaucracy. These points of frustration regarding becoming and remaining a student in Austria, point to the dissonant interaction between federal migration policy and internationalization policy across multiple scales, as well as the disjointed application of the regulations related to student migration.

5.2.2 Inconsistency and power dynamics

When considering the nature of bureaucracy and its effects on the experience of third-country national students in Vienna, it is necessary to include the power dynamics at play. According to Wolf, rather than being explicit in interactions, "structural power shapes the

social field of action in such a way as to render some kinds of behavior possible, while making others less possible, or impossible” (Wolf 2001: 385). Rather than clear lines being drawn between what is possible and impossible as a student-migrant, each time a third-country national applies for a renewal of their residence permit, they interact with migration policy as mediated by individual employees of the state. These power asymmetries found in the inconsistency with which migration policy and regulations are enacted upon the third-country national students are an expression of structural power. The bureaucratic experience in terms of residence permit application and renewal is completely dependent on who a student interacts with at an official office, and on what day. This, in turn, highlights the power dynamics hidden beneath the illusion of neutrality that bureaucracy and the policy it enforces tend to portray (Shore and Wright 1997).

In Austria, the student residence permit must be renewed every year regardless of the length of a program of study. It is during this period of renewal that the inconsistency present in Austrian bureaucracy is most apparent in constructing the experience of the students. The feeling of uncertainty stems greatly from the inconsistency with which documents submitted as part of an application are deemed insufficient or incomplete. No matter how hard an applicant tries to successfully complete their application in one visit to the MA35 (Municipal Department for Immigration and Citizenship), it is a rare and noteworthy occurrence when it happens. Miguel, an art student from Mexico described his confusion at the requests of the MA35 in our discussion saying:

I applied the way they wanted me to do it at the MA35 and they always kept asking for new documents and I got rejected twice (Miguel, 18th June 2020)

He was not alone in feeling led astray by the authorities. Even students who have been in Austria for multiple years still struggle to guess what they will be asked to produce in a given residence permit appointment:

I brought all of my documents, and they were the same documents that I needed before and had turned in, and they said that they were not good enough to renew. So, I had to go and get a totally different set of documents, and this is, there's a little part on the MA35 website, or on the application where it says that the officials are able to ask for whatever documents or further documents that they deem necessary. So, it's you know, you go in there and you know, at least for me, that something's going to be wrong and then you have to go back and fix it. And what that's going to be, you know in the renewal process, what's going to be wrong, you know or incorrect, it depends on who you get that day, so you never really know what you're going to do or need [...] the problem at least I feel like, with the Austrian system is that some of the things that they want, they don't actually mean anything, and it's based on the interpretation of the person (Michael, 4th June 2020).

Despite his acceptance of the fact that something will be wrong, or that extra documents will be needed, Michael still has to experience uncertainty. He and other third-country national students are subject to the discretion of a caseworker as to what documents they deem necessary at the time. This sentiment is echoed in several other interviews:

What they say online and in practice can also be different, because like the people at the MA35 can basically do whatever they want, which is what happened to me (Laura, 14th June 2020).

I mean [what] they require, it depends also who's in front of you, who's collecting your documents, if they are in a good mood or in a bad mood (Bora, 29th June 2020)

The “ambiguous and often contested manner in which policies are simultaneously enacted by different people in diverse situations” (Shore and Wright 2011: 8) further complicates the experience of third-country national students. The caseworkers within the Viennese immigration office are all operating under the same federal migration policies, but the varied interpretations are what cause students’ distress. They have no one way of predicting how their yearly endeavors to maintain studentship will play out.

5.2.3 Language and power

In the context of migration, but particularly student migration, the ability to speak the language of the country in which one is studying has an impact on the way one interacts with surroundings. Though English is spoken relatively widely in Vienna, many institutions, such as the MA35 operate exclusively in German, further marking them as “sites where control,

selection, and regimentation of newcomers take place” (Duchene, Moyer and Roberts 2013: 2). As discussed previously, third-country nationals have a complicated relationship with the German language in terms of the privileges it affords or denies them in a university setting. The power of language is also apparent in the context of the bureaucracy related to maintaining legal status in Austria. Despite the proficiency that all of my interview partners have in English, they described varying levels of German knowledge. As a result of students’ German competencies, they expressed uncertainty and mistrust when interacting with the MA35. Miguel, who previously lived in Germany and has a high level of German fluency, summarized the experiences of many of my interview partners well in his description of German-language information he received from the MA35:

I mean the way they write in German, like the legal terms they use, even with Austrian people, I mean friends here, they also told this is really, this doesn't really make sense. This is a way for them to play it in a tricky way for you, for me as a foreign student, or whatever I would be (Miguel, 18th June 2020).

Difficulty in understanding what is requested of them by the authorities, and discomfort in expressing themselves in a foreign language, also had a significant impact on the feelings of uncertainty and stress experienced by third-country national students. The inability to completely follow interactions at the MA35 had potential implications for the residence permit application – such as misunderstandings about documents or deadlines. Additionally, many students felt they could not approach the authorities on their own and needed to rely on the support of German-speaking friends or partners.

In situations when students attended appointments with German-speakers, the outcomes of the interactions were very different. Ms. Brunner highlighted the difference in the attitude of caseworkers in the presence of an accompanying native German speaker, sharing an anecdote from a student:

Taking someone, a German-speaking friend or whatever with you, because it's a totally different situation when they [students] are not alone. Because speaking the language issue is always there [...] [Academy] students, they only need to know

German on a level B1 after one year. And also, B1 is not really communication level that you can very well communicate at MA35, so yeah, you need someone to help you. Because, for example, this one lady there, first she spoke German and then [friend] said she [the student] doesn't understand, the student doesn't understand German, so maybe she [the caseworker] could talk in English, and then she talked in English. But she wouldn't have done it herself, so this was very different. And that's why [...] it's important to bring someone. And another case for a renewal [...] he had different scholarships and proof of money and everything, and the officer said yeah, we don't need all these, we just need a bank statement. And then [friend] asked again back, because the student, that's also something [...] [German speakers] understand the situation, are able to ask back quickly, but the students, they are not very sure (Ms. Brunner, 9th June 2020).

The inconsistency with which information is communicated in German or English within the context of the MA35 (and other bureaucratic offices in Vienna) results in third-country national students having to rely on others. In this way, language functions as means of selection and is a form of power which should be questioned (Duchene, Moyer, and Roberts 2013) especially in the context of third-country national student migrants who function as instruments of internationalization within a narrative of desired migrants. Those who can speak German fluently are either more successful in their interactions at the MA35 or are in a position to relay information to the student they are accompanying.

5.2.4 The Waiting Game

Beyond language and inconsistency in interpretation and application of the requirements to maintain student status, having students wait for long periods for a decision on their residence permit is yet another way in which students can be made to feel helpless as a result of power asymmetries. Waiting, particularly within the context of bureaucratic processes raises the question of agency (Hage 2009). In waiting for decisions to be made students are at the mercy of authorities who regularly leave emails and phone calls unanswered, marking their time as more important than that of the students and leaving them to “wait it out” (ibid). These periods of waiting have extreme effects on the student

experience, with the third-country national students who were interviewed expressing sentiments of stress, lack of productivity, a distraction from studies, and frustration.

Despite the Austrian Settlement and Residence Act (*Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz*) stating that a decision regarding a student residence permit application must be made within 90 days (§64 para. 6), students describe lengthy periods of waiting without receiving any indication on the status of their application. The waiting period for a decision on a first application is even more disconcerting for students because they have limited time to be in Austria. First-time applicants enter the country either on a short-term visa, or are permitted to stay for 90 days visa-free, whereas students waiting for a residence permit renewal to process are permitted to stay in Austria, but are not always able to move freely beyond Austrian borders if their old permit has expired:

My *Erstantrag* [first application] took so long to get back that I only received it, like my student visa [residence permit] on the very last day of my 90-day allowance to be in Austria. So I very nearly fled to Croatia [...] I've done it [permit renewal] a few times at different locations, so it's like much, it makes a lot more sense to me now, or I at least understand what the expectations are, but that beginning part was like just so much uncertainty, so much like will I be able to stay here? Will I get it in time? Like I just had no idea (Sally, 1st June 2020).

[A] couple of them [third-country national friends] really wait their response from the permission months [...] so it's in a way of even waiting this is yeah, kind of pretty stressful because you never know how long it takes and you're not permitted to move (Irina, 18th June 2020).

[A] friend of mine he really had problems, his visa was delayed for six months, for example. He didn't receive any answer for six months. It was time to renew that visa when the visa came (Bora, 29th June 2020).

The condition of being a student in Vienna is predicated on a constant cycle of applying for a residence permit, waiting for a result, and then waiting for the process to start again. The necessity of renewing the permit every year means there is no respite for third-country national students, they find themselves either anticipating the next application or stuck in Austria awaiting a decision. It is only through enduring this process that students are in a small way able to reclaim agency in their interaction with Austrian bureaucracy (Hage 2009).

Zeynep, one of my interviewees who has been in Vienna the longest went even further than the others in describing her experience of waiting, comparing when she first moved to Vienna from Turkey, and her most recent residence permit renewal experiences. She attributes the differences in waiting time to the changes in the political parties in charge of the government:

It depends on the politics, because the year I came in 2013, these things were really easy. And since the new government, I mean the one before this one, the blue/black⁸, they changed a lot of small things [...] which made things really harder. Like I used to wait, I waited for one week when I first came here, and they didn't ask for these weird documents. And now, although I give everything, I still have to wait two months. And you don't know if it's rejected, if it's ok, um and this is a really stressful thing (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

Although she was one of the few interviewees to explicitly identify the change in government as a potential root of the increased waiting times, many of my interviewees expressed longer delays and general bureaucratic difficulties in late 2018 – early 2019, approximately one year after the (blue-black) ÖVP-FPÖ coalition came into office. It is no coincidence that during a period of conservative governance the bureaucratic hurdles for third-country national students were more pronounced. Institutions such as the MA35 themselves are not the possessors of power, rather they function as instruments of the state and as a location where power relations have been “elaborated, rationalized, and centralized” (Foucault 1982: 793). Although bureaucracy has the guise of neutrality similar to that of policy, in reality, those responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the policy at the individual level are affected by the whims of the parties in power.

In the case of third-country national students, the end result, after a period of waiting for the authorities’ decision on a residence permit application was overwhelmingly positive. Very few of my interviewees ever received a rejection that resulted in them having to leave

⁸ Coalition between the FPÖ, the right-wing Freedom Party and the ÖVP, the center-right Austrian People’s Party

Austria and delay their studies. However, there were a couple of cases where a rejection was delivered by the MA35, and the students were either unable to begin their studies as planned or had to interrupt their studies and return to their home country to wait and start from the beginning of the process:

I got all my dormitory documents, all my other documents my embassy wanted for the visa application in Azerbaijan, and in September 2018 I sent them all [...] I was waiting in Baku for 6 months, and in March 2019 I got my first refusal (Tural, 23rd June 2020).

I did an internship abroad and when I got back, I had to apply for a visa [residence permit] from the beginning again, so I couldn't prolong it, and there I got rejected and I went home, waited a semester, and came back again (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

In cases of rejection, both those described above and other stories relayed by interviewees, many of the students sought legal advice. Though none of them appeared in court, they were told by legal counsel that they should not have been rejected outright by the authorities, but it was the path of less resistance for many to simply accept the rejection and try to remedy the situation rather than arguing the case. The difficult legal situation that rejections put third-country national students in creates an opening for lawyers to function as facilitators (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013) in the emerging education migration industry in Vienna. Instances of rejection led to confusion and frustration on the part of the third-country national students and had implications for their perception of the condition of being a third-country national student in Austria.

5.3 The cost of being a student: privilege and the financial burden of a residence permit

5.3.1 Financial privilege

As outlined above, there is a range of pre-defined requirements to attain a student residence permit as a third-country national, and as described through ethnographic evidence, further documentation is often requested by caseworkers. Though inconsistency of required

documents leads to confusion and uncertainty on the part of students hoping to maintain their status in Austria, one explicitly stated requirement has the same effect. The financial implications of deciding to study in Austria – not from a tuition standpoint but regarding proof of funds – were highlighted as an obstacle by all of my interview partners, including the administrators with whom I spoke. Requirements of this sort are not unique to Austria, according to King and Raghuram (2012), “much of the research on ISM [international student migration] shows that the students who move generally belong to the middle and upper class” (131). The privileges and inequalities that are expressed through my ethnographic data align with other research in the field of internationalization of higher education recognizing disparity in who is able to participate in student migration (e.g. Waters 2006; Brooks and Waters 2011; Bilecen and Van Mol 2017)

To be granted either a first residence permit in Austria or a renewal, applicants must be able to provide evidence that they have sufficient financial means to support themselves for the duration of their residence permit (12 months). This amount changes every year in accordance with the Austrian *Mindestsicherung* (minimum income benefits), which for 2020 are €533.85/month or ~€6,400 total (under 24 years of age), €966.65/month or ~€11,600 total (over 24 years of age) (OeAD). During interviews, the difficulties that third-country national students mentioned facing in fulfilling this requirement ranged from acquiring sufficient funds to proving they had the money, to the bureaucratic realities of earning the funds.

The ability for a third-country national student to accrue and maintain the required minimum finances to be granted a residence permit is highly dependent on the student’s background. Some are lucky enough to have parents to support them, others worked and saved money before arriving in Vienna. Having the money is a mark of privilege, not only in social class, but also in regard to the value of the currency of one’s home, and plays a role in whether or not a potential student would choose to study in Vienna, which ultimately allows

for the reproduction of multiple forms of capital: financial, social, and cultural (Bourdieu 1986):

[T]here's for sure this certain law, which tells you that before you pass the exam and before the Academy accepts you as a student you should show a certain amount of money in your account, on your bank account, which is pretty big. Not every student can afford to show this. And I would say the Academy again is trying to help with this question. But that's the big issue. I mean, I know a lot of people simply [are] not applying for this, because they [are] afraid that they will [be] accepted but at the end [it] will not [be] possible to deal with that, just in a financial way (Irina, 18th June 2020).

[I]t's not only that we are from the non-EU countries, I think in most of the cases, the people are coming from very poor countries. I mean, at least, like, in my case, when I came here Turkey didn't have a financial crisis, so 1€ was equal to two Turkish Lira, which was totally fine and Vienna was cheaper than Istanbul, and I was like shocked I'm gonna go there and spend less money. And then the crisis came and also the political crisis, and now 1€ costs eight Turkish Lira, which means like, I mean I don't think my parents are earning less, they are upper-middle-class so it's for them it should be like easy to live there, but it's like if they will give me like I don't know like 900€/month it will be like my mom's salary, you know, and she's working there 30 years, like a huge money. So, I became completely poor off the situation (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

[O]nly Korean people or there's like American people that can afford to move here. I mean it's not that expensive of course, but Singaporean, I have one classmate from Singapore, but its wealthy countries or wealthy cities, ok it's citizens from countries that are wealthy that could actually be studying [...] how is a Guatemalan person with a European passport going to be able to afford to live in Europe the currency is the rate exchange is just really bad and for Mexicans also, it's quite bad (Miguel, 17th June 2020).

The notion of currency privilege and students being excluded was discussed much more by students at the Academy of Fine Arts. The financial requirement functions as an indirect means of selecting which students can join the student body at an institution in Austria, reducing the scope of geographic diversity participating in student migration. Not only do students need to come from socio-economic backgrounds allowing for the reproduction of social capital, but they must also come from national contexts where their currency is relatively strong compared to the Euro.

Beyond simply producing bank statements showing the necessary funds to maintain legal status as a student in Austria, third-country nationals are subject to a burden of proof. If

a student wants their finances to be accepted, along with bank statements they can be asked to produce any number of supporting documents including tax statements, pay slips, employment contracts, and more (OeAD). These documents are not limited to the student themselves but can be requested from any third party who is helping to support the student throughout their studies. Yet another bureaucratic hurdle facing students attempting to study in Austria, the constant requests for further documentation lead to students feeling as though they are untrustworthy and violated:

[T]hey were not sure if my finances are ok, because the sponsor is my dad and actually, I sent all the documents needed, all the documents my embassy wanted, so there were no definite reasons, they didn't ask any definite document. They just said, "we're not sure, just come and prove us" [...] They told that I have to send this document, these financial documents, tax reports and so on (Tural, 23rd June 2020).

I had to show the pay stub of my parents, and then I had like three jobs while I was back in Texas, so I had to show proof like I had to show my YMCA pay stub, I had to show that I was a dog sitter from this website, and then my babysitting job, I had to get like she signed it, like all this official stuff. It was ridiculous. And then I had to show my every single month, my bank statement from every single month showing like every transaction, which I feel like is, it felt like very violating (Laura, 14th June 2020).

The construction of the student-migrant as an untrustworthy subject through the burden of proof associated with the financial requirements further highlights the role of bureaucracy in impacting the student experience. It is exacerbated by the inconsistencies that can be found at the case-worker level. The majority of my interviewees had experiences similar to those of Tural and Laura, however, Sally was explicitly told by her caseworker that she should have someone transfer her the amount of money needed for her permit, rather than attempting to have her partner sign a declaration of guarantee (*Haftungserklärung*), accepting financial responsibility for her. Conflicts in guidance and practice (re)produce the condition that “international students are also becoming the targets of increasing suspicion [...] Like other types of migrant, they are simultaneously desired yet treated with disdain. Their mobility is continuously under interrogation” (King and Raghuram 2012: 131).

5.3.2 Bureaucratic Catch-22: proof of funds and permission to work

The struggle to provide proof of funds in the context of residence permit renewal highlights one of the most frustrating bureaucratic limitations placed on third-country national students. One of the options for showing sufficient financial means is to present a work contract and pay slips. However, the process of acquiring employment for third-country national students is riddled with bureaucracy. Not only are students limited to working 20 hours per week – above this threshold, the purpose of their stay in Austria would no longer classify as studying – a potential employer must request a work permit (*Beschäftigungsbewilligung*) from the Public Employment Service (AMS), which can take up to six weeks to process. This leaves students in the difficult position of finding an employer who is willing to wait for the authorities to grant the permission. In relaying their experiences of trying to find employment in order to finance studies in Austria, many interviewees described feelings of exclusion and frustration at the system. They recognized the ease with which their EU/EEA classmates could find employment and expressed exasperation with the inconsistency of Austrian policy requiring proof of funds but limiting employment opportunity:

I got really a lot of rejections because they just don't want to get all that procedure. Why do they have to wait like 2 or 3 weeks at the AMS when they can take some guy who is like from Bulgaria, let's say for example, who is an EU student. It's easier just to apply for him [...] I got a lot of refusals just because of my nationality (Tural, 23rd June 2020).

When you realize that there's people that don't need to worry how to pay rent or like they don't really need to get a job or anything, and they could if they wanted to, because they are allowed to have them, to have a job. That's the kind of the freaky part of being in a disadvantage (Miguel, 18th June 2020).

The financial burden of being a third-country national student is strongly connected to the other bureaucratic facets of maintaining legal status in Austria. It warranted a separate exploration, however, because of the prevalence these financial aspects play in the student

experience. The financial factors, more than any other, function as a gatekeeper to an Austrian residence permit. Further, it locates not only MA35 caseworkers who request the proof of funds and determine what document suffices but also the AMS employees responsible for issuing work permits in the role of managers (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013) within the context of the education migration industry. It is clear to see not only the privilege needed to become a student but also the ways in which bureaucracy leads third-country national students to feel as though they are in a constant cycle of having to prove themselves while being given limited access to the job market, which would allow them to earn. Further highlighting bureaucratic hurdles that represent a misalignment between Austrian migration policy and internationalization policy, which constructs third-country national students as an important part of transforming Austria into a well-known destination for higher education.

5.4 COVID-19: bureaucratic particularities of being a third-country national student during the pandemic

As mentioned in the discussion of my methodology, the majority of the interviews and data collection for this thesis took place in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. This, of course, had its own specific influence on the experience of the third-country national students in Vienna, and cannot go unacknowledged. The majority of the experiences that my interlocutors discussed regarding inconsistency and stress were based on pre-pandemic occurrences, however, they also mention aspects of student migration that were highly impacted by COVID-19. In general, the pandemic led to exacerbated feelings of uncertainty and increased difficulty in already stressful bureaucratic matters.

The financial impact of being a third-country national student already discussed was worsened by the COVID-19 situation. The student union (ÖH) petitioned to have tuition fees returned for the 2020 summer semester, but the Education Ministry (BMBWF) in Austria

Rejected the petition (*Der Standard* 17th August 2020). They did, however, extend the social benefits – stipends or scholarships – for Austrian students who were eligible. This led to the third-country national students with whom I spoke feeling left out of the financial accommodations and stressed about having to pay for a semester that was far from regular.

The requirement to pay fees when their Austrian counterparts were granted an extension of social support in conjunction with increased difficulty in finding work led to increased financial difficulties for third-country national students. Finding a job proved tough due not only to the mass unemployment caused by the pandemic, but also the additional hurdles for the employment of third-country nationals. Tural expressed frustration at not being able to work at grocery stores and other essential workplaces that needed extra employees. Though he applied, he was turned down because they did not want to go through the process of attaining a work permit (Tural, 23rd June 2020).

Employment difficulties as a result of the pandemic also extended to those third-country national students lucky enough to have found jobs prior to the arrival of COVID-19 and lockdowns in Austria. Laura, who works at a restaurant, was initially fired from her job because of the conditions of employment that are unique to third-country nationals:

I'm on a student visa I can only work 20 hours or max 20 hours, and you have to tell the AMS exactly how many hours per month that you're working, and then you can only be paid for those hours, no more no less [...] if I don't [work enough] then I have to make them up the next month because they have to pay me the same every single month. And so, when coronavirus was shutting down restaurants and things like that, they were like well, we have to fire you because we don't even know if there's going to be 14 hours available. And they were like it has nothing to do with who you are as a person or anything, but we just have to fire you, because your contract is like too complicated for it to work out right now (Laura, 14th June 2020).

Her employer, who had to close due to Austrian regulations, could not afford to continue paying Laura in compliance with the *Beschäftigungsbewilligung* from the AMS, which led to her being laid off. Her EU/EEA colleagues, on the other hand, simply had their hours reduced to the few shifts available throughout lockdown.

Similarly, to Laura, John was employed prior to and throughout the lockdown, but his organization went into *Kurzarbeit* (furlough). While many of his colleagues, as EU/EEA citizens, were able to take on additional employment to fill their time and offset lost income, he was restricted in his ability to do so due to the requirement of a *Beschäftigungsbewilligung* (work permit) for any employment:

I'm in Kurzarbeit and I have 18 free hours of my 20 hours, but I can't do anything with it, cause no one would want to take me because it would take, it could take, it would probably take a month and a half for the AMS to not even approve it, but for it to go through automatically, because after 6 weeks it goes through automatically and no company wants to deal with that, so it makes it impossible for me to be flexible (John, 7th June 2020).

In addition to not having the option to take on more work, the salary reduction puts John at risk of not being able to provide sufficient financial funds for his upcoming residence permit renewal⁹. For third-country national students, difficulties working and finding work in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the stress stemming from the prospect of providing proof of sufficient means to renew a residence permit. Though none of the requirements or fundamental aspects of the residence permit process have been affected by the pandemic, it has significantly impacted the experience of my interview partners. The difficulty in acquiring and retaining a job in light of the bureaucratic hurdles was clearly felt by many third-country national students. Additionally, the feelings of uncertainty stemming from bureaucratic inconsistency were further accentuated by new processes of submitting residence permit applications, and stress stemming from the legal and bureaucratic aspects of life.

5.5 Chapter conclusion: the disjointed relationship between internationalization and migration policy

⁹ John has since been in touch with me and informed me that following two rounds (six months) of *Kurzarbeit*, his employer has decided to end his employment. He is currently waiting for his student residence permit to be approved, hopefully prior to his contract being terminated.

My interview partners discussed their decisions to study in Vienna with optimism and enthusiasm. However, their experience has been colored by negative feelings and anxieties surrounding maintaining legal status and the bureaucratic hurdles surrounding migration. Zeynep, a student at both the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts reminisced on her excitement to get out of her routine in Istanbul and move to Vienna to attend university. She described the arts and culture scene that drew her to Vienna in addition to the opportunity to study at the Academy of Fine Arts, which is well-respected in her field. After her residence permit rejection, however, her feelings and description of the experience drastically changed:

[W]hen my result was rejected, since then I became much [more] political and much [more] shy, much [more] critical about my environment. I realized there was a lot of everyday racism or everyday exclusion I had after my visa was rejected. Even now like even with my best friends, if something little happens maybe I don't tell them, but I always feel like there is this paper that separates us (Zeynep, 17th June 2020).

Laura, from the USA, had a similar shift in the perception of her status in Austria. After spending time in Vienna as an au pair, she returned to the city as a student, because it was where she had created a life, she viewed it as a place that had a lot to offer third-country national student migrants. She described the low tuition fees and the opportunity to complete a master's degree in English as the main factors that brought her to the University of Vienna. However, the difficulties she faced in attaining her initial residence permit caused her extreme stress and led to her rethinking her decision to study in Vienna:

[T]hat situation [preliminary rejection] was just really stressful, like really really stressful for me and then like the whole year, since you have to renew it every year, so that whole year I was just kind of in the back of my mind was a little bit nervous because you have to show your finances again and a couple other things (Laura, 14th June 2020).

The sentiments expressed by Laura and Zeynep were also shared by other interlocutors, who pointed to this added stress and acknowledged that the connection between their studentship

and migration policy in Austria further distinguished their situation from that of EU/EEA classmates.

Though there are purposeful aspects of the institutional internationalization policies and strategies that function to attract third-country national students, the reality of functioning within the Austrian migration framework arguably has a more significant impact on their experience. The asymmetry present at the intersection can in part be attributed to the nature of policy, and rather than taking the effects of the overlap as a given, they must be problematized, asking “what does policy mean in this context? What work does it do? Whose interests does it promote? What are its social effects?” (Shore and Wright 2011: 8). Considering these questions in relation to internationalization and migration, it is possible to tease out the priorities of different actors such as the educational institutions, the migration policymakers, and the low-level bureaucrats at the MA35, as well as the ways in which varying scales (e.g. institutional or federal) differently impact the student experience.

From the aspects of Austrian migration policy in relation to third-country national students discussed above, it is clear that these two fields of policy lack alignment. However, this is not necessarily a factor of the policies themselves but can in part be attributed to the disconnect between policy goals and applications, and the need to problematize it as noted by Shore and Wright (1997; 2011). Both administrators interviewed acknowledged the difficulties third-country national students the universities attracted faced difficulties as a result of this inconsistency. They discussed the disconnect between educating third-country nationals at universities funded by Austrian taxes, and the obstacles limiting their ability to contribute to the Austrian social system based on the lack of job prospects both during their studies and afterward. Additionally, they pointed to the MA35 and the caseworkers’ refusals to speak English as contrary to the notion of welcoming third-country national student migrants as “qualified foreigners”.

Within Austrian migration reports, there is an acknowledgment of the benefits that would come from easing the process of migration and labor market integration for third-country students. The reports note that: “students who have been trained in Austria should have the possibility to remain in Austria upon their graduation and so that they are available for the Austrian economy and labour market” (Musil and Reyhani 2012: 42). This sentiment was echoed by the former Vice-Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner when he was in office, who said, “We want to more frequently keep well-integrated professionals in the country instead of only educating them at a high cost” (Invest in Austria 2017). Though the possibility to remain in Austria does not directly impact the student experience, it does highlight the notion that student migrants are, at least in theory, important for Austria, and has implications for the decision to move to Austria to study in the first place. This further illuminates the inconsistency in the application of migration policy at the individual level that led to the experiences described by my interview partners, as well as the differential impacts of internationalization and migration policies.

The lack of unity between internationalization policies in higher education and other types of policy is not unique to Vienna. “[C]alls for more centralized and broader strategic approaches to internationalization and for the harmonization of policies across sectors (i.e., labor market, migration, trade, economic development, foreign affairs) so as to address both national and institutional interests” (Craciun 2018: 105) can be found in multiple nation-state contexts. The United Kingdom, for example, one of the largest receiving countries for student migrants, recently underwent changes to its policy governing post-graduation opportunities for students to remain in the country. This has led to new challenges faced by higher education institutions that were reliant on foreign students (Beech 2018). The importance of internationalization to institutions of higher education has led to efforts to attract and support students in various ways, but in order for these systems and practices to prevail in

constructing the student experience, the misaligned relationship between institutional policy and federal migration policy would need to be adjusted.

6. Conclusion

The ethnographic evidence presented in this research project was heavily based on the stories relayed by 10 third-country national students in Vienna. Through interviews with these individuals, as well as two administrators, and analysis of documents and reports related to the internationalization of higher education and migration in Austria, several main insights regarding the construction of the third-country national experience arose. Taking the internationalization strategies created by the Ministry of Education and tracing how they are translated into institutional plans, and ultimately enacted by the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts, the privileges and (in)accessibilities inherent in being a third-country national student were revealed. The administrators spoke differently of the importance of third-country national students to their institutions; the Academy of Fine Arts prides itself on maintaining an international community, and though the University of Vienna is a publicly funded institution with the obligation to, and focus on, educating Austrians, international students are an important factor of internationalization at home (Beelen and Jones 2015). Though the plans outlined objectives and initiatives for increasing internationalization at home and transforming Austria into a location known for higher education, in practice, the students often experienced feelings of otherness or felt undervalued compared to not only Austrian students, but also international students from the EU/EEA.

The second recurrent theme touched on by my interlocutors was the presence (or lack) of systems of support to guide them through the process of becoming a student and maintaining their studentship in Austria. The Academy of Fine Arts, where retaining a high proportion of international, specifically third-country national, students is a priority, has a concrete, centralized point of support for the students. This led to students at the Academy

feeling as though they had somewhere to turn with confusion or difficulties, resulting in the internationalization efforts being reflected in their experience. For students at the University of Vienna, where support systems are scattered amongst university offices, students were more likely to turn outside the institution for guidance. In these cases, students received support based on the experience of their peers or those with similar national backgrounds. These systems of support were generally more readily available and could offer what the students deemed more personal advice. However, University of Vienna students still turned to the ÖH when they felt they needed “official” information on topics such as navigating migration policy. The presence of systems of support, whether institutional or private actors, functioned as migration facilitators, easing the process of migration and enrolment in the Austrian university system.

Though I focused my interviews on the impacts of internationalization on the third-country national students’ experiences, and the ways in which efforts translated into their interactions within the educational institutions, the topic of the bureaucracy related to migration regularly dominated the conversations. Inconsistency and waiting came up repeatedly, with students sharing stories of waiting months to hear a decision on their residence permits one year, only to be told within days the next time they applied for the renewal. Experiences such as these point to the power asymmetries present in the interactions and relations between the third-country national students and the bureaucrats at the MA35. No matter how prepared a student felt for the application or renewal of their residence permit, they had no control over the outcome or the period of waiting they would have to endure. This waiting and uncertainty were further exacerbated by the financial requirements of being a student in Austria. My interview partners expressed little concern towards the other documents they had to provide to the Austrian authorities but kept returning to the difficulties they faced in not only showing but proving the source of their financial means.

Stories of this nature were shared by students at the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts alike, highlighting that regardless of the emphasis an educational institution places on supporting third-country national students, the interactions and challenges they face as a result of migration policy ultimately play a greater role in shaping their experience. The internationalization policies at the institutions of education in Vienna and Austrian migration policy create varied subjectivities in which the third-country national students are alternately constructed as welcome actors raising the institution's prestige, and secondary contributors to internationalization at home, or actors whose access to the nation is constrained as a result of hurdles meant to limit migration. Third-country national students are stuck in a cycle of having to maintain student status to be a migrant and having to maintain their migration status to be a student.

As highlighted within each thematic section, the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic had impacts for all aspects of student life. The lockdown and conditions stemming from the presence of COVID-19 in Vienna resulted in an exaggeration of everything impacting the student experience. Language barriers were accentuated by online learning, and mobility for third-country national students was severely limited by travel restrictions. In terms of support, students who relied on university facilities and services were disadvantaged, and those whose support systems are outside Austria experienced increases in stress and anxiety. For third-country national students already struggling with waiting for bureaucratic procedures such as the issuance of work permits and decisions on residence permits, the lockdown resulted in extended periods of waiting. Had this research taken place within a different temporal context, the results may have been very different. By placing a specific emphasis on the aspects of the third-country national students' lives that were directly impacted by the pandemic, the ways in which their non-pandemic experiences are a reflection of internationalization and migration policies are foregrounded.

Ultimately, the research I presented reveals not only the varied ways that internationalization efforts are reflected in the experiences of third-country national students at two institutions in Vienna, but also the co-construction of their experience through the influence of migration and educational policy. I would further argue that there exists a disconnect between these two areas of policy, not necessarily in theory, but in practice, which causes the inconsistency experienced by the students. The Ministry of Education wants to develop Austria as a significant site for higher education and research through processes of internationalization (BMBWF 2019) and the Interior Ministry believes “the potential of international students should be utilized. Austria should derive long-term benefit from its investments in the education and training of foreign students” (BMI 2016: 14). Despite these coinciding objectives, the evidence presented throughout my thesis highlights that the experiences of third-country national students in Vienna do not reflect the intended outcomes of the policies.

Moving forward, there are a number of directions in which my research could be expanded. I dealt with a very specific group of students. The subjects of study could be broadened to different categories of international students, to students at other public or private universities in Vienna, or to universities in other parts of Austria. Even within the sample of students I chose, there is space for more variation. The students with whom I spoke were mainly master’s students and overwhelmingly American. An inquiry focused on the differential experiences of students depending on national background and/or gender would reveal different types of accessibilities and privileges than I discussed. Additionally, I focused on the experience of students holding a student residence permit, there are of course foreign students studying in Austria whose right to stay is granted on a different basis than their studentship, this would be another entry point for potential further analysis particularly within the realm of migration policy.

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Appendix I

Abstract

Internationalization of higher education is a process found at institutions across the globe. The movement of students across borders is an integral aspect of internationalization at many institutions, and student migrants is one of fastest growing categories of migration that calls for increased study. Policies related to internationalization span various levels of society from national to institutional to individual. They interact with national migration policy resulting in varied subjectivities that impact the experiences of student migrants. This study focuses on these phenomena in the context of two institutions in Vienna, Austria – the University of Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts – and third-country national students pursuing degree mobility there.

The experiences of third-country nationals at the intersection of internationalization and migration policies in Austria were investigated using the following questions: how is the discourse and practice of internationalization at institutions of higher education reflected in the lived experiences of third-country national students? How do the interactions between migration and internationalization policy affect student experience? What systems of support exist as a part of internationalization efforts at higher educational institutions and how do they impact student experience?

To explore these questions, methods including informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were used. The investigation revealed several different aspects of the third-country national experience in Austria. The varied priorities and implementations of internationalization policy at different scales leads to the existence of (in)accessibilities and privileges for select students. In the cases where students were the focus of internationalization policy, institutional systems of support eased their education and migration experience. In the absence this support, third-country national students turned to personal social networks, eliciting individualized guidance. Despite systems of support and interest in third-country national students as a means of internationalization, bureaucratic hurdles such as financial requirements and waiting led migration policy to play the largest role in constructing the student experience – thus highlighting the dissonant relationship between migration and internationalization policies. The results discussed in this study have implications beyond the situations of my interview partners, revealing a disconnect in national policy areas related to education and migration in Austria.

Keywords: Internationalization policy, higher education, migration policy, Austria, student migrant, third-country nationals

Zusammenfassung

Die Internationalisierung der Hochschulbildung ist ein Prozess, der an Institutionen auf der ganzen Welt zu beobachten ist. Die Bewegung von Studierenden über Grenzen hinweg ist ein integraler Aspekt der Internationalisierung an vielen Institutionen, und studentische Migranten sind eine der am schnellsten wachsenden Kategorien der Migration, die eine verstärkte Forschung erfordert. Die Politik, im Zusammenhang mit der Internationalisierung, erstreckt sich auf verschiedene Ebenen der Gesellschaft, von der nationalen über die institutionelle bis hin zur individuellen Ebene. Sie interagieren mit der nationalen Migrationspolitik, was zu unterschiedlichen Subjektivitäten führt, die sich auf die Erfahrungen der Migrantenstudenten auswirken. Die vorliegende Studie konzentriert sich auf diese Phänomene im Kontext zweier Institutionen in Wien, Österreich - der Universität Wien und der Akademie der bildenden Künste - und von Studierenden aus Drittstaaten, die dort ein Studium absolvieren.

Die Erfahrungen von Drittstaatsangehörigen am Schnittpunkt von Internationalisierungs- und Migrationspolitik in Österreich wurden anhand folgender Fragen untersucht: Wie spiegelt sich der Diskurs und die Praxis der Internationalisierung an den Hochschulen in den Lebenserfahrungen von Studierenden aus Drittstaaten wider? Wie wirken sich die Wechselwirkungen zwischen Migrations- und Internationalisierungspolitik auf die Erfahrungen der Studierenden aus? Welche Unterstützungssysteme gibt es im Rahmen der Internationalisierungsbestrebungen an Hochschulen und wie wirken sie sich auf die Erfahrungen der Studierenden aus?

Um diesen Fragen nachzugehen, wurden Methoden wie informelle Interviews, halbstrukturierte Interviews und Dokumentenanalyse eingesetzt. Die Untersuchung deckte mehrere verschiedene Aspekte der Erfahrungen von Drittstaatsangehörigen in Österreich auf. Die unterschiedlichen Prioritäten und Umsetzungen der Internationalisierungspolitik auf verschiedenen Ebenen führen dazu, dass es (Un-)Zugänglichkeiten und Privilegien für einige Studierende gibt. In den Fällen, in denen Studierende im Mittelpunkt der Internationalisierungspolitik standen, erleichterten institutionelle Unterstützungssysteme ihre Bildungs- und Migrationserfahrung. In Ermangelung dieser Unterstützung wandten sich Studierende mit der Staatsangehörigkeit eines Drittlandes an ihre persönlichen sozialen Netzwerke und ersuchten um Rat. Trotz der Unterstützungssysteme und des Interesses an Studierenden aus Drittstaaten als Mittel zur Internationalisierung, spielte die Migrationspolitik, aufgrund bürokratischer Hürden, beispielsweise finanzielle Anforderungen

und Wartezeiten bei Amtswegen, die größte Rolle in der Prägung der Studentenerfahrung - was die dissonante Beziehung zwischen Migrations- und Internationalisierungspolitik deutlich machte. Die in dieser Studie diskutierten Ergebnisse haben Auswirkungen, die über die Situation meiner InterviewpartnerInnen hinausgehen und eine Diskrepanz in Gebieten der Nationalpolitik bezüglich Bildung und Migration in Österreich aufzeigen.

Schlagwörter: Internationalisierungspolitik, Hochschulbildung, Migrationspolitik, Österreich, studentischer Migrant, Drittstaatsangehörige