

Limits of (our) work

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How it started... not only articles, but a whole project!





Limits of work / Heroes of the capitalist labour 2017

5 months

5 jobs

Laundry in a hospital - a poultry farm owned by the Prime Minister - supermarket cashier - worker in a razor blade factory - waste sorting plant worker

the process of finding work: we have set targets - it must not be bullshit, we must achieve regional stratification, we are after unskilled jobs that society cannot do without



Heroes of the capitalist labour

Five months of unique research that changed the way we think about low-wage workers in the Czech Republic.

The idea: to describe what life is like for people who don't even work hard for a living.

The process: journalist Saša Uhlova became one of the workers herself in order to cover issues related to wages, working conditions and exploitation.

Practical & Ethical issues

How to avoid disclosure when the project is implemented by one of the most famous journalists in the Czech Republic?

How to ensure safety for those Saša worked with?

How to record the daily routine of work? How to protect materials?

Gender issues: as a mother of four children, Sasha practically experiences what other mothers experience - how to take gender into a project? Is it important to us? Why?

How to approach publication: so that those who have spoken are not recognizable? So that they don't get fired from their jobs? So that it's not just Sasha's story?

how to look for a job - google reviews, adverts showing what type of job it will be - how much money, how many hours, what type of contract

we wanted different jobs and different contracts: main employment, temporary work, agency work, to describe the differences in the type of employment



Rules for working in the field

the principle that Saša never lies - she answers questions as far as she can (do you have a high school education? Have you ever worked manually? do you have a family?)

She tries to contextualize every situation: the work is not just a description of what is happening, but how it affects our lives - health etc.

noticing differences, analysing them, checking with the people you work with, collect payroll tickets, make photos in case you can

when publishing always: change name, change gender frequently

when someone talks about violations of working conditions and exploitation, their personal story is never known and vice versa

verify everything that is said

what we have found and described

the Labour legislative was violated in every workplace visited - safety training was lacking, people were not paid the same for the same work, overtime was routinely concealed or broken down to make it look legal, there were no breaks

at the same time, it has become clear that hidden poverty is a problem and that people do not make a living from one job, which has far-reaching consequences for the perception of freedom, democracy, justice, trust in the state, in institutions, in government; these people are disillusioned with politics and refuse to participate in it

Results of articles



Publication of texts on the Alarm website: spring 2017

interviews in a number of foreign media

what we achieved: over 700 000 reads (the Czech Republic has 10 000 000 inhabitants)

winning several journalism awards

A big society-wide debate on working and wage conditions and hidden poverty in the Czech Republic

in every job that Sasha visited, there was eventually a change for the better

cheap labour has finally become a political issue in the Czech Republic

Heroes of Capitalist Labor has been hailed as one of the best investigative works of the last 35 years

Results of a film

more than one million views
one-year tour throughout the Czech Republic

Winning Best Film of the Year in International film festival Jihlava,
audience award, many nominations, award of the best documentary
according to the czech critiques etc etc

two screenings with debates with politicians on the floor of the European
Parliament

a tour of Europe and a visit to USA with the film

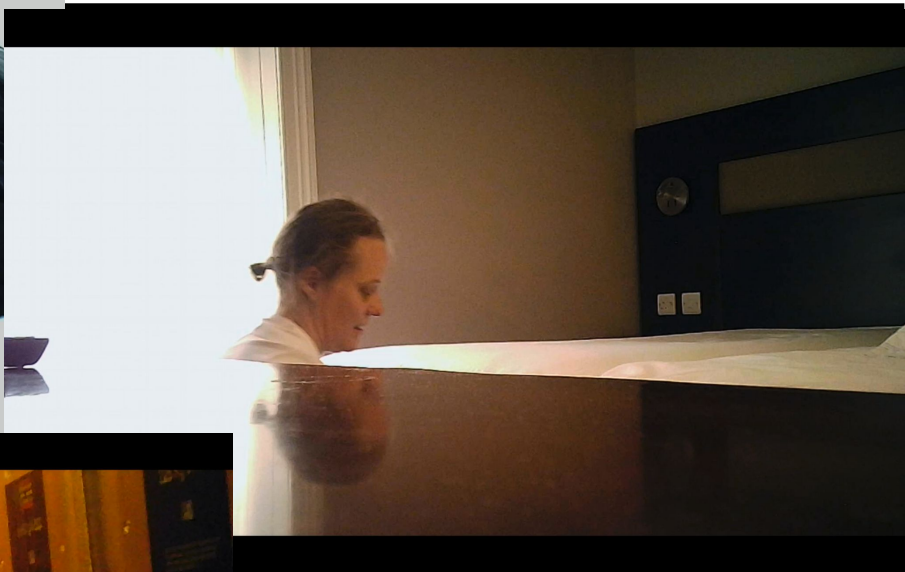


...how it's going: Limits of Europe

project focusing on the working conditions of Eastern European workers in the West

"In a globalised world full of social inequalities, there will always be people who will seek work where they can get paid for it. But how much is Western welfare really worth?"

same method - but much more challenging



Targets & workflow

describe the living conditions of eastern European migrants who come to the west to work

address the topic of the disintegration of the European Union and European values, the flip side of globalisation, and the negative consequences of labour migration

job search via Eastern European agencies

identifying three countries and three areas of interest in the context of global capitalism

Germany - an organic farm with tens to hundreds of Polish workers

UK - mapping a situation after Brexit, we had to change it to the Ireland - housekeeper in the hotel and the care sector, which is an important segment of women's labour migration, France - Marseille, home carer for sick elderly people

problems and challenges

Each country required a completely different approach, we studied legislation, read google reviews, contacted unions in each country, found lawyers who educated us on labour law issues in that country

There were interviews for most jobs, but if one was flexible enough to brush off various work issues : double contracts, no counting hours, unpaid overtime, unpaid transfers between jobs, falsifying CVs, one was usually hired, work for the minimum amount of money for however long the employer says

German farm

we got the job through a Polish agency, it required basic knowledge of Polish, otherwise nothing, a short interview and a request for an immediate start

living in a hostel near a farm, traditionally six women in a room, paying 100 euros a month for housing

working in the field and sorting vegetables, we discovered that the farm buys vegetables other than salads from the supermarket and sells them as organic, the workers repackaged them

the working day was 14 to 16 hours, two working days, working 7 days a week

the workers paid for everything themselves, work clothes, tools, cleaning supplies

In a month of work, Sasha earned 1500 euros for 4 weeks of work every day, an average of 3.5 euros per hour.



Uk & Ireland

even though we had contacts in the UK, we couldn't find a job after a few weeks, we tried to find one through the Czech Roma community, who work there under the table, but to no avail

finally we went to Ireland and through a Slovak agency Saša found a job in a hotel in one of the national parks, she worked practically only with Slovaks, she told most of them she was a journalist

problems: massive exploitation, no one kept track of the hours worked, not enough staff, so everyone did three jobs in the hotel, no time off

Eventually it was revealed that Sasha was a journalist, but the hotel owner was scared and started supplying everyone with pay slips and keeping track of the number of hours worked.

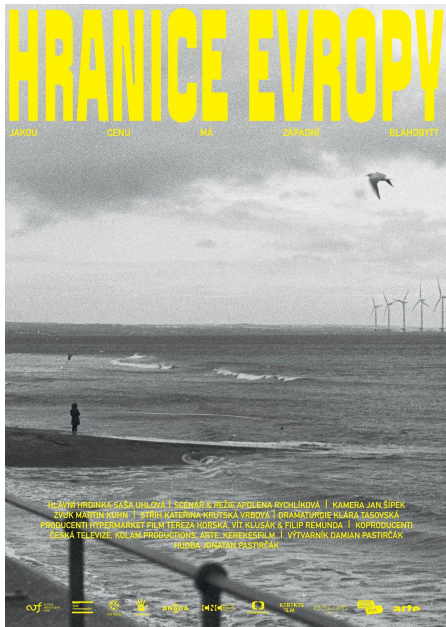
France

we looked for work through local non-profit organizations and advertisements, wrote a resume, distributed it to nursing homes

it was difficult to find a job a legal in France because of the complicated bureaucracy, we contacted NGO's that help women who escaped from modern slavery, they helped to find out a illegal job - helping one guy with care of elderly parents

the second part of the work through the agency, when Sasha went from place to place and took care of old people, she was not paid for the transfers, but only for working with people, which was insufficient

as a result, she began to exploit herself, a lot of isolated work, loneliness, little contact with other workers, uncertainty about how much work there will be in a day, high psychological stress



Summary

we always work with social anthropologists during the project
careful preparation and research will pay off

the basic thing is to protect your work: look for options for recording,
taking notes, so that no one is exposed

the diary that was encrypted, the data from the glasses and the
thermos that was filmed, which was regularly sent to other drives

recording of all conversations, including those with family and
friends
