

## **Until the End of Oil: The Elusive Futures of Migrant Workers**

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In this paper, which is based on fieldwork among mainly Egyptian migrant workers in Vienna, Austria and Doha, Qatar, I take up their reflection about their situation to think about the ambiguities and contradictions evolved in the social practice of imagining a better future. Instead of being able to collect a fortune and return home to live a life in relative comfort, migrants commonly find themselves in the circuit of working to send home money on which entire families depend for their daily needs. And instead of being able to live a fuller life of more choices, labour migrants commonly face an extremely narrow life in which both possible choices as well as the rhythm of everyday become extremely limited. A key moment of this experience is its uncertain temporality, shifting between the hope to return next year, and the realisation that one may have to stay for a lifetime. This is an experience that is often explicitly voiced by migrants themselves who struggle to find dreams they can believe in and to develop acceptable ways to live in dignity, well knowing that these dreams themselves are partly responsible for their sense of wasting the best years of their life. This tragic sense of hope articulated by migrant workers is telling of the ambiguous power of the social practice of imagination to provide hope and a real sense of possibility while at the same time causing despair and making it extremely difficult to come up with serious alternatives.