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Revisiting geographies of temporalities: The significance of time in migrant responses to Brexit

Abstract

In this article, we look at the role of time and temporalities in migrant responses to the result of the 2016 EU referendum in the UK, i.e. Brexit. While some attention has been paid to affective 'first reactions' to Brexit, less is known about how it is negotiated in a longer perspective. Here, we recognise that responses to Brexit are dynamic and prone to change. Therefore, it is crucial to explore practical rationalising alongside emotional reactions as two different, but equally relevant, responses. Using the example of Finnish and Polish migrants to Scotland, we show that time is central to making sense of Brexit and is used to negotiate uncertainty about legal status and the right to remain. In doing so, we revisit a wider gap in geography scholarship, which continues to underappreciate the temporal dimension in migration research.

Keywords

time, temporalities, migration, negotiating change, Brexit, Scotland

Introduction

Imagine you live abroad. Or maybe you do? You have put a lot of effort into finding your way in this new place and it has been a life-changing experience. Now, imagine you have found yourself amid totally unexpected political change that affects everything you have worked for. You realise you might lose it. How do you feel?

Shocked? Angry? Scared? Imagine some time has passed: a year or two. Talks about how to tackle the change have been slow and no solution has been worked out. Uncertainty continues. *How do you respond to this?*

In this article, we address the above question by looking at migrant responses to the result of the 2016 referendum on the British exit from the European Union (EU), i.e. Brexit. Using the example of Finnish and Polish migrants to Scotland, we first explore the temporal dynamics of these responses, i.e. how they change over time. Then, we investigate how time features in these responses: specifically, how migrants use time to negotiate uncertainty about legal status and the right to remain.

While the UK government has reached an agreement with the EU on citizens' rights, its capacity to be legally binding remains, as of mid-2019, unclear. Consequently, the 3.7mln EU citizens who settled in the UK under the EU free movement principle (ONS, 2018a), i.e. without the requirement to legalise the right to remain, are left 'in limbo' about their status and rights post Brexit. This state of uncertainty has been sustained since the date of the EU referendum (23 June 2016).

When we started our fieldwork in summer 2017, roughly a year after the EU referendum, the debates on responses to Brexit focused largely on emotional 'first reactions' such as disappointment, sadness, fear or anger (now published as: Brahic & Lallement, 2018; Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018; Lulle, King, et al., 2018; Lulle, Moroşanu, et al., 2018; Ranta & Nancheva, 2018). However, as our research progressed, we realised that over time the initial shock may give way to more tempered responses. Indeed, at the time of interviews the vast majority of our research participants tried to rationalise Brexit or to 'keep calm and carry on' - to use a popular expression. Simultaneously, we were amazed by how much they spoke of time: time

for emotions to settle, time to think of the next steps, time justifying or threatening their sense of security. Time was omnipresent in these stories: research participants explicitly drew upon temporalities of Brexit and/or utilised time to negotiate it. Here, we call these stories ‘time narratives’.

In the article, we establish that migrant responses to Brexit are dynamic. From largely emotional ‘first reactions’ they shift to more reflexive and rationalising. We also find that time is intricately linked to how migrants negotiate uncertainty: it is commonly used to draw boundaries between those who (assume) will secure the right to remain and those who will not. In doing so, we make two significant contributions: firstly, to the body of work on geographies of temporalities in migration research (Cwerner, 2001; Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Erel & Ryan, 2018; Griffiths, 2014; King et al., 2006; Mavroudi et al. 2017) by highlighting the temporal dynamics of responses to Brexit; and secondly, to the literature on migration and Brexit (Duda-Mikulín, 2018; Lulle, Moroşanu, et al., 2018; McGhee et al., 2017; Rzepnikowska-Phillips, 2018; Tyrrell et al., 2018) by demonstrating how time features in these responses. In addition, we consider the significance of time and temporalities (Adam, 1990; Harvey, 1990; Lefebvre, 2004; Massey, 1992; May & Thrift, 2001) in how migrants conceptualise profound political change in a broader attempt to inform debates on the experience of rupture in the age of migration (King, 2018). Understanding how individuals and communities respond to such ruptures has a wider significance in the context of political ‘hostile environment’¹ increasingly affecting societies across the globe.

We understand time as “a social phenomenon relating to questions of ‘when’” (Griffiths, 2014: 1992) and temporality as “time in things” (Adam, 2000: 136). Here, we explore the ‘when’ of migrant responses to Brexit and the ‘when’ they draw upon in negotiating (in)security related to their legal status and the right to remain. Essentially,

we look at how time is understood and negotiated, how EU migrants produce time narratives and how these narratives are fixed in time.

In what follows, we first shed more light on Finnish and Polish migration to Scotland in the wider context of EU mobility. We then engage with geography literature on time in migration and emerging interdisciplinary work on migration and Brexit. Next, we discuss our study outline and methodological approach before focusing on the analysis of findings.

Finnish and Polish migrants in Scotland

In this article, we pair Finnish and Polish migrants as two different EU citizen groups to better understand the impact of Brexit on diverse migrant communities in the UK. While Poles in Scotland (and the UK) have been heavily researched (Botterill & Hancock, 2018; Duda-Mikulín, 2018; Rzepnikowska-Phillips, 2018; McGhee et al., 2017), Finns remain a 'hidden' population. This is due to the considerable size of Polish community in the UK on the one hand and the disproportionate focus on in-migration in Finnish migration studies on the other. To the best of our knowledge, these two populations have never been paired in migration research in the European context.

While both Finnish and Polish nationals are EU citizens and share the same legal status and mobility rights within the EU, Finnish and Polish migration patterns, including settlement in Scotland, differ in some fundamental ways. Finland joined the EU in 1995 and is usually viewed as an 'old' member state (Koikkalainen, 2011). In contrast, Poland, having joined in 2004, is mostly framed as a 'new' member state (Burrell, 2009). In wider geopolitics of migration in Europe, Poles also occupy,

arguably, a less privileged position and tend to be racialised as 'Eastern Europeans' (Fox et al., 2012). Finns, on the other hand, while largely underresearched, are likely to capitalise on the narrative of privileged 'White Nordic' migrants (Lundström, 2014). This difference in the degree of privilege is important to consider throughout this article.

In the Scottish (and UK) context, these two national groups also differ significantly in terms of size, prominence and motivations to migrate. At the time of writing this article, there are around one million Polish nationals in the UK and nearly 90,000 in Scotland (ONS, 2018). Polish has become the most common non-British nationality while Polish language the second most spoken language in England and Wales, and the third in Scotland (ONS, 2013; Scotland's Census, 2011). Although Polish nationals' motivations to migrate are extremely diverse, economic reasons and job opportunities tend to be quoted frequently (Burrell, 2009).

In stark contrast, numbers of Finnish nationals in the UK are very low and oscillate between 15,000-20,000 including around a thousand in Scotland (FinEmb, 2018; ONS, 2018b). Unsurprisingly, given the size of this population, Finnish nationals are hardly visible in public and media debates. However, what makes this migrant population stand out is its gendered nature: in young age groups (15-34 years) up to twice as many Finnish women migrate than Finnish men (Heikkilä, 2011) and between 1990 and 2016 nearly 60% of all Finnish migrants to the UK were women (OSF, 2018). While motivations to migrate are also diverse, professional career and education are quoted on par with relationship and/or marriage (Heikkilä, 2011).

Time in migration research

Time is key to migration: it underpins the bodies of work on motivations to migrate and settle, transnationalism, citizenship, identity and belonging (Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Griffiths et al., 2013). For instance, the ‘why’ in why people migrate is always implicitly situated within the wider ‘when’: specific historical, political or legal circumstances, personal histories and life stages. But, while there is some important work on time in migrations studies (e.g. Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, 2014; King et al., 2006; Shubin, 2015), there is also general agreement that time remains underappreciated in this field (Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Griffiths et al., 2013; Mavroudi et al., 2017; Ryan & D’Angelo, 2018).

Some have argued that one reason why it is overlooked is a fundamental imbalance between time and space in migration debates (Cwerner, 2001; Erdal & Ezzati, 2015). Migration research tends to prioritise national and geographical dimensions: questions usually focus on ‘where from’ and ‘where to’ people migrate or ‘which national group’ is involved, but rarely ‘when’. This reflects a wider problem of methodological nationalism – “the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002: 301). For this reason, there is a continuing need to question the dominance of the spatial and to bring the temporal to the fore (Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Erel & Ryan, 2018).

This need is reiterated by geographers more broadly. While the relationship between time and space has been heavily theorised (Hägerstrand, 1975; Harvey, 1990; Lefebvre, 2004; Massey, 1992), space continues to be prioritised (May & Thrift, 2001). This is despite attempts to reinvigorate debates on time-geography (Scholten et al., 2012; Thrift and Pred, 1981) and, indeed, timespace (May & Thrift, 2001). In

other disciplines, most notably sociology and anthropology, this interdependency of, and imbalance between, time and space is also acknowledged (Adam, 1990; Giddens, 1979). Here theorists of time such as Adam call for the constructive use of the concept of timescape - “the temporal equivalent of landscape, recognizing all the temporal features of socio-environmental events and processes” (2000: 137).

Given this attention to time across a range of disciplines (reflected also in the establishment of the journal *Time and Society* in 1990s), studies of time and migration remain surprisingly isolated. But, as noted earlier, this is not to suggest that they do not exist. Griffiths (2014), for instance, has explored what time means for immigration detainees in the UK. In her study, research participants experienced time in profoundly different ways than people around them: they spoke of a slow time of waiting in detention centre and accelerated time when things happened abruptly and without warning. This suggests that time is uniquely experienced by individual migrants depending on their legal status, personal situation and wider political circumstances.

On the other hand, Erdal and Ezzati (2015) focused on voluntary migrants to Norway and temporal aspects of their plans to settle or return to the country of origin. They found that these plans are likely to change over time. While, unsurprisingly, the length of stay plays an important role in these plans (i.e. the longer one stays, the more likely to settle they are), the authors argue that “these are not always linear processes; considerations about settlement and return can always take new turns” (Erdal & Ezzati, 2015: 1208). This ‘changeability’ of migrant plans over time is echoed by others, in particular those who have explored aspects of migrant integration and future plans (Ryan, 2015, 2018). While this research may not explicitly address the issue of time, temporality in migrant planning is implicit to claims that “migrants are active agents weighing up various considerations and circumstances as their plans

change over time” (Ryan, 2015: 13). Importantly, time has been increasingly evident in recent scholarship, most notably in the work of Erel and Ryan (2018) on migrant capitals and Ryan and D’Angelo (2018) on migrant networks. These authors advocate for temporal analysis, or what Adam (2000) would call ‘the temporal gaze’, in particular with regard to researching migration experience (by nature messy and prone to change) and migrant understandings of the country of origin and destination (which are dynamic and often informed by wider circumstances).

The need for more temporal analysis is partly addressed in the body of work on emotional geographies of migrant belonging (e.g. Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Christou, 2011; Mas Giralt, 2015; Svašek, 2010). While inexplicit, time underlies this scholarship as it forefronts emotional processes leading to the development of ‘sentiments of belonging’ (Mas Gilat 2015: 3) in the ‘host’ society and how they are negotiated over time. For example, by looking at feelings and experiences of belonging among Greek migrants in Denmark, Christou (2011) have noted that temporality of diasporic life is crucial to migrant (gendered) performances.

Despite these important contributions, many questions remain. How migrant populations respond to seismic socio-political change, such as Brexit, in a longer perspective? How are initial emotional responses different from rationalising that, arguably, occurs over time? What role do time play in negotiating uncertainty? This article addresses these questions by looking at the temporal dynamics of migrant responses to Brexit and how time features in narratives of uncertainty.

Migrant responses to Brexit

The scholarship on migration to the UK and Brexit is a fast growing one. As of mid-2019, it particularly focuses on: EU migrants' future plans, i.e. whether to stay in the UK or not (Lulle, Moroşanu, et al., 2018; McCarthy, 2018; McGhee et al., 2017; Moreh et al., 2016); EU nationals' experiences of precariousness, discrimination and xenophobia post Brexit vote (Duda-Mikulín, 2018; Rzepnikowska-Phillips, 2018); and emotional responses to Brexit (Brahic & Lallement, 2018; Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018; Lulle, King, et al., 2018;). By focusing on what Anderson and Wilson (2018) frame as 'everyday Brexits', i.e. everyday manifestations of how the decision to leave the EU is affecting UK populations, this body of work illustrates that Brexit has been a highly disruptive event for EU migrants (King, 2018).

In the emerging literature on responses to Brexit there is a strong narrative of 'affective impact' whereby migrants respond to Brexit emotionally with fear, panic, anger or sadness (Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018; Lulle, Moroşanu, et al., 2018). Lulle, Moroşanu, et al. (2018), for example, report expressions of profound disbelief, shock and confusion among young Irish, Italian and Romanian migrants in London. Indeed, research participants in their study speak of having cried or experienced a breakdown when the result of the EU referendum was announced. In a similar vein, Guma and Dafydd Jones (2018) note emotional responses among EU migrants in Wales.

While there is some evidence of negotiating Brexit exemplified in narratives of personal resilience, this emerging work largely draws upon narratives of how EU migrants felt about Brexit in the run up to or immediately after the EU referendum (although see exceptions: Brahic & Lallement, 2018; Lulle, King, et al., 2018; Ranta & Nancheva, 2018). In other words, this work tends to discuss initial responses or 'first

reactions' which are necessarily fixed in specific time. Consequently, we do not know whether these responses would be equally 'emotional' at another point in time or whether they would have changed and how (Botterill et al., 2018).

As revealing as this work is, further gaps could be identified. Firstly, in contrast to initial emotional aftershocks, which have been explored to a much greater degree, we know relatively little about how EU migrants rationalise Brexit, i.e. how they make sense of or try to find reasons to explain Brexit in more 'rational' ways, in particular in the wider context of uncertainty. EU migrants may be shocked, angry or sad with the result of the referendum, but they may choose (or not) to take certain steps as a result of rationalising (Brahic & Lallement, 2018). This discrepancy between what people say (in the heat of the moment) and what they actually do (after they give it a think) is a fascinating one, and yet remains underexplored in migration studies.

Secondly, as highlighted above: we need a systematic discussion of time and temporalities in exploring these responses. Lulle, King, et al. (2018) have interestingly noted that their research participants who have been in the UK for less than five years at the time of interview, and hence do not fulfill permanent residency² criteria, seem to be more worried about their status post-Brexit than those who have been there longer. This suggests that EU migrants may use time (here: length of stay in the UK) to negotiate sense of (in)security and to explain or understand Brexit. It is important to recognise that these negotiations are positioned within the timeframes set by the UK government to separate those who have the right to remain from those who do not. This "complex temporalities and socio-spatialities of migrant trajectories" (Lulle, King, et al. 2018: 8) need to be explored in greater depth.

Finally, there's a slight imbalance in the emerging literature on migrant responses to Brexit, and migration and Brexit more broadly, in favour of looking at England. While there are notable exceptions from Scotland (Botterill & Hancock, 2018) and Wales (Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018), we need to further consider regional disparities in voting patterns and how they might translate to the experience of Brexit-driven (in)security and migration more widely. Indeed, Scotland voted overall to stay in the EU (62% remain, 38% leave) as opposed to England (46.6% remain, 53.4% leave) and Wales (47.5% remain, 52.5% leave).

Methods

In this article, we draw upon 42 in-depth interviews with Finnish and Polish nationals in Scotland conducted as part of two research projects: *[details of projects anonymised for blind review purposes]*. In each project, we explored, among other things, how Brexit shapes migration experience in Scotland and investigated immediate responses to the result of the EU referendum and how they changed over time (one-two years afterwards). Although we worked separately on these projects, there are significant similarities in our research designs, and methodological and analytical approaches. For example, we both conducted fieldwork roughly at the same time (Author 1: Jul 2017-April 2018, Author 2: Jul-Aug 2017), used interview as the main data collection technique, asked similar interview questions about Brexit and used the same data analysis approach. In developing this article, we have spent considerable amount of time discussing our projects, sharing and exploring empirical data, building up a common analytical framework and generating findings together.

As part of Author 1's study, 22 interviews were conducted with Polish nationals in Glasgow. These research participants were recruited through leafleting in Polish venues in the city (e.g. delis, hairdresser salons), community organisations, gatekeepers, social media and chain referral. Throughout the recruitment process, particular attention was paid to diversifying this sample in socio-economic terms to ensure diversity of migration experiences and responses to Brexit. The group included 15 women and 7 men of ages between 27 and 56, who lived in the UK between one and 12 years. While there was a range of education levels and employment statuses, the sample was skewed towards the better-educated and employed. At the same time, a number of participants worked below their actual qualifications, which is reflective of deskilling among Polish migrants in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016). But, the group included also highly-skilled professionals, business owners and students.

As part of Author 2's study, 20 interviews were conducted with Finnish nationals in Scottish cities (mostly Glasgow and Edinburgh). Given the small size of Finnish population in Scotland, social media recruitment (e.g. via facebook groups) was primarily used to reach out to research participants. Similarly, to the case of Author 1's research above, best efforts were taken to diversify the sample, although this was not possible across all characteristics. For example, Author 2 directly contacted Finnish men to encourage them to take part in the study. Still, there was a significant gender imbalance in the Finnish data: 17 women and 3 men. It is, nonetheless, indicative of wider gender trends in Finnish migration to the UK (OSF, 2018). These participants were between 23 and 48 years old and lived in the UK between one and 19 years. The majority of them were university-educated and employed. Three were students and two were out of work (but considered this a temporary circumstance).

In each case, interviews were conducted in the first language of research participant (Polish or Finnish) by a researcher of the same national background. While wary of the complicated position of migrant researchers researching their migrant co-nationals (Author 1, 2016), we found that shared migrant status and language facilitated the recruitment process and the interview discussion on Brexit. Although interviews in both projects were transcribed in the original language (Polish or Finnish), we translated sections of transcripts into English for each other as this is the only language that we share.

Given these language limitations, in developing this article we employed a four-stage data analysis approach. Firstly, having each coded and analysed her dataset independently, we had a detailed discussion about emerging themes, similarities and differences across the projects. Secondly, we prepared a comprehensive summary of how each interviewee in our respective projects spoke about Brexit and analysed them closely. Then, we carefully translated into English key sections of interviews related to Brexit, exchanged them and analysed again. Finally, we repeatedly discussed our overall material to generate findings and wider knowledge about the significance of time in migrant responses to Brexit. In doing so, we utilised narrative analysis which allows to explore relationships, interconnections and socially constructed understandings that occur within oral accounts (Maynes et al., 2008).

Negotiating Brexit over time

Similarly to others (Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018; Lulle, King, et al., 2018; Lulle, Moroşanu, et al., 2018), we found that most participants recalled strong, emotional first reactions to the result of the Brexit referendum: shock, disbelief, disappointment,

anger, confusion, sadness, anxiety, grief, fear or panic. Many participants spoke of verbalising these emotions through crying or manifested them in some other way. This is reflected in the two narratives below.

The morning of the result I cried, I didn't really believe that it would happen. And then I was angry, and I think that was the first time in a very long time when I really felt I wasn't from here and that I wasn't welcome. (...) And I was really worried, I was scared, I was thinking: what the hell is going to happen? I've got a mortgage for decades here. (Sabina³, PL, 32, f, 2006⁴)

I'm not easily provoked on social media but then (...) I posted a black frame on facebook and wrote 'fuck'. (...) If Britain is leaving the EU, I thought: 'shit, when will they kick me out?!' (Kyllikki, FIN, 32, f, 2016)

Naturally, not everyone spoke of having been so expressive. A few participants said that they had been more philosophical and recalled intensely thinking of or speaking with others about Brexit, largely in terms of fundamental political mistake: “they shot themselves in the foot” or “they scored an own goal”. Interestingly however, when asked about feelings towards Brexit at the time of interview (one-two years after the EU referendum), most participants seemed to be much less emotional. While still deeply unhappy about the result of the referendum and not keen to accept its consequences (in most cases), they appeared to be commonsensical and strived to understand, i.e. rationalise, the politics of the vote. Clearly, from largely emotional, their responses had shifted to rationalising. This is illustrated below.

It [the result] felt like someone had hit me on the head with a log. I simply couldn't believe it. (...) My basic security was shaken, this wasn't supposed to be possible and everyone thought it was a joke. Then I started worrying about

the economic side: jobs, mortgages, our rights to public services. (...) I was really, really angry. I'm not angry any more as I cannot influence it. You must just see what happens. (Esko, FIN, 41, m, 2015 but lived in the UK before)

I did stress out at the beginning to be honest. It hit us all because we didn't know what was going on. But not now. I'm not worried at all [now]. I think that if there are any requirements... we'll try to meet them. (...) The Home Office will probably want to keep a record of us, give us some permits, do resident checks – we'll see. (Urszula, PL, 45, f, 2010)

Both Esko and Urszula admit that Brexit took them by surprise and mobilised emotional first reactions. But it seems that as time passed, the initial shock was gradually replaced by anticipation ('let's-wait-and-see' also noted by Lulle, Moroşanu, et al., 2018). This anticipation is understood to stretch over time: it is reflective of sustained temporariness. There is also an element of personal resilience here (Brahic & Lallement, 2018), in particular in Urszula's narrative. If certain steps need to be taken to legalise her status, she will make sure to take them regardless of whether she likes it or not. This resilience also manifested itself in other participants' narratives, most prominently in Johanna's and Łukasz's.

Disbelief was the first and then desperation (...). I still think the same way about things, but it hasn't been possible to live the whole year in panic (...). Really, it's been a year and nobody knows anything. In the beginning, I was more afraid and tried to think what next. I perhaps tried to calm myself down by finding out, like 'ok, what would be the worst that could happen?' and what I'd do if it happened. (Johanna, FIN, 29, f, 2013)

I feel I should be frightened. I do, because Brexit is absolutely idiotic. The whole campaign was based on lies and people would buy these lies like fresh donuts. So, I feel I should be frightened, but I have... I don't know – whatever happens, happens. There's no point being frightened, there's no point panicking, because it won't change anything. So, it's better to keep calm and carry on. (Łukasz, PL, 32, m, 2007)

These narratives are reflective of a turn towards 'moving on' after a seismic rupture (King, 2018). Similar narratives were produced by other participants: some spoke of gradually "getting used to" Brexit, others of "becoming numb". The 'keep calm and carry on' analogy in Łukasz's narrative epitomises the rationalisation process: it is an attempt to domesticate Brexit, to understand why it is happening, but also to reassure oneself that 'carrying on' is the right (i.e. the rational) thing to do in the longer run. Time is implicitly evident in these narratives – the shift occurs *over time* when fatigue leaves little room for emotions. This fatigue is epitomised by stories of being tired of Brexit or wanting to let it go. It is also closely interlinked with a lack of control over what is coming.

To highlight participants' desire to 'move on' is not to suggest that Brexit stopped affecting them. There is compelling evidence that the result of the vote has had a profound impact on migration experience and future plans of EU citizens in the UK (Brahic & Lallement, 2018; Duda-Mikulín, 2018; Lulle, King, et al., 2018; McCarthy, 2018; McGhee et al., 2017; Miller, 2018; Ranta & Nancheva, 2018; Tyrrell et al., 2018). Unprecedented rise in hate crime was noted after the EU referendum (Devine, 2018) and research has shown that Brexit legitimised anti-immigration prejudice and translated to discrimination and xenophobia (Rzepnikowska, 2018). The above narratives should not be viewed as an expression of wishful thinking that 'things will

work out eventually', but rather an expression of fatigue and lack of control. Indeed, even though some research participants made bold statements such as "I'm not worried at all" (see Urszula's quote earlier), deep-seated anxiety manifested itself as interviews touched upon issues of social relationships, future opportunities, rights and entitlements. While research participants seemed to increasingly rationalise Brexit as time passed by, this was indeed underpinned by a strong sense of continuing uncertainty.

Using time in making sense of uncertainty

While time played a key role in transforming responses to Brexit, it was also relevant to negotiating uncertainty about future legal status and the right to remain. In general, participants who had been in Scotland (or the UK) for a longer while and considered themselves settled in Scottish society (e.g. through home ownership, children born in the UK) felt more secure than those who had arrived more recently (also noted by Lulle, King, et al., 2018). Some of those who felt relatively 'safe' believed that their long-term contribution to the society through work, engaging with local communities or paying taxes would guarantee them a secure position in the future. This led to a problematic assumption that Brexit would not affect them in negative ways simply because they had been in the country 'long enough'. On the other hand, research participants who had been in the UK for a relatively short time (one to five years) appeared to feel more insecure. They worried about negative impacts of Brexit, in particular that they would not fulfil criteria for permanent residency and would be forced to relocate abroad.

I've been here 10 years, I'm involved, I vote in [local] elections, I pay taxes, I work, I did study here, then I kept moving up the ladder. There's no reason why this country gets rid of people who want to achieve something here...
(Marcin, PL, 37, m, 2007)

When Brexit happens, I'll have been here for three years only. My husband will've been for five, so he'll be able to apply for permanent residency, but what about me and the rest of the family? What if they tell me that I cannot stay? What if he's able to stay with kids and I'm not? (...) It's so stressful for me. I'm worried that I'll be travelling to Poland with kids and then won't be able to return here because I won't have this document that allows you to stay permanently. (Beata, PL, 42, f, 2015)

While noticeable across the whole sample, this time-divide was more evident in the narratives of Polish participants (as illustrated by the quotes above). We believe that rather than reflecting a wider national trend, the difference in responses could be explained by the fact that the number of Poles in our study who admitted following British politics and English-language media was smaller in comparison to Finns. It is also important to consider gendered experience of Brexit here (Duda-Mikulín, 2018). Marcin moved to the UK as single man while Beata followed her husband with children - her sense of uncertainty cannot be detached from her gendered position as a woman and mother.

Overall, Finns in the study appeared to be more aware of status-related challenges that Brexit might involve regardless of how long they have been in Scotland. They were also more preoccupied with formalizing their legal status either via permanent residency or citizenship.

If you've been here for five years, you [may think you] can stay... But then you go to the passport check at the airport and how do you prove that you've been here for 15 years? (Pirjo, FIN, 45, f, 1998)

I'm a realist and this is the name of the game. (...) I did acquire permanent residency. I've done that. I filled in all 80 or so pages and got it quite easily. (...) Now, I've taken the knowledge test and little by little I'm working towards citizenship. (Matilda, FIN, 29, f, 2008)

Differences in planning for Brexit have been noted by Moreh et al. (2016) and McGhree et al. (2017) in a survey on intentions to stay in the UK among Polish, Romanian and Portuguese nationals undertaken prior to the EU referendum. Moreh et al. (2016) have argued that the overall vote to leave would have a slightly different effect on different national groups. For instance, fewer Poles declared that they would apply for permanent residency or British citizenship. In a subsequent paper, McGhree et al. (2017) have explained that Poles who had arrived to the UK recently (and might not qualify for naturalization) but would like to stay there longer are likely to apply for permanent residence. Longer-term Polish residents, on the other hand, would rather either opt for British citizenship or return to Poland.

This likelihood to secure legal status among 'new arrivals' could also be linked to the greater sense of anxiety that our participants seemed to express regardless of nationality. As we explored these anxieties, we noted that it was not the time spent in the UK as such that mobilised the sense of (in)security about legal status. Rather, it was the capacity to meet the right to remain or citizenship criteria alongside the quality of time spent in the country. In other words, participants' sense of security was derived

from the existence of legal framework imposed by the state on the one hand and their interpretation of how they had spent this time on the other.

The latter is reminiscent of the well-known rhetoric of a ‘good migrant’ (Anderson, 2015) – essentially someone who is employed full-time, healthy and has not used welfare. With a few exceptions, research participants who were unsure whether they fulfilled these requirements (e.g. because they had worked outside the UK, studied or stayed at home as carers) were more anxious about the future. This is captured by Johanna’s narrative below.

My problem is that in June I got my four years up, so five years would be up next year. But, the first six months I worked for my dad’s company in Finland and didn’t have an insurance then as nobody knew that I’d need one. I set up my own company here in April 2014, so my five years of working here will be up just a month after the actual Brexit. I cannot do much before the five years is up. (Johanna, FIN, 29, f, 2013)

What matters in this narrative is primarily the timeframe set by the state (i.e. the five-year period Johanna talks about). While the length of stay in the UK is important as it tends to allow to embed oneself within wider society (Ryan, 2018), this legislative timeframe adds an additional temporal layer marking the ability to secure the right to remain. Importantly however, this timeline is underpinned by an understanding that the time is spent in a ‘right’ way by being a ‘good migrant’ (Anderson, 2015). This is reflective of multiple and overlapping temporalities: the absolute time spent in the UK alongside the time that counts (or not) towards securing legal status and the time that is, in the end, considered by the state. We have found that the process of negotiating

uncertainty was, for the most part, a balancing act within and between these temporalities.

Conclusions

In this article, we have looked at the role of time and temporalities in migrant responses to the result of the Brexit referendum in the UK. Using the example of Finnish and Polish migrants to Scotland, we have shown that these responses change over time and that time can be used instrumentally to make sense of uncertainty about legal status and the right to remain. The article adds a new perspective to geographical debates on time in migration research by exploring the temporal dynamics of responses to profound socio-political change. It also contributes to and takes forward interdisciplinary debates on migration and Brexit by illustrating how feelings about Brexit are not only fixed *in* but also fixed *on* time.

While we argue that time is central to understanding migrant responses to Brexit, our intention is not to imply that social effects of Brexit will dilute over time. There is no doubt that migrant lives in the UK have been and will continue to be deeply affected (Devine, 2018; Rzepnikowska, 2018). Rather, we wish to illustrate how time is crucial to negotiating a profoundly disruptive event, how responses to this event are messy and fluid, and how important it is to situate them within specific timescapes (Adam, 2000). Brexit itself also has a fundamentally temporal dimension and has had different magnitude at different points in time. For instance, it has attracted immense public attention prior to and straight after the referendum in the summer of 2016, but was *relatively* less prominent at certain points in 2017 and 2018 as negotiations with the EU repeatedly came to a dead end. When the UK leaves the EU on 31 October

2019 (assuming no unexpected turn of events), we might as well see a return to more emotional narratives. Indeed, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services are preparing for another hate crime wave at that point (HMICFRS, 2018).

It is also important to keep in mind that our findings need to be positioned within wider hierarchies and/or privilege among migrant groups. We acknowledge that Brexit is likely to affect different migrant populations in different ways and recognise that, with a few exceptions, our research participants found themselves in a relatively privileged position at the time of interview (e.g. they were largely employed). Their time narratives must be seen as a reflection of this privilege: many of our participants felt *relatively* secure about their future because their personal circumstances afforded them to do so. This is in stark contrast to, for instance, EU Roma or homeless EU citizens in the UK who face multiple vulnerabilities (Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018).

Naturally, we also need to consider the location of this study in Scotland, which voted overall against Brexit as opposed to England and Wales. While not explored here, distinctiveness of Scotland as a 'welcoming' place for immigrants was articulated in interviews and often contrasted with England. Against this backdrop, and given Scotland Government's largely positive attitude towards immigration, we recognise that our informants might have produced less 'dramatic' Brexit narratives. However, in line with existing research (e.g. Davidson et al., 2018), we warn against romanticizing Scotland as unconditionally accepting of immigration. In addition, because migration remains a reserved matter, i.e. decisions about migration are taken by the UK Parliament at Westminster, the legal ramifications of Brexit for EU citizens in Scotland are the same as elsewhere in the UK. Therefore, we see knowledge

generated here as both situated in specific geographies and reflective of wider UK patterns.

Finally, we wish to stress that we recognise Brexit as a symptom of the global production of hostile environment (see Note 1). With multiple examples from elsewhere - the European refugee 'crisis', Trump administration in the United States, forced displacements in South Sudan or Myanmar just to name a few – we are convinced that understanding of how people respond to and negotiate hostile environment is a key concern for contemporary societies and social science research.

Notes

¹ We use the term 'hostile environment' as a proxy for immigration control measures embedded in everyday life. It was originally devised in 2012 by Teresa May in her capacity as the UK Home Secretary, but has been increasingly used in other national contexts.

² At the time of interviews, the term 'permanent residency' was broadly used to refer to the settled status of EU citizens in the UK.

³ All names in the article are pseudonyms to ensure participant anonymity.

⁴ Date of arrival to Scotland.

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