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## **'You get a better life here': social in/security and migration in a time of geopolitical transformations**

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## **'You get a better life here': social in/security and migration in a time of geopolitical transformations**

**Abstract:** This paper is not about Brexit and yet it is. It presents findings from a project which explored the ways in which experiences of material and emotional in/security have shaped the decision-making and choices of people who came to live in Scotland from Central and East-European over the period 2004-2014. Their stories reveal much about the ways in which apparently monumental moments of geopolitical change resonate in longer-term lived experiences of transformation. The analysis foregrounds the often mutually constitutive influence of material and emotional in/securities in people's experiences of and decisions regarding migration and settlement. It demonstrates the linkages between these and wider questions of representation and entitlement which can feed into a (lacking) sense of deserving presence. It explores the complex relationship between the past, present and future which provide rationales and justifications for sometimes difficult decisions and experiences. Based on research largely undertaken before the referendum had even been announced the papers arguments and findings resonate closely with an emerging literature on Brexit and its consequences.

**Key words:** emotional and material in/security; migration; postsocialism; deservingness; Brexit; Scotland

### **Introduction**

This paper is not about Brexit. The migration stories which inspired it were shared with us in 2014-2015, before the Brexit referendum took place, and in many cases before it had even been announced. Our research focused on the experiences of people from Central and Eastern Europe living in Scotland. We were interested in their decision-making and choices relating to migration and longer-term settlement and the ways in which these were shaped by experiences of in/security. In interviews, many of our participants spoke about their desire for a 'better', more secure life. They referred to a range of geopolitical upheavals, including post-socialist transformations, EU accession, global financial crises and austerity, which had disrupted previous securities and played an important part in decisions to migrate and evaluations of life in Scotland.

This paper is not about Brexit. It is about the material and emotional aspects of in/security experienced both prior to and following migration. It is about the ways in which these, often mutually constitutive, aspects of in/security are linked to wider issues of representation and entitlement. It is about the comparisons across time and place through which our participants explained what a 'better' life entails. It is about the longer-term processes of transformation which are sometimes obscured by a focus on immediate 'moments of rupture', or 'shocking' referendum results.

This paper is not about Brexit, and yet, all the things which it is about resonate with an emerging literature on Brexit. Scholars have emphasised the emotional and material impacts of Brexit as an 'everyday' phenomenon (Anderson and Wilson, 2017; Botterill et al., 2018). Studies have shown that Brexit is part of a much longer continuum of past inequalities and hostilities, discourses of undeservingness and welfare bordering practices (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019; Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2018). The need to understand Brexit as an event which is part of the present has been placed side by side with an imperative to understand Brexit as a process intimately linked with experiences,

imaginaries and fears of the past and the future (Anderson and Wilson, 2017; Botterill et al. 2018). By exploring experiences of other geopolitical transformations and their relationship to migration and settlement in similar terms, I hope that this paper, which is not about Brexit, nonetheless has something to add to a special issue which is.

### Theoretical frameworks: social in/security and critical perspectives on postsocialism

This paper draws on two apparently unrelated conceptual frameworks: anthropological theories of social security and interdisciplinary critical perspectives on postsocialism. Both frameworks have been developed from rich empirical insight into the relationship between micro level practices, relationships and experiences and macro level structures, transformations and their consequences. Anthropological theorisations of 'social security' provide a holistic framework for understanding the ways in which people deal with everyday risks and insecurities, including those produced by processes of geopolitical transformation and the social and economic challenges that accompany them. Critical perspectives on postsocialism offer a conceptual framework for understanding the complex ways in which people experience and respond to wider processes of transformation through day-to-day practices, interactions and processes of meaning-making (Hann, 2002; Horschelmann and Stenning, 2008; Flynn and Oldfield, 2008). Taken together, these complementary frameworks are helpful in analysing the everyday impacts of geopolitical transformations, their influence on migration decisions and experiences of settlement.

With a focus on everyday practices and relationships, the social security framework interrogates the material and emotional resources, formal and informal structures and state and non-state institutions which people draw on to make themselves socially, economically, personally and culturally secure (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 2000; Thelen and Read, 2007). This framework provides space for recognition of 'non-material' dimensions linked to questions of trust, care, feelings of group belonging and having a purpose or place in the world (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 2000: 7; Thelen and Read, 2007). Analysis of the non-material dimensions of social in/security has been further developed by scholars exploring the impacts of and responses to post-socialist transformations. Trust, care and emotion as important aspects of formal and institutional encounters and practices, as well as private, informal relationships or interactions have been found to have significant social security effects (Haukanes, 2007; Caldwell, 2007). The relationship between shifting ideologies, everyday practices and lived experiences has also been highlighted. Studies have noted the existential insecurities which can result from rapid social and political change and a consequent loss of entitlements, sense of purpose and respect both in the present, and in relation to the past (Thelen, 2007; Kay, 2012).

As noted above, this resonates with a growing scholarly focus on the emotional as well as material aspects of Brexit as both event and process (Anderson and Wilson, 2017). It also points to the role of social in/exclusion, including underpinning forms of representation, in determining whether and how the needs of particular social categories are met (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 2000:11). Shifting discourses and understandings of deservingness, entitlement and contribution underpin material changes to pre-existing social rights, whether for women as mothers and workers after state socialism (Haney, 1999) or for migrants in the face of austerity, welfare bordering, hostile environment and Brexit (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019; Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2019). This combination of discursive and material aspects of in/exclusion has both material and emotional consequences: as well as influencing material inequalities through the allocation and (re)distribution of resources (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 2000) it may impact

on a more subjective sense of belonging and a feeling that one's experiences and needs are (not) recognised (McKenna, 2018; Stella et al., 2017).

As critical scholars of postsocialism have long argued, processes of geopolitical transformation where these entail the 'unmaking of previous ways of life' (Humphrey, 2002: xx) can be experienced simultaneously as a source of material and emotional insecurity: material consequences of unemployment, poverty and removal of state support are accompanied by feelings of loss, betrayal, anxiety and longing (Pine, 1998; Berdahl, 2010). Recent empirical studies of social in/security show these aspects to be closely intertwined and indeed mutually constitutive. Thus, whilst a search for material security may in some cases result in emotional insecurities (Sime, 2018), emotional and material in/securities can also be mutually reinforcing, particularly where a longer temporal perspective is brought into view. A sense of calm, feelings of confidence and trust in both the present and future can result from, but may also provide preconditions for, improved material circumstances, or vice versa, the absence of one can result in a lack of the other (Kay and Trevena, 2018, Stella et al. 2017).

The relationship between past, future and present is the final aspect of these frameworks which I want to highlight before moving on to a more empirical discussion. From early critiques of 'transitology' through to later discussions about the critical power of studying postsocialism, scholars have called for more historically aware analysis which, rather than focusing on a moment of rupture, recognises protracted and complex processes of continuity and change, and values the role of the past and future in the present (Hann 2000; Flynn and Oldfield 2008). Studies of postsocialist nostalgia have shown that contestations of shared histories act as a lens through which to understand (re)evaluations of the present (Berdahl, 2010; Todorova and Gille, 2010). Thus, reminiscences about the past as more secure, as a time when people were friendlier or when life had more meaning, when states were more reliable or had more control, whether in reference to the era of state socialism or to Britain's 'heroic' history, may have more to say about the discontents of the present than they do of the realities of those pasts (Pasięka 2012; O'Toole 2018). Whilst some studies of postsocialist nostalgia have suggested this is more about mourning a past that is gone forever than about political revanchism or an attempt to alter the present (Creed 2010), the politics of Brexit may suggest something more potent. Social security is also understood to bring together past, present and future, such that, 'both repetitive unfulfilled promises in the past and expectations of profound change in the future may undermine the sense of security, even though at present the situation may be quite satisfactory' (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2000: 17). Whilst others grapple with the relationship between past, future and present in understanding Brexit and its consequences (Anderson and Wilson, 2017; Botterill et al. 2018), in the final empirical section of this paper I explore the ways in which notions of 'normality' and a sense of security are constructed through, sometimes nostalgic, comparisons across time and place.

## Research and Methods

This article is based on research material from a larger study 'Experiences of Social Security and Prospects for Long Term Settlement in Scotland amongst Migrants from Central Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union' (SSAMIS)<sup>1</sup>. The research team undertook 207 qualitative interviews between

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the SSAMIS project team: Moya Flynn and Paulina Trevena (University of Glasgow); Sergei Shubin, Holly Porteous and Claire Needler (Swansea University). Also, to Gintare Venzlauskaitė for assistance with the Glasgow fieldwork and interviewing in Lithuanian. This work was supported by the UK Economic and

June 2014 and December 2015 with East Europeans living in both urban and rural Scotland: Glasgow and Aberdeen cities, five towns and several villages and hamlets in Aberdeenshire and Angus. All participants had been living in Scotland for at least a year at the time of interview. Most had arrived following the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2008, and some had been living in Scotland for many years, although none for more than a decade. The majority of participants were from Poland (40%), Latvia (20%) and Lithuania (13.5%), with smaller numbers from other EU countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia) and from non-EU countries of the former Soviet Union (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine).

Participants were contacted mainly through their places of work, through ESOL classes, at sites of service provision and through snowballing techniques. Issues of trust and a degree of research fatigue made recruitment tricky and the team of fieldworkers had to build relationships through organisations, by participating in language classes and at places of employment and through the gradual development of a network of contacts in the different research locations. The language skills of the researchers were crucial to this process. In Angus interviews were conducted by a bilingual Polish-English speaker; in Glasgow by a bilingual Polish-English speaker and a bilingual Lithuanian-English speaker; in Aberdeen interviews were conducted by a bilingual Hungarian-English speaker; in Aberdeenshire by a fluent Russian speaker<sup>2</sup>. The majority of the interviews were carried out in the migrants' native (or second) language. Where participants preferred, or if the researcher could not speak the language of the interviewee, interviews were conducted in English. All interviews were fully transcribed, and translated into English, then analysed using NVivo 10 software. Citations from interviews which were conducted in English are verbatim and reflect the differing levels of fluency amongst participants. Citations from interviews conducted in the interviewee's native language have been translated to retain the fluency of their speech in their native language. All interview participants are referred to by a pseudonym and only the region or larger city where they lived is indicated to help protect anonymity, especially for those living in smaller, more rural, locations.

### Geopolitical change and the production of insecurity

Many of our participants described a clear and sometimes very explicit link between moments of geopolitical change and their decisions to migrate, some of which had been made very quickly, and often counter to previous intentions. Ludis, for example explained how the financial crisis of 2008 led him to change his mind over the space of a few months from a definite decision not to join his mother in Scotland, to a position where he had bought a one-way ticket.

The first time I came to [this town] it was end of March 2008 and I just came to visit my mum for a week or ten days. When I saw how she is living here I said 'no, I will never come down. ... I will be in Latvia, in my hometown forever'. And then, this changed with the crisis in 2008: in a couple of months I lost about 20 per cent of my customers. Then I decided, 'okay, I will have to ... I need to make some changes in my life.' And that's why I decided to move here, to [this town], without any work. I just lived in accommodation, stayed with my mum for some time - that was my first experience coming here. And in July 2008 I had a one-

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Social Research Council (November 2013-November 2018, ESRC ref: ES/J007374/1). The underlying data is available from the UK data archive DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN852584>.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian participants living in Aberdeenshire are native Russian speakers.

way ticket.

(Ludis, Latvia, 30 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

Nonetheless, apparently sudden moments of change were often set within much longer processes of transformation. The collapse of the USSR, accession to the EU and the global economic crises of the early 2000s are revealed in Alexei's story as part of a continuum, not from the perspective of macro-economic or political analyses, but in the experiences and responses of those who lived through them. Viewed in this way migration appears less of a spontaneous or unplanned response and more as a last resort, turned to once people have tried repeatedly to (re)build their lives in situ:

When we joined the European Union, many places closed, plants and factories were all closed. ... Our entire economy crashed. ... I would have never gone to work to Norway or abroad for that matter. When it all collapsed, people started moving to other places. I then worked in Norway and everything was good. Then there was another world economic meltdown. ... [After the collapse of the USSR] it was bad. We lived poorly for about fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union until everything sort of worked out. Then we lived okay for about six or seven years: the enterprises were on the rise, everything was great. The economy was recovering and then the EU happened. And it was over. Everything collapsed, everyone's hopes, everything.

(Alexei, Latvia, 47 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

Katya also described her decision to leave Lithuania as simultaneously both a very sudden response to global economic crisis and as part of a longer and repetitive experience of 'starting again from zero':

I had a wonderful job, I loved my job ... Full-time, amazing salary, a lot of travel. I used to travel in Europe. I could feed my whole family. But the 'crisis' – in inverted commas, we say like that – our people started to fight, we had a really big group of people – 20 co-workers, but it was reduced. Salaries were strictly divided, reduced. That's why I had two jobs – during the day I was an office worker with legal advice, and at night I was a nightclub worker. I managed to do that for two months, but later I just gave up ... So I just gave two weeks' notice ... I grabbed my luggage and I was here in the UK. And I started my life for the second time from zero, because my life in [this town], it's the third time I've started from nothing.

(Katya, Lithuania, 32 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

Katya spoke eloquently of her life prior to 'the crisis' as both materially and emotionally secure: she had a job which she loved, good relationships with co-workers, the ability to feed her family. In her narrative it is the disruptions to both these dimensions of security and the relationship between them which prompted her to leave. A deeper interrogation of the relationship between the material and the emotional can help us to consider how disruptions to interpersonal relations and associated emotional securities might prompt decisions to move.

### Material and emotional aspects of in/security

Participants descriptions of the increasingly difficult and insecure situation in their home countries reveal interconnected material and emotional in/securities rooted in interpersonal relationships and encounters. The souring of relationships was a consistent thread in many participants' discussions of

what had changed as a result of wider transformations and part of what made them decide to leave. The sense that people had become 'angry', 'bitter' or 'distrustful' was a common theme.

Before we joined the European Union and when we were still the USSR ... I liked it more ... Firstly people were more straightforward. You could trust them more, we were more sociable. Your job was forever. Yes, we didn't have all the same shops as now, I forgot about that, but living conditions were a lot better. People were somehow easier to talk to and showed each other respect when they spoke to each other; people were friendly. Now, it's changed: people have become very ill-natured and jealous. There's no work, and because of that a person loses their ... they only think about themselves. How to survive, how to get through life, how to earn money, how to pay for their flat, how to raise their children ... It's changed so much: the quality of life has just become about existing, it's not really about living normally.  
(Svetlana, Latvia, 44 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

Like Svetlana, many participants related this loss of positive or supportive social relations directly to the loss of the material security and stability. Such reminiscences of the past may or may not be factually accurate in their assertions that people were more straightforward, trustworthy or sociable during the period of state socialism. What matters here is that through such references to the past people make sense of their discontent with the present (Berdahl, 2010; Todorova and Gille, 2010) and of their decisions to move.

A convergence of material and emotional insecurities was also reflected in Boguslawa's decision to leave Poland for a 'new life', joining her husband in a small town in Angus. Boguslawa had been working in a city hospital and explained that the consequences of privatisation, including restructuring, staff cuts and increased managerialism, set against a background of wider social malaise, made her job unbearable:

There was not enough time to do anything. So we were all nervous and stressed. And if you're stressed, work doesn't go well either. It came to this that we were being threatened with law suits all the time because ... everyone is so stressed that, everyone is running around and sees everyone else as their enemy ... So all the time I could feel this fear that at some point I'll forget to make a note of something, I'll forget to write something down ... Being so tired I could've easily overlooked something. So this fear, and the job would be tiring me out mentally. I'd had enough. And I couldn't see things improving in any way in terms of work although I wasn't in threat of redundancy ... I was feeling burnt out. I started looking for something new. And I started talking to my husband about coming here, for me to come here and start a new life.  
(Boguslawa, Poland, 48 years-old, Angus)

For Boguslawa a gradual erosion of confidence in the future undermines emotional security in the present, regardless of material circumstances (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 2000: 17). Boguslawa's material circumstances had not in fact changed at the point of her decision to leave, but she feared that they would and found the emotional and mental strains unbearable. Significantly, she already had a potential base in Scotland with her husband and so saw an opportunity to develop material and emotional securities there, again something she projected into the future in order to make and justify a decision in the present. In fact, her move demanded a shift from professional, skilled employment as a laboratory technician, to low paid work on a farm, but she offset this against an expectation of greater stability and emotional security from reuniting with her husband.

### Entitlement, deservingness and existential in/security

When asked specifically to reflect on their sense of security and whether this had changed since moving to Scotland, many participants spoke about their experiences of welfare services, employers or 'the state' in a more abstract sense. As well as providing material securities, the practices and provisions of such formal institutions were often described as bringing a sense of emotional and existential security often expressed in terms of being seen, cared about or respected, and having a 'deserving presence' (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019: 199) in society.

Elizabete, a single mother who had moved to a small town in Angus from Latvia with her mother and teenage daughter, spoke of the social support she received:

In Scotland it's probably greater support. It's like even with housing office. In Latvia no one doesn't care how much you earn and how much you need spend on housing and ... Health as well because like my mum and my daughter have free healthcare, and my mum have free dentist also. From that side it's definitely ... You feel more human ... And even child benefit it's definitely, it's like ... more proper what child needs, how in Latvia it's ... You can't buy even milk for a month for that money.

(Elizabete, Latvia, 39 years old, Angus)

Whilst this support clearly had significant material consequences for Elizabete and her family, she also drew attention to emotional and existential aspects of security. In Scotland she felt that public and state institutions 'cared' about her needs and responded to them more adequately. As a result, she described feeling 'more human'.

Bozena had left Poland in her late 40s having experienced gender and age discrimination when seeking employment following a period of ill health. The existential as well as material insecurities she recounted stemmed both from her individual experience of ill health and unemployment and from a wider sense of belonging to a social category, older women in this case, which was represented as worthless and undeserving. This combination meant that she faced risks and challenges which she had not been able to resolve through her efforts alone and that she had felt unable to rely on the support she required from external institutions. In contrast, she described a highly personalised sense of security and protection from the state in Scotland:

The state won't let anybody do me harm [laughs]. Even with benefits, from what I read, I don't claim any, but when I was reading about them there were many such points 'You are entitled to this and that benefit if this and this and this ... you're 50 and ...' [laughs]. So I was laughing that I've reached this privileged age. In Poland this is an age when they're ready to get rid of you ... That's one of the reasons why I'm here.

(Bozena, Poland, 56 years old, Angus)

Unlike Elizabete, Bozena was at pains to point out that she did not claim anything, and so did not benefit materially from this relationship with the state. Such denials of dependency are part of a common narrative revealed in other studies of welfare bordering, hostile environments and Brexit and show migrants' awareness that their entitlements are circumscribed and their 'deserving presence' in the UK far from secure (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019: 199; Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2019). Nonetheless, at the time of her interview in 2014, Bozena still described a sense of recognition and entitlement which was in stark contrast to her feeling that 'In Poland ... they're ready to get rid of you'.

### In/security constructed through comparisons across both time and place

Not surprisingly, given the ways in which the insecurities of life in their countries of origin were discussed, participants frequently explained the 'better', more secure, or more 'normal' life they sought in Scotland by reference to a contrasting set of material and emotional experiences: the ability to provide a modest but stable standard of living for their families, a sense of calm, or at least the absence of overwhelming stress, and an experience of positive, albeit superficial, social interactions in public settings. Reflecting on his reasons for moving to, and deciding to stay in Scotland, Isaak explained:

One, there were more jobs. Another [reason] is that there is more value. You get a better life here. Friendly people. In Poland people are sometimes nasty: everyone is scared someone will steal their job. This is a difficult life ... too much stress, didn't even let me think about having a normal life. If you have too much stress, you think about problems, and it goes up and up.

(Isaak, Poland, 28 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

Such comparisons emerged over time, and as Lidija explained, sometimes only became apparent once a more 'normal' life had been established. In retrospect she explains her life in Latvia seems to have been 'terrible' but she did not experience it as such at the time.

I feel here maybe more calm because I don't have the stress about money. The stress about my family. When we live in my country my boyfriend works in two jobs and one at home ... three jobs ... and he don't have a free time for us ... In Latvia my life was more stressful in compared to life here. And now I can improve myself and it is good. I can maybe, at home, I can do some more things for my family ... Because in my country I don't have time for that. Because I come from work, quickly, quickly cooking and then go sleep. It was terrible [laughs]. After one month after I lived here, my life in Latvia wasn't so terrible but now ...[laughs] it was terrible. Yes.

(Lidija, Latvia, 38 years-old, Aberdeen)

In Lidija's explanation of her emerging experience of life in Scotland, we see how a sense of security is constructed and comparisons are drawn over time. Time and place might be brought together in new constellations through such comparisons. For example, some participants explained the 'security' they experienced in Scotland as similar to, or even the same as that which they remembered having existed under state socialism.

What I found about Scotland and living in the UK: it's living the way we were before in the USSR. Before, we had socialism, but it collapsed ... Now in Latvia there is no way to manage it. We don't have money, nobody ... how do people survive? Before, the society was very like being here ... There was support for people.

(Lena, Russia, 42 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

At issue here is not so much whether the actual workings of the economic or political systems are the same, clearly they are not, but that the consequences for day-to-day lives, the securities which people are able to construct are experienced somehow as similar. Artjoms explained that what had mattered in the past was how people lived, how they felt and significantly, that they 'had a future'.

I can tell you a lot about socialism. How people felt, how they lived. It wasn't bad. It was different, we had social protection of a really high level for ordinary people. On that level ...

and every person who worked had a future. There was a future.  
(Artjoms, Latvia, 56 years-old, Aberdeenshire)

Artjoms refers to the future and its significance for the security of life in the present reminding us again of the complex and interconnected temporalities that inform the present. He also draws attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between material and emotional or existential in/securities: how people felt, how they lived and their faith in the future are intimately connected.

### Conclusions

In the stories presented here, our participants were looking back on decisions to leave their countries of origin and start a new, and they hoped 'better' life in Scotland. For many, neither these decisions nor their subsequent experiences of migration and settlement had been easy and their narratives include a degree of post hoc justification and rationalisation. State support in Scotland may well not be as generous as Elizabete implies, the state may care much less for Bozena than she imagines and certainly many participants' stories of everyday encounters in Scotland did not reflect the calmness, or friendliness that Isaak and Lidija long for. Nonetheless, their narratives and the justifications and explanations they provide show clearly the intimate connections between macro level transformations and micro level practices, experiences and decisions which critical perspectives on postsocialism and anthropological theories of social security have long highlighted. Our participants consistently draw attention to the salience of material and emotional securities for everyday lives and the extent to which these are disrupted by wider processes of political, social and economic transformation. This retrospective view is useful in understanding how, from a different temporal perspective, European citizens living in the UK may (re)consider their futures in the face of the uncertainties and upheavals of Brexit. As both an event and a longer and more complex process (Anderson and Wilson, 2017) Brexit brings significant change not only to EU citizens' relationships with formal institutions of the British state but also within everyday encounters affecting aspects of housing, employment, health care and citizenship, as well as feelings of belonging, exposure to hostility and violence, a sense of social value and deserving presence (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019).

Through their narratives our participants demonstrated that material and emotional in/securities are closely connected and mutually constitutive. Soured relationships, lost solidarities and feelings of worthlessness arose as a result of material insecurities such as uncertain employment, insufficient welfare and rising costs of living. However, the relationship was not always one of straightforward cause and effect: the anticipation of material insecurity produced anxieties and strained relationships, and these in turn exacerbated the consequences of material change. Issues of representation and entitlement impacted both on access to resources and support and on feelings of belonging and social recognition. Emotional and existential insecurities were referred to at least as often as material considerations in explaining what had prompted decisions to migrate and/or encouraged longer-term settlement in Scotland. Certainly, our participants stories showed that migration is by no means an easy decision or experience, and this will be just as true for those individuals and families considering or embarking on a return to their countries of origin as a response to Brexit. Material and emotional upheavals in situ must always be weighed against the uncertainties of a (new) move. However, sustained and repeated experiences of material insecurity, lost or unreliable entitlements to support and contingent feelings of lacking respect and dignity can all be important factors in a decision to leave. There is already plenty of rich empirical evidence of the ways in which Brexit as a culmination of longer-standing discourses and policy process is

impacting on migrant lives and experiences in similar ways (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019; Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2019).

Scholarship on Brexit has drawn attention to its complex temporalities as both process and event (Anderson and Wilson, 2017). A mythologised and 'glorious' past of British sovereignty, as well as 'heroic failure' (O'Toole, 2018), alongside 'the making present of diverse futures' (Anderson and Wilson, 2017: 293) are powerful components in both the outcome of the referendum itself and the shifting policies, rhetoric and everyday encounters which both preceded and proceeded from it (Burrell and Schweyher, 2019). Far from being over, or simply yet to come, the past and the future were similarly constantly alive in the experiences and explanations of the present which our participants shared. (Re)imagined and multiple-layered pasts from their countries of origin were brought into new alignments with present experiences and hopes for the future in Scotland. The geopolitical transformations which had prompted their decisions to migrate were understood as having happened in the past, but also as having disrupted an earlier past, aspects of which some sought to recreate or felt they had rediscovered in Scotland. Their narratives showed the lengthy roots and consequences of such transformations and their continued relevance for new presents and futures. The collapse of state socialist regimes, economic crises, decisions to join or to leave a transnational body such as the EU may give the 'impression of a major event' (Anderson and Wilson, 2017: 292) and a historic moment of rupture on a grand scale. The transformations they bring to people's lives and the emotional and material in/securities which accompany these can be both shocking and mundane, may be immediate and obvious or more subtle and longer term, but they are likely to resonate for many decades to come.

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