

# Introduction: Migrant Experiences of Emotional and Material (In)Security: Post-Socialist Perspectives

How do migrants negotiate risk and manage both the material and emotional challenges and opportunities which moving to a new place brings? What is the everyday relationship between security and insecurity in lived experiences of migration? What can critical perspectives on post-socialism teach us about the practices, relationships and experiences which migrants from Central and East European countries mobilise in seeking to make themselves and their families more secure? Can migration itself be seen as a ‘social security practice’ entailing both material and emotional dimensions and, if so, with which implications for migrants as individuals, families and identity-based groups? These are some of the questions which this special issue seeks to address.<sup>1</sup>

Collectively, the articles included in this special issue draw on anthropological theorisations of social security, which first emerged out of studies and debates regarding developing countries in the global South (Ahmad, Drèze, Hills and Sen 1991; Lelieveld 1994; Midgley 1984; von Benda-Beckmann, von Benda-Beckmann, Casiño, Hirtz, Woodman and Zacher 1988). This analytical framework has subsequently been further developed in relation to post-socialist contexts and more explicitly linked to aspects of care and emotional dimensions of security, in large part through the work of Rosie Read and Tatjana Thelen (2007). This framework is used in each of the articles published in this special issue as a way of exploring rich empirical data reflecting a range of diverse but interconnected issues in the experiences of migrants from the post-socialist region who have moved to and settled in Western European countries. The contributions here focus primarily on Scotland as a destination country, with additional insights from Finland. In so doing, the articles also synthesise this focus of analysis with insights from other wider literatures relating, for example, to family, childhood, sexuality and ‘normality’, media representation and health and care.

Moreover, the special issue further develops the analytical application of ‘social security’ with a deliberate focus on querying binaries and fixed categories. We intentionally use the term (in)security to show how the relationship between security and insecurity is more complex than a simple either/or. In so doing, we hope also to critique fixed approaches to other related categories of analysis which emerge from and cut across the articles – for example, here/there, past/present/future, private/public and visibility/invisibility. This emphasis on composite categories draws inspiration from earlier work which pointed to the dynamic and processual nature of social security (Read and Thelen 2007: 12). The work problematised ideas about security as absolute or universally desirable, showing instead that it can only ever be partial and relative (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2000: 7). Nonetheless, these earlier contributions did not develop such a strong focus on exploring the everyday relationship between security and insecurity themselves. Indeed, at this empirical level, security and insecurity have continued largely to be treated as clearly delineated categories. Through use of the composite term (in)security, then, we seek to highlight the connectedness between these apparent poles, showing how they constantly co-exist and exploring their nuanced emotional and material dimensions.

Our introduction begins with an overview of the geographical context for the individual articles, exploring the nature of migration from post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia to Scotland and Finland, the specifics of the migration environment existing in these places and the focus of academic research to date. We then move on to explore in greater detail the original theoretical and empirical contribution of the special issue as a whole, mainly through its use of the concept of (in)security. We explore the origins of the concept and highlight the importance of considering the emotional dimensions of (in)security, its temporal aspects and the linkages between these and critical understandings of ‘post-socialism’. Throughout this discussion we show how the articles in this special issue draw on and further contribute to the development of this theoretical approach for understanding the different aspects of the experiences of migration and settlement.

### **Scotland and Finland as countries of destination and settlement**

Migrant experiences and negotiations of (in)security, as well as drawing on previous and contemporary resources, relationships and frames of reference in their countries of origin, are certainly influenced by the social, economic and political environment of their countries of destination. Five of the six articles included in this special issue focus on Scotland as a country of destination and settlement and it is here that we begin our discussion. Traditionally a country of emigration, Scotland has seen a growing number of migrants arriving over the last 20–30 years. Many of these ‘new’ migrants have come from the post-socialist region, including Central and East European countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007 (Scottish Government 2016). The vast majority have come to Scotland to find work and to improve their economic situation (Kyambi, Kay, Boswell, Taggart and Porteous 2018: 37) and sometimes also to join family members already living and working in the country.

As a nation with some devolved powers but without full independence from the United Kingdom, Scotland presents a distinctive context as a country of destination and settlement. As noted above, its experience as a country of settlement is relatively new. As a result, whilst the overall number of migrants and the level of ethnic and cultural diversity within Scotland are lower than in many parts of the UK, the proportion of newer European migrants arriving since 2004 has been higher (Hudson and Aiton 2016). Scotland is also distinctive within the UK in terms of political rhetoric and response. Migration is not a devolved matter and responsibility for policy-making and agenda-setting lie with the UK government. Nonetheless, the dominant attitude of the Scottish Government and across the Scottish political spectrum towards these increased levels of migration has tended to be positive. This is due to the fact that migration is seen to encourage demographic stability and to facilitate short- and medium-term economic development (Kyambi *et al.* 2018; Scottish Government 2016, 2017). Furthermore, studies have shown that there is less public opposition to immigration compared to other parts of the UK (Blinder 2014: 2) although ‘pockets of hostility’ are still found to exist (McCollum, Tindal and Findlay 2014: 82).

In terms of existing research on the movements of people from CEE and FSU to the UK, however, much greater attention has been paid to migration occurring to regions of England (Drinkwater and Garapich 2015; Markova and Black 2007; Ryan 2011; White 2011). This research has also tended to focus on larger migration flows from EU accession states, in particular on the movements occurring from Poland. There has, nonetheless, been a growing body of research which has explored the specific features of the Scottish experience, including a number of policy-oriented and/or locally based studies (Boyes 2006; de Lima, Chaudhry, Whelton and Arshad 2007; Jentsch 2007; Kyambi *et al.* 2018). Furthermore, there is a burgeoning literature which is more theorised, empirically grounded and longitudinal and which explores a number of key themes, including the intricacies and complexities of the processes of migration and settlement, the role played by families and children and the importance of place and how this impacts upon the experience of settlement and the decision to stay long-term (Flynn and Kay 2017; Moskal 2011; Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee 2017; Trevena, McGhee and Heath 2013). The articles in this special issue add both depth and scope to this growing body of research. They explore

experiences of migration to different regions within Scotland from across a wide range of post-socialist migrants, drawing out both similarities and diversities within and across migrant groups and without prioritising ethnicity or nationality as ‘categories’ of comparison. For example, individual articles focus upon Czech- and Slovak-speakers (Guma 2018), Russians and Russian-speaking migrants (McKenna 2018) and also mixed CEE migrant communities (Kay and Trevena 2018; Sime 2018; Stella, Flynn and Gawlewicz 2018), in locations as diverse as the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen and the rural locations of Angus and Aberdeenshire.

The sixth paper in this special issue (Sotkasiira 2018) discusses the experiences of Russian migrants to Finland. We therefore continue here with some insights into that context, drawing comparisons as appropriate to Scotland. Like Scotland, Finland has traditionally been a country of emigration. However, since the 1990s, the numbers of people arriving in the country has increased rapidly. One of the main constituents of this migrant population is people moving from post-socialist Central and Eastern European countries and from countries of the former Soviet Union. Finland’s geographical position and historical linkages with the Russian Empire, as well as more recent processes of accession to the European Union of some Central and Eastern European countries – notably the Baltic States – shape this migration rather differently from that experienced in Scotland. As Martikainen (2013: 5) notes, in 2010, people from post-socialist countries made up 41 per cent of all foreign-born citizens in Finland. Whilst, in Scotland, Polish is now the most commonly spoken foreign language (Scotland’s Census 2011), the largest group of foreign-language speakers in Finland is native Russian-speakers and the second largest, Estonian-speakers (Statistics Finland 2016). Many of the Russian-speakers are Ingrian returnees, descendants of Finnish settlers who moved to Ingria (now Leningrad oblast’, Russia) in the seventeenth century and others of Finnish origin who have been able to return to Finland within the remit of a specific resettlement programme since the collapse of the USSR in 1991 (Finnish Immigration Service 2017). It is significant that the majority of the migration taking place to Finland is family related – although this is not a strong focus of public and political discourse, which tends to emphasise the arrival of asylum-seekers and refugees, even though these numbers in fact remain quite small (Finnish Immigration Service 2015).

Approximately 30 per cent of immigrants entering Finland are from other European Union member-states. Nevertheless, there is little research dedicated to intra-EU migration, except that from the Baltic States. There is a growing body of research on migration from Russia and the Baltic Sea region, primarily Estonia. This is at least partly explained, as noted above, by the fact that the country’s migration profile is characterised by a relatively large group of immigrants from Russia and Estonia. Research on this particular migrant community has focused on a number of key themes: well-being, adaptation and integration amongst those from the former Soviet Union, Russia and Estonia (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000; Liebkind, Manmila, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Jaakkola, Kyntäjä and Reuter 2004), ethnic and linguistic identification processes of Russian-speakers (Davydova 2009; Iskanius 2006) and transnational care which takes place in the Finnish-Russian context (Davydova and Pöllänen 2011; Pöllänen 2013). In this special issue, Sotkasiira (2018) makes an original contribution to this growing body of research by exploring the relationship between social (in)security and media use amongst Russian-speakers living in Finland.

## **Developing social (in)security as an analytical lens for understanding migration**

### *Anthropological theorisations of social security*

As noted above, anthropological theorisations of social security developed initially through a critique of debates around developing countries in the 1970s and 1980s and drew attention to the shortcomings of assumptions about social security as being linked only to state provision and formal institutions (Ahmad *et al.* 1991;

Midgeley 1984; von Benda-Beckmann *et al.* 1988). Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann argued for the need to explore social security in more complex and holistic ways, bringing in the role of informal institutions, relationships and practices in order to understand better how people deal with insecurity and mitigate risk. However, they acknowledged that this could lead to an unhelpfully nebulous catch-all category. They therefore defined social security as relating to needs which are not simply considered a matter for individuals to deal with themselves but as matters of responsibility for larger groups and categories of people, socio-political institutions etc. (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2000: 8). This focus on the ‘social’ aspect of social security is complemented by concepts such as ‘well-being’ (de Lima 2017; Lulle and King 2016) or ‘normality’ (Rabikowska 2010) which have been used more widely in migration studies. Here there has been rather more focus on the experiences of individuals as well as on considering the ways in which these are influenced by wider social, cultural, political and institutional contexts. In this special issue, we also focus in many ways on individualised experiences of social (in)security amongst participants in the various studies presented, whilst also exploring how such experiences and practices emerge out of more collective endeavours, be that through relationships with kin and friends (Guma 2018; Kay and Trevena 2018; McKenna 2018; Sime 2018; Stella *et al.* 2018), through interactions with more formal institutions (Guma 2018; McKenna 2018; Sotkasiira 2018; Stella *et al.* 2018), or through the ways in which people are treated as part of a particular social category (McKenna 2018; Sotkasiira 2018; Stella *et al.* 2018).

As well as highlighting the complexities of social security, and acknowledging both its material and non-material dimensions – which we explore in more detail in the following section – von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann (2000) have argued that social security is actively produced and negotiated through ‘social security arrangements’ involving a wide range of actors and institutions, both formal and informal. Importantly, they stressed that such arrangements are not limited to those institutions primarily designated as having a ‘social security’ function and emphasised the need to focus on underlying relationships, practices and experiences, rather than prioritising an institutional approach (2000: 13). These challenges to previously dominant theories of welfare, perceived as services and entitlements delivered to vulnerable groups via the formal institutions of (mainly) the state, resulted in a range of studies exploring the role of formal and informal organisations and institutions, and their intersections with social networks and other more personal and private relationships (Caldwell 2007; Kay 2011). The articles in this special issue continue this exploration of intersecting formal and informal arrangements and practices – for example in Guma’s (2018) contribution where the ‘potentialities of care’ experienced by Slovak-speaking migrants in Glasgow are shown to draw upon both interpersonal (and transnational) relationships and connections and the formal provisions of health and social care services (Guma 2018). Other contributions by McKenna (2018) and Sotkasiira (2018) take further the invitation to explore the role of actors and institutions not formally designated as having a ‘social security’ function by considering, for example, the role of the media and particularly the impacts of representations of migrants and of their home countries on emotional and existential aspects of social (in)security.

Moving beyond an interest in institutions – whether formal or informal – a focus on practices, relationships and experiences also allows us to look at migration itself as a social security practice and to explore the contradictions, ambiguities and interpersonal, temporal or contextual dimensions that this entails. Here, the special issue builds upon earlier studies which viewed migration as a means of coupling local networks to wider support systems but which focused more particularly on the, mainly material, implications of this for local social-security mechanisms in the places and amongst the people whom migrants left behind (Brouwer 2000; Lelieveld 2000), or for the collective security of migrant/host communities in their destinations (Moore 2000; van Walsum 2000). The articles presented here look in greater depth at the implications of migration as a social security practice for migrants themselves, as individuals, families and identity-based groups and in relation to both material and emotional dimensions of (in)security. Contributions by Sime (2018) and by Kay and Trevena

(2018), for example, explore the ways in which different aspects of material and emotional (in)security develop, fluctuating over time and through interpersonal negotiations regarding both migration and longer-term settlement within migrant families. Meanwhile contributions by McKenna (2018) and Stella *et al.* (2018) explore the ways in which (in)securities produced through migration practices intersect with other aspects of migrant identity, be that nationality (McKenna 2018) or sexuality (Stella *et al.* 2018).

### *The importance of emotional dimensions of (in)security*

As the concept of social security has developed over time, increasing emphasis has been placed on the need to explore the emotional dimensions of (in)security and their relationship to more material aspects. Initial conceptualisations of social security provided space for recognition of its ‘non-material’ dimensions, linking these to questions of trust and notions of ‘existential security’ associated with a feeling of group belonging and having a purpose or place in the world (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2000: 7). However, less attention was paid in earlier work to developing this part of the concept; both empirical and theoretical contributions tended to focus on challenging state/non-state boundaries whilst still prioritising the structural and material aspects of social security involved (Read and Thelen 2007: 6). In seeking to redress this balance, Read and Thelen (2007) argued for an alignment of understandings of social security with feminist perspectives on care, in order to ensure that ‘non-material’ aspects were not treated as secondary and that the significance of such aspects found in people’s narratives and lived experiences was given sufficient analytical consideration and conceptual recognition.

In so doing, they also aligned the concept more closely with important debates which emerged at a similar time in the study of ‘post-socialism’. Here authors emphasised the importance of studying closely and seeking better to understand everyday lived experiences at the micro level in order to understand and unpick the trajectories, consequences and contradictions, both material and emotional, of macro-level economic, political and social transformations (Hann, Humphrey and Verdery 2000). It was argued that more nuanced and thoroughly analysed understandings were needed of the ways in which people, both as individuals and as part of wider social groupings, responded to and managed such transformations through day-to-day practices, interactions and, importantly, processes of meaning-making (Bridger and Pine 1998; Hann *et al.* 2000: 4; Horschelmann and Stenning 2008: 340). Taking these debates in something of a new direction through their focus on experiences of social security within post-socialist contexts, Read and Thelen brought together a range of empirical studies exploring emotional dimensions of both social security and care. These continued to highlight the complex webs of actors, organisations and agencies involved, ranging from international charities (Caldwell 2007), formal and informal organisations and networks (Kay 2007; Thelen 2007) to mixed social and institutional settings (Haukanes 2007). In this way an association of emotional security and care primarily with interpersonal relationships in the private sphere and in more informal settings, was challenged and the role of more formal and public institutions in this dimension of social security was also brought to the fore (Guma 2018; Haukanes 2007; Thelen 2007). Contributions to this body of work emphasised the ways in which the care which people received from both public and private actors and in both formal and informal settings contributed to a sense of emotional security even where people’s material circumstances were sometimes only marginally improved (Caldwell 2007; Kay 2012).

They also drew attention to the relationship between shifting ideologies of care and social solidarity on the one hand and everyday practices and lived experiences on the other, within a range of post-socialist contexts. Studies exploring the experiences of older people in post-socialist countries, for example, noted the ontological and symbolic insecurities which rapid social and political change, combined with a sense of loss – both in the

present and in relation to the past – can produce (Caldwell 2007; Kay 2012). The ways in which caring interactions and the provision of emotional support can mitigate this have been discussed (Kay 2012; Thelen 2007).

Resonating with some of this earlier work on symbolic and existential aspects of (in)security, the contributions to this special issue by McKenna (2018) and Sotkasiira (2018), through their exploration of migrant experiences of and responses to media representations, draw attention to the importance of having a recognised place in the social and cultural contexts in which one lives. In so doing, they also remind us of an important theme from the initial development of the social security concept, where the crucial role of social in/exclusion in determining whether and how the social security needs of particular individuals or groups are met was highlighted (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2000: 11). In its original formulation, this concern focused on the impacts of in/exclusion on material inequalities through the allocation and (re)distribution of resources. Building further on this, the contributions to this special issue consider the implications for both emotional and material (in)securities. This is achieved through an exploration of the ways in which different aspects of in/exclusion can impact on a sense of belonging and a feeling that one's experiences and needs are recognised (McKenna 2018; Sotkasiira 2018; Stella *et al.* 2018), as well as on confidence in formal legal frameworks and an expectation that rights will be protected (Stella *et al.* 2018). Here, differentiated expectations and experiences of formal institutions as well as specific day-to-day interactions with other people across post-socialist countries of origin and Scotland or Finland as countries of destination come into play.

Whilst the majority of the articles in this special issue do not replicate the conceptual focus on care emphasised by Read and Thelen, they do continue to develop the emphasis on the emotional dimensions of (in)security and particularly on furthering understanding of the relationship between emotional and material (in)securities as these relate to experiences of migration and settlement. In keeping with the challenging of binaries in our use of (in)security, the contributions presented here explore emotional and material dimensions as connected and seek better to understand the ways in which these are constituted through everyday practices, relationships and interactions. Articles by Sime (2018), Stella *et al.* (2018) and Kay and Trevena (2018), in particular, consider the relationship between emotional and material (in)securities. They show that, whilst a search for material security may in some cases result in emotional insecurities and that the balance between these may differ between individuals even within the same family (Sime 2018), emotional and material 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 also, in some cases, provide preconditions for, improved material circumstances (Kay and Trevena 2018; Stella *et al.* 2018).

### *Temporal aspects of (in)securities*

The need for a longer-term view and for an awareness of the interactive relationship between past, present and future have been key concerns in the development of the concept of social security. As such, it has been recognised that social security practices are always, in some way, about preparing for a (potentially uncertain) future and drawing on resources and experiences from the past in doing so:

*The sense of security is based on a combination of past experiences, on promises encapsulated in existing mechanisms, in entitlements and the continuing availability of resources, and on some estimation about future developments. 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).

As illustrated through Guma's use of the concept of 'potentialities of care' (Guma 2018), a sense of (in)security in the present depends very much on people's expectation that they will or will not be able to transform resources (material, human, emotional, social) accumulated in the present to fulfil needs or to deal with anticipated risks or crises in the future. Of course it is only ever possible to know retrospectively whether social security needs have actually been met in these ways for certain. Nonetheless, such expectations, often based on observed and/or lived experiences from the past, do constitute a sense of security in the present.

### **In conclusion: a return to post-socialist perspectives?**

This kind of longer and more fluid temporal perspective also resonates strongly with critical approaches to post-socialist area studies where the relationship between the past, present and future has been closely interrogated (Hoerschelmann and Stenning 2008; Thelen 2011). From early critiques of 'transitology' through to more-recent discussions about the critical power of studying post-socialism, scholars have called for a more historically aware analysis – one that, rather than focusing on a moment of rupture, recognises more protracted and complex processes of continuity and change and values the role of the past and, to some extent, the future, in the present (Flynn and Oldfield 2008; Hann *et al.* 2000). Migrants from post-socialist contexts make decisions to move and negotiate the processes of migration and settlement from within this longer historical experience of continuities and changes. Therefore, a consideration of the temporal aspects of social (in)security has been important in developing this special issue, where we focus on the lived experiences of migrants within the local, social and institutional contexts that they currently encounter, aiming also to reveal the ways in which these are informed by and contingent upon both past experiences from the post-socialist region and future hopes and aspirations.

For migrants, interactions between past, present and future also bring with them relative notions of (in)security drawing on comparisons between their countries of origin and their current places of residence (Kay and Trevena 2018; Sime 2018; Stella *et al.* 2018). Here, as well as comparisons with experiences from the past, people also refer to and make assumptions based on observed or related experiences of friends and relatives still living in their countries of origin. As earlier studies exploring the concept of social security specifically in relation to the post-socialist region have shown, the transformations following the collapse of state socialist regimes in the area led not only to the reorganisation of state provision but also to a much more complex and ambiguous set of processes which required overlapping reconfigurations of public and private, old and new, deservingness and need (Khlinovskaya-Rockhill 2010; Read and Thelen 2007). They brought with them both 'repetitive unfulfilled promises' and 'expectations [and indeed experiences] of profound change' (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2000: 17). It is clear, therefore, that post-socialist transformations have entailed significant changes to the underlying conditions for social security and care (Read and Thelen 2007: 8). This affects both the present-day experiences and the future expectations of people living in the region. As such, it is also often the precursor to a decision to migrate, as shown by the narratives of many migrants involved in each of the studies underpinning the contributions to this special issue. It is for this reason, that we suggest that migration itself can be viewed, in part, as a social security practice.

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## Note

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