



University  
of Glasgow

# **‘I moved only when Mum felt secure here ...’: Migration and settlement choices of Central and East European families in Scotland**

Prof. Rebecca Kay

Dr. Paulina Trevena



# Aims of the Paper



**SSAMIS**  
Social Support and  
Migration in Scotland

- To examine the ways in which CEE migrants make decisions about arrival to and longer-term stays in Scotland
- To consider how these intersect with considerations regarding wider family relations and responsibilities
- To explore migration and settlement as open-ended processes, influenced by and productive of intersecting emotional and material aspects of ‘social security’

*I moved only when Mum felt secure here ... she never planned to live here ... but then she decided she liked [Scotland] and to live here forever.*

Karlis, 19, Latvia



**SSAMIS**  
Social Support and  
Migration in Scotland

Nov 2013 – Nov 2017

- 207 migrant interviews
- 60+ expert interviews
- observations
- video & photo diaries

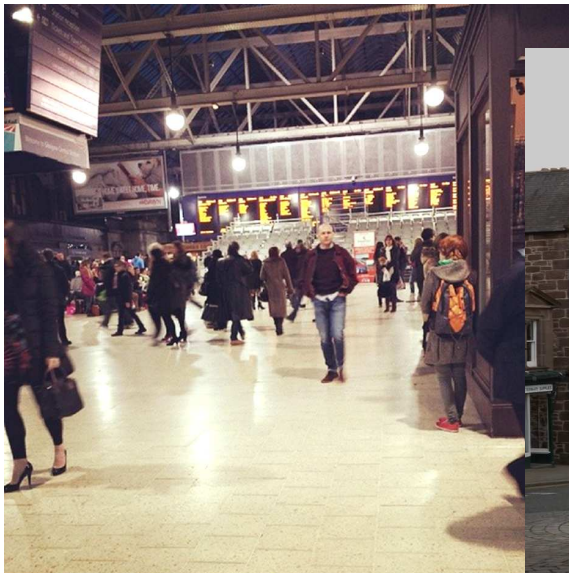


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# Exploring 'Social Security'



**SSAMIS**

Social Support and  
Migration in Scotland

- People produce securities (social, economic, personal and cultural) through a combination of public/private resources, formal/informal networks, state/non-state structures (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 1988; 1994).
- Material and emotional aspects of security are of equal importance and often intersect/ co-produce one another.
- Importance of temporal dimensions - interconnectedness of past, present and future in people's understandings and negotiations of what it means to be 'secure' (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 1994; Thelen and Read, 2007; Kay 2012).

# Why & how do CEE families come to Scotland?



- Changing trends in migration → from individuals & employment agencies to families & migration networks
- Key reasons: seeking material security & family considerations
  - material security: employment, higher earnings (also: need to pay off debts)
  - family considerations:
    - re-unification/family break-up
    - health reasons – including better care, e.g. for people with disabilities
    - education – especially parents of children with ‘special education needs’

# Deciding to stay



- For most people longer-term stays emerge over time, not part of a clear original plan
- longer-term planning often linked to processes of wider family migration and re-unification.
- decisions influenced by emotional and material needs and (inter)dependencies of different family members.

*We're definitely staying here longer term because, ... let's not fool ourselves, here I have the comfort... I work and can earn my keep by myself. I can afford a flat, a car, I can live normally ... I can maintain my child as well and don't have to wonder how I'm going to pay my bills the next day.*

Iza, 31, Poland

# Re-uniting families



- Family re-unification often staged over time and involved children, parents, siblings, grandparents etc.
- Linked to longer-term stays, as both result of and prerequisite for growing emotional/material security

*Home is in Bulgaria... Maybe when my daughter is here, my whole family, maybe. But for the moment, no, not home here*

Andrei, 27, Bulgaria

*Here in Scotland, I saw - for the first time in my life and I'm 62 - a state that thinks about its people. ... [My son] said to me, 'forget about Latvia, you come and live here'. ... Here you have free medical care too. Free rides on the bus too, I can get that.*

Boris , 62, Latvia

# Material and emotional security



- Ability to ‘provide’ for self and dependents through work, plus sense of being able to rely on a ‘caring state’ produces *both* material and emotional security
- Positive impact on family relationships and assists with dual material/emotional responsibilities e.g. of parenting

*If you don't feel good about yourself because you can't earn your living you're just existing from something so it's, it's, you don't feel like good in yourself, it doesn't help with like a relationship with my daughter or anything, so it's... You feel a lot better when you can...*

Elizabete, 39, Latvia



# Children: Securing the present/future



- Family formation in Scotland (e.g. finding a new partner and/or the birth of children) often associated with a sense of ‘permanence’
- Children ‘settling’, especially after a difficult early period of adaptation makes longer-term settlement a fait accompli

*Actually, for youngest son it was very, very hard. He was crying, nearly 3-4 weeks he was crying. ... But I think, they are integrate very very well at the moment.*

Lauris, 37, Latvia

*I don't see any prospects for my grandchildren in Latvia. What will they do there? Here they go to a good school and I don't have to pay a lot of money because they go to a state school.*

Dita, 45, Latvia

# Incomplete/open-ended family settlement



- For many ‘securing the future’ for children could also mean ongoing, or renewed, separation from some family members

*On one hand, I want to go back to Latvia, but the main cause of that is that my elder son and his family are there. It's because I've always been with my children: we've never been split before. ... For me, family means a lot: of course, that's the main reason I would go back to Latvia. But considering living standards, and money for my family, I want to stay here. It's easier here for me. It's just that I feel myself putting down roots. I feel calm here.*

Svetlana, 44, Latvia

# Conclusions



- Initial decisions to migrate spurred by material insecurities in CEE countries and prospect of achieving such security in Scotland;
- Plans for longer stay typically emerge over time and are linked to interplay of material and emotional securities in Scotland vs. prospective insecurities back home;
- Many CEE families declare long-term/permanent stay but - migration is an open-ended process, decisions re-/ negotiated depending on changing life circumstances.



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