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Rescaling belonging in 'Brexit Britain': spatial identities and practices of Polish nationals in Scotland after the UK Referendum on EU membership

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INTRODUCTION

Research is emerging on the geographies and geopolitics of Brexit (Anderson and Wilson, 2017; Manley, Jones and Johnston, 2017; Bachmann and Sidaway, 2016), with analyses of migrant perspectives on Brexit becoming more fertile (Lulle et al., 2017; Remigi, Martin and Sykes, 2017; Sime et al., 2017). This paper contributes to these debates in two connected ways. Firstly, we use the 'event' of Brexit to explore the spatial identities of Polish nationals living in Scotland. We present qualitative data collected in the immediate aftermath of the UK Referendum on EU membership in 2016 with post-accession Polish nationals living in Scotland. Drawing on this data, we discuss the ways in which Polish nationals use local, national and European scales to narrate a sense of belonging in Scotland. While Polish migration to Scotland is not new it has increased dramatically since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004. The drivers, patterns and impacts of this significant wave of migration from Central and Eastern Europe has been widely discussed in a range of geographical locations. Important research is emerging on the immediate impacts of the vote for Brexit on Central and Eastern European migrants. We contribute to these debates through a focus on scalar identities and practices. Viewing Brexit as a moment of intense geopolitics, we argue that EU citizens are compelled to re-engage with questions of national and European identity. We discuss how the anti-liberal populism surrounding Brexit has shaped Polish nationals' attachment to Britain, with transnational, local and sub-national frames figuring as important in providing a

sense of (ontological) security in the context of uncertain futures. Secondly, we reflect on how everyday practices and encounters with people in local spaces after the vote have shaped spatial identifications, both unsettling and enhancing attachments to place. The narratives explored in this paper reveal complex multi-scalar engagements with Brexit geopolitics in relation to both localized, and often idealized, identifications with Scotland and broader identifications with the EU. Drawing on relational theories of scale advanced by feminist geographers and migration scholars, we demonstrate that attachments to place and locality are not incompatible with supra-national and national frames of belonging.

Scotland and Polish Migration: a 'welcoming' environment?

Scotland has experienced significant in-migration following the accession of 10 East-Central European (ECE) countries to the EU successively in 2004 and 2007. Of the 181,000 EU nationals residing in Scotland, the majority (119,000; 66%) are from ECE and almost half of all EU migrants are Polish (86,000, 47%) (Hudson & Aiton, 2016). The unprecedented wave of post-accession mobility to Scotland is also geographically diverse shaping urban and rural communities (De Lima, 2012; Shubin, 2014). Scotland has a 'distinctive' migration context in terms of levels, patterns and public perceptions of migration and the EU (Packwood and Findlay, 2014; McCollum et al., 2014). The Scottish Government has upheld a welcoming narrative to international migrants in contrast to the UK with First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, aiming to 'change the narrative' on migration after Brexit (Gordon, 2018; Scottish Government, 2018). In 2016, a report on the impacts of migration to Scotland found 'compelling evidence that migrants' contributions may be welcomed and appreciated' and 'no evidence that migrants are a burden on Scotland's economy and public services' (Scottish Government, 2016). Unlike in England and Wales, the majority of the Scottish electorate voted to remain in the EU and the Scottish Government have outlined a commitment to free movement and EU citizen rights in response to Westminster negotiations on the status of EU citizens in the UK (Scottish Government, 2017). Whilst the UK has now reached an agreement with the EU on citizens' rights, the implementation of 'settled status' for EU nationals is fraught with uncertainty (Bulat, 2018).

Research on attitudes to and experiences of migration and race equality in Scotland has somewhat complicated this picture. McCollum et al's (2014) analysis of public attitudes to migration, for example, determined that while attitudes compare favourably to other countries in Britain, there is evidence of 'growing hostility towards migration' amongst the general public in Scotland. Hopkins (2008:115) has also pointed to the ways in which 'issues of race and racism permeate everyday life throughout Scotland' Research conducted before the Brexit vote has discussed the insecurities associated with work, housing, welfare and education for ECE migrants in Scotland (Flynn and Kay, 2017; Kay and Trevena, 2017; McCollum et al., 2017; McGhee et al., 2016; Moskal, 2016) as well as experiences of racialization and discrimination among Polish and other East-Central Europeans (Fox et al., 2012). Furthermore, though there has been a numerical decline in instances of hate crime in Scotland (COPFS, 2017), anecdotal and media reports suggest that Polish migrants in particular are continued targets of prejudice (BBC, 2017). The patterns and experiences of hostility are differentiated across groups and places. In their study of LGBT migrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Stella et al. (2016) found that while migrants felt Scotland was a welcoming country, many experienced 'subtle forms of homo-, bi-, transphobia and xenophobia' often taking the form of 'microaggressions'. Levels of integration also depend on local context with migrants in rural Scotland experiencing particular exclusions from local communities and key institutions (Flynn and Kay, 2017; Shubin, 2012).

Scotland's particular political and constitutional context has also had an impact on Polish migrants who have settled throughout the country. The full enfranchisement experienced by Polish migrants in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum and subsequent disenfranchisement from the 2015 UK General Election led to many being frustrated as 'thwarted stakeholders' (McGhee and Pietka-Nykaza, 2016). This has been exacerbated by EU nationals' disenfranchisement from the UK Referendum on EU membership which has led some to reassess their citizenship status and plans for future mobility (Lulle et al., 2017; McGhee, Moreh & Vlachantoni, 2017). This is in line with what Graeber (2016) identified as new trends of naturalisation amongst intra-EU migrants across Europe, in response to political and economic crises and uncertainty. In this context then, it is important to explore how spatial identities and practices are being reworked in relation to the material and emotional insecurities produced by

Brexit. Furthermore, if Brexit is altering attachments to place and nation, what impact might this have on Scotland's aim for a different approach to migration?

Re-scaling Brexit geopolitics

Debates surrounding the geopolitics of Brexit have largely focused on macro-scale causes and implications of Britain's vote to leave the EU. Bachmann and Sidaway (2016) argue that the vote for Brexit should be contextualized in British imperial geography and a series of social and economic fragmentations within the UK and Europe that have led to rising populism and nationalism among British voters. Dorling (2016) points to growth of inequality and austerity policies as key drivers of Brexit. Wallerstein (2016), similarly, views Brexit as a symptom of four broad social, political and economic crises: 'popular anger at the so-called Establishment and its parties; the geopolitical decline of the United States; the politics of austerity; and identity politics' (cited in Bachmann and Sidaway, 2016:49). While offering important commentaries on the unfolding politics of Brexit, these accounts often ignore alternative scales of geopolitical experience. Many of these explanations highlight the role of discourse and representation in producing the geopolitics of Brexit. For instance, Bachmann and Sidaway (2016:50) suggest that the vote for Brexit was a 'post Imperial reflex' and 'symptom' of deeper malaise in Britain, contending that "territorial imaginations of British (and English) sovereignty thus trumped relational and multi-scalar ones of EU citizenship". This interpretation stresses the importance of the state in providing a narrative of security and belonging in the context of global uncertainties (Habermas, 2016 cited in Bachmann and Sidaway; Kinvall, 2006). Yet the very appeal to British Empire suggests a beyond-the-state visioning of territoriality involving multi-scalar connections with, and domination over, 'other' places. Furthermore, the method of recording these imaginations, through a single-issue referendum vote, does not convey the complexity of these spatial imaginaries and the everyday practices and relations that constitute them. In this paper, we re-focus attention towards the narratives and experiences of Polish nationals and explore how such imaginations and the mundane, everyday practices in place are being re-configured by political change and, as such, are part of Brexit geopolitics. As Anderson and Wilson (2017:2) argue, treating Brexit only as a symptom of wider political and economic relations 'risks passing over the range of more or less subtle,

more or less intense, changes that are Brexit as it surfaces across multiple ordinary scenes and situations'.

In order to do this we employ feminist geopolitics as a framework to re-imagine spatial scales and interrogate Brexit geopolitics through the lens of everyday life. Such frameworks are valuable for this study for two key reasons. First, feminist geographers have argued for a 're-scaled geopolitics' to acknowledge alternative and relational scales of politics and the interconnections between the international, national and the emotional or intimate (Hyndman, 2001; Hyndman, 2007; Odeja, 2013; Waite et al., 2014; Pain, 2009; Pain and Stehaeli, 2014). In her work on the geopolitics of fear, for example, Pain (2009:305) challenges the 'scaled hierarchy' commonly constructed in analyses of fear where 'big political forms and transnational processes are the top, active and in control. Ordinary people's emotions are affected, sponge-like and passive, at the bottom'. Pain argues for an 'emotional geopolitics of fear' to destabilize hierarchies of scale and connect political processes with 'everyday, emotional topographies' (ibid.). Others have also critiqued scalar hierarchies in discourses of globalization that 'obscure the myriad local material and discursive practices through which the very fabric of globalization is produced' (Leitner and Miller, 2007:116; also Marston et al., 2005). As discussed, the discourse surrounding Brexit also reproduces scalar hierarchies through abstract emphasis of the impacts of Brexit on particular communities. We seek to challenge these representations and highlight how spatial identities and practices are not simply shaped by geopolitical discourse, but are active in the production and contestation of discourse across a range of scales. Second, we are drawn to the feminist praxis of foregrounding actors often overlooked in analyses of global politics, including women, young people and migrants (Benwell and Hopkins, 2016; Horschelmann and El Refaie, 2014; Hyndman, 2012). Re-writing these social actors back into accounts of geopolitics is key to overcoming the hegemony of 'big' scale politics (Dowler and Sharp, 2014; Marston, 2005; Pain, 2009; Smith, 2004). In this paper, we emphasise the agency of Polish nationals in the co-constitution of Brexit geopolitics and highlight their negotiation and transgression of scalar relations. Similarly, Koefoed and Simonsen (2012) have shown that Pakistani citizens in Copenhagen have ambivalent identifications with the Danish nation due to daily experiences of 'estrangement', yet they hold positive identifications at alternative spatial scales,

such as the city. The conscious 'jumping' of spatial scales demonstrates the agency of citizens to deflect experiences of exclusion and achieve a sense of belonging in place (cf. Smith, 2004).

Finally, the paper contributes to debates on transnational migration through its focus on how, in the context of Brexit, migrant identities and practices are narrated and experiences across spatial scales. Transnational migration scholars have long interrogated how migrants negotiate lives at overlapping spatial scales (see Silvey, 2007 for review). Critical approaches to transnationalism and translocality, in particular, show the complexity of migrant lived experiences at multiple spatial scales and across time (Brickell and Datta, 2011; Conradson and McKay, 2007; Glick Schiller, 2015; Ley, 2004). Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, Brickell and Datta (2011:13) argue that migrants are simultaneously situated across different locales, their multi-scalar attachments grounded in 'localized contexts and everyday practices'. Verne (2012) argues that understanding migration as a 'translocal' process overcomes hierarchical notions of scale and recognises the "intermediary arrangements, fluidity and intermingling processes" of mobility and place (cited in Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013:376). Place and locality are understood not as spatial containers but as relational (Massey, 1991), or as Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013:377) explain, places are 'nodes where flows that transcend spatial scales converge'.

Polish migration scholars have also emphasised the dynamism and relationality of migrant experience at different scales. Whilst these processes are not unique to the Polish experience, we have chosen to focus on Polish national migrant cohorts to acknowledge the particular histories and geographies that shape transnational processes. As discussed, the pace and scale of Polish migration to the UK make this a well-documented phenomenon. However, Brexit is a new context within which to explore the dynamics of Polish migration and is shaping communities in differentiated ways (author, 2018). Ryan (2017:3) argues that for Polish nationals in the UK, integration and attachment involve 'differentiated embedding', conceptualized as a dynamic, multiscale and differentiated process i.e. the degree of rootedness to a particular 'sector of society', such as the labour market, can vary over time and space. Similarly, Grzymała-Kazłowska's (2017) concept of 'anchoring'

describes integration as a series of variable connections and disconnections over time as migrants 'search for footholds' to achieve stability and security in the context of adaptation and settlement. Erdal and Lewicki (2015) have highlighted the simultaneity of mobility and settlement, whereby transnational networks are sustained and often required for integration. In her study of Polish migrants in Belfast, Bell (2015) shows the complexities and ambivalences associated with sustaining transnational ties. She disputes overly positive and linear framings of transnationalism to highlight the differential qualities of transnational practices and the simultaneous experiences of continuity and discontinuity. Many of these studies stress the relationality of transnationalism, integration and settlement, seeing them as multi-scalar, open-ended and incomplete (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2017; McGhee, Moreh and Vlachantoni, 2017; Pietka-Nygaza and McGhee, 2016; Ryan, 2017). White (2015) stresses that 'transnational practices have varying forms and significance in different locations and among different occupational groups'. For instance, Kusek (2015) has shown that Polish professionals in London, whilst highly 'transnational', also maintain strong national affiliations, and their global ambitions are mediated through local and national contexts and standards. By combining theoretical resources from feminist geopolitics and migrant transnationalism, the paper bridges interdisciplinary scholarship on the politics of migration. We use these resources to underline the importance of scale in understanding migrant experiences of politics and demonstrate this through original, empirical data. The data presented in the following section shows how migrant spatial identities are in flux after the vote for Brexit with decisions for migration, settlement and integration connected to an emotional geopolitics of Brexit. As the aftershocks of Brexit subside there may be more resilient and pragmatic strategies to mitigate insecure status, but these are not unemotional and relate to everyday practices and encounters with Others at a range of scales.

Research Methods

The paper is based on a qualitative research project conducted between in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 UK Referendum on EU membership. It forms part of a wider study on socio-spatial mobilities of Polish migrants and returnees over time (see author, 2018 for fuller explanation). Ten face-to-face biographical narrative interviews were conducted with post-accession Polish nationals living in Edinburgh.

These were conducted as 'follow up' interviews to an initial study conducted by author A in 2010 revisiting the same participants at two different timeframes. The aim of these interviews was to capture impacts and future plans of Polish nationals after the Brexit referendum. They were not, however, designed in isolation but reflected prior interview contexts¹. As Ryan and D'Angelo (2017) argue, follow-up interviews and ongoing engagements in the research field can be a flexible and practical approach to researching the dynamics of migrant experience.

Biographical-narrative methods are valuable in exploring personhood and agency revealing not only how individuals make sense of the social worlds they are embedded in but also how broad social and political discourses are inflected through their narrative (Maynes et al, 2008). The interviews covered a broad range of topics including perceptions of mobility, home, national identity and belonging. The sample consisted of post-accession Polish nationals of working age who were mixed in terms of gender, family and relationship status, employment status and occupational sector. The majority of participants were under 40 years of age at the time of interview and most were highly educated and in employment. Individuals were recruited initially through convenience and snowball sampling for the 2010 study. The study was advertised in arrange of local Polish shops and community centres, and featured on Polish social media sites locally and nationally. It is important to note, however, that the sampling routes did not produce a very diverse sample. Whilst the diversity of Polish communities has been widely discussed (Garapich, 2009; author, 2018), many studies of Polish migration focus either on highly skilled graduates and professionals or low-skilled 'economic migrants'. As a result, studies tend to reproduce a classed binary of economic vs cultural migrants that can be seen in public discourse of intra-EU migration and indeed through the narratives of Polish nationals themselves. Given the potential limitations of a sample skewed towards highly skilled migrants, this paper focuses in depth on the on just a few narratives of Polish nationals living in Edinburgh to highlight how people talk about belonging at different spatial scales and circumvent insecurities following the Brexit vote. The narratvies are not representative of the sample, however, they do reflect common themes of negotiating scalar positions in the context of Brexit. The data was fully transcribed, coded and analysed using an intersectionality approach through NVivo software. This enabled us to explore diversity within each narrative and explore how

structural and discursive inequalities interconnect with individual experiences and identities³. Each narrative reveals the complexity of individual analyses of Brexit and shows how loyalties to place and nation are punctuated by everyday (in)securities and shaped by broader discourses of migration, security and nationalism.

Unsettling attachments: Dorota and Pedro

Dorota has lived in Edinburgh for 12 years, she is married to Pedro, a Spanish national and they have two children who were born in Scotland. Dorota and Pedro met in Germany and have spent many years working and moving within the EU. Here Dorota reflects on her immediate reactions to the vote for Brexit.

“It felt like a personal attack completely...I’ve been rejected. I didn’t feel Scottish, British whatever. I’ve been rejected. I’m not putting my own time and skills anymore. I’m just gonna earn money and then search for opportunities... We don’t belong here. We’re not gonna pretend we are. If we buy a house here it’s an investment, we’ll make sure we’re secured. I am not being stupid anymore and trusting the system will take care of me...

I used to feel settled. I seriously felt settled. I just felt like okay, it’s fine...And we, with the school and stuff, and the nursery, we started to build up more local contacts. Not a huge amount, but there’s a few people I would like to expand. And it all stopped since June because why would you if you’re gonna leave?

³ We use intersectionality in the analysis of data for three reasons: 1) We are concerned with how individuals perceive and express different aspects of their identity, and how these intersect in differentiated experiences of space and place; 2) We are interested in exploring how the discursive landscape (ideologies) of Brexit maps onto or exacerbates existing structural inequalities of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality and class 3) An intersectionality approach connects to a broader political commitment to social justice and equality and ongoing challenge to uneven regimes of migration. We are, however, mindful of recent critiques against the ‘depoliticization’ and ‘whitening’ of intersectionality in geography (Hopkins, 2018). As such we advocate an ethical approach that is sensitive to the black feminist roots of intersectionality and critically acknowledge racialized power (whiteness) that is embedded within and, at times, reproduced through migrant narratives.

We'll just make sure that each step links with an exit strategy...The world is big, there is lots of beautiful places that we would like to explore... and we looked up places, we looked up jobs in New Zealand...and Spain. Spain feels bloody European”

Dorota's feelings of anger and rejection, although perhaps temporary, appear to have unsettled her attachment to Scotland and she expresses a lack of faith in the British political system to provide a fair deal for her family. The outcome of the referendum seems to rupture her everyday life locally and stimulate a new feeling of transience. The decision to stay or leave is clearly on her mind and the narrative shifts quickly between the very personal meanings of Brexit and the pragmatic strategies for onward mobility. Dorota doesn't currently own property in Scotland, and refers here to a more pragmatic attachment to place – investing for security and developing 'exit' strategies for intra-EU mobility. Similarly, Lulle et al. (2017) found that despite the immediate affective reactions to the referendum outcome among EU nationals, including anger, consternation and rejection, many were pragmatic and tactical in planning for the future. Strategies for onward mobility are often conceptualized as economically driven. Here potential onward mobility is linked to emotional responses to political disenfranchisement showing the connection between everyday, intimate geopolitics and patterns of intra-EU mobility (Pain and Stehaeli, 2014).

She goes on to reflect on her shifting sense of belonging in relation to alternative spatial scales.

“We didn't feel European here. We felt migrant from Poland, from Germany...We always felt welcome here but we were nationals from different countries... So the feeling that we had in Germany, that we're European, doesn't matter where we go, that feeling wasn't there [in Britain]...We were not Europeans where we felt European. We thought...what will the kids be? And we know they will be Europeans.

Dorota's perception that Britain is different to other European nations reflects a long standing spatial imaginary couched in imperialist histories (cf. Triandafyllidou, 2017). Here she compares the European values of Spain and Germany to Britain's more 'awkward' Europeanism. She compares this to how she felt living in Germany where

she met her Spanish husband and the perceived 'freedoms' of becoming a European when Poland joined the EU. Dorota's narrative is shaped also by the legacy of Poland's accession to the EU and her past experiences of intra-EU mobility. Similarly, when interviewed in 2010 she regarded her European identity in conflict with British people's perceptions of her Polishness. 'Britain' she remarked has always felt 'over there' in its relationship to Europe. Poland, by contrast, in joining the EU was 'going ahead with civilisation', 'no visas, no international phone cards, no boundaries'. Dorota and Pedro could be characterized as highly-skilled, mobile Europeans whose adult life has been shaped by 'free movement' (cf. Favell, 2009). As Erdal and Lewicki's (2015:5) have discussed, mobility has become 'normalized' for many highly-skilled Polish nationals, shaping their 'self-understanding as citizens'. Despite claims that the EU has not fostered a 'deep' sense of belonging among its citizens (Staeheli et al., 2012), the threat of Brexit appears to have enriched European loyalties for many deepening their spatial identification with Europe as a region. This is also evident in the mobilization of grassroots activism among EU and non-EU migrants in Britain (e.g. the 3 million; OneDayWithoutUs). However, for Dorota and Pedro these spatial identifications are made real through everyday practices and interactions in place, which often constrain or complicate romantic imaginaries of Europeanism. They reflect here on the effects of having Scottish-born children on their collective sense of belonging.

...I worry about the feeling of belonging for [my son], because we as humanity, at least the current understanding is we need to belong somewhere to develop. And I don't think we can give that to [our son]...like the feeling of belonging came from his [Gaelic] nursery..

Pedro: 'yeah, these are places that celebrate diversity, and for us diversity begins with language...and that's why Brexit was such a shock for us, because that's the environment we've been living in for years and those kids are almost like an anchor for us. Anchors us here'

The shock of Brexit has been widely discussed in initial analyses of the referendum (Lulle et al., 2017; Remiggi et al., 2016), a rupture to the continuity of EU citizens' everyday lives. The local context here is vital to re-establishing a sense of belonging

after Brexit (Ryan, 2017). For Dorota and Pedro the locality, that celebrates difference and promotes inclusion, provides the resources to nurture a European identity for themselves and their son. The enrolment of their son in a Gaelic school highlights the centrality of multi-lingualism to their sense of Europeaness (cf. Kusek, 2015). Yet it also keeps him in place, attached to particular (sub)national and local frames of meaning. This example supports claims that European belonging is an ongoing, flexible process rather than a static form of identity (Duchesne and Frogner, 2008) and emerges through a range of mundane, everyday and embodied practices (Addler-Nissen, 2016; Mosio et al., 2012). Whilst their children are the 'social anchors' that facilitate their settlement in Britain (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2017; Moskal, 2014), they also represent aspirations for a multi-lingual, European-oriented future detached from the regressive discourse of Brexit Britain. These relationships, then, are key to constructing a sense of belonging. In this sense, Dorota's narrative is indicative of what Ryan (2017) calls 'differentiated embedding' as she negotiates her sense of belonging through the interplay of the 'personal/subjective (micro), relational (meso) and structural (macro) dimensions of migrant experience'.

While locality is significant in constructing belonging this is not straightforward (Ryan, 2009). Experiences in the locality are highly differentiated and vary between private spaces of home and selective institutions and the public spaces of encounter. Evidence of growing hostilities towards Polish nationals in public space is emerging (see Guma and Jones – this issue). For Dorota, everyday interactions in local sites of belonging have altered since the Brexit vote and here she reflects on her experience of public transport in her locality.

"Since we live here we have to take, I have to take buses more often...And I don't like to talk to [my son] or other, or [my daughter] in Polish because...sometimes I am being looked at...there was a few moments like that where I felt what previously did not alert anyone to pay attention to me. Now it's because the kids misbehave, perhaps that...the behaviour of someone else with a local accent would not trigger reaction, whereas misbehaviour of a child being, you know, talked to in a foreign language does evoke certain nodding [huffing noise], or you know, like rolling eyes and stuff.

KB: *When do you think that changed?*

...It was certainly post-referendum. It was certainly post-referendum...These are these things that you can feel. They are not outspoken, they would not perhaps trigger action, but they are there. I mean certainly I stopped taking buses”

Not only does Dorota stop communicating with her children in Polish, she has now stopped using public transport showing embodied avoidance strategies to circumvent potential sites of inter-cultural tension. These strategies are not in response to experiences of racism or violence, they are ‘pre-emptive’ suggesting that complex psycho-social negotiations are taking place, altering local sites of meaning. Later in the interview, Dorota admits that ‘my perceptions are based on Ryan’s (2010) study of Polish nationals living in London found that in instances where the normal rules of social interaction were broken, or where a negative stereotype regarding Poles was being reinforced or perpetuated, participants sought to reassert their ‘sense of order’, which in some cases involved ‘concealing their Polishness’. We argue that these strategies have intensified since the vote for Brexit alongside growing anti-immigrant sentiment in Britain. The concealment of nationality is connected not only to dissociation from ‘other’ Poles but is an attempt to minimize ‘foreignness’ in the context of a general public unease with difference. In the following section we discuss this in more detail illustrated by the narrative of Helena.

Citizens and Others: Helena

Helena moved to Edinburgh in 2006 and has recently received her certificate of naturalisation and became a British citizen. She explains here her reaction to the vote for Brexit and the sudden shift in her sense of belonging in Scotland.

It's very consoling that so many Scots, you know, even like the M[S]P Sturgeon...she said that you're welcome here, we value you. I feel that I'm in the right place...but it's hard to describe what I feel...It's just like, you know, when I got my certificate of naturalisation and my passport and I went home and I used my British passport just to see how it works and how it feels. And I felt good about it.

And they took that away from me because I don't feel good about it anymore... I don't feel wanted here. ...And it doesn't really matter whether I had citizenship or not. You know, after ten years living somewhere and feeling, I felt 100% equal. I never felt worse. So even though so many people voted to remain, I'm looking at the streets and I feel anger and I feel hatred...

After the Brexit vote, Helena's spatial identity is in crisis despite formal citizenship suggesting there is more to feeling part of a society than a document. While she feels consoled by the Scottish government commitment to EU citizen rights and feels she is in the right place she holds contrasting emotions relating to Brexit shocks that dampen the recognition she gained through formal citizenship. After the vote, these formalities feel like lip service, despite the rights they offer. She goes on to talk about the impact of the vote on perceptions of Poles in the UK.

...And I have an accent. Whenever I speak somebody will hear that I'm a foreigner. I never felt ashamed of it or anything like that but now, you know, you open your mouth and you don't know, you know, whether somebody will react to it or what you're doing here. You don't know...I think it created this artificial kind of border between, or limit between us and them. And I never felt it before and now I feel like I'm them and not, you know, us.

Accent has been noted as a key marker of difference or foreignness (Hopkins, 2004). But for Helena this is a new experience – while her accent has always marked her out as different, she never felt threatened or ashamed before. The idea that with being foreign comes shame also reflects historical discourse of 'easterness' relating to othering of Central and Eastern European nationals in the UK (Billinger, 2017; Todorova, 2005). Such discourses may have taken on new meanings in the

context of Brexit, internalised in different ways by Polish nationals along lines of gender, class and age. Lulle et al (2017), for example, refer to the 'deeply felt emotional burden' by those perceived as 'foreign' after the Brexit vote. For Helena, the references to 'us' and 'them' shift as she explains her sense of abandonment, betrayal and disbelief - she had never before expected to defend herself from offensive comments as a white migrant in a predominantly white country (cf. McDowell, 2009; Cook, Dwyer and Waite, 2011). Helena's racial consciousness is at once raised and threatened as particular white bodies are surfaced in the context of political and legal uncertainty and anti-immigrant sentiment. She realises she is an identifiable 'migrant', no longer protected by the structural privilege of whiteness, (Frankenburg, 1993; van Reimsdijk, 2010). Feminist scholars of migration have argued that the national scale is a product of political and social processes that connect to the politics of gender and difference (Silvey, 2007; Yeoh and Huang, 1999). The vote for Brexit as a statement of nationalism appears as a reconstructed view of the nation that enhances the already marginalized position of the 'foreigner'. Fox et al. (2012) argue that 'new Europeans' from East-Central Europe (ECE) have become racialized subjects in the UK, but positioned as 'inbetween', on the one hand economically marginalised in the labour market, while on the other racially [and legally] privileged through their white identity (see Parutis, 2011). It is largely Romanian and Hungarian migrants positioned in this way (Fox et al., 2012), but perhaps Brexit is unsettling these hierarchies.

As with the example of Dorota and Pedro, spatial identifications are not straightforward. Despite feeling detached from her newly acquired citizenship status, Helena spoke positively about Scotland and her locality as an alternative scale of belonging, particularly in relation to her attachments to Poland. She described the city she lives in as 'the best relationship in my life' and a space where you don't feel like an alien.

"I never thought about myself going back. Even like now I'm thinking...should I pack my bags and leave? And I wouldn't like to do that. I am so much accustomed to living here and the way of life here that I don't see myself in Poland...even though I'm single I never feel on my own in this town because you can go for coffee in [locality] or for a walk. And people are so open and they will sit in the café next to

you and if they see you are smiling, whatever they will start to chat to you. And, you know, you don't feel like you are alien or like a foreigner or like you don't belong... yeah it's a funny thing because I just realized I never thought about leaving this place [laughs], never'

This extract contradicts Helena's earlier narrative and highlights again the importance of locality to a sense of belonging. Her local life is shaped by everyday convivialities, the informal, unexpected interactions that give meaning to a place and form ideas of community (Gilroy, 2007; Rzepnikowska, 2016). Furthermore, this extract reveals how the politics of citizenship is negotiated day to day by migrants alongside formal and legal mechanisms (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006; Staeheli et al., 2012). Clarke et al. (2014) argue that citizenship is constantly under construction, and a form of practice and process. Similarly, Staeheli et al (2012:630) suggest that these 'ordinary' practices of citizenship have potential to 'nudge established patterns of control and authority'. They argue that citizenship understood as ordinary avoids separation of 'legal standing' from 'standing in communities', indeed re-scaling notions of citizenship to demonstrate its socio-spatial complexities. In the example above, Helena discusses the emotional and affective dimension of belonging which, in the context of Brexit, means more to her than legal citizenship. Moreover, after the referendum, the status of British citizenship is viewed as unpalatable.

'when I'm supposed to say that I'm British I'd rather say that I'm Scottish. I don't feel in the same place as English people, Welsh people, Northern Irish people. So, so yeah I would swap my British passport for Scottish one in a heartbeat basically'

Here we see the emergence of sub-national loyalties as connections to Britain – as England – diminish. In the following section, we continue this discussion drawing on the narratives of other Polish nationals in Scotland.

At home in Scotland: Jacek and Kasia

For many, the referendum stimulated a re-engagement with British and Scottish politics and some used interviews to re-assess their relationship to Scotland and

Scottishness. As with other research on migrant national identity in Scotland, this was often narrated in contrast to England (see author et al., 2017). The two individuals discussed here are unknown to each other, yet express similar allegiances to Scotland rather than England. Jacek moved to Edinburgh in 2008 but had lived previously in England and Ireland. Here he discusses his perception of the similarities and differences between Scotland, Poland and England.

I think that Eastern Europe or Central Europe is still much better in a sense that they are trying things, they are more courageous... In that same way I actually see more similarities between Polish and Scots you know... I feel that it would be more difficult to establish a deeper relationship with an English person than with a Scottish person. I dunno, I felt more at home in Scotland... I'm sort of idealising Scotland, for some reason. Mostly because of this Brexit thing and the outcome of it. Yeah I think we got a little bit disenchanted with, again, South of England'

In his interview, Jacek talks about the connections between Scotland and Poland, scaling his descriptions up and down – he talks about the people of these two nations alongside a national political character. Scotland is idealized as different to England offering a more open and welcoming political narrative, as well as cultural differences that align to Polishness. Interestingly, he is not affected by the 'East European complex'⁴ reported by Polish nationals in other studies (Szewczyk, 2016). He locates his disenchantment onto particular geographies in the South of England, internalizing the discourse of Brexit as a symptom of a fractured Britain in which Europe is England's 'other' (Henderson et al., 2016). The disappointment over the Brexit vote and appeal to a European sense of belonging further shows the significance of these national imaginaries in constructing spatial identities.

⁴ In her study on Polish graduates in the East Midlands, Szewczyk (2016:14) found that a dominant negative aspect of being a Polish national in the UK is the perceived 'East European complex... a feeling stemming from a lack of self-confidence, feeling that "I'm not good enough"'. This reflects discourses of 'Easternness' that stigmatize Central and Eastern Europeans as 'backward' or peripheral (see Billinger, 2017; Buchowski, 2006; Todorova, 2005)

'...I was really hopeful of this whole project turning us into...one continent. Ditching this tribal notion of, of a nation or a country...there's no point in others, in this border and separation stuff to carry on. And it was actually something that made me really proud and made me consider myself a citizen of Europe as opposed to a citizen of Poland or wherever...I don't really feel Polish anymore like in that very strict sense you know I can follow traditions...But I don't feel Scottish either, I don't feel anything, I feel me'

Contrary to his earlier national characterisations, Jacek derides nationalism and bordering as 'tribal' and expresses a sense of pride in supra-national identification with Europe. He frames Europeaness as incompatible with Polish and Scottish national identity, referring instead to his connection to Polishness as his 'background' related to food, poetry and language. Whilst he celebrates the unity and commonality associated with the EU, he also understands difference as a key feature to being a European saying *'it's to do with living with different cultures'* and *'absorbing what you can from them'*. However, when talking again about Scotland, Jacek carves through this integrationist logic to reveal his support of an independent Scotland.

"I voted 'No' in the [Scottish] Referendum cause I was badly misinformed...I didn't pay enough attention...I would vote 'Yes' if I were voting again because as I realised that this was one of those rare situations where people were given a chance"

For Jacek, Scottish nationalism is appealing not because of an ethnically derived connection to territory, but because of the SNP's commitment to European values showing how sub-national identities can be shaped through a European consciousness. In her study of British citizenship acquisition among Polish graduates, Szewczyk (2016) has shown that rather than prescribe national boundaries, a British passport is a resource for flexible international mobility giving Polish nationals access to previously locked-out places. For Jacek, Scottish independence signals a similar opportunity given the Scottish government's commitment to EU membership.

For others too, the Scottish government narrative on Europe was a welcome antidote to the British nationalist rhetoric of the Leave campaign. Like the other participants

featured in this paper, Kasia, who has lived in Scotland since 2008, aligns politically to values of 'community' and 'unity' in the context of Brexit.

'I identify much more with what, for example, Scottish Parliament is representing.... and political direction that they're taking. I'm a little bit concerned about the UK direction...of taking a step back from working as a community. And my idea of European Union, despite all the challenges and bureaucracy is that we work as a community. We work together to make things better. Not only for Europe but for the whole world and we were united in that call. What the referendum for me represents is UK taking a step back from that commitment'.

In her narrative, Kasia talked about the imperialist connotations of the Leave campaigns as representative of 'a step back'. She identifies with Scottish Government priorities and is encouraged by public statements by the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, in support of EU citizens. Kasia's narrative shows that her engagement with politics on the issue of Europe is linked to a deeper and multi-scalar sense of belonging and attachment to place. This shows the way in which sub-national and local scales of governance have the potential to shape migrant belongings and attachments to place (McCollum and Packwood, 2017).

Finally, whilst the four examples featured in this paper reveal very individualized accounts of Brexit, they also have much in common. All have positioned themselves as cosmopolitan, global citizens navigating the boundaries of national, regional and local belonging which reflects their socio-economic status and urban dwelling (see Tully, 2014). The vote for Brexit, and the discourse surrounding it, is perceived as a counterpoint to their aspirations for a multi-lingual and multi-national Britain⁵. This has been central to the mobilization of grassroots campaigns for EU citizen rights where the political agency of migrants is visible through practices of 'stakeholder citizenship' (McGhee and Piętka-Nykaza, 2016). At the same time, the many positive associations with everyday, local sites of belonging show that encounters in place are key to fostering emotional citizenry of EU nationals (Askins, 2017).

⁵ For example, UK PM's heavily criticised claim in her speech at the Conservative Party Conference that 'if you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere' (May, 2016)

Conclusion

This paper has explored the spatial identities and practices of Polish nationals in Scotland. We have used data collected through biographical-narrative interviews to discuss how the UK Referendum on EU membership has shaped migrant attachments to place and nation. We argue that Polish nationals are in the process of re-scaling their spatial identities following the Brexit vote. These processes are relational and connected to a range of discourses and practices. We view scale as non-hierarchical and relational drawing on feminist theories that acknowledge the interconnections between the international, national and the intimate scale of human experience. Looking closely at issues of scale is key to understanding migrant belonging and attachment to place and nation and how these attachments alter at times of geopolitical instability. Though not generalizable, the examples given show the complexity of migrant spatial identities, they are not fixed, but in process and involve multiple scales of belonging, from sub-national to supra-national or post-national. Our arguments are three-fold. First, we suggest that whilst the nation state is a resilient actor in determining mobility preferences and options, transnational and local sites of meaning are key to making people feel 'at home' in uncertain times. We have shown how emerging nationalisms in Scotland shape migrants' political sensibilities, offering alternative, and often idealized, scales of belonging. In many of the narratives, Leave voters were assumed to be amassed in England. Scotland, by contrast, was viewed as welcoming, open, progressive and most importantly European. For example, some of those claiming to be a 'citizen of Europe' also expressed a desire for a Scottish passport showing how sub-national identities can be shaped through a European consciousness. This demonstrates the resilience of the nation state alongside cosmopolitan and transnational belongings and raises new questions about how spatial identities are changing as nationalism is re-energized in Scotland and the EU as a political mode of governance is challenged.

Secondly, migrants demonstrate agency in negotiating the complex interconnections between the sub- and supra-national scales, drawing on discourses of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism yet re-framing these through everyday

experiences and practices. Importantly, the legacy of post-socialist and accession-era transitions shape Polish migrant spatial identities. Whilst Brexit symbolizes fragmentation and threatens the cohesiveness of European identity, Polish nationals continue to narrate their commitment to a European identity linked to experiences of growing up in an era of free mobility and accession-era opportunity. Finally, processes of re-scaling are shaped by moments of intense geopolitics. It is clear that Brexit cast a shadow over the encounters with others for some Polish migrants in the weeks and months following the vote. Though it is not yet clear what the long-term effects of these feelings will be, the data gathered very much reflects the *immediate* reactions to the decision for Britain to leave the EU. As argued by feminist geographers, capturing these moments empirically is important as a way of understanding the 'event' of Brexit (Anderson and Wilson, 2016) and to highlight everyday, intimate geopolitics at times of political crisis (Pain and Stehaeli, 2014). We have demonstrated that the immediate aftermath of the vote gave rise to a range of conflicting emotions and complex strategies of resistance. The vote triggered new emotional responses among some Polish nationals, yet people drew on existing resources to mitigate against potential insecurity of self, home and nation.

Finally, the paper has highlighted the value of employing a feminist geopolitical lens to explore transnational migration and migrant adaptation, integration and belonging as a relational and geopolitical processes. For population geographers this is an important contribution as it challenges rigid hierarchies of scale to show the interconnected scales of the regional, national, local and individual. Moving forward, there is scope for population geography to draw on resources from feminist theory and praxis to better understand migrant strategies of adaptation, integration and embedding as well as strategies of resistance against the inequalities of migration that are produced through anti-liberal, anti-immigrant politics. This can be seen, for instance, through migrant engagement with different forms of transnationalism, cosmopolitan and multicultural nationalism, as well as through everyday convivial encounters with Others in local places. Furthermore, such engagements raise new questions about the politics of race and migration as Brexit illuminates the inequalities that are implicit in postcolonial European migration regimes.

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ⁱ For example, interviewees were sent their original transcript in advance of the 2016 interview and asked to explain their perceptions of biographical changes over time. Additional questions relating to the Brexit vote were added to the original topic guide to allow comparability and extension of the 2010 interviews.