



“We’re definitely staying here longer term ... I can live normally and earn my keep”:

Migrants’ experiences of rural contexts in Angus and Aberdeenshire and implications for longer-term settlement

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Key questions

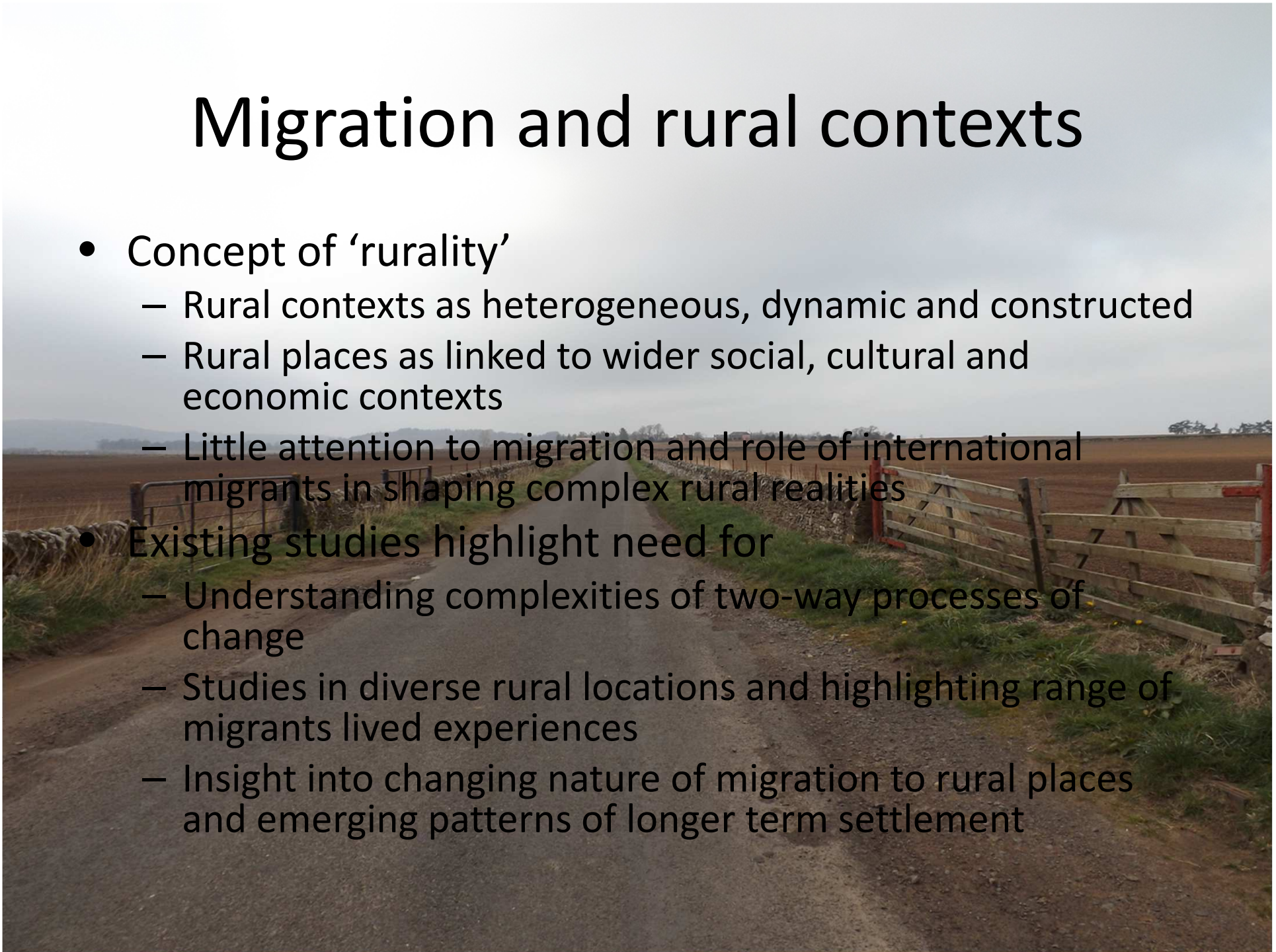
- To what extent are rural destinations actively chosen by migrants and how do in/securities and perceptions of ab/normality shape these decisions?
- How are migrants' experiences shaped by the realities of rural life in the particular Scottish contexts studied? In responding to this question we focus on issues of employment, language learning and social connections which emerged through our research.
- How do migrants interpret these experiences through their own understandings of what constitutes a 'normal' life and how does this impact on longer term attachments and plans for settlement in rural places?

Theories and Concepts

- Concept of social security (v. Benda Beckman and v. Benda Beckman 1994; Thelen and Read 2007)
 - Material and emotional aspects
 - Formal and informal resources and strategies
 - Temporal aspects and relationship between past, present and future
- Concept of normality (Galasinska 2010; Rabikowska 2010)
 - Emerged from empirical data
 - Allows for consideration of emotional and material aspects of 'normality'
 - Normality perceived and created through individual lived experiences
 - Allows for linking of 'here' and 'there' through understandings of what is ab/normal
- Taken together these conceptual frameworks have been useful in exploring migrants experiences and an approach to migration and settlement as open-ended, ongoing processes

Migration and rural contexts

- Concept of 'rurality'
 - Rural contexts as heterogeneous, dynamic and constructed
 - Rural places as linked to wider social, cultural and economic contexts
 - Little attention to migration and role of international migrants in shaping complex rural realities
- Existing studies highlight need for
 - Understanding complexities of two-way processes of change
 - Studies in diverse rural locations and highlighting range of migrants lived experiences
 - Insight into changing nature of migration to rural places and emerging patterns of longer term settlement



Fieldwork context and methods

- Wider project:
 - 4 Locations (Glasgow; Aberdeen; Angus; Aberdeenshire)
 - 200 in-depth interviews with CEE migrants
 - 12 photo diaries
 - 42 Expert interviews
- This paper focuses on 13 'rural' interviews
 - Angus/Aberdeenshire
 - Small towns and villages
 - Working in agricultural sector (farms, food processing factories)



Reasons for migration and pathways to settlement

- **Joanna, Polish, 40, Angus:** Years of circular migration, and then deciding to go home
- **Andrei, Bulgarian, 27, Angus :** Seasonal work for several years, then permanent full-time contract and decides to stay, joined by wife and planning to bring young daughter soon
- **Bozena, Polish, 56, Angus:** Multiple insecurities at home (loss of job, age/gender, illness) sense of better opportunities/security here and initial visit facilitated by friend already in town where now lives
- **Vasylyna, Estonian, 38, Aberdeenshire:** Chance opportunity for work in Scotland via acquaintance already in village, ends up staying 6 years and now planning to bring over daughter
- **Aleksandra, Polish, 40, Angus:** Came with young daughter to join husband, relationship broke down but stayed on. Now in relationship with local Scottish man and plans to stay long term.

Experiences of employment

I'm very happy with my job. That's not to say, sometimes the work is really difficult, working on a farm is not exactly pleasurable, but personally, I'd got a job with a very good company, nice people, ... they're very accommodating with us so...

Iza, Polish, 31, Angus, Farm

All the rights! There's no problem with that, everything's official. When we got here, they did everything... we were from the EU so they didn't need to do some things, but the manager did it himself. He got us National Insurance, with those little cards, he helped us do everything. It was very good. He's a very good boss!

Vasylyna, Estonian, 38, Aberdeenshire, Egg factory

I liked this farm. We'd be working in this workshop, and it was really dark there, and we'd go out and see this beautiful beach and the sea. And I would say to myself that it's worth working there for this view alone!

Bozena, Polish, 56, Angus, Farm

Experiences of employment

What I'm doing now (cleaning/kitchen work), I could easily do until retirement. If I keep in good health, of course. But I feel I could easily do it until retirement. ... And in the fields, that might have been a problem at that age. I haven't come across any older people working in the fields... Because it is hard work.

Bozena, Polish, 56, Angus, Farm

It's manual job, make me tired, make me exhausted, honest. So after six years I still feel how my bones sore. I can't sleep, still have medication from Poland. ... Harvest time was too hard ... It was a lot of stones, a lot of mud. ... It was very difficult time, and you know in the field wasn't toilet, so for woman was very difficult

Aleksandra, Polish, 40, Angus, Farm

Another thing is that this is hard manual work, as I say, and the monotony, I come back home in the evening and it's dark. So this is maybe just an excuse but it does work this way that I just don't feel like learning because I'm simply falling asleep already, I'm tired.

Boguslawa, Polish, 48, Angus, Farm

Language learning

After the summer job last year, I decided to come here my ESOL programme. ... because my English is not so well, so I decided to do it. And I would like to do something more than working in the farm.

leva, Lithuanian, 24, Angus

One person helped me. He was over seventy years old. ...I was just sitting [in the pub] thinking to myself, and he came up to ... I wasn't able to say anything to him [in English]... and he said "I'll sit and chat with you and we'll study together". We went there every weekend, Friday and Saturday, and he got one of those tiny, but thick, pocket dictionaries, and we studied together very well.

Vasylyna, Estonian, 38, Aberdeenshire

Here I also live among Scots only, you could say. It's very nice here in terms of neighbours. My son speaks English so when we were moving in he spoke to the neighbours ... And they know I only speak a little English but they always smile and I think that once I learn a bit, once I gain some knowledge, my dream is to be able to speak to them

Boguslawa, Polish, 48, Angus

Social ties and networks

I know a lot of people but have few best friends, let's put it that way ... Poles, my two sisters, for example, and Jacek and his family. And these are my closest friends, this is my circle ... I wanted to move, because I was living on xxx, it's like a centre for Poles ... And I wanted to move out of there because for me it's simply terrifying what goes on there. There are a lot of Poles there, a lot of Poles, and the situation there isn't great. ... I had such experiences that I couldn't enter the flat in peace with my shopping because they would look into my bags as if I had god knows what there

Iza, Polish, 31, Angus

I like to go in town and have fun as well, but it's no problem these days travelling back, so for me it's better to stay in smaller towns, nice people, you know the people, they say hello for you. In here I am walking sometimes in the street and I think "I know this person but I don't know why I know this", but it's the guy from the gym, we start to say hi...It's nice to see people's faces that you know. Bigger cities, you just going and you don't know people, that's why probably.

Ieva, Lithuanian, 24, Angus

Longer-term attachments to rural places

There's everything we need here, nothing else is necessary. ... We're happy with everything here ... At the moment there aren't any problems. We came here to work, we're settled at work, and for us that's the most important thing ... The second thing was to make friends, and we've got that as well.

Vasylyna, Estonia, 38, Aberdeenshire

We could do with more supermarkets such as Tesco, yes, that would be sufficient. Lidl itself is... you know... But Montrose is close so ... I've got a bus stop right outside my house and there are two buses per hour. Same with return. It's also close to Arbroath. Forfar is close... So it's close everywhere ... 25 minutes by bus.

Bozena, Polish, 56, Angus

I pack my rucksack and go by bus and I can spend the whole day by the sea, I like doing that, calm down a little, have a think. ... For me it's such a place where, I like to sit down and look at the waves and it really helps me relax.

Bozena, Polish, 56, Angus

Deciding to stay

No, we're definitely staying here longer term because, first of all I have nothing to go back to in Poland. I haven't got a flat there and my parents wouldn't be able to help... And 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 and earn my keep

Iza, Polish, 31, Angus

I love my country and everything but unfortunately... Like I speak with one Latvian lady here, when we old, we retire, maybe we will come back, so... Because, like in Scotland you can feel like human, and live not like a... just exist and fight.

Elizaveta, Latvian, 39, Angus

Conclusions

I would like to stay here, and live here in Arbroath [or] in other place, I would like to have a house, and if I would have a decent job and a house where to live, I would like to start my family already and I would stay in here, yeah.

leva, Lithuanian, 24, Angus

I still think about Polish restaurant. It's no a lot here. ... it's in Glasgow and Edinburgh, it's some restaurant. ... But it's no bad idea. ... of course with Scottish food as well, because Scottish people maybe don't like, maybe never try, don't know it's ok or no ... So, my plan for future is set up a restaurant.

Aleksandrea, Polish, 40, Angus