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# Experiences of social security and prospects for long-term settlement among migrants from Central Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union

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## The SSAMIS project

- 4-year ESRC funded research project to study perspectives and experiences of 'social security' amongst migrants from CEE/FSU in Scotland
- **'Social security'** = ways in which migrants are able to make themselves socially, economically, personally and culturally secure in their new environment
- Project aims:
  - to explore links between experiences and perspectives on 'social security' and longer term intentions regarding settlement in Scotland
  - to deliver theoretical and methodological innovation, practical outputs, model for best-practice
- Project team: Glasgow University - Rebecca Kay (PI), Moya Flynn (Co-I), Paulina Trevena (RA); Swansea University - Sergei Shubin (Co-I), Alexa Szoke (RA)
- Diverse range of project partners: local authorities, voluntary section organisations, migrant organisations and groups



## Background and policy context

- Migration movements to UK/Scotland from CEE (2004/2007 EU accession) and FSU accelerated since 2004
- Existing research: focus on England/the South East; policy focused/smaller scale studies in Scotland; larger groups of migrants (e.g. Polish communities);
- Scotland: a particular case within the UK
  - economic and demographic specificities
  - political discussions re need for migration
  - migration as a non-devolved issue but responsibility in terms of social services/community integration within Scotland lying at the Scottish LA level



## Grounds for developing the SSAMIS project

- What is needed: understanding of migrants' experiences, aspirations, longer-term intentions, and interaction with service provision
- SSAMIS project: focus on diversity amongst the migrant communities and across different locations (in terms of context and geographical scale)



## Analytical frameworks (1)

- Social Security
  - anthropological theorisations – the diverse/complex ways in which people produce securities (social, economic, personal, cultural) and mitigate risk through a combination of private/public resources, formal/informal networks, and state/non-state structures
  - post-socialist studies – how historically and culturally informed attitudes affect people's expectations regarding state provision
  - existential aspects of social security (emotions, affects, memories)



## Analytical frameworks (2)

- Structural Inequalities
  - sociology/human geography (welfare studies) – the ongoing relevance of structural inequalities and the ways intersecting social, economic and cultural divisions impact upon access to and experience of social security.
- Transnationalism and migration studies
  - migrants operate within multiple contexts and frames of reference; their social, economic, political, and cultural affinities, identities, and practices transcend national boundaries.



## Research Questions ('academic')

1. How do migrants mitigate risk and produce forms of 'social security'? In the process, how do they use:
  - state and non-state structures and informal networks?
  - public and private resources?
2. To what extent are migrants' experiences and strategies related to 'social security' shaped by material and emotional aspects? How do these relate to longer-term intentions regarding settlement?
3. How are migrant experiences/strategies/intentions shaped by:
  - location and geographical scale?
  - socio-economic diversity (language, gender, class, citizenship, ethnicity, country of origin, migrant status, age)?



## Research Questions ('practical')

4. How can we better accommodate migrants' social security needs in various locations across Scotland?
5. (How) can collaborations between a range of actors (migrants, policy makers, service providers) lead to improvements in policy responses and in service provision at local, regional and national levels?





## Research design and methodology

1. Pilot research – policy overview/analysis, expert interviews with representatives of LAs, NGOs, migrant organisations, service providers (42 interviews)
2. Main fieldwork – extensive ethnographic research in 8 locations across Scotland (incl. observations, 200 in-depth interviews, 40 visual diaries (photo/video))
3. PAR (Participatory Action Research) involving local service providers, policy makers, migrant organisations and individual migrants to further understand problems, develop solutions, policy recommendations, generate ‘action research sets’



## Fieldwork sites

- Cities: Glasgow and Aberdeen
- Midsized towns: Arbroath (Angus) and Peterhead (Aberdeenshire)
- Smaller towns in Angus (Breachin, Montrose) and Aberdeenshire (TBC) plus farms/more remote locations









## Developments

- Completed pilot research (interviews with experts)
- Main research – ongoing (July 2014 - August 2015)
  - Completed research in Aberdeen
  - Brechin/Montrose/Arbroath (Angus) – ongoing
  - Next stages: Glasgow, Aberdeenshire, Angus cont.
- Main research – currently 38 interviews with migrants:
  - In Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire (N=27: F=20, M=7)
    - **13 Hungarians, 9 Poles, 5 other EE: 1 Romanian, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Latvian, 2 Czechs**
  - In Angus (N=11, F=8, M=3)
    - **10 Poles, 1 Latvian**



## Fieldwork challenges

- Language barrier in reaching migrants of certain nationalities
- Finding/accessing sites where migrants gather/work
- Recruitment of migrants (esp. living in more remote areas – time pressures and timing)
- Recruitment for photo/video diaries
- Geographic divisions vs. ‘real life’



## Observations of experts/service providers

- Generally – migrants more knowledgeable about provision than a few years ago; knowledge gained predominantly through personal networks
- Language support as crucial need for service providers and migrants (esp. in rural areas)

*“That is definitely a barrier if you don’t have the funding to employ a dedicated worker who has the language skills because that’s what you really need.”*

- Need for holistic approach to advice/support for migrants





## Challenges faced by service providers

- Funding issues as a key problem for service providers
- Difficulties in reaching various migrant groups (e.g. parents) and building trust
- Difficulties in dealing with certain institutions (e.g. DWP, JobCentre Plus)
- Little interest among EE migrants in voluntary work, forming community organisations, organising/taking part in social events (?)

*“Our experience has been that our EE clients engage for things that are helpful to them but tend not to engage in the social stuff quite as much.”*

but on the other hand – formal barriers to volunteering



## Preliminary findings from main research (1)

- Similarities among EE migrants:
  - motives of migration – predominantly economic (NOT welfare migration)
  - often poor knowledge of English (on arrival and/or later)
  - starting from low-skilled work regardless of qualifications level
  - opinions about the NHS, the education system (primary level), the Job Centre
  - access to/opinions about lg provision for adults: ESOL vs. college
  - strategies for accessing information about formalities, housing, services etc.
  - meet/gather mainly in friend's homes
  - plans for longer-term stay



## Preliminary findings from main research (2)

- Comparison: Hungarians and Poles
  - motives of migration – economic but under different circumstances (e.g. mortgage crisis in Hungary)
  - process of migrating
  - access to community organisations, ethnic shops etc.
  - composition of networks in UK
  - family migration







## Next steps

- Proceed with main fieldwork (to be completed August 2015)
- Ongoing analysis with a view to preparation for PAR
- PAR activities (September 2015 – April 2016)
- Further analysis, writing up, engagement activities
- Completion of project: November 2017