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Dr Eva Duda-Mikulin is an academic with extensive research and lecturing experience. Eva assisted with and/or coordinated a number of qualitative and quantitative research projects within the broad disciplines of social policy and sociology. She previously taught on both undergraduate and postgraduate courses at Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford.

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Gendered Migrations and Precarity in the post-Brexit-vote UK: the Case of Polish Women as Workers and Carers

Abstract

Polish migration to the UK post European Union enlargement has been studied extensively but limited attention has been paid to women and their gendered mobility. In this paper, I argue that it is key to turn attention to women migrants as those who are often responsible for reproductive labour and who raise future generations of workers and citizens. This is pivotal to consider in light of ageing European societies and the need for workers and Brexit. Arguably, precarity is characteristic of contemporary life. This applies to the post-Brexit-vote UK and the uncertainty linked to the future after 2019. Precarity is inevitably characteristic of many migrants' lives often punctuated by a lack of job security which is linked to limited material and psychological wellbeing. For women migrants, this state of affairs is further compounded by their attachment to the private sphere which often constitutes a barrier to their engagement in the paid labour market on the same footing as men. This paper draws on qualitative primary data gathered from 32 Polish women migrants who were initially interviewed in 2012/2013 and subsequently some of them were re-interviewed in 2016/2017.

Keywords: Brexit, migration, gender, women migrants, precarity

Introduction

Migration is an age-old strategy to improve life. Yet, it was only relatively recently, in the 19th century, that migration was recognised as a social phenomenon and consequently investigated (Gabaccia, 2014). Arguably, due to the forces of globalisation, people's mobility between and within national borders became normalised and is a necessity in some work environments (e.g. banking, marketing) and for some people's livelihoods (Vollmer, Sert & İçduygu, 2015; White, 2011). In the past, migration was characterised by a movement of people from point A to point B, now those moves appear to have become more unpredictable (Wallace, 2002). According to some scholars, "the mobility turn" in social sciences emphasises the divide between the largely unwanted migration of (regarded as low-skilled) labour migrants and the more positively perceived mobility of highly-skilled professionals (Faist, 2013). Castles and Miller (2009) note that we now live in the 'age of migration' that is characterised by the acceleration, increased fluidity and unpredictability of international movements. Moreover, a 'feminisation of migration' has been observed, which implies that increasingly more women become migrants (Ibid.), which may not be such a new phenomenon (Zlotnik, 2003).

Additionally, the context of the ageing of the UK population increases the need for foreign-born labour to take on jobs unpopular with British workers (ONS, 2017; Gardiner, 2017). Hence, after Brexit the UK is likely to experience labour shortages in certain areas of the economy (IPPR, 2017). Indeed, some argue that 'Brexodus' has already begun with EU migrants leaving their jobs and the country (Luyendijk, 2017; Swinford, 2017; Agerholm, 2016). This is linked to overwhelming uncertainty (and racial abuse) which followed the Brexit vote (Luyendijk, 2017; Agerholm, 2016). Within this context, it is important to explore gendered migrations and precarity and consider the wider implications of Brexit.

This paper focuses on post 2004 international migratory flows between Poland and the UK, two Member States of the EU[i]. Recent Polish migrants, in the majority, would be classed in the former category (Scullion & Morris, 2010; Düvell & Garapich, 2011; Akhurst *et al*., 2014). In this paper the terms 'migrant' and 'migration' are applied as these are seen as more appropriate due to their long-standing historical usage (Wallace, 2002; Willis, 2010) and the fact that they may be more applicable to labour migrants (Faist, 2013).

This paper is concerned with unpacking the contested interconnections between migration, gender and precarity. This is explored against the backdrop of the post-Brexit-vote UK which is characterised by prevailing uncertainty that creeped in following the triggering of Article 50 in March 2017 (also see Brahic's paper in this volume). This paper aims to critically analyse the process of migration through the lens of precarity taking into account Polish women migrants. This is meant to redress the existing imbalance in migration literature which has for long been gender blind (Yeoh & Ramdas, 2014; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Moreover, the fast-changing political scene in the UK calls for an exploration of how Brexit is likely to affect EU migrants currently resident in the UK. This paper contributes to debates on economic migration to the UK and more specifically gendered migrations of EU women migrants in light of Brexit. It aims to add to discussions on migrants' precarious position started by Waite (2009) and continued by Anderson (2010) and Lewis at al. (2015).

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. First, gender in migration is brought to the fore. Second, Polish migration to the UK is briefly explained. Third, the notion of precarity is explored in relation to: neoliberal reality; migrants' lives; the lives of women migrants; and Brexit. The article ends with conclusions.

Migrant as a gendered agent

Gender is a "force shaping human life" but it has been "regularly sidelined in research on international migration" (Pessar & Mahler, 2003, p. 812; Donato *et al.*, 2006; Lutz, 2010). One's gender is not only related to biological and psychological difference but also social and cultural factors and thus is a social construct. Gender is linked to certain specific characteristics and expectations of women and men in any given society (Oakley, 1972). The concept of gender relates to both men and women, of course, but this paper focuses on women only.

Female migrants began to appear in the literature from the mid-1970s; previously they were often portrayed as "followers, dependants, unproductive persons, isolated, illiterate and ignorant" (Morokvasic 1983, p. 16). More recent studies consider women to be active decision makers (Kindler & Napierała 2010). This paper focuses on women in migration as breadwinners, caregivers and free mobile agents. A male bias in migration theory and literature is still evident (Morokvasic 1983; Lutz 2010; Yeoh & Ramdas 2014). Migrants are often portrayed as male, single and unburdened by a host of gendered responsibilities that have been traditionally and stereotypically assigned to women (Boyd & Grieco 2003; Temple 2011). Even when a migrant has a family, *he* (as often asserted) is repeatedly represented as a migrant in *his* own right, a pioneer (Zlotnik 2003), whilst *his* female partner is frequently depicted as a "tied mover" or a "trailing wife" (Cooke 2001). In this paper, internationally mobile women are considered as agents and represented as such.

Despite increasing numbers of mobile women, migrants are still portrayed as genderless. Worldwide, approximately 48 per cent of all migrants are women (UN 2016); and "over the past thirty years, more females than males migrated to the UK" (Vertovec 2007, p. 1040). Thus, some scholars emphasise the contemporary feminisation of migration[ii] (Castles & Miller 2009), while others argue this has been evident since the 1970s (Zlotnik 2003). More than half of the foreign-born UK population are women (Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2017). Yet,

women migrants are largely neglected in literature on economic migration. This is while the majority of post 2004 migrants to the UK have been characterised as labour migrants (Akhurst *et al.*, 2014).

Precisely because women have for long been viewed as those attending to the needs of others, be they senior relatives, young children or those who fall ill (and men more generally), these gendered expectations make understanding their international moves particularly complex. Moreover, gender ideology prevalent in the country of origin can 'migrate' with women, thus putting an additional strain on them as they settle in the new country but may still be somewhat constrained by the gender roles commonplace in their home country (Duda-Mikulin, forthcoming).

Issues around work-life balance remain particularly problematic for women migrants (Sweet, 2014) (cf. 'double burden', Hochschid & Machung, 1989) (and men; Kilkey, 2010). Women have become increasingly more active in the paid labour market, thus they are less likely to be in a position to balance work with informal caring roles in the home (Daly & Rake, 2003; Płomień, 2009; White, 2011). Those who leave their homes and migrate elsewhere often contribute to the creation of migration care chains (Lutz & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2012).

This paper is important because it is looking at women who continue to be the main caregivers and domestic workers doing the lion's share of responsibilities tied to the private sphere (Keryk, 2010; Boyle, 2013). At the same time there has been a rapid increase in women's employment rates (Fraser, 2013) and this, coupled with ageing populations, may potentially lead to a demographic crisis. Women's increased participation in paid work does not automatically shift the burden of housework on to their male counterparts (Orloff, 2002; Keryk, 2010; Fraser, 2013). Thus, it can be said that women's gender role expectations are contradictory and may be challenging when women become migrants. This is how women's

precarious position within the public and private spheres is framed. This paper focuses on how the abovementioned themes play out in the post-Brexit-vote UK in relation to Polish migrant women.

Polish migration to the UK

In 2004, the original European Union Member States (EU15)[iii] were joined by ten new countries, predominantly from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE); Poland was among them. Following the expansion of the EU, migration from the Accession 8 (A8/EU8[iv]) to the UK was identified as a significant social phenomenon (Pollard, Latorre & Sriskandarajah, 2008). Polish migrants to the UK were the largest migrant community from CEE countries that joined the EU in 2004 (Trevena, 2009). The majority of Polish migrants to the UK have been identified as economic migrants (Sobis, Junjan & de Vries, 2016; Akhurst et al., 2014). At the time of accession, the UK was an attractive destination for economic migrants due to a relatively low unemployment rate, labour shortages and comparatively higher economic performance, particularly in relation to CEE countries (Trevena, 2009).

The UK has witnessed many waves of international immigration over the centuries (Craig et al., 2012), in contract to Poland which has mainly been a country of emigration[v] (White, 2011). Polish migration to the UK post EU accession was "one of the most intensive migration flows in contemporary European history" (Trevena 2009, 1). The UK experienced relatively small A8 immigration prior to the beginning of the 21st century whilst after 2004 it was confronted with "the largest ever wave of immigration" (Drinkwater, Eade & Garapich, 2006, p. 2).

In 2004, the UK was in need of workers to meet labour shortages and foreign labour was seen as a solution to this (Currie, 2008). Still, certain measures (e.g. Worker Registration Scheme;

Habitual Residence Test) were put in place to protect the UK welfare system. While some sources claim that large numbers of A8 workers have left the country in the aftermath of the global economic crisis in 2008; others acknowledge that there is a constant circulation of A8 migrants moving between the UK and their homeland in order to access work (White, 2014). Additionally, substantial numbers appear to be long-term residents settled in the UK (Ibid.). That said, following the Brexit vote, some writers note that 'Brexodus' has begun with EU migrants leaving their jobs and the country (Swinford, 2017; Luyendijk, 2017; Agerholm, 2016) which is linked to the overwhelming uncertainty (and racially-motivated abuse) that followed the result of the referendum (Luyendijk, 2017; Agerholm, 2016).

It was estimated that between one and two million Polish nationals left Poland for the West after 2004; hence the Polish community is said to be the most rapidly growing migrant community in contemporary Britain (Isański & Luczys, 2011; Valenta, 2016). Migrant Polish nationals soon became the single largest foreign born resident group in the UK (Trevena, 2009) and by 2011 the Polish language became the second, after English, most widely spoken language in England (ONS, 2011). Polish migration to the UK is not a new phenomenon; however, it was not until the EU enlargement in 2004 that the idealised stereotype of a Polish migrant worker was coined. It points to a hard-working, educated, compliant worker, who makes few demands on welfare services in the UK (Drummond & Judd, 2011). Thus, Polish migrants represent a distinctive case of large-scale economic migration to the UK enacted within new institutional settings of intra-European migration. Despite the fact that the majority of post-accession migrants to the UK are young male adults (UKBA 2009), it is important to explore women from A8 countries and add to literature on international women migrants and female economic migrants within the context of Brexit.

Methods and participants

This paper offers important insights that are of wider relevance to all those interested in developing a more in-depth understanding of EU migrants' attitudes to their future in the post-Brexit-vote UK and of the experiences of women CEE migrants within the UK. A migrant is understood here as someone who has been resident in a country other than their country of origin for a minimum of six months. A qualitative approach to data was used. The fieldwork took place at two crucial times – before and after the Brexit vote. Initial interviews were carried out between October 2012 and February 2013 which were then supplemented by repeat interviews conducted between June 2016 and January 2017. Strategic purposive sampling was utilised, with some snowballing. Most of the participants were recruited through existing networks in the voluntary community sector. Semi-structured interviews were the chosen research methods. 32 participants were interviewed; some of them participated in repeat interviews. All interviews were audio recorded for the purpose of verbatim transcription and took place in a range of venues including respondents' homes and cafés (Duda-Mikulin, 2014). The data were thematically analysed by systematic reading of the transcripts followed by their organisation into categories of preliminary codes (Braun & Clarke 2006). Through constant comparison, a number of themes were identified, among them feelings of uncertainty about future plans evident before Brexit which were heightened following the result of the referendum. I was guided by a number of ethical principles, namely: respecting the dignity, rights, welfare and safety of research participants; ensuring informed consent and voluntary participation; protecting anonymity; and doing no harm (Olsen, 2012). The study was subject to institutional ethical approval.

All of the research participants were female who migrated to the UK after the EU enlargement in 2004 when Poland joined. The participants, at the time of the first interview,

had been living in the UK for between 6 months and almost a decade. The majority of the interviewees were in their 20s and 30s but some older individuals (aged 48 and 57) were also recruited. The respondents arrived in the UK for a variety of reasons, economic motivations were most prevalent. Some however, followed their partners, came to study or sought adventure before settling down. Most, if not all, of the participants' migrations were meant to be short-term and temporary in nature. However, many remained in the UK beyond what they first anticipated. The reasons behind this were varied, including new relationships, starting a family, perception of comparatively unfavourable situation in their home country and enjoyment of their new lives in the UK. All of the women were in paid work but some were in receipt of state-funded assistance predominantly in the form of Child Benefit.

Precarity – what is it and where did it come from?

Bourdieu (1963) is said to first use the French equivalent *precarite* when describing casual workers in opposition to permanent employees. In this article, the following definition of precarity is seen as particularly useful: "precarity can be understood as literally referring to those who experience precariousness. Precarity, thus, conjures life worlds that are inflected with uncertainty and instability" (Waite, 2009, p. 416). The term precarity is linked to other words with similar meaning like risk, insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability. Yet, it encompasses all of these 'qualities'. Precarity as a term only relatively recently entered English parlance as Waite (2009) asserts. Its meaning can be understood as a condition and a point of mobilisation. The former is seen as characteristic of general neoliberal reality or can specifically relate to work conditions in the paid labour market. The later meaning emphasises a political potential that comes with precarity which is increasingly used to describe capitalist exploitation of workers and which stimulates visions of alternative reality. Often scholars highlight that "the term precarity is less useful as a descriptor of life in general

and more useful when attempting to understand particular groups in society who experience precarious lives as a consequence of their labour market positions" (Waite, 2009, p. 414). Indeed, those who attempted to theorise precarity can be divided into two groups: those who see it as characteristic of embodied experiences of exploitation in post-Fordist societies (Bauman, 2007; Ettlinger, 2007); and those who point to its particular relevance towards conditions and experiences of employment (Anderson, 2007; Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2006). Insecurity is, of course, far from a new experience for the working classes. The 'precariat' was coined to emphasise that the new insecurities felt by the working classes correspond to Marx's proletariat. "The precariat is to postindustrialism as the proletariat was to industrialism" (Foti, 2005, p. 3) and thus is it believed to hold a revolutionary potential.

"Human life is quintessentially transitory (…). Uncertainty and contingency are at the heart of the human condition" (Barbier, 2002, p. 1). The case can be made that our working lives have a huge effect on all other aspects of our lives. The concept of the working poor who are in paid work and in poverty at the same time stresses the wide-ranging effect of people's employment status and conditions on their overall life quality (Patrick, 2017). This is particularly characteristic of neoliberal advanced capitalist economies and labour markets within these. Many analysts argue that precarious employment based on temporary work contracts, job insecurity, zero-hours contracts with no guarantee of future work have become prevalent in post-Fordism (Amin, 1994). These conditions are particularly characteristic of low skilled and low paid jobs but are also evident in relation to other sectors of the economy like higher education, for instance (Reisz, 2015). With regards to the former, these types of jobs often prove unpopular with the native workforce and thus are undertaken by immigrants (IPPR, 2017). Still, it needs to be acknowledged that some individuals may find short-term employment attractive. However, this is only relevant if said individuals can exercise choice

in their employment decisions rather than have no control over the type of employment that is available (Waite, 2009).

Migrants and precarity

Often, if not always, migration is a risk-taking activity and precarity may be the cause of migration and/or the outcome following migration (Moniruzzaman & Walton-Roberts, 2018). Migrant workers provide 'hyperflexible labour' frequently employed through agencies and in temporary work (Anderson, 2010). The sectors of the economy that attract new migrants, in themselves, offer precarious employment (Lewis et al., 2015); while migrants tend to be employed in the so-called '3D' jobs – dull, dirty and dangerous (Favell, 2008). Work in construction may be dangerous and often depends on steady flow of contracts (Ahmad, 2008). Work in hospitality and catering is characterised by unsociable and long working hours (Anderson, 2010). Zero-hours contracts are commonplace and offer no security or guarantee if more work will be available in the future. Additionally, due to a lack of knowledge and awareness and often limited support networks, new entrants are particularly prone to precarious and exploitative work conditions (Pemberton & Scullion, 2010). It can be said that international migration is inherently precarious.

Unsurprisingly, precarious situation prior to migration often constitutes a strong migration motivation for many individuals. Voluntary migrations for work are often motivated by uncertain or insecure work or livelihood in the country of origin. "Precarity is already a well-known issue of the pre-migration phase; it helps push migrants out to seek work and a life overseas" (Piper & Lee, 2016, p. 480). Migrants are prepared to leave their homelands in search of a better life and this has implications for their feelings of (in)security. Whilst voluntary migrants may choose to move to seek or take up work elsewhere, those who are

smuggled or illegal entrants are inevitably in a considerably more precarious position (Ahmad, 2008). Few migrants can afford the luxury of having their livelihoods transferred in their entirety from one country to another and so may need to be prepared for a relative decrease in the standard of living, at least at the beginning. Indeed, migrants are heavily represented in low paid and low skilled jobs undertaking the kind of work that natives are often unwilling to do (IPPR, 2017).

Socio-economic position and class structure is likely to be disrupted by migration as initially economic migrants are likely to experience downward mobility with regards to their position and standard of living (Ryan, 2011). "For many migrants, although not all, movement across space is accompanied by downward social mobility, resulting in a precarious location on the fringes of the British working class" (McDowell, 2008, p. 500). Migrants' class position may be further complicated by the level of their English language skills, occupation and future aspirations (Drinkwater, Eade & Garapich, 2006). This may be true particularly for economic migrants whose goals are related to accumulating financial resources and who therefore may take up positions that do not match their qualifications or experience (cf. Iglicka, 2010).

Migrants typically engage in highly precarious forms of employment that do not provide sufficient social benefits or adequate levels of income (Woolfson, Fudge & Thörnqvist, 2014). Limited social entitlements and insecure employment coupled with a lack of family networks and new unfamiliar setting are challenging for migrants. All of the above results in precarity as migrant workers are particularly susceptible to being locked into categories of work characterised by insecurity (Lewis et al., 2015). This is in the context of a general rise in employment insecurity for everyone (Standing, 2011). Therefore, a combination of financial, social and legal insecurity is characteristic of migrants' experiences. The types of jobs available to migrants are highly precarious whilst their socio-legal status is often too.

Western capitalist countries attract migrants who then tend to be clustered in jobs at the bottom end of labour markets that are routinely precarious (Standing, 2011). Due to neoliberal globalisation, precarity is now widespread and it arguably does not only apply to the paid labour market but almost every aspect of our lives (Bauman, 2007).

> Migration processes and immigration restrictions compound precarity to produce various unfreedoms that can close down any real and acceptable alternative to engage in (severely) exploitative labour (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 588).

Lewis et al. (2015) assert that a migrant worker is subject to 'multiple points of vulnerability' cast in the lower echelons of the paid labour market which in itself is characterised by hierarchies of precariousness. They draw attention to the divide between good and bad migrants. The former relating to EU migrants who are often portrayed as hard-working and not too dissimilar culturally. The latter is in reference to asylum seekers and refugees who in contrast are perceived as bogus and a burden and are in many respects unlike the host population. Lewis et al. (2015) argue that migrants are characterised by 'hyper-precarity' due to multidimensional constraints that stem from their labour market position, socio-legal status, transnational social reproduction and gender relations. Hyper-precarity is a creation of neoliberal labour markets and increasingly more restrictive immigration regimes. This occurs whilst migrants' perception of temporariness encourages them to take on low-skilled, low-waged and insecure jobs (Anderson, 2010).

Women migrants and precarity

> Like male migration, female migration is motivated by a complex web of social relations. In this sense precarity takes on multifaceted meanings in cultural, social,

and economic terms and is reflective of a multi-layered state of crisis (Piper & Lee, 2016, p. 480).

There are differences between how migrant men and migrant women experience the process of migrating which in itself is a gendered activity (Lutz, 2011). Those who become mobile and who also bear certain gendered 'responsibilities' will encounter different, in many cases more complex, difficulties in their pursuit of a better life abroad.

"Migrants are exposed to multi-layered forms of precarity in and beyond labour markets throughout the entire migration cycle" (Piper & Lee, 2016, p. 474). As the authors assert (Ibid.), these forms of precarity relate to both male and female migrants and although they primarily focus on marriage migrants in Asia, many of the issues they touch on are relevant to A8 migrants to the UK. Piper and Lee (2016) consider reproductive labour as constituting new forms of precarity outside of the paid labour market. This can be added to migrants' already precarious status in economic, legal and social terms as shown above. Moreover, cultural norms may also impede women migrants from reaching job security as patriarchal systems may stand in their way. Studies indicate that migrant women, in contrast to men, are often over-represented in the low-paid and low-skilled occupations (Castles & Miller, 2009). Indeed, migrant women tend to be employed in irregular and insecure employment such as domestic labour sector, care work and agricultural work. In the absence of or limited access to sufficient social safety networks, women migrants are among the most precarious of workers (Lutz, 2011).

> Patriarchal family as the locus of the reproduction of labour power, characterised under neoliberalism by the inadequacy of public service provisioning, which, in turn, results in a preponderance of women working in precarious sectors such as care work or housework (Piper & Lee, 2016, 476).

Additionally, women migrants tend to be sandwiched between care responsibilities in relation to their home and the new host countries. This paper draws on Ryan et al.'s (2009) concept of 'double caring responsibilities' as an illustration of gendered expectations that cross national borders. This term demonstrates the need to balance care priorities in two geographical locations which confirms the gendered nature of migration and the problematic character of women's migrations. Polish women have been found to appreciate the relatively more extensive welfare state in the UK which provides more security when it comes to raising a family whilst the comparatively more flexible paid labour market enables women to also participate (Duda-Mikulin, forthcoming).

One of the interviewees, Ksenia, expressed her worries about her and her family's future post Brexit. She talked about her disappointment with the way EU migrants are now treated despite their long-term contributions. She felt betrayed by her host country and the fact that in spite of her best intentions and enjoying her newly-built life in the UK, she found herself in a precarious position with regards to rights and entitlements. Having had her first child in the UK with her British partner, she now worried about the family's future.

> *I'm disappointed because I was very pleased to be in the EU but since the UK decided to leave I'm still an immigrant without British passport so I'm vulnerable. I'm worried about what will happen next as they haven't decided yet. I might have to apply for residency or citizenship which is costly. Now that I started a family here and I have a child here, that's linked to new worries. Will I have problems accessing the NHS or getting social assistance? I've been here for 10 years but I don't know if I'll have equal rights same as Brits. I work here, I've been paying taxes for the last 10 years and I never asked for benefits. I don't know how it'll all work. I have worries and I'm disappointed and I'm concerned about my child and his future. That said he'll have dual citizenship but my position is more uncertain. We're waiting for a*

decision and I'll probably have to act fast, stressed about all the changes as changes

never come easily but we'll see.

Piper and Lee (2016) argue that reproductive labour and care are characterised by an element of crisis. Because women are assumed as the natural providers of unpaid work and care in the private sphere, this has obvious implications for their participation in the paid labour market. The public and private divide is often seen as the root of the problem for women (Walby, 1994; Lister, 2003; Lewis, 2009). Women are primarily in charge of the private, hence incapable of engaging in the public on the same footing as men. They can, of course, participate in the public but only having first mitigated the loss of their domestic and care work in the private sphere (Anderson, 2000). Care-giving is unappreciated even though it is an inevitable part of everyone's life (Orloff, 2009; Erel, 2012). The difficulty with the two spheres is that there are different values attached to the male and female domestic work. The former is often perceived as skilled whereas the latter unskilled, seen as coming naturally to women (Kilkey, 2010). Women can resolve the work-life conflict by either having fewer children or engaging in less demanding jobs (Łobodzińska, 1996). It is unlikely they can have it all (cf. 'great expectations', Lanning, Bradley, Darlington & Gottfried, 2013). When women disappear from the labour market, they disappear from the analysis of paid and unpaid work and welfare (Lewis, 1992). Further, even though "caring is now understood as work" (Lutz, 2011, p. 6) women still undertake the majority of it in Poland (Keryk, 2010) and the UK (Boyle, 2013). Care work is a highly gendered activity, and a "feminisation of the caring sector" is evident (Daly & Rake, 2003, p. 56).

Across European countries women experience 'double burden'; hence they find themselves in a generally precarious position. "Women are pressured to serve dual roles – to participate in the labour market and carry out reproductive labour at home – without adequate social support" (Piper & Lee, 2016, p. 488). Additionally, women who become migrants may be

able to improve their overall situation by crossing international borders but this carries with it the possibility of further complications related to "double caring responsibilities" (Ryan et al., 2009), "dual location households" (Smith, 2011), "flying grandmas", "Euro orphans" (White, 2011), and "transnational motherhood" (Lutz, 2011) as illustrated in Kornelia's account (also see Pourmehdi's paper on growing transnationalism, this issue).

I'd like to find someone and just live here [UK], stay here. But I'm most worried about my parents because they live alone. And it's just this one thing that worries me, because they will only get older. That's why my plans here that I want to stay here for good, this is what I want, but what will happen and what I will have to do, only time will tell.

- So the way I understand it is that you think you might have to go back?

I think there might be this issue.

Post-Brexit-vote precarity

To the uncertainties explored above in relation to migrants and women migrants, doubts around Brexit with migrants' social rights, entitlements and legal rights under threat should be added. The UK population has experienced a steady corrosion of welfare rights and entitlements with increasing welfare conditionality particularly since austerity measures were introduced following the global economic crisis (Dwyer & Wright, 2014). In the context of the Brexit vote in the UK and the new President of the United States of America, precarity has arguably become a fixed condition of societies worldwide where uncertainty does not only affect our working lives but it has penetrated almost every area of our livelihoods. Additionally, this is heightened for migrants and for women migrants whether we consider

the paid labour market or the general picture. Tightening of immigration regimes has meant greater conditionality with regards to migrants' welfare rights (Kennedy, 2014).

Olivia, a long-term resident in the UK explained that she feels betrayed and angry with the British government for the lack of protection, assurance or care about the future of EU citizens resident in the UK post Brexit. Olivia asserted that she feels like a "*second rate person*" and that the UK government is "*two-faced*" as "*they use us when they need us, then open borders, now they want to close them*".

> *I was really surprised by the outcome. It shows that people's opinions were emotional rather than rational. The propaganda beforehand didn't help. Brexit showed an ignorance, lack of knowledge how Britain and EU are connected. As a person still living here I feel insecure, let down and disappointed. I feel used, tricked. I feel like I'm unable to live here fully as I don't trust what's next. Living here for 14 years I showed great integration with society, in the same time remaining proudly Polish. I don't want to feel being pushed to apply for British passport. I contributed enough of my youth, taxes and hard work. It's just not fair. I don't want to feel like a second class citizen. So far the future in UK looks gloomy, unstable, changeable. I build my life here for 14 years and it will be hard to leave it. But if I'm pushed to do it I will get back. The trust is broken. I team up with the rest of the world and I perceive Brexit as embarrassment.*

Kay and Trevena (2017) assert that the feeling of insecurity is prevalent among CEE communities in the UK. Thus, the Brexit vote could have only added to these feelings of uncertainty as full legal protections for EU nationals are yet to be ensured by the British government. The legal insecurity experienced following the Brexit vote in the UK is widespread among EU migrants to the UK. The British Prime Minister, Theresa May, is yet

to provide clear and comprehensive information on the future of EU workers resident in the UK. May proposed a 'settled status' as a new way for migrants to regulate their stay but this was not approved or indeed welcomed by the European Commission. Unsurprisingly, migrants feel uncertain about their future and unable to make plans (Luyendijk, 2017; Agerholm, 2016). Despite the fact that the UK government seems to be eager to provide assurances, the few mistakes they have made tell a different story. The wrongly sent letters asking EU migrants to the UK to prepare to leave the country is one such example (Busby, 2017; Home Office News Team, 2017). Linked to the above is the heightened sense of insecurity, anxiety and stress for all those who may be affected, predominantly EU nationals in the UK and UK nationals in the EU (e.g. some 1 million British *expats*[vi] on the Spanish Costas; Ahmed, 2015).

Additionally, there has been an unprecedented rise in hate crime towards migrants recorded across the country since the Brexit vote (Civitas, 2016). All the major media (the BBC, 2017; Channel 4 News, 2016; Channel 4 Dispatches, 2016; Lyons, 2016 for the Guardian; England, 2017 for the Independent) documented this rise in the aftermath of the EU referendum. Additionally, fears over the legal status of EU workers in Britain have led to employment exploitation (Whitehead, 2017). This is one of the reasons behind migration activists such as Nicolas Hatton (see 'the3million') starting campaigns with the aim to fight for and protect the rights of migrants. The truth is that there are currently more questions than answers in relation to Brexit and the future after the divorce.

Kornelia, similarly to other respondents, shared her thoughts on how insecure she feels with regards to the right to live and work in the UK post Brexit. She explained that due to similar uncertainties that followed the referendum result many of her friends already decided to leave the country.

Of course I feel insecure, especially since no one knows the details of how Brexit will impact on us… I don't know what rights I'll have regarding work or if there'll be additional obstacles in terms of buying a flat or a house. Many of my friends are thinking of going back to Poland. People apply for permanent residency but no one knows if that's even going to help… The worst thing is that I feel like we're not taken seriously. The UK government might come up with new rules and regulations to do with our rights in the UK post Brexit and we won't be able to do anything about it. And the fact that we still know nothing is disrespectful if I'm honest.

The substantial increase of EU migrants seeking to regulate their stay in the UK suggests they now feel the need to attempt to secure their future (Blinder, 2017). This points to heightened precarity after the Brexit vote (see also Brahic, this volume). Many EU nationals already applied for permanent residence (PR) and British citizenship (naturalisation) which suggests they consider staying for good (Travis & Stewart, 2016) while many others are planning to leave (Wood, 2017). The process of obtaining PR has undergone a number of changes but remains lengthy with the requirement to present reams of documents from the 5-year qualifying period (e.g. P60s/payslips/bills for every year) and so may be difficult for some (e.g. disabled migrants, Huijg, 2017*)*. This could be the case for women migrants who are not engaged in the paid labour market as they are homemakers. They may experience trouble in regulating their stay due to a lack of continuity of employment. The same can be said about those in unregulated employment (e.g. cleaning, construction, care work) or those doing cash-in-hand jobs. They may find it difficult to collect the required substantial documentation for PR. Those women migrants who are in part time work or on zero-hours contracts may find it difficult to secure their residence. The considerable increase in EU nationals looking for clarity and more security and to legally regulate their stay created a demand for immigration advice. In response to this UK Citizenship for European Nationals (UKCEN) was established

and provides pro bono legal assistance to all those unclear about their rights in light of Brexit. To demonstrate the demand which signifies heightened feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, UKCEN by December 2017 provided support and information to more than 17,000 EU/EEA citizens and their families seeking to obtain UK citizenship and/or PR certification (UKCEN, 2018).

Migrants' lives, particularly after the Brexit vote, are characterised by widespread uncertainty. This newly defined form of precarity is rooted in the exigencies of neoliberal globalisation and globally networked capitalism.

> Although migrant labourers as a category should not be considered as the new precariat, there may be particular spatiotemporal contexts where the activism and mobilisation of precarious migrant labourers indicates their precariat potential (Waite, 2009, p. 426).

Meanwhile, "London's economy is now dependent upon the labour power of low-paid workers from across the world" (Wills et al., 2010, p. 29). Positions such as cleaners, carers, builders, cooks, waiters, to name just a few, in great majority, are outsourced from outside the UK, often from the EU (IPPR, 2017). Additionally, Poland for instance recovered quite well after the 2008 crash and now has a record low unemployment of 4.7% compared to the UK at 4.3% (Eurostat, 2017). This will no doubt make it more attractive to post-2004 emigrants and may stimulate return migrations. As already noted, some claim that a 'Brexodus' has already begun (Luyendijk, 2017; Agerholm, 2016).

Conclusion

This paper explores gendered migrations of Polish women migrants to the UK within the context of the post-Brexit-vote UK. A migrant is a gendered agent and due to the fact that

half of migrants worldwide are female, it is pivotal to explore their experiences as those entangled in complex gendered responsibilities related to care work that may migrate with them. Polish migrants exemplify a unique case of a large-scale economic migration to the UK that was enacted within new structural settings of intra-European migration. The abovementioned themes are considered through the lens of precarity particularly after the Brexit vote. Migration is a risk-taking activity and thus migrants are prone to precarious work conditions and/or livelihoods. Precarious position of women migrants in relation to the paid labour market is noteworthy. Polish migrants resident in the UK are characterised by an uncertain situation which stems from the result of the referendum of 2016. Their rights to welfare and work post 2019 are still to be confirmed or indeed decided. A combination of the above results in 'multiple marginality' or 'hyper-precarity' for some while others plan to leave or legally regulate their stay in an attempt to gain greater security for the future.

Newly found precarity penetrated everyone's lives in light of recent events in the UK and the USA. This state of uncertainty is heightened for migrants as moving away from one's country of origin is always a risky activity. Labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe who moved to the UK following the EU enlargement in 2004 may now wish to return. Those who occupy low-skilled low-waged jobs that offer no security will no doubt start to feel the pull of 'home' but may not that easily reintegrate upon return (Duda-Mikulin, 2017). In light of a lack of clarity or guidance on what EU migrants' rights and entitlements may be post Brexit, migrants' legal status and socio-economic livelihoods remain highly precarious. This is arguably heightened for women migrants who may have a weaker attachment to the paid labour market and so fewer contributions and entitlements. This coupled with austerity measures, greater welfare conditionality with gradual erosion of social rights and legal protections results in overwhelming precariousness for all.

It is important to recognise that the UK may lose a large proportion of its labour force and future workers while Poland may struggle to accommodate the returns of their citizens. Olivia asserted: "*I love the UK but it broke my heart and I will leave*". While we live in the "age of migration" (Castles & Miller, 2009) people's flows may not be easy to predict or manage but they will be even more difficult, if at all possible, to be stopped. The question remains: should we get used to the new precarious reality punctuated by insecure work and rolling back of state-provided protections or will this be a temporary drawback while the UK works out its approach to migration management post withdrawal from the EU?

Acknowledgements

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[i] Although, on the 23rd June 2016 the UK voted to leave the EU and Article 50, which formally started the process of Brexit, was triggered on the 29th March 2017, the UK will remain in the EU at least until early 2019.

[ii] Some scholars (e.g. Castles & Miller, 2009; Kilkey, Lutz & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2010; Lutz, 2011) note that female migrants are on the increase which is mainly due to women migrants undertaking domestic and/or care work in economically more prosperous countries. Others however (e.g. Zlotnik, 2003), argue that the number of women migrants has been rising steadily since the 1970s. What has been named a 'feminisation of migration' is nonetheless noteworthy as it brings attention to women migrants who are considered in this paper.

[iii] EU15 – „old" EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden) including the UK

[iv] EU8 – „new" EU Member States which joined the EU on 1st May 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)

[v] Although, it is increasingly portrayed as a destination country too (cf. Keryk, 2010).

[vi] Rather interestingly, UK migrants within the EU are often referred to as 'expats' and not migrants. The term 'expats' has more positive connotations and demonstrates the divide between what is perceived as good and bad immigration.