Editorial Introduction: Relocating East–West Migration and (Im)Mobilities

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This introductory paper sets the scene for the special issue. It describes the rationale for the collection – which has to do with the multiple geopolitical, economic and health-related events of the past 30 years – and summarises some of the overarching changes in East–West migration dynamics within and beyond Europe over this period. However, this introductory article and the nine papers that follow also challenge and nuance the predominant East–West framing of recent intra-European migration. They identify numerous other trends: return migration and immigration into CEE countries, intra-CEE migrations and a range of issues relating to the impacts of migration on children and youth.

Keywords: East–West migration, return migration, children and youth, geopolitical change in Europe, migration motives

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Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the removal of the Iron Curtain and, even more so, since the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007, the East–West axis came to dominate the geography of migration flows in Europe. Succeeding this epochal geopolitical change were a series of economic, political and health-related events – the 2008 financial crisis, the so-called migration and refugee crisis of 2015–2016, the 'Brexit' referendum of 2016 and its aftermath, the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020–2021 and, most recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, launched in early 2022 – all of which have had, and are still having, profound effects on migration and mobility trends within and beyond Europe.

The above constellation of geopolitical and economic events and their consequences for ongoing migration dynamics provide the setting for the nine papers that follow in this special issue. The papers are a careful selection from the 42 presented to an international conference hosted by the University of Sussex on 15–16 November 2021. The conference was entitled 'New Dynamics of East–West Migration and Migrant Integration Within Europe and Beyond' and was organised as part of the academic activities of the Horizon 2020 MIRNet project.[1] For most of the approximately 50 attendees, this was their first in-person conference for more than 18 months, due to the suspension of 'normal' face-to-face collective events during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the conference followed a mode which has latterly become the 'new normal', which is to organise such events in a hybrid fashion, with a mixture of in-person and online presentations and discussions.

Whilst the East–West migration axis remains the dominant organising frame for the special issue, the papers that follow challenge, broaden and nuance this 'compass migration' and also draw attention to new temporalities of migration and (im)mobility. On a world scale, compass migrations are those which are framed by global macro-regions of North, South, East and West, including migrations which take place within such regions, for instance South–South or intra-East.[2] The papers collectively stress the multi-directionality and multi-temporality of new migration and mobility flows unfolding in recent decades, whereby geographical and typological diversity and the spontaneous emergence of new migrations have been key features of the new map of European migration (King and Okólski 2019).

Three themes structured the conference and are represented in the papers that follow:

Theme 1: From emigration to immigration and fluid mobilities
Theme 2: From emigration to return migration
Theme 3: Children, youth and the 1.5/2nd generation

Each of these represents a different kind of migration transition characteristic of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. The first is arguably the most fundamental: the 'migration turnaround' from net emigration to net immigration which tends to occur when a country or region experiences economic growth and modernisation. Interestingly, in the CEE region we observe a parallel set of geopolitical, economic and migration transitions which are all closely interrelated. The collapse of the communist or state-socialist regimes in the region unlocked the floodgates to emigration which had been closed for most of the postwar period. In the words of one book on the subject, Europe became 'a continent moving West' (Black, Engbersen, Okólski and Panţîru 2010).

Pretty soon, however, these initial emigration waves led to other mobilities, including return migration (some of which was automatically enfolded into regimes of shuttle and circular migration) and migrations into and within the CEE region driven by labour shortages in the more prosperous CEE countries (e.g. Poland, Czechia, Slovenia) and income gaps between them and poorer countries to the east and south (e.g. Ukraine,

Moldova, Albania). Whilst most of these CEE-focused migrations can be considered labour migrations motivated by the need to find work and access higher incomes, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused a massive refugee flow since early 2022.

Eurostat data[3] for the CEE11 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) for 2011–2020 allow us to be more precise about recent migration trends, bearing in mind the limitations of such official figures in capturing migration in an era of free movement. The data reveal that, at an aggregate level, the migration balance moved from net emigration to net immigration in 2018, largely due to return migration rather than immigration from other countries. Apparently, the large-scale, indeed dramatic, emigration to wealthier 'Western' EU countries that predominated after free-movement rights were extended to the new 'Eastern' member states is becoming substituted by a pattern of temporary mobility whereby many migrants return after a few years abroad. Meantime, emigration has continued at quite high levels throughout the decade. Immigration from other EU countries remains relatively low. However, the wage gap and difference in living standards are already notable with the non-EU countries in the wider CEE region, with immigration developing from countries such as Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, especially to Poland and Czechia.

Given that most of the papers that follow in this special issue feature Poland and/or Romania, a few specific remarks on the statistical migration trends in these two countries are in order, also because these two countries are by far the largest in population terms in the CEE11 group and their migration profiles are quite distinct from each other. Table 1 gives the figures. Poland's annual emigration figures remained high throughout most of the decade in question, only dipping below 200,000 in the final three years 2018–2022, when the net migration rate turned from negative to positive. The in-migration to Poland was made up of three different flows: return migration, immigration from other EU countries and immigration from non-EU countries, notably Ukraine. For Romania, the trends over the decade show a different pattern: continuous high emigration with peaks of 230,000 to 240,000 in the years 2017–2019; and a constant profile of net emigration throughout the decade, with highs of -60,000 to -70,000 during the years 2015–2018. The in-migration flows to Romania are largely made up of returnees.

Table 1. Migration trends in Poland, Romania and all CEE11 countries 2011–2020

Year	Poland		Romania		CEE11	
	Emigration	Net migration	Emigration	Net migration	Emigration	Net migration
2011	265,798	-108,739	195,551	-47,866	649,333*	-232,383
2012	275,603	-58,057	170,186	-2,920	633,232	-101,093
2013	276,446	-56,135	161,755	-8,109	617,999	-92,563
2014	268,299	-46,024	172,871	-36,836	639,691	-101,884
2015	258,837	-40,690	194,718	-61,923	678,023	-132,767
2016	236,441	-28,139	207,578	-70,123	693,850	-127,528
2017	218,492	-9,139	242,193	-64,758	705,796	-84,045
2018	189,794	+24,289	231,661	-59,083	644,436	+39,738
2019	180,594	+46,055	233,736	-31,314	697,159	+109,920
2020	161,666	+48,949	186,818	-41,299	560,090	+116,417

Note: *Excluding Bulgaria.

Source: Authors' elaboration of Eurostat data.

Although geo-historical comparisons are often problematic, the experience of the CEE region in terms of migration transitions and turnarounds has some parallels with what happened in the Southern European countries a generation earlier (King, Fielding and Black 1997). Here the geopolitical transition was not the collapse of communism but the demise of fascist-military dictatorships in Portugal, Spain and Greece in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by accession to the European Community in its 'southern enlargement' in the 1980s. Italy had been a founder-member of the Common Market but its economic and migration profile resembled the other Southern European countries, transitioning from mass emigration during the 1950s and 1960s to substantial return migration following the oil crisis of 1973–1974 and then expanding immigration flows thereafter. Since the 1980s and accelerating during the 1990s and 2000s, Southern Europe has attracted large-scale immigration from many global source regions – North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South and East Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. Within Europe, large East–South compass migrations took place, most notably from Romania to Spain and Italy. It remains to be seen whether the CEE experience will fully repeat what happened on the southern flank of Europe but some signs of similarity are already present.

'Emigration to return' and 'emigration to immigration' are essentially geographically based temporal trajectories which, in many countries, combine together to flip the balance from net out-migration to net in-migration. A more demographic sequence is found in this special issue's third theme, which looks at children and other components of what Conway and Potter (2009) have termed the 'next generations' of migration. Following the pioneering volume of Assmuth, Hakkarainen, Lulle and Siim (2018), children are imbricated in the dynamics of migration in the CEE region in multiple ways: as children 'left behind' by their migrating parents; as children either taken abroad by their parents or born abroad to immigrant parents (the 1.5 and second generations); as youth and adolescents who 'follow' their already-migrated parents; and as children who are caught up in return migration when families decide to relocate to their 'home' countries. As we shall see in the papers that follow, the CEE region offers a fertile research terrain for studying the involvement of children in migration and migration's impact on them.

Introducing the papers

The papers in this special collection are sequenced according to the three themes listed above (namely emigration to immigration, emigration to return migration and first-generation to post-migration generations), albeit some of the papers relate to more than one theme. The first paper, by *Anne White*, is based on her keynote lecture which opened the conference. She critiques the notion of compass migrations and opens up a window on the varieties of migration and mobility which are observable in the CEE region. She deploys the well-established concepts of transnationalism, mobility and integration to make sense of the complexities of contemporary migration, treating each of the three concepts as a continuum along which individual migrants can be located at discrete points in time depending, amongst other things, on their length of stay in the destination country and their stage in the life-cycle. Empirically, White draws on her ongoing interview-based research in Poland with two groups of migrants – Polish returnees and Ukrainian migrants – thereby addressing two of the migration transitions listed above, namely from emigration to immigration and from emigration to return migration. Her focus on Ukrainian migrants in Poland is a good example of the 'East–East' migrations emerging within the CEE region.

White uses the overarching concept of 'migranthood' to document how her two target groups talk about their experiences of 'being a migrant' and, in particular, to explore how their experiences and views are either shared or deviate between them. Using migranthood as both an existential condition and as a form of social identity (both self-identity and ascribed by others), opens up possibilities for an intersectional approach

incorporating social class, ethno-national origin, gender, age and citizenship, amongst others. White's overall empirical conclusion is suggestive of similar comparative research in other migratory and geographical contexts. She finds that, whilst returnee Poles can draw on their own experiences of migranthood to appreciate the migratory lives of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland, their empathy for them seemingly has its limits. It veers between a full understanding of shared transnational experiences and challenges on the one hand and, on the other, drawing hierarchical differences between themselves and the immigrant Ukrainians.

The next paper, by *Kseniya Homel*, fits directly into Theme 1, 'from emigration to immigration' and looks at the entrepreneurial experiences of Belarusian and Ukrainian women in Poland who specialise in the beauty and cosmetology sector. Homel's main theoretical stance is to view migrant entrepreneurship as a socially embedded practice. This is explored via in-depth interviews in which the author extracts narrative material relating to the participants' use of social networks in developing 'entrepreneurial agency'. The article can lay several claims to originality. First, it provides another example, alongside White's, of the emerging phenomenon of intra-CEE migration. Second, it focuses on female migrant entrepreneurs – an under-researched group in the literature on transnational migrants' businesses. Third, it employs a 'mixed embeddedness' approach (following Kloosterman and Rath 2001) to examine both the structural factors impacting on migrant entrepreneurial activity and the agentic role of migrants' social capital in developing business clienteles and in women's self-empowerment as specialists in the beauty sector. Fourth, it explores how the participants navigated the Covid-19 crisis, which closed down all beauty salons in Poland during April–May 2020; Homel's interviews were carried out later in 2020, after the salons had re-opened. Social relationships with other migrant women and with co-ethnic and Polish clients enabled the participants to ride out the enforced closure of their businesses. They used their expanding social networks to develop their businesses in two dimensions: moving their business from their apartments to commercial premises and expanding from the co-ethnic migrant market to catering to the 'mainstream' Polish clientele.

The third of the substantive papers – by *Davide Bertelli, Marta Bivand Erdal, Anatolie Coşciug, Angelina Kussy, Gabriella Mikiewicz, Kacper Szulecki and Corina Tulbure* – covers a broader remit. Ostensibly about the relationship between property ownership in migrants' home countries and their intentions to return there, it actually explores a wide range of (im)mobility practices beyond a simple return to base. Hence it links the 'fluid mobilities' of Theme 1 with Theme 2 on return. This article is also geographically wide-ranging, based on 80 interviews with Polish and Romanian migrants in Oslo and Barcelona. The paper poses and answers the question: How does transnational property ownership intersect with migrants' future mobility (and immobility) intentions? Two scenarios can be envisaged. One is that owning a property in the home country, often bought, built or enlarged from savings and remittances earned from working abroad, is an indication of a future commitment to return and live in that property. The authors call this the 'return hypothesis'. The second scenario is almost the reverse. Instead, the homeland property is seen as a 'second home' and as a base for visiting the home country; so, visiting substitutes for return. Bertelli *et al*. find evidence to support both scenarios, as well as other functions – for instance as a hedge against the forced need to return at some unforeseen future date or as an investment to be rented out.

In terms of take-away findings, the most important one is to challenge the 'return hypothesis'. Property ownership is not a predictor of return migration. Of the 32 participants who own property in Poland or Romania, 18 have no intention of returning, 7 have concrete plans to return and 7 are undecided. Another key finding is that most of the properties stand empty except for occasional use as a base for visits; only a few are rented out for an income. Nevertheless, the emotional resonance of these home-country properties is considerable – as a link to home and a kind of 'presence in absence', as well as being a signifier of a materially 'successful' migration. On the other hand, many interviewees stated their preference for property ownership in Barcelona or Oslo, as an investment for their future integration and long-term settlement there.

The next two papers are about return migration as reality rather than an intention. In the first of this pair, *Remus Gabriel Anghel, Ovidiu Oltean and Alina-Petronela Silian* explore the heterogeneity of return experiences in a small multi-ethnic town in central Romania, comparing the return outcomes of three groups: ethnic Romanians (the majority population), ethnic Germans and Roma. The authors cross-cut this triple inter-ethnic comparison with a threefold temporal sequence, looking at how returnees have been able to reintegrate socio-economically over the three post-socialist decades of the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, each decade marked by a different stage in the economic evolution of the town.

The 1990s were a period of economic chaos in the wake of the post-socialist transition. It was a decade of emigration but of rather little return migration; yet, paradoxically, some of those who did return were successful in that they were able to invest their savings in a newly emerging market where property and business development costs were very low. Ethnic Germans were the main returnees in this period, often as seasonal returnees taking advantage of their enhanced social status and lucrative business opportunities. Emigration escalated during the 2000s, helped by easier access to EU destination countries, especially Spain, Italy, France and Germany. The town's economy, although still hampered by structural problems, was boosted by foreign investment and the growth of employment and business opportunities for returnees. Most emigrants and returning migrants in this decade were majority-ethnic Romanians, plus a very small number of Roma. Roma emigration and return grew rapidly in the 2010s, even if their livelihoods, both in migration and as returnees, were precarious compared to ethnic Romanians, who returned in larger numbers to take advantage of this decade's more prosperous economic context. The authors' findings demonstrate the continuing marginalisation and precarity of the town's Roma population, often reduced to temporary jobs in the informal sector abroad and with only minimal prospects of getting rewarding jobs upon return, owing to their low human and social capital and ongoing discrimination. By contrast, ethnic Romanian returnees became some of the most dynamic entrepreneurs within the town's revived economy.

The second paper devoted exclusively to return has a much narrower but no less interesting focus. *Anatolie Coşciug* writes on Romanian returnees who set up businesses in the transnational importation of used vehicles. Coşciug gives unique insights into this particular instance of transnational entrepreneurship, little researched but visible to any observant traveller on the motorways of Central Europe who notices the frequency of Romanian trucks with second-hand vehicles on board. Coşciug initially divides his 50-strong interview sample into two groups: those who become entrepreneurs because this is the only way to escape unemployment – 'necessity entrepreneurs' – and those who see and grasp the market potential for selling imported used cars in Romania – 'opportunity entrepreneurs'. This division is found to be too simplistic, as many individuals plying this trade do so for multiple motives, including a family history of business activity or experience with servicing and repairing vehicles, as well as other social-capital factors operating in both the host country and Romania.

This kind of research on specialised entrepreneurship which grows out of an experience of 'migranthood' (to use Anne White's favoured term) has great potential to be developed in other sectors. Moreover, the gender dimension should not pass unnoticed. Trading second-hand cars is overwhelmingly a male business and this offers a counterpoint to Homel's paper, summarised above, where the Ukrainian and Belarusian beauty-salon entrepreneurs in Poland are all migrant women.

The final group of papers focuses on children and youth, either as migrants or affected by the migration of their parents. Four papers investigate the positionality of children and adolescents in an instructive sequence: as children 'left behind' by their parents' migration; as adolescents who rejoin their already-migrated parents abroad; as second-generation youth growing up abroad but who then onward-migrate to another European country; and as children taken back with their parents when family return migration takes place.

The first article in this set, by *Georgiana Udrea and Gabriela Guiu*, focuses on the impact of parents' labour migration on the social, communication and educational experiences of left-behind children in Romania. The paper reflects the under-researched reality that one of the major consequences of the mass-scale emigration from Romania and other CEE countries is that large numbers of children are growing up without the irreplaceable support of one or both of their parents. The empirical base of the paper is 21 interviews with adolescents aged 16–18 in rural Oltenia, south-west Romania. The research is designed to answer three questions: (i) What are the adolescents' perceptions of the reasons why their parents emigrated? (ii) How do the youthful participants communicate and maintain relationships with others during their parents' absence? (iii) What are the perceived effects of parental migration on the children's school experience and performance?

Udrea and Guiu initially outline two outcomes of 'left-behindness'. The first is a set of negative experiences: loneliness, a sense of abandonment, poor communication skills, social marginalisation and demotivation to do well at school due to a lack of parental support and guidance. The second scenario posits more positive outcomes: better material standards fed by remittances, strong support from other family members (grand-parents, aunts and uncles etc.), enhanced agency to organise their lives, good motivation to self-educate and do well in school and a desire to repay the sacrifice of their parents. The balance between these two outcomes is seen to vary from one individual to another, dependent on a number of factors: the age of the child when parental migration took place, the gender of the child and, most important of all, whether the migration was of one or both parents and, if one, whether it was the father or the mother. The most problematic scenarios occur when the child was left behind at a young age (so they hardly 'know' their parents), when both parents migrated or when only the mother emigrated so the care and child-raising responsibilities are left in the hands of the father. All respondents appreciate the reasons behind their parents' migration – to improve the material standard of living of the family as a whole – but, when it comes to envisioning their own futures, they plan not to take the emigration path but aim to do well enough in their education to develop a career in Romania.

The next paper presents the logical sequence to the previous one. *Oksana Shmulyar Gréen, Charlotte Melander and Ingrid Höjer* study the migration of the CEE-born '1.5 generation' to Sweden to join their previously migrated parents there – and how these young people express their memories, feelings and connections to 'place'. Here the 1.5 generation are defined as foreign-born children who migrate to a new country before the age of 18. Due to their migration at a formative age, they are hypothesised to experience duality and possible confusion and conflict in their identities, social lives and attachment to place. Following Tyrrell, Sime, Kelly and McMellon (2019), their 'in-betweenness' is expressed across three dimensions: (i) between origin and destination country, (ii) between youth and adulthood and (iii) between the majority and their minority culture in the host society. Shmulyar Gréen *et al.* focus their analysis on place-making processes via an innovative methodology which involves two-stage qualitative interviews with 18 adolescents and young adults from Poland and Romania who immigrated to Sweden as children. This is combined with a visual component based on participants' drawings and photographs of places that hold 'meaning' for them.

The findings emphasise the importance of place-meaning for these young mobile people, who actively preserve their memories and ongoing connections to the distinctive places of their childhoods in Poland or Romania as well as demonstrating strong attachments to new post-migration localities in Sweden. Of the photographs and drawings produced for this research, roughly half show images from the homeland and half portray places in Sweden. The images are unique and personal, portraying 'everyday triviality' in the form of pictures of grandparents, dwellings, classrooms and schoolyards, streets and shopping malls, church and club gatherings and images of animals and nature – such as 'hay bales in a field'. Drawing on both the narrative and the visual evidence, the authors of this paper extract four salient themes for in-depth analysis: (i) nostalgic memories of care and love from the birth countries, (ii) places where participants feel at ease in their post-migration environment, (iii) images of micro-spaces of rooms and flats where they feel secure in terms of their work and

self-expression and (iv) places of exclusion and misrecognition, together with accounts of their strategies to deal with these more negative spaces.

The subsequent paper, by *Roberta Ricucci*, addresses a similar research question – 'Where is my place?' However, this time the question is applied to second-generation young adults of Eastern European parentage who have grown up in Italy and who then onward-migrate to another European country. Ricucci's interviewees have immigrant parents from Albania, Romania, Ukraine and Moldova. Two-thirds (20 out of 30) of them have university degrees, the remainder high-school diplomas. Half were born in Italy, so are 'true' second-generation; the other half were born abroad and moved to Italy as children with their parents. Half the sample interviewed are already working abroad, mainly in Northern Europe, whilst the other half are actively contemplating migrating out of Italy to have better life and career choices. In terms of 'compass migrations', we observe in this case an East–South first-generation migration within Europe succeeded by a South–North migration of the second generation.

So, why do so many second-generation, CEE-origin young adults aspire to move abroad rather than try to advance their careers in Italy – which is, in a sense, their 'home' country and the country of their citizenship? The answer lies in two levels: first, in the overall difficulties for all young people in Italy to enter the qualified labour market. Second, there are extra challenges faced by people perceived to be of 'foreign' origin or as 'the children of immigrants', who are subject to various forms of exclusion and prejudice. Ricucci presents many troubling biographical accounts which demonstrate that teachers, professors and employers are not fully open to transparent, meritocratic principles of grading, hiring and promotion, due to negative perceptions of 'Albanians', 'Romanians' etc. It seems that Italy has yet to learn how to manage, let alone celebrate, ethnic and cultural diversity, despite the reality that, *de facto*, it has been a multicultural society for several decades. Moreover, getting a qualified job in Italy often depends on 'who you know' and on the 'recommendations' of friends, relatives and people who have 'power' and 'connections'. Young people of immigrant background, whose parents perform humble jobs and are not well integrated into Italian society, often lack such personal connections to influential friends and networks.

The final paper in the collection brings together two of the conference's nominated themes – on return migration and on children in migration. *Daina Grosa* presents a mixed-method study, combining an online survey of Latvian emigrants and returnees (N=6,000, including 2,000 returnees), with 67 in-depth interviews with returnee families, including children, in order to explore the relationship between imaginaries of return and the lived experiences of the return reality when it occurs. Return migration to Latvia, as elsewhere in CEE, has gathered pace in recent years, due to economic progress in the country. Many family decisions to return are also shaped by life-stage – e.g. the wish to bring up children in the Latvian educational and cultural environment or the need to look after ageing parents.

The special focus of the paper is on the experiences of children brought to Latvia when still of school age, having started their schooling abroad – typically in the UK, Ireland, Germany or Norway. Anxieties regarding the children's ability to adapt to their new lives in the parental homeland mainly concern their lack of 'academic' fluency in the language, the different school curriculum, 'Soviet-style' methods of teaching and worries about bullying due to the children's 'different' background. These anxieties – part of the imaginaries of return which either precede the move back or stop it from happening – are generally found to be exaggerated in practice, according to the narratives of family members and children who have returned. Nevertheless, the challenges are still real and need to be overcome, especially in the realm of language – key to success in school integration and beyond. For the children, pre-return preparation via language courses, diaspora schools and regular homeland visits are generally very helpful to ease the abrupt transition to living in what is, for them, a 'new' country. Grosa also surveys home-country government initiatives to support returnee and immigrant children and to train teachers in more inclusive modes of learning to recognise pupils' heterogeneity of backgrounds.

Conclusion: avenues for further research

Migration is a vast, historically embedded and constantly evolving global phenomenon and, hence, a field of study which mixes established, tried-and-tested concepts and theories with new approaches and perspectives. Europe – and especially the CEE region – has generated ample evidence of new migration dynamics which subvert the compass migrations of South–North and East–West with new directionalities and modalities. This means that there are many opportunities for further research, some of which are signalled in the papers that follow, especially in their respective conclusions.

First, we pick up Anne White's intriguing notion of migranthood and ask what new forms of this condition of 'being a migrant' unfold in the CEE region and beyond. More open-ended and flexible than the fixed 'stay abroad or return home' intentions and actions of migrants in earlier times, new regimes of temporary, circular and onward migration open up new perspectives on integration, 'home', identity and belonging. In a changing EU space which, on the one hand, promotes internal migration within its free-movement borders and, on the other, erects barriers to those moving in from outside this favoured territory, how do needy migrants (whose labour is also needed) navigate the constraints of citizenship, visa and travel rules, such as the 90-day tourist/visitor limit designed to prevent long-term residence and the right to work?

Second, the papers in this collection make us realise how migration and mobilty are phenomena which are fundamentally gendered and subject to generational positionalities within families. Men, women, children, grandparents and other age and life-stage cohorts experience migration – and are impacted by it – in different ways, depending on the family structures they are embedded in or detached from. This in turn leads to intersectional perspectives combining migranthood, gender and generation with 'race', ethnicity, class, citizenship and (lack of) wealth and privilege. All these intersectional combinations, which shift with mobility and over time, have great potential to be further explored.

This leads to a third dimension for further research and innovation – methods of collecting data. Most of the research reported in these papers is qualitative, based on interviews with participant samples of varying sizes, sometimes quite small. Expanding these samples, also into a comparative dimension, is one obvious avenue for further research. More imaginative are the initiatives undertaken by some of the authors to engage in mixed methods (e.g. Grosa's combination of a large-N online survey and a smaller-N round of in-depth interviews) or to explore visual methods of drawings and photographs as a tool to represent migrants' shifting attachments to 'place' (Shmulyar Gréen *et al.*).

Fourthly, we suggest that further research should be made into the relationship between migration and inequality in Europe and worldwide. True to our understanding of what constitutes a nexus, the migration–inequality nexus is recursive: migration is a product of inequality and migration itself generates new inequalities. The migration–inequality nexus is one of the big themes of migration which has yet to be investigated fully by migration (and other) researchers.[4] Some of the papers in this special issue open up interesting debates within this nexus – for instance between different ethnic groups in return migration to Romania (Anghel *et al.*) and on shifting hierarchies of migrants (White) – but our view is that this aspect of migration studies, with its links to social, economic and spatial inequalities, is ripe for further research, especially of a quantitative nature.

Returning to the recent developments mentioned at the start of this introductory article – and especially Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine – we recognise that the papers included in this special issue capture mostly 'voluntary' forms of migration and mobility, however difficult it is to define voluntariness. Future research should therefore also pay attention to forced movements, as well as to changes in attitudes towards different migrants and their families following these events, whose implications are only starting to be felt more widely. Furthermore, this collection's focus, in some papers, on generations – and thus on histories of mobility – also points to avenues for future research. Whilst the horrors of war in Europe in

2022 force people to move in the present, so has war repeatedly forced people to move in earlier decades and centuries. Both now and throughout history, people have moved voluntarily and involuntarily due to famine, war, revolution and persecution. They have moved as a result of fear, poverty, hope, falling in love or a desire to secure the best chances for the next generation. Perhaps, by comparing human movements across history, we may understand better the migrations and mobilities of the present and the future.

Notes

1. MIRNet – Migration and Integration Research and Networking – is a 'Twinning for Excellence' project funded by the European Commission over the period 1 September 2019 to 28 February 2023 under the 'Widespread' programme. Partners in the consortium are Tallinn University in Estonia (the coordinating institution), the University of Sussex (UK), Roskilde University (Denmark) and the University of Tampere (Finland). The Sussex conference was the second international conference organised by MIRNet, the first having been held in Tallinn, 14–15 January 2021. Each of the two conferences is committed to producing a major publication. For the Sussex conference, it is this special issue; for the Tallinn event, it is an edited book currently in press (see Jakobson, King, Moroşanu and Vetik 2023).

2. The conference's opening keynote lecture, by Anne White, was intriguingly titled 'Migration without compass directions' and set out to complicate, reverse and subvert the dominant European and global 'compass migrations' of East–West and South–North. A version of this keynote, with a different title, appears as the next paper in this special issue. For a more detailed exposition on compass migrations, see the International Organization for Migration's 2013 edition of its *World Migration Report* (IOM 2013).

3. See Eurostat migr_imm8 and migr_emi2, accessed 3 November 2022.

4. Interestingly, 'Migration and Inequality' was the theme of the most recent SCMR/JEMS (Sussex Centre for Migration Research and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*) annual conference, held at the University of Sussex, 19 October 2022. It is also the overarching theme of the next and 20th IMISCOE conference, to be held in Warsaw, 3–6 July 2023.

Conflict of interest statement

No conflict of interests was reported by the authors.

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