

Aure, Marit. (2013). "The Emotional Costs of Employment-Related Mobility." *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 67(5): pp. 284-294.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2013.847855>

## Abstract

The relationship between migration, labour market access, and emotions has not been widely analysed despite ample evidence suggesting that difficulties with labour market entry evoke diverse feelings among migrants. The article analyses migrants' narratives of their feelings toward mobility and subsequent labour market participation based on research material relating to skilled migrants entering Norway. The author examines how understanding migrants' emotions associated with place-specific labour market entry, namely low self-esteem, shame, loss of individuality, and infantilisation, but also pleasure and content, can contribute to studies of the relationship between emotion and migration. Work-related and family-related mobility are often considered the least controversial forms of mobility. However, the article shows how they may have gendered emotional costs for the individuals involved. The author concludes that studies of migration and emotion should include these issues in order to tie migration, place, labour market participation, and gender together.

Keywords: *emotions, gender, labour market entry, labour market participation, skilled migrants*

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Running head: *The emotional costs of employment-related mobility*

## Introduction and background

Maruska Svašek (2008, 213) starts a special issue of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* on emotions and human mobility by saying 'while feelings of non-belonging are part and parcel

of human nature and thus not restricted to migrants, experiences of loss and homelessness can be directly caused by migrants-specific predicaments'. She thereby confirms that 'complex forms of subjectivity and feeling ... emerge through geographical mobility' (Conradson & McKay 2007, 167). The present article focuses on relationships between skilled migrants, their problems regarding entering skilled labour markets, and their emotions. Consistent with other literature, skilled migrants are considered individuals with an undergraduate degree or higher level of education (Iredale 2005). Studies indicate that skilled migration is growing in terms of migrant numbers and migration destinations. All types of migration appear to be on the rise globally. Conradson & Latham (2005b, 288) state that, at least for some groups, mobility is 'becoming a normal and almost taken-for granted part of life cycle'. Most countries welcome such migrants; there is growing competition to attract their expertise, and it is presumed that highly skilled migrants experience few problems, especially when there are labour shortages in the destination country (Pethe 2007; Favell 2008). Skilled migration is typically seen as an unproblematic transfer of people, as distinct from political and economic problems of brain drain, brain waste, and 'brain abuse' (i.e. skills misuse) (Bauder 2003; Chiswick & Miller 2009). It is also increasingly constructed as a process of personal freedom for individual migrants made possible through globalisation.

However, the promise of a better life is not disembodied or void of emotions. Classic studies of migrants accessing labour markets, and their subsequent deskilling, such as Piore's *Birds of Passage* (1979) and Morokvasic's 'Birds of passage are also women' (1984), as well as Sennet & Cobb's *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1977), provide broad, vivid, and fascinating descriptions of emotions surrounding social and geographical mobility, which include shame, pride, and the loss of (working) class belonging. However, while these studies identify the emotional shifts inherent in migration and labour market integration processes, they do not focus specifically on emotions as the subject of inquiry. My analysis is located at

the intersection of these classic studies, addressing directly the emotional dimension of skilled labour market entry as it relates to transnational migration. Utilising data from two qualitative studies, I argue that the emotion and migration literature should include employment-related issues and highly skilled migrants, a perspective that is almost absent from present studies (e.g. Koser & Salt 1997; Marsden & Gorman 2001; Pethe 2007; Csedö 2008; Liebig 2009). However, addressing emotions could also inspire the literature on skills transfer (e.g. Friedberg 2000; Meyer 2001; Carr et al. 2005; Williams 2007), where there is still no discussion of the *feelings* inherent in skills transfer.

I utilise a broad concept of emotions. Svašek (2008, 218) defines emotions as ‘processes in which individuals experience, shape and interpret the world around them, anticipate future action and shape their subjectivities’. She gives attention to time and different levels of reality by making a space for memories, imaginations, expectations, and aspirations. She does not say much about what emotions *are* in terms of different types of experiences, thus following Smith et al. (2009) in avoiding what they call ‘essentialist’ concepts of emotions. In this article, I include what is often excluded as being non-rational, such as bodily sensations, mourning, joy, anger, disappointment, and affects. In this way, my use of emotions follows from the literature on migration and emotion (e.g. Svašek & Skrbiš 2007).

This article is motivated by the experience of emotions reported again and again by interviewees during years of research on labour migration (Aure 2007; 2011) and highly skilled ‘love migrants’ (relocated primarily because of a partner) entering labour markets (Aure 2013). When I began airing this theme to migrant organisations and at academic presentations, I was met with grateful, relieved, tearful recognitions and additional emotionally powerful stories from migrants, including those in academia. Such experiences

seemed under-studied, despite the emerging field of migration and emotion studies. Although not a migrant myself, I have experienced some of these emotions during shorter stays abroad.

After presenting a brief literature review of how the emotion and migration literature fails to deal with labour market participation, I give a short introduction to theoretical approaches on *emotions* and link issues of emotion, place, and migration. Place is important because mobility as well as entering labour markets deals with spatial issues. This draws on sociological and geographical theories of emotion. I then present the empirical study and the analysis, before ending with some concluding remarks.

## Studies of emotions and migration

To date, the interrelations between emotions and migration are particularly addressed within transnational studies, i.e. studies following migrants in different geographical spaces (Basch et al. 1994). Many of these studies include accounts of feelings (Basch et al. 1994), but their thematic concern is usually about how connections between people and belonging at ‘home’ and ‘here’ are maintained. For example, Baldassar (2007) studied the persistence of emotional bonds between adults who migrated to Australia as children and their kin in Italy. Moreover, Svašek (2008) researched migrants’ family obligations and moral expectations of proximity and distance, highlighting caregiving as emotional labour.

Within the transnational tradition, Ehrenreich & Hochschild (2003) focus on emotions and care chains in the global economy in their studies (specifically the roles of women as nannies, maids, and sex workers), building on Hochschild’s (1979) earlier work on emotions. Parreñas (2001) details how women in the Global South take emotionally demanding care jobs in the Global North, while continuing to care for families at home. Such female migrants may employ even poorer women to care for their children and families (Hondagneu-Sotelo &

Avila 1997; Huang & Yeoh 2007). van Riemsdijk (2010) shows how Polish nurses in Norwegian elderly homes experience the negative effects of new public management reforms. Timonen & Doyle (2010) analyse professional migrant care workers' emotional relationships with recipients, colleagues and employers. They argue that more attention should be given to intersections of gender, class, and ethnicity, and the importance of emotional labour.

One strain of the care literature focuses on the emotional aspects of sending remittances back home, and the constraints and feelings of responsibility involved. McKay (2007) shows this through the experiences of Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong, detailing how emotions are embedded in economic necessity. Conradson & McKay (2007) describe how migrant workers' lives are shaped by emotional geographies interweaving economic success 'abroad' with intimacy at home.

In their introduction to a special issue of *Global Networks*, on the theme oral history and migration, Chamberlain & Leydesdorff (2004) explore the role of memory and narratives in understanding transnational families. They show how families become imaginary sites of belonging. Such work draws links between memory, identity construction, and attachment to places, as also shown by Fortier (2000) and Skrbiš (2008). These studies add to the literature on emotion and to migration studies, even if they do not specifically deal with skilled migrants.

Also, there are studies analysing emotions and conflicts in diaspora communities in destination countries (e.g. Andits 2010; Galasińska 2010; Lau 2010; Svašek 2010), which are not mentioned further here, since this study does not focus on the diaspora. Family relations and distress among skilled immigrant women in their country of arrival is yet another theme in the emotion literature (Gu 2010; Maehara 2010)

Conradson & Latham (2005b) studied young New Zealanders' friendship (in higher education) and networks in London. They found creative identity projects that should be

understood as practically and intangibly included in emotional 'work. Later, they focused on the 'affective possibilities' that mobility may offer skilled migrants in London (Conradson & Latham 2007). Contributing to research on the lived dimensions of transnationalism, they argue that attraction and experience are linked to feelings of being 'in the heart of things'. Consideration of affective possibilities offers valuable insights into the dynamics of subjectivity, in addition to emphases traditionally placed upon labour market dynamics in accounts of skilled migration.

Silvey (2007) offers insights into Islam's influence on the conduct and experiences of migrant Indonesian women in Saudi Arabia. She highlights the emotional vocabularies and religious constructs deployed, identifying fear, disgust, and love as key emotions in skilled women's experiences and utilising these to discuss geopolitical links between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. McEvoy et al. (2012) deal with the emotions of women left behind in Mexico when their husbands go to work in the USA, analysing the women's increased labour market participation, moral issues, and the migrant men's need to control the women. These studies show how emotions may be included in a variety of specific migration streams.

This short review reveals that emotions typically are highlighted in studies of family and households, focusing on how different migrants maintain relations, links, and connections between 'here' and 'home'. Studies of care chains in the global economy and remittances combine the fields of emotion, family, and economy, and show one example of the way that labour and emotions are connected. Nevertheless, emotions are mainly included in studies focusing on families, care, belonging, and identities – fields in which emotions are more readily discussed. Emotions seem to be less highlighted in relation to work, politics, and community participation (with the exception of studies of the diaspora, which are not addressed here). In studies of labour market entry and deskilling, emotions are rarely discussed, as though labour market and economy were not socially and culturally embedded,

as argued by Bathelt & Glückler (2003). In the next section I present the few studies of emotions, skilled migration, and labour market entry that have been conducted to date.

### *Emotions, skilled migration and labour market entry*

Very few studies of migration and labour markets for skilled migrants include emotional aspects, although some touch upon the theme. Relatively early, Bernstein & Shuval (1995) analysed immigrant physicians from the former Soviet Union in Israel, and found that many had had to seek employment in other occupations, which was complicated and described as 'painful'. While not making a point of emotion, Bernstein & Shuval have nevertheless addressed emotions, but as is typical of contemporary studies, they have neglected gender aspects (Koser & Salt 1997).

In more a recent work, Purkayastha (2005) discussed cumulative disadvantage experiences among highly qualified Indian women in the USA. She shows how these women suffer, emphasising how gendered and/or racialised immigration laws, workplaces, and households can only be understood together. Whilst Purkayastha does not highlight emotions, she draws on the women's expressions of emotions. Liversage (2009a; 2009b) analysed gendered factors when studying the labour market exclusion of highly skilled women migrating for non-work reasons to Denmark. She broadens understandings of skilled migration by going beyond household and patriarchy while focusing on employment and includes migrants' experiences and emotions regarding labour market entry problems. Meares (2010), studying South African professional migrant women in New Zealand, shows the relationship between migrant women's work and home lives, and their attempts to achieve balance between the practical and emotional obligations in each case. She thus relates emotions to work and gender, and to some degree discusses labour market entry. She

describes knowledge of the interplay between women, work, and skilled migration as ‘scant’. The inclusion of men – as gendered beings – and emotions is particularly rare.

Gendered studies of skilled migration and the labour market have expanded the literature considerably by including a wide variety of aspects of and dimensions to skilled migration (Kofman 2000; Willis & Yeoh 2002; Raghuram 2004; Kofman & Raghuram 2005; E.L.E. Ho 2011). Nevertheless, most of the studies lack a focus on emotion, while the studies of emotions and migration lack an interest in skilled migrants’ entry into labour markets. In this article, I focus on emotions, both in the data used and in the analysis. I argue in favour of adding men to gendered studies, including work-related emotions and processes, and seeing deskilling as part of the domain of emotions.

### *Emotions, place, and mobility*

Burkitt (1997) asks what we explore when approaching emotions sociologically. He stresses that emotions are relational, having both physical and cultural elements. Basic emotions are shared, ‘culturally elaborated so that they are socially and historically nuanced and thus variable’, structured, and structuring (Burkitt 1997, 39). Thus, we can have feelings that we cannot express adequately. Burkitt argues there is a complex relationship between emotions and cognition, with neither taking precedence over the other or occurring as a result of the other. For example, he sees joy as a ‘bodily expression within a situation’ (Burkitt 1997, 43); ‘the expression *is* the emotion’ (p. 45).

In the much-cited article ‘Some comments on the sociology of the emotions’ Craib (1995) asks readers to bear in mind that emotions are necessarily contradictory, and that coping with conflict and ambivalence makes it even harder for people to feel the appropriate way. In other words, feeling is ‘emotional hard work’. For many migrants, the whole



migration experience involves dealing with expectations of how to feel and be a migrant in an ‘appropriate’ way.

Migration is situational and so too are emotions: both are embedded in time and space (Burkitt 1997; Anderson & Smith 2001; Bondi 2005; Davidson et al. 2005; Svašek 2008; Smith et al. 2009). This makes emotions vital for understanding migration, given that migration is a specific configuration of time and space anchored in the life course. Svašek & Skrbiš (2007, 373) highlight how migrants ‘carry along’ memories and feelings, and that their feelings are linked to certain places. According to Bondi (2005), emotions are thus part of experiences and related to subjectivity. This is not subjectivity as opposed to objectivity, but highlights that experience is always subjective, and simultaneously an expression of self and identity. Migration subjectivity is closely related to how people experience themselves, the relationships they engage in, places they depart from and arrive at, and how they experience changing places (Gu 2010). Conradson & McKay (2007) describe in detail the connections between what they term ‘translocal subjectivities’, mobility, and emotion, stating that the self is a relational achievement, that bodies move and experience complex forms of subjectivity, and that feelings emerge through geographical mobility at the localities involved. This makes ‘movement ... generators of particular affects’ (Conradson & McKay 2007, 170) and shows the centrality of emotions in mobility studies.

Davidson & Milligan (2004, 524; original italics) write: ‘Our sense of who and what we are is continually (re)shaped by how we *feel*.’ This social understanding of subjectivity focuses on lived personal experiences: processes in the past, present, and future (Svašek & Skrbiš 2007). This article focuses upon these social aspects of emotions rather than psychological and therapeutic dimensions. Feelings, affects, and emotions are used synonymously, even though this is problematic (Pile 2010), and are connected to space and place by migration mobility and the spatial aspects of emotions: everything takes place

somewhere. In this regard, migrants recounting their feelings, together with a few (participatory and non-participatory) observations, are taken as expressions of their emotions. Smith et al. (2009) criticise this assumption, but state that it is considered a usual approach.

Thus, emotions are integral to experiences. They are practices in webs of social, cultural, geographical, and political processes. This study employs this practice-oriented approach (Bourdieu 1990), focusing on what migrants tell about what they do and how they feel.

## Methods

My discussion in this article draws on two qualitative studies. The first study dealt with short-term, circular labour migration Båtsfjord, a small Norwegian arctic fishing community that had c.2450 inhabitants in 2001 (Statistics Norway 2013). The study (which involved interviews) was conducted between 1998 and 2002, and further interviews were held in 2012. Russian migrants undertook unskilled work in the fish processing industry, even though many were skilled or highly skilled. Among the migrants were engineers and teachers, and others with economic and administrative education and training. There have been foreign workers in Båtsfjord since the 1960s, and Finish migrants there for centuries. The participants in the study were Russian migrants mainly coming from Teriberka, a small coastal community on Russia's Murmansk coast. The period 1998–2002 was characterised by economic and political transition and hardship. At the times when the interviews were conducted most of the migrants were women in the age range 22–45 years.

Further, the first study included qualitative interviews, ethnographic field talks, and notes from participant and non-participant observations. Altogether, 16 migrants were interviewed either once or several times, and either individually or in focus groups.

Information regarding other migrants and their life histories was also obtained through interviews. In addition, employers and industry managers, family members, co-workers, neighbours, organisational representatives, and political and administrative leaders on both sides of the Russian-Norwegian border were interviewed. In total, 74 Russians and 74 Norwegians were interviewed in private homes, workplaces, conferences, meetings, and cafés. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, English, and Russian by my Russian colleague Larissa Riabova and me. I carried out most of the fieldwork in Båtsfjord. Both of us discussed the findings and analyses, but published individually based on this work.

The second study, conducted in 2009 (partly with colleague Trine Fosslund), followed highly skilled, married, and dependent migrants through the programme Global Future (a project run by the regional branch of the Norwegian Cooperation of Enterprises), which aimed to mobilise highly skilled migrants in Tromsø's local labour market. The city of Tromsø is Northern Norway's regional hub, with a young, well-educated, slightly female-dominated population. In 2012 the population totalled 69,100 inhabitants (Statistics Norway 2013), with an additional population of 7000 students; Tromsø Municipality n.d.). Tromsø hosts a university, a university hospital, research institutes, the county administration, regional headquarters of state agencies, and a significant private sector.

The Global Future programme aimed at utilising highly skilled migrants in the local labour market, and included 17 migrants from 13 countries who had migrated for non-work reasons: 5 men and 12 women in the age range 31–49 years, none of whom were refugees or asylum seekers. Rather, most of them had entered Norway either as a dependent partner of a person with a temporary residence permit or as a student. A few of the migrants had backgrounds from Western European countries, some were from the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, and just under half had originally come from Eastern Europe and Russia. Four of the migrants had received most of their tertiary education from Norwegian universities,

while several had Norwegian education in addition to university degrees and work experience from their countries of origin and other countries. All had master's degrees and three had doctoral degrees. The migrants included medical doctors, psychologists, economists, engineers, architects, philosophers, social scientists, and law graduates. All but one had lived in Tromsø for more than three years. The participants were self-recruited: they had applied to join the Global Future programme after reading newspaper and Internet advertisements. Consequently, they might have experienced more problems than other similarly situated migrants, and hence they may have been more eager to utilise their skills and experiences.

The programme lasted for one year and consisted of seven two- to three-day sessions with lectures on management theory and practice, law, labour market norms, and formal training for members of boards of directors. The participants were offered individual tutorials, and formed groups to meet between gatherings. I followed the programme throughout its duration and was present at all plenary sessions. All participants were informed of my research and were offered the opportunity to participate, in compliance with Norwegian Social Science Data Services guidelines. Together with my colleague, I conducted in-depth biographical interviews with 15 participants, the project leader, the coach, and most lecturers. Occasional meetings and talks with participants enabled me to keep track of changes in their personal situation with respect to family, work, moving, and education, and led to further contributions from the participants.

Both studies had a broad 'life story' approach. The interviews had an open design directed toward understanding migration and integration experiences in the migrants' local context. They lasted from 1.5 to 2.5 hours, and took place once or several times. Issues related to life at home and abroad, family, kinship, leisure time, background, education, work, civil society activities, friends, networks, experiences, and opinions were discussed.

The information obtained from both studies was comparable and revealed a variety of work-related experiences among skilled migrants. In some interviews in both studies, emotions emerged as an important theme, while in others they did not. This may have been due to differences among people, differences in their experiences, the contact between the informant and the researcher(s), and the atmosphere in the interviews. The studies were of different but comparable contexts and dealt thematically with similar questions. They are utilised to show variety and strengthen the case presented in this article.

## Context and background

Norway is in general a 'new' immigration country: in-migration did not exceed emigration until 1967 (Brochmann & Kjelstadli 2008). The northernmost region of Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway are characterised by the mobility of Sami people. Since the 1960s these Arctic regions have received labour migration to the formerly quintessential fish processing industry in Norway. The migration across the Russian-Norwegian border rose rapidly after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. Immigration again increased after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the European Union (EU).

Overall labour market outcomes for highly qualified foreign-born persons in Norway appear rather favourable in international comparison. According to the OECD, almost two-thirds of highly qualified foreign-born persons are employed in a job that requires a high degree of skill (Liebig 2009). Family migrants have higher employment rates and educational levels than refugees but lower than labour migrants (Liebig 2009). Education levels thus vary among immigrants in Norway, depending on their immigrant category and country of origin (Nygård & Daugstad 2006). Low-skilled migrants experience the most difficulties in Norway's labour market (Liebig 2009).

In Norway (Rogstad & Orupabo 2007), as in other countries (Piore 1979; Boyd 2000; Kofman 2000; Fawell 2008; Liebig 2009; E.L.E. Ho 2011), statistical and qualitative studies show that some highly skilled migrants experience problems in securing appropriate jobs and promotion. Problems vary according to gender, skill type and profession, country of origin, years of residency, and language proficiency. Migrants with higher levels of education, including even migrants with Norwegian education, long-term residency, and language proficiency still experience greater risks of unemployment and overqualification than the ethnic majority (Støren 2004; Brekke 2008). SOPEMI (2009) reports that the discounting of highly skilled migrants' qualifications happens most often to asylum seekers, refugees, love-migrants, and dependent migrants.

The Russian migrants from Teriberka that participated in the first study were recruited to Båtsfjord by an exchange programme specifically designed to supply workers for unskilled work. This meant deskilling for many of the migrants and hence the inherent emotions of bitterness and, tension, but also relief due to the opportunity for an easier life. The highly skilled dependent migrants in the Global Future programme in Tromsø had no such conditions, but nevertheless experienced deskilling and attendant emotions.

## Migrating women and men – experiences and emotions

This section shows how emotions are integrated in processes of entering the labour market. As indicated in the review (in the section 'Studies of emotions and migration'), a substantial part of emotion and migration studies centres around transnational issues, particularly care work, i.e. issues related to connections between the place of departure and arrival. Also experiences of self are connected to the transnationalism, as I will describe in the first section.

Thereafter the role of labour market participation and the symbolic meaning of mobility are discussed.

*I became a nobody*

Natalia,<sup>1</sup> married migrant aged 34 years from Eastern Europe and living in Tromsø, said in near-perfect Norwegian at the end of an interview:

I soon came to see myself as a person without a future, one that didn't know anything. I became a nobody who couldn't talk or express herself. I would hardly be worth hiring. You have to believe that you are an interesting employee yourself otherwise it's difficult to get an employer to think so. There is a very low unemployment rate right now, but I am still not able to get a job, any job. I really feel that there is something wrong with me. Back home, I was somebody. I come from a well-known, highly educated and respectable family.<sup>2</sup>

While struggling to hold back tears, she concluded: 'Here, I am nothing. I lost all my confidence.' Natalia had been in Norway for just a few years and had taken a leave of absence from her leading position at a university in her homeland. She held a doctoral degree and had visited Tromsø as a researcher before marrying a Norwegian, who had received higher education, and subsequently having a child with him.

John, a Western European in his late thirties, also lived in Tromsø and had a job that matched his qualifications, although his position was temporary. He said:

It is important to be able to follow the discussions in the small breaks. It took me a long time before I understood that, and the codes and rules involved in the conversations. I didn't master the language. What is okay to tell the other, what is fun, what do you joke about? I was silent

for years and I felt that I was not who I really am, if you know what I mean? It's hard to learn to fit in ... much harder than I ever thought. I didn't feel comfortable with the very flat structure of leadership either ... I was not used to it. And, [instead] some clients approached my young female subordinate, when I was the project's leader. It was difficult. They somehow avoided me because I was a stranger. You know, it's not only the professional work you do that counts, you have to fit in ... you have to know how to do it.

The above two migrants were clearly oriented toward life in Norway, but their lack of confidence and sense of inferiority was strongly related to their status in their former country of residence. Their emotions of rupture and loss related to experiences and expectations had developed at different places and times. A transnational lens can add to this finding not by focusing on how life in new places of residence is oriented towards home or how it will provide them with something to take 'home', but rather by focusing on how contemporaneous emotions in certain places are embedded in former time-place experiences, and that distress arises from mismatches between present and former experiences.

The above narratives show that both women and men have expectations regarding their participation in the labour market that are not always fulfilled after migration. The informants felt pained at not being able to practise their professions or gain recognition based on their capabilities. Honneth's (1992, 188) theory of recognition and dignity builds on the premise that 'the constitution of human integrity is dependent on the experience of intersubjective recognition'. Identity is dependent on recognition and reassurance given by others, with the first and most fundamental type of personal disrespect being physical. The second type of disrespect is that of being structurally deprived of rights and duties, and not being a fully-fledged member of society (Honneth 1992). The third form of disrespect focuses on the lack of respect for the social value of individuals or groups.



Natalia's statement indicates that migration is not merely a subjective experience: the post-migration experience of not being valued, not having her skills recognised, and not being able to secure a skilled job failed to affirm her as an individual and an inhabitant of Tromsø. She felt that she was a 'nobody'. Given that she spent most of her time at home where she felt 'stuck', she had no access to the respect and social value from which she usually derived her core sense of worth, meaning, and self.

John experienced that a lack of language proficiency, not being able to understand and cope with the hierarchies at the office where he worked, and his feelings when clients approached his junior female colleague rather than him, were degrading. The experiences failed to confirm him as the senior male that he used to be, and this example shows the significance of gender. Male seniority is discussed by Timonen & Doyle (2010).

Both Natalia and John identified their career and profession as important, and their emotions related to these aspects of their lives. This finding contrasts with the finding of many studies that emotions are mostly related to women as mothers and wives (i.e. to family issues) (Willis & Yeoh 2002; Man 2004; Yeoh & Willis 2005; C. Ho 2006; Huang & Yeoh 2007; Gu 2010; Maehara 2010; Meares 2010). Men also have feelings towards their work and status, contrary to what the lack of studies of men, emotions, and labour markets may indicate.

Elena (aged 35 years), a Russian engineer employed in unskilled work in Båtsfjord, felt strongly about her work, but her heaviest migration burden was have to leave her child in Russia. When interviewed in Båtsfjord and again at home in Teriberka she cried and said she would never again practise labour migration. Her experiences thus resembled those detailed by Parreñas (2001) and Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila (1997). Nevertheless, later she chose to undertake another period of labour migration. her case shows the interconnectedness of gender, work, family, the economy, and caring inherent to motherhood (Hochschild 1979;

Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Parreñas 2001; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2003), and the contradictions of emotions (Craib 1995).

Piore's study of migrant deskilling (1979) argues that migrants cope with deskilling processes by orienting themselves towards their status in their community of origin. This is plausible in the case of the short-term migrants who went to Båtsfjord to perform unskilled work in the fish-processing industry: many of the participants argued that migrating for unskilled work would only ever be for a short period of time.

By contrast, Valeria, a Russian with an education science degree, who was living in Båtsfjord, said:

It was so exciting. I was curious; I wanted to stay in a foreign country. The kids had grown up and their father could take good care of them. [I felt that] I would really like to go [migrate] and almost felt forced to use the opportunity.

Time, place, and the specific situation are thus relevant in people's decision to migrate for work. Valeria was home-oriented, and not mobility- or destination-country oriented, as might be expected from the results of studies of transnationalism (Basch et al. 1994). She highlighted adventure and her interest in visiting other countries and learning a new language, but only for a limited period of time, as she wished to continue living in Russia. Valeria's children visited Båtsfjord, while her husband apparently preferred to go hunting than travel abroad. The age of her children, Valeria's own view of motherhood, and her husband's approval are the key to understanding her migration and enabled Valeria to have positive experiences. She said that she did not feel deprived of her rights and did not expect recognition during her stay in Båtsfjord.

By contrast, highly skilled married migrants in Tromsø planned to stay on and were oriented towards daily life in Tromsø with their families. It is understandable that many of

those migrants felt frustrated that nobody saw them as they really were, or saw them as they saw themselves. Such negative feelings were reinforced by their lack of language skills and ability to master sociocultural codes in their workplace.

### *The loss of self*

The most striking aspect of the migration experiences presented above is how the problems of deskilling and labour market entry were tied to loss of self-confidence, which ultimately was expressed as a loss of self. Personal dignity is strongly related to the lack of portability of human capital (Friedberg 2000) and to non-recognition of qualifications.

Elena (mentioned above in the section '*I became a nobody*') had migrated for unskilled processing work in Båtsfjord, where she was not allowed to utilise her education and skills. She wanted to transfer to another position in the factory, but the foreman had refused her request. In an interview, he told me what he previously told Elena: 'Of course, she could not do those tasks. The equipment is expensive and it requires experienced and skilled workers.' In his view, Elena (perhaps mainly because she was a woman) could not possibly possess the skills and qualities, which locally were typically held by men. Elena was upset and reacted strongly, concluding: 'Russians are the bottom of the pile. I, as a Russian, am not allowed this [opportunity].' However, she did not mention the issue of gender.

Julian, a man from Western Europe, aged 50 years, spoke resignedly about his professional life in Tromsø:

I have lived here for years and have applied for a lot of different positions, mainly without getting any answers at all. I have 17 years of highly varied experience in my home country. I have been a trusted leader in an international business at different levels. I know several

languages and am familiar with international trade and finance from the 'inside'. But I can't get a relevant job. I am too old. No one wants to invest in an old foreign man.

Elena and Julian had different experiences of devaluation and identity loss, and often spoken of 'losing themselves'. Whereas Valeria's orientation toward her home country prevented her from having the sense of having lost herself, Elena's experience was different. Her education and experience as a female engineer and her Russian nationality were experienced as part of her threatened identity. Liversage's (2009a; 2009b) study of dependent female migrants in Denmark shows how a person's professional life and education ceases to confer status upon them unless they are actively practised. Some migrants – such as Natalia and Julian – feel they are not approved of and respected by their 'significant other' (Honneth 1992), and this affects their professional identity and hence their gendered self-esteem. Current job and former career were significant in the migrants' gender identities (i.e. in the identities of the participants in my study). According to Honneth (1992, 189), the denial of recognition 'constrains ... subjects in their freedom of action and does them harm ... [and] impairs these persons in their positive understanding of self' to such a degree that they feel they are losing themselves.

The sense of losing self is a result of being deprived the rights and duties of the unwritten contract between society and the individual in question. The contract holds that one deserves respect according to one's skills, education, and experiences (and perhaps also to one's family background). The disrespect that migrants experienced as individual rather than as a norm is related to class hierarchies and experienced by both women and men. Migrants find themselves occupying lower positions in a social system (labour market) than they have done previously (Chiswick & Miller 2009). When applying for jobs or when denied a relevant job, they feel that employers do not value their skills. Hence, some migrants give up being contributing members of society and are consequently denied access to commensurate

rights and duties. Such denied access may be perceived as structural disrespect, based on the premise that rights and duties follow labour market positions and structures. However, it may also be related to a structural lack of recognition of foreign credentials in the Norwegian system (Liebig 2009). Further, the lack of status ascribed when migrants' skills are acquired in their country of origin are not recognised (e.g. a Russian degree in engineering) and leads them to feel that their cultural background and nationality are devalued. Elena felt her 'Russianness' was the real problem, and considered this an attack on her national and cultural identities, including motherhood and gender.

#### *A full member of society*

Lack of recognition may involve migrants not being accepted as fully-fledged members of society, with the accompanying emotions that may bring. For those lacking language skills, this may lead to infantilisation, as they can no longer express themselves in a manner befitting their sense of self and professional status. Even if such migrants made rational choices to relocate and follow their spouse, and even if they attend language classes – assuming that they find adequate courses (which are often lacking), and have sufficient money and time – they may still feel infantilised. They will not lack agency but rather the confidence that is part of being able to utilise their agency. Furthermore, their agency may be rebuilt and demonstrated by attending programmes such as Global Future.

Reasoning can help understand and explain feelings and come to terms with those feelings, but it does not remove them. Several migrants recounted such having similar experiences when they conversed in Norwegian with their child's teacher, friends, or colleagues: the look on the faces of those they were talking to told them that they were not understood and not considered a 'reasonable', adult person. Some felt they were treated like a

child or an 'idiot'. An 'infant' is a prototype of an unfulfilled citizen who has not achieved certain rights and duties. Some participants in the Global Future programme described how they 'zoned out' of professional conversations because their Norwegian skills were insufficient to respond in an intelligible or appropriate way, and their training, the structure of their education, and their expertise made them think differently to their Norwegian peers. As Csedö (2008) points out, language is the means of negotiating and presenting oneself effectively as a professional. Again, migrants can explain the reasons for encountering problems in this regard, and how to handle them, yet the uncomfortable experience of not being considered professional and able to add to the discussion remained.

Studies show how migrant women may withdraw or be pushed out of public and professional life and into the home and to roles as wives and mothers (Man 2004; Yeoh & Willis 2005; C. Ho 2006; Scott 2006; Huang & Yeoh 2007; Liversage 2009; Maerha 2010; Meares 2010). This situation was identified also among a few of the skilled migrants in Tromsø. However, most of the female participants did not consider mothering as an alternative to professional recognition; nevertheless, this is often what happens after migration. Being a mother and wife would partly afford them recognition as women but not as self-supporting skilled adults, which was also an aspect of their female identity (i.e. in Norway and Russia). They were used to having and wanted to continue to have their own work, wage, and career, as E.L.E. Ho (2011) similarly shows in a case of migrants in London, and Liversage (2009a; 2009b) shows was the case for skilled female migrants in Denmark. Although most men in the Tromsø study had taken parental leave (as in Norway fathers have a right to state-funded paternity leave), and as expected in a gendered society, labour market withdrawal and full-time parenthood seemed less likely to occur for them than for the female participants. Gendered norms and division of labour in public and private life intertwine with a lack of personal recognition. In general, seven out of ten women are active in the Norwegian

workforce (Statistics Norway 2013), and this high rate means there are few educated women outside the labour market, thus making labour market participation mandatory to some extent and employment a cultural norm. Forced ‘housewification’, with little reward, adds to the disappointment and dissatisfaction with the outcome of migration.

Yeoh & Willis (2005) claim that international migration does little to destabilise traditional gender norms: rather, migration upholds the norms, hardening lines between women’s and men’s identities and tightening the ties that bind women to the home. In sharp contrast, the results of my fieldwork indicated that male migrants actually had and took more responsibility for children when excluded from the labour market. Similarly to what Meares (2010) says is the case for women, some men experience an increased childcare role (enabled by a loss of labour force participation) as rewarding, but also as involving grief, loneliness, and increased socio-economic dependency.

Women and men participants in the Global Future program emphasised that they wanted to use their skills and capacities, and that they needed to earn their ‘own’ money. Some felt that the duty of and right to labour market participation had been taken away from them, depriving them of their right to be seen as they ‘really were’, and acknowledging their subjectivity in their current place of residence.

### *The shame and the rhetoric of free movement*

Migrant men and women face problems of deskilling not only as a societal problem of brain abuse (Bernstein & Shuval 1995) but also as individually felt shame. Shame is not easily spoken about, and is rarely articulated directly, but is implicit in statements of not being anybody or not being worth anything. In my study, some blamed themselves, and others blamed Norway and Norwegians. This finding may be related to the freedom of movement

rhetoric and praise of mobility within globalisation discourses. Literature on mobility problems deals mainly with what may be called vulnerable migrants, understood as poor women, refugees, and labour migrants who move to the Global North (Conradson & Latham 2005a; Svašek & Skrbiš 2007). This limits and/or excludes the experiences of skilled migrants that move to and within the Global North (Meyer 2001; Scott 2006). Labour market entry difficulties are often considered migrants' own fault, since it may seem that only the poor and unskilled have such 'problems'. Sharing common experiences in the Global Future meetings was appreciated by the participants, and made the issue collective. Lack of analyses in academic and policy debates excludes these experiences, thereby failing to critique adequately globalising processes, and thus contributing to making skilled migrants' challenges appear as individual(istic) problems.

Svašek (2010) writes about a female migrant who made a film and raised the issue publicly in order to counter the discrimination she had experienced. For migrants with similar experiences, emotions mostly remain a private matter. Situations described by some of the interviewees as 'unexpected shock' tell about loss and shame as seemingly self-imposed and individual rather than structural. This is just one aspect of the individualisation that leads skilled migrants to pursue their goals (Davidson & Milligan 2004). For many migrants, devaluation is a new and unexpected experience, and one they had not anticipated prior to migrating. Experiences are associated with self-expression, and 'ongoing emotional struggles to relate internal and external experiences in which both processes and structures of self-definition may be explicitly examined, revised and transformed' as stated by Svašek & Skrbiš (Elliott & Lemert 2006, cited by Svašek & Skrbiš 2007, 372).

Further, denial of recognition may be experienced as shameful. For some case study migrants this created feelings of bitterness and spurred them to take new educational courses, whereas others found new arenas (such as working within migrant organisations) where they



could gain recognition. Liversage (2009a; 2009b) writes about highly skilled women who gave up attempts to enter the labour market in Denmark and therefore chose to leave the country. At the time when the interviews were held, none of the participants in the Global Future programme had made similar choices, but some said they had considered resettling in another country. Others believed that similar problems would be encountered elsewhere, and that it was not an option to leave. They valued the Norwegian welfare system for the benefits it offered with respect to their young children. Political, economic, and/or general situations made it impossible for some migrants to return to their country of origin, while others had nothing to return to, having been away from their homeland, networks, and cultural norms for too long. This finding resonates with what is well known in migration literature and among migrants: migration is characterised by its dynamic of gradual settlement and ambivalence.

### Emotion, mobilities, and particularities of places

Studies of migration and emotions are evidently interrelated to places and thus to the *meanings* of places. Conradson & McKay (2007, 168) discuss translocal subjectivities and state: 'Geographical mobility inevitably changes the relations with emplaced configurations of people and events, while at the same time bringing us into contact with new and different ecologies of place.' This highlights the spatial configuration and thus social and cultural processes and encounters taking *place* in the *feeling of migration*. According to Davidson & Milligan (2004, 523), 'Emotions, to be sure, take place within and around the closest of spatial scales', connecting mobility, space, subjectivity, and emotions.

Conradson & McKay (2007, 168) claim that mobile selves and selfhood are shaped in relations 'in the destination setting, as well as through the distance obtained from those that characterise the sending context'. According to them, 'Mobility provides new opportunities

for new forms of subjectivity and emotion to emerge' (Conradson & McKay 2007, 168), and these may be problematic and demanding. Experiences do not yield places of destination in general. It is the processes themselves that count in peoples' lives. One migrant in my study asked rhetorically: 'If only I lived in Oslo [the capital city of Norway], there would be more businesses suiting my education. Maybe my experience and knowledge would be valued and appreciated there?' Experiences and emotions are related to the scale and hence the social and economic ecology of place, even though there is no evidence to show that migrants avoid deskilling in bigger cities. Rather, Nagel (2005) shows that entry routes, and migrants' place of origin and skills types make labour market entry a localised and embedded process, even in 'global' cities such as London.

The entry route of skilled migrants in Båtsfjord made it impossible for them to find any other type of employment than unskilled work. Likewise, the specific characteristics of Tromsø's labour market were integral to skilled migrants' labour market entry problems, but so too were the lack of local networks and local knowledge which could have activated the migrants' skills and expertise (Meyer 2001). Thus, skills and expertise are highly embedded in places and relations (Meyer 2001; Beaverstock 2002; Williams 2007).

**Conclusions: studying emotional costs give a better understanding of employment-related mobility?**

This article demonstrates that emotions may be integral to skilled migrants' experiences when they struggle to enter skilled labour markets or apply for other positions. Such emotions may be contradictory, understandable and explainable, but they may remain strong, partly beyond rationalisation, and a defining characteristic of migration experiences. Adding analyses of emotions in the process of transnational skilled migration can help to address better skilled

migrants' problems in the host context: feelings may be dealt with in some ways, discrimination and structural hindrances with other tools, and the lack of transferability of skills in yet other ways.

Migrants' emotions need to be recognised in their country of origin and their host country. Such experiences are produced transnationally and hence a transnational lens is needed in order to understand them. Migrants may be either 'homeward' oriented or oriented toward their destination country, depending on the time horizon in their migration process. This may influence how they experience deskilling and the emotions entailed. Emotions are thus part of a mismatch in what is recognised and connected to unmet expectations held by migrants.

For some migrants the loss of self is tied with their sense of being either somebody or nobody in society. When skills and knowledge are not recognised and the holder is not given an appropriate position in the host society, the situation deprives the holder of a presumed, preferred, or desired role, along with the rights and duties that follow from employment. It also deprives the host society of migrants' skills, despite official discourses prizing highly skilled migrants. Other people on the periphery of the labour market may also experience such feelings, and this concerns the affirming role that the labour market has economically and socially, and the commensurate devaluation of those outside it.

Participating in the formal labour market (in high-income societies) is part of being an adult and accepted as a member of society. Emotions related to migrants' labour market position, together with their experiences of not mastering a foreign language, infantilisation, and not having their skills and abilities recognised, reduce their self-confidence and agency. I have also identified anger and bitterness as leading to withdrawal from persons and communities.

Exclusion and withdrawal from labour markets has a strong gendered dimension. Some women and men feel they are either forced or have the opportunity to increase their household and childcare roles. Although such roles may prove rewarding they also cause loneliness and isolation, as shown by Meares (2010). In my study both male and female participants deemed that spending more time on family care was unsatisfactory with respect to their professional careers. Contrary to Yeoh & Willis (2005), the findings presented in this article indicate that migration can destabilise traditionally gendered divisions of labour, but increase men's childcare engagement.

Both women and men are subject to emotions, and their professional life and identity are closely linked, despite the lack of literature on emotions and skilled migrant labour market entry with a gender perspective looking at both women and men.

The free movement rhetoric may lead migrants to believe that problems with 'global' labour market entry are an individual experience, and experience it privately as an unspoken shame and as self-inflicted. Research literature's pre-occupation with labour market problems for poorer migrants encourages a worldview in which the unskilled and poor are the only ones to suffer such experiences, and point to shame as class related, as indicated by Conradson & Latham (2005a; 2005b) and Svašek & Skrbiš (2007) .

Migration emotions are connected to place because mobility and place are intertwined, but also because labour markets are place-specific and culturally embedded (Aure 2013). Nevertheless, place is not a variable that gives a certain outcome. My study shows that place is an integral part of emotions: emotions occur and place matters because experiences, recognition, and evaluations are grounded in different places.

My focus on emotional experiences among high skilled migrants adds labour market entry as a new field for studies of emotions. This is a step on the way to show that the economy is imbued not only with cultural processes (Bathelt & Glückler 2003) but also

emotional processes. In this article I have argued that the implications of such feelings should be studied for both women and men with regard not only to labour markets but also to households and families, acknowledging that there are gendered processes in and across both arenas.

Thus, in order for emotion and migration studies to grasp current processes it is necessary to include skilled migrant women and men's challenges when entering the labour market to bridge the gap between economic and cultural processes in migration. This will make visible more of the costs related to international migration and globalisation, instead of treating them as individual(ised) migrants' problems. Addressing emotional problems for skilled migrants trying to enter local labour markets will hence contribute to a much-needed deeper understanding of work-related mobility and the overall complexity of contemporary human migration in the age of globalisation.

## Notes

1 All participants names are pseudonyms.

2 All translations of the participants' quotes have been made by the author.

*Acknowledgements* – I am grateful to Chris Rowland for his very generous help with this article. In addition, I owe thanks to two anonymous referees and the copy-editor Catriona Turner.



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