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Negotiated belonging in sub-state nationalist contexts: young adult migrant narratives in Scotland and South Tyrol

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This contribution expands on research first presented in Nicolson and Carlà (2020).

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Abstract

This contribution investigates the intersection between macro-level political narratives on diversity and micro-level lived experience of social inclusion and everyday interaction. The case studies for analysis comprise of two regional sub-state nationalist contexts, Scotland and South Tyrol, Italy. Scotland is a nation state that defines itself vis-a-vis the rest of the UK and where a discourse has emerged that Scottish nationalism is both civic and inclusive. South Tyrol is an autonomous province in northern Italy which remains a liminal space between Austria and Italy and is presented as a model to protect minorities. We argue for developing a critical stance on diversity narratives identified in these two-regions. Based on in-depth narrative interviews with young adult migrants, we use an ontological security framework to examine the relationship between macro-narratives and micro-level lived experiences of everyday social interactions. Firstly, we address how macro-level national identity discourses manifest themselves in micro-level everyday interactions. Secondly, we look at how young adults interpret these narratives when retelling their everyday experiences, sometimes to the point of excluding their own experiences of discrimination. In this way, we trace the negotiation of belongingness in these two contexts.

Keywords: Migrant integration, Ontological security, Sub-state nationalism, Narrative, Micro-level experiences, Belonging, Scotland, South Tyrol

Introduction

The "age of migration" is ongoing (Castles et al., 2003). Meanwhile countries still struggle with dealing with migratory flows as well as how to integrate migrants and address their (cultural, racial, religious, or linguistic) diversity. The same concept of integration is at times questioned and its practices have witnessed various changes, e.g., from a focus on multiculturalism to the adoption more recently of civic integration programmes (see Favell, 2019; Joppke, 2007).[1]

[1] Among its various definitions, integration is described as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016, 14). Due to the contestation surrounding the concept of integration we prefer to use the term social inclusion in this article. The two concepts overlap, though social inclusion may focus more on rights and individuals' participation in the community. For commonalities and differences between the terms social inclusion and social integration see Georgi (2015).

Such issues are faced not only by nation-states, but also by regions and sub-national entities. Here, national dynamics and policies combine with regional features and developments. Migration issues have been shown to acquire further complexities when they intersect with the politics of substate nationalism and the relationship between the territories and the nation-state and within the various segments of the "local" population (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011). Examples of this phenomenon can be seen in both Scotland, with its proclaimed civic nationalist ambitions, and South Tyrol, an Italian autonomous province with German and Ladin-speaking minorities and a sophisticated system to protect them. Putting the attention on the individual migrants, one might ask how they navigate the complexities of sub-state nationalist contexts.

In this study we foreground the everyday lived experiences and narratives of young adult migrants living in Scotland and South Tyrol.[2] We are particularly interested to investigate how young adult migrants respond and adapt their own micro-narratives in relation to macro-narratives on diversity within these two specific sites. The underlying questions that stimulate the research presented in this article are: how do young adult migrants negotiate their own sense of belonging in spaces of strong sub-state nationalist sentiment? What is the impact of diversity political discourse on young adult migrant arrivals in these settings? How are macro-narratives on diversity in these regions understood and interpreted first-hand, at the micro-level, by young adult migrants? To answer these questions, we look at the interaction between macro- and micro-narratives from the perspective of individuals' search for ontological security. In this way, we bring to light how feelings of ontological security intersect with people's sense of belonging, and thereby processes of social inclusion.

We explore the ways in which individuals engage with macro-narratives on diversity within the regional contexts of Scotland and South Tyrol. Our conceptual argument is centred around the role that narratives play in relation to young adult migrant security-seeking processes and sense of belonging. We build on earlier work by Kinnvall (2004) who has stressed the importance of nationalist narratives in fostering a sense of belonging to the nation state. For the purposes of this research, we conceptualise narratives as "generalisable selective depictions of reality across time" (Dennison, 2021). A theoretical framing of ontological security is used to analyse the data collected throughout interviews with young adult migrants and examine their micro-narratives and how they engage with macro-narratives on diversity. Accordingly, this article explores how macro-narratives can provide an opportunity for young adult migrants to achieve an enhanced sense of ontological security. On the other hand, it will be revealed that to refute or challenge claims of sub-state diversity would position these individuals outside of the dominant narrative and lead to the experience of ontological insecurity and increased anxiety.[3]

[2] In this article we use the term "young adult migrant" to indicate those individuals who we interviewed for this research, namely, foreign people (before Brexit, mostly third country nationals) who are between 18 and 27 years old and arrived in Scotland or South Tyrol at various ages (see the methodology section). Alternatively, we used the term (participant/individual/interviewee) "with/without migration background". The term "migrant" is used generally to indicate people with migration history from foreign countries.

[3] It should be clarified that in the intersection between macro and micro-narratives, our focus is on the latter. We do not apply ontological security to trace the development of macro-narratives. Rather the presence of specific macro-narratives is our starting point to then analyse how they manifest themselves and are reinterpreted in micro-level everyday experiences by young adult migrants in their search for ontological security.

Such feelings of ontological (in)security interact with individuals' sense of belonging and thus more broadly with the social inclusion of young adult migrants. Indeed, social inclusion/integration is a multidimensional phenomenon in which various factors interact, such as recognition of rights, access to institutional structures, and social relationships (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016; Millán-Francoa et al., 2019). One of its crucial aspects is a sense of belonging (Medda-Windischer, 2017), i.e., expression of the emotional and social attachments that individuals develop towards each other, social groups, and the place they live. As pointed out by Babacan and Babacan (2012), social inclusion of migrant communities is closely dependent upon the establishment of belonging as well as trust and social networks.[4] Ontological security is also related to a firm conceptualisation of social trust and home (Kinnvall, 2004) and feelings of belonging (Croft, 2012). However, it is often made difficult for migrant individuals to feel comfortable in the new setting due to issues of stigmatization and perceptions of threat from the wider population (Noble, 2005). These are the core perspectives underpinning the direction of our study.

The article focuses on Scotland and South Tyrol because they are both cases of relevant sub-state nationalism and sub-national narratives on diversity. At the same time, they represent different types of narrative. Scotland epitomizes the example of a civic sub-nationalism that proclaims to be open and inclusive of migrants and their diversity. South Tyrol, instead, represents a case where the politics of sub-state nationalism and proclamations of multiculturalism struggle with the diversity brought by recent migration. Thus, our case studies cover the impact and challenges of different types of sub-national macro-narratives on individual micro-level experiences. Moreover, both areas have become destinations for migrant groups, who represent around 9% and 9.5% of the Scottish and South Tyrolean populations respectively. Increased migration to these two regions in recent years makes Scotland and South Tyrol relevant case studies within which to explore the influence of political discourses on diversity on individual migrants and wider society. The comparison of Scotland and South Tyrol speaks to other areas of substate-nationalism with inclusive or more ambiguous discourses on diversity and relevant migratory flows, like Catalonia, the Flanders and Quebec.

This research contributes to three fields of literature. First, we enrich migration studies, in particular studies on migrant integration/inclusion, which often focus on models of integration (Koopmans et al., 2005), the principles of the concept of integration (Favell, 2019), and indicators to measure it (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Following Atalay and Korkut (2022), we address inclusion challenges through migrant everyday experiences and narratives. In processes of social inclusion, we focus on the interaction between political macro-level and micro-level experiences, bringing attention to feelings of ontological security and their intersection with processes of negotiation of belongingness. This illustrates how individuals engage with the discourses on diversity in the society where they live, and the role played by ontological security. We highlight individuals' settlement strategies, overlapping in this way with existential anthropology research on migration, which looks at migrants' existential quest regarding well-being,

[4] Similarly, in their operationalization of integration Heckmann and Schnapper (2009) speak of "identificational integration," which regards feeling of belonging (together with structural, cultural and social integration).

home-building and (im)mobility (Hage, 1997, 2005; Lems, 2014). However, our focus is on individuals' search for ontological security and how these feelings interact with processes of belongingness and social inclusion, and how in this process migrants grapple with society's macro-narratives.[5]

Second, we contribute to the growing body of scholarship that has analysed the interplay between 'the "old" politics of sub-state nationalism' and the "new" diversity of immigration' and pointed out the factors affecting the relationship between sub-state nationalists/national minorities and new migrant communities (Barker, 2015, 2; see also Jeram, van der Zwet and Wisthaler, 2015; Hepburn, 2011; Zapata-Barrero, 2009). Such work has tended to have a top-down approach focusing on the policies, approaches, narratives of the sub-state national society towards migration and migrant communities. Instead, we add a bottom-up perspective that analyses how young adult migrants address diversity politics and discourse. Finally, we contribute to the work of scholars who have looked at the securitization of migration and migrants through which they are perceived as a threat; a process that relates to the identity concerns and insecurities of a society (Swarts & Karakatsanis, 2012; Paterson & Karyotis, 2020). We add an alternative perspective to this strand of research, focusing on the ontological security of individual migrants and its effects on how people negotiate their place and feelings of belonging in society.

This article is organized in five sections. First, we present our theoretical framework, which is centred around the concept of ontological security and introduce the methodology employed in the study. The second section provides overviews of the Scottish and South Tyrolean contexts with regards to the dynamics surrounding Scottish nationalism and South Tyrolean ethnic politics. This includes demographic data on migration in these settings and explores the emergence of diversity narratives which have been adopted to deal with processes of social inclusion in the two territories. In the third and fourth sections, we apply an ontological security framework to analyse the lived experiences of young adult migrants in the two case study settings across four themes: accepting the macro-narrative and narrative othering, playing by the rules, downplaying negativities, and challenges faced. Our analysis investigates how the micro-experiences of the participant's engage with and contrast with the macro-level diversity narratives in the two settings. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of our findings and reflects on how they contribute to our understanding of processes of social inclusion.

Theoretical framework and methodology

In order to understand how young adult migrants negotiate macro-narratives on diversity we employ the use of ontological security theory. The concept of ontological security was originally developed by Scottish psychiatrist R. Laing (2010) to explain the individual level impact of existential security among his psychiatric patients. Laing was primarily interested in the analysis of individual-level ontological insecurity in his seminal book *The Divided Self* where he focussed his attention on the sources of insecurity that led his patients to self-doubt and lose connection with their

[5] Further study should explore more the intersection between our ontological security perspectives and existential anthropology insights, e.g., relations between sense of (in)security and sense of moving/being stuck.

respective realities. Giddens (1991) took a sociological approach in his reinterpretation of the theory, whereby he described ontological security as a person's sense of existential safety in the world which is closely linked to societal trust and everyday routine. He suggested that a breach in daily routine would give cause for an existential crisis and thus ontological insecurity would be the resulting experience from such a disruption.

Giddens has detailed how daily routines and everyday events are used to overcome the experience of traumatic events and has emphasised the importance of familiarity in one's everyday interactions as an essential coping mechanism. A continuous biographical narrative and the ability to 'bracket out' existential doubts and questions are important prerequisites for feelings of ontological security. There is also a close interplay between interpretations of security and nationalist political sentiments. Giddens (1986, 218) stated that, "nationalist sentiments rise up when the sense of ontological security is put in jeopardy by the disruption of routines". In other words, when people face extreme doubts about their existence and right to exist, they turn to feelings of collective belonging to overcome their anxieties. Giddens also explained how in the postmodern era of globalization, as people react to a growing sense of placelessness, they react with regressive forms of object identification such as identifying with symbols of nationhood. This can also include interaction with society's macro-narratives.

Narratives and rhetoric surrounding diversity have helped to foster feelings of ontological insecurity within population groups, including between migrants. Croft (2012) has highlighted how ontological security is reliant on a sense of belonging, in terms of group alignment and nationality, feelings of comfort and, also, how perceived threats can work towards eroding feelings of security. While feelings of being 'at home' and comfort may be taken for granted by the majority population, those who are excluded from these feelings are left in a state of perpetual dread. Harris and Ameera (2019) report that Australian Muslims have expressed that they feel the need to perform their 'normalness', and qualities of good citizenship in public spaces and during routine social interactions to counter their perceived difference. For Kinnvall (2004), ontological security is a constant process of 'becoming secure' *not* of being secure as earlier theorists have suggested. Thus, believing in shared -albeit distorted or unachievable- narratives of hope can also provide population groups with security.

Most research in the field of ontological security tends to analyse macro-level processes and state actors. Instead, in our application, we return to the micro-level origins of the theory, examining the interaction between macro-narratives and micro interpretations of those at the level of the individual. We take the starting point of ontological (in)security as the natural state of being for all subjects, who are encouraged to engage in specific behaviours to establish their own security. This study seeks to unpack the role of macro-level diversity narratives and discourses on processes of social inclusion for individual young adult migrants in the two contextual settings analysed. Our hypothesis is that through invoking macro-narratives of national and/or regional diversity, our study participants can bracket out existential insecurities. This process also allows individual young adult migrants to establish a sense of ontological security and foster feelings of belonging in the local environment, contributing to social inclusion processes.

Methodology

In our study we conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with a gender-mixed group of eight young adult migrants from foreign countries: five in Scotland and three in South Tyrol. Participants were mostly from non-EU countries (before Brexit third-country nationals). At the time of the interviews, the respondents were between 18 and 27 years old and had various legal status and type of resident permits (including refugees) and lengths of residency in the country (ranging from new arrivals to individuals who arrived in the country as adolescents), thus reflecting different types of migration experience. The interviewees had different levels of education and social class.[6] We also interviewed five young adults without a migration background (two in Scotland and three in South Tyrol). The perspective of the latter was included to better frame the experience of the participants with migrant background. We focused on young adults as they are "citizens in the making" who carry several stigmatizing identifiers which makes social inclusion a challenging prospect (Fangen et al., 2011, 8). It is important to listen to the voices of this often-marginalized social group so that we can understand the magnitude of discrimination faced and inform future policy.

The anonymized interviews occurred in two waves, in May–June 2019 and March–April 2020 and, to gather relevant information, we included specific questions on sense of belonging, perceptions on diversity narratives, and public attitudes towards migrants in Scotland or South Tyrol. We also collected testimonials of individuals' experiences with diversity narratives identified in Scotland and South Tyrol. For privacy reasons, the quotations presented in this article are fully anonymized and we do not provide any additional information on the study participants. In order to unpack the macro-narratives of diversity in Scotland and South Tyrol, against which we confronted individuals' experiences, we relied on the existing literature on Scottish nationalism, South Tyrolean ethnic politics, and discourses and approaches towards migration issues in the two territories.

We are aware that the interviewees might not represent the wider young adult migrant population, and that this type of research does not allow for generalization. However, we believe that this work provides precious insights as to how people relate to and engage with societies' macro-narratives and political discourses, and their daily experience with processes of social inclusion. We believe that these inferences are crucial to developing a more coherent understanding of social inclusion mechanisms for young adult migrants. Before proceeding with the analysis, the next section presents the context of sub-state nationalism and migration and the identified narratives that characterize Scotland and South Tyrol.

Scotland and South Tyrol: the context

Migration and civic nationalism in Scotland

Scotland has a growing ethnic minority population and Glasgow is Scotland's most diverse city (Understanding Glasgow, 2019). In 2017 non-British nationals in

[6] It should be disclosed that all participants were part of a research project on volunteerism and migration, (VOLPOWER, http://www.volpower.eu/) and active in volunteering activities. Thus, they represent a specific category of people engaged with civic activities. This aspect does not limit the scope of our research, since we assume that the desire for ontological security is shared by all.

Scotland made up 7% of the total population (National Records of Scotland, 2018). The number of EU nationals living in Scotland was recorded as 235,000, while the number of non-EU nationals or third-country nationals in the country was 142,000 (National Records of Scotland, 2018). The largest groups of non-UK nationals living in Scotland are, in order of size; Polish (99,000), Irish (21,000), Indian (16,000), Italian (15,000) and Pakistani (14,000).

Considering this growing diversity, Scotland has long presented itself as a pluralist nation state which welcomes migrants and prides itself on diversity (Bechhofer & Mccrone, 2009). The Scottish National Party has long-claimed that Scotland is "open, welcoming and outward looking" (SNP 2019) and have emphasised that a Scottish national identity is open to anyone who wishes to claim it. The 'One Scotland, Many Cultures' campaign developed by the Scottish Government can be viewed as exemplary of the civic nationalism political elites have endeavoured to promote with an ideology that anyone living in the country can claim Scottish identity whilst simultaneously pursuing the campaign for Scottish independence (Penrose & Howard, 2008). In Glasgow, city branding, including the motto 'People Make Glasgow', has been used to promote a local narrative of inclusion. Scotland's perceived pro-immigration attitude is often contrasted with England and other parts of the UK to highlight a narrative of Scottish distinctiveness (Nicolson & Korkut, 2021). The Scottish National Party's policies and rhetoric have been successful in gaining political support from some ethnic minority groups, particularly Scottish Pakistani's and young Scottish Muslim adults (Finlay et al., 2017).

However, research (Leith, 2012) has shown a disparity between the civic nationalist vision of political elites with the, often ethno-centric, views of Scottishness shared by the majority (white) population. Despite politicians' best efforts to promote an inclusive civic nationalism, non-civic and exclusive criteria continue to influence public perceptions of national belonging and Scottishness (Leith & Soule, 2011; Mycock, 2012). Cultural markers of Scottishness, including dress, language, and food choice, continue to hold influence over an individual's claims to a Scottish identity (Hopkins, 2014). Furthermore, everyday racism and islamophobia continue to undermine efforts to establish a truly civic Scottish national identity (Davidson et al., 2018).

Research on Scottish nationalism and Scottish identity is often divided between two camps. On one hand researchers and historians have sought to present a positive view of a diverse, open, and culturally harmonious society (Bonino, 2017) which will benefit from independence from the rest of the UK (Breeze et al., 2015; Hassan, 2014). Other scholars have highlighted the prominence of structural racism across all aspects of Scottish social life (Davidson et al., 2018) and exclusionary criteria embedded within majority-population conceptualisations of Scottishness (McCrone, 2017). There is a growing body of research on the everyday coping mechanisms and survival strategies of migrants in Scotland (Botterill et al., 2016; Hopkins, 2014). These offer an in-depth insight into the everyday effects of Scottish nationalism at the micro-level and individual identity negotiation processes that are always ongoing, often influenced by the political sphere. It is hoped that this study can contribute to this literature.

South Tyrol: the ambivalence of a multicultural society

A South Tyrolean macro-narrative on diversity is strongly related to the specific ethnic cleavage and traumatic past that characterize the province.[7] Annexed by the Italian state after World War I and subjected to a process of Italianization during the Fascist regime, the province witnessed ethnic tensions in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1972 the second Statute of Autonomy put in place a "complex power-sharing system" (Wolff, 2008), which provided the German and Ladin-speaking populations with a high level of protection, diluting ethnic tensions.[8]

Consequently, in public discourses South Tyrol is often considered as a model to foster peaceful cohabitation between ethnic groups, though some political forces continue to pursue the right of self-determination for South Tyrol. Politicians, practitioners as well as scholars have emphasised that the province is an example of minority protection for a variety of contexts ranging from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Tibet and Ukraine.[9] Along these lines South Tyrol presents itself as a multicultural and bilingual/trilingual territory where the presence of cultural diversity is considered as an enrichment for the society. Some of the metaphors used in public discourses to represent South Tyrol are those of "a bridge" between the cultural and economic Italian and German worlds and "a small Europe in the heart of Europe" (Kompatscher, 2019).[10]

However, this narrative clashes with some critical aspects of the South Tyrolean reality for people living in the region. Observers have pointed out that some of South Tyrolean mechanisms have maintained the ethnic cleavage and linguistic divisions in many aspects of social and political life (Carlà, 2007; Marko, 2008).[11] Furthermore, despite the official declaration of bilingualism/trilingualism, part of South Tyrol's population, especially Italian speakers, struggle with the second language. Finally, some measures of the second Statute of Autonomy no longer reflect the province's demographic reality today, i.e., the presence of linguistically mixed persons (children of parents belonging to different South Tyrolean linguistic groups) and the increasing presence of migrants from foreign (EU and non-EU) countries.

Since the late 1990s the province has experienced the arrival of many migrants from a variety of countries. Today migrants are a structural feature of South Tyrolean society, measuring 50,333 persons (9.5% of the total population) from more than 130 countries at the end of 2018. One third of these migrants came from European Union countries; another 30%, from other European countries; 19.3%, from Asia; and 14.1%, from Africa. The main nationalities are Albanian (5767/11.4%), German (4500/8.8%) and Moroccan (3650/7.2%), followed by Pakistani (3550/7.0%) and Romanian (6.6%).[12]

The South Tyrolean macro-narrative on diversity has struggled to keep up with the demands of the increase in migrant population. Indeed, various studies point out that

[7] According to the 2011 census, Italian, German and Ladin speakers represent, respectively, 26.1%, 69.4% and 4.5% of the South Tyrolean population.

[8] The system foresees a combination of territorial autonomy, consociational mechanisms and several cultural and linguistic rights.

[9] See for example Benedikter 2015; Alto Adige 2013.

[10] Authors' translation.

[11] For example, the distribution of public employment and public resources among the linguistic groups in proportion to their numerical strength and the creation of three school systems (Italian, German and Ladin), which are based on the distinction between the linguistic groups.

[12] Data in ASTAT 2019.

often South Tyrolean political discourses have presented migration as a challenge to local cultures and languages, accepted mostly for economic reasons, and have expressed defensive and/or negative attitudes (Carlà, 2018; Medda-Windischer, 2011; Wisthaler, 2016). As in many other European countries and regions, migration is at times linked to issues of criminality, cultural alienation, and attitudes of welfare chauvinism. Moreover, according to Carlà (2015), in some South Tyrolean political discourses migration has been presented as a threat because it alters the established balance between Italian and German-speaking groups and challenges some South Tyrolean measures of minority protection.

In the past decade, defensive attitudes towards migration have found expression in the adoption of the principle of "fordern und fördern / sostegno a fronte di impegno" (promoting and demanding), which inspired the 2011 provincial law on integration of foreign citizens.[13] In the framework of the 'promoting and demanding' principle, cultural diversity is seen as both a form of enrichment and a challenge to cohabitation in the province (see Amministrazione Provincia Bolzano, n.d.). Integration is understood as a quid pro quo, where provisions of support and services for migrants are linked to individuals' commitment to learn the local languages and to respect local values, traditional cultures and rules (see Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano – Alto Adige/Servizio coordinamento per l'integrazione 2016).[14]

To summarize, Scotland is characterized by an apparently inclusive civic nationalist discourses, which is welcoming and open to the inclusion of migrants and their diversity. However, at the same time an ethno-centric understanding of Scottish identity persists. South Tyrol, instead, witnesses a complex set of at times contradictory macro-narratives on diversity, distinguishing between South Tyrolean linguistic group and new migrant minorities. The rhetoric of South Tyrol as a multicultural society is ambivalent towards migration and the migrant population in the province. In the following pages we foreground the lived experiences of young adult migrants living in Scotland and South Tyrol in order to understand how the identified macro-narratives permeate the everyday lives of individual migrants in these two settings.

Micro-level experiences in Scotland and South Tyrol

How do the interviewed young adult migrants engage with macro-narratives on diversity of Scottish civic nationalism or the contradictory narratives of South Tyrolean multiculturalism in light of ontological security-seeking processes? To answer this question, we explore the narrative data across four conceptual themes identified: *accepting the macro-narrative and narrative othering, playing by the rules, downplaying negativities* and *challenges faced*. The first theme regards to what extent young adult migrants embrace the sub-national macro-narrative while making comparison with the rest of the country. The second and third themes bring to light specific strategies and mechanisms used by young adult migrants to cope with the macro-narratives. The final theme

[13] See Provincial Law on Integration (Integrazione delle cittadine e dei cittadini stranieri), 2011, No. 12, 28 October, Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen.

[14] Consequently, some provincial policy measures follow a civic integration approach, linking migrants' access to certain economic benefits to the provision of proof by migrants of their willingness to integrate and of their participation in programs to promote integration – for instance, attending courses on civic education and learning Italian or German.

refers to specific difficulties encountered by participants in their engagement with the macro-narratives. The analysis will show the mechanisms through which participants in our study are able to continue their processes of ontological security-seeking and deflect existential anxieties.

Accepting the macro-narrative and narrative othering

In interviews conducted with young adult migrants in Glasgow the participants were quick to address a narrative of Scottish distinctiveness, and perceived welcoming public attitudes towards migrants. One interviewee described the effect that having a macro-narrative of acceptance in Scotland had on her when initially arriving in the country:

> *When you come to Scotland, and you hear that it's a welcoming place it kind of puts your mind at ease. It's much easier than going into London or some places down south and going in to all the stories around knife crime and hate crime and stuff like that (GLA1).*

The above extract highlights how the macro-narrative of an inclusive Scotland was operating even before the individual had arrived in the country. Another study participant, GLA2, shared a similar view of Scotland, also building on a comparison with England and London. He gave the example of asking for directions to people on the street to illustrate his point of view:

> *…in Scotland to be nice to people is kind of a culture y'know that's how people kinda think an how people are… most people... think like this. But in England it's somethin' else… Cos if I go to London people are usually not nice and they don't give a f**k. See people in Glasgow if you nice to them they be nice to you back, right? An if you need help, they will help you out. If you need directions, you ask a taxi driver somewhere in city centre, right, he will point you in the direction, he will say 'oh come on now ah'll take you there…you know so people are willing to kind of talk to you… people are nice in Glasgow you know… (GLA2).*

The above extracts show how the participants, while asserting that Scotland and Glasgow in particular, was an exceptionally welcoming and friendly place, often drew on comparisons with England and other parts of the UK to justify their arguments. This can be thought of as a process of narrative othering whereby, as Plummer (2019, 115) describes people "find or create stories to which we belong but, in the process, also create the stories to which we do not belong: the narratives of the other". Furthermore, this process allows the migrant participants to demonstrate their allegiance to the Scottish national *self* which is reliant on comparisons with the English other. Ontological security theory scholars have highlighted how discourse and practices which enforce a stable sense of the other can help to foster security in the national self (Rumelili, 2015). In other words, having a sense of certainty about the *other* with whom we are in constant tension helps us to deflect existential anxieties.

It is somewhat paradoxical that the subjects of the study, who have themselves been positioned as the other, engage in their own process of narrative othering to establish security and give further justification to their qualities of belonging. Nonetheless, the study participants went to length to share the narrative that Scotland was a welcoming

country for migrants, a narrative to which they belonged. This can also be understood as a method of diverting unwanted attention from one minority group (migrants in Scotland) to another (English people). We argue that through foregrounding the Scottish distinctiveness narrative, and engaging in processes of narrative othering, the young adult migrants we interviewed were able to assert their own ontological security and bracket out insecurities around their perceived difference.

Similar dynamics can be observed in South Tyrol, where some participants who have recently arrived in the province appear to easily conform to South Tyrolean multicultural discourses, willing to affirm their secure space in South Tyrolean society. As in Scotland, some of the interviewed young adult migrants pursue their ontological security by embracing the narrative of South Tyrol as a multicultural place, by highlighting the advantages of living in the province and its cultural features. In this endeavour, like their counterparts in Scotland, they made comparisons with the rest of Italy to stress the uniqueness of South Tyrol:

> *I like that there are three linguistic groups here (…) it is the nice thing of South Tyrol, because if you are a foreigner, here you can learn Italian and German, and it is a nice thing. In Sicily you do not have the possibility to learn two international languages (ST4).*[15]

Similarly, another participant stated:

> *…we all know in Italy, Italian is spoken … If you are born in South Tyrol, you speak German and Italian … If you go out of Italy, to another country, you can speak German (…) So that it is an advantage (ST3).*

In both South Tyrol and Scotland interviewees tend not only to rely on their experience in the local context. Instead, through these comparisons between South Tyrol and Italy and between Scotland and the rest of the UK, respondents combine the local macro-narrative with the experience in the rest of the country to build on a complementary parallel discourse that stresses the positive aspects of their new home (Hajer, 1995). Discrepancies between sub-national and national realities are used to reinforce a specific positive image of South Tyrol and Scotland and highlight their attachment to the new home, while othering the rest of the country.

Playing by the rules

Participants in the study also emphasized that there is a pressure on individual migrants to adapt and perform acts of good citizenship in the new context. For example, in Scotland GLA4 explained how she, as a person of colour, feels herself to be under an obligation to represent the wider migrant community in a positive light and show that she is not a threat. As she explained:

> *if I wasn't exactly like a good person, if I was a bad person…they (the wider Scottish population) would think, you know, all people with my skin colour, you know, are the same thing…you know, people are ignorant at first, but until you let them know*

[15] Except for the interviews by ST3, all quotations of interviews conducted in South Tyrol are translated in English by the authors from German or Italian.

that you're not the person they think you are…So, I obviously had to make them understand that I am… I'm not a threat (GLA4).

GLA4 highlights how she feels representative of the wider black population in Scotland and is therefore under pressure to both display positive attributes to the wider (white) Scottish population and downplay any 'threat' she may be seen to pose. As Croft (2012) has highlighted, migrants are often tasked with responding to the perceived threat they are seen to pose to the wider population. In the extract above we can see how GLA4's own ontological security structure is shaped by the wider population's stereotypes surrounding people of colour. If she were to behave disrespectfully, this would work against the foundations of her ontological security-seeking structure, to present migrants of colour in Scotland in a positive light.

This view of playing by the rules is clearly summarized by one of the participants in South Tyrol, when, addressing whether some groups of people might not be included, he stated:

In any country that I was, if you go beyond the rules, then you definitely have to be excluded. But, if you are going with the rules, you are definitely included. So, if anyone or anybody says he feels excluded, that means that you are definitely out of the rules (ST3).

From the extract above we identify the need for the interviewed people to adapt to the society where they live. In a similar opinion to the Scottish participant who has stressed the need to behave well, the South Tyrolean interviewee puts the responsibility on individual migrants to integrate and fit in to the local society. If he follows the perceived rules, he will be included in the South Tyrolean society. This understanding of the social inclusion process can be interpreted as a coping mechanism to reinforce the interviewee's sense of belonging and promote his ontological security.

Downplaying negativities

Another manner in which the participants sought to enhance their ontological security-seeking structures was through downplaying any negative experiences they had and downplaying critical stances on the macro-narrative in both Scotland and South Tyrol. For example, in the following extract, GLA5 described an incident where a bus driver refused to accept his age and entitlement to a discounted child fare:

My travelin', ah'm not gonna lie to you, it could be rough sometimes, y'know…some drivers they give you dislike... Like they give you hassle an' stuff. Like when ah'm tryin' to get a ticket an they're like 'no you have to pay more cos you're an adult.' Even when I was 16, cos I look older, they're like 'no you have to pay extra money'…I used to be on the bus, they called the police, then y'know the policeman verified my age, and I would go on the bus (GLA5).

Participant GLA5 went on to summarise his reflections on the perceived racial discrimination he had received from bus drivers in Glasgow,

…ah feel like drivers, they give more hassle to more like, coloured people. That what ah think, that's what ah think. But not all of them, just only some of them. It's

good and bad, at the same time y'get nice drivers that won't even look at you sticky! (GLA5).

Furthermore, another participant, GLA6, a young man of Romani background, went into detail about the abuse and attacks he had suffered at the hands of an anti-immigrant youth gang when attending school in the Govanhill area of the city:

*When I used to go to school, we used to fight a lot just because I was, you know, with a different colour and I was Roma or they was calling me Gypsy …we used to fight with a gang called GABBA (Get all the Black B******s) in the Gorbals. Ah think it was cos of us teenagers and y'know… it's just the way you grow up, Scotland's rough… it's a jungle. Ye need to survive in the jungle (GLA6).*

In the above extracts we can see how both participants GLA5 and GLA6 downplay the seriousness of the violent and discriminatory behaviour they have been subjected to in Glasgow. Despite GLA5's negative experience he contends that not all bus drivers are bad. In a similar manner GLA6 justifies the gang violence he was subjected to with the explanation that Scotland is rough and claims "it's just the way you grow up." Discounting racist experiences and everyday experiences of micro-aggressions in Glasgow was therefore one coping mechanism which the participants used to process these insecurity-provoking incidents. The young adult migrant participants themselves did not reflect on their experiences of racial discrimination in Glasgow as symptomatic of a wider racism and discrimination in Scottish society. Rather, the participants would typically downplay the seriousness of these events and instead be more inclined to share positive experiences of mixed social interactions and everyday life in Glasgow. In contrast, an interviewee without a migration background, GLA7, was more forthcoming about her experience of anti-immigrant attitudes among the wider population:

Some people just don't get it… they'll just like I hear this term constantly that 'they're just here for the jobs', I hear that all the time. That's 100% not the case for the majority of them (immigrants). People just assume that…Personally I've usually seen that from like taxi drivers and stuff. They're like the biggest targets when it comes to getting abuse. Most taxi drivers are of a different ethnic background, and they just get abused constantly (GLA7).

GLA7 was therefore more critical of public attitudes towards migrants in Glasgow. From the dataset it seems that some individuals without a migrant background were more open to challenging diversity narratives in Scotland. As GLA7 is not the subject of the discrimination witnessed it is not harming her own security to acknowledge the persistence of racism in Glasgow. This is a very different position to the vulnerable position that migrants occupy, and the challenges faced in overcoming feelings of ontological (in)security.

In South Tyrol the participants also appeared to downplay negative aspects of the macro-narrative, including the prevalent issues that characterize South Tyrol and the relationship between its linguistic groups, despite having direct experience of these challenges. Indeed, interviewees claimed to regret not having learned German, mimicking the frustrations of part of the South Tyrolean population that is not actually bilingual:

when I arrived (…) they make me learn the Italian language … and I felt … I thought I could learn … a German course … but I felt only, I never applied. I wish I have done it, eh, I would know how to speak even German (ST4).

ST3 reports having witnessed occurrences of the ethnic cleavage between Italian and German-speakers in the working environment, but dismissed it as not relevant for him:

… sometimes I see like some parts of Germans do not accept Italians and some parts of Italians do not accept Germans, because there was this job (…) it was in construction (…) the Italian guy last a week. He only did three days and he stopped because the German people did not like him (…) I was not worried about me, if Germans don't like Italians and Italians don't like Germans, what the hell. There are also disadvantages. Advantages and disadvantages (ST3).

This dismissal, we argue, can be seen as a method to hide the insecurities that can derive from living in such a culturally complex setting. Along the same lines, participants stressed the perceived inclusiveness of South Tyrol, where they think migrants are treated well, again making comparison with other parts of Italy. This contrasts with the picture offered by interviewees without a migrant background, who, similarly to GLA7 in Scotland, tend to express a critical stance on how migrants are dealt in South Tyrol, voicing stories of prejudices, exclusion and in the words of one of the participants (ST2) "an invisible wall" between locals and migrants. Instead, participants with migrant background report their positive experiences of living in the province, where they feel at home, boosting the province's multicultural features and downplaying any negative occurrence they might have encountered:

I would say South Tyrol is just a place of meeting strangers from different countries, all part of the world. It's a nice place and … I think I am loving it, actually […] living here for almost let me say three years, it's just like I'm home. I don't have any problem with anyone, I don't have anyone having problems with me. I was only stopped once, in these three years, by the police to check my documents. That was the first time, and it is the last time till now (ST3).

The same interviewee never felt discriminated and does not believe that there is racism (or he feels he has never been a target of racism), due also to the fact that he tends to avoid framing negative experiences in terms of racism.

Challenges

The dataset presented thus far is just one side of the story related to the lived experiences of young adult migrants living in Scotland and South Tyrol. From the interviews, specific challenges emerge that young adult migrants find difficult to cope with in their engagement with the Scottish and South Tyrolean macro-narratives on diversity.

Despite sharing discourses of Scottish distinctiveness and inclusive attitudes in the country the participants outlined several barriers which hinder their claims of belongingness. For example, a distinct Scottish accent was considered essential. One participant outlined the importance of accent to his observation of being perceived as a newcomer to the country:

> *…when you have a Scottish accent, people think that you've lived in Scotland for (a) very long (time) compared to when you don't have accent. For me, people assume am new to the country you know… like I don't have a Glasgow accent, so I think people think I'm a bit weird as well, they ask me where I'm from. They know that I'm not from here (GLA3).*

Interviewee GLA3 claimed that being in possession of a distinct Scottish accent is associated with having lived in the country for a long time and he illustrates how he is made to feel different by lacking this requirement. In another interview, GLA4 explained that they would not feel comfortable adopting a Scottish accent, for fear that it would be disrespectful to wider Scottish society to do so:

> *I feel if I tell people I was Scottish, with like a Scottish accent, that's me embarrassing myself because I do not look Scottish or appear Scottish, I cannot claim to be Scottish. As much as I'd love that, it's not right to claim something you're not, you know. I feel like I will be offending someone (GLA4).*

A different set of challenges are present in South Tyrol where the complex set of macro-narratives on diversity that characterizes the province is reflected in different ways interviewees negotiate and relate to them. Indeed, one of the respondents follows a different trajectory from her counterparts, presenting a more critical stance toward both the cohabitation among the Italian, German and Ladin-speaking groups and South Tyrolean discourses and policies on migration, revealing insecurities raised by South Tyrolean ethnic features. ST1, who has lived in the province for several years, departs from the narrative of South Tyrol as a successful multicultural territory, pointing out that a plurilingual cohabitation is sometimes missing. In this way she comes closer to the view of many of the participants without migrant background, who have a negative opinion of the cohabitation and relations between the German and Italian linguistic groups and speak of "clear borders […] deep boundaries between Germans and Italians" and limited social contacts (ST7).[16]

The South Tyrolean ethnic cleavage and the specific cultural features of South Tyrol seem to have repercussion on ST1's understanding of belonging and her daily life experience. Her interview reflects the challenges hindering feelings of belongingness for individuals that are not originally from South Tyrol. Indeed, not only is she not from South Tyrol because she has a migration background, but also her South Tyrolean born and raised sister "always has a migration background". Furthermore, she uses the word "immigrants" to describe anyone who is not from South Tyrol, including those who come from other parts of Italy, including friends who moved to the province from Naples. In addition, the perceived separation among South Tyrolean groups creates problems and raises ST1's insecurities:

> *people are always distanced, I mean the two cultures are always more distanced from one other always more enemies, right, and this thing also influences me being an emigrant from another language, I'm always stuck between multiple worlds … I*

[16] It could be that the variable of time might play a role in regards to these different perceptions on South Tyrol. One might wonder whether having lived for long time or having grown up in South Tyrol, and thus being more entrenched in the divisions among South Tyrolean groups, might foster a more critical view of the society. Further research is necessary to elaborate this observation.

> *found myself in a situation of continuous translation, not only linguistic, but also cultural … and this for sure isn't a serene situation because I'm always a bit here, a bit there, a bit who knows where. Language gives you a sense of belonging. Therefore, I sometimes feel I don't belong anywhere or to belong to both parts and being, even the positive sense, as in I can communicate, that is I have the possibility of knowing both, but at the same time I find it really difficult because I'm constantly translating, and this make me feel a bit insecure at an emotional level (ST1).*

This extract highlights the contradictions between South Tyrolean macro-narratives, the reality on the ground, and the challenges addressed by those who comes from outside. These contradictions create additional insecurities for ST1, who may be forced to look for strategies to find membership in South Tyrolean society. Indeed, as an outsider she is unsure with which side of the South Tyrolean linguistic world she should relate to. Thus, in her social inclusion experience there is the additional burden to learn to negotiate with the remaining divisions between South Tyrolean linguistic groups.

Conclusions

Through our investigation we have unpicked the specific diversity narratives which underpin life for young adult migrants living in Scotland and South Tyrol. We have noted particular commonalities across the datasets and explored how the concept of ontological security can be used to help understand processes of social inclusion and negotiation of belongingness for migrants in sub-state nationalist contexts. Processes of inclusion for our interviewees in these two settings are strongly influenced by macro-level diversity narratives and a perception that these opinions should be upheld.

We have shown that young adult migrants in Scotland have adopted a variety of strategies and coping mechanisms (narrative othering, playing by the rules, downplaying negativities) to adapt to the framework of Scottish civic nationalism and its portrayal of a welcoming and inclusive society. This has allowed participants to address the ontological insecurities that derive from their positioning as an outsider, or threat to the wider population. Similar inferences could be observed in some of the data gathered in South Tyrol. It thus appears that the interviewed young adult migrants frame their daily experience considering the prevailing macro-narrative on diversity, in order to provide themselves with a sense of security and feelings of comfort in their new place of living. In this process, they might overlook any negative aspect that they encountered in the sub-state context, while embarking in processes of othering towards the rest of the country. At the same time, this framing presents some challenges. For example, participants stressed the importance given to having a Scottish accent that is difficult to master. Also, one interviewee in South Tyrol seemed to struggle in navigating the complexity and contradictions of a society that is in part affected by the divisions of the past ethnic conflict. These divisions caused her additional insecurities, which might prove to be difficult to cope with. This problem did not emerge in Scotland where the national cleavage and divisions within Scottish society are less pronounced.

In this research we have looked at micro-level ontological security-seeking processes of young adult migrants and how they are influenced by macro-narratives on diversity. Returning to a micro-application of ontological security theory allows us to draw out the coping mechanisms and processes of establishing a sense of belonging for our

respondents. Our findings provide various insights. First, we draw attention to the ways in which the macro and micro-level intersect, moving beyond the appearance of public discourses and policies on diversity pursued by national as well as sub-national and regional governments, to see how people interact and negotiate these discourses and policies based on their unique personal experience. In this intersection, we find that macro-narratives have the potential to produce ontological (in)securities at the micro-level and there is a variety of settlement strategies that people use to engage with these narratives in order to build their sense of ontological security.

In this way, second, the research highlights the value of ontological security for migration studies. This is because the quest for ontological security interacts with establishing a sense of belonging and setting roots. Both factors also account for what is perceived as social inclusion. An ontological security perspective, therefore, highlights additional tension, choices of engagement, and adaptability faced by migrants in processes of social inclusion. Such experiences occur within a power-structure where it is the migrants, pursuing feelings of security in their micro-narratives, that are obliged to cope in a unidirectional way with society's macro-narratives.

With our focus on ontological security, third, we distance ourselves from those scholars who consider security pronouncements as necessarily negative and maintain the need to move beyond a security framework to focus on minorities' needs and other political and socioeconomic issues (Huysmans and Squire 2009). Instead, we argue that the key question to ask is 'whose security?' stressing the need to depart from a unidirectional focus on the society and its insecurities to consider the insecurities of individual migrants and how they deal with them to be included in society. We show the specific challenges faced by individual young adult migrants in their daily life experience in contexts characterized by sub-state nationalism, further expanding our understanding of the intersection between old and new diversity. In situations characterized by sub-state nationalism like Scotland and South Tyrol, the practices of negotiation of the self and feelings of security during social inclusion processes are the result of a triangulation among individual migrant experience, sub-national discourses, and national reality. Searching for ontological security, migrants interact with the sub-national frame, while touching upon the context of the broader country, which in turn affects the perception of the macro-narrative with which they relate to. This dynamic might not necessarily facilitate the process of social inclusion.

Fourth, our analysis has policy implications. Indeed, we point out the importance of public inclusive discourses on diversity and symbolic slogans, including Scottish civic national discourse and 'People Make Glasgow' motto. Such narratives could provide opportunities and tools for migrants to feel more ontologically secure, and thus help their settlement process, regardless of the reality they face on the ground and their existing difficulties. However, it should be clear that when the lived experience openly contradicts the macro-narrative, the result can be disillusionment, frustration, and resentment.[17]

[17] A clear example of this are the tensions in the French banlieue considering principles of secularism and equality proclaimed by the French republican model of integration.

Finally, beyond more traditional top-down analyses of public policies and practices and models of integration, we have looked at individuals' experiences as our dimension of inquiry to gain new insights in processes of social inclusion and belonging, while capturing the social environment (in terms of discourses) in which these experiences develop. We highlight the degree and capacity of adaptability of migrants and how they can navigate the new society in terms of macro-narratives. In this regard, Lems and Tošić (Lems & Tošić, 2019, 8) refer to the notion of "social navigation" to point out "the ways people move within social environments and the ways these social environments move them." In this way, we return agency to migrants, in terms of how they live with their migration status and reframe macro-narratives. Instead of considering migrants as passive recipients of society's discourses and macro-narratives, we highlight that migrants actively engage with, and may appropriate, aspects of them.

Overall, our focus on the ontological security perspective and the interaction between macro- and micro-narratives leads us to a more nuanced interpretation of what is meant by social inclusion. Indeed, this multifaceted process relies on macro-narratives on diversity, developed within the society, and how individual migrants negotiate and respond to these in their daily experiences. However, as our research in Scotland and South Tyrol reveals, such macro-narratives are context specific. Each state, but also subnational entities, develops its own narratives, based on its history and socio-cultural features. Thus, comparative research designs that address different contexts or different segments of the migrant population are particularly valuable to trace the similarities and differences in how migrants respond to macro-narratives, stressing the contested nature of processes of social inclusion and the various scales in which it unfolds. Indeed, our analysis suggests that the burden of the process of inclusion and its outcomes rely, in part, upon individual migrants, and how they self-construct their sense of ontological security, negotiating and coping with the society in which they live. This searching for ontological security is a subjective and open-ended process, where security remains an unachievable goal. On the other hand, the task of the society is to relieve this burden, e.g. removing structural barriers and discrimination and extending rights and equal access to core institutions and public goods.

As a final note, it goes without saying that several factors affect interviewees' lived experiences and thus our analysis. Indeed, many of the interviews themselves tend to highlight that their perception depends on the specific ambit and individual persons that they met. Many other aspects might play a role in how people relate to macro-narratives on diversity and negotiate processes of social inclusion and belonging, like individuals' personal characteristics or their legal status and length of residence. Thus, we would welcome the opportunity to further expand our study across a larger participant group.

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Author contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the publication. MN is responsible for the sections on Scotland and the part on the theoretical framework, AC for the sections on South Tyrol. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials
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