
ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

Raphi Rechitsky

TRUST NETWORKS, HUMAN SECURITY, THE DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION DECISIONS: THE CASE OF GLOBAL REFUGEES IN UKRAINE

How do international policies influence the formation of social networks and inform social action? Using in-depth biographical interviews, this paper explores factors influencing the formation of trust networks among displaced persons with interview, ethnographic, and case file archive data from a recent study of refugees in Ukraine. Analyzing the life histories of individuals and families from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, and Palestine this study finds that factors such as the geopolitical relationships between origin and host countries, duration of the journey, immigration laws and international policies, as well as the original goal of coming to the host country combine and intersect to drive the formation of trust networks. These trust networks provide resources enabling or constraining settlement or mobility. As such, the central argument of this paper is that international migration policies play key but divergent roles for migration decisions of different refugees based on the constraints and opportunities in place for the development of rooted or mobile social networks. This work follows the suggestion of Charles Tilly to examine the impact of migrant "trust networks" as the key to understanding how social ties are maintained in a transnational social world, building bridges between the study of forced migration and refugee studies.

Key words: migration, refugees, social networks, Ukraine, migration-trust networks.

Raphi Rechitsky – Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology, European University at Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation. Email: rrechitsky@eu.spb.ru.

Introduction

In a stuffy apartment in a Ukrainian city, tensions brew over a small business deal between several immigrant and refugee acquaintances. The conflict over the resale of a minibus features a Pakistani negotiator, the president of a cultural association, an Iraqi medical student as investor, an Indian trader as the buyer, an unemployed Ukrainian veteran and his nephew sign the documents, and Rabah – a longtime Palestinian refugee and the deal's broker. Rabah requests a larger compensation in the transaction. "*We are the damned foreigners getting screwed here*", he blurts out in a colorful Russian. Cigarette smoke swirls around empty beer bottles on the coffee table. "*Why would you expect us to pay more anyway*", he snarls at his Ukrainian friend. By the end of the night, however, they shake hands and the deal is sealed with all parties content. Rabah depends on such social networks to squeak out a subsistence, as he is unable to attain refugee and other legal status in Ukraine. Long unable to return to Gaza or find ways to join his brother in France, the immigrant networks he draws on provide him with social, cultural, and material resources to root him in what he calls a homeland, where he has resided for most of his life. "*This city is very dear to me*", he explained in an interview. "*It is more than a second hometown*".

Meanwhile, on a grey and dreary afternoon on the outskirts of another Ukrainian city, a cacophony of passionate voices pierce out of the windows of a small evangelical church assembled in a dilapidated Soviet theater building. Sunday services led by West African immigrants and Ukrainians in a mix of Russian, Ukrainian, and French are delivered to a crowd of around two dozen diverse parishioners. After the service, Mozghan and her son Sharif, two Iranians who arrived in Ukraine the year before, share their spectacular story of flight with a small circle of friends: escape from an abusive Iranian husband in Germany, women's shelter, immigrant detention, conversion to Christianity, returning to Iran as missionaries only to face religious persecution and violence and finally fleeing to Ukraine in the footsteps of a student relative. This story departs somewhat from the asylum claim they recorded at the local branch of the UN Refugee Agency. Yet, regardless of the truth-value of the narrative of their original flight, it is the mobile orientation of their social networks in Ukraine that drive their opportunities and hopes to find refuge elsewhere. A fresh scar appears on Mozghan's forehead. She tells me of how she was assaulted for her religious activities by Iranian students, whom she suspects are agents of the Iranian state. Perceiving persecution following her across borders, Mozghan has forged links with transnational religious movements, rather than Iranians, other immigrants, or Ukrainians, hoping to find opportunities for international resettlement to take refuge in the U.S. While both Mozghan's and Rabah's social networks link them to other refugees and migrants, Rabah's network provides him with resources towards settlement. On the other hand, Mozghan's network provides resources that facilitate her onward migration. This paper explores the variable role of social network formation in the migration decisions of refugees and asylum seekers, building on perspectives on migration processes using a case study of forced mig-

ration. It draws on social and immigration policies and original interview data following the biographies of post-Soviet refugees to Ukraine from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, and Ethiopia.

Following networks of Soviet student and work exchange programs, refugees from Russia's "far abroad" and the Global South formed the initial core of emerging "nontraditional" migrant communities in independent Ukraine, whereas in Russia refugee policy was shaped to favor refugees from former Soviet states (Shevel 2011). Moreover, scholars have argued that these more distant others tend to develop the "diversity capital" of ethnically heterogeneous countries like Ukraine or the Czech Republic, in turn helping to mend existing divisions in the contentious national identity politics of these countries (Ruble 2005; Shevel 2011). Yet, there has been less focus on understanding how migration processes are linked with local forms of organization and networks in this case and migration studies more broadly; most European studies have focused on "transit migration", as European policymakers sought to limit new third-country nationals from treating Ukraine as a layover on their journey *en route* to Europe. American immigration studies, on the other hand, remain locked into an assimilation paradigm despite recent perspectives on migrant transnationalism.

The organization of the paper is as follows. The first section examines the literature on social networks and with an eye towards recent research on migration trust networks, while the second section introduces the method and case selection used in this study. The third section details the results, demonstrating how geopolitics, time, intention, and law intersect to influence migration decisions in the lives of refugees. Finally, the fourth section summarizes these results and sketches implications for further research on social networks and the role of security and trust in migration decisions. This paper thus stresses importance of policy, as well as agentic, temporal, and particularly geopolitical factors impacting life chances of people fleeing persecution. It emphasizes the importance of trust within refugees' networks for improving understanding of the drivers behind settlement or onward migration. In other words, the central aim at the heart of this paper is to highlight the factors influencing the composition of social networks and resources that shape refugees' motivations to settle or move on. Thus, this paper examines two interrelated questions: (1) how refugees' intentions to either settle or move onwards are driven by the composition of their social networks, and (2) which variables drive the composition of rooted or mobile social networks. I will argue that the duration of time spent in exile, legal opportunity structures, original intentions to move, and geopolitics with the home country determine the composition of a refugee's social networks, which in turn determine either settlement or mobility.

Migration and Social Networks

What role does the composition of social networks play in the motivations of refugees when left with a decision whether to settle in the host country or

move on to an alternative destination? Social policy studies of migration have usually focused on two main aspects in the migration decisions of mobility from the Global South and to Global North. On the one hand, undocumented migration can be analyzed by problematizing the control of admission and citizenship by the postcolonial metropolises and host societies of people forced to flee regions under occupation. On the other hand, refugee migration can be understood as a major arena of international humanitarian aid transfers and the international refugee regime to protect those excluded from rights worldwide (see, Geiger, Péroud 2014). These two directions of research are important for understanding the significance of sending and receiving countries for asylum mobility outcomes. However, these approaches mean that the social networks among vulnerable groups in transit and on the move are left unexamined in studies of forced migration. Studying social networks of people on the move can help develop approaches to a more transnational understanding of refugee mobility, expanding research into "migration trust networks" in western host states (Tilly 2007; Flores-Yeffal 2013).

The transnational strand of migration studies in culture, law, and politics has challenged neoclassical assumptions on the causes and motivations of international migration. The "culture of migration" thesis claims that in communities with high rates of migration, social norms and values constitute or become aligned to social norms that sustain migration (Ryo 2013). Legal scholars and behavioral economists, for example, have explained the low levels of legitimacy of immigration law among migrants, especially from those societies with longstanding cultures of mobility, by reference to their belief that migration should be seen as a human right. While this recent legal research shows the centrality of beliefs at the level of culture to motivate migration, it lacks perspective on how migration cultures are reproduced or changed over time through social networks.

Social network approaches have remained central to understanding international migration processes (Massey et al. 1998). Sustainable immigrant enclaves are established in the first instance through chain migration, a process whereby pioneer migrants find opportunities to initiate sustained connections through a thick network of strong ties in an immigrant cohort. Network concepts had long been used to explain the formation and expansion of immigrant enclaves in the U.S. in the early 20th century, as well as more recently to examine migrant cross-border ties such as remittances. In this guise, 'the strength of weak ties' between a critical mass of newcomers forms the organizational basis that sets up a vast network which facilitates and sustains migration. Following the publication of his final monograph, *Trust and Rule*, Charles Tilly (2007) identified the interpersonal ties that make up migrants' "trust networks" as central to facilitating and regulating the flow of resources that maintain social ties in the modern world. Specifically, he defines trust networks as "ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failure of others" (Tilly

2007: 7). Flores-Yeffal (2013) develops Tilly's theory in her recent book on Mexican-U.S. migration, emphasizing that a close-knit structure of networks is most important for undocumented migrants. "Migration trust networks" sustain migration by ensuring strong ties and firm boundaries around a secure social network, which is seen as necessary to protect members against costs and risks ranging from denial of basic rights to detention and deportation. Flores-Yeffal's (2013) has documented the importance of trust in transnational Mexican hometown networks, a factor that helps provide protection against external risks faced by undocumented migrants in the U.S. Such close-knit trust networks are not equally needed to sustain migration among all transnational migrants; they are of particularly use to those who are cut off from access to the basic rights of citizenship and the services attached to those rights (e.g. banking, driver license, schools, housing). While Flores-Yeffal's (2013) study points to constraints on undocumented migrants' networks, more can be done to account for constraints or even risks that these networks themselves could present to those who are forced to flee from conflict. I would argue that internal risks also limit opportunities in the formation of refugee social networks, especially among those fleeing ethnic, religious, other social or political persecution. Studies have begun to recognize the way refugees' decisions are embedded in the ties linking vulnerable people on the move, such as refugees for whom "human security" from state violence is the guiding principle (see, Guild 2009).

By theorizing the factors behind mobility from transit countries, this paper seeks to contribute to theories about why people move and how "migration systems" are reproduced in a context of forced mobility (Fawcett 1999). It argues that secondary mobility of refugees and the orientation of their trust networks are driven by a constellation of factors including the original intentions behind migration, the geopolitics of the host state and its legal system, and the duration of residence in the country. How refugees and other vulnerable people on the move invest trust in social networks explains migration decisions.

Research Methods

Utilizing mixed qualitative methods, this paper is based both on ethnographic observation and archival records, as well as on expert interviews and policy analysis. The fieldwork spanned fourteen months largely from September 2010 through June 2011, but also continuing into 2012. Multi-sited field research focused on three of Ukraine's cities with larger migrant communities: Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa. In each city, I recruited and conducted interviewees as well as nonparticipatory observation at the offices of legal and social aid NGOs partnering with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. Fieldwork outside of these institutional contexts, provided for the recruitment of interviewees at settings such as markets and shops where refugees worked, and refugee housing centers and homes. As a method, the use of biographical narratives (Maynes et al. 2008) detailed

in this text from eight refugees in Ukraine, should not be understood an attempt to statistically represent the demographic characteristics of refugees or migrants in Ukraine as ethnic groups. While the selection of respondents was crafted so as to represent their diversity, the main reason they were selected was the richness of the data on social processes they provided¹.

Findings

The analytic framework uses four meso-level factors to explain the composition of refugee networks: time, law, geopolitics, and intention. With this I draw on and revise Düvell's (2006) similar scheme for analyzing transit migration as variable onward mobility. By *time* I am referring to the duration of time spent in a transit country, the temporal dimension of a journey and settlement. The longer spent in a destination, we would expect the more likely a refugees' social networks would be rooted in place rather than aimed at mobility. By *law* I refer to the legal opportunity structure resulting from states' policies and international authorities. Less restrictive migration policies and more welcoming refugee policies in other, alternative host countries may lead forced migrants to build networks oriented toward moving to those states. By *geopolitics* I refer to the relationship of a country of origin and its relationship to the host country where the refugee stays. Prior research on refugee mobility would lead one to expect a hostile relationship between the governments of the country origin and destination would result in insecurity and motivation to build resources towards onward migration. By *intention*, I refer to the original intent of the journey and its spatial destination at the time of departure. Here, barring no change in intent to move from country A to country C, despite interruptions to the journey, we would expect the social networks that emerge would be ones facilitating onward movement rather settlement. The following data is presented as a means of analyzing how these four factors intersect to influence the formation of trust networks through the biographies of five refugees.

Time and Law

Does the length of time spent in a country influence one's intention to stay in place? Lake is a forty-six year-old Ethiopian man. A rank-and-file member of dissident organizations in socialist Ethiopia in the 1980s, he still went to the army and was sent on an exchange program to study in the USSR in 1988. "*I didn't have any questions about leaving*", he explains, "*I had plans to come back and work for this organization, I didn't think I would need to leave. But then anti-government forces came*". He came home briefly in 1991 after completing his degree, but quickly

¹ The interviews are selected not to provide a generalization of the characteristics of groups (ethnic, national, etc.) but rather to the social mechanisms driving network formations, which are potentially important for migration decisions.

returned to Ukraine. After the subsequent fall of state socialism in Ethiopia, he received death threats for assisting an exiled Ethiopian dissident.

Lake stares at me as he explains how he struggles to support his Ukrainian family by working at an electronics stall. Working shifts of 10 hours a day in a small street market, earning about forty dollars per week. He tells me of his hopes of returning to Ethiopia with his Ukrainian son, but knows there is nothing left there for him; his parents have passed away and many of his relatives fled the country as well. Lake's own mixed ethnic background is another reason he fears persecution in Ethiopia: "*When the war came so did the ethnic violence. [The new regime] said you Oromo live there, you Amhara live there. ... What is there to return to? The country is left empty*". Still it was the political exile that kept him from being able to return to Ethiopia. "*I just read about how students learn abroad*", he recalled, "*I never had that motivation and still don't have that motivation. Life just turned out this way, with the war at home, the banditism*". Lake's case demonstrates that the length of time spent in-country may not change the intention to settle. Lake's tale of exile furthermore demonstrates the legacy of postcolonial migration in the region. USSR student exchanges since the 1960s have resulted in lasting immigration from Ethiopia to Ukraine, though on a much smaller scale than in Western Europe. When hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians fled the civil strife in the 1990s, some students like Lake returned to or were forced to stay in Ukraine.

For this aging man, who has built a family and community in Ukraine, law and state practices continue to impact migration aspirations. Lake remains rooted in his adopted city's international communities and is an active participant in advocacy groups promoting the rights of refugees in Ukraine. His networks are firmly established in Ukraine despite his relationships with other refugees he assists in applying for asylum. However, these are not the types of networks that provide opportunities for onward mobility upwards in society or onward to alternative destinations. As such, much of his fate is left in the hands of an international refugee regime that is unable to ensure his refugee resettlement.

Despite building a local community, Lake and his family have increasingly looked for a better life abroad as well. Due to a lack of viable paths to citizenship for refugees and limited access to visas, Lake is neither able to work in Ukraine nor resettle to another country. His refugee documents are rarely accepted for visa applications to work in western countries, and he doubts his future Ukrainian passport would be accepted either especially due to his naturalized status:

I tried to apply for a permit to go work [in Sweden] in the summer. It was \$500 for the invitation, I can't afford that now. So even if you have a normal document, it's hard to leave here. Even if you are lucky as me and have had [refugee] status since 1997. Sure we have a travel document but it doesn't work. They don't even accept the Ukrainian one...

Despite having settled in Ukraine, he is forced to ask international organizations for local support, and is now grasping at straws for an unlikely bid for

international resettlement. *"The UNHCR has done a lot, but I will ask UNHCR for resettlement, it is their responsibility. That's my plan. I have entered a strange place here, but I can't stay here nor go there".*

Law and Geopolitics

Law and geopolitics also combine to both constrain and enable migration opportunities and outcomes. The impact of law and geopolitics on multi-stage migration is best demonstrated by the biography of Sahel, a 26 year-old Afghan whom I first met a month after he arrived in Ukraine. After studying English in Kabul before the American occupation, he worked as an interpreter and nursing assistant at a coalition hospital, until he was forced to flee Afghanistan at 24. Agreeing to work as a translator for a western development agency in exchange for a good salary, he was also promised a "special visa" to the U.S. if his life became endangered. Several years later, such a situation materialized after he helped translate a religious pamphlet for "American friends", people he claims were missionaries visiting the hospital. Later, he and several Afghan hospital staff were discovered with this religious pamphlet and were pursued by the Taliban.

Unable to obtain refugee resettlement through the UN Refugee Agency, or get good news from his "American friends" about the U.S. Special Visa application, he instead spent a year at a camp in Pakistan, taking care of an ill travel companion. The reason Sahel was not able to move safely onto the U.S. from Pakistan was due to irregularities in visa policies. Specifically, the implementation of the 2007 U.S. Special Visa Program for Afghan Interpreters, only issued a fraction of the 25,000 visas that were approved by the U.S. Congress (Baker 2010). Instead, his American former employer wired him \$3000, which he used to pay for a smuggler to take himself to safety in Austria. However, due to changes in smuggling routes, perhaps due to shifting border controls, his journey through Ukraine did not go according to plan. Arriving in Ukraine by car, the smuggler abandoned him outside Kyiv, saying Sahel had reached Europe. Sahel's typical story of transit migration shows how, different states' policies impact migration trajectories in different ways.

In order to survive in Ukraine, he makes contact with Afghani and Ukrainian locals. Indeed, Sahel reported that he was accompanied by Farsi-speaking, Afghan smugglers – often referred to as "saviors" by the Afghan migrants I spoke with – across his three month journey from Pakistan. Still, given the post 9/11 context and the legacy of the Soviet war in Afghanistan on Ukrainian society, reports of anti-Afghan sentiment echoed through Sahel's other Afghan asylum seekers' accounts. Geopolitics, in Sahel's story, has contributed to him seeking out social networks to facilitate his travel not only to, but also beyond, Ukraine. And despite finding Afghan communities who understand his plight (see, Ruble 2005: 153–187), Sahel cannot find a way to settle in Ukraine.

Critical to Sahel's insecurity in Ukraine are the internal conflicts within Afghan communities that have important consequences to his vulnerable social lo-

cation as a refugee. In an interview for a project on refugee services, a social worker in a UNHCR partner group applauded "the Afghans" for "taking care of their own". Nevertheless, Sahel's story demonstrates the deep divisions of support networks, especially for recently arrived Afghans, for whom limited support is offered. During his first year in Ukraine, Sahel made a living by returning to the first trade he learned as a tailor, joining a group of Afghan Ukrainians who mended clothes. However, this job only placed the refugee in more danger, as he told me. One coworker got too curious, and began contacting him to offer him a place to work and live with an Afghan family. Hanging up the phone on his curious acquaintance during our meeting, he exclaimed, *"I cannot live with Afghans, so I just told her I found a place"*. Sahel persists in telling where he lives and how he came to Ukraine to other Afghans about, claiming he came there because his uncle was a communist. *"I am sure if someone in Afghanistan found out where I am very bad things would happen to me here"*. Once we concluded our interview, he left to visit the UNHCR and to ask them to schedule a resettlement interview. *"The only way I can live here is with Afghan people. And they will only pay me 80 Hryvna per day for the rest of my life, I don't have enough to live on"*. He lived a quiet life, staying away from the group of rowdy international students he met at his job at the market. Two months later Sahel had to get a new phone because he had a suspicion he was being tracked, *"I have to change my number because a boy I bumped into at the market knows my home town. I am afraid he will tell people I am here"*. He does not develop friendships even with other Afghans, because he fears revealing too much will endanger his personal security due to the persecution that led to his departure from Afghanistan. Evidently, Sahel's ethnic and national ties led him to Ukraine but did little to help him to settle with established Afghan Ukrainian communities. In this story we see how geopolitical factors may further advance motivations related to original intentions.

Understanding this situation, Sahel invested much effort during his two years in Ukraine towards finding a way to reach Europe. After over a year of rejections and appeals to obtain refugee status and international resettlement via the UN, Sahel attempted to cross the EU border to Slovakia on his own *"with little help"*. Deported back to Ukraine under a 2008 EU-Ukraine readmission agreement, he was jailed in a detention center close to the EU border for near the six month maximum allowed at that time. A year after his release, he admitted himself to a state-run refugee camp in the EU borderland Transcarpathia region. Only after receiving additional funding from his "American friend" coworkers from Afghanistan was he able to pay and wait for a smuggler to get to Austria several years after his initial arrival to Ukraine. Sahel's story shows the unstable influences of law and geopolitics on his migration trajectory. The resources he mobilized were afforded to him by geopolitical conditions that included Afghans and Americans working for military Coalition forces in Afghanistan, as well as smuggler networks that facilitated his journey west, even as they ultimately left him stranded en route amongst Ukraine's substantial Afghan community. At the same

time, legal structures, specifically European border policies, Ukrainian refugee and citizenship policy, and the U. S. Special Visa program drove his inadvertent migration to, and then out of, Ukraine.

Geopolitics and Intention

The case of a recent Uzbek refugee, Nigora, further demonstrates the importance of identity, including specific national, regional, as well as gender dimensions, for migration outcomes. Nigora fled her home in Kyrgyzstan along with four family members amidst the strife that followed the 2009 "interethnic tensions" in south Kyrgyzstan (see, Bond, Koch 2010). A twenty-two year old English teacher, she arrived in Ukraine after a brief stay in Russia, after fleeing the war-torn city of Osh. Her asylum interview records reveal that she survived two police beatings, with her family's house and the entire block burned down in race riots. She suspects she was originally let go by authorities only because she was a woman, and that she was targeted as a witness to a raid during which police planted political literature at her uncle's home, who was suspected of funding a dissident political party. They first fled to Russia, and – like refugees from the "far abroad"—originally had no intention of making Ukraine their final destination.

Nevertheless, though Nigora has lived in Ukraine for nearly a year, she hopes to settle here. "*I have nothing left in Kyrgyzstan*", she admits. Certainly, return is not an option, as for a vast majority of refugees. She and her family first spent two months in Russia, too. Her refugee story demonstrates the importance for settlement and migration of intention:

When my uncle and I came to Russia, we didn't know where to turn to. We heard about how Russian [FSB state security] services kidnap refugees from Uzbekistan. We waited for our relative. When he came, he found out that it is more peaceful and reliable in Ukraine, and that you can get help in Ukraine. Russia is different from Ukraine in this respect.

So, it was not until arrival in Russia, that their original intentions changed. Fearing continued potential exposure to unlawful extradition, Nigora remains reluctant to tap into ethnic networks with Uzbeks in Ukraine. As a result, her, her five-person family-in-exile is unable to find steady work, and survives on \$80/month of social assistance from the UN Refugee Agency, and some help from new friends. "*In Russia we are called names and put down – in the Migration Service too. Here it's a different mentality*". Although her family barely speaks Russian¹, she felt accepted in Ukrainian society and institutions compared to the fear she felt for her safety and the open racism she experienced in Russia. Though she has only stayed in Ukraine for several months and has been denied an application for refugee status, she enjoys a sense of belonging in Ukrainian society. Specifically, she cites her relationship with her Ukrainian landlord,

¹ We speak through an interpreter and reviewed her asylum case file with the UN.

whom she met only upon arrival to Ukraine, but who had taken in Nigora's family, recalling memories of her affinity for Uzbeks due to her old life in Soviet Uzbekistan. In later communication, Nigora also expresses her reluctance to go to Europe due to her comfort in a "similar culture" in Ukraine as well as the dangers of "men we don't know" that would facilitate their irregular journey to Europe. This demonstrates how in addition to the more rigid ethnic dimension of compatriot status (Shevel 2011), the experience of shared migration across post-Soviet space (through which people continue to be linked through experience) also contributed to the formation of local trust networks.

At the same time, geopolitical constraints continued to influence Nigora's social networks. Notably, weeks after we began to speak, Nigora's reluctance to rely on ethnic networks due to security seem confirmed. Through her lawyers, I learned that several of her family friends they rely on for social support in Kiev, refugees from Uzbekistan – rather than Kyrgyzstan—, faced deportation, their apartment having been raided by Ukraine's SBU secret police/security services in an apparently politically-motivated extradition attempt made in cooperation with Uzbekistan security services. Two Uzbekistan nationals were taken into custody, and according to UNHCR, faced an unlawful extradition where they would be imprisoned without a fair trial. A third resident had escaped Ukrainian authorities and was being considered for international protection and resettlement by Sweden and Canada. Despite her legal status as a Kyrgyz citizen, geopolitics and intention mattered a great deal in Nigora's case since cooperation between the Ukrainian government and Uzbek authorities *motivated* her to reconsider relying less on social networks with other Uzbek ethnics and nationals. In other words, when international policy practices threaten refugees, the *perception* of personal security, driven by traumatic experiences of expulsion, influences one's motivation to settle or move once more.

Geopolitical and legal opportunity structures combined to influence Nigora's migration trajectory, first to Russia and then to Ukraine, and possibly elsewhere. First, her Kyrgyz country of origin and Uzbek ethnicity were central to why she left Russia as quickly as she escaped Kyrgyzstan: she feared for her security and feared deportation from Russia to face persecution in Kyrgyzstan. By contrast, her Uzbek friends' national identity, which linked them geopolitically to Ukraine, gave the two Uzbek nationals a better opportunity for refugee resettlement to the west unlike other nationals of Kyrgyzstan. This was due to the point that the UNHCR prioritized the protection of Uzbeks due the severity of persecution there. Second, her fears of associating with Uzbek ethnics came to fruition when she found out that two of her friends were awaiting deportation to Uzbekistan despite concerns from human rights groups. As such, in the post-Soviet space it would appear that "compatriot" identity has as much to do with geopolitics as the ethnic relations described by Shevel (2011). Third, as a carrier of her family's refugee story, gender remains an important influence on her family's decision to go through with their asylum claim in Ukraine as opposed to moving on to EU countries through insecure irregular

channels. During her asylum interview, she expressed fears about trafficking within human smuggling businesses. Yet, Nigora's story is most significant because of how geopolitics influenced her aspiration and opportunities to settle in Ukraine. Though she remained reliant on local social networks due to her undocumented status, she refused to trust and associate with Uzbeks due to concern for her family's security even as she perceived better opportunities for social integration in Ukraine, as compared to Russia. Her insecurity originated in geopolitical relationships that structure the linkages between different people on the move as well as their governments, who may forcibly remove those whose presence is deemed politically inconvenient. Nigora's case demonstrates the capacity of transnational Uzbek communities to develop local social ties for settlement in former Soviet countries where they find local affinity. Still, the degree to which geopolitics can influence refugee settlement varies, as evidenced by her family's perceived persecution in Russia and in Ukraine.

Conclusion

This paper has detailed the migration biographies of five refugees in Ukraine. It has built on Charles Tilly's (2007) approach to migrant transnationalism to construct a theory of migration decisions. Specifically, it has argued that geopolitics, time, law, and intention represent factors that interact to provide opportunities and constraints for refugees in developing trust networks for mobility or settlement. Geopolitical relationships between the countries of origin and destination create a variety of risks for refugees' human security. Thus experiences of continued persecution in exile figure at the center of migration biographies of refugees like Nigora and Sahel. There are thus international factors other than a refugee's compatriot identity and shared experience that helps explain adaptation and more permanent settlement in post-Soviet space (Shevel 2011). As evident in their diverging aspirations (to stay in Ukraine or move onwards), however, Sahel and Nigora's migration trajectories differed both in their original intentions and in their (Afghan Pashtun and Uzbek Kyrgyz) ethnic positions in relation to geopolitics. Rabah's new intention to stay in Ukraine, along with the time spent in Ukraine and legal opportunity structures afforded by his Palestinian documents, drove him to develop local – rather than mobile – trust networks with Ukrainians as well as immigrants. The narrative of the Ethiopian and Afghan refugees, despite differences in the length of time spent in Ukraine, highlight the limits of geopolitical factors and the particular legacy of Soviet internationalism for forging trust networks that promote either settlement or onward migration depending on the context. Thus, network resources may be utilized to achieve mobility or settlement, but these outcomes may be dependent on social contexts related to geopolitics. Overall, geopolitics, time, law, and intention constitute competing as well as intersecting causes for the formation of resources that enable or constrain settlement or onward mobility.

The main contribution of this paper is the development of an approach that might better explain how migration is directed and sustained. In particular, such studies have investigated how the formation of "migration trust networks" that sustain transnational ties and mobility emerge (Tilly 2007; Flores-Yeffal 2013). This study has looked at how refugees develop these networks either for settlement or mobility. Transnationalism studies have mainly focused on the links of immigrants in the Global North with their home countries rather than analyzing migration and lineages as a social process occurring across time and space. Policy research on transit migration has analyzed migration to buffer countries only as stepping-stones of transit to penultimate destinations in the west. Yet, the spread of punitive immigration policies and the decline of protections for refugees makes studying migration trust networks ever more important for understanding how and why displaced people move from or stay in "transit zones" (Hess 2012). Refugee security is threatened or rebuffed not only internally by domestic immigration policies (see, Flores-Yeffal 2013), but also by external geopolitical mechanisms which function within changing legal opportunity structures. I argue that refugee security requires the strongest of "migration-trust networks" when the goal is onward mobility rather than settlement (c.f. Flores-Yeffal 2013). This focus on human security rather than on state security enables an understanding of migration that takes seriously the causes and consequences of forced displacement in the new millennium (see, Guild 2009: 87–107).

This paper has pointed out that trust networks may either facilitate the onward mobility of refugees away from transit zones or facilitate settlement in these locations. Developing sociological theories of social networks, this paper points to a need to go beyond neoclassical approaches in migration that stress the importance of weak ties for sustaining migrant transnationalism. This paper also advances studies that highlight the agency of refugees in forming their own networks despite popular discourses that treat them as agentless victims. Future research can investigate how the salience of different social, religious, and political identities motivates people on the move to search for an imaginary "Europe" dedicated to human rights, and thus contribute to the growing literature on European identity that is integral to many migration studies.

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible thanks to funding from the Fulbright Program for U. S. Scholars, as well as the Bright, Dubcek, and Mears Awards at the University of Minnesota. I am grateful for comments on earlier versions of this paper from Donna Gabaccia, Ron Aminzade, and session participants of the 2014 Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association. Personal communication with the author at rrechitsky@eu.spb.ru and raphirech@gmail.com.

References

Baker M. (2010) Interpreters and Translators in the War Zone: Narrated and Narrators. *The Translator*, 16 (2): 197–222.

- Bond A. R., Koch N. R. (2010) Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: a Political Geographic Perspective. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 51 (4): 531–562.
- Düvell F. (2006) Crossing the Fringes of Europe: Transit Migration in the EU's Neighbourhood. Working Paper. *Centre on Migration, Policy and Society*, Oxford: University of Oxford.
- Fawcett J. (1999) Networks, Linkages, Migration Systems. *International Migration Review*, 3 (3): 671–680.
- Flores-Yeffal N. (2013) *Migration-Trust Networks: Social Cohesion in Mexican US-Bound Emigration*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Geiger M., Pécoud A. (2014) International Organizations and the Politics of Migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40 (6): 865–887.
- Guild E. (2009) *Security and Migration in the 21st Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hess S. (2012) De-naturalizing Transit Migration: Theory and Methods of an Ethnographic Regime Analysis. *Population Space and Place*, 18: 428–440.
- Massey D., Arango J., Hugo G., Kouaouci A., Pellegrino A, Taylor J.E. (1998) *Worlds In Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Maynes M. J., Pierce J., Laslett B. (2008) *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ruble B. (2005) *Creating Diversity Capital: Transnational Migrants in Montreal, Washington, and Kyiv*, Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ryo E. (2013) Deciding to Cross Norms and Economics of Unauthorized Migration. *American Sociological Review*, 78 (4): 574–603.
- Shevel O. (2011) *Migration, Refugee Policy, and State Building in Postcommunist Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly C. (2007) Trust Networks in Transnational Migration. *Sociological Forum*, 22 (1): 3–24.