What's Driving Migrant Russian Physicians to Stay Permanently in Finland?A Life-Course Approach

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Abstract
This article addresses driving forces that influence Russian migrant physicians in Finland to stay permanently or return to Russia in post-migration. Despite many studies on Russian migration to Finland, little is known on the topic of highly skilled migration and especially the migration process of healthcare doctors. I argue that a blend of factors incites Russian physicians to stay, and these factors affect both present and future migration prospects. Using a qualitative life-course perspective and grounded on interactive migration theories, this study provides new empirical evidence of why Russian physicians decide to stay permanently in Finland. This study adds new knowledge on an under-researched immigrant group and in a less theorized research area in Finnish scholarship. Different social markers form contingent relationships with multiple objectives and implications in the personal and professional life-course of these migrant professionals, and the strategies they employ are analyzed within the context of a Nordic welfare country that is increasingly adapting policies to attract foreign-born health professionals. The study uses semi-structured interviews to provide empirical findings and evidence. The results inform us about important interactive multi-level factors that meet these migrants' negotiated aspirations and expectations to stay in Finland.

Keywords: Russian migrant physicians, migration process, Finland, decision-making, life-course approach

Introduction
The international migration of healthcare professionals has markedly increased in the last decades, with emerging new complex migration and

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mobility trends and patterns seen across the world (Hawthorne 2013). Statistics show an increase of foreign doctors in OECD countries between 2000 and 2010 (Iredale 2012; OECD 2015, 106). Conceptually, these developments would influence the rates, forms, and destinations of mobility and migration, opening opportunities and challenges in the doctors' migration experiences. The scope and rates of this phenomenon will increase in the future as part of global human mobility (Connell 2010; Iredale 2012; Hawthorne 2013). The effects of this global migration are specifically well documented in Central and Eastern Europe, where great emphasis is placed on medical specialties (OECD 2015, 135). The migration of Russian-speaking[2] health professionals to Western countries has been motivated by an expectation of better career prospects and quality of life in the destination countries (Iredale 2012, 16; Bradby 2014, 2016).

Aalto et al. (2013) indicate that foreign-born physicians have mostly moved to Finland from Russia and Estonia. Finland is among many countries that currently face impending shortages in the workforce, especially in rural and remote communities (OECD 2012; Kuusio et al. 2014). Because of an increasing demand for services and an aging staff pool, the recruitment of foreign health professionals is one solution to address the deficit situation and territorial imbalances. For that purpose, Finland began cooperation agreements that involve the recruitment and training of health professionals (OECD 2015, 108). Even though the number of practicing foreign doctors in Finland is comparatively small in relation to Finnish-born doctors, this number, nevertheless, increased from 575 in 2000 to 1,454 in 2010 (113). Between 2000 and 2007, the number of migrant health professionals in Finland increased by 60 percent (Kuusio et al. 2011), while in 2010, 7.6 percent of physicians were of foreign origin (Ailasmaa 2013). Migration of Russian physicians to Finland is important because they represent the second-largest group of foreign health workers in Finland, after the Swedes. The number of recruited physicians increased to nearly 7 percent in 2007 (OECD 2012, 95). Data from the Finnish Medical Association (FMA) on registered Russian physicians in Finland show that their net immigration is annually increasing. In 2013, a total of 357 physicians were licenced to practice in Finland; by 2016, this number had risen to 644 (see FMA 2016).

Focusing specifically on this group, this study examines why Russian physicians who migrated to Finland decide to stay permanently and how this influences their personal and professional life-course. The choice appears to be bi-dimensional as I try to understand the extent to which professional opportunities and better living standards influence international migration patterns of such immigrant group for higher returns (see

2 Migration from Russia to Finland is often studied using the language criterion as an indicator of population: the number of Russian-speaking residents in Finland. This study considers Russian-speaking doctors who migrated to Finland in last three decades or so, including those who moved during the Soviet era in the 1980s; those who migrated to Finland from other countries (mainly Estonia); and those who migrated from Russia but whose mother-tongue was Finnish (Ingrian Finns).

Viry and Kaufmann 2015; Habti 2012, 2018). Studies on Russian health professionals in Finland have so far focused on their integration into the labor market, their working-life conditions, and the regulatory mechanism of their recruitment (Kuusio et al. 2014). The process and patterns of the actual migration of Russian physicians from a relational micro-individual approach and the complex process that shapes their migration decisions have remained under-theorized and under-researched in the Finnish literature. It is important to understand the migration behavior itself: these migrants, their career prospects, and the family circle all feature in the negotiation and assessment of any decisions related to their migration trajectory. As King and Skeldon (2010) emphasize, international migration forms an integrated system where neglecting one element leads to a partial interpretation of the whole panorama.

In this article, I explore what lies behind the physicians' decision to stay, their specific individual characteristics and conditions, and the costs and consequences of their migration. This sheds light on the diverse incentives and the potential setbacks that affect their migration trajectories. The study aims to develop this broader picture by looking at the perceptions of personal and professional life experiences of a representative sample of physicians living and working in Finland. Conducted in 2014 and based on the life-stories and experiential conceptions of these physicians, this qualitative study was motivated by an interest to gain a deeper understanding of how the migration of Russian physicians to Finland affects their personal and professional life-course. Whereas quantitative frameworks tend to over-emphasize economic-related outcomes of migration, this qualitative research provides a window into different aspects shaping their migration decisions and patterns.

While it is obvious that macro- and meso-level processes drive international mobility and migration behavior, micro-individual factors are also important in the process (Habti 2018, 115–16). Hence, this study considers migration through the lens of micro-individual and life-course approaches (Ryan and Mulholland 2015; Findlay et al. 2015). Given the broader disciplinary context whereby researching migration decision processes has largely been concentrated in the discipline of social-psychology, sociologists have started problematizing migration decision-making as a possible empirical object of study from the individual perspective. I assume these physicians have an immigration history and, at various stages in their life-course, have assessed their lived "social world" and negotiated the often-interactive, multi-level factors in decision-making. For this purpose, I focus on the theoretical underpinnings of current migration theories, under the umbrella of the new mobilities paradigm (see Habti and Kurki, this issue). I partly establish the dimensions of a new mobilities paradigm as a linking component in analyzing the main question, providing a theoretical breadth that links this theory and the doctors' migration within migration dynamics and societal, political, economic, and historical developments in Finland and Russia. This theoretical linkage will

develop an adequate knowledge on the study's main concern. The study also uses migration theories that account for migration processes, so the implications of the findings are linked within that frame of reference. I also address the following sub-questions: Are these physicians more likely to stay in Finland, return to Russia, or move to a third country? Do personal and professional factors interplay in shaping their decision-making process? How do they relate migration experiences to their personal and professional expectations and aspirations? How do emotions surrounding their imagined futures—including risks and uncertainties—influence the decision-making process?

This article contributes to the increasing literature on the drives and patterns of the global migration of health professionals. It situates this research within the framework of descriptive theories of the migration process. In the Finnish context, it sheds light on the migration outcomes of the physicians' personal and professional lives. The results inform us of the significance of these major outcomes and the effect of policy measures toward the attraction and retention of international highly skilled migrants in the Finnish labor market and society. Below I present a short history of migration from Russia to Finland and address the theoretical literature that highlights relevant international migration process theories. Then, I present the research methodology of this study, followed by a data analysis of collected qualitative interviews. Finally, I provide a synthesis of empirical findings and conclusions.

Migration from Russia: A Brief Historical Review

The Russian-speaking population has been a part of Finnish immigration history. The first migratory wave of Russians occurred in the early eighteenth century. Between 1809 and 1917, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire. During this period, thousands of Russians, mainly soldiers, merchants, civil servants, and tourists, lived in Finland as permanent or temporary residents. The presence of Russian troops in Finland significantly increased the number of Russians in Finland, and once they retired, many decided to stay in Finland (Nylund-Oja et al. 1995). Before the Russian Revolution in 1917, Russia was traditionally a country of emigration with an estimated 20 million emigrants worldwide. Upon Finland's independence from Russia in 1917, 6,000 Russians lived in Finland, and, by the 1930s, this number had increased to 15,000. The Russian community, however, has not generally been included among the ethnic minorities of Finland. Up until early 1970s, Finland remained a closed society and a non-immigration country, primarily because the number of immigrants was low. The reasons for entry were centered upon studies, temporary work, or marriage to a Finn.

Historically, Finland has been primarily a country of net emigration. The turning point came in the 1980s when immigration was high, mainly consisting of Finnish returnees. In 2006, immigrants from Russia formed the largest foreign group in Finland with 25,000 persons, followed by

nationals from Estonia, Sweden, Somalia, and Iraq. Importantly, marriage and family ties are common reasons for Russians to obtain a residence permit since marriage between Russian women and Finnish men has been common (Statistics Finland 1980–99). In 2003, there were 3,500 marriages between Finnish men and Russian women. Russian migrant women constituted 61 percent of all Russian immigrants in 2006. Moreover, the end of the Cold War in 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a rise in Russian emigration to Western countries such as Finland. However, contrary to predictions, the Russian law of free movement abroad, which has been in place since 1993, did not result in a high increase in Russian emigration to Finland. Still, since then, nationals from the former Soviet Union have formed the largest immigrant group in Finland.

An important marker of many of these immigrants is their Finnish origin; they are known as Ingrian Finns. They form the majority group of returnees[3] of Finnish origin; they are descendants of Finnish people who inhabited the former Ingria, which is located nowadays partly in Russia and in Estonia, but which had been, from the early seventeenth century, part of the Kingdom of Sweden (Matley 1979, 2). Nationals of Finnish origin have lived in this area for thousands of years, but in the eighteenth century, control over the territory passed fully to Russia. According to the census of 1926, there were 135,000 Ingrians living in the Soviet Union, out of whom around 60,000 moved to Finland during the Second World War (Nevalainen 1989, 59). Yet, they were forced to return to the Soviet Union between 1944 and 1947 and prohibited from returning to their home places (Flink 1995). At the end of the 1980s, there were about 61,000 Ingrian Finns in the Soviet Union. Later, the Alien Act of 1991 introduced a Return Migration Program of Ingrian Finns, which granted them the right to immigrate to Finland and to have Finnish citizenship based on ethnic origin. Approximately 30,000 ethnic Finns migrated to Finland from the territories of the former Soviet Union, mainly from Russia and Estonia. However, the exact number of returnees who currently live in Finland on a permanent basis is unavailable because official statistics do not collect population information on ethnicity.

Another major turn that influenced migration from Russia to Finland is the membership of Finland in the EU beginning in 1995. A new border regime characterized by an increased cross-border mobility between Finland and Russia emerged. Another major factor that has affected Russian inflows to Finland is the economic, political, and societal crisis of the 1990s following the fall of the Soviet Union. Among the consequences of this crisis were high unemployment rates, economic recession and austerity, rising poverty and inequality, as well as restricted professional development opportunities (e.g., Davidova et al. 2009; Georgieva 2011). Within this crisis, an EU-Russia partnership agreement was made in 1997;

3 The terms *paluumuutto* (return migration) and *paluumuuttaja* (returnee) for migrants with Ingrian Finnish origin are widely applied in both Finnish media and official documents issued by the Finnish government.

this allowed Russia to develop cross-border connections with Finland in different domains (Eskelinen 2011, 575). Subsequently, Finnish-Russian border-crossing intensified from 1.3 million in 1991 to 7.7 million in 2008, which is one reason for the growing migration from Russia, including work-related migration (576).

The Russian-speaking community in Finland included only 4,000 members in 1990, but that increased to 28,000 in 2000, 55,000 in 2010 (Eskelinen and Alanen 2012, 45), and 75,444 in 2016 (Statistics Finland 2017). Most Russian immigrants live in cities, mostly in the Helsinki area and the eastern border cities, where the Russian-speaking community is large and contacts with Russia are maintained because of geographical proximity. There are also Russian immigrants who have moved to Finland for other reasons than those mentioned above, such as work, business, and professional/higher education. Finland and Russia have different healthcare systems, professionalism practices, labor-market structures, and a mismatch between education and production systems (see Popovich et al. 2011). Hypothetically, since the 1990s, Finland has been among the favored destinations for emigrating Russian health professionals for a number of reasons: a shared history, geographical neighborhood, bilateral agreements, regulated mobility policies, ethnic belonging, Finnish welfare system, and marriage, for example. Historical and economic factors, together with the long eastern border with Russia with its increasing border-crossings, are likely to perpetuate the inflow to Finland. Thus, it seems that immigrants with a Russian background will remain significant and continue to form the largest immigrant group in Finland, at least in the near future.

Theoretical Ground

The New Mobilities Paradigm

The study of international migration is an interdisciplinary field, and it is addressed through a range of paradigmatic assumptions and methodological trends. Migration intersects with the social world and appears to appeal to those who seek better living conditions and well-being, those fleeing political persecution, environmental hazards, or wars, or those seeking freedom from political instability in their own countries. As the interdisciplinary nature of migration studies has not been fully extended through different interactive disciplinary perspectives, a dynamic research agenda has lately given considerable attention to what is called the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006; Creswell 2006; Habti and Elo 2018); researchers seek to understand human mobility empirically in ways that acknowledge individual agency in relation to meso-structural and macro-contextual factors. The paradigm emerged at the turn of the new millennium as a reaction to the emergence of new forms of mobility and migration and, importantly, a new set of academic interests in these fields. Sheller and Urry (2016, 11) argue that this new paradigm seeks the fundamental recasting of social science (also Habti and Elo 2018, 12–16).

The mobilities paradigm, as theoretical platform, provides analytical descriptions of modern societal problems, mainly the mobility of individuals, ideas, goods, and capital, and their implications for the modern world. Social scientists have started incorporating new ways of theorizing (Sheller and Urry 2006, 207) because previous migration theories have failed to account for the diverse categories of migrants and the actual migration process—a serious weakness if one considers that the migration process has become increasingly complex. An explicit gap that research has yet to address adequately is a cross-disciplinary and multi-faceted approach to studying international migration. Additionally, as O'Reilly (2012) advances, questions arise on how different agents, structures, and macro-level factors are part of the broader regimes that foster and affect global migration. More than this, the determinants of international migration have long been debated in the literature from economic, demographic, and socio-political perspectives, in both the sending and receiving regions. Yet, the real factors that shape and reshape migration processes remain little known. For example, it cannot be explained why some people emigrate from developing to developed countries while the majority remain (see Arango 2004; de Haas 2010b). In the spirit of the "mobility turn" (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006), research needs to generalize the aspects of international migration in different forms and spheres of life and to examine "ways of life" and "walks of life" in a world of mobility and immobility, interconnectivity and disconnectivity.

The paradigm cannot be successfully used unless a social scientist critically reflects on the underlying social, economic, personal, cultural, historical, and political embeddedness in migration experiences. De Haas (2010b, 2011) explains that analyzing international migration needs to go beyond descriptions and start accounting for the dynamic forces and underlying experiences of migrants. The dynamics of migration processes have been explained through a narrow focus on origin and destination countries. However, in their analysis of migration experiences, scholars need to recognize the importance of embeddedness in historical, social, political, and cultural conditions of mobility, institutional frameworks and interactions, and individual agency and everyday practices (O'Reilly 2012; Habti 2012; Ryan and Mulholland 2015). In undertaking international mobility, highly skilled migrants engage in a more personalized ongoing assessment and negotiation through their evolving migration and career trajectory, and bear the consequences of their implications and outcomes. Research needs to focus on both personal and professional life aspects (Habti 2014; Viry and Kaufmann 2015).

In the same vein, because migration and career trajectories are complex, dynamic, and multi-layered, I argue that analyzing highly skilled migration and its multi-layered implications requires research that adopts a life-course approach (Findlay et al. 2015; Erel 2015; Ryan and Mulholland 2015). The literature has emphasized the theoretical and analytical importance of a micro-level life-course approach. However, the

real-life contexts where these migrants live and work play a crucial part in structuring their social life, personal-family well-being, and career progression. Hence, the migrants' decisions on where to move, or whether to stay put or leave, are based on these dimensions. A micro-individual level approach to migration can provide a deep understanding in line with the value-expectancy model suggested by de Jong and Fawcett (1981, 47–51) because individuals assess personally valued goals when they decide to stay or move. Individuals tend to reach maximum fulfillment in as many areas of value as possible. However, meso-structural and micro-agentic processes are always and continually interrelated through the practice of individual migrants in their personal-professional life trajectory, while the goal is still to tell stories of actual practice of migration (O'Reilly 2012).

Looking outside the "traditional" paradigm of the leaving-arriving-integrating/belonging migration trajectory that still underpins most scholarly and economic/political thinking of mobility/migration, this study problematizes the issue by demonstrating that migration can be thought of as part of an individual's "mobilities map," created when the individual looks back to the past, experiences the present, and imagines (plans) the future. The dimensions of this "map" vary from the physical (local, international/transnational), the social and professional (horizontal and vertical), and the cultural and political. Research has shown that highly skilled mobility is overwhelmingly determined by interactive multilevel factors beyond the traditionally assumed push-pull model (de Haas 2010b; Ryan and Mulholland 2015). This evidence suggests that complex embeddedness is always playing an elemental role in highly skilled mobility experiences that either facilitate or hamper the personal-professional life course.

Social Networks and Transnationalism

The international migration literature has tried to provide an integrated theoretical framework for empirical investigation to fathom migration as a dynamic ongoing process through which forms of capital are mobilized (Nohl et al. 2006; O'Reilly 2012; Ryan and Mulholland 2015). Arango (2004, 19–20) asks why neoclassical theory failed to explain that few people actually migrate, despite apparent incentives to do so, and why some countries have high rates of emigration, while others with the same structural economic conditions have low rates. Current theorists advocate that migration is so complex that following the binary push-pull model of economic theories in studying forms of migration is too simplistic and untenable (see de Haas 2010b; O'Reilly 2015; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014). Moreover, these approaches fail to explain the dynamic nature of the migration process and to uncover the various interrelated factors driving migration and related to sending and receiving countries. Being critical of the weak and fragmented theorization of international migration, Arango (2004, 28) shows that "the importance of networks

for migration can hardly be overstated. [. . .] [They] rank amongst the most important explanatory factors for migration."

Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, non-migrants, and former migrants in webs of kinship, friendship, and shared origin. They can be a form of social capital stretched across the migrant space, and, therefore, facilitate international migration because they provide information which lowers the costs and risks of migration (Massey et al. 1999, 42–43). Earlier, Massey et al. (1993, 449) explained that "every new migrant reduces the costs of subsequent migration for a set of friends and relatives, and some of these people are thereby induced to migrate, which further expands the set of people with ties abroad." Migration is a process wherein migrants are located within networks and relationships. Social ties play a significant role in the migration process because migrants are not isolated individuals within isolated groups, making isolated decisions (O'Reilly 2012), and thus possibilities of a more successful integration are increased (see Haug 2008; Habti 2018).

Ryan et al. (2008) underline that social networks (or social capital) can be valuable to migrants for enhancing their position, at least in the early phases of the decision-making process of migration to and settlement in a destination country. Such social ties include the household, friends, and old and new colleagues. Grasmuck and Pessar (1991, 13) indicate that social contacts and households simultaneously "mediate macro-structural changes, facilitate the migration response to these changes and perpetuate migration as a self-sustaining social process." These social ties mobilize resources and support, and they importantly influence the migration process (Haug 2008). Hence, migrant networks tend to have a multiplier effect and to perpetuate migration (Arango 2004, 28). Some empirical literature has broadened this circle and included other units, such as ethnic groups (Bauer, Gang, and Epstein 2009; Haug 2008; Ryan 2011; Molina et al. 2015). Network migration also depends on the closeness and information exchange between its members.

While a lot of empirical research has focused on the strength and density of family networks and other close personal ties in reproducing migration, Granovetter's (1973) notion of the "strength of weak ties" has also been shown to be instrumental in facilitating migration. Weak ties, based on (perceptions of) common cultures or ethnicities, or even fleeting friendships between migrants in vulnerable positions can generate a sense of mutual trust or empathy, and, thereby, as Tilly (2007) holds, result in forming bonds and providing forms of assistance. According to Boyd and Nowak (2012, 83–86), there are three main types of migrant networks: family and personal networks, labor networks, and illegal migrant networks. They highlight the gendered nature of networks and the active role of women in developing and sustaining personal networks. An early study by Massey and Espinosa (1997) explored the role of social networks and combined the new economics of labor migration and neoclassical economics with social-capital theory. They used a complex

analysis to examine the role of social capital on emigration and return migration. They explained that while wage differences do not trigger migration, social and cultural capitals, that is, network and credentials in Bourdieu's sense (1986), are important in the migration process. In the context of their study, the former explains that migration is more likely to occur with relatives living in the US, and the latter explains that migration increases after multiple mobility and migration experiences.

Thomas Faist (1997) advances that social networks are relational, and constitute the "crucial meso-level" between micro- and macro-formulations of migration, helping us to move beyond the push-pull theory and to connect individual and socio-structural factors for migration. Migration networks contribute three further important insights into theorizing the migration process: they allow us to understand the dynamics of differential migration; to predict future migration, since networks "reproduce" migrants through time; and to resolve the theoretical distinction between initial causes of migration and its perpetuation and diffusion in time and space (Fussell 2012). Yet, literature on highly skilled migration (de Haas 2010b, 2011) shows migration to have multiple determinants beyond the social network factors. However, recently, migrant social networks have taken a more "transnational turn" (Brettell 2008, 125; Faist 2007).

An analytical theme that has dominated international migration research is its conceptualization as a transnational process. In the study of international migration, settlement, and integration of migrant communities in receiving countries, the transnational turn has been advanced since the 1990s in the contributions of Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) and Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc (1994) (also Portes 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). Studies on transnationalism have exposed the increasing possibilities for migrants and their families to live transnationally and to adopt transnational identities. This could be made possible through developed communication technologies that enable migrants to build connections with their origin countries. Increasingly, this enables migrants and their families to foster double loyalties, to lead transnational livelihoods on a daily basis, to travel back and forth, and to relate to people in different places. It is assumed that the migrants' ties with their origin country do not break in the case of a permanent stay in the receiving country (Ryan, Klekowski von Koppenfels, and Mulholland 2014). Furthermore, migrants' contributions to development in their origin countries do not necessarily involve return migration, especially for highly skilled migrants. De Haas (2010a) mentions that migrants' engagement with their origin countries can be maintained through knowledge and skills transfer, financial and social remittances, and circular mobility.

The sustainability of transnational ties is also exemplified by social networks and family ties which potentially instigate further emigration by family members, friends, or ex-colleagues from the origin country. However, Faist (2000) underlines that overrating the importance of the transnational perspective to migration research and presupposing that

every immigrant leads a transnational life or occupies "transnational social spaces" should be avoided because a "transnational life" applies only to a limited number of migrants (Portes 2003, 876). Finally, the main significance of the transnational approach in reformulating migration theory is that it questions the linear, push-pull, no-return model, it builds on the theories of migration networks, and it questions the plethora of literature devoted to integration/assimilation of migrants in receiving countries.

Prospect Theory and Personality Traits

New Social theories of migration, such as prospect theory and personality traits, with their social-psychology approach, emerged with contributions offering alternative explanations of migration processes. Research literature in psychology has been concerned with understanding individuals' future behavior by looking at their past-life events and current circumstances. Seligman et al. (2013, 119) emphasize the importance of "prospection" as the mental simulation of future possibilities, which plays a significant role in organizing perception, cognition, affect, memory, motivation, and action. Czaika (2015) thinks *prospect theory* relies on probability to describe outcomes, rather than assuming that people will always know all possible outcomes when seeking to select the most optimal. This theory holds that people are afraid of losses more than they appreciate gains, and they assess the probabilities of adverse outcomes more severely than their actual possible cost. De Jong's (2000) research has shown that the expectations related to living in a receiving country, such as living standards, social and family norms, and support networks, are critical factors of migration decision-making. Van Dalen, Groenewold, and Schoorl (2005) suggest that by extending this argument to studies of the return migration process, migrants weigh the expectations attached to their decision to stay against those attached to returning to origin countries. Hence, in this study, I examine whether the interviewees prefer to stay in Finland because of better career prospects, family relations and well-being, or the Finnish lifestyle.

Boneva and Frieze (2001) focus on characteristics of an individual's personality (also Frieze and Li 2010). Their study of Eastern European students found that certain personality characteristics predict future desires to emigrate. High achievement and power motivations, especially when combined with high work-orientation, predict international mobility while high affiliation motivation and family centrality tend to predict staying rather than leaving. They argue that "unfavorable economies in the country of origin, emigration and immigration policies, network support in the receiving country, and other environmental factors create the conditions for wanting to leave, but desires to do so are based on the personality of those who make the choice" (Boneva and Frieze 2001, 478). "Personality" involves an ensemble of ready-made orientations and mental shortcuts to the way one imagines future motivations and actions.

People use it to foresee and imagine their future actions within a wide array of social conditions and cognitive challenges. Taking account of these allows the generation of a full understanding of human mobility and individual-level aspects of migration.

Scholars have explained migration through different theoretical windows, such as the push-pull model of economic theories (Zolberg 1987) and rational choice, and cost/benefit analyses. However, these overlooked the actual migration process and its dynamic nature and failed to uncover the various interactive factors driving migration (Massey et al. 1993; Brettell and Hollifield 2008; de Haas 2010b; O'Reilly 2015; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; Habti 2018). Studies often focused on macro-level approaches to migration, but have neglected micro-individual factors such as an individual person's agency (de Haas 2011), the surrounding environment and non-economic motivations (Halfacree 2004; Schewel 2015), transnationalism (Faist 2000), social networks (Ryan et al. 2008; Ryan, Erel, and D'Angelo 2015), the role of individual hopes formed by images of a better future (Hagan 2008; Carling 2002; de Haas 2011; Czaika and Vothknecht 2014), emotions (Lerner et al. 2015), the different historical and geographical contexts that incite and sustain international migration (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014), and the extent to which policies affect migration outcomes in sending or receiving countries (Cerna 2014). In this context, this article privileges individual migrants' perspectives and builds on the acknowledgment of their individual agency in the migration processes and their career trajectories. The question of how the possibilities that migrants imagine for the influence of their current and future decision-making remains empirically under-researched. Results from some studies give importance to an individual person's agency, especially in psychological theory, which considers it the driver in the decision-making process. Sociological studies, however, tend to highlight the meso-level and networks (Faist 1997, 2007). Based on the outlined theoretical ground, I explain how Russian physicians form reference points to help them determine where positive outcomes lie. I also explore why most of them intend to stay in Finland.

A Qualitative Life-Course Approach

Biographical life-course research is relevant for current scholarly debates in mobility/migration research, especially if career and everyday lives are the research focus (O'Reilly 2012; Kõu et al. 2015; Ryan and Mulholland 2015; Findlay et al. 2015). This approach allows new insights into the embedded complexities of interrelated factors at play in the migration experiences of Russian physicians. The life-course approach is used to draw out complex motivations in the interviewees' life-work interface. This approach emphasizes the range of mechanisms that interplay over time in the physicians' migration experiences. A life-course perspective can account for the continuity and transformation of migration as a life-course. This qualitative approach has been attractive specifically because

of the existing research stream that focuses on life trajectories and the transition between different phases of the migration experience. This allows us to situate the various migration trajectories of migrant Russian physicians, and to understand migration processes from the migrants' perspective. This individual perspective seeks a deeper understanding of the dynamic factors influencing the migration process, as well as the embedded interrelationships of those factors. Understanding migration processes from an individual perspective can help identify, untangle, and transform those processes and their effects in the practices of individuals in their lived social world. The biographies reflect their thoughts, attitudes, aspirations, and expectations, and are used in analyzing their experiential perceptions.

I conducted this case study in 2014, based on biographical narratives of open-ended semi-structured interviews, specifically focusing on the processes and patterns of migration with twenty-six registered and accredited physicians living and working in Finland as specialized or general physicians (GPs). I retrieved a list of registered physicians from the Finnish Medical Association (FMA), in order to recruit participants. I also used a snowball strategy in the process. The geographical locations of these physicians' workplaces are diverse, ranging from big cities to peripheral towns, which gives a broad representation and geographical mix. The interviewees had emigrated to Finland since the 1980s, which reflects the slow increase of their inflow to Finland. Self-initiated mobility is seen mostly in early- or mid-career stages. The duration of their residence at the time of data collection varied between eight and thirty-five years. On average, they had lived in Finland for more than fifteen years and had been working around fourteen years, and most of them held dual citizenship. Their ages ranged between twenty-eight and sixty years. Most physicians were over forty years of age (n=17), ten among these were aged between fifty and sixty, and the rest were aged between twenty-eight and thirty-nine (n=9).

At the time of the interviews, most (90 percent) of the respondents were employed at public institutions while the remainder worked at private institutions (10 percent). The overwhelming majority of the twenty-six interviewees were female (n=22) and the rest were male (n=4), which indicates a highly feminized migration of Russian physicians to Finland, according to FMA statistics (2016). More than half of the sampled physicians were general practitioners (n=15) and the rest were specialized doctors (n=11). Almost all of them were married (95 percent) and more than two-thirds (68 percent) had offspring. The true names of the institutions, cities, and specializations of the interviewed doctors are anonymized. The interviews were conducted mostly on the phone and a few face-to-face. Generally, the interviews lasted between one-and-a-half to two hours. While some were in Finnish, the interviews were held mostly in Russian to allow interviewees to describe in full their life-stories and to produce rich data, thus assigning value to the experiences and events they considered

important enough to relate (Wengraf 2001). Transcripts were sent to the interviewees for review and validation before use. The first cycle of coding involved the identification of both inductive and deductive codes. In the second cycle, the codes were grouped together in code families. A thick description was made based on the code families and their relationships. This led to the identification of important themes on migration process: well-being, career progression, and future prospects.

The goal of qualitative studies (unlike their quantitative counterparts) is to provide an understanding of the shared human experiences through qualitative analysis of a small number of interviewees. Nonetheless, a larger mixed-method study is needed to make a generalization on the migration trends and patterns of Russian physicians in Finland. The interview questions involve subjective evaluations of the migration and career trajectories from Russia to Finland. The collected data concern interviewees' main socio-demographic, educational, and professional features, their situation prior to emigration, their family dynamics, their reasons for leaving Russia, their post-mobility experience, and their future prospects. As van Laer and Janssens (2011) argue, this perspective allows new insights into the complexities of the migration experiences of a highly skilled group and emphasizes the interacting forces that shape and reshape the participants' personal and professional trajectories (i.e., past and present working life, career progression, personal-family life, and future prospects regarding these fields). Of the thirty-two main questions in this study (excluding demographies), two questions specifically relate to the focus of this article: What factors influenced your migration to Finland as a place to work and live in? Are you going to stay in Finland, and for what reasons?

Working in Finland, Staying in Finland

This article addresses the prime factors behind the migration pattern of Russian physicians remaining in Finland, as well as their future life prospects. I explore whether the Finnish-Russian context magnifies the interplay between different motives and show the characteristic trends in their views on the migration experience. I also look at these physicians' characteristics based on the career-stage of their moves and their fields, age, and gender. The overall goal is not to measure the direction or to quantify their migration experiences since these are always under ongoing negotiation and transformation and involve various interrelated and multi-layered factors that direct the migration trajectory and the personal life-course of these migrants.

Different factors lure different categories of highly skilled people to migrate. At the individual level, personal characteristics, attitudes, and family- and career-related factors shape decisions to move and settle down in a destination country. The existing literature shows that policies on skilled migration, the education system, the social welfare regime, economic growth, and political changes and migration systems are meso- and

macro-level factors that affect decisions on global mobility and migration patterns. Finland has been affected by these developments, conceptually in policies to encourage the inflow of a foreign health workforce, especially from neighboring countries. Thus, studies have attempted to explain the reasons behind people's migration decision-making through two different kinds of theories: (1) those that assume the important influence of rational individual agency to estimate the benefits and drawbacks of migration, and (2) those that emphasize important meso- and macro-level structures that directly affect this process (see Bakewell 2010; Morawska 2012).

Assessing the Socio-Economic Conditions of Russia and Finland

The emigration of Russian health professionals to Western countries is not a new phenomenon, and their mobility might be attributed to the post-1990s crisis in Russia (Davidova et al. 2009; Connell 2010, 58; Kuusio et al. 2014). The expectation that work conditions and wage prospects in a receiving country will be better than in the origin country has long been acknowledged as core determinant in a physician's cost-benefit analysis when deciding whether to stay or not. Likewise, the highly selective nature of migration has also been underlined, as physicians with better labor market prospects and high levels of career capital have more competing alternatives (Hawthorne 2013). Precarious working and living conditions increased to unprecedented levels in Russia with the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and during the 1990s. Russia witnessed a poor drive for social reform, weak institutions in the social field, inadequate incomes, and other factors that have impeded economic growth since the 1990s (Davidova et al. 2009, 2). Experiencing these has had important effects on the personal and professional lives of Russians. It has reduced lifetime earnings, increased the precariousness of employment, and resulted in poor health and well-being through the working life and beyond (Bell and Blanchflower 2011). The subsequent economic reforms brought social costs with a 50 percent reduction in Gross Domestic Product and a deterioration in health systems, welfare, and the quality of life for an important segment of the population. For many health workers, employment prospects in Russia were not a reason to emigrate (as reflected by the interviewees), but rather the working conditions. The quotes below by Vladimir, Marina, and Slava depict the conditions of the time that act as a stick factor in Finland:

> The year 1990 was terrible, with the fall of the Soviet Union. For me, it was more the influence of the economy than the thought about professional progression. However, after moving to Finland, I undoubtedly developed professionally. (Vladimir, 53, M, specialist)[4]

4 All excerpts from the interviews have been translated into English from Russian and Finnish by the author.

> I know that in the hospital where I worked in Russia, everything was getting worse. [. . .] It's a bit hard to explain, but during the Soviet Union, everything worked quite well. (Marina, 59, F, specialist)

> People of my age and those who lived the 1990s crisis or those older than me, experienced emotional exhaustion (burnout) at work: there were high requirements and an absence of the possibility to have a rest because people had to combine five, six, seven, eight jobs. People did not feel job satisfaction because, in Russia, there is a drastic decrease in the occupational prestige of the physician profession. (Slava, 40, F, specialist)

Central government decentralized the health sector by transferring responsibilities to regional governments (Davidova et al. 2009, 5). This exacerbated the conditions in this sector as local governments faced a rather difficult financial situation to efficiently support their facilities and services. Subsequently this led to a visible decline in the level of public health in the late 1990s (Brainerd and Varavikova 2001). Igor points out that his concerns about work conditions involved the lack of core research support to cover the costs of sophisticated materials on a routine basis. Generally, the interviewees exposed the drastic problems Russia has in infrastructure investments and conditions. There is a range of structural determinants that they see as essential to efficient performance and quality services, including access to optimal human and physical resources, a better work environment, access to facilities and infrastructure, and a high level of autonomy. Many echo that working life in Russia lacks these conditions. They also mention a lack of prestige and opportunities for career progression (Alexei, Slava, Galina). According to Ivan, the majority thinks that better career opportunities and working conditions are major factors in migrating to and remaining in Finland.

> I had a desire to work in a professional field, which I did not find in Russia. In order to find more professional fields in Russia, you need to live in a big city. I did not have such opportunities. (Ivan, M, 52, specialist)

> In Russia, there are no special medical facilities [. . .]. It was in the beginning of the 1990s, I was twenty-five years old and I saw that if I wanted to work and develop professionally, I would have to run from Russia. (Igor, 50, M, specialist)

> There are many reasons that play an important role and affect the daily work of doctors. Most of them are the standard of living and wages, poor organization and management of the activities of medical institutions, corruption, bureaucracy, a failure to

comply with generally accepted medical diagnosis and treatment, and a low respect for the profession. (Galina, 33, F, generalist)

The literature of healthcare professionals' migration generally focuses on integration processes and less frequently features an institutional meso-level analysis. Diallo (2004) distinguishes between migration decisions and the actions of physicians, and the contextual factors and forces affecting their integration into the local labor market. He explains that their stay evidences their integration since opportunities for career progression usually limit the possibility of return migration. Moreover, as Galina indicates above, physicians would find it difficult to re-integrate into the Russian health sector if they return, especially when a number of anticipated risks are involved. She expresses that such risks involve decreased access to convenient employment and work conditions, which would undermine their professional authority and performance. In their narratives, most physicians claimed that work-related factors in Russia are dissatisfactory, in addition to the problems of quality of life, and the political-economic situation of Russia, and a lack of opportunities for career progression. Few, however, emigrated with aspirations for new life prospects where security and stability were to be found.

A significant finding is that most physicians are less worried about their future prospects in Finland as they feel fully satisfied with living and working conditions. This is understandable if we take into account that these highly skilled migrants work in a Nordic welfare country where satisfaction with life is among the highest in the world (Habti and Koikkalainen 2014). However, they are concerned not just about their work conditions, but also their career future and their family's prospects in the near future, if not the long-term. Obviously, there is a fear that the macro-level conditions of Russia are not in a good shape at present. Recent research into migration decision-making challenges the rational-choice tenet. Czaika (2015, 59) explains that a decision to emigrate to, return to, or stay in a country is contingent on the changes in rational beliefs about the current and future economic conditions in origin and receiving countries. Yet, the assessments of future prospects are not restricted to rational choice grounded on developments in the socio-economic condition or employability, but involve other spheres of personal life such as the family (see Halfacree 2004; Kõu, Mulder, and Bailey 2017).

Between Career Prospects and Life Aspirations

As this study recognizes migrant agency in migration processes, emigration generally comes as an individual or household strategy to improve one's condition in academic, professional, financial, or personal terms. Following this conceptual framework, and centered on notions of "aspirations and capabilities," along with key indicators of structural macro- and meso-level conditions, I consider the important links between aspirations and opportunities, and structural macro-level determinants. Indeed, many

human decisions do not often stem from a migrant's rational agency with a careful evaluation of economic and psychological drawbacks and the benefits of one's decisions. However, such decisions form an intricate process of decision-making, importantly, to prospect a future change in one's social and professional position, well-being, and self-satisfaction. De Haas (2011, 16) underlines the importance of researching aspirations and capabilities, and he argues that "People will only migrate if they *perceive* better opportunities elsewhere and have the capabilities to move." Furthermore, Czaika and Vothknecht (2014) and Carling (2014) show the role of aspirations in migration decision-making, because the experience of migration supports higher aspirations. Importantly, Schewel (2015) explains that the capacity to aspire can be related to an aspiration to stay (also Carling and Schewel 2017).

The accumulation of *career capital* is a significant motivator in the migration of physicians, while international education has been seen as a strategy to raise "employability" and secure "positional advantage" (Waters 2012). After making assessments, an individual often enters a process of selecting the best attainable option and contemplating future possibilities. The interviewees considered the individual factors and opportunity structures that influence their decisions on future personal and professional life. This can be framed alongside socio-economic, demographic, security, and career prospect factors that are recurrent in international migration literature (see Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; Favell, Feldblum, and Smith 2015). The fact is that they often think about their immediate personal well-being, in parallel with opportunities for career progression in their place of residence (Maria, Marina, Milla, Anastasia, Slava).

> A physician's salary is very low [in Russia], I mean, most of them get a small salary that is not quite enough for living. They have to work in two, three different jobs; it is a huge burden for people, of course. It is quite difficult to develop professional skills because specialization, for example, is very costly [. . .]. (Maria, 31, F, specialist)

> Everyone moving from Russia is driven by concerns about a better income. Another reason for those who were studying with me is a better career, and also their children's future. [. . .] In Russia, unfortunately, social benefit is not so good. (Milla, 41, F, specialist)

> The main problem is that people aged between thirty and forty emigrate. These people have good qualifications, and they did not leave their occupation at the first stage because they had hopes for the best and hopes for the future. (Slava, 40, F, specialist)

Most developed countries that have invested in the education and training of foreign health professionals strive to retain them within local labor markets. The interviewees' biographies show that they had short-term and open-ended contracts in Russia before moving permanently to Finland. The decision to stay in Finland correlates with the quality of their occupational position and career opportunities, which are crucial in their migration trajectories as foreign physicians. They believe that career progression would allow them to have better work conditions and higher income. For example, Elena (39, specialist) thinks that Finnish people and Finland are more tolerant toward Russian physicians as the procedures of accreditation of diploma and employment are smoother and easier. Hence, an objective and transparent system of employment and occupational mobility in Finland is a major stay-factor. The interviewees also refer to work-related factors that improve "employability" through more specialized training and education. For some, choosing Finland was determined by their previous mobility for internship and traineeship, or by previous living experience in the country. These mobility schemes allowed them to gain personal and professional development, and reduce the costs of future migration through the acquisition of transnational and transversal skills (e.g., Finnish language, adjustment to new environment, and integration) and building social networks.

> [In Russia], people who are not accepted for internship bare it at their own expense; consequently, parents provide financial support for their sons during six years of studies in medical university and also support the seventh year [. . .]. It is wiser to move to Finland right away after graduation and go through the accreditation process here. (Slava, 40, F, specialist)

> First, if we compare the physician occupation in Russia and Finland, in Finland emphasis is laid on providing training and qualifications for physicians. Here, there are good possibilities for self-achievement if physicians have aspirations for it. Certainly, in Russia, if you really want to achieve something concrete, you have to do everything at your own expense and put in immense effort. (Irina, 36, F, generalist)

A question remains whether the decisions by physicians to stay permanently in countries like Finland risks becoming a brain drain from Russia. The resulting effect of emigration would not, in general, result in workforce shortages, considering the low rate of emigration. As such, recent studies indicate that it does not constitute a concern for the state (Tjadens, Weilandt, and Eckert 2013; OECD 2015). Since Russia does not suffer shortages in its healthcare workforce, international migration may actually be beneficial. Vladimir shows his self-satisfaction in Finland because his priorities are usually career achievements and productivity,

not necessarily financial returns, and he expresses the improbability of a negative effect of his migration to Russia.

> I have been working here for twenty-five years. It is unlikely [that I return] [. . .]. Well, I am citizen of Finland, I am satisfied that I am living here. I am satisfied almost with everything and I do not think that I would be in demand in Russia as a specialist [. . .]. (Vladimir, 53, M, specialist)

> It's hard to return to Russia. After getting your degree, they offer you a specializing position for free in Russia. If I want to return now I have to pay for it myself. I guess it's not an impossible sum but it would be a bit strange to pay for something you can get for free. Second, medical details are different in different countries. [. . .] The standards and values are all different [. . .]. (Alexei, 28, M, specialist)

If they return, however, physicians like Vladimir and Alexei might face difficulties adjusting to the Russian health system and work organization, owing to differences between the Finnish and Russian health systems. However, it is noteworthy that these two male physicians are the ones who think about a possibility of return, while the female physicians had categorically decided to stay in Finland. A question arises whether gender plays a role in these varying migration patterns. In Russia, the management of human resources and policy initiatives are not very effective as a number of professionals emigrate every year. The outflow of physicians from Russia remains low compared with the increase in the tertiary-educated population. While in Finland a medical residency program for a specialist does not require exams and expenses, many of the interviewees (Alexei, Milla, Olga, Larisa) mentioned the lack of quality standards in higher education in Russia, as well as the high expenses that trainees have to pay for specialization.

Ingrian Finns, the Presence of Family, Marriage, and the Children's Future

Gardner (1981, 63–65) highlights that migration decision-making is not an isolated event, but rather a process. Halfacree and Boyle (1993, 337) further explain that "a specific migration exists as a part of our past, our present, and our future; as a part of our biography." A life-course approach potentially offers a holistic view into migration as part of an individual's life-course, and it acknowledges that the decision-making process is affected by various interrelated factors rooted in everyday life, the family history, or family relations. Historically, Finland has been a choice of migration for many Russian nationals because of its geographical proximity and the shared history. For Ingrian Finns in Russia, their ethnic origin and family ties also influenced the migration decision: almost half of the interviewed physicians migrated to and decided to stay in Finland

because of their Finnish roots as Ingrian Finns in Russia. This is the case of Vladimir (52, specialist), Anna (60, generalist), Larisa (36, specialist), Ljudmila (47, generalist), Marina (59, specialist), and Inga (55, specialist):

> I am paluumuuttaja (returnee). My mother is from Finland, so I have Finnish roots. She is a native Finn from Lahti and all her family is Finnish. When my father [Russian] died, my mother decided to return to her motherland Finland and that is why our whole family moved here. (Inga, 55, F, specialist)

> I decided to move to Finland to study medicine and work as a physician because of my Ingrian background. Almost all my relatives are here. (Ljudmila, 47, F, generalist)

Marriage migration and the presence of a large Russian immigrant community as a niche for social networks (e.g., relatives, friends) may facilitate mobility and migration to Finland. For example, Alla (47, generalist) moved to Finland because she has Finnish stepbrothers, while Maria (31, specialist) moved because her friend and her husband, who had both been living in Finland, provided her with ample information on residence and integration, which influenced her decision to emigrate. Moving to Finland seems to be planned and determined through family circle negotiations. The interviewees' decisions to stay permanently in Finland, in those cases, was not work-related but driven by family factors. Because her mother lived in Finland, Ksenia (42, specialist) emigrated and plans to stay in Finland, while Yulia (55, generalist) and Natalia decided to stay because their husbands are Finnish citizens. Other physicians settled down, had children, and purchased houses in Finland, which they view as reasons enough to stay.

> I chose Finland as a place to study medicine and work as a physician because my spouse was Finnish. (Natalia, 46, F, specialist)

The propensity to return to Russia may be reduced over the life-courses of those whose spouses make for dual-career situations and who have children. Most interviewees view their stay in Finland positively in terms of career progression, family stability, and lifestyle. Their social ties and family circumstances do not allow their return in the near or even far future. This finding is supported by other studies which evidence the linked lives of migrants that directly influence their migration patterns (see Boyd 1989; Ivlevs and King 2012; Habti 2014; Kõu, Mulder, and Bailey 2017). In their narratives, other interviewees see the general conditions in Russia as not encouraging enough to return. Moreover, those in mid- or late-career stages do not wish to return as they plan to pursue professional careers in Finland until their retirement.

> I had an invitation for work [in Finland] and I accepted it. I think that the reasons were worries about family and an aspiration to provide better opportunities in life and better living conditions for my family. (Vladimir, 53, M, specialist)

> I never thought of returning to Russia to work and spend my late career there. The reason is there are no guarantees for a safe and secure life with three children in Russia. (Galina, 33, F, generalist)

Settling down is an important way to meet one's aspirations and expectations. Most physicians think of a permanent stay in Finland unless unexpected developments occur, such as a failure to get accreditation in Finland (Inga 55, F, specialist), or finding a position with a high salary in a large, metropolitan city like Moscow or St. Petersburg (Ivan, 52, M, specialist), or having an ailing parent in Russia (Anatoli, 35, M, specialist). Julia (31, F, specialist) indicated that a settled family life is her major stay-factor: "We feel comfortable here and don't want to make a change; that's difficult for the child and for us as well. I'd say we got used to our new life."

Safety, Risk, and Uncertainty

The decision to migrate abroad is often considered in the context of possible resulting effects. The ability to evaluate future risks and to cope with uncertainty is closely related to migration decision-making (Williams and Baláž 2012). The decision is often made with the partial knowledge of what kinds of risks moving abroad will entail and what the future life in the new destination would be like. The interviewees were motivated to stay permanently in Finland, or at least their intention to stay was stronger than the intention to return to Russia. Following the lines of prospect theory, since these physicians positively framed the decision of a permanent stay as a "gain," they did not consequently consider that their decision involves any form of risk. For them, a decision to return was perceived as risky, especially given the reference points mentioned earlier. Maria explains that life in Russia was "unstable and often unpredictable" and she could not foresee what the future there would bring. For Ksenia, low income and instability in Russia, and a desire for the safety of her children are main stay-factors because she does not know "what will happen tomorrow." Julia highlights the same reasons and perspective: "It's not only about salaries, but the overall situation in Russia isn't as good as in Finland." Anna voices her fear of meeting hardships if she returns, while Tatjana's marriage, family life, and social contacts are factors that deter her return.

> Because I have had a long medical experience for many years and I want to work in my specialty, it is not necessary to move to another country to work as a cleaner. (Anna, 60, F, generalist)

> I don't know what the situation will be tomorrow, but today I don't think so, because my family is here, my relatives are here, and my friends are here. (Tatjana, 55, F, generalist)

Thus, the findings show that return is improbable for all of the interviewed physicians, whether married to Finns or Russians, although the two male doctors hinted at the weak probability of a return. Understanding these aspects also requires a deeper look at the nature of their occupational career stage and their accumulated career capital. They mostly seek employment positions where they can fully benefit from a good environment and remuneration, and live a comfortable family life.

The Role of Emotions

Lerner et al. (2015) stress the importance of analyzing the relation between emotions and decision-making. Loewenstein and Lerner (2009) indicate that emotions play a role in decision-making in two ways: as *expected emotions*—predictions of the emotional consequences of one's actions, and as *immediate emotions*—experienced when the decision is made. Research insights in this field potentially provide deeper understanding about the role of prospection in migration decision-making, especially when migrants think about their future personal-professional lives. When reconstructing past events, individuals often make "educated guesses" about what must have happened. In contrast, imagining the future tends to be more optimistic about reaching personal goals, and people tend to neglect many contextual details of the future realities. Newby-Clark and Ross (2003, 807) indicate that people spontaneously remember an affectively mixed past, which contains both ups and downs, but they anticipate an ideal future, as shown in the cases of Slava and Elena:

> I knew that I was emigrating from the country forever [. . .]. Probably I planned that I would not return. [. . .] when we studied at school, we were all already dreaming to move to Finland, and those who studied the English language were dreaming to move to the United States. (Elena, 39, F, specialist)

> When I moved to Finland, I did not speak Finnish at all. I effectively realized that it is almost impossible to learn Finnish and find a job if you do not have any basics of language [. . .]. I was on maternity leave, which was a "parachute" for me. (Slava, 40, F, specialist)

Individuals are psychologically predisposed to choose the best possible scenarios over more problematic versions of a prospective future. In this respect, Cerulo (2006, 6) advances that those considering migration in the future may be trapped in a "positive asymmetry" and choose to see a positive future as the one most likely to come true. Culture controls the

brain's tendency toward asymmetrical thinking and converts that process into a much more targeted experiential bias. Depending on the situation, seeing the future positively may thus obscure either the risks involved in a possible return migration or in staying in Finland, as Anastasia's comments show:

> I did not have a desire to return. I had fear. [. . .] I am a human and, of course, at some point, I felt that it is probably too difficult for me. An obligation to take exams is a challenge for every doctor. I was lucky or, maybe, I worked hard enough, because I passed all the examinations. It didn't take a long time for me to pass the exams if compared with how much time it might have taken. (Anastasia, 43, F, specialist)

When migrants make decisions for their current and future lives, they consider the emotional and psychological consequences of their behaviors. The decision to move entails thinking over and pre-experiencing the possible future life, which also involves an affective expectation by envisioning various situations. This could help migrants define what they would feel in a given context in the future. However, this process might also lead them to opt for other alternatives (especially those who wish to stay in the receiving country), which might suggest that leaving in the near- or far-future is a wrong choice. My previous research on highly skilled Arabs in Finland showed that many intended to do nothing but stay, as in the cases of some Russian physicians here:

> I have never had these kinds of thoughts [to return] (laughter). [. . .] When I was invited for work, I was on maternity leave. My friend, working here in the hospital, came in the summer for a visit and asked me if I could move to Finland. I declined, saying, "I don't speak Finnish, I don't need this." Another friend tried to persuade me that I would like the experience. First, what happened is that I took maternity leave for three years [. . .] and moved to Finland. I was thinking, "Would I like it or not? If it works—I will think what to do." [. . .] I worked from March until June, and at that point, I realized that I did not want to return after I saw how people worked in Finland. I quit my previous position [in Russia]. In June, I brought my child to Finland. It appeared that after a year-and-a-half, the decision was made that we would not return. (Milla, 42, F, specialist)

> I planned to move permanently. The whole process—moving from my own country was such a big thing. Love is like that. I was also scared, by then. I couldn't imagine [now] how it is possible to live somewhere other than in Finland. (Natalia, 46, F, specialist)

Research on the migration process has considered the role that emotions and aspirations play in migrants' decisions about their current and future life, and the way the real-life context in Finland affects these outcomes. This study finds that almost all of the physicians who moved to Finland do not plan to return to Russia. The narratives show that physicians seek to optimize benefits while minimizing costs as they have knowledge about the possible outcomes if they return to Russia. To stay permanently in Finland does not seem to have any level of risk or uncertainty for them. They negotiate their future in their two social worlds of personal-family and professional-occupational, and the emotional states they experience in-between converge around Finland, which is perceived as a major facilitator for their stay and the best choice for their current and future life. Their narratives are constructed around how their life is likely to proceed in relation to the conditions they aspire to. Interestingly, while the migration of Russian health professionals to Finland is highly feminized, this study notes no significant gender differences in their reasons for stay. Men and women are equally motivated by similar drives and considerations, and these are mainly non-economic and family-related motives, generally referred to as post-materialist concerns, such as lifestyle choices, professional emancipation to achieve a sense of personal fulfillment, security, and family well-being. The broader background of an increased uncertainty and insecurity regarding Russia, and the individualization of work and lifetime choices interplay with the physicians' aspirations, and these shape their individual satisfaction, such as career progression, secure employment, and, importantly, better living conditions and family well-being.

Discussion and Conclusions

It is important to recognize that all individuals in their migration and career experience are unique for various reasons and that the drivers of migration and the contextual circumstances that surround it, can, and often do, change over the course of an evolving migration process. When new experiences are acquired, dispositions are developed and adjusted, and migrants' knowledge of their social world develops as well as their individual drivers. Migration is not always a one-off event which ends in settlement, but a constant process that is re-assessed many times over the migrant's life-course.

Migration decision-making is influenced not only by the individual's ability to envision a prospective future but also by the complexities of deciding whether to migrate or stay. Traditionally, existing migration research tends to overlook how immigrants imagine their future life and what could happen in post-migration if they decide to migrate. In this regard, studies in cognitive social sciences and social psychology are relevant to international migration scholarship, particularly in looking at how one views and decides on future choices and how this process shapes the personal and professional life-course. The fact is that migrants

often think of their personal life well-being, in parallel with their career progression in the receiving country (cf. Habti 2012). Different factors were under constant negotiation and assessment, and they shaped the interviewees' alternatives to choose the paths with the highest value that worked for their professional-personal life aspirations. They seemed to be dissatisfied with the quality of life and job prospects in Russia, as they aspired for self-realization. They often referred to the challenging issue of an adjustment to daily realities and work environment. In evaluating their decision-making, the interviewees apply rationality to options of either a return to Russia or a permanent stay in Finland.

The study explores local issues of global significance with theoretical and empirical implications, thus providing it with national and international relevance. This case study contributes to research on highly skilled migration in the Nordic region and to understanding Finland's position as a receiving country of highly skilled professionals, amidst the globalization of labor and economy, human capital development, and technology. It places the findings in the context of scholarship on "new mobilities paradigm" and offers an opportunity to think through an integrated framework that facilitates a new way of understanding the migration process of highly skilled migrants. Further, this study attempts to synthesize a range of interactive theoretical approaches, which may potentially lead us to expand our understanding of the nature and complexity of the migration process. This study also helps to develop a new theoretical framework for understanding the interrelated nature of the research participants' migration, along with the underlying dynamics that come into play in their embodied personal-professional life experiences, in their practices and strategies, and the various factors shaping and reshaping their migration experiences and life-course.

Further research is needed to focus on the various phases of migration decision-making, especially exploring the way "the future" shapes our present just as much (or possibly more) than the past. It is also important to apply the empirical findings from different disciplines of international migration through a cross-disciplinary approach that investigates the ambiguities and complexity involved in the migration process, and the meanings and imaginings attached to migration by migrants and their significant others. This would provide tools for further theorization to understand the dynamics of the global migration process better, and to clarify different aspects of the migration phenomenon. Generally, highly skilled migration is seen as diverse (van Riemsdijk and Wang 2017; Habti and Elo 2018), and I would argue that given the findings of this study, permanent forms of migration should be investigated alongside temporary forms of migration. A thorough analysis of the migration process might add new dimensions to understanding the motives that trigger people in similar situations to move or to stay. Migration is a social, psychological, emotional, and cultural process which is, in reality, hard to disentangle. A combination of different factors clearly explains what drives Russian

physicians to stay in Finland, even though additional research is needed to support these arguments. In the current situation, however, we still do not know much about highly skilled Russians in Finland.

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