Review
From the state of the art to new directions in researching what Brexit means for migration and migrants

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Abstract

What has Brexit meant for migration and migrants? How has the geopolitical repositioning of the UK in consequence of the UK's exit from the European Union (EU) impacted on the experiences of long-established migrant communities and newly arrived migrants? In what ways are the impacts of Brexit differentially experienced across migrant communities according to, inter alia, class, gender, age, country of origin, disability, and race? How has migration scholarship addressed Brexit and its impact on migration and migration governance? And what has been the significance of migration research within this project?

This critical review of migration studies scholarship literature focussed on Brexit and migration, we draw out the dominant themes and gaps in this emergent field and consider how these reconfigure the 'spotlights' and 'blindspots' in migration research from methodological nationalism to. In this way, we identify the potential for new lines of enquiry for research on Brexit and migration.

Keywords: Brexit, Freedom of Movement, methodological nationalism, migration-citizenship nexus, migration state, Global Britain

1. Introduction

What has Brexit meant for migration and migrants? How has the geopolitical repositioning of the United Kingdom (UK) in consequence of the UK's exit from the European Union (EU) (Brexit) impacted on migration flows to and from the UK, and the

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experiences of long-established migrant communities and newly arrived migrants? In what ways are the impacts of Brexit differentially experienced across migrant communities according to, *inter alia*, class, gender, age, country of origin, disability, and race? How has migration scholarship addressed Brexit and its impact on migration and migration governance?

These are the core questions we set to examine in this review of migration scholarship related to the impact of Brexit published since the announcement of the EU referendum in 2015.[1] Our review highlights core themes as well as noticeable gaps in this growing body of scholarship. We offer reflections on the potential drivers behind migration scholars' current research agendas and suggestions for future directions for researching what Brexit means for migration and migrants. After outlining our methodology and its rationale, we offer a quantitative overview of the corpus. We particularly focus on the geographies of knowledge production (journals where the articles were published; corresponding author's country of affiliation); research methodologies (methods; temporalities of data collection); the characteristics of the object of research (geographical areas; socio-demographic profiles of the populations studied); and the analytical approach used to consider subjects' social locations and positionalities. We then develop an in-depth analysis of what we learned from the corpus concerning the questions above. We show how this emergent field reconfigures the 'spotlights' in migration scholarship and reproduces its 'blindspots' to offer insights on the potential for future new lines of enquiry that open up research on Brexit and migration to new perspectives.

2. Methodology

Our scoping review consisted of three steps: (1) database creation; (2) source coding; and (3) scope definition.

We compiled an initial database drawing on sources included on Scopus and the Web of Science (WoS) and published between May 2015, which is when the EU Bill was announced in the Queen's speech, and November 2021, which was our review's cut-off date. On both databases, we ran searches combining the term 'Brexit' with '*migration*' (thereby capturing also 'immigration' and 'emigration'), and subsequently with '*migrant*' (thereby capturing also 'immigrant' and 'emigrant'), and '*citizen*'. We thus included sources describing British and EU nationals as either migrants (respectively, in the EU and the UK) or citizens (reflecting the EU's legal definition of those moving within the EU via Free Movement Directives as 'mobile citizens'). Queries were run in English, so the results in our initial database include only sources in this language, with the exception of a few articles published in other languages with English abstracts. We then merged the results of these queries, obtaining 2,069 sources overall.[2] We subsequently cleaned the database by deleting duplicates, resulting in a total of 1,337 sources (Echchakoui 2020).

The following steps made up our coding of these sources. We coded each item in our database for the following information: source type; corresponding author's country of affiliation; country/ies and population/s studied; methodology; unit of analysis; author keywords.

In a third and final step, we further specified the scope of our review. From our overall set, we identified all sources published in English-language migration journals (see PRIO Migration

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Centre 2021), as well as migration journals publishing in two (or more) languages including English. From this subset, we then selected research articles and Special Issue introductions,[3] giving us a total corpus of 61 sources, which we analyse in the following section.

3. Mapping the corpus

Articles were published across a wide spectrum of migration journals ($N = 13$), but approximately two-thirds ($N = 41$) appear in three journals only: the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* ($N = 18$), *Ethnic and Racial Studies* ($N = 12$), and *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* ($N = 11$). Over 60 per cent of the articles ($N = 38$) have a UK-based scholar as corresponding author; a third ($N = 20$) is authored by scholars affiliated with universities based in a European Union member state (EU27) or within the European Economic Area (EEA) (and in the case of Switzerland, the single market), and the remaining articles ($N = 3$) by authors affiliated with universities based outside of the continental boundaries of Europe (USA, Australia, China).

The overwhelming majority of the articles included in this review focuses on the UK, either exclusively ($N = 45$) or in combination with an EU/EEA ($N = 8$) or a non-EU/EEA ($N = 4$) country; the remaining four focus exclusively on the EU/EEA, including articles on one ($N = 2$) or multiple countries ($N = 2$). Among the articles focusing on the UK, some have a specific national or subnational focus ($N = 23$); among these, the spotlight is prevalently on England, generally on its own ($N = 16$), or in combination with Scotland ($N = 2$). While a few articles focus on Scotland ($N = 2$), Wales and Northern Ireland do not explicitly feature as research sites. Research was primarily undertaken in urban areas, with a few exceptions ($N = 3$).

Over three-quarters ($N = 48$) of the articles reviewed draw from original empirical data. Qualitative research methods prevail ($N = 35$), especially interviews, sometimes undertaken as part of ethnographies or in combination with other qualitative research methods. Approximately one-sixth ($N = 8$) is based on quantitative research methods—often surveys; a few ($N = 5$) are based on mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). The remaining articles ($N = 13$) include essays, with no methods section ($N = 9$); scoping reviews ($N = 2$); a Special Issue introduction ($N = 1$); an interview ($N = 1$).

From a temporal perspective, empirical work was generally conducted in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, except a few articles ($N = 7$) that either use prior data collected to reflect on continuities between past and present or offer a longitudinal perspective by combining data collected before and after this event.

Among the articles based on original empirical work ($N = 48$), three-quarters discuss the perceptions and experiences of nationals of EU Member States living in the UK ($N = 36$). Meanwhile, only a few focus on British citizens in the EU ($N = 5$) or British citizens in the UK ($N = 7$). Finally, there is one article that focuses on the experience of returnees.

Of the articles focusing on EU nationals in the UK, slightly less than two-thirds ($N = 21$) specifically focus on citizens of Central and Eastern European countries either exclusively ($N = 19$) or in combination/comparison with citizens of an EU14 country ($N = 2$). In these studies, Polish nationals are the most represented national group ($N = 15$), either on their own ($N = 12$) or in combination/comparison with other

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national groups ($N=3$); while a few more articles focus either on Bulgarian nationals ($N=3$)—of which one with a group of EU14 nationals, 'Central and Eastern Europeans' ($N=2$), or Czech and Slovak-speaking migrants ($N=1$). Six articles discuss the experiences of EU14 nationals, either on their own ($N=4$) or in combination with a group of Eastern European nationals ($N=2$); out of these, Italians feature as the most researched group of EU nationals ($N=3$), followed by Spanish ($N=1$) and French nationals ($N=1$). Other articles do not focus on specific national group/s; they either discuss the experiences of EU nationals at large, or nationals of multiple EU countries. Of the articles focusing on British citizens in the EU, some concentrate on this group alone ($N=2$), while others discuss/compare their perceptions and experiences with one or more categories of EU nationals in the UK ($N=3$). Finally, the articles on British citizens in the UK largely focus on this group only ($N=5$), but also include articles where their perceptions and experiences are discussed in combination with either their non-EU spouse ($N=1$) or with a group of EU nationals in the EU ($N=1$).

Zooming in on the socio-demographic characteristics of the research subjects as described in the articles' methodology section, articles based on original empirical work generally discuss the experiences of individual migrants or citizens, and only a few ($N=4$) put centre-stage either couples or families constituted by at least one migrant subject. With some exceptions ($N=3$), articles largely focus on adults' experiences of migration and settlement. Besides a few articles that specifically focus on either migrant women ($N=3$) or men ($N=1$), all others identify research subjects primarily by their nationality. In some cases, this descriptor is combined with class, thereby studying the specific experiences of some categories of migrants based on their professional qualifications—i.e. the 'low'/'high' skill distinction ($N=5$), employment sector ($N=3$), or status as (higher education) students ($N=1$).

What this descriptive corpus analysis has shown is that the scholarship on migration after/since Brexit has (largely) successfully reconfigured its 'spotlights', specifically attending to the experiences of those populations who had moved between the UK and EU under the auspices of the EU's Freedom of Movement Directives and whose future status in their country of residence was at the heart of the citizens' rights provisions included in the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement.

The scholarship shines a particularly bright light on those directly impacted by Brexit, by centering the experiences of categories of migrants and citizens that newly find themselves 'unsettled' (e.g. Kilkey and Ryan 2021) and in uncertain circumstances, e.g. by being pushed out of the 'citizen' and into the 'migrant' category for the first time (D'Angelo and Kofman 2018). In shining these spotlights, the literature in the corpus has also inevitably reproduced certain 'blindspots'.

The corpus analysis shows that few studies explicitly integrate ethnicity/race ($N=3$) and/or religion ($N=2$), while sexuality and disability are not explicitly considered—for example, as potential push or pull factors of post-Brexit migration and settlement choices. It thus becomes apparent that most articles undertake a single dimension and categorical analysis of the experiences of their research subjects, who are generally identified by their nationality and specifically their status as foreign-born nationals. As a result, these are often treated as internally monolithic groups, and there is a dearth of studies looking at the relational processes of construction of

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intra-categorical differentiation or that more broadly adopt an intersectional analysis encompassing further axes of differentiation, such as race, class and their spatialisation or gender and religion.

In the next section, and against the backdrop of our review of the existing literature on migration after Brexit, we discuss in more depth the prevailing themes and approaches, as well as the gaps that we have identified. Importantly, we explore how these blindspots in this new body of work relate to broader (and often systemic) issues that plague migration research and the social sciences, notably methodological nationalism/supranationalism, and Brexit-exceptionalism.

4. Brexit, migration studies, and methodological nationalism

Two decades ago, Wimmer and Glick Schiller's seminal work (2002, 2003) on methodological nationalism and the study of migration offered a compelling critique of the then emerging field of migration studies. This conceptual intervention pointed to how migration research was historically entangled with the nation state and its migration apparatus, whose categories, agendas, and framing defined the epistemological boundaries of the field. Approaching migration through the lens of the nation state, has had profound implications for the ways in which research priorities are identified and framed, and which groups are identified as of interest or not for research. This has led to understandings of migration characterised on the one hand by spotlights—particular populations or forms of migration becoming emblematic of migration—and on the other blind spots (see Humphris and Sigona 2019). As a result, the archetypal migrant produced through migration research is the immigrant, perceived as a threat to the national security, identity, economy, and culture of receiving countries. Despite the early critiques, methodological nationalism remains widespread in migration scholarship across disciplines, often leading to a conflation of society and nation state, and assumptions of national homogeneity (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). In consequence, migration research contributes to the reproduction and validation of the self-same categories of those apparatuses (Dahinden 2016).

A precursor to such critiques was the one levelled by Malkki (1995, 1997a,b) towards the emerging field of refugee studies. By tracing an array of different discursive and institutional domains within which 'the refugee' had been constituted (see Sigona 2018 on the so-called Europe's 'refugee crisis'), she highlighted that 'the national order of things' was what underpinned, implicitly or explicitly, by how refugee scholars approached, conceptualised, and investigated forced displacement. Turning her critical gaze beyond the national level, she pointed the spotlight on international institutions such as the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in the construction of the refugee subject (see also Harrell-Bond's pathbreaking book *Imposing Aid*, 1986). Malkki's observation is an important reminder that migration apparatuses are not confined to the nation-state level. Other institutions involved in the global governance of migration similarly produce their own categories and framings that, in turn, shape research in the field. As Bakewell (2008: 449)

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observes, an important shortcoming of the privileging of the worldview of policy makers 'in constructing the research, constraining the questions asked, the objects of study and the methodologies and analysis adopted', is that it leaves large groups of forced migrants invisible in both research and policy.

Shifting focus to the EU, it is evident that over the last two decades, and in particular since its 2015–6 'refugee crisis' (Crawley et al. 2016), its function as a norm-maker in the field of migration and asylum has expanded (see Geddes and Scholten 2016). Processes of policy expansion and EU-wide harmonisation have been accompanied by the emergence and consolidation of an EU vocabulary of migration. This vocabulary has, in turn, been reinforced and validated through large investments in research on migration via dedicated funding lines in programmes such as FP7, Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, contributing to the production of what we here define as a manifestation of methodological supranationalism in migration scholarship; that is, defined within the political and geographical boundaries of the state-making project of the EU, and the role of human mobility within it.

One of the pillars of this semantic architecture is the distinction between EU mobile citizens and Third-Country Nationals and the categorisation of their movement as 'mobility' and 'migration', respectively. Only the latter are expected to 'integrate' into EU society and constructed as the legitimate subjects of fundable migration research. In contrast, and before Brexit, the movement and settlement of EU citizens in the UK and of British citizens in the EU was largely categorised as intra-EU mobility.

An important exception here seems to be the case of people migrating from the 'new' EU Member States (EU8 and EU2) to other parts of the EU including the UK, and around whom a field of research within migration scholarship has developed. This resulted in the veritable explosion of scholarship centring the intra-EU movement of citizens from Central and Eastern European countries—with Poland and Romania occupying a particularly prominent position. In this way, the research agenda connecting migration and European enlargement followed from the assumption that mobility from these states and, by extension, the integration of those from these locations, presented a problem for receiving states. Research thus reproduced the familiar trope of migration scholarship: migration as a social problem (Castles 2010; Anderson 2019).

In contrast, those from the 'old' EU Member States were more often incorporated into scholarship on the significance of intra-EU mobility for the construction of the European social space, and related considerations over the development of European (contra national) identities and belongings. This scholarship was published more conspicuously within sociology, political science and geography rather than migration studies (see, e.g. Favell 2008; Andreotti, Le Galès and Moreno Fuentes 2015).

Brexit has unsettled many of these assumptions. Thus, answers to the questions 'what has Brexit done to migrants, migration flows and migration governance?' must be mindful that Brexit holds not just empirical but conceptual significance for migration research. How has Brexit unsettled the pre-existing biases/assumptions outlined above? Our responses to the following set of questions given some prelimianry insights.

What did Brexit do to those (formerly) classed as 'mobile citizens' in the literature and in EU funding programmes? The transformation of their status (and corresponding rights and entitlements) turned British citizens in the EU and EU citizens in the UK into

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'migrants' and their movement into 'migration'. It also made them subjects of 'integration' and integration policy—in the EU and its Member States for the British citizens and in the UK for the EU nationals—accelerating a process that had its precursor in the increasing contestation of intra-EU migrants' access to welfare resources (Lafleur and Mescoli 2018; Guma 2020).

What did Brexit do to migration regimes in the UK and EU? It moved the UK out of multiple EU-wide legal instruments (e.g. Dublin Regulation; Return Directive), solidifying the border between the UK and the EU, affecting migrant routes and flows as well as migratory projects and experiences.

What did Brexit do to migration research? On a meta-level, it fractured the epistemological field which had emerged from years of cross-EU comparative work and pan-European collaborations promoted by national and EU research funding bodies, destabilising the position of researchers—many with a migration-background themselves—who find themselves facing fundamental questions on their conceptual, epistemological, methodological, and ethical stances.

Ultimately, Brexit has brought into sharp relief once again how, as migration scholars, our understandings of migration and migrants are inextricably and ontologically connected to how migration and mobility are constructed in law and policy. For Anderson (2019: 3) it is not only 'a terminological and epistemological challenge, but a conceptual, ethical and theoretical one'. It has reshuffled a tension that lies at the heart of contemporary concerns about human mobility, one that 'assumes a tension between embedded "natives" and out of place "aliens"' (Anderson 2019: 3).

5. British/Brexit exceptionalism

The methodological nationalism inherent to this body of scholarship echoes the broader methodological nationalism identified within Brexit research (Bhambra 2017; Virdee and McGeever 2018). In other words, it runs the risk of reinforcing the exclusionary political project of national belonging at the heart of Brexit (see also Valluvan and Kalra 2019) and ambitions for 'Global Britain'. It is notable that methodological supranationalism barely features in this burgeoning field of Brexit and migration research. A largely British field of migration research—in that most of the researchers publishing on this topic to date have been affiliated with British universities—it is perhaps unsurprising that the semantic architecture has traced more closely that of the UK's migration policy regime, with a prominent approach being the retreat to national categories in documenting and explaining how Brexit has been experienced by EU nationals already settled in the UK (and to a lesser degree British citizens living in the EU). This has the effect of unmooring Brexit from the broader migration politics of the EU (e.g. Fortress Europe, Refugee Crisis, European disintegration), as well as presenting Brexit as a predominantly British problem. It also tends towards dissociating Brexit from the experiences of discrimination and disenfranchisement of racially minoritised British citizens (for notable exception, see Benson and Lewis 2019). Such Brexit exceptionalism also extends to how this corpus of work does not extend to foreign-born (non-EU/EEA) populations. Brexit, at least as far as this

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body of academic scholarship on migration is concerned, seems only of significance to those whose legal status has been directly impacted.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the predominant approach within migration studies research has been to focus on how Brexit has been experienced by citizens of EU Member States already within the UK's borders. Brexit has exacerbated and made visible some of the existing cleavages within the European citizen population, but it has also produced new ones. This points to a need to think about which of these cleavages are spotlighted in the emergent research and which remain blindspots. The published research to date follows an earlier differentiation between 'new' and 'old' member states, with those (EU14) featuring far less frequently than Polish and other EU8 and EU2 citizens, populations who continue to be veritable spotlights. Research published in these journals prior to the Brexit referendum included a few articles that looked at the transnational dimension in migrants' lives and identity-negotiation processes. However, more recently, this perspective has been notably absent (but see Redclift and Rajina 2021), with research turning instead towards considering Brexit as an immediate problem for those located within the UK or, in the case of British citizens in the EU, within their country of residence. A small exception here are the articles that look either at returnees (Klimavičiūtė et al. 2020) or the impact of Brexit on an EU27 state's demographics (Kumpikaite-Valiuniene 2019).

In framing the impacts of Brexit by national group, how it crosscuts the population of EU citizens has been overlooked. The consequence of this is that questions of what this means for Europe, European mobilities and identities—including how Brexit exacerbated and made visible existing cleavages across multiple axes of social division within this population (Benson 2020, 2021a)—are largely absent from migration studies research. While considering the disproportionate effects of Brexit in ways that acknowledge the inequalities within and between EU nation-states is an important contribution (and the longer geopolitical histories that inform this; see Antonucci and Varriale 2020), taking a starting point that prioritises shared European citizenship and then looks to the differential experiences among these citizens offers the prospect of thinking about how Brexit interplays with the ongoing construction of Europe and its polity, including in the context of its (potential) disintegration.

The relative absence of British citizens living in the EU from this corpus of work is one dimension of this. It points to the shape methodological nationalism has taken in the way that Brexit has been approached within migration studies. It is notable that this reflects an earlier trend, where, despite the UK having one of the highest per capita emigration rates in the world (Hammerton 2017), its emigrants have not been considered part of Britain's migration story and are rarely considered as migrants—including in migration studies research—whether in the places they settle or in public and political understandings (Benson 2021a). They are both outside the scope of the UK government's migration controls and policies and only considered in migration studies scholarship at times where they present a social problem to their receiving state (e.g. in the case of elderly British citizens in Spain). What this reveals is the way in which migration studies scholarship reproduced the one-way understanding of Britain's borders that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, i.e. migration a proxy for immigration.

Work on Brexit published in migration studies has yet to consider what these outcomes of Brexit might tell us about the future political project of belonging and its consolidation through the UK's migration and citizenship nexus. Other future directions for research in

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this area lie in considering how these dynamics interplay with ongoing political processes of making the European citizenry and its borders, and the global political economy of migration.

5.1 The British 'migration state' after Brexit

The predominant political narrative that accompanied the UK's exit from the EU concerned taking back control of the UK's borders. And indeed, with Brexit, the UK has shed its obligations to conform to EU legislation. Furthermore, while it remains formally bound by other international frameworks (e.g. the global refugee protection regime), Brexit seems to have opened the door for the UK to reconfigure its migration governance regime in ways that push the envelope even further in respect to these obligations.

We argue that, already, Brexit signals a multi-scalar process of rebordering, the like of which was previously seen in Britain's prolonged political 'decolonisation'. We suggest that now, as then, this process was prefigured through the politicisation of migration and the creation of an exclusionary politics of belonging drawn through racial nationalism. This paved the way for the emergence of new immigration and nationality legislation and policies in the UK.

Crucially, such an understanding of Brexit as a (re)bordering process, thus requires also a re-evaluation of assumptions that have been made about the post-war British 'migration state'. Hollifield (2004) describes the 'migration states', as one in which the regulation of migration and settlement are seen as of equal importance to state power and identity, as maintaining economic well-being and providing security.

In the post-war period, like many Western European states that used immigration policies as a way to carve out their national identity, Britain began to similarly narrate/implicitly understand itself as a liberal democracy. Elaborating this perspective, Consterdine (2020) argues that since the immigration reforms introduced by the New Labour Government in the early 2000s, the UK's regulation of migration is one characterised by a model of migration management predicated on (individualised) economic worthiness. As she argues, in the 21st century, the UK is best understood as a *neoliberal* migration state.

Indeed, much of the literature reviewed in this article shows how characteristics of the neoliberal migration regime theorised by Consterdine (2020) continue to shape EU migrant's subjectivities in the UK, as EU nationals are positioned and position themselves within discourses and hierarchies of un/desirable and un/deserving migrants. For example, Schweyher, Odden and Burrell (2019) look at how Polish migrants deal with the stigma surrounding the use of social benefits in the new 'welfare bordering regime' for example by passing it on to some 'other' categories of welfare recipients or by avoiding at all costs to claim any benefit.

Post-Brexit , alongside the development of new migration management practices, it is timely to reevaluate the shape and nature of the British migration state. It is pertinent that Hollifield (2004) highlighted that Britain never quite fit his model of the 'migration state'. The fact that there is an assumption that the model could ever explain what unfolded in post-war Britain points to another blindspot, characterised by imperial amnesia, and lack of reflection on what actually drove British migration policy in the period of formal political 'decolonisation'. At the heart of such a re-evaluation, it is exploring the imbrication

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of colonial and imperial legacies (for example, conceptualisations that see Britain as a postcolonial migration state; see Sadiq and Tsourapas (2021)) in Britain's migration management regimes alongside neoliberalism.

While broader literature on Brexit traces its connections to imperialism (see, e.g. Bhambra 2017; Virdee and McGeever 2018), the research on Brexit and migration reviewed here rarely links to these longer and connected histories of migration and citizenship within the UK. In adopting a predominantly presentist account, the reviewed works overlook the ways in which the diverse and uneven outcomes of Brexit within the mobile European population may be rooted in (or present continuations of) earlier articulations of national migration regimes (for notable exceptions, see Benson and Lewis 2019; Kromczyk, Khattab and Abbas 2021). Particularly significant here is how colonialism and the racial hierarchies that it produced and perpetuated have become integral to current understandings of borders, defining who belongs from within and without the borders of the nation state (see e.g. Anderson 2019 on 'migrantizing' the citizen). What this reminds us is that the control, surveillance, and management of mobility has long been part of state-formation, imperial and national. One fruitful line of enquiry for future migration research then perhaps lies in the scholarship on coloniality and Brexit (e.g. Boatcă 2021) and cognate works on coloniality, citizenship, and migration and the making of Global Britain (e.g. Benson 2021b).

Looking at immigration reforms emerging in the wake of Brexit the questions we need to be asking are whether these make a significant transformation of Britain's migration management practices? Do these changes signal further ideological and political shifts at the heart of the British migration state? What are the continuities and discontinuities in the shape of the British 'migration state' before and after Brexit?

Asking such questions, offers a way to shift scale from what Brexit means for particular populations, towards questions about what this tells us about the work of managing migration and who belongs in the making of post-Brexit Britain, the convergences and divergences between the past and present.

6. Conclusion

This review has offered an initial mapping of how what Brexit means for migration and migrants has been addressed through research published in migration studies journals. It has considered the spotlights and blindspots in this emergent field of research, identifying convergences with broader trends within migration scholarship. What becomes clear is that what Brexit means for migration has been reduced to what it means for those populations (only some of them) directly impacted by Brexit. The predominance of research on EU nationals from Central and Eastern European countries in the UK, at once reproduces the familiar trope of migration as a social problem, while also neglecting broader considerations of how the outcomes of Brexit are unevenly distributed, as intersecting inequalities beyond national difference are significantly absent in migration scholarship. We further observed how this field of research to date has not considered how Brexit and its consequences for migration are caught up in broader state-making projects whether in the UK or EU. The tendency towards methodological nationalism and Brexit exceptionalism has removed these discussions from broader conversations about what this means in respect to debates on European

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(dis)integration and the regional political economy of migration within continental Europe. Finally, the focus on Brexit as a contemporary problem for affected populations unmoors it from ongoing conversations across the social sciences about the longer histories that inform questions of citizenship and migration in present-day UK.

While the spotlights may have been slightly reconfigured, the blindspots within migration research have been largely sustained through the body of work reviewed in this article. To our mind, turning attention to methodological nationalism is urgent at this time of geopolitical repositioning and the related reconfiguration of Britain's borders and politics of belonging.

Returning to our initial questions, migration scholarship on Brexit to date has focused predominantly on the impact of Brexit on EU migrants, with non-EU migrants and migration flows rarely featuring in migration research on Brexit.

To date the question of the impact of Brexit on the UK and EU migration regimes is also largely absent from migration journals, as is the broader consideration of the nexus between migration, migration governance, and global politics. Human mobility and its governance are closely intertwined with geopolitical projects like the British Empire, the EU, and now Global Britain, with the imagined communities that underpin these ideological and political constructs, and the semantic and legal architecture that they employ order, discipline, and validate them.

Moving to the question on the impact of Brexit on migration studies, Brexit has fractured a convergence that had emerged over the years of cross-EU comparative work and research collaborations calling into question some taken for granted categories and concepts central to migration studies including relating to who the subjects of our studies are and why, reinvigorating a debate on reflexivity in migration research, on the positionality of migration researchers, and reviving long-standing debates on key concepts such as 'integration' (see Dahinden 2016; Schinkel 2018; Anderson 2019; Favell 2019; Meissner 2019; Spencer and Charsley 2021) and their normative underpinnings.

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Notes

1. In an earlier iteration of this exercise, we worked with Dr Marie Godin to identify some of the trends in the wider literature. This has informed some of the analysis presented here.
2. More specifically, the string 'Brexit and *migration*' gave us 607 results in the WoS and 630 in Scopus, meaning 1,237 in total; the string 'Brexit AND *migrant* NOT *migration* gave us 90 results in the WoS and 122 in Scopus; the string 'Brexit AND *citizen* NOT *migration*' gave us 285 results in the WoS and 335 in Scopus.
3. We have excluded one commentary and one book review.

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