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Mobile Vulnerabilities: Perspectives on the Vulnerabilities of Immigrants in the Finnish Labour Market

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the types of vulnerability faced by immigrants in the Finnish labour market are investigated in relation to differences in their ethnic origin. Labour-market performance of immigrants is analysed by local labour-market area. The most successful immigrants are so-called Westerners. By contrast immigrants from the developing world face severe problems, especially the fundamental one of getting started in the labour market. High unemployment levels in Finland, the low esteem attributed to foreign work experience by Finnish employers, and inadequate language skills are the main barriers encountered by labour-market entrants from abroad. There are more jobs for migrants in the major southern cities than in the smaller centres of other regions. Those who are unemployed during the first year after immigration are likely to continue to face problems thereafter. Only a fifth of unemployed immigrants succeeded in finding a job in their first year after arrival year.
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INTRODUCTION

Estimates suggest that across the world there are 175 million people who live outside their country of birth, of whom 100 million are labour migrants. Contrary to many people's belief, most migration takes place between developing countries, but migration to Europe has grown to the point where migrants make up around 20 million of the European Union's 380 million people (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2003; Evans, 2004).

The 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium confirmed the increasing role of migration in the context of economic globalisation. One of the most significant trends in recent years has been the rise in both permanent and temporary migration for employment purposes. There is heightened competition between Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries to attract the human resources they lack, and to keep the highly skilled groups in their own populations who might be tempted to emigrate elsewhere. In France, for example, a so-called 'scientific visa' has been introduced as a fast-track procedure to allow scientists from countries in the non-European Economic Area (EEA) to work in France. Likewise, in Germany the government has introduced 'green cards' for IT professionals from non-EEA countries, and in the UK an 'entrepreneurial visa' has been introduced. While specialists in new technologies have been the primary beneficiaries of the recent easing of visa requirements, the measures have applied to other categories of skilled workers as well, and more particularly to doctors, nurses and medical-related staff (Mahroum, 2001).

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The rise in labour migration does not concern skilled workers alone, and some OECD member countries make extensive use of unskilled foreign labour chiefly in agriculture, building and civil engineering, and domestic services. This is especially true in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and the US. In some countries, a substantial proportion of these foreign workers are undocumented (Sopemi, 2002).

In many European OECD countries, the share of foreign workers in the total number of jobless is larger than their share in the labour force (Sopemi, 2002). While the mobility of international migrants makes them more vulnerable than local employees on account of the differential citizenship status that they hold, this vulnerability is greatly magnified for those without work who therefore have very limited financial means to support themselves, and little or no access to state support for their health and other social needs. In this paper the author deals specifically with the vulnerability of immigrants to the Finnish labour market. The empirical base includes both a questionnaire survey of immigrant job-seekers and employees in Finland (Jaakkola, 2000; Heikkilä and Jaakkola, 2000), and a study of immigrant experiences in the local labour-market areas of Finland (Heikkilä and Jaakkola, 2004). These data sources not only allow analysis of migrant experiences relative to different ethnic and cultural origins, but also in terms of regional differences and inclusion and exclusion at the scale of local labour markets. Before turning to these issues, it is useful, however, to consider how mobile vulnerabilities might be theorised.

THEORISATION OF VULNERABILITY AMONGST LABOUR MIGRANTS

Satisfactory integration of immigrants requires the possibility, in ideal conditions, for full social, legal, economic and cultural participation in a society, with them having comparable rights to those of a national citizen (Spencer, 1995, 2003). In many cases, therefore, international mobility does not lead to integration but to multiple vulnerabilities amongst immigrants. It may imply the acceptance of cultural pluralism by a host society (Bustamante, 2002: 351–2). The goal of integration also has certain costs for the immigrant. He or she cannot live and behave as if they were in their home country. It requires that they speak the language of the receiving country fluently. They may also be unable to maintain certain customs from their place of origin that may be against the law of the recipient country. The reality is that these 'ideals' are seldom achieved. In a European context, outcomes range from societies that have made very positive adaptations to accommodate immigration, through to very negative experiences (Berry, 1992: 69).

Some researchers have suggested that human rights have both a structural and a cultural dimension, and that the vulnerability of immigrants is not therefore just a physical condition but that it is socially constructed by the nationals of the country in which migrants are living. The structural nature of migrant vulnerability derives from the existence of a power structure which in any given society allocates more power to some than others. The cultural nature of vulnerability derives from the set of cultural elements (stereotypes, prejudices, racism, xenophobia, ignorance and institutional discrimination) which are used to justify the power differentials between nationals and immigrants. Mobile vulnerability is therefore a social condition associated with the ways in which the human rights of migrants are violated, especially amongst those migrants labelled as most 'deviant' (Bustamante, 2002: 339–40).

Labelling of migrants therefore needs to be understood as a social process which in turn produces spatial vulnerabilities (Findlay, 2005). It involves social interaction between the one who labels another as deviant and the one who is so labelled. Thus, the vulnerability of an immigrant is a function of how they are labelled as deviant relative to the socially accepted definitions of a 'national' (Bustamante, 2002: 347). Cultural proximity is supposed to reduce the distance between foreigners and natives (Vourc'h *et al.*, 1999: 78). There is a widespread assumption that the more distant the culture of a migrant, the more problems there will be (Wrench, 1999: 237). These problems also increase when migrants are competing with citizens for access to limited resources, whether these be jobs or social services. Where competition and cultural distance are greatest, discrimination against migrants is most severe (Lange and Westin, 1981: 59–62).

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Another sociological concept which can be applied to the experience of minorities in the labour market is the concept of social closure. There are a variety of different forms of social closure which are employed by powerful social groups to exclude the less powerful. These processes are both conscious and unconscious. The notion of difference is crucial to understanding the operation of social closure. Skin colour, gender, language and culture have all been cited as evidence of difference and used to define distinct social groups (Carter, 2003: 11, 65) with all the discriminatory consequences that such labelling implies. These labelling issues are now explored in more detail relative to how they impact on the labour-market recruitment and progression opportunities of foreign labour migrants.

Cultural theories describe an immigrant's success in the labour market in terms of whether his or her ethnic background is evaluated in a positive or a negative way. A positive evaluation would be inspired by theories of diversity management; that is, that a multicultural work force contributes directly and indirectly to the success of a company. A negative evaluation is often evoked by ethnocentrism (e.g. the promotion of local values, skills to the detriment of those holding foreign qualifications), which could lead to incidents of discrimination. Personal characteristics that often serve as guidelines when evaluating an individual are gender, civil status, age, ethnic background, ethnic group belonging, and religious belonging. How these characteristics are interpreted depends on the experiences, attitudes and values of a labour-market recruiter. Sometimes the recruiter's interpretations of a candidate's personal attributes activate ethnocentric and prejudiced opinions. Instead of being seen as an individual, the candidate is ascribed values which members of the majority culture think the minority group hold. Immigrants are therefore seen as 'others' instead of 'us' (Spence, 1974; Ryding Zink, 2001: 34–6).

Theories of discrimination make a distinction between statistical and preference discrimination. The former occurs because the employer is unaware or unsure of the immigrant's productivity and how to evaluate it. Not showing interest in other cultures or underestimating the qualifications achieved in other cultural settings is likely to lead to the occurrence of statistical discrimination. Also, feeling uncertain about the value of foreign qualifications, many recruiters are hesitant to employ immigrants. Recruiters might be unable to see the immigrants' hidden competence. Instead, similarities in culture and values might become the main criteria of selection in the recruitment process (Solomos and Back, 1996; Ryding Zink, 2001: 34–5, 40, 46).

Preference discrimination is a result of employers preferring a certain ethnic background at the expense of others. It is argued that there is a sort of 'ethnic ranking' in the labour market (Robinson, 1992). Thus, employers may employ local people as their first choice, followed by nationalities perceived as culturally 'proximate', with 'distant' nationalities being excluded unless no other labour is available. The ranking seems connected with the idea of cultural 'distance' between different nationalities. As a result of ethnic ranking, many well-educated immigrants find themselves in positions far below their level of education. Ethnic identity therefore influences an immigrant's chances of finding a job in a position corresponding to his or her qualifications. Discrimination can also be classified into direct discrimination, which involves less favourable treatment on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin, and indirect discrimination involving active victimisation (Carter, 2003: 16).

According to segmentation theory there is dualism in the labour market, sometimes involving the ethno-stratification of jobs. Within the secondary labour market, it is argued that there are employment sectors entirely occupied by workers of foreign extraction, and also sectors in which certain ethnic groups are over-represented and which are avoided by local workers. Empirical research not only confirms the existence of these mechanisms but also suggests that there is a hierarchisation in the occupational integration of migrants on the basis of their nationality. Within western Europe, EU member state nationals achieve better social and economic integration. For young women and non-EU foreigners the main problem is not achieving stability in employment but getting a first job (Ouali and Rea, 1999: 26). Those at the bottom of the hierarchy are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and so most in need of legal protection (Rea *et al.*, 1999: 13).

The citizenship effect, and consequent benefits that citizenship confers on the native population,

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play a key role in discrimination against immigrants working in the same labour market sectors as local staff (Campani and Cardechi, 1999: 158). In addition, institutional discrimination against visible migrant groups may be acute in certain sectors of the economy. For example, the qualifications of migrant populations may not be recognised in terms of their real value. In addition, in many workplaces perfect knowledge of the language is seen as indispensable by employers, even though the work does not require such fluency (Räthzel, 1999: 47).

Welfare states have many national institutions, access to which is based upon some conception of national citizenship. Exclusion from full citizenship is a frequent concomitant of immigrant status, and such exclusion will often mean exclusion from full participation in the welfare state (Marston and Mitchell, 2004). Different types of migrants with varying legal statuses (e.g. EU and non-EU citizens living in another EU state) are differentially excluded from rights of access to the welfare state. The most disadvantaged group is illegal immigrants who, as workers, tend to be almost wholly without employment rights. Living under constant threat of deportation, they remain largely on the sufferance of their employers and often find themselves super-exploited in intermittent work on low wages, under poor and unregulated conditions (Pierson, 1999: 81). Also refugees and asylum-seekers can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation on the fringes of legal work (Rea *et al*., 1999: 6–7).

There is an argument that ethnic minority labour reduces the costs of the reproduction of labour power. Firstly, immigrant labour may not enjoy the same rights to housing, unemployment benefit and healthcare as indigenous workers. Secondly, immigration laws may explicitly seek to exclude from citizenship, or indeed from residence, the dependent relatives of the immigrant worker. Thirdly, the costs of education and training of immigrant workers will generally have been met by their country of origin, while the 'guest' worker approaching retirement age may be encouraged to go home (Pierson, 1999: 78).

Mobile vulnerabilities also have a strong gender dimension. Feminisation of international labour migration is a global trend. Women migrate in their own capacities as workers. However, as the number of migrant women increases, the number of cases of abuse and exploitation has also risen. Since most migrant women work at the bottom rung of the occupational hierarchy, they are extremely vulnerable. The vast majority of them work as housemaids, entertainers, nurses and factory workers. Housemaids are especially vulnerable because they work in private homes where public scrutiny of conditions of employment is very hard. The problems they face include sexual harassment, rape, non-payment or underpayment of wages, and verbal/physical abuse (Oishi, 2002). Ethnic minority nurses in particular have faced harassment, ranging from verbal abuse to physical attacks (Carter, 2003: 105).

Knocke (1999: 109–10) argued that 'invisibility' and stereotyping are fundamental causes of vulnerability amongst immigrant women. Spouses of male migrants are often unable to enter the workforce and are forced to accept hidden domestic roles. Despite being from many different backgrounds in terms of origin, education and experience, a collective identity is often imposed on them, misrepresenting them all as lacking in education and with poor work experience. They face multiple boundaries of exclusion because of the expectation that they will accept traditional gender roles, being tied to the home in a range of domestic roles.

To summarise, the literature points to many sources of vulnerability amongst migrants. Many of these ultimately can be linked to the social and cultural labelling of migrants as 'other', but these labels are often reinforced by legal structural forces that block access to the economic and social rights available to the permanent citizens of a country.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION TO FINLAND

Having reviewed the academic literature on mobile vulnerabilities, it is now appropriate to focus attention specifically on Finland. Finland has traditionally been an emigration country. People have migrated to other Western countries to seek better labour opportunities. Sweden has been the most popular target country of the Finnish emigrants. The migration flow to Sweden reached its peak in the year 1970. Since then the volume of emigration has decreased and immigration to Finland has increased. From the beginning of the 1980s Finland has received more immigrants than emigrants.

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The population of Finland is considered more ethnically homogeneous than the populations of most other European countries. In the 1980s the foreign population was still low in Finland, but it doubled during the decade. From the beginning of the 1990s immigration began to increase rapidly. The phenomenon coincided with a deep economic recession. In addition to foreign immigrants, Finland also has a population of ethnic Finns born outside the country. In 2004, the total number of immigrants to Finland was over 108,000, or only 2% of the total population.

The structure of the immigrant population and the reasons for its arrival have changed over time. In the 1980s people moved to Finland because they had a specific job to perform or for family reasons, such as marriage to a Finn. Major groups of arrivals in the 1990s have been Ingrian Finnish returnees and refugees who did not generally have a job pre-organised, and could not benefit from existing social networks that promote employment and integration. The main groups of immigrants to Finland were from Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Germany, the UK, the US and Vietnam.

Three-quarters of foreigners in 2001 were of working age (15–64 years) compared with 67% of the population as a whole. There was a slight excess of women among foreigners. Many individual national groups were clearly male-dominated. Many of the Italian, Dutch, Moroccan and Turkish residents in Finland were men (from 73% to 77%). All the largest refugee groups had a male majority except for the Vietnamese. Women were clearly in the majority within the groups originating from Thailand, the Philippines, Russia and Estonia (Statistics Finland, 2002).

Diverse employment opportunities and services attract immigrants to the southern coastal areas of Finland, including the capital area of Helsinki in Uusimaa county. In the year 2000, the immigrant population was 3.4% of the total population in the county of Uusimaa, a percentage nearly double the national average. Half of Finland's immigrants lived in Uusimaa. During the 1990s in particular, immigrants heading for Finland settled first and foremost in Helsinki. Later, they moved to the outskirts of the Helsinki conurbation. Turku has the second largest immigrant concentration (Heikkilä and Järvinen, 2003).

Immigration has not only been spatially selective, but has also been sectorally concentrated. This has happened because the level of education in Finland is constantly rising and, consequently, the number of Finns willing to do manual work has decreased rapidly. This in turn has encouraged sectoral segregation in the employment of immigrants. Migrant workers have tended to have lower demands than Finns and have been perceived by employers as more willing to take up manual labour (Paananen, 1999). This observation corresponds to the finding that immigrants are most successfully recruited to jobs that require little or no training. Another problem for immigrant job-seekers is that foreign degrees have not been properly valued by employers, despite the fact that they are officially recognised (Joronen, 1997; Paananen, 1999; Forsander and Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2000).

The recruitment of immigrant graduates has been particularly problematic. Highly qualified immigrant experts have been frustrated by the fact that the jobs offered to them underutilise their education. Finns and foreigners are therefore drawn to different jobs in a dualistic labour market, resulting in some migrants being dissatisfied with their work, while others fail to find any suitable jobs. There is therefore a growing division between a small minority of immigrants who have a better 'Finnish' job and the great majority who end up with manual work.

METHODOLOGY

In order to research the problems facing immigrant workers, the Institute of Migration at Turku undertook a multi-method research project to establish a baseline survey of migrant vulnerabilities. The research involved analysis of existing secondary data and also a suite of primary research methods involving questionnaires and interviews. The most significant research instrument was a major questionnaire survey sent to people from the biggest immigrant groups (Russians and Estonians), longer established communities (Vietnamese), and immigrant communities with high levels of unemployment (Bosnia-Herzegovnians, Iraqis and Somalis). Finally, American and British migrants were included to represent groups with similar employment opportunities to the Finnish population. As Table 1 shows, there appears to be a

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Table 1. Sample structure and migrant unemployment rates by nationality (1999).

Nationality	Sample size	Number of respondents in the sample	% of all respondents	Population in Finland, 1999	Unemployment rate, 1999 (%)
Russian	250	141	46.8	17,909	57.2
Estonian	180	93	30.9	10,521	42.8
Bosnia-Herzegovnian	31	13	4.3	1,554	77.7
Iraqi	33	12	4.0	2,803	75.9
Somali	75	9	3.0	4,783	74.9
Vietnamese	30	10	3.3	1,869	69.9
American	30	14	4.7	2,034	15.3
British	30	9	3.0	2,115	17.3
Total	659	301	100.0	86,476	52.4

Source: Heikkilä and Jaakkola (2000), and Institute of Migration, Turku.

strong association between nationality and unemployment. Significant differences are evident between the different national groups.

This sample was selected from a well recognised sampling frame: the Finnish National Population Register, established in 1983. The sample was stratified in terms of nationality/former nationality and age (16–55 years). Table 1 shows the number of persons who returned the questionnaire. The immigrant questionnaire was followed up with some semi-structured interviews. The interviews were held in the home of the interviewee, at the workplace of the interviewer, or in some cases by telephone.

A survey of state-run recruitment and employment agencies was also undertaken. This consisted of 37 careers advisers from the five biggest cities (Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Turku and Vantaa) and one smaller city (Lappeenranta). Another strand of research was a small survey of companies and public service providers. The survey was posted to 50 organisations representing different sectors of activity. Most of them were located in the Helsinki conurbation (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen), Tampere, Turku or Lappeenranta. The survey was completed by 32 employers (a 64% response rate).

Clearly the methods described above offer some opportunities to interrogate the issues outlined in the introduction to the paper. Inevitably, however, the tools discussed above are more effective in providing evidence of the unequal opportunities facing migrants in Finland than they are in explaining the causes of these differences. Nevertheless, the research remains a very valuable first step in attempting to map the contours of mobile vulnerabilities in Finland, and hopefully it may stimulate other researchers to theorise and analyse in more detail the structural causes underlying the patterns revealed in this paper.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND FACTORS INFLUENCING MIGRANT RECRUITMENT

It is not hard to illustrate that migrants to Finland face major barriers to entering the labour market. These barriers are most evident in terms of the much higher unemployment rates experienced by immigrants.

In 1994 the unemployment rate of immigrants was three times higher than the rate for the population as a whole (Fig. 1). Since then unemployment has decreased but the relative difference between immigrants and others remains just as great. In 2004 immigrants were still three times as likely to be unemployed. Unemployment rates and the duration of unemployment are correlated. Those nationalities with high unemployment rates also have longer durations in unemployment. For example, in 2000, 47% of citizens from former Yugoslavia belonged to the long-term unemployed, and 29% to the short-term unemployed. The situation is the opposite for EU-citizens like the French (5% long-term unemployed, 16% short-term unemployed, and nearly 80% in full employment) (Heikkilä *et al*., 2004).

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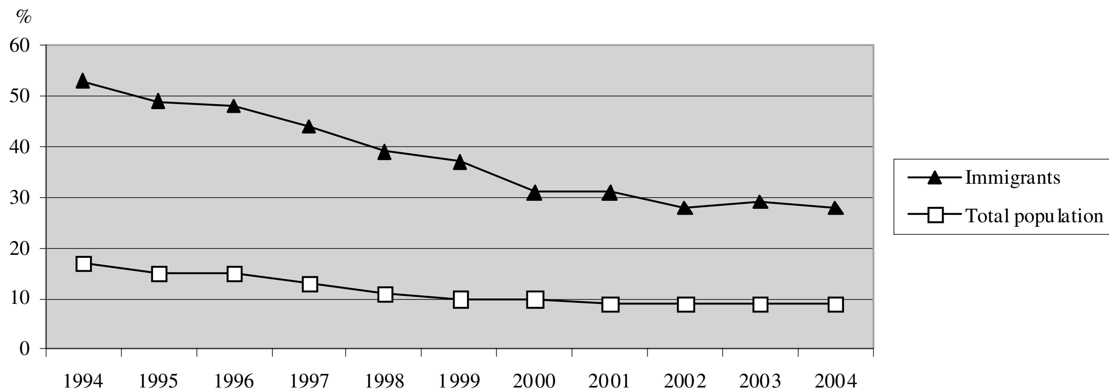

Figure 1. Unemployment rates in Finland for immigrants and the total population, 1994–2004.
Sources: Monitori (2002); Työministeriö (2005).

According to Jaakkola (2000) a dual system has also been developed in the recruitment of immigrants. The immigrants who succeed in finding work in Finland are college-educated Westerners, while those who have not succeeded usually come from the developing countries, possess little education and have little working experience. Refugees in particular suffer high unemployment rates and are out of work for longer periods of time than other migrants.

Although it does not necessarily explain their exclusion from Finnish society, it is interesting to note how migrants perceived their situation. The questionnaire survey of the Institute of Migration confirmed that they felt that the underlying high levels of unemployment in Finland was the single most important reason for them struggling to gain employment. Some 84% of immigrants saw this as the most important reason for them not getting a job. Russian respondents perceived the lack of language skills as a major barrier to recruitment, and also just being a foreigner. Almost 40% of Russians wanted more language training and a quarter wanted further training within their profession. By contrast, only 12% of Estonians wanted more language training, and less than 30% further vocational training.

Recognising the existence of these barriers, migrants admitted adopting a range of strategies to improve their opportunities. For example, one Estonian voiced the feelings of many when declaring: '*You should try to hide your real origin*' (25-year-old male, building engineer). The hiding of identity is a strategy noted by other researchers who have examined the responses of refugees to discrimination (Stewart, 2005). The migrant survey of the Institute of Migration confirmed that those who had got work identified having Finnish language skills as the single most important reason for their success (60% of all respondents). Three-quarters of Russians perceived language skills as the most important qualification in getting a job. Indeed, over 60% of Russians claimed they could speak Finnish and over 70% could read the language fairly well. The significance of language skills inevitably rose depending on the type of recruitment involved. For example, over 70% of the British and over 60% of the Americans were employed in the field of education, most of them as language teachers or translators, and were therefore able to use their native English in Finland. By contrast, on the one hand over 90% of Estonians could speak and write good Finnish, but took their language skills somewhat for granted in their self-assessment of work opportunities; while on the other hand Iraqis, Somalis and Vietnamese had poor Finnish language skills and felt disadvantaged as a result.

The survey of state-run recruitment and employment agencies is perhaps the most useful entry point to understanding why migrants face such difficulties gaining access to work in Finland. The agencies are a key link between employers and employees, organising interviews for job-seekers with potential employers. Employers are provided in advance with information about a job-seeker's professional background and their ethnicity. The personal

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background of a candidate was acknowledged to affect crucially the likelihood of getting a work placement for a migrant. The agencies confirmed that it was much easier to place Ingrian Finns, Estonians and Russians in jobs on account of the relative similarity of their cultural and religious background. This also increased their chances of integration. Most difficult to place were immigrants from outside Europe. Over 40% of recruitment and employment authorities reported difficulties finding work for Somalis. The equivalent figure for Arabs and Iranians was 30%. Not only were these groups seen as being more different in cultural terms, but respondents to the survey thought that migrants from these countries would have greater language and attitudinal problems.

According to the recruitment and employment agencies, prejudice amongst employers was the major barrier to the recruitment of immigrants. Prejudice was seen as being caused by fear as well as communication problems and cultural differences. Interviewees were reluctant to specify religion or colour of skin as the reasons for prejudice, claiming that recruitment procedures ensured that selection of successful candidates related to their professional know-how, which inevitably was facilitated by language skills and cultural awareness.

Turning to the survey amongst employers, it is interesting that they too tried to distance themselves from accusations of racial prejudice. Only 20% admitted to having enough understanding of immigration issues. Their perceptions were that courses tailored to help immigrants adjust to understanding relations in the workplace would be the best means to improve migrant employment opportunities. They claimed to offer permanent rather than temporary work to ethnic minorities, but admitted that once employed, few migrants progressed to reach management-level positions. Nearly 90% of employers reported that they had no migrants employed in management posts.

Employers preferred job applicants who had been trained in Finland in terms of their trade or professional skills. They were, however, willing to consider employing foreign staff with specialist skills that might not be available locally. Over 40% of employers specifically emphasised the need for Finnish language aptitude.

IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES IN THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET

Employment Transitions over Time

Aggregate flow data on immigrants were analysed by the author for the working-age population (16–74 years) for the years of 1996–97. The statistics were studied for nine local labour-market areas, representing three major cities (Helsinki, Turku and Tampere), three regional centres (Jyväskylä, Oulu and Rovaniemi) and three smaller centres (Rauma, Lohja and Kajaani) (Fig. 2). A local labour-market area includes a central municipality and the municipalities surrounding it from which at least 10% of the employees commute to the central municipality. The data from Statistics Finland were analysed to show the changes in the labour-market status of migrants during the first year after their arrival year in Finland.

The labour-market area of Helsinki was targeted by most working-age immigrants; two-thirds of them settled in Helsinki (Table 2), while the second most important destinations were Turku and Tampere. In general, the bigger the centre the more migrants it received. Only a third of immigrants in 1996 succeeded in being recruited by the end of 1997, but not all others were unemployed. The data shows large numbers of students and people outside the labour market, such as the spouses of migrant employees. On average, however, there was 20% unemployment. The unemployment rate was highest in Jyväskylä, where 30% of the immigrants were unemployed.

Around a quarter of migrants got work upon arrival in Finland in 1996. Only 87% of these were still employed at the end of the year 1997. Some lost their jobs and failed to get new work because of the social and cultural boundaries on recruitment discussed earlier. Others opted to become students or to become inactive.

Over a quarter of immigrants were unemployed when they arrived in Finland in 1996. In this group nearly a fifth had been recruited to a job by 1997 – a very low figure (Table 3). Half of this group continued as unemployed, and this was the case even in the larger labour markets of Helsinki and Tampere.

Not only do these statistics attest the vulnerability of migrants in gaining access to employ-

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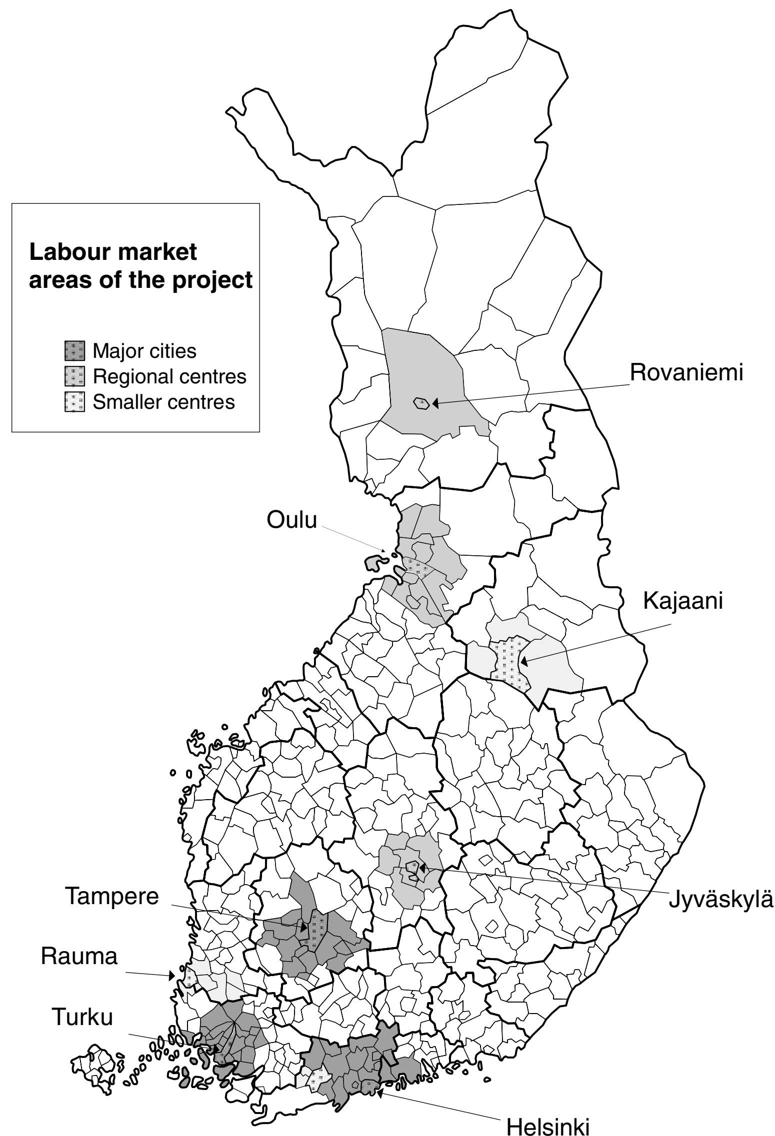

Figure 2. Labour market areas in the study in Finland.

ment and in keeping their jobs within the Finnish labour market, but the survey of the Institute of Migration showed that many other forms of discrimination applied within the labour market. Some 15% of interviewees complained about their wages being lower than for Finns doing the same work, while 20% reported unequal treatment by their fellow workers. This was manifested in terms of other staff not talking with immigrants or evading them, and with 70% of survey respondents feeling vulnerable because of being stared at by local employees.

Experiences of Employment and Unemployment

The survey of migrants provides significant detailed evidence of migrants' experiences in the Finnish labour market. Some 55% of people had held a professional post or had been employed in the fields of education, trade or administration in their home countries. Of the 168 persons who provided details of their current employment status, 44% were unemployed while 56% had been unemployed at least once during their time

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Table 2. Immigrants aged 16–74 years and their position in the Finnish labour market in 1997.

Labour-market area	Number of immigrants 1996	Employed 1997 (%)	Unemployed 1997 (%)	Students 1997 (%)	Others outside labour force 1997 (%)
Helsinki	4052	37.0	20.3	10.7	32.0
Turku	694	25.1	15.0	29.3	30.7
Tampere	605	32.1	24.3	16.9	26.7
Jyväskylä	251	22.7	30.7	13.9	32.7
Oulu	269	34.9	17.5	16.0	31.6
Rovaniemi	87	29.9	24.1	18.4	27.6
Rauma	49	26.5	22.5	10.2	40.8
Lohja	62	29.0	19.4	24.2	27.4
Kajaani	31	25.8	25.8	12.9	35.5
Total	6102	34.2	20.5	14.0	31.3

Source: Statistics Finland.

Table 3. Transitions into and out of employment: employed and unemployed migrants aged 16–74.

Employment status on arrival	Number 1996	Employed 1997 (%)	Unemployed 1997 (%)	Students 1997 (%)	Others outside labour force 1997 (%)
Unemployed 1996	1614	18.5	49.1	16.9	15.5
Employed 1996	1479	86.8	4.0	2.1	7.1

Source: Statistics Finland.

in Finland. Over a quarter had been unemployed for more than three years.

Insecurity of employment was reflected not only in high unemployment rates, but also in the temporariness of many jobs. A typical period of employment lasted for not more than 1–2 years. Some 40% of respondents had held their present job for less than a year. Only 30% (51 persons) had held their present job for more than three years, although over half of employees claimed to have a permanent job.

The unstable labour-market position of the immigrants meant therefore they felt extremely vulnerable to labour-market fluctuations in relation to economic trends and to structural changes in production. Immigrants were over-represented in the segment of the workforce who were the last to be hired and the first to be fired during economic cycles of boom and depression. This confirms Pierson's (1999: 85) views that migrant labour acts as a reserve pool of labour taken up in times of heightened economic activity and laid off in periods of economic recession. The risk of being marginalised in the labour market also seems to affect second-generation migrants, since the cultural divides of vulnerability impact on the children of migrants through their socially inherited characteristics (Työministeriö, 1995; Forsander, 2003).

CONCLUSION

In terms of vulnerability, the sphere of employment of a migrant is central to discussion of their inclusion or exclusion in a host society, since it is through work that people earn money and gain status and a sense of job satisfaction. Employment can be said to be a crucial part of integration into wider society (Carter, 2003: 9). It is for this reason that this paper has examined the ways in which immigrants may be vulnerable in the Finnish labour market. In concluding, we now ask whether the results contribute to our understanding of the theories of vulnerability introduced earlier in the paper.

In terms of labelling theory, there seems clear evidence from the Finnish case of 'othering' taking place. In the Finnish labour market, it

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appears that recruiters feel closer to those immigrants who have cultural proximity to Finnish culture. Those immigrants who were labelled as most distant faced the greatest difficulties in finding a job, and thus they were more vulnerable than those with cultural proximity. Recruitment and employment agencies mentioned that Ingrian Finns, Estonians and Russians were the best employees, while immigrants from outside Europe were difficult to place. A fear of 'difference' as well as language problems meant that migrants from developing countries faced particularly acute problems in entering the labour market.

According to segmentation theory there is a dualism in the labour market, and this was certainly observed in Finland. The research revealed firstly that there are certain jobs for natives and 'other' jobs for immigrants. Secondly, it can be argued that there also exists a dualism within the immigrant labour market – a double dualism. The immigrants who succeeded in finding work were usually college-educated Westerners, while those who did not succeed usually came from the developing countries. It can be further pointed out that there seems thus to be a hierarchisation in occupational integration on the basis of immigrants' nationalities. The process results in a waste of human resources, with some immigrants with a good education only able to get menial service sector jobs in cleaning, hotel work and the restaurant sector.

Discrimination and segmentation theory may also help to explain why migrants face very insecure employment prospects, with the most vulnerable groups in terms of high levels of unemployment also being the ones most likely to gain only short-term or part-time posts. Thus immigrants remain vulnerable in the workplace even after getting a job, and this phenomenon can be described as social closure. Fellow workers may avoid contact with them and treat them like 'others'. According to theories of discrimination, this type of treatment can be classified as both direct and indirect discrimination. The immigrants were, however, a little bit cautious to talk about discrimination cases and reluctant to criticise their local work conditions.

Given the vulnerability of mobile populations, it is good that legislation has been introduced in Finland to curb discrimination and to strengthen the rights of immigrants. In Finland, a new integration law was passed in May 1999 giving a more active role to immigrants in planning their own life in society. The objective of this Act (Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers) was to promote the integration, equality and freedom of choice of immigrants through measures which help them to acquire the knowledge and skills required in Finnish society to participate in a full working life. It also sought to ensure that they could enjoy a basic livelihood and have access to social welfare. Furthermore, the law simultaneously aimed to preserve native languages and the ethnic and cultural features of immigrants (Heikkilä and Peltonen, 2002). The law has been in effect for over six years, but inevitably many problems still exist in the labour market.

There has been discussion recently on whether Finland should now actively recruit more labour from abroad in order to avoid skill shortages in the near future. The key principles of the government's immigration and refugee programmes remain openness, internationality, human rights, good management and legal security on the one hand, and preventing illegal immigration on the other. However, achievement of such laudable principles depends above all on promoting flexible and efficient integration of all immigrants into Finnish society as the primary goal of immigration policy (Ministry of the Interior, 2003). Finland has taken the first few steps towards a multicultural society, but there is still much work to do to overcome the prejudices and barriers that make migrants vulnerable to forces favouring the social and economic exclusion of foreigners.

To summarise, engagement with the labour market represents an essential first step in the process of integrating immigrants into a host-country society. Labour-market entry begins with emergence from inactivity, which seems to be difficult for immigrants in many OECD countries. Foreigners tend to have multiple handicaps like lower education levels, more extended family structures and less working experience. These factors can only partially explain their disadvantage in the labour market, with the much more fundamental problems remaining those associated with discriminatory practices linked to ethnic and cultural prejudices. Discrimination remains a major issue at all stages of the integration process. Governments could move

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things forward faster by admitting that such discrimination exists, and by establishing a proper legal framework for combating it (Sopemi, 2005: 84).

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