POLITICAL BELONGING AND FANTASIES OF INCLUSION.
ROMANIANS IN LONDON AND PARIS

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Abstract: This article analyses from a bottom-up perspective Romanians' complex emotions surrounding their reasoning for applying for a French or British passport. It illustrates the extent to which interviewees' fantasies of inclusion in the host countries are thought to be dependent on the political membership of the country of residence. It is argued that British/French naturalisation is perceived as a status enhancer, allowing the interviewees to overcome the marginalisation associated with their Romanian nationality.

Keywords: Inclusion, Exclusion, Political Belonging, Romanian Migrants.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although people are considered to be more mobile than ever, with the total number of international migrants reaching 244 million in 2015 (UN 2016), they are not always free to travel or to move to the countries of their choosing. The right to enter the territory of a different country is dependent on a conditional authorisation granted by the receiving country. A visa is "a pre-emptive check on the bona fides of a pending visitor to a country, allowing the government of that country to check the background, means, itinerary and reasons for visiting" (Whyte 2008:135). Visa-free access is granted mostly to wealthy, democratic and Western countries, while poor countries are less likely to enjoy the privilege of free travel. As such, the nationality on the passport brings a lower or greater freedom of movement. Countries are thus capable of regulating the flow of people through a system of visas and passports (Wang 2004, McMahon 2012).

In the European Union (EU), Romanian nationals theoretically would have no longer been required to hold visas for working in the EU free movement space starting from 2007. Nevertheless, transitional measures were put in place in 15 member

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countries (amongst which were France and Britain), aimed at balancing the flows of Eastern Europeans seeking work in Western Europe. Referring to the case of Romanians in Italy, McMahon (2012:211) states that "Union citizenship has not resulted in equality, as labour market access remains limited and the political rights of Italians and Romanians are quite distinct". This article is not interested in the pathways to membership from a political perspective (nationality law). Rather, its objective is to illustrate the extent to which Romanians' fantasies of socio-cultural integration in the host countries are thought to be dependent on the political membership of the country of residence. As such, it analyses from a bottom-up perspective Romanians' complex emotions surrounding their reasoning for applying for a French or British passport. This provides useful insights into their everyday lives in the host countries and their attachment to the country of residence. It is argued that the Romanian participants, which this study was based on, attribute characteristics associated with offsetting marginalisation to a foreign passport, with the aim of feeling part of the 'social fabric' of the host country.

As such, this paper first explores the theoretical framework underpinning this research, namely the concepts of socio-cultural integration, inclusion and exclusion, social relations and citizenship. It then outlines the methodological challenges encountered in the field. It then The third section investigates the characteristics of Romanian migration to Western Europe. Lastly, the role of a British/French passport in overcoming various forms of marginalisation is explored.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND ASPIRATIONS OF NATURALISATION.

The concept of integration has been heavily debated in literature (see for example Wieviorka 2014). Favell (2008, 2013) questions the notion of integration, which, he argues, relies on "a conception of a bounded national society that can be defined by its more or less inclusive rules of membership, but which also for functional reasons, imposes social closure to non-members and demands a certain socialisation – bluntly put, a nationalisation – of the (new) insider population" (Favell 2013:3). He asks whether it is still a relevant concept to use in present times, on the basis of the diversity of populations, but also the internationally mobile and high-skilled intra-EU citizens, who are not seen or do not perceive themselves as immigrants, but as expatriates or free movers (Favell 2008). Nevertheless, he agrees that the differentiated citizenship amongst the economically successful EU free movers distinguishes between Western Europeans, and "Poles, Romanians, even Turks [who] may one day feel and be treated as simple mobile European citizens, not immigrants. For the time being, only the Westerners can hope to enjoy this degree of invisibility and spatial flexibility" (Favell 2008:103). In other words, it may be that for Romanians, who, at the time of the research were not yet 'free movers' in all respects, the concept of integration may still be relevant, due to their status as 'othered' immigrants.

Scholars (see Engbersen 2003 for an overview) generally distinguish between two forms of integration; structural integration and socio-cultural integration. While the former refers to immigrants' participation in social institutions, the latter is described as the socio-cultural contacts immigrants maintain with the host society. This paper is interested in Romanians' motivations for naturalisation in the host country. It is argued that the reasoning behind the application for host country citizenships is represented by the desire to have access to socio-political, legal and economic equal rights, an equality which they perceive as enabling them to be positioned as socio-culturally integrated into the host country. Socio-cultural integration is defined as "the social and cultural distance between ethnic minorities and the indigenous majority" (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007:806). The elements of socio-cultural integration significant for this study take place in migrants' daily lives in the host country, and refer to their daily experiences in the city they live in, elements which bring to the participants' attention their marginalisation.

Often, immigrants leave the country of origin because of expectations of better opportunities in the host country. The first years in the destination country are of high importance for migrants' integration process. Individuals reliant on better life chances in the host country might be desirous to settle. In the process, they are likely to develop their language skills and interact with the members of the receiving context, obtain a job and might develop a sense of attachment to the new country. Many immigrants arrive in the new country with high levels of optimism and expectations, the so called "immigrant optimism" (Kao and Tienda 1995). However, while immigrants may feel accepted and included in the mainstream, many of them will experience exclusion which may shape their reality, taking the form of social and affective distance from the mainstream.

Molles (2013) distinguishes between four dynamics which are to be found in the construction of inclusion and exclusion in Western Europe: an economic-rational; a social network; a political-institutional logic and identity politics reasoning. Since the sphere of work is considered the crucial instrument for integration, the economic approach suggests that immigrants are accepted into the destination country when they provide cheap labour in areas where native workers are not likely to show their interest (Piore 1979). Similarly, Logan, et al. (2002) state that "studies of European immigrant groups have long emphasised the importance of occupational niches in which newcomers could find ready, if poorly paid, employment in businesses run by their compatriots". However, they are often excluded when they compete with the members of the mainstream for welfare benefits and jobs which are desirable to the nationals.

According to the social network approach, inclusion of immigrants into the destination country happens when migrants are part of networks between the country of origin and the host country, as well as institutions in the receiving state which facilitate the migration and integration of the new arrivals (Faist 2000). However, when immigrants rely on employment within their own ethnic groups, work can become exclusionary and can engender social isolation rather than social integration (Engbersen 2003:6), and can reduce incentives for investments in host country language acquisition.

The political-institutional approach refers to the nature of the political context of the host country. While immigrants are likely to feel excluded from contexts where anti-immigration parties prevail, they are usually included in states which display left wing immigration policies. Both France and Britain have popular extreme right wing parties, yet the electoral agendas are somewhat different. The United Kingdom Independence Party's manifesto has been centred on Britain leaving the EU in order to be able to manage its influx of immigrants (most recently Romanians and Bulgarians). The French Front National has been promoting a similar desire for France to leave the EU in order to boost France's power internationally. Although immigration is at the core of the protectionist and populist political agenda of Front National, reducing African immigration rather than European to France has been the priority.

The fourth approach is concerned with symbolical elements regarding inclusion and exclusion, such as identity politics and the marginalisation of immigrants on the basis of cultural distance (see Molles 2013:4). This often occurs at a local level, during social interactions between the nationals and the non-nationals, when non-citizens experience inclusion and/or exclusion. Nevertheless, the literature is mainly concerned with the incorporation of immigrants by the state itself, as well as supranational entities such as the EU which produces the Other (see Castles and Miller 2009, Geddes 1998).

The nature of social relations reflects the tensions which may exist between and inside groups and which translate into immigrants' inclusion and exclusion and thus influence their allegiances towards the receiving society. In line with other scholars (see Wilson 2011, Neal and Vincent 2013), this article emphasises the need to acknowledge the everyday as the locus where differences are negotiated. As Hemming (2011:65) suggests, the idea of 'encounter' refers to "how citizens can learn to live with cultural difference by showing civility to the others". However, Valentine (2008:329) warns that although individuals may behave with civility in public areas, they may still express prejudice in the space of their own homes, as "urban etiquette does not equate with an ethics of care and mutual respect for difference".

Similarly, more recently, in her fieldwork in Hackney, Wessendorf (2013:418, 2014) found that although people mix in public and associational spaces, this is not accompanied by social mixing in the private realm, where only people with similar life styles, cultural values, backgrounds and attitudes mingle. She shows that despite the potential of passing encounters to enhance intercultural understanding, their absence leads to negative attitudes towards those who exclude themselves from participation in local life. This is also shared by Fonseca et al. (2013), who reported that in Lisbon, there is a high level of public interaction, but an absence of home visits among the residents. Wilson (2011:646) tells that intercultural encounters can "solidify prejudices and antagonisms as much as it can weaken them", but she notes that encounters are still significant as they "might produce something closer to recognition than it can to consensus and understanding". As such, differences are tolerated rather than cherished. In the context of East-West migration, the connection between encounters and hostile attitudes towards immigrants is starting to gain growing attention (see Fox 2013, Parutis 2011).

This may indicate that a British/French passport might assist in interviewees' journey towards socio-cultural integration in the mainstream. The rules migrants need to comply with in order to become citizens of the country they live, or even to work, are referred to as 'politics of belonging' by Yuval-Davis (2011). They are situated temporally in the sense that political developments affect the politics of belonging; spatially reflecting the fact that their effects are heterogeneous; and finally intersectionally, as they affect different people in different ways (Yuval-Davis 2006). Through an exercise of power, the politics of belonging classify people into those who are excluded from full membership and those who are allowed to become full members of the society according to their gender/ethnicity/class. The politics of belonging thus include and exclude citizens in order to make sure that only those 'eligible' can enter someone else's home.

Citizenship is a set of practices (cultural, symbolical and economic) and both rights and duties, such as civil, political and social, which define peoples' membership in a polity (Isin and Wood 1999:4). Joppke distinguishes between three aspects of citizenship: citizenship as status, which refers to membership in a state, citizenship as rights, which is about the capacities and immunities linked to such status, and citizenship as identity, "which refers to the behavioural aspects of individuals acting and conceiving of themselves as members of a collectivity, classically the nation, or the normative conceptions of such behaviour imputed by the state" (Joppke 2007: 38). He goes on to explain that citizenship as identity addresses the unity and integration of society (ibid.). It refers to the official views of the state as well as the views held by ordinary people (*ibid.:*44).

Immigration challenges the concept of citizenship and of national identity, as the newcomers are not perceived as belonging to the host nation-state due to their unwillingness to integrate into the larger society (Clarke et al. 1998:46) and the challenge they pose to national identity, which is perceived as a set of characteristics attributed to individuals who share the same cultural and ethnic characteristics. Consequently, they are exposed to unequal treatment by the mainstream and are subject to exclusion. Citizenship becomes a form of social closure, which restricts the participants of certain non-citizens (McMahon 2012:2012).

It is therefore understandable why immigrants may want to become naturalised: mainly to avoid the constraints associated with their own citizenship (see Jansen 2009) from a visa-free travel perspective, or to enjoy the bundle of rights associated with membership in the host country. Literature examining dual citizenship is fairly recent, as the possession of two passports has only been recognised in the past 20 years (Skulte-Ouaiss 2013). Indeed, Joppke argued (2007:44) that "[w]hat ordinary people associate with citizenship is one of the biggest lacunae in the literature". This is also shared by Szewczyk (2014), who admits that there is still no information regarding the reasons why people acquire citizenship. In academic research, migrants' perspectives of multiple citizenship are generally omitted (with a few exceptions, such as Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006, Harpaz 2013 and Byrne 2014).

Indeed, the meaning of citizenship and of passports, are analysed in current literature using a top-down approach, as a classifying device within the hierarchy of mobility, or as a theoretical concept in international mobility (Torpey 2001, Macklin 2007). In her study on Israelis with a European passport, Harpaz (2013) argues that the second nationality is better defined by the notion of "passport citizenship" which points to its understanding as private property. He explains that while the Israeli nationality retains individuals' identity, the second citizenship is seen as "just a passport" which can improve the family's livelihoods by securing economic and political privileges due to visa-free mobility. Also, the European passport is seen as prestigious through its power to exclude the Israelis who do not own one. Therefore, "the European passport serves as a portable status symbol that allows them to reproduce Israeli ethno-class hierarchy abroad and experience it as a justified part of a global European-dominated hierarchy" (Harpaz 2013:192). Nevertheless, Harpaz does not explain how different European passports are perceived by their Israelis possessors. Rather, she considers Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Czech, Austrian, Hungarian, Polish and German passports as having an identical value in the eyes of their new possessors.

Amongst Romanians in London and Paris there is a variety of reasons for applying for a passport. Whilst some participants may take up British or French nationality in a desire to feel more integrated into the host context, others see it from a more practical angle, such as a visa-waver passport.

III. RESEARCHING ROMANIANS IN LONDON AND PARIS.

The study was based on empirical research undertaken in order to explore, understand and interpret Romanians' daily experiences in London and Paris. It is explanatory, built on participants' feelings, perceptions and lived experiences. The comparative nature of the study resides in its focus on Romanians' everyday lives in two socio-cultural contexts. This sheds light on the relations and differences between these locations and on the variations in migrants' lived experiences revealing belonging.

This research draws on the multiple lived experiences of 64 Romanian participants as well as the insights of 12 informants, who give accounts about their interpretations of the social reality they inhabit during qualitative semi-structured interviews in London and Paris as well as follow up Facebook chats. It addresses the relational and context-specific nature of identities, as well as their construction and negotiation socially (Gunaratnam 2003:21). It examines how social categories are constructed cross-culturally and how they affect Romanians' relationship with their social worlds. Their identities are produced and reproduced through everyday processes which alter the relationship the individuals have with the society.

The data collection and analysis lend themselves to phenomenological inquiry, which acknowledges that social reality is the product of individuals' understandings and interpretation of it. The phenomenological approach suggests that phenomena can only be understood in their deepest form and consequently recounted and interpreted by

having access to the subjective perspectives of those who have lived them (Merleau-Ponty 1945). This perspective aims to understand the worlds Romanian participants live in and their lived experiences by focusing on the meanings they ascribe to these experiences. Their everyday experiences as immigrants are understood as the phenomenon this study seeks to understand and interpret.

The London-based part of the fieldwork took place between September and November 2013, a period of tabloid media and political frenzy regarding the potential arrival on British soil of large numbers of Romanians (and Bulgarians). At the time of the fieldwork, Romanian workers in Britain needed right to work documents. In London, 25 participants (12 men and 13 women) were interviewed, holding various positions ranging from cleaners and builders to engineers. Additionally, interviews were conducted with six key informants (an Adventist pastor, an Orthodox priest and four key informants actively involved in the community). Both in London and Paris multiple individual and group informal conversations were had during social, educational and political events attended. The fieldwork in Paris occurred from February to May 2015, after the removal of restrictions to the labour market for Romanian nationals. The temporal and spatial dimensions allowed the ability to 'follow' migrants' lives before, during and after the changes in immigration policy, which sheds light on differences and similarities in their lived experiences. The lifting of restrictions, together with less aggressive media coverage in France regarding Romanians' activities and a more successful snowballing effect may explain the smooth nature of participant recruitment.

The interviews aimed to access Romanians' migratory experiences, the meanings they attribute to these (see Lindseth and Norberg 2004) and how they affect their daily realities. Elements of the social can be explored by listening to, interpreting and gathering knowledge from the participants (Mason 2002). The interview encounter offered the possibility to analyse participants' social cues in order to validate the accuracy of the discourse. Nevertheless, this did not come without its challenges, due to my positionality as an insider researcher. My insider identity, that of holding the same membership as the population studied, negatively affected the way I was perceived when I entered the field. My Romanian nationality, as a researcher was often associated with Romanian institutions and thus generated mistrust amongst the participants. However, my outsider identification reflected by my Western education allowed me to negotiate my positioning and be perceived as an 'insider from afar'. On many occasions, I had to emphasise my non-affiliations with Romania and my Western credentials in order to dwindle peoples' mistrust. I do not pretend that I was seen as an insider into the Romanian community, but rather I worked my way into the community. Due to the combined identity I was finally attributed, I was perceived as the product of both the East and West and thus trustworthy, fair and reliable, characteristics associated with the West, but also empathetic, correlated with my Romanian side.

As a researcher, my aim was to understand my participants' social worlds by giving them voice to express their perceptions, feelings and lived experiences (Guest et al. 2012) and describe and interpret their social lives using the theories available. Data is constituted from the meanings the participants attribute to their lifeworlds. Data analysis

was performed applying the hermeneutic cycle, which consists of three stages: reading of the participants' testimonials, engagement in reflective writing of the lived experience of human experience and finally interpreting the data (van Manen 2007). Epistemologically, hermeneutic phenomenological research acknowledges that new meaning is created through subjective experiences and research, with the new knowledge produced being subjective (Kafle 2013:194). The data analysis process combined two approaches. From a technical perspective, thematic analysis was used in order to organise the data. Within an initial phase of data analysis, the transcripts were examined, in order to highlight important quotes which shed light on participants' experiences of social encounters and belonging (Creswell 2007). Then, the data from the textual data-sets was interpreted and themes were identified. The themes were organised using inductive reasoning which aims "to establish limited generalisations about the distribution of, and patterns of association amongst observed or measured characteristics of individuals and social phenomena" (Blaikie 2010). In parallel, academic articles about the overarching themes were read in order to engage with the perspectives from the literature.

Lastly, connections and similarities between the themes, as well as patterns, and differences were identified and labelled and led to the development of a table comprising the themes and associated quotes/extracts from the interviews under labels which were connected to participants' socio-economic demographics such as gender, age, employment type, temporal dimensions. This analytical process involved the 'fleshing-out' of interviews in order to identify examples, which reflected the themes identified (Chaitin et al. 2009). During this stage, the lived experiences of participants were analysed. Then, the table was put in a larger cultural, social and theoretical context in order to provide a conceptual framework for personal stories about participants' worlds (Larkin et al. 2006).Thematic analysis was therefore useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within the interviews (Guest et al. 2012).

The second approach consisted of the interpretation of the data from a phenomenological stance in order to generate knowledge about lived experiences of the everyday from the perspective of the individual. The ontological assumption was that the process of understanding participants' social worlds is itself subject to my own interpretation of their social world. Therefore, this study engages in a double interpretation of the social world. Firstly, the interviewees' testimonials represent an interpretation of the everyday which is shaped by daily encounters. Secondly, participants' social meanings are once again interpreted from my own point of view in order to de-code and analyse them. This implies that my own interpretation of participants' accounts contributed to and shaped data organisation and analysis. I was immersed in the social worlds of the participants and was part of the knowledge production through constant reflections on the data I was analysing. The data collection and analysis thus rested on an ongoing interaction between myself and the participants' testimonials in order to generate new theories based on new perspectives of the participants' lifeworlds. In parallel, knowledge is modified through the act of analysing participants' understandings of their social worlds. Thus, ontological considerations come first, followed by epistemological and methodological approaches (de Gialdino

2009 paragraph 53). New ways of knowledge production rely on understanding the social position of the interviewee (gender, age, status etc.) followed by connecting their identities to the emergent concepts.

IV. ROMANIAN EMIGRATION TO LONDON AND PARIS.

Romanians are part of a new cohort of migrants in the EU as they only started to emigrate to EU countries after the fall of the communism in 1989. Before, only ethnic minorities (mainly Germans and Hungarians) were allowed to leave the country. However, it was only in 2007 that the numbers of Romanians in other EU countries (mainly Spain and Italy) significantly increased, as Romania joined the EU, which guaranteed free movement within the EU. They then became the 'new Europeans' (Favell 2008, McDowell 2009), alongside Bulgarians and the Accession 8 countries which joined the EU in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia).

The current estimates for the number of Romanians living in Western Europe is over two million people. Worldwide, it is estimated that there are 10 million individuals, taking into account the Romanians who emigrated between the two wars and during the communist regime. In total, a third of Romanians live outside of Romania (Trandafoiu 2013:7), and the figures are likely to have increased since 2013. Moreover, one third of Romanians living in Romania at the moment have worked outside of the nation-state at one point in their life and over 40% of those consider re-emigrating (Sandu 2010).

While most of the literature on discrimination has focused on non-European immigrants in Europe, there is starting to be a large body of literature focusing on discrimination of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe (Scheibner and Morrison 2009) more generally, and Romanians in Europe (see Fox et al. 2012, Moroşanu and Fox 2013, McMahon 2016), more particularly. This latter point is one also made in Gijsberts and McGinnity (2012)'s paper, but from the perspective of the destination country responses to new migrants. Their paper stresses the need to acknowledge the extensive racialisation of white minorities following EU enlargement. European intra-EU migrants have traditionally been considered 'unproblematic' in much of the previous literature due to the tendency of white migrants to assimilate rapidly and often to represent privileged migration flows. However, there is now an increasing recognition of the ways in which Eastern European migrants are 'othered' and distinguished as 'culturally' problematic in national discourses (McDowell 2009).

Romanians from London have faced negative press mainly attributed to the marginality and precariousness of those leaving the country of origin and heading to Spain and Italy (but also France and Britain) have displayed (McMahnon 2012), as well as various activities such as begging, prostitution and pick-pocketing (Tesăr 2011). Fox (2012) argues that Romanians have been subject of negative reviews mainly due to the unexpected large numbers of Poles in Britain, which triggered unease amongst the British public regarding the potential numbers of new migrants. They have recently

occupied a central place in the British media. Between autumn 2013 and spring 2014 there were daily articles in the (mainly tabloid) press, focusing on the 'massive influx' of Romanians (and of Bulgarians) to the UK and their portrayal as criminals and Gypsies (Vicol and Allan 2014).

The French press is rather contrasting, publishing articles on Roma deportations back to Romania as well as on Romanian cultural aspects such as the film and literary scenes. Interestingly, Romanians' hostile portrayal in the French media is of a cultural nature (with focus on the Roma), while in the British media the focus has been rather on the economic nature of immigration. These hostile representations of Romanians as 'failed citizens' (Anderson 2013) of either a cultural or economic nature, have made the Romanian population visible in France and Britain. Quite often, the anonymous/invisible Romanian majority, the 'good citizens' (ibid.) has been thought of as meeting the same characteristics as the visible part of Romanian population.

Moreover, the deportation of Romanians citizens from France (but also Italy) shows that Romanian nationals are not treated equally, and highlights "the presence of a border between the two countries, distinguishing between those who belong on each side" (McMahon 2012:211) Deportation defines the legal and normative dimension of the political community as it is only applied to those individuals who are seen as not good enough to become a citizen of the country of residence. As Anderson et al (2011:555) argue, [m]aking an individual subject to deportation is a way of demonstrating that an individual is *not* a citizen - one whose membership and presence is unconditional. But deportation may also construct individuals as *unfit* for citizenship, as not living up to its normative requirements". Thus, the deportee is denied residence in the host context and membership of the political community. Consequently, the rules underpinning the migration of Romanians to Western Europe determine their positionality towards the sending and receiving country.

V. ACHIEVING SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION THROUGH POLITICAL BELONGING.

The Directive 38 (European Parliament and Council Directive 2004/38/EC) reads:

"In accordance with the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality, all Union citizens and their family members residing in a Member State on the basis of this Directive should enjoy, in that Member State, equal treatment with nationals in areas covered by the Treaty, subject to such specific provisions as are expressly provided for in the Treaty and secondary law."

In theory, all European citizens enjoy similar rights conferred to them by being citizens of states which are members of the EU, however some citizens are seen as enjoying these rights more than others. The effectiveness of European citizenship in ensuring equality between citizens is therefore questioned, as it has resulted in a

distinction between citizens and non-citizens which is still maintained, despite it being against EU law (see McMahnon 2012 for a legal analysis of this regarding Romanians in Italy). For Romanians, political membership of the host country is imagined as translating into European membership which they are excluded from on the basis of their Romanian nationality (see also Byrne 2012:536). As such, a French/British passport is not only imagined as a tool which allows the interviewees to overcome various forms of discrimination, but also, implicitly, to achieve equality during encounters with the members of the mainstream and consequently achieve socio-cultural integration.

Many respondents saw the acquisition of host country citizenship as a way to mitigate the effects of discrimination, as a pathway to inclusion in the French/British space. As such, it was not the outcome of life satisfaction in the host context (as Massey and Redstone 2006) found, but rather the trigger of low life satisfaction and the belief that their lives could noticeably improve if they became naturalised French.

While passports can be associated with a feeling of belonging and loyalty to the state that issues them, they can also have a political dimension, due to their capacity to define peoples' statuses based on the country of issue.

V.1. Legal discrimination

Taking the Romanians case, many participants have argued that a Western European passport gives them more confidence and a feeling of safety, especially in moments of high vulnerability, such as border crossing.

On the one hand, they have practical benefits such as visa-free access to a large number of countries, which facilitates international mobility. Not all passports guarantee the right to international mobility. Often, mobility is "encouraged for passport holders from privileged nations, particularly rich Western countries, at the expense of severe restrictions for others" (Neumayer 2006:2). On the other hand, they reveal symbolical advantages, such as social status enhancer, when stigmatised groups adopt a less stigmatised identity.

At the time of conducting the fieldwork, Romanian nationals enjoyed freedom of movement to both France and Britain. Nevertheless, many participants recall negative treatment by the case workers in charge of their visa application prior to 2007, when Romania joined the EU. Such is the case of Emma, who describes the humiliation she experienced in Bucharest during the visa application process to visit her Romanian husband in London:

> *I had a very bad experience at the embassy, or whatever it was, British consulate, when I went to collect my documents, (…) because they asked me to bring along photos to demonstrate that I am married to [her husband], and I came with some photos… I did not have very many with the two of us (…). And I had many from the wedding. And the lady from*

> *the counter told me that [these photos] do not demonstrate anything. I felt like a second class citizen. (...) I left and I started to cry, I thought I would not get [the visa] and I felt humiliated. How can I demonstrate it? I have all the rights to go see my husband!*

The precariousness which resulted in Emma's understanding of her persona as being a second class citizen is experienced politically, through the difficulty in obtaining the documents necessary for travel. Her human right to family reunion was undermined by British immigration procedures, which might have forced her to live in a state of emotional dislocation.

The socio-cultural and political attributes of the host country passport, which translate into Romanians' ability to surmount the challenges associated with their second-class citizenship, was an opinion held by numerous participants.

Likewise, Adina from Paris explains how whilst on holiday in Prague with a French friend, they took the shuttle from the airport without having a valid ticket. Unluckily, a few stops later, a ticket inspector apprehended and fined them. When Adina handed her Romanian ID, she felt that inspector's facial expression betrayed his hunch that she had to be Romanian since she had not respected the law, by not holding a bus ticket:

> *And when he saw that it is a Romanian passport, I can't tell you the face he had, I mean... That's what I mean, talking about barriers... I was in Prague, in the Czech Republic... When he saw [the ID], it was as if [he said] "It makes sense, I was expecting you to be Romanian", you know? (smiles)*

The quote highlights a two class system. In this context, Romanian nationality becomes ascribed and seems to determine her daily interactions.

Consequently, this caused her to regard a French identity card as beneficial: "it is better when you show them a French ID than a … [Romanian ID]". This belief held with confidence is shared by numerous participants. For example, an Orthodox priest interviewed in London, who claimed that as possessors of a British passport, Romanians "gain a bit of trust in front of the British [and] you are not subjected to a shakedown at the Romanian/Hungarian border". These examples point to the transnational dimension of Western citizenship, which becomes a prerequisite for equality outside of the host polity which allocates citizenship. Indeed, despite Adina having the work permits necessary to live and work in the host country, the necessity of a foreign passport is explained by the protection the second passport offers to its citizens found outside the national borders. Most participants considered that a French or British passport would allow them to be less likely to be regarded with suspicion. Daily lived experiences influence their projections of political belonging to the host country and country of origin.

V.2. Economic discrimination

The importance of host country citizenship is also emphasised in terms of building a life in the host country, which often starts with employment and a stable home. Teodora, who works as a nanny in Paris without a work permit, and despite holding a university degree in tourism, argues that both her and her husband consider the acquisition of a French passport necessary to build a viable future in France:

[T]o have more rights, not because we feel discriminated against. For example, when it comes to a mortgage, it would maybe make it easier... or maybe to find a job... maybe it is only in my mind or maybe it does help... [Maybe] we delude ourselves that we would have more rights as French citizens (...). I know Romanians who got mortgages and they do not have French citizenship, but I think you have more credibility if you are a [French] citizen.

As a French passport holder, Teodora thinks she would be able to overcome the barriers erected by the precariousness of her Romanian nationality in the labour and housing market. Precariousness is experienced through the perceived denial of "spatial security rights" (Yuval-Davis 2011:57), which prevent immigrants from easily planning a future in neoliberal times characterised by both the erection of boundaries between citizens and non-citizens and the control of peoples' intimate lives. Access to the housing and employment market is, in theory, open to Romanian citizens on the basis of their citizenship of the EU. However, due to unfavourable everyday experiences in France caused by unfulfilled professional expectations and discrimination, the respondent does not see herself equal in front of the law, and thus not entitled to the rights conferred by her European citizenship. This correlation is not counterintuitive.

Indeed, Beatrice who works as accountant for a London-based loan company, indicated that Romanians can easily be refused a mortgage application on the basis of their nationality, as often it comes jointly with a low credit score and an undesirable previous housing location. Precariousness thus becomes proxy for Romanian nationality, which does not allow the participants to attain administrative invisibility in the eyes of French and British officials. This provides some explanation as to why a Western passport becomes a means for gaining access to material resources in the host country, resources which are allocated on the basis of nationality.

Both home ownership and employment are to be read as having an impeding consequence on immigrants' behaviour. Home ownership, perhaps even more than employment, creates a social tie to the place individuals are located in, especially since it becomes a long term commitment due to the financial investment (such as a mortgage), and is thus filled with a sense of hope for a safe future in France (see for a similar argument Hage 1998:103, Taylor 2009). Home owners are thus less likely to consider leaving the host country than tenants (Helderman et al. 2006).

However, due to unfavourable everyday experiences in France caused by unfulfilled professional expectations and discrimination, she does not see herself as equal in front of the law.

V.3. Socio-political discrimination

Nationality is often seen as reflecting the belonging to the political community of the country which issues it. It is enacted through social, political, cultural entitlements. In other words, it entitles its possessor to recognition in the host country as the next quote shows:

> *"Even if you get [French] citizenship, you won't be considered fully fledged French... They will always have, even if they trust you, a thing, 'you are not French after all'. (…) But if I have decided to have my life here, at the end of the day you have to vote in this country, you need citizenship in order to vote (…). Since I want to remain here… I will certainly need it, because if I don't take it, I will always feel like a tourist. [owning a French passport will make me] feel more integrated (…) and it will certainly facilitate many things. (…) I feel that I am perceived differently because I am not French, or maybe it is all in my imagination. But maybe when I get the citizenship it will disappear. (…) I have decided to stay here and not return to Romania, I think I need to do everything all the way through, inclusively taking the citizenship. It can help facilitate some stuff."*

Interestingly, while the interviewees from London point to their onomastic and linguistic markers, such as a foreign name and accent, which prevents them from fully feeling accepted in the British society as 'one of them', the participants from Paris refer to a form of socio-cultural capital which it is impossible to acquire in order to become fully fledged French citizens, while simultaneously expressing their longing for recognition in the French realm. Irina (above) goes to great lengths to explain that a French passport is part of a purely personal approach to make her bond with French society, although she knows that this will not translate into her being seen as part of the society. Her statement is about self-constructed definitions of belonging despite ascriptions of non-belonging. French citizenship represents a personal validation of her attachment to France as she wants to settle there (and hence she is not here on a temporary basis), and it uses it to exclude the others, who are the tourists. In other words, it reflects her permanent status in France and gives her more confidence in the relations with the citizens and ideally it would allow her to be perceived as 'one of them'. However, she realises that despite being legally French, she will not be read as French in social circles. This is due to the fact that, as Isin and Wood (1999:3) argue, "group identities such as those based on racial, gender, ethnic and linguistic aspects conflict with citizenship, because while citizenship signifies 'universal' attachments, group identities are particular".

A French passport empowers and entitles Irina to claim belonging to the French society. The inhabited space at the moment characterised by ambivalence attributable to her foreign nationality would be replaced with a safe space in which she feels she would be included and allowed to belong to, on the basis of her newly found membership. Interestingly, in parallel, she understands its limits, reflecting the impossibility of full inclusion into the mainstream.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This paper was concerned with Romanians' passport stories at an individual level, a perspective which is largely absent from the current literature. It argued that a Western European passport was often sought in order to mitigate the effects of legal, socio-political and economic discrimination. Imaginings of citizenship operate relationally, as everyday encounters with inequality locally, nationally and internationally influence the participants' self-perception and the necessity of the host country's legal citizenship. The participants from France expressed some emotional belonging reflected by their long term plans in the host country, such as home ownership and employment in the public sector, which reflect the desire to create a stable future in the country of immigration. Financial investment into society reflects their long term prospects of settling down. Since they do not see their stay as temporary, they are prepared to improve their situation in the host country. Uncertainty about permanence is dispelled gradually through (the thoughts of) owning a French passport.

In contrast, Romanians from the UK were more likely to envisage temporal disruptions in their stay in Britain. British citizenship was mainly sought for mobility reasons, which might correspond to Romanians' plans to one day leave Britain. The temporality of the British experience reflects the ambivalence towards the host context and perhaps the desire to return to Romania. This can have future negative implications for Britain, such as brain drain (see for a similar argument Szewczyk 2014). Also, if citizenship of a given country reflects a genuine bond based on loyalty, this connectedness between the temporary immigrant and the context of arrival is challenged by the temporary nature of the migrant's presence which shifts conceptions about national loyalty and belonging (see also Bauböck 2011).

The tales of Romanians revealed that citizenship was experienced through society practices of inclusion and exclusion rather than as a political membership. As such, affective belonging is not totally absent from individuals' stories, as they strive to become part of the 'social fabric' of the host country by becoming nationals. However, the non-validation of the emotional belonging by the mainstream triggers their affective reorientation towards the country of origin or their positioning in ambivalent spaces of belonging. Thus, migrants' perspectives of citizenship might be better understood as experiences rather than fixed legal memberships. This is due to their understanding of citizenship, which changes over time as a result of social interactions in the host country and it therefore allows for gradual changes in perception. Thus, a Western European passport was sought in order to claim an ethnic status superior to the Romanian one,

based on accessing a bundle of rights not easily available to Romanian nationals. Therefore, participants' practices of political belonging can be interpreted as a strategy to move from the margins both ethnically and institutionally in order to achieve inclusion into the mainstream.

To conclude, this article was not interested in how exclusion and boundaries are maintained by political actors such as the state. Rather, it explored how processes of inclusion, exclusion and differentiation provide insights into the limits of both a Romanian and a Western passport. It showed that although there is a diversity of reasonings behind naturalisation, Western citizenships allow Romanian respondents to embrace a sense of security they lack without it: identity security and mobility security. French and British naturalisation, from a Romanian applicants' perspective, represents strategic naturalisation. This highlights the second class status of Romanian citizenship at the European level, where all member-states are not perceived as equal.

The similarities in both contexts reflect Romanians' peripheral social location. Indeed, the European liberalisation of mobility rules did not engender the presence of equal rights. The aim of EU citizenship, and one of its founding principles, has been to create, through the elimination of national borders, a space defined by a rejection of nationality based discrimination (Maas 2008). As well as an economic project, European integration is a political project intended to create a common European status by virtue of European citizenship. Yet, despite the political and economic rights the Romanian diaspora can enjoy in the EU as a result of the harmonisation of policies, their European identity is still questioned during social encounters with the mainstream.

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