

**FROM THE *MARGINAL* IMMIGRANT TO THE *MOBILE* CITIZEN:
RECONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY OF ROMANIAN MIGRANTS IN SPAIN**

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Abstract:

This article looks into the complex interplay of identity (re)construction as conducted by Romanian immigrants to Spain within the context of the enlargement of the European Union (EU) towards Eastern Europe. By using qualitative research techniques, the article attempts to highlight how the migration process, which is closely tied to border dynamics and European expansion occurring in stages from 1990 to the present, has influenced the (re)construction of identity and the change of discourse among immigrants. As part of the analysis, the study looks into the factors that contribute to the initial loss of the components of identity, identity reconstruction, and the types of identity emerging from the process of mobility. Finally, the paper examines to what extent immigrants' temporary work movements influence the nature of identity construction.

Key Words: *Romania, Spain, migrants, mobility, identity, citizen*

Introduction

The contemporary world is characterized by mobility, which challenges the fixed links between a territory and a group of people and forces us to reflect on identities in more dynamic ways (Blunt, 2007). Thus, identities can be understood as processes of perpetual rewriting of the self and social collectives (Milligan, 2003). Taking into account the intensive migration which transformed into mobility within a complex and dynamic phenomenon, which includes all the stages of Romanian integration into the EU, this article examines a scarcely studied environment that includes the process of identity reconstruction by Romanian immigrants in Spain. This case study is particularly relevant for the dynamics involved in Romanian migration to EU countries, and more especially Spain, in the last two decades.

The article focuses on how the gradual opening of EU borders towards Eastern Europe both accompanies and determines the processes of migration and the free movement of Romanians, converted to European mobile citizens within the EU space.

The first objective is to show how Romanian migration, in terms of the life-course stage on the part of immigrants, influences the discourse of interviewees during the process of identity reconstruction.

The second objective is to ask what role borders play in the reconstruction of identity during the different stages of migration. I argue that seen through the lens of life-course stage, three waves of Romanians emerge, in parallel with the change and flexibility of borders, each with a distinct way of acting, remembering and linking to their country and Spain, and each with different experiences and circumstances for leaving Romania, for staying, or moving in between: the

migrant, the transnational, and the mobile life-course stage, respectively. Finally, I try to determine if mobility affects the construction of identity.

This article poses the hypothesis that people living in 21st-century Europe modify their perception according to circumstances, assuming the initial background identity and multiple characteristics that they continue to design and share throughout the distinct life-course stage within the surroundings of their adopted country of destination.

The argument can be summarized as follows. First, identities are not simply given, but discursively reconstructed (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Second, identities can never be entirely fixed. Identity is a process of continuous negotiation between the various parts that form the self, the various moments of time in which this self lives and the different environments or relationship systems of which each one of us is a part. Third, identities are always constructed against the difference to another. As Taussig (1993) pointed out, identity is formed as much through repeated mimetic performances of the other as it is through insistence on difference from the other. This is particularly important for the case studied here. We try to highlight, as Taussig (1993) rightly argues, how Romanian migrants come to adopt or assimilate another culture, and also how they come to both identify themselves with and distance themselves from it.

After outlining the theoretical framework that aims to situate the reader in the complex world of identity linked to border, mobility and belonging, the article presents the principal characteristics of the three periods of migration of Romanians in Spain. At the same time it analyzes the creation of identity found in the interviewees' statements. Concluding remarks point to the necessity of a theoretical advance that can detect and inquire into the identity values of the mobile citizens of the EU in the 21st century.

Reconstruction of Identity in a wider Europe

Research concerning (re)construction identity among immigrants in the EU refers to the development of geo-cultural aspects of migration, embedded in the combination of concepts such as border, transnational mobility and belonging (Vertovec, 2001).

Since its creation, the EU project configured a three-dimensional concept of border, examining the migratory flux, migration policy and questions of identity in Europe. The first concept of border is border as a barrier: a process of exclusion expressed by the reinforcement of border security, establishment of 'Fortress Europe' and marginalization of so-called economic-migrants (Wallace and Stola, 2001). The second is border as bridge: a fluid process with the opening of internal borders manifested solely in the case of Member countries of the EU. The third is border as a symbol of identity that establishes a temporal and spatial difference between "us" and "them" (Meinhof, 2003).

In recent years, coinciding with the opening of the Schengen border for the free movement of Eastern Europeans EU candidates, there was a growing awareness that state borders not only have significance as fixed territorial lines between states but are also constructed in pools of identities, practices and narratives of belonging (Scott and Van Houtum, 2009). The flexibility of the border raises and reproduces new social networks and forms of identities that mobilize a new kind of mobility (Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 2006) and affects people on the move (O'Reilly, 2007). Without controls, borders play a less significant role, and people, as argues Diminescu (2003), rather than trying to immigrate and settle in one or another country, tend to become installed within the "culture of mobility".

Thus, in the wider EU, human mobility, as a strategy of life, may be empowering a resource, a tool for social innovation and an important dimension of social capital, but simultaneously, may reflect increased dependencies and proliferation of precarious work, turbulence and instability (Papastergidiadis, 2000). As a result of the new choreography of border opening and ground-breaking trans-world, transnationalism has emerged as a cross-border field where migrants on the move for opportunities of work try to maintain and forge new relationships with their home country (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Dunn, 2010), play an active role in shaping “transnational space” (Hannerz, 1996), and modify their sense of place (Massey, 1994). King (1995:29) discusses this issue with reference to migrants’ experiences arguing that “the migrant’s sense of place and of personal identity often involve a duality ‘here’ and ‘there,’ which is an important aspect of their lives.

The fact that many mobile people have become trans-mobile has an important consequence for spatial concepts, such as belonging. Current debates around borders have reinforced the importance of engaging critically with the notion of belonging and its centrality to people’s lives (Yuval-Davis *et., al* 2005). Belonging involves an important affective dimension relating to social bonds and ties, and their constructions serve to naturalize socially produced, situational and contextual relations. As Anthias (2002) claims, such constructions produce a ‘natural’ community of people and function as exclusionary borders of otherness.

The impermeability of borders and difficulties of movement may cause migrants to experience the loss of former identity or the loss of a sense of competence in a host country. Milligan (2003) discuss that the sense of loss experienced by individuals as a result of migration, leads to the discontinuity of identity embedded in the former place of attachment. Thus, similarly to a

borderline, their identities may indicate inadequacy in the host country and often a certain disconnection to both worlds.

In contrast, the opening of borders places transnational migrants in the position to relate to various cultures, to place themselves in either, and to communicate among each other. Conceptualisations of transnational mobility develop a sense of belonging in which migrants, on the one hand, maintain links to their roots, reaffirming elements of their cultural identities, and on the other hand, negotiate the values and norms of the host society (Vertovec, 2001). Waters (2009) argues that transnational migrants often demonstrate a high level of local civic involvement and a localized sense of identity in the 'new' country, even when continuing to practice transnationalism and may experience self-affirmation, a sense of competence and growth in the self, reasserting their identity. Nonetheless, as Yuval Davies (2006) argues, subjective identities appear in relation to others creating the "otherness", a subjective face of migrants' identity. Moreover, Halstead (2001:307-308) points out that the notion of otherness and the idea of outsider as status-enhancing was linked to the ability to access a better lifestyle.

Mobile identities in turn emerge from the intense cross-border mobility, in which immigrants increasingly (re)construct identities that cut across fixed notions of belonging. Understood as process, these flow through various networks and create new models of identification (Katzenstein and Checkel, 2009), in which the movers perceive identity as the freedom to choose and experience. Kantor (1995) suggests that "cosmopolitans" are 'comfortable in many places and able to understand and bridge differences.' Similarly, Favell (2008) has given the name 'Eurostars' to young Europeans who are mobile citizens, who enjoy their right of free circulation, reflecting the cosmopolitan face of Europe. They are considered key elements in the process of constructing mobile, fluid identity by means of cross-border interaction.

Conceptualizing migrants' identities as constantly negotiated in relation to multiple societies and places enables us to think beyond dichotomies and mutually exclusive notions of local and transnational ties and to recognize immigrants as agents who are able to forge their belonging and multiple places and attachments in global contexts. In her work on migration and differing identities from a Caribbean Island to the West, Fog Olwig (1999) argues that a useful point of departure for ethnographic research on migrants can be found in the study of constructions of place and the wider patterns of rooted mobility, at various regional scales, which they implicate.

Following these concepts, I propose looking at three life-course stages of Romanian migration to Spain and the impact of each on the building of identity. Some authors studied the experiences of identity of different immigrant collectives in Spain from different perspectives that offer contrasts, but also potential comparisons, with the Romanian collective. We mention Oliver (2008) who carried out an ethnographic study of British retirees in Spain, and Berg (2011) who researched, in generational terms, memory and belonging among the Cuban Diaspora in Spain.

The process of reconstruction of identity of Romanians in Spain is scarcely reflected in the literature. However, Sandu (2006) analysed circular labour migration as a life strategy, and Elrick and Ciobanu (2009) and Viruela (2006) analysed the migration process of Romanians, the partial return and transnational practices. Recently, Marcu (2012) examines experiences in terms of belonging and identity feelings among young Romanian immigrants who came to Spain in search of opportunities for professional development.

Therefore, in this time of high trans-spatial mobility, questions such as "Who am I?", "Where am I?", "Where do I belong?" are essential to determine the different life-course stage of identity construction of this particular group of Romanian immigrants in Spain.

Methodology

The research used a semi-structured in-depth interview technique. Life stories tend to be related to the expression of identity (McAdams 1933), which as Yuval Davies (1997) points out are specific forms of cultural narratives which constitute commonalities and differences between self and others, interpreting their social positioning in more or less stable ways.

Given the scarcity of research on the subject, I aim to grasp the existential idiosyncrasies of immigrants –as mobile citizens of Europe– living in Spain. To do this, I conducted 30 in-depth interviews of Romanian immigrants, 15 women (10 married and 5 single) and 15 men (8 married, 2 divorced and 5 single), who have arrived in Spain over the last 20 years in several stages. The interviews were carried out in October-November 2009 and January-April 2010 in the cities of Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Zaragoza, where the largest Romanian communities in Spain are. In this work, all informants appear under pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity. Some of the respondents came to participate in the project through Romanian Immigrant Associations, while others came through personal contacts and the subsequent snowball effect.

I conducted the interviews in Romanian and translated them before undertaking the analysis. The sample confirms that Romanians who emigrated did so with their families, while those who were involved in mobility (across open borders) were single. The design of the questionnaire included various criteria among which we can distinguish the life-course stages of migration to Spain. Those interviewed in the first group were between 46 and 60 years of age, those in the second were between 30 and 45 years of age, and those in the third were between 20 and 30 years of age.

Due to the large amount of data obtained, I have opted for utilizing the thematic theme/sub-theme analysis, which is a well-established technique for reducing data in qualitative research (Grbich, 2007)¹. The advantage of thematic analysis is its flexibility, both in terms of the variety of data sets it can be applied to and its compatibility with different research paradigms. Through said analysis, I have detected three models of identity construction classified according to the life-course stage of migration that occurred after 1989, and which I present below taking into account the principal characteristics of Romanian migration to Spain. The first stage (1990-2002) is that in which participants report the feelings of identity loss; the second stage (2002-2007) is where they try to negotiate and recompose their identity; and the last stage (since 2007) is where respondents strive to construct a new type of cosmopolitan, mobile identity, which they locate within the European, global, rather than local, context.

“Who am I? Where am I? The loss of self

In the broad and dynamic first stage, Romanian emigration to Spain was diffuse and people emigrated fundamentally for economic reasons. The changes in the configuration of migration (from an initial migration with an ethnic component to permanent and temporary migration for work) came about concomitantly with other phenomena that were specific to Romania's transition to democracy, a free-market economy and integration into Europe (Viruela, 2006). These included changes in border controls, the closing of large industries, the appearance of unemployment and an increase in poverty, among other fundamental factors (Sandu, 2006).

From 1990 to 1992, Spain attracted a very low number of Romanians departing for work abroad (about 2%)². However, especially from 1996 onwards, Romanians' international routes for work converged towards the southern region of Western Europe, with Italy and Spain as the main

destinations. This is the first life-course stage of immigrants –people who wanted to improve their economic status- who moved from one place to another with all of the baggage of the migration process: breaking with those left behind, the uprooting and an attempt to become accommodated into a new reality that, because of its novelty, has a high impact on individuals.

Given that during this period, before falling under the Schengen Accord, the border regime between Romania and the EU remained closed, in a fieldwork, the interviewees remembered the role of the border as a first element hampering their process of loss. Thus, their statements reflected memories of anguish endured upon leaving their country behind: *“I was without hope: the borders were closed”, “I got a tourist visa, after paying a great deal of money”, “Fearfully, I boarded the plane and thought of going away forever, since in Romania nothing worked: it was a black hole of corruption”*.

Upon arriving in Spain, immigrants were not familiar with the territory that received them. They thought they had *“gone over the border”*, where they expected a country where everything would be within their grasp: employment according to their level of education, and facilities to learn the local language and thus be integrated. However, their arrival proved to shatter their lives. As Mihai remembered:

It was not what I expected, because I found myself alone in Madrid, a foreign city, without papers, without work, and not knowing the language. In Romania, it was easy to say ‘I’m leaving’. But reality was quite different. It was a shock. (Man, age 48, married)

In the fieldwork, I detected the theme of the loss of former identity due to the lack of integration into the new socio-cultural environment. The continued turbulence they experienced in both places is certainly significant for the immigrants of this period (Papastergiadis, 2000). Interviewees experienced a disparity between the way they had expected their identity would be

viewed by the receiving country and the reality they found. The relationship between the level of conformity to the dominant culture and the emergence of migration has been pointed out by Fielding (1992) in an intriguing essay on culture and migration. This correlation is quite significant in the case of Romanian migrants in Spain.

Hence, the concepts of identity and professional career are closely intertwined for the majority of those interviewed. As Ion told us:

I don't want to remember. I had been a respected member of the intellectual elite, and when I walked down the street I could not help but run into my friends and acquaintances once in a while. Now, I am nobody. From professor to construction worker. After all these years, I have lost my identity as a professional. I lost my friends and home. (Man, age 50, divorced)

Throughout the discourse, we note the difficulty that interviewees have in finding employment that will allow them to survive in Spain. Maria admits that:

I learned to start from the bottom: cleaning houses, and forgetting who I am. (Woman, age 47, married)

It is important to highlight that the employment sectors in which Romanians of the first life-course stage worked were construction (in which 65% of males were employed) and domestic service (in which 73% of females were employed)³. The respondents indicated that they had attempted various sorts of employment and worked in the informal economy, in construction “with people from my country, toting bags of cement” or in the domestic sector, “minding elderly people or children, sometimes at home or from outside, but most of all by the hour”.

Another manifestation of the loss found is based on the loss of a sense of competence due to the immigration process. Despite their Romanian certifications and academic degrees many participants have not been able to validate their studies to Spanish standards and remain in Spain while working in jobs for lower pay and with lower social status. Vasilica remembered with sadness:

It happens that I thought that here I would work as a teacher. But the years went by and I became a cleaning woman. I tried to validate my degree, but it was difficult in the 90s and I gave it up. Here you have me now, twenty years later, with nothing. (Woman, age 53, married)

The identity vacuum experienced by immigrants was accompanied by the creation of identities of being different and inadequate. The concept of difference as an aspect of immigrants' identity was brought about through the implicit inferiority of immigrants, reflected by the unequal relationship between them and the local population. As Maria claimed:

I believe that, for as much as we try, we will always be at the bottom, second-hand, used only if they need us. (Woman, age 47, married)

In the same way, *language* constitutes a sub-theme that, from the point of view of the interviewees, perturbs their identity as foreigners. Moyer (2004) and Roesler (2007) pointed out the importance of their language as configuring their identity. According to Alexander *et al.*, (2007:785) following (Bhabha 1994), to acquire language is to do more than acquire the ability to communicate; it is to acquire culture. Furthermore, language skills provide access to increasing chances of being employed closer to one's education and qualifications levels.

The interviewees declared, "*It was costly to learn the language and I still speak it poorly*", and "*If you don't know how to speak, you are nobody, you cannot find work*".

Occasions to practice the language at work were limited for respondents since they usually worked with other Romanians. Nonetheless, they were conscious and worried about the fact that their lack of competence in Spanish was an obstacle in their search for better working conditions.

Concerning their feelings about identity, those persons interviewed who came during the first stage of immigration say that they feel themselves to be Romanian. Gheorghe confessed that:

I will be a Romanian until the end, I am a foreigner here and that is how I feel, I am a Romanian, I think like a Romanian, and I love my country just like anyone else loves his country.
No? (Man, age 52, married)

Thus, respondents exhibit the strong attachment they have to their country and the hopes they have for the economic and social recovery of Romania. It turns out that for the immigrants interviewed who have lived in Spain between the ages of 9 and 18 and who have not regularized their academic studies but have been reunited with their families, the previously mentioned life experience is important for situating themselves and their identity in the world.

From invisibility to self-affirmation: Recomposing identity

Unlike the first, the second life-course stage of Romanian migration in Spain was marked by the opening of borders under the Schengen agreement, allowing Romanians free circulation within Community territory. The regularization processes implemented by the Spanish government in 2000-2001 and 2005⁴, eliminating visa requirements at the start of 2002, and Romania's accession to the EU (2007), led to the free movement of Romanians in EU countries (for periods of up to three months), and consequently began the process of temporary labour circulation which reached unprecedented levels. Thus, this period confirmed Spain as one of the most important

hubs of Romanian migration for work, accounting for 24% of total departures, the second-most attractive destination after Italy. Furthermore, during this stage, Spain had been experiencing a substantial growth in employment. In consequence, there was demand for both skilled professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers and social workers as well as for less skilled waiters, cleaners and construction workers. Therefore, the number of immigrants increased considerably. While in 2002 there were 33,705 Romanian immigrants registered in Spain, by 2007 that number had reached a total of 505,670⁵.

During this period, the first networks created in the 1990s were expanded, while there was a parallel process of family reunification on a grand scale. Here, then, is the upsurge of mobile immigration of all ages, but mostly middle-aged, of people who circulate in family networks between Romania and Spain. Because of the links that (trans) migrants maintain with their homelands, they “create fluid and multiple identities grounded in both their society of origin and the host society” (Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992:11) rather than simply abandoning their homeland identities. It is clear that Romanian migrants, whether permanent or provisional, use a wide range of strategies (with varying degrees of success) to reaffirm elements of their cultural identities to maintain links to their roots while negotiating the values and norms of Spanish society in rewriting their identities.

Also, the development of immigrant networks, paired with the creation of an important number of associations, Orthodox Christian and Adventist congregations, or other Romanian cultural centres, developed immigrants’ ties to their country of origin, while also exposing Romania to the cultural values of Spain. Similarly, many immigrants have integrated into local structures, and this is reflected again in their social networks. We find a higher proportion of transnational ties compared to locally established ties, but we also find new relations with local networks of

Spanish people. In addition to the feeling of belonging to two national identities, this also includes behaviour and activities that connect two countries. Marin related that:

My Spanish employer also opened a business in Romania and I travel there frequently. I feel that both places are equally important to me. (Man, age 45, married)

As Wash and Horenczyk (2001) note, the theme of self-affirmation appears during the second process of the building of identity among immigrants, and they formulate it as a recreation of a sense of competence, principally through professional advancement. According to Spanish statistical information, in this second period, the principal sectors in which Romanians were employed remained construction (34%) and domestic service (21%). However, they were also represented in new sectors such as trade (7%) and agriculture (12%).⁶

For migrants of this stage, knowledge of the language is fundamental, because it provides access to new social networks. Likewise, to find employment the use of Spanish is especially necessary, since in sectors such as construction and domestic service there is direct competition with Latin American migrants.

As Ioana explained:

“If you don’t speak Spanish, you cannot find work here, because Latin American migrants are native Spanish speakers, and they can take your job. (Woman, age 41, married)

Respondents pointed out the importance of getting an adequate job in promoting a sense of self-worth and of satisfaction in life. As Diana reported:

What is important is to work at something you like. Since I am employed as a secretary, I am happy. (Woman, age 42, married)

In the interviews, the participants were asked what impact the migration process had on them, whether migration changed them in any way, and if so, what these changes were. They highlighted this change in terms of change in the self -a development of the “new me”. As Caterina reflected:

As a person, I have changed. It is though I am another, I am new, I have Spanish friends.

(Woman, age 40, married)

While George replied: *I have not forgotten my country's past, but here I value myself more.*

(Man, age 43, married)

Results prove that the majority of participants acquired an overall growth in the self. This growth reflects Baumeister's (1997) proposal that social interaction and interpersonal relationships shape the self.

In this stage, belonging is conceptualized as a transnational place that is *here*, as well as a space that is *there*. Some of informants emphasized this notion of simultaneity in their feelings about belonging. As Simona pointed out:

The idea is that I have two places, one here and another there. When I go to Romania, I speak about Spain and when I am here, I speak of Romania. Now, it depends on each person and how he internalizes the process, but I believe that one comes to live in a space between two worlds.

(Woman, age 40, married)

We note that an important issue for creating belonging is Spain as a society and the perception that the participants have of it. Vasile claimed that the place called Spain *...must be won, a career must be forged* (Man, age 41, married) and Marin also said that *...the duty of immigrants is to integrate with Spanish society.* (Man, age 45, married)

Moreover, this second life-course stage of immigrants interviewed were educated under rigid and totalitarian controls, so the category of European citizenship also has a very important and tangible significance. Therefore, an official recognition of their status in the form of citizenship permits the participants to validate the sense of belonging, claiming Spain to be “*a little my country*”.

Similarly, there were comments about the difficulty of starting up in Spain, which was attributed to discrimination against Romanians. As Bogdan remembered:

When I came, I went to a town called Coslada, where rocks were hurled at us because we were Romanian. They saw us as being different, because there were many Romanians, and all of us were the same: in other words, bad. This is an issue; this memory haunts me. (Man, age 37, married)

In this way, by being unhappy with the receiving society, individuals are forced to become intruders or inept, which is the ‘other’. That otherness is, however, just a face of immigrants’ identity, which is subjective and in constant change (Yuval- Davis, 2006). The road to another place that may be hostile sometimes changes the individual and recomposes his subjectivity. Thus, for respondents who feel frustration, as Dana:

Spain receives but does not offer, most notably in an economic sense, given the context of the country’s broader economic crisis. My husband and I are here without a job I do not know how long we will be in these conditions. (Woman, age 43, married)

They point out the fact that mobility within the EU has led to lower categories of work; they work in the informal economy, “*without rights*”, and they will continue to do so until Romania offers “*a new standard of living*”.

Bogdan said with resignation: *It is very sad that we have to survive in Spain instead of returning to Romania. Maybe we do, when our country will improve its economic situation.* (Man, age 37, married)

In the discourse of those interviewed, it was noticed that there were different focuses and strategies used to (re)construct their identity and obtain new aptitudes to permit them to reclaim co-ownership of socio-cultural resources in Spanish society. As Taussig (1993:246) noted metaphorically, migrants enter into the “second contact” era of the borderland where “us” and “them” lose their polarity and swim in and out of focus. Thus, as Healstad (2001:311) states, the boundaries of insider-outsider had stretched to accommodate their expectations and contradictory cultural performances, facilitating a multiplicity of identity movements. As a result of these processes, new meanings that articulated the framework of a potential cosmopolitan identity were created.

Towards a mobile identity

Our research indicates that there is distinction between transnational and cosmopolitan identity. As seen above, transnational identity is manifested by people suspended between two belongings; people who began to circulate freely within the Schengen space and thus gained elements of identity from their places of origin and destination. Immigrants with ‘cosmopolitan’ identities, however, are those who do not pursue linking their identity to one or two places, but see identity as the freedom to choose, or as flexibility and fluidity. In the fieldwork, I have identified this

profile among young Romanians who came to Spain in search of opportunities for professional development, and they, as Favell (2008) points out, are “free movers”, not immigrants.

Therefore, not all Romanian migrants manifest orientation toward cosmopolitan identity. It is necessary to note that in this last stage of migration to Spain, (that began in 2007 and continues in the present time, having been marked by Romania’s entry into the EU) mobility increased considerably. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2012, Romanians represented the largest grouping of foreigners living in Spain, with some 913,405 citizens registered. However, the number of workers affiliated with Spanish Social Security dropped from 429,427 in 2007 to 266,003 in 2012, while the number of unemployed increased over the same period from 60,826 to 198,120⁷. In the current economic context, there has begun what we can call the partial return of immigrants now unemployed in Spain. The interesting feature of temporary mobility is that it is indecisive because it seeks to be in two or several places at the same time, and it is not clear which appeal will prevail (Marcu, 2012). Thus, for Romanian movers, migration does not mean permanent departure; they are actually intermittently on the move, because they maintain transnational connections and because they find work in both countries. Young Romanians, now legal citizens of Europe, leave their country in search of professional opportunities and they no longer consider themselves immigrants but rather European citizens who have the right to circulate as well as study and work in Europe.

In the interviews, respondents appreciate the opening and flexibility of the border. As Roxana pointed out:

Now we can move, save much money on visas. There is not corruption at the border because we have freedom to travel. (Woman, age 24, single)

Romanians position themselves in the mobility culture, facilitated by the frequency of trips on low-cost airlines (EasyJet, BlueAir) and the use of the Internet. This was experienced by Marius:

Because if I want to go to my country on a Monday, I can even buy, an airline ticket on the previous Sunday night on the Internet. (Man, age 28, single)

For people who move, identity undergoes change and is moulded and shaped to meet with reality. Their thought patterns are formed, naturally, in accordance with social change. During this time, immigrants coexist with the border, a factor that facilitates the reconstruction of their identity and makes for a cosmopolitan or global identity (Favell, 2008). Their experiences of change in the sense of self have given rise to different ideas about how their identity can be reconstructed and reactivated by new forms, some of which were represented in the theme of *cosmopolitan identity*, characterized by transparency and holistic representation. Therefore, within the framework of existential migration, the sub-theme of *world citizenship* appeared. As Lucian recognized:

I cannot compare myself to migrants who left Romania in the 1990s, since they did so out of economic necessity. Many continue to do so. It is just that I left because I wanted to study more, extend my cultural horizons, and I see things differently. I consider myself a citizen of the world. (Man, age 29, single)

People construct themselves, discover the qualities they possess in different terms even before they migrate, and they perceive them as an absolute necessity for survival and future success in new environments. As Mirela explained:

I am as eager to broaden my personal horizons as I am to expand my professional prospects. I want to enjoy my mobility spending a year in Spain, another in England or Germany, another ... I do not know, maybe in the U.S. (Woman, age 29, single)

These aspects of personality are manifested in the most motivated and ambitious people. They are impelled towards an objective: to change their lives, which are affected not only by crisis and scarcity but also by a lack of professional fulfilment. However, the difficulty and the need to work in any sort of activity is a specific characteristic of mobility among young Romanians who, as a legacy from the adult generation, are perceived to be economic immigrants and are, therefore, relegated to low-skilled employment. During 2011, according to data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 55.4% of the total number of affiliated Romanians worked in the general category (construction, industry, commerce and transport), while 28% worked in the agricultural sector, 8.9% were self-employed and 7.7% were domestic workers. It is important to note, that as a result of the acute economic crisis and the incessant flow of Romanians, in 2011, the European Commission⁸ approved a temporary measure (Order PRE2072/2011) that restricted the right to employment for Romanians who emigrated to Spain as of that date.

Thus, in expressing the difficulty they have had in their professional lives, interviewees reflected on precariousness and instability. Adriana confessed:

I left home at the age of 16. I studied in England, but I was also in Mexico, Japan and Ghana. And in Spain it is hard: I study and work. It is like starting all over again, because it is difficult to move around in Spain's work environment. I worked in houses, I worked in a restaurant, and now I work at Unión Fenosa in order to pay the bills. (Woman, age 24, single)

It is relevant to note that Romanians in Spain cannot yet compete on the basis of equality in obtaining positions in public administration. The better-educated immigrants point out that, “*Our education is not recognized in Spain because we are from Eastern Europe*”.

Nevertheless, for the majority of respondents, following Romania’s entry into the EU, factors such as staying in one place or identification with either Romanian or Spanish culture “*are no longer important*”.

This fact can be seen also in the aspect of language as all of the young people interviewed feel very comfortable in the Spanish language environment and did not manifest loss of any elements of identity.

I speak Spanish, as I speak English or Romanian. You have to know languages when you leave your country, said Lucian who, moreover, considered Spain, and above all Madrid, to be a cosmopolitan place *...in which you are free, because no one asks you where you are, you can come and go whenever you want.* (Man, age 29, single)

Thus, travel no longer causes nostalgia, nor does leaving behind places to find others. Adina expressed in this way:

I no longer weep at airports when I take leave of or meet a person. It is truly a part of me...stays at home. Another part is in Spain, which also exists and that I will probably miss very much later on when I leave. However, neither of these places...is strong enough to keep me from fighting for something better. (Woman, age 30, single)

We note that, while circulating within Europe, mobility helps them to situate themselves globally, to ignore and not set up well-defined borders between home and location or the places of belonging. Their place is waiting to be created in the future; they invent and imagine new places

where they can attain their personal and professional goals. Hence, for them, belonging is the journey itself. Irina pointed out:

I have lived and studied in Romania, England and Spain. Now I live here, but I would like to live in Australia or the United States. My heart is everywhere, because I need to have a broad experience of life. (Woman, age 25, single)

Irina's desire to move around has helped her develop the sensitivity to multiple perspectives and the ability to work across cultures that are indeed the hallmarks of the global, mobile citizen.

Young Romanians interviewed construct and reconstruct while acquiring experience, and see in it their principal motor for building a space for places, and their complex identity in the world. As noted above, it is certain that this post-modernism has been obscured, frequently, by the turbulence experienced in the difficulty of finding a certain level of professional or employment stability in any place. However, despite this, life then becomes a fascinating exercise in seeking: an intense and circular voyage.

Conclusions

In response to the questions posed at the beginning of the article, related to how the open border and EU enlargement introduce new ways in which Romanians (re)construct and (re)interpret identity in the context of mobility, I have reached the following conclusions.

First, we can say that immigrants' life-course stage has an influence on the (re)construction of immigrant identity. Although all Romanians share a geographical origin, the EU enlargement and the possibility of free circulation and posterior labour mobility over the past 20 years mean that Romanians (re)construct their identity in different ways. It has been noted how interviewees who

emigrated to Spain during the first migration stage, long most frequently to find themselves with the stability of a home, and to find their identity in a definite place, such as their country of origin. Their condition as marginal immigrants did not allow them to reconstruct a new identity, and to a great extent they maintained their initial marks of identity. Immigrants of the second stage, appear to value the two forms of belonging and find themselves somewhere between them. They are also oriented toward integrating into the new environment and are more active in overcoming the various difficulties of adaptation. Their ‘transnational’ identity reaffirms their ego in the destination country by means of their freedom to circulate. This facilitated the negotiation of their identity and the recreation of a sense of competence, principally through professional advancement. The young interviewees forming the third stage move continuously between Spain, Romania and other parts of the world, manifesting mobile, global identity. Their mobility is fluid (Favell, 2008) and, in this process, the concept of loss may be replaced by search experiences. They enjoy mobility and view it as being necessary to gather the connections and credibility that will transform them from migrants into global citizens.

Secondly, we note the role played by borders, connected to different experiences of life-course stages, in the (re)construction of the identities of Romanian immigrants. We observed throughout the analysis how EU border politics and the agency of individuals entwined in “their constant interaction” (Findlay and Li, 1999:51-52) shape the migration experience (Bakewell, 2010).

Although currently, as noted by Favell and Recchi (2009: 222), Romanians still seem relegated to secondary roles in the Spanish labour market, which belies formal EU citizen rights, the future could see a scenario in which Romanians benefit from enhanced labour rights. Full access to labour rights would lead to flexible competence and therefore could facilitate a more cosmopolitan attitude of Romanian citizens.

Thirdly, we find that mobility affects the reconstruction of identity. In order to reconstruct a European global identity in the 21st century, it is necessary to facilitate the mobility of peoples. The greater the mobility, the more feelings of transnational and cosmopolitan identity there will be. The second and the last stages of mobility between Romania and Spain have created a mobile citizen, who is seeking work strategies in any country of the EU territory with help from established networks.

We conclude that, although elements of loss, precariousness and instability were manifest in the different life-course stages of migration, human movement enriches identity by offering new codes of behaviour and learning that transform individuals. For now, the data obtained in the interviews reveals that Romanians in Europe increasingly view the world from a trans-border point of view, in terms such as “not even outside of the country,” nor in Romania, “like home,” or “like Spain.” In other words, they go from “home to home” in a wider Europe.

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Notes

¹ The goal of thematic analysis is to locate the most common and salient themes in the data, which are capable of representing the data group in the form of a thematic map of a phenomenon or process.

²Source: Spanish National Institute for Statistics, *Population Register, national results, 1996-2009*, <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20/e245&file=inebase&L=1>, accessed on 2 March 2011.

³ Spanish Ministry of Labor and Immigration <http://mtin.es> accessed on 8 February 2012.

⁴ Some 604,357 immigrants (99,673 Romanians) in Spain were legalized in 2005- Ministry of Interior 2007.

⁵ <http://www.mtin.es/en/index.htm> accessed on 10 February 2012.

⁶ <http://www.mtin.es/en/index.htm> accessed on 17 February 2012.

⁷Spanish Ministry of Labor and Immigration <http://mtin.es> accessed on 10 January 2013.

⁸ European Commission (2011). Decision to Authorise Spain to Temporarily Suspend the Right of Free Circulation for Romanian Workers (Regulation 492/2011) Brussels. 11.8.2011 C (2011) 5896 final.