

MOBILITY AND IDENTITY IN A WIDER EUROPEAN UNION

Experiences of Romanian migrants in Spain

Silvia Marcu

Instituto de Economía, Geografía y Demografía, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT: Over the past two decades, the theoretical frameworks of human mobility studies have undergone profound changes. The rise of transnational and border analysis, the formulation of the embodied experiences of migration, the increasing interest in migrants' attachment to place and sense of home have coalesced to enrich our understanding of human mobility. This paper explores how Romanian immigrants in Spain interpret the changes to their global identity in terms of self-perceptions within the context of the enlargement of the European Union (EU) towards Eastern Europe. By means of qualitative research, the principal aim of this article is to highlight how the migration process, which is closely tied to border dynamics and European expansion, and which has occurred in stages from 1990 to the present, has influenced the (re)construction of identity and the changes in discourse among immigrants. The experiences of the interviewees show that migration/mobility and place – that left behind in the country of origin and the new place in the receiving country – are essential factors in the reconstruction of identity in the twenty-first century.

Key words: identity; European Union; Romania; Spain; mobility

1. Introduction

In the wider European Union (EU), identity involves the role of border as a space of interaction, the politicization of immigration, regionalism, and the process of European integration itself (Meinhof 2002; Favell 2008). While the EU opened up the possibility for the construction of identity through a less exclusionary practice of temporal difference, human geographical and cultural mobility have, since the 1990s, the 2004s (the first enlargement), and the 2007s (the second enlargement), become more important in the discourse on European identity (Tsaliki 2007; Martínez

Guillem 2011). Enlargement has favored traveling and mobility and this has had a huge impact on identity. In fact, one could say that the world is constantly changing and thus our identities are constantly readapting and readjusting to the new realities they face and deal with. As such, both identity and identification may be seen as dynamic processes since they are never complete; they are constantly being redefined (Easthope 2009).

Taking into account the intensive migration which was transformed into mobility within a complex and dynamic phenomenon which includes all the different stages of integration of Romania into the EU,¹ the main objective of this study is to examine a much ignored topic, that is, the process of identity reconstruction on the part of Romanian immigrants in Spain. Given that identity is a vague, virtual concept and therefore hard to define empirically, in this article I analyze the way in which respondents perceive their global (national, transnational, professional, cultural, and emotional) identity in terms of self-perceptions as migrants and as people on the move in the new country of residence depending on their migration stage. In this way, the paper gives an overview of the currents of Romanian immigration parallel to the broad process of border transformation and the enlargement of the EU towards Eastern Europe. These changes influenced the individual and social identity of those who emigrated. Thus, the main argument is that the gradual opening of EU borders to Eastern Europe both accompany and determine the processes of migration, mobility and the free movement of Romanians, converted to European citizens within the EU space (and by extension, Spain). Border opening stages thus influence the identity perceptions that those who emigrate, circulate, or practice labor mobility have, strengthening the bonds between the border and the (re)construction of identity.

Linked to this, the study also highlights the symbolic and emotional ties that bind people to their place of birth, destination or several places, and focuses on the relationship between their country and their ability to create a sense of belonging in another. What is the impact of education, professional status or contact with the country of residence on the identities of migrants? How do migrants cope with their multiple losses or build their lives and sense of belonging by retaining, extending and forging local and transnational ties? How do they balance the relationship between socio-spatial positions, everyday practice and identity formation? As Giddens (1991) states, self-identity is a fundamentally uncertain project, and something to be continually worked upon and crafted. Thus, in this paper, identities can be understood as processes of perpetual

1. These include the signing of the European Agreement, fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria, the adoption of the 32 chapters of *acquis communautaire*, and the opening of the borders towards Eastern Europe.

rewriting of the self and the social collective. As such, the hypothesis posed is that people living in twenty-first-century Europe modify their perceptions according to circumstances, assuming the initial background identity as well as the multiple characteristics that they continue to design and share throughout the distinct stages of their life within the surroundings of their adopted country of destination.

This paper is structured as follows. After an initial presentation of the patterns of Romanian migration in Europe and Spain, the subsequent sections offer a review of the relevant literature focusing on the construction of identity in a mobile world, and the methodology underpinning the research on which this paper is based. Sections 5–7 analyze the (re)construction of identity found in the interviewees' statements, by stage of migration. My aim is to determine the factors which contribute to the loss of self and professional identity as well as the (re)building of identity through self-affirmation, sense of place and belonging, and the search for transnational and cosmopolitan identity. The conclusions call for a theoretical advance capable of detecting and further analyzing the identity values of mobile citizens in the twenty-first century in the EU.

2. Romanian mobility in EU and Spain

The migration and mobility of Romanians has deep roots in the country's Communist past. As noted by the Romanian researchers Diminescu and Lazaroiu (2002), internal mobility during the Communist period, when Romania's rural population engaged in daily labor mobility from their hometowns to nearby urban centers, ought to be considered an important factor for understanding subsequent international mobility. After 1990, Romania's transition brought about a sharp decline in the levels of satisfaction with the living standards caused by higher unemployment rates and increased poverty. Working abroad seemed to be one of the few strategies available for coping with rapid economic and social changes (Sandu 2006). From 1996 in particular, Romanians' international work routes started to converge towards the southern region of Western Europe. That said, the scale of Romanian migration to other EU countries has been increasing steadily since 2004. Upon its becoming an EU member state on 1 January 2007, Romania was Europe's largest source of outward migration flows. Official government estimates for late 2006 indicate that between 1.2 and 1.3 million Romanian citizens were legally employed in EU member states (Ban 2012: 6). During the period 2007–2009, the number of Romanian citizens residing in the EU-15 reached 2.1 million

(EU Report 2011) while the main destination countries for migrants from Romania, are Italy and Spain.

Romanian emigration to Spain took place in three stages. The first stage, 1990–2002, was a trial-and-error exercise in terms of labor migration. According to data from a 2006 survey,² from 1990 to 1995, Spain attracted a very small number of Romanians departing for work abroad (about 2%) (Elrick and Ciobanu 2009). However from 1996 onwards, Romanians' international work routes converged towards the southern region of Western Europe, with Italy and Spain as the main destinations. Labor demand, language learning ability, degrees of tolerance, and the existence of already established Romanian networks influenced the increase in emigrant streams towards Spain (Marcu 2012). Migrants had an urban rather than rural background (59% as compared to 41%), and on the whole were middle-aged (80% were in the 30–54 age bracket). Most of them were male (85%) and married (88%), and had a university degree (78%) (NISR 2010). It is important to note that the employment sectors in which Romanians of the first stage worked were construction (where 65% of males were employed) and domestic service (where 73% of females were employed) (INE 2006).

The second stage, 2002–2007, was marked by the opening up of borders under the Schengen agreement, allowing Romanians free circulation within EU territory. The regularization processes implemented by the Spanish government in 2000–2001 and in 2005,³ visa requirements having been eliminated at the beginning of 2002, and Romania's accession to the EU (2007) were all important events. Similarly, economic growth in Spain at the time, especially in the construction and tourism industries, generated a strong and sudden demand for foreign workers (Viruela 2011: 43). As a consequence, the process of temporary labor circulation, which was to reach unprecedented levels, began. The development of immigrant networks, together with the creation of an important number of associations, Orthodox Christian and Adventist congregations, or other Romanian cultural centers, developed immigrants' ties to their country of origin, while at the same time exposing them to the cultural values of Spain (Marcu 2012). The characteristics of the Romanian migrant also started to change, as migrants were increasingly coming from a rural background (48%), were not married (19%), and were younger (24% were in the 15–29 age bracket) (INE 2006). According to Spanish statistics,

2. Source: Spanish National Institute of Statistics, *Population Register, national results, 1996–2009*, <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20/e245&file=inebase&L=1>, accessed 2 October 2012.

3. Some 604,357 immigrants in Spain were legalized in 2005. Ministry of Interior 2007.

the principal sectors in which Romanians were employed remained construction (34%) and domestic service (21%). However, they were also represented in sectors such as trade (7%) and agriculture (12%).⁴

The third stage began in 2007 and continues at present, and is marked by Romania's entry to the EU. In 2011, Romanians represented the largest group of foreigners living in Spain.⁵ In 2012, the Romanian collective in Spain grew to 912,526 registered individuals.⁶ During this period, migrants have come almost as much from a rural (49%) as from an urban background (51%). They are also younger, with an important segment in the 15–29 age bracket (48%) complementing the 30–54 age group (50%). While the new movers continue to be mainly married (60%), there is also an important group of non-married movers (31%). Finally, while they continue to have predominantly bachelor degrees (77%), a growing number have only secondary education (16%) (NISR 2010). Unfortunately, since the start of the recession, unemployment has drastically increased in Spain, especially among those segments of the labor force that were already at a disadvantage, such as immigrants. As a result of the acute economic crisis and the incessant flow of Romanians, in 2011, the European Commission⁷ approved a temporary measure (Order PRE2072/2011) that restricted the right to employment for Romanians who emigrated to Spain as of that date.⁸

The difficulty, and the need, to work in any sort of employment is a specific characteristic of the mobility among Romanians, who, as part of the legacy from the previous generation, are perceived to be economic immigrants and are, therefore, relegated to low-skilled jobs. In 2011, according to data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 55.4%

4. <http://www.mtin.es/en/index.htm> accessed 17 November 2012.

5. <http://www.mtin.es/en/index.htm> accessed 5 September 2012.

6. <http://www.mtin.es/en/index.htm> accessed 20 October 2012.

7. 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.

8. While this does not affect self-employed workers or those receiving unemployment compensation, Spain's decision to demand work permits for Romanians only affects those who are registered with Social Security. The European Commission authorized these temporary limitations in view of Spain's economic climate, which has endured serious consequences in the labor market: (1) the highest rate of unemployment in the EU (21% as compared to the 9.4% average for the EU and 9.9% for the Eurozone) and (2) slow economic recovery, with only 0.3% growth in GNP during the first 3 months of 2011 as compared to the previous 3 months, and compared to 0.8% in the EU and the Eurozone (Spanish Ministry of Labor and Immigration, 2011). Besides Spain, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom will continue the period of restrictions until 2013.

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. Today, the 912,526 Romanian registered in Spain cover all Spanish provinces, but Romanian mobility is mainly concentrated in the Autonomous Communities of Madrid (191,743), Valencia (138,775), Andalucía (132,789), and Cataluña (116,955) (INE 2012). Even in an economic downturn, such as the unprecedented recession hitting Spain, the new mobility strategies of migrants are visible.

3. Building the framework of analysis: Identity in a mobile world

Due to the broad acceptance of Western values within Eastern Europe, the enlargement of the EU, and the intense process of cross-border mobility, a fundamental change took place in the nature of migrant identity. Regular mobility, which Bauman (2001) calls 'liquid modernity', is characterized by the flow of people, capital, goods, and ideas that share cross-border flexibility. As such, borders can be associated with a range of claims-making activities, not only claims to national belonging or citizenship, but also demands for mobility. This means that bordering may not only be viewed in terms of 'Fortress Europe', that is, securitization, but also in terms of opportunities (Johnson *et al.* 2011). An important question, then, is how identity and cross-border mobility are related. As arguing Rumford (2006: 163) mobilities and borders are not antithetical; therefore, a globalizing world is also a world of borders. As a result of the new choreography of border opening and ground-breaking transworld movements, transnationalism has emerged as a cross-border phenomena whereby migrants on the move seeking work opportunities try to maintain and forge new relationships with their home country (Basch *et al.* 1994), play an active role in shaping 'transnational space' (Hannerz 1996), and modify their sense of place and belonging (Massey 1995). In this context, Paasi (2001: 23) argues that places should be understood as networks where socio-spatial processes occur on various scales. Migrants persistently maintain ties with their cultural backgrounds and spatial contexts manifesting forms that inevitably create transnational social spaces (Faist 2000). Borders should, therefore, not be seen as lines of division, but rather as inhabited spaces. As Gielis (2009: 603) states, transmigrants are mentally present there and, consequently, they are temporarily absent from the place and country they physically find themselves in. These mental processes create a kind of present-absent border (Paasi 2001). This present-absent border can also have a virtual side, for instance, calling or e-mailing people in the former country of residence.

In turn, the concept of cosmopolitanism is frequently used to identify the extent to which a new global space is able to create a new territory, which, while taking into consideration national borders, produces patterns that transcend the national distinctions typical of modernity (Beck 2002). According to Favell (2008), EU movers are the human face of European integration. Their lives and experiences are the best guide to finding out how easy it is to shift one's identity or horizon to a post-national or cosmopolitan level, and the practical benefit, insights, barriers and failings of a life lived outside the place you historically belong to. In this mobile context, identity is perceived as a search and individual project in which each person has the responsibility of organizing his life own according to his own decisions (White and Wyn 2004). As Easthope (2009: 65) claims, we live in a world characterized by the flux of people, money and ideas and hence the construction of identity must be understood as an individual process. However, as Paasi (2001: 10) argues, identity is not merely an individual or social category, but also – and crucially – a spatial category, since the ideas of territory, self and 'us' all require symbolic, socio-cultural and/or physical dividing lines with the *Other*. Formed by multiple characteristics, identity in post-modern European society is, thus, fluid and sometimes unstable, fragmented and fractured (Caldas-Coulthard and Ledema 2008; Coulthard 2008). Therborn (1995: 207) argues that 'the cultural space of Europe may be seen as shaped by a set of cultural systems, providing and reproducing identities, knowledge and norms and values'.

The fact that many mobile people have become transmobile, that they find themselves neither here nor there but in several places at the same time, has important consequences for spatial container concepts such as place (Ernste *et al.* 2009). In Massey's view, 'we actively *make* places' (1995: 48) and our ideas of place 'are products of the society in which we live' (50). This is not to say that the creation of places is entirely subjective. The creation of places is influenced by physical, economic and social realities. What it means, rather, is that these realities are understood socially in the creation of place. As Gieryn (2000: 465) explains with reference to the work of Soja (1996), 'places are doubly constructed: most are built or in some way physically caved out'. They are also interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined.

Research on the experience of migration provides fertile ground for looking into the building of identity, given that immigrants frequently confront new situations and experiences that mean an almost daily re-negotiation of the ego and surroundings, and which requires thinking about and understanding the world (Zournazi 1998; Mason 2004).

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) argues 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. As Walsh and Horenczyk (2001) note, in order to maintain a strong sense of their national identity, migrants will remain connected to their land and belonging. In contrast, the opening of borders places migrants in the position of relating to various cultures, of placing themselves in either, and of communicating among each other. Conceptualizations of transnational mobility develop a sense of belonging in which migrants, on the one hand, maintain links to their roots, reaffirming elements of their self and cultural identities, and on the other hand, negotiate the values and norms of the host society (Faist 2000; Vertovec 2001; Castles 2012). 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 (Castles 2012). Today, the transformative potential of cross-border people mobility signifies, as Sigalas (2011: 242) points out, a window of opportunity for the EU. As border controls between most EU countries disappear, as do the controls of traveling to and living in other European countries, Europeans have more chances than ever to interact with each other and to develop a similar identity. Thus, for people who move, identity undergoes change, and is molded and shaped to meet with reality. Their thought patterns are formed naturally, in accordance with European social dynamism.

Based on the theoretical framework that links identity to that which is static (place) as well as mobile (migration, mobility), I propose looking at three stages of Romanian migration to Spain and their impact on the building of identity.

4. Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used in this study as it better helps understand the complexities of human behavior (Ezzy 2002: 29). 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. In addition, a form of participant–observation was used to help place the stories of the interviews in their wider context. Thirty in-depth interviews were carried out⁹ of Romanian immigrants who had arrived in

9. The author conducted interviews in Romanian and digitally recorded, with the permission of the research participants, and translated them before undertaking the analysis. The interviews were completed during October–November 2009 and January–April 2010 in the cities of Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Zaragoza, where the largest Romanian communities in Spain are. Respondents were found through a

Spain over the last 20 years in three stages. This approach aims to uncover the inner world of the immigrants, in order to allow readers to see the world through their eyes and be able to relate to their lived experiences (Jacobson 2002). Foner (2003) argues that up-close, in-depth studies embedded in ethnographic research and involving a small number of people unveil subtle meanings, otherwise subdued by generalizations, and provide insights into the contextual environment of identity formation.

The criteria derived for selecting participants included equal numbers of men and women: 10 of them had arrived in Spain in the first period of migration (1990–2002), 10 had arrived in the second stage (2002–2007), and 10 young people, who had arrived in Spain after 2007. All selected participants were of a medium-high socio-cultural and professional level, and had active employment status, which included having a current job in Spain, as well as actively looking for a job or planning to do so in the near future while studying for Spanish qualifications. The decision to interview trained immigrants was based on their knowledge of the process of mobility and the greater difficulty in finding employment both in Spain and in their own country, hence the need for mobility in the first place.

The design of the questionnaire included various criteria among which we can distinguish the stage of migration to Spain (including the age of the interviewee – between 20 and 60),¹⁰ as well as the intensity of migration mobility between the country of origin and destination. Given the vast amount of data obtained, I have used the thematic theme/sub-theme analysis, a technique used to reduce data for qualitative research (Grbich 2007).¹¹ The advantage of thematic analysis is in its flexibility, both in terms of the variety of data sets it can be applied to, as well as its compatibility with different research paradigms (Braun and Clarke 2006). The analysis of in-depth interviews identifies the most common and salient patterns of identity construction in this group. Several themes were identified as the most common and salient throughout the interviews. The order of presenting the themes is based on temporal and dialectic principles, so that the themes can illustrate the development of particular stages in identity construction in the majority of the participants.

mixed range of snowball strategies. Research participants were living in Spain at the time of the interviews. In addition, detailed notes of all interviews were taken by the researcher. Verbatim transcription and comparison of the transcripts against the field notes assured data accuracy.

10. Those interviewed in the first group are between 45 and 60 years of age, those in the second are between 30 and 45 years of age, and those in the third are between 20 and 30 years of age.
11. 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.

The first category of participants report the feelings of identity loss and exclusion, based on their understanding of negative attitudes and wide-spread stereotypes among the host population. While the second category of participants try to negotiate identity constructions and to (re)construct their identity, the third category strive to construct a new type of identity – a transnational, cosmopolitan identity – which they locate within the global, rather than any local, context. These findings contribute to the recent developments in social science research in such areas as identity studies, discourse or cosmopolitanism.

5. The loss of self

The loss of previous identity and a longing for the past is notable in the discourse of participants in the first stage of migration. For them, the border between Romania and Spain is not situated around their lives, but has moved to the center of their life worlds (Meinhof 2002). Thus, their narrative is broken and unsettled. Despite their Romanian academic degrees, many have not been able to validate their studies to Spanish standards and remain in Spain while working in jobs at lower pay. Thus, one of the themes detected is the *loss of former identity* due to the lack of integration into the new socio-cultural environment.

In the literature, the loss of identity was noted as one of the most important consequences of immigration in the sense of self (Colic-Peisker 2006). Unfortunately for the majority interviewed, documents which symbolized their identity, including their professional status did not protect the Romanian migrants and therefore, since the beginning of the 1990s, they have experienced a profound loss of their previous identity that they have not been able to recover. Participants in this study experienced a disparity between the way they had expected that their identity would be viewed by the receiving country and the reality that they found. As Ion pointed out:

I don't want to remember. It seems like someone else's life. I was 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. Now, I am nobody. From professor to construction worker. After all these years, I have lost my identity as a professional. I have lost my friends and my home. (Male, 50 years old)

Walsh and Horenczyk (2001) distinguished two important aspects of immigrants' experiences that contribute to the sense of loss of identity: a loss of the sense of belonging and loss of self-image as a competent person. This second manifestation of the loss of identity is based on the loss of a

sense of competence due to immigration. The migrants arrived in Spain with plans and expectations of obtaining work in keeping with their previous work experience and professional qualifications. Many of them worked in one or more jobs unrelated to their education, often part-time or temporary, desperate in their attempts to make a living. Dorina talked about this situation:

I thought that here I would work as a teacher. But the years went by and I became a cleaning woman. I tried to get my degree certified, but it was difficult in the 90s and I gave up. Here I am now, twenty years later, with nothing. (Female, 53 years old)

The identity vacuum experienced by Romanians in Spain was accompanied by the creation of identities of being different and inadequate, and of inequality. These discourses were grouped under the common theme of *negative labels*. The most common manifestation of negative labels as a factor of difference provided by the interviewees was the sub-theme *alien status* or the sense of being an outsider. As Vasile recognized:

I don't feel as though I am a part of this society . . . even though they are very friendly. I feel different, and apart from it. The Spanish are trying to help, but quite simply, there is a feeling of non-communication. Or, that you feel like a foreigner. (Male, 51 years old)

It would seem that for these immigrants, their previous life experience is fundamental for situating themselves and their identity in the world. This migrant is still a one-dimensional person, a stranger or outsider embedded in the culture of the former country of residence.

6. Recomposing identity

Following the opening of the Schengen space in 2002, Romanian migrants tended to attempt to create a new sense of themselves, which was based on the new socio-cultural surroundings. By using experience gained before departure, once they have arrived in Spain, they tended to create this new sense by means of active involvement in the discursive processes within the receiving environment. Following Therborn (1995: 229) 'the process of identity formation may be seen as composed of three crucial moments: by differentiation, by the sentiment of self-reference or self image, and by the recognition of another'. While the host society tries to position newcomers as alien and powerless, immigrants themselves may decide to reject this inferior status and attempt to reposition their place in society by

demanding power and agency in reconstructing their own identity. In this way, Gabriel affirmed proudly:

I can handle it, I am tough, I am still capable, I had to take control of my life.
(Male, 43 years old)

Thus, marginal identities can be renegotiated. As Monica said:

I learned to be active, to be ingenious, I am another person. (Female, 47 years old)

Obtaining cultural and social recognition in Spain is frequently seen as obtaining a new sense of belonging that is rooted in the local environment to which the participants must adapt. This process is illustrated by the theme of *belonging*. Irina reported:

Spain is a second homeland, as it were. I cannot imagine another life, only this one. This does not mean that I feel that I am Spanish, but the previous state is now passed and I feel that going back is impossible; you cannot turn back time. So, I feel that this is my second life . . . a new life. (Female, 40 years old)

Walsh and Horenczyk (2001) suggest that a sense of belonging is essential to maintain the continuity of identity between the old and new meanings and to achieve a sense of connectedness to the local community. According to them, the subtheme 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. Silvia reported that *'What is important is to work at something you like. Since I am employed as a secretary, I am happy'* (Woman, 45 years old).

For people who were educated under Romania's rigid and totalitarian controls, the category of citizenship has a very important and tangible significance. As such, official recognition of their status in the form of citizenship also allows the participants to validate their sense of belonging, claiming Spain to be *'a little my country'*. As a result of their success in reclaiming possession of their identity and in rebuilding their desired sense of themselves, many participants talked about their view of personal growth. This view is apparent principally in the answers to the following question: *Does the migration process influence how you see yourself as a person?* One of the most common concepts attributed by the interviewees to this change was the greater sense of confidence they had

acquired as a result of adapting to a new place of residence. As Liviu suggested:

First, I have changed greatly in terms of my principles; I look at myself and see that I have matured; in a way, I feel freer, more independent, more secure; my self-confidence has improved in that respect. Here, first of all, it was necessary to become stronger in order to survive . . . and not to stay at home crying. . . . In order to change, it is necessary to adapt to this kind of life, to the people around you. (Male, 38 years old)

In the discourse of the interviewees, it was noticed that there were different focuses and strategies used to reconstruct their identity and obtain new aptitudes to permit them to reclaim co-ownership of socio-cultural resources in Spanish society. As Yinger (1994) points out systems-level antecedent factors – situational, individual and interpersonal factors – combine as a net influence on an immigrant’s adaptive experience and identity change process. As a result, new meanings that articulated the framework of a potential mobile identity were created. These constructs were reflected by the transnational and cosmopolitan identity themes.

7. From home to home: Towards cosmopolitan identity

The Romanians interviewed in the last stage, appear to participate in a double process of identity: one process is that of the adoption or rejection of particular aspects of each culture, the other is that of the construction of a system of values on the basis of previous values (Zevallos 2008). Movement between the two processes of transnational identity reflects the fluidity of identity construction, in accord with the social restrictions imposed by the immediate environment. Doina mentioned that:

With my Spanish boyfriend, I act like a Spanish woman. With Romanians, I act like a Romanian. Well, it depends on whether a person changes automatically. All of my friends are like Spaniards. They joke in Spanish; their behavior is like that of a Spaniard. Maybe they think in Romanian, but they act like the Spanish. Then, there is change. A person can change in just an instant. It happens automatically. (Female, 21 years old)

Transnational ideas are, then, expressed within the identities of the people who arrived during the second stage through reunification with their families in Spain, but it is especially the case during the third stage

(2007–2009) that transnational identities are articulated. It is interesting to point out that the greater part of the participants, do not report assimilation strategies, although they do place a high emphasis on their cultural heritage along with the adoption of local values. In this way, Portes and Zhou (1993) introduced the concept of *segmented assimilation*, to describe the diverse possible outcomes of this process of adaptation, and point out that their prospects of adaptation cannot be gleaned from the experience of their parents.

Other participants, who came to Spain as a result of a personal decision to emigrate, do not follow the model of the transnational process. 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. According to Hannerz (1996), cosmopolitanism is an orientation, a willingness to engage the *Other*. It is characterized by an aesthetic and intellectual openness to divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts instead of uniformity. Similarly, D'Andrea (2007) conceived cosmopolitanism as a disposition favoring connectedness. Therefore, the qualities cosmopolitans have, transparency and holistic representation, are included in the notion of existential migration perceived by Madison (2006) as a necessity, as a possibility, for self-actualizing and for exploring foreign cultures in order to assess own identity and ultimately grapple with issues of home and belonging in the world generally. Therefore, within the framework of existential migration, the sub-theme of world citizenship appeared. In her discourse Bogdan observed:

I cannot compare myself to people 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. (Male, 29 years old)

For the same interviewees, 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 so important. Travel no longer causes nostalgia, nor does leaving places behind to find others. As Olivia pointed out:

I no longer cry at airports when I leave or meet someone. Each time, fewer people cry. It is true a part of me stays at home. Another part is here 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. (Female, 30 years old)

A weak link to the place of residence means a relative uprooting when neither the home country's culture, nor the new socio-cultural surroundings, are capable of providing a sense of community or a feeling of belonging (Colic-Peisker 2006). Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2008) identified this construction of identity as 'neither here nor there'.

Adrian pointed out that:

Now that we are officially in Europe, I travel widely. And I have, of course, friends in Romania and Spain, but my best friends are in both of those places. In the same way, . . . my place? I don't believe I have only one. I have a place in my country, another here, but my place is Europe. (Male, 30 years old)

Respondents appreciate the opening and flexibility of the border: '*Now we can move, save a lot of money on visas*'. '*There is no corruption at the border because we have freedom to travel*'. 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:

. . . Because if I want to go to my country on a Monday, I can even buy an airline ticket on the preceding Sunday night on the Internet. (Male, 28 years old)

They may navigate physically or virtually between two homes, by travel or by way of various forms of communication such as the Internet, web cameras or Skype, which actually allows them to see their family members and inside their home in the country of origin, since '*. . . now that I communicate via Skype, I can see how people move, as well as the things in my home, everything; I am here and there at the same time . . .*' (Man, 27 years old).

Thus, people construct and reconstruct while acquiring experience, and see in this their principal motor for building a place, a space for places and their complex identity in the world. Their mobility is fluid and the concept of loss may be replaced by other experiences and opportunities.

In this sense, European border dialogue is the key to understanding mobility as well as questions of identity, belonging and societal transformation.

8. Conclusions

The experiences which are observed in this paper show that migration/mobility and place – that left behind in the country of origin and the new place in the receiving country – are essential factors in the reconstruction

of identity in the twenty-first century. In this process, the *present-absent* border (Paasi 2001; Gielis 2009) and the perception that immigrants have of it play the principal role.

First, we can say that immigrants' stage of migration linked to a specific policy regarding the opening of EU borders has an influence on the (re)construction of immigrant identity. It has been noted how interviewees who emigrated to Spain during the first migration stage of the post-dictatorship era long most frequently to find the stability of a home, and to find their self-identity in a particular place such as their country. It is also true that negotiating their identity by seeking employment corresponding to their training and condition as immigrants did not allow them to reconstruct a new identity, and so to a great extent they maintained their initial marks of identity. Immigrants of the second wave have (re)composed an identity that is situated between two senses of belonging, where freedom of circulation has reaffirmed their sense of self in the destination country. This freedom facilitated the negotiation of their identity and the recreation of a sense of competence, principally through professional advancement. The interviewees forming the third wave move continuously between Spain, Romania and other parts of the world, manifesting transnational, mobile and cosmopolitan identity. However, as Castles (2012: 8) reminds us, the cosmopolitan dream of free mobility in a competitive EU labor market usually linked to the idea of cultural openness and growing acceptance of diversity seems far from the experience of most workers. It may hold for a small elite (although even for the highly qualified discrimination is not wholly absent; Xiang 2007) but it is certainly not the rule for most migrant workers.

Secondly, we note the important role played by borders, their flexibility and openness, in the (re)construction of identities in a mobile world. An open border transformed the citizens and conditioned their negotiation of identity. While identities are defined and limited by borders, people need to be able to cross them in order to maintain or reconstruct their identities. Therefore, we can place mobile immigrants within this fluid network that is the EU border (Rumford 2006). They cross it as 'border beings' who, while overcoming initial precariousness and without ceasing to be foreigners, take the culture of their own country while taking on the new one. They have, therefore, become citizens of the world who communicate with the border, accept it and overcome it. This dialogue is what explains circulation and return as components within the framework of the current mechanisms of mobility within the border space that has been created by EU policy.

Thirdly, in order for migrants to reconstruct a European global identity in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to facilitate their mobility. Thus, I claim that transnational relationships affect identity (re)construction.

The greater the mobility, the greater the feeling of cosmopolitan identity. The last stage of mobility between Romania and Spain has created a European mobile citizen who is seeking work strategies in any country of the EU with help from established networks. In the current situation a more cosmopolitan view is needed instead of the established concept of place. In this way, the paper suggests that this can be achieved by understanding place as a cumulative archive of personal experience that is not bound with any specific location.

I conclude that human movement enriches identity by offering new codes of behavior and learning that transform individuals. For now, the data obtained in the interviews shows 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.

Finally, I suggest that the situation of Romanians and their identity reconstruction in a wider Europe calls for more research and for researchers from EU, Romania, and Spain to join forces and approach this multifarious phenomenon from many angles and perspectives.

Acknowledgements

This article comes as a result of the research project entitled: 'Eastern European migration to Spain in the context of border geopolitics: circulatory mobility and return' (CSO 2010-14870), with funding from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and coordination by the author. I wish to express my gratitude to all of the Romanians migrants who shared their stories with me in the course of this research.

References

- Ban, C. (2012) 'Economic transnationalism and its ambiguities: The case of Romanian migration to Italy', *International Migration* 50(6): 129–149.
- Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N. and Szanton Blanc, C. (1994) *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-states*, Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.
- Bauman, Z. (2001) *The Individualised Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (2002) 'Cosmopolitan society and its enemies', *Theory, Culture and Society* 19(1–2): 17–44.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3: 77–101.

- Caldas-Coulthard, C. R. and Iedema, R. (2008) *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Colic-Peisker, V. (2006) 'Ethnic and cosmopolitan transnationalism: Two cohorts of Croatian immigrants in Australia', *Migracijske I Etničke Teme* 22(3): 211–30.
- Coulthard, M. (2008) 'By their words shall ye know them: On linguistic identity', in C. R. Caldas-Coulthard and R. Iedema (eds), *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 143–55.
- Castles, S. (2012) 'Cosmopolitanism and freedom? Lessons of the global economic crisis', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33(11): 1843–52.
- D'Andrea, A. (2007) *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*, New York: Routledge.
- Diminescu, D. and Lazaroiu, S. (2002) *Circulatory Migration of Labour Forces from Romania*, IOM.
- Easthope, H. (2009) 'Fixed identities in a mobile world? The relationship between mobility, place and identity', *Identities* (16)1: 61–82.
- Elrick, T. and Ciobanu, O. (2009) 'Migration networks and policy impacts: Insights from Romanian-Spanish migrations', *Global Networks* 9(1): 100–16.
- Ernste, H., van Houtum, H. and Zoomers, A. (2009) 'Transworld: Debating the place and borders of places in the age of transnationalism', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 100(5): 567–77.
- Ezzy, D. (2002) *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation*, Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.
- Faist, T. (2000) *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Favell, A. (2008) 'The new face of east-west migration in Europe', *Journal of Ethnic Migration Studies* 34(5): 701–16.
- Foner, N. (2003) 'Introduction: Anthropology and contemporary immigration to the United States – where we have been and where we are going', in N. Foner (ed.), *American Arrivals: Anthropology Engages the New Immigration*, Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, pp. 3–44.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gielis, R. (2009) 'Borders make the difference: Migrant transnationalism as a border experience', *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 100(5): 598–609.
- Gieryn, T. (2000) 'A space for place in sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 463–96.
- Grbich, C. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*, London: Sage.

- Hannerz, U. (1996) *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, New York: Routledge.
- INE (Spanish National Institute for Statistics) *Population Register, national results*, 1996–2009 and 2012. <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20/e245&file=inebase&L=1> accessed 2 September 2012.
- Jacobson, M. F. (2002) *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Johnson, C., Jones, R., Paasi, A., Amoore, L., Mountz, A., Salter, M. and Rumford, C. (2011) 'Interventions on rethinking 'the border' in border Studies Political Geography', *Political Geography* 30(2): 61–9.
- Krzyżanowski, M. and Wodak, R. (2008) 'Multiple identities, migration and belonging: Voices of migrants', in C. R. Caldas-Coulthard and R. Iedema (eds), *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 95–119.
- Madison, G. (2006) 'Existential migration', *Existential Analysis* 17: 238–60.
- Marcu, S. (2012) 'Emotions on the move: Belonging, sense of place and feelings identities among young Romanian immigrants in Spain', *Journal of Youth Studies* 15(2): 207–23.
- Martínez Guillem, S. (2011) 'European identity: Across which lines? Defining Europe through public discourses on the Roma', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 4(1): 23–41.
- Mason, J. (2004) 'Personal narratives, relational selves: Residential histories in the living and telling', *The Sociological Review* 52(2): 162–79.
- Massey, D. (1995) 'The conceptualization of place', in D. Massey and J. Pat (eds), *A Place in the World?: Places, Cultures and Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meinhof, U. H. (2002) *Living (with) Borders: Identity Discourses on East-West Border in Europe*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Milligan, M. (2003) 'Displacement and identity discontinuity: The role of nostalgia in establishing new identity categories', *Symbolic Interaction* 26(3): 381–403.
- NISR (National Institute of Statistics Romania) (2010) *Statistical Yearbook 2010, Time series 1990–2009*. http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/Anuar%20statistic/02/02%20Populatie_en.pdf accessed 4 October 2012.
- Paasi, A. (2001) 'Europe as a social process and discourse: Considerations of place, boundaries and identity', *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8(1): 7–28.
- Portes, A. and Zhou, M. (1993) 'The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530(1): 74–96.

- Report from the Commission to the Council (2011) 'On the functioning of the transitional arrangements on free movement of workers from Bulgaria and Romania', Brussels, 11.11.2011 COM(2011) 729 final.
- Rumford, C. (2006) 'Theorizing borders', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9(2): 155–69.
- Sandu, D. (2006) *Living Abroad on a Temporary Basis. The Romanians and the Economic Migration: 1990–2006*, Bucuresti: OSF.
- Sigalas, E. (2011) 'Cross-border mobility and European identity: The effectiveness of intergroup contact during the Erasmus abroad', *European Union Politics* 11(2): 241–65.
- Soja, E. (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Therborn, G. (1995) *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945–2000*, London: Sage.
- Tsaliki, L. (2007) 'The construction of European identity and citizenship through cultural policy', *European Studies: A Journal of European Culture* 24: 157–82.
- Vertovec, S. (2001) 'Transnationalism and identity', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27(4): 573–82.
- Viruela, R. (2011) 'The Romanian migrants in Spain. An exceptional migratory flow', *International Review of Social Research* 1(1): 31–59.
- Walsh, S. D. and Horenczyk, G. (2001) 'Gendered patterns of experience in social and cultural transition: The case of English-speaking immigrants in Israel', *Sex Roles* 45(7/8): 501–29.
- White, R. and Wyn, J. (2004) *Youth and Society: Exploring the Social Dynamics of Youth Experience*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Xiang, B. (2007) *Global 'Body Shopping': An Indian Labor System in the Information Technology Industry*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Yinger, J. M. (1994) *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* New York: State University of New York Press.
- Zevallos, Z. (2008) "'You have to be Anglo and not look like me": Identity and belonging among young women of Turkish and Latin American backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia', *Australian Geographer* 39(1): 21–43.
- Zournazi, M. (1998) 'Out of bounds: Inauthentic spaces and the production of identities', in M. Zournazi (ed.), *Foreign Dialogues: Memories, Translations, Conversations*, Annandale, New South Wales: Pluto Press, pp. 153–67.

Silvia Marcu, Ph.D. Postdoctoral Researcher 'Ramón y Cajal' (RYC 2009-03834) For the last decade conducting research into international

EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

migration, identity and mobility: Frontiers and flows of immigration from Eastern Europe to Spain; Studies of Geopolitics: Eastern Europe, Russia, European Union (EU) and International Relations.

Address for correspondence: Dr. Silvia Marcu, Instituto de Economía, Geografía y Demografía, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Madrid, Spain.
E-mail: silvia.marcu@cchs.csic.es