

**Aspirations of belonging. A study of Romanians in London  
and Paris.**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

Despite the salience of migrants' everyday social lives, there remains a paucity of evidence on how individuals both racialise and are racialised. The purpose of the thesis was to explore how Romanian migrants' senses of belonging towards the sending and receiving country are shaped by their social encounters in London or Paris. The qualitative comparative nature of the study sheds light on the relations and differences between these locations and on how the variations in migrants' lived experiences reveal different senses of belonging. The original empirical data was collected during fieldwork in London and Paris between September 2013 and June 2014. It was generated through semi-structured qualitative interviews with a total of 64 participants as well as 12 informants in order to understand and interpret Romanians' social worlds. The interpretation of the data contributes to an exploration of Romanians' determinants of migration, as well as their experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the host societies.

It is argued that Romanian respondents' home aspirations are believed to be materialised through migration. However, understandings of 'home' through everyday lived experiences in London and Paris evolve to conceptualise 'home' as a fantasy. In the process, belonging is brought into question through perceptions of (non-) belonging as a result of social encounters with the mainstream.

Consequently, another aspect explored is the processes through which Romanians hope to achieve mainstream inclusion. Using the analytic lens of critical whiteness studies, Romanians' relational strategies are examined. These 'whitening' strategies aim at both socio-culturally elevating their own persona and at racially marginalising those perceived as 'others', in order for the participants to become 'whitened'. Lastly, the thesis engages with participants' institutional approaches deemed beneficial in Romanians' journey to overcome their vulnerable status. It investigates interviewees' reasons for (not) taking up the nationality of the host country and how their considerations of political belonging are validated or contested by the majority. The study identified that for the Romanians interviewed, the process of migration evolved from a quest for a personal home, to a quest for belonging.

Key words: Romanian migration, belonging, social encounters, whiteness, home, passport.

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## Introduction

In 2007, France and Britain<sup>1</sup> granted restricted entry to Romanians and Bulgarians, with limitations in place for employment and study. In January 2014, both the UK and France fully opened their doors to Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants, lifting these free movement restrictions. As such, the study of Romanians in the UK and France is empirically and theoretically important due to its timely nature.

Politically, the immigration of Romanians to Britain has been a contentious issue over the past five years, particularly in the UK, where the tabloid press and UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party), the far right wing party held an exclusionary and racist rhetoric against Romanians. Tabloids, such as The Sun warned against mass migration from Romania and Bulgaria: "A TIDAL wave of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants is threatening to swamp Britain — and flood our overstretched jobs market" (Francis 2012). In parallel, in a statement, Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader made discriminatory comments regarding Romanian immigrants: "Any normal and fair-minded person would have a perfect right to be concerned if a group of Romanian people suddenly moved in next door" (BBC 2014). Across the Channel, politicians and the media have centred their attention on the cultural aspects of the Romanian Roma, with less attention paid to the economic impacts on the French job market. In an interview in September 2013, Manuel Valls, the then French Prime Minister, declared that "[The Roma from Romania and Bulgaria] have a totally different lifestyle from ours', and [these lifestyles] clash" (Beaudoux 2013).

From a theoretical perspective, the Romanian diaspora deserves its own body of literature. The reason is threefold. Firstly, due to the large numbers of Romanians across the world (over ten million individuals), this community should be studied and understood in its own right, rather than being conflated with other Eastern European groups. Secondly, the research to date on Romanians has tended to be located in the Spanish and Italian context, and it has been mostly restricted to the study of low skilled Romanians (and Roma Romanians). So far, there is very little understanding of the lives of high-skilled Romanians, with a few exceptions (Culic 2010 and Nedelcu 2009 for the Canadian context, Moroşanu et al. 2013 for the British context,). Thirdly, although there are social, economic and political patterns across Eastern European countries due to the shared communist legacy,

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the terms Britain and United Kingdom (UK) are used interchangeably.

Romanians differ from these groups in at least two aspects. On the one hand, their Latin roots enable them to feel close to the West, particularly to France, Spain, Italy and Portugal due to an imagined shared culture, which seems to 'enlighten' Romanians' self-perceived social position in the West. On the other hand, the presence of the Roma minority in Romania escalates into the Roma-Romanian amalgam outside of Romanian borders, which 'darkens' their quotidian experiences in the host societies.

This thesis analyses the lives of both low and high-skilled Romanians in two under-researched settings. It argues that Romanians' migratory trajectories evolve from aspirational home to aspirational belonging. Therefore, it differentiates between 'home', which is a felt relationship with the self and is lived as a detachment from society, and 'belonging', experienced as relational, because it is lived through everyday encounters with the mainstream.

## **Contextualising Romanian migration: migratory trajectories, stages and profile**

Romania has a long history of migration, which dates back to the 1970s when, despite Romanians not being allowed to leave the country, the government agreed that a small number of people would be allowed to travel to Russia, the German Democratic Republic, Libya, Egypt and Iraq for work purposes (Safta et al. 2014:2550-2551). Towards the second half of the 1980s, many Romanians (such as intellectuals) attempted to illegally leave the country due to the increasingly oppressive life under the communist regime (Constantin et al. 2004). Despite this, Romanians are considered to be part of a new cohort of migrants in the European Union (EU), as they only started to migrate in high numbers to other EU countries after the fall of communism, in 1989. Before, only ethnic minorities (mainly Germans and Hungarians) were allowed to leave the country. However, it was only in 2007 that the numbers of Romanians in other EU countries (mainly Spain and Italy) increased, as Romania joined the EU, which allowed limited free movement within the EU. They then became the 'new Europeans' (Favell 2008b, McDowell 2009), alongside with Bulgarians and the Accession 8 countries<sup>2</sup>.

There is great uncertainty regarding the numbers of Romanians in Western Europe, but there were estimated to be approximately 2,769,400 in 2010, which accounts

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<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, the abbreviation A8 will be used to refer to Accession 8 countries that joined the EU in 2004. These are: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. In contrast, A2 (Accession 2) refers to Romania and Bulgaria, countries which joined the EU in 2007.

for approximately 13% of the Romanian population (Militaru 2013), compared to 1,244,052 in 2005 (International Organisation for Migration 2008). Worldwide, Romanian diaspora is approximately ten million individuals, taking into account the Romanians who emigrated between the two wars and during the communist regime. High emigration rates, together with low fertility rates, places Romania in a group of countries expected to have their population decline by more than 15 per cent by 2050 (United Nations 2015). In total, a third of Romanian citizens live outside of Romania (Trandafoiu 2013:7). A survey carried out in 2006 found that more than one third of Romanian households had at least one member working abroad (Sandu et al. 2006). Moreover, almost a third of the adult population from Romania has worked abroad at least once in their lives (Sandu 2010:12). Romania is therefore an important sending-country, whilst considered as being unattractive for immigrants. In 2005 (only date available), only 0.6 per cent of the Romanian population was represented by immigrants. The main countries of origin of immigrants are Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia and Syria (International Organisation for Migration 2008). This is even more interesting since, according to a study by Andreescu and Alexandru (2007), 81 per cent of Romanians declared that they would prefer to live in Romania. This suggests that for most of them emigration is not a choice, but rather a necessity due to the Romanian economic and political landscape.

Sandu (2010, see also Ban 2012) distinguishes between five stages in the character of Romanian migration which occurred after the fall of the communist regime (1989). The first stage took place between 1990 and 1995 and is defined by a massive exodus of the ethnic German population, but also Hungarians and Jews, who returned to areas of origin. Another pattern emerged, represented by Romanian emigration to Germany, Turkey and Israel for employment purposes. Romanians would work in the host country for fixed periods of time and were not joined by their families due to the strict guest worker policy. In Turkey, since the job prospects were modest, Romanians were involved in circular migration, journeys during which garments would be bought and subsequently sold in Romania.

During the second phase (1996-2001), emigration levels grew to approximately seven percent of the population (compared to five percent in the previous phase). The most popular destination countries became Italy and Spain, which received approximately 31 per cent of Romanian migrants, the majority of whom were low skilled young men involved in informal or illegal sectors (Andrén and Roman 2016:9). Other countries favoured by Romanian migrants in this period were the US, Canada and Australia, as well as Germany, Austria and France.

The migration outflows increased during the third stage (2002-2006), prompted by the availability of Schengen visas and triggered interest in Italy, Spain and Germany. From 2002 onwards, Romanian nationals could enter Schengen countries<sup>3</sup> if they met one of the following criteria: they had enough economic resources for the duration of their stay; they were in the receipt of an invitation from a person or an institution from the country of arrival; or possessed a hotel reservation and a return ticket (Elrick and Ciobanu 2009:105). Visas were still required for stays longer than three months or for work purposes. The structure of the emigrating population was relatively homogeneous: men and women emigrated in similar numbers, from both urban and rural areas. It is estimated that in 2006, 777,200 Romanians emigrated (Sandu 2010).

A fourth phase starts in 2007, when Romania joined the EU, and Romanian nationals were allowed to seek employment within the EU despite some work restrictions in place until the 1st of January 2014 in multiple Western European countries, such as France and Britain. As well as economic migrants wishing to work in the destination countries, many students went to Canada, the US and Western Europe and did not return (Suciu 2010). The migration numbers increased from 2,200,000 in 2006 to a total of 2,700,000 in 2007 (Sandu 2010) and Romanians became the most mobile citizens in EU, followed by Poles and Germans.

During this period, Germany, Spain and Italy saw an increase in the numbers of Romanians arriving. Immigration data available from the Italian National Institute for Statistics suggests that at the end of 2007, the number of Romanian residents was 1,016,000, three times more than in 2006. Similarly, in Spain, in January 2008 there were 729,000 Romanians, 38 per cent more than in 2007 (Suciu 2010). Italy and Spain account for almost 8 per cent of the Romanian population outside of the country (Militaru 2013). This is explained by the language proximity and the easy integration within the labour market, as Romanians did not need to be in the possession of legal documents to take up work, since both countries regularised undocumented migrants (Trandafoiu 2013:6). The decline in Romania's population is believed to have peaked in 2008, when the Minister for Labour declared that "Romania is confronted with a situation of crisis on the labour market, this phenomenon being a consequence of the migration process" (Erdei 2008, cited in Stan 2009:7).

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<sup>3</sup> All European countries with the exception of Britain and Ireland.

Despite the economic crisis in Western Europe, and particularly in Spain and Italy, Romanians did not return in mass to Romania, largely due to the lack of economic stability and uncertainty regarding their opportunity to re-emigrate. Romanian migrants are prone to multiple migrations towards other host countries and remigrations between the country of origin and the host society<sup>4</sup>, which challenges the assumption that migration is one-way and permanent. Numerous participants in this study had already lived (and worked or studied) in Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta, Germany or France before coming to the UK. The participants from Paris were less likely to have experienced previous migration before arriving in France, with only a handful of respondents having lived in Spain, Hungary and Belgium prior to their arrival in Paris. Multiple migration (or 'serial migration' as Ossman 2006 coins it) shows Romanians' adaptability to labour markets in that they choose future migrations on the basis of the demand for their skills. In other words, the capacity of localities to ensure successful laboral integration prevails over cultural or linguistic characteristics. If economic opportunities are not found upon arrival, Romanians are prepared to move on to a different location (see also Ciobanu 2015).

Lastly, the fifth phase took place following the liberalisation of EU border controls and the lifting of administrative barriers on the 1st of January 2014. The predicted arrival of many Romanians and Bulgarians in Britain at this time rejuvenated public concerns regarding economic migration and security issues.

Romanian emigrants represent a diverse group in terms of education and professional skills. 86.2 per cent of the Romanians living abroad have secondary education, while 12.4 per cent are university educated (Goschin et al. 2013:192). Three different profiles of Romanian emigrants can be distinguished, contingent on the migratory channels selected (see also Andr n and Roman 2016:9).

Firstly, a significant number of highly educated young people emigrated to Canada, United States and Australia to pursue their studies or work in high skilled employment. Due to the strict selection process, which is not found in Europe (on account of free movement), the overall Romanian flow is much smaller. In 2007 the population of Romanians in Canada was estimated at around 80,000 (Tudoroiu 2007). Robila (2013) found that Romanian immigrants are the highest earners

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<sup>4</sup> The changing role of Romania, Britain and France throughout participants' life course reflects their understanding of both societies as not binary opposites. The shifting orientations crafted by participants are further analysed in Chapters Four and Five. Despite this and due to a limited number of concepts available, throughout this thesis, the terms 'sending country' and 'country of birth' are used interchangeably to mean 'Romania'. Similarly, 'host country', 'receiving context', 'context of reception' and 'context of destination' are used interchangeably to refer to 'France' or 'Britain'.

amongst the Eastern European migrants in North America, with an average income of over \$50,000. High-skilled Romanians are present in science and technology sectors and education or health services. The 2008 economic crisis saw a massive brain drain amongst the Romanian population, with IT professionals and medical doctors emigrating to the USA, Canada, as well as Ireland, France and Britain (Militaru 2013).

The second profile is represented by Romanians settling in Western Europe. The absence of entry barriers allowed many individuals with medium or low level qualifications and specialisations such as para-medical personnel and nurses to enter France and Britain. Within the British job market, it has been suggested (Glennie and Pennington 2013) that Romanians are generally skilled and tend to be concentrated in London and the South East. Furthermore, 60 per cent of Romanians and Bulgarians who come to the UK have an intermediate qualification and 18 per cent have a high educational qualification.

Lastly, the third group of Romanians with no qualifications tend to be traditionally found in Spain and Italy in the building, hospitality or care sectors. According to Diminescu (2004), many Romanians emigrating to France would fall under this category, as their activities consist of begging or selling newspapers on the street.

The key objective of this doctoral thesis is to explore, using a social relations lens, the relationship between Romanians' migratory experiences in London and Paris and their attachments to the sending and receiving societies. More precisely it aims to assess how belonging is negotiated in the aftermath of exclusionary discourses that Romanians are often subject to. The 2007 EU expansion to include Romania and Bulgaria, as well as the economic crisis which followed a couple of years later, generated the creation of new migration flows in Western Europe.

The removal of transitional labour market controls for Romanian nationals meant that they shortly became targets of public hostility in Britain. Between December 2013 and December 2014, 19 British newspapers published 4,000 articles mentioning Romanians (Vicol and Allen 2014). The majority of these stories were related to the socio-economic and ethnic profiles of Romanian citizens. Indeed, a group largely absent from public and political discourse before 2012, became within months, a threatening group in the eyes of both politicians and the wider public. In the French context, Romania's image was tarnished in the early 1950s, mainly due to its link with the Soviet empire and the communist regime. At present, most of the French media and political parties' attention has been directed towards Romanian Roma who mostly live in squalid camps which are regularly demolished and then rebuilt, with the Roma being regularly deported to the countries of provenience. Likewise, in 2008 in Spain, 61 per cent of the population had a negative opinion

about Romanians, while in Italy, Romanians have become 'the new black people' (Sandu 2010), mainly due to Romanian's EU ascension, which triggered large waves of emigration to Italy of Romanian Romas. These stigmatising accounts are reported by the Romanian newspapers quoting Western media and led to the Romanian population becoming aware of their perception abroad.

The prejudices Central and Eastern Europeans are subject to date back to the post war years, when approximately 600,000 European 'aliens' were recruited to work in Britain under the European Volunteer Workers (EVW) programme (Tannahill 1958, Kay and Miles 1992). Despite the terminology used, EVWs were, in fact, a free labour force who found themselves in manual work. Women were mainly working as domestic workers in tuberculosis sanatoriums and men were given jobs in the textile, steel and iron industry, or in coal mining or agriculture. Their white and clean appearance made them both desirable and invisible in post war Britain (McDowell 2008).

Todorova (1997) explains how Western media and politics, soon after the fall of communism, associated Romania with Balkanisation, tribalism and barbarity, which was in part due to the West's inaccurate geographical knowledge about Romania's position in Europe. Similarly, in touristic narrations, Romania was imagined displaying savage but beautiful landscapes, which permitted Westerners to reaffirm the superiority and the homogeneity of the West (Trandafoiu 2013).

Thus, Romanians' recognition as strangers occurs even before social contact with the 'locals' from the host country takes place, and not as a result of it (Ahmed 2000:3). These events have triggered complexes of inferiority culminating in an "underlying moral and psychological crisis in the Romanian collective consciousness" (Trandafoiu 2013:28). Many Romanians choose the countries they travel to and/or emigrate to on the basis of perceived discrimination. Above all, this shows how attitudes to migration are influenced by political and economic factors, and it indicates that categories of race and ethnicity represent social constructs fluctuating over time.

Migrants are often located at the very bottom of labour markets in Western societies and tend to have highly precarious work experiences (Standing 2011, Lewis et al. 2015). A much maligned group, Romanian immigrants are customarily portrayed by French and British public discourse as embodying socio-economic precarity. This precarity is twofold. Firstly, it refers to the instability and uncertainty they experience in their working lives (Waite 2009). Secondly, many Romanians working in low skilled sectors (such as building and cleaning) did not have legal immigration documents prior to January 2014. By the time the research was conducted in Paris and London, the immigration rules relaxed. Even so, many low skilled Romanians

were unsure about the validity of the new law and were still hoping to apply for a 'carte de séjour'.

## **Methodological approaches**

Understanding migrants' social experiences in the labour market, in their neighbourhood and in the private sphere, sheds light on the bonds and allegiances to the city they are physically in and clarifies the link between their experiences as local actors and their affiliations to sending and receiving societies. Cities represent platforms where the intersection between migrants' paths to integration and the broader neoliberal processes they are part of (Glick Schiller and Çaglar 2009), such as cross-border practices and affiliations, takes place.

Methodologically, since precarity is an inevitable feature of Romanian migration, the first challenge I had to overcome as a researcher was the purpose of the project, that of exploring the social lives of the Romanians interviewed. Is there room for social experiences in economically-driven migration? And if so, how can they be captured in research? The data collection was also made difficult by intra-community factors.

Furthermore, the shared communist past positioned me as an insider and it was not always understood as to why I would conduct research on co-nationals. Distrust amongst Romanians is a legacy of communist rule, a historical period during which all institutions were seen as belonging to the political apparatus. People feared all types of public organisations due to the social control they exerted. As Mishler and Rose (1997:420) argue,

*[t]otal control of social life could not be achieved, but the combination of involuntary participation and the official proscription of independent organisations created a disjunction between state-recognised political and civil institutions and the institutions that individuals actually trusted.*

The attempt to control the masses was undertaken through the infamous secret police ('the Securitate'), which used informers spying on the population and storing files on them. This created distrust in civil and political institutions and protection of the private space.

As such, Romania's communist legacy and authoritarian past triggered high levels of distrust and scepticism amongst those who had experienced the communist rule and the memory of this time was still fresh in their minds. Many of the participants interviewed were in their 40s or older, and had lived a significant portion of their lives under a regime characterised by almost total control of peoples' lives through 'the Securitate'. The consequence of this abiding distrust in the political system

(and those seen as having a link with it) meant that during my fieldwork, I was often perceived as a civil servant, and thus, regarded with suspicion. Some participants associated the research project with political surveys or the Romanian government in some way and therefore questioned the purpose of the study. In a study of post-communist Bulgaria, Pehlivanova (2009) noted that, in post-communist countries, personal contacts generate trust, rather than institutions. Since national political and civil institutions do not perform well and are unlikely to be transparent, the population finds alternative forms of institutions to trust, formed by social relations.

In a similar manner, most of the studies which have focused on East Europeans' position in the labour market, have a common finding outlining the paradox between their high level of education and their precarious position on the labour market. Although these migrants tend to be highly educated (Blanchflower and Lawton 2009), they are often found in low-skilled (Drinkwater et al. 2009) and '3D' jobs, involving dirty, dangerous and dull tasks (Favell 2008b). As these are often positions not wanted by the locals, the 'new Europeans' are therefore in danger of becoming "a new Victorian servant class for a West European aristocracy of creative-class professionals and university-educated working mums" (Favell 2008b:711).

In her study on Poles and Lithuanians in the UK, Parutis (2011), adopts a more positive stance in order to contradict the common assumptions regarding their precarious positions. She argues that Eastern Europeans are mobile within the labour market which reveals their search for progress and ability to move easily from 'any job' when they arrive to the UK to the 'ideal job' once their English language skills have improved. Amongst the London-based participants in the study, I only came across two participants who had a university degree from a Romanian public university and were still working in low skilled employment at the time of the interview: as a sommelier and hotel receptionist. Others, although they had worked in sectors such as the building industry when they first arrived in London, had eventually secured high skilled positions such as IT technicians. In France, two participants, despite university degrees and further studies in France, were still found in low-skilled employment, with one participants working as a nanny and another one as a shop assistant. This is one of the very few studies (see also Moroşanu 2015a) which engages with the lives of both low and high skilled Romanians in Western Europe.

## **Aims and research questions**

This study makes two claims. Firstly, while I initially planned to study migrants' attachments in the context of their transnational ties, the interviews revealed that

social encounters with the mainstream, rather than transnational connections, were of chief importance in migrants' constructions of belonging. Thus, this research contributes to the body of literature (see Yuval-Davis 2011, Anthias 2008, May 2013) highlighting the relational nature of belonging. In contrast, the concept of home refers to self-centred aspects of migrants' lives reflected by personal aspirations. The notion of belonging refers to migrants' position vis-a-vis the host country communities. Home refers to migrants' ideals in their dynamism: pre-migration and during migration.

Drawing on the importance of belonging in understanding the subjectivity of individual experiences, the second argument put forward is that belonging and home-making strategies represent a lens through which we can investigate migrants' pursuit of modernisation. Conceptualising home as aspirational provides insights into respondents' interpretation of Romanian modernity. Relational belonging, which implies migrants' understanding of processes of inclusion and exclusion, reveal insights into practices of modernity. Thus, migratory experiences and constructions of belonging reveal Romanians' aspirations to modernity and their role in the process of Romanian nation-building.

The questions underpinning this research project aim to contribute to migrants' understandings of belonging and social relations.

The central research question in this thesis asks how do social encounters influence Romanians' senses of belonging towards the country of origin and the host society.

The key theoretical question focuses on the relationship between social relations and belonging for transnational migrants.

In particular, this thesis will examine the following four sub-questions:

1. How do processes of inclusion/exclusion through social interactions affect Romanian migrants?
2. How do Romanian migrants understand the meaning of home as a result of migration?
3. How do power relations play out in Romanians' negotiation of belonging and their aspirations to modernity?
4. What are the drivers for Romanians' naturalisation as Western European citizens?

The aims and research questions underpin the organisation of the study, which is considered next.

## **Structure of the thesis**

The theoretical framework of the study is explored in Chapter One. It contextualises the conceptual underpinnings which support this thesis by investigating how inclusion and exclusion operate through belonging, social relations and whiteness.

Chapter Two proceeds to outline the methodological and philosophical approaches underpinning the investigation of Romanians' lived experiences in London and Paris. It dedicates a considerable amount of attention to my negotiating of insider-outsider status and the ethics involved. The main contribution of this thesis lies in its empirical element, which is organised around the remaining five chapters.

Chapter Three begins the empirical analysis by contextualising Romanian emigration. It investigates the drivers and consequences of migration, which frame the current socio-economic Romanian climate. It then focuses on the place of the Roma in Romanians' discourses, the racialisation of whom often represents a vindication of participants' white European identities. The Romanian socio-economic and ethnic components provide an insight into Romanians' feelings of inferiority and perceived lack of modernity on a global scale. These are complemented by a view into the context of arrival from an employment legislation perspective and the Romanian civic platform which reiterates the necessity of individual acts towards Romanian nation-building.

The discussion in Chapter Four covers the meaning Romanians attribute to the notion of home. It argues that home is experienced as a modern aspiration defined by family relations and economic security, neoliberal characteristics which can be both longed for and achieved through migration. Home is defined as a site of material and affective practices which represent migrants' perception of their place in society based on personal achievements resulting from their own aspirations prior to migration.

Chapter Five then asks how social encounters in the public, parochial and private spheres influence migrants' connections to the sending and receiving society through the prism of their negotiation of ethnic and social belonging. Unlike home, which does not entail acceptance of migrants' presence in the receiving society by the dominant group, belonging is about migrants' understanding of their place in society based on everyday encounters with the mainstream. Social encounters with locals have the potential to forge a sense of belonging to the host society. In parallel, they influence participants' understanding of their own sameness and difference in relation to the mainstream and shape the negotiation of their ethnic belonging.

Romanians understand their ethnic otherness and non-belonging to the mainstream through their everyday social interactions.

In Chapter Six, the analysis shifts to the ways in which Romanians engage in relational whitening strategies with the aim of being included in the dominant group. Ethnic and racial boundaries are erected between themselves and the others perceived as non-belonging to the mainstream. In parallel, Romanians' work ethnic and white skins are used as whitening tools which allows them to feel included and contribute to the Romanian practices of nation-building.

Chapter Seven continues to explore Romanians' struggles for recognition as modern European individuals, with focus on the institutional dimension. It focuses on migrants' motivations for French and British naturalisation, such as visa-free travel and fantasies of inclusion into the mainstream from an institutional perspective.

This study endeavours to investigate migrants' personal testimonies of inclusion and exclusion during migratory experiences particularly with respect to social relations in the host country. A focus on social relations reveals migrants' ties with both the sending and receiving societies and it provides insights into migrants' accounts of (non-)belonging to modernity.

## **Chapter One**

### **Migrants' lived experiences in the host country. Perspectives from literature.**

#### **Introduction**

Immigrant integration into the host society has long been discussed. In Western Europe, it is broadly conceptualised as social cohesion and it developed in parallel with the formation of modern nation-states. It often refers to how immigrants integrate into society and whether they become assimilated into the culture of the host country and identify with the new country (Loch 2014:624). In times of economic crisis, like the post 2008 recession, immigrants' integration is highly questioned by the leaders of the countries they reside in. Populist parties such as UKIP and the French Front National (FN) find the space to express their views regarding migrants' failure to integrate and their threat to national economic and cultural wealth. As such, many European leaders such as David Cameron, Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel talked in 2011 about the failure of multiculturalism and the importance of integration due to the fact that "in all our democracies we focused too much on the identity of the one who was coming [here] and not enough on the identity of the host country" (Sarkozy 2011, cited in Eq. 2011).

The aim of the chapter is to contextualise the theories which underpin this thesis by investigating how inclusion and exclusion operate through belonging, social relations and whiteness. The first part of the chapter examines the notions of inclusion and exclusion and the forms these take through the lens of social relations and whiteness studies. The second part of the chapter unpacks the concept of belonging, by focusing on its emotional and political dimensions.

#### **The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion**

This section ties together the common theories regarding migrant inclusion and exclusion. It begins by exploring the elements that may contribute to migrants' acceptance and rejection in the context of destination. It then moves on to the importance of social interactions in individual's quotidian lives. The final section highlights the theoretical approach used in this thesis to unpack respondents' contested presence and identity.

## **Migrants' integration in the host country, between inclusion and exclusion**

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

In other words, it may be that for Romanians, who, at the time of the research were not yet ‘free movers’ in all respects, the concept of integration may still be relevant, due to their status as ‘othered’ immigrants. Using a transnational perspective, Faist et al. (2013) understand integration as ‘co-integration’, which refers to a process that happens ‘here and there’, at various levels and within different groups. This view challenges both assimilationist approaches, which focus on the role of the country of origin and multiculturalist approaches, which essentialise immigrants’ culture and do not account for immigrants’ differences based on various social categories such as class, age, gender, ethnicity etc. Similarly, Gsir (2014) prefers the term ‘co-integration’, as it accounts better for the reciprocal nature of social relations between immigrants and the members of the host country.

In addition, many scholars distinguish between various forms of integration, such as structural integration and socio-cultural integration. While the former refers to immigrants’ participation in social institutions, the latter is described as the socio-cultural contacts immigrants maintain with the host society (see Engbersen 2003 for an overview). This study explores the socio-cultural integration of Romanian immigrants in London and Paris. The term ‘socio-cultural integration’ is understood to mean “the social and cultural distance between ethnic minorities and the indigenous majority” (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007:806). The elements of socio-cultural integration significant for this study take place in migrants’ daily lives in the host country, and refer to their experiences at the workplace, neighbourhood, as

well as at the city level. These daily lived experiences influence their senses of attachment to the host country and country of origin. As such, this study is concerned with the social and cultural ties between immigrants and the dominant population, and the mechanisms through which the minority groups become/are perceived as (not) being a part of the receiving society, from the Romanian respondents' viewpoints.

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

In line with 'classical' assimilation theory (see Alba and Nee 1997), it is assumed that over time, the immigrants are highly likely to adopt the norms and values of the host country which translates into a shared national identity and thus social cohesion (Entzinger 2005, Joppke and Morawska 2003). In other words, their integration is successful because they become "similar and equal to us" (Papadopoulos 2011). In parallel, their transnational contacts with those left behind in the country of origin become more sparse, while the interactions with the members of the majority in the country of destination become more prevalent.

This theory has been criticised due to its assumption that immigrants are expected to 'integrate' into the mainstream culture, which is assumed to be homogenous, and stays uninfluenced by the newcomers. Nagel (2009) suggests that a better understanding of assimilationism is "a process of making sameness" (*ibid.*:403), rather than just a simplistic view referring to patterns of similarity and dissimilarity. She argues that while some forms of difference become normalised (i.e. accepted), others became marked and thus rejected, pointing to the power of the mainstream to decide and interpret which differences are important and which are insignificant. These social constructions are context and time based. Indeed, a Romanian in the 1950s in France was mainly associated with intellectuals, in the late 1980s was identified as a political activist fighting against communism, whereas throughout the 2000s, their reputation has been associated with the Roma, prostitutes, and low-skilled workers. In contrast, in Britain, Romanians were relatively absent from the

media rhetoric until 2013, when the lifting of EU restrictions was associated with a surge anticipated in the numbers of Romanian (and Bulgarian) immigrants in low-skilled positions.

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

According to the social network approach, inclusion of immigrants into the destination country happens when migrants are part of networks between the country of origin and the host country, as well as institutions in the receiving state which facilitate the migration and integration of the new arrivals (Faist 2000). However, when immigrants rely on employment within their own ethnic groups, work can become exclusionary and can engender social isolation rather than social integration (Engbersen 2003:6), and can reduce incentives for investments in host country language acquisition. The political-institutional approach refers to the nature of the political context of the host country. While immigrants are likely to feel excluded from contexts where anti-immigration parties prevail, they are usually included in states which display left wing immigration policies. Both France and Britain have popular extreme right wing parties, yet the electoral agendas are somewhat different. UKIP’s manifesto has been centred on Britain leaving the EU in order to be able to manage its influx of immigrants (most recently Romanians and Bulgarians). The French FN has been promoting a similar desire of France leaving the EU in order to boost France’s power internationally. Although immigration is at the core of the protectionist and populist political agenda of FN, reducing African immigration rather than European to France has been the priority.

The fourth approach is concerned with symbolical elements regarding inclusion and exclusion, such as identity politics and the marginalisation of immigrants on the basis of cultural distance (see Molles 2013:4). This often occurs at a local level, during social interactions between the nationals and the non-nationals, when non-citizens experience inclusion and/or exclusion. Nevertheless, the literature is mainly

concerned with the incorporation of immigrants by the state itself, as well as supranational entities such as the EU which produces the Other (see Castles and Miller 2009, Geddes 1998). In response to this, many authors have started to focus on the significance of locality (see Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009 for an overview of authors exploring the 'city as context').

In this context, ethnicity as difference becomes a tool used to exclude populations perceived as socio-culturally different. In contrast, groups seen as familiar will benefit from a friendly welcome (see Triandafyllidou 2001). Indeed, many countries have restricted the number of migrants allowed entry in the political community in order to protect their feeling of national belonging (Geddes 2008).

Brubaker (2002) noted that ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only from a relational perspective; that is through the perceptions, understandings, categorisations and identifications we make. As such, "[t]hey are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world" (*ibid.*:174). He suggests that a better way of understanding ethnicity is by refraining ourselves from seeing it in terms of groups (as ethnicity itself is attributed to different people depending on the geographical location). An alternative would be to focus on "practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, common-sense knowledge, organisational routines and resources, discursive frames, institutionalised forms, political projects, contingent events and variable groupness" (*ibid.*:186). However, the focus on these units might engender a different type of analysis which would not explore ethnicity any longer, but other phenomena which are commonly grouped together under the label of ethnicity.

The ethnic frames are activated by the situational cues we are surrounded by. One example of these is the media, which can include classification of people. Migrants who are portrayed as culturally different are disadvantaged. Nevertheless migrants' symbolical capital such as language proficiency, education, economic capital (engendered by work occupation), as well as their marriage to a national of the host country increase their chances to be incorporated and to even naturalise (Bloemraad 2006, Helgertz and Bevelander 2016). Indeed, in her study conducted on Poles and Nigerians in Dublin, Molles (2013:5) finds that the nature of reception in the host country stems from a sense of cultural proximity and commonality. As such, unlike Nigerians, white Polish workers in Dublin are considered to fit in.

A generally accepted definition of ethnicity is lacking. In this study it is used to refer to a social construction which denotes the sharing of a common descent, cultural meanings and memories, while race is perceived through physical markers and it can represent one of the sub-sets of ethnicity (Law 2010:64,77). Both social categories contribute to the creation of racial hierarchies. The use of the concept of

ethnicity allows for an understanding of how Romanians invoke and deflect their connection to the Romanian nation as a result of social interactions with the mainstream. In turn, this sheds light on their creative use of ethnic belonging to produce hierarchies of whiteness in the host country by either excluding those who are not perceived as valid members of Romanian nation or of the host country. Indeed, as already noted by Modood and Khattab (2016:4) “[t]hese may be ambivalent and subject to change, including an intensifying of group consciousness in the face of external contact or domination and a projection of a (re)imagined past in order to account for a certain groupness”.

Inclusion and exclusion are often experienced by immigrants either through the public apparatus (immigration laws), or through social interactions with the local residents, which take place at the local level and result in immigrant discrimination. Discrimination refers to “the differential treatment of persons supposed to belong to a particular class of persons” (Banton 1994:1); in particular, this consists of the essentialisation of differences (mainly biological and cultural) which are perceived in individuals.

Often, discrimination affects individuals’ identification with the host country (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009; Nandi and Platt 2014, Diehl et al. 2016). Indeed, perceptions of discrimination influences immigrants’ senses of belonging, with perception of discrimination being directly proportional with their low levels of satisfaction with the host country (Safi 2010). Röder and Lubbers (2016) show how immigrants perceiving discrimination are resistant to acquiring the host country’s norms and values (for an overview of acculturation and its revisiting see Schwartz et al. 2010).

While most of the literature on discrimination has focused on non-European immigrants in Europe, there is starting to be an emergent body of literature focusing on discrimination of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe (Scheibner and Morrison 2009; Ciupijus 2009; Drinkwater et al. 2009) more generally and Romanians in Europe (see Fox 2013, Moroşanu 2015a, Moroşanu and Fox 2013, McMahon 2016), more particularly. This latter point is one also made in McGinnity and Gijberts (2016)’s paper, but from the perspective of the destination country’s response to new migrants. They stress the need to acknowledge the extensive racialisation of white minorities following EU enlargement. European intra-EU migrants have traditionally been considered ‘unproblematic’ in much of the previous literature due to the tendency of white migrants to assimilate rapidly and often to represent privileged migration flows. However, there is now an increasing recognition of the ways in which Eastern European migrants are ‘othered’ and

distinguished as 'culturally' problematic in national discourses (McDowell 2009, see also Luthra et al. 2016).

Discrimination is often associated with prejudice. Prejudice refers to "unjustified, usually negative attitude directed towards others because of their social category or group membership" (Sampson 1999:4). By qualifying one group, the other group positions itself as different from the former group. It is the "sense of social position" (Blumer 1958:4) resulting from this process of characterisation that is at the basis of racial prejudice. In racialised contexts, racial refers to "the racial identification made of oneself and of others and of the way in which the identified groups are conceived in relation to each other" (*ibid.*:3).

From this discussion, it can be seen that racialisation is often coached in social interactions, when individuals embodying different social positionings engage in exchanges. The following section summarises the literature which has dealt with migrants' perspectives of rejection and/or acceptance into the host community through a social relations lens.

### **Everyday interactions as sites of dominance**

Social interactions are part of immigrants' lives. They take place at work, in the neighbourhood and in the form of inter-ethnic friendships, intimate relationships or simple exchanges with people they vaguely know or have more regular contact with. For Goffman (1963:1), social interactions refer to

*the class of events which occur during co-presence and by virtue of co-presence. The ultimate behavioural material are the glances, gestures, positioning, and verbal statements that people continuously feed into the situation, whether intended or not.*

The nature of social interactions reflects the tensions which may exist between and inside groups and which translate into immigrants' inclusion and exclusion and thus influence their allegiances towards the receiving society.

In line with other scholars (see Wilson 2011, Neal and Vincent 2013), this thesis emphasises the need to acknowledge the everyday as the locus where differences are negotiated. As Hemming (2011:65) suggests, the idea of 'encounter' refers to "how citizens can learn to live with cultural difference by showing civility to the others". However, Valentine (2008:329) warns that although individuals may behave with civility in public areas, they may still express prejudice in the space of their own homes, as "urban etiquette does not equate with an ethics of care and mutual respect for difference".

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

Fonseca et al. (2012:119) distinguish between weak and intimate interactions. While the former refers to knowing fellow residents from a distance and engaging in small talk, the latter refers to more meaningful interactions such as private contacts such as home visits (see also Neal and Vincent 2013:910). Blokland (2003) refers to relations based on intimacy, familiarity and anonymity. Intimate relations are represented by those relationships with kin and close friends. Familiar relationships are characterised by the interactions with neighbours, acquaintances, people we know without necessarily engaging with them at a deep level. Lastly, anonymity refers to those interactions with people we do not know, but we meet at in various circumstances such as job interviews or when searching for (rental) properties.

This research differentiates between mundane and meaningful social interactions, which inform how differences are negotiated in the everyday between Romanians and the cultural others. In parallel, it sheds light on how Romanians' encounters with the mainstream influence their negotiation of ethnic belonging. While mundane interactions are superficial encounters with individuals in the parochial or public contexts, meaningful interactions are deep, based on mutual support and friendships and they happen as a result of shared wish for socialisation.

Human capital, such as language proficiency has been associated with an increase in the levels of inter-personal trust (see Anderson and Paskeviciute 2006, Chiswick and Miller 2007). Following on from van der Laan Bouma-Doff (2007), who suggests that often, misconception regarding immigrants is due to the lack of contact, it can be argued that language mastering facilitates communication

between immigrants and the citizens and thus enhances social contact (see also Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007 for a similar argument). This indicates that high-skilled immigrants are more likely to have ethnically diverse groups of friendships than their low-skilled counterparts, which can also be due to their interest in discovering other cultures. Also, they may have more time to dedicate to social interactions than immigrants engaged in precarious labour, working shifts, whose time is relatively limited as they may need to work longer hours to earn more money in order to send remittances to the family left behind.

Furthermore, in a study conducted on Eastern Europeans in the UK, Spencer et al. (2007:88) found that the respondents spent limited time with British people because many of their fellow workers were immigrants. This approach sees the workplace as a place which would foster interaction between ethnic groups so that intercultural exchanges can occur. Similarly, for Amin (2002), the workplace refers to a local site of everyday encounters where people come to terms with each other's differences. He argues that "cultural contact should be incorporated in everyday practices – (and not just copresence) in mixed sites such as school and the workplace" (*ibid.*:976). This interpretation contrasts with that of Putnam (2007) and Lancee and Dronkers (2008), who hold the view that ethnic diversity reduces social cohesion. Likewise, Gijsberts and Dagevos (2007) argue that in Dutch cities, the higher the concentration of ethnic minorities in the neighbourhood, the lower the chance is for the minorities to interact with the Dutch citizens. They conclude that there is a tipping point, at which interethnic contact declines. Indeed, if the ethnic population is over 50 per cent, the dominant Dutch population is less likely to engage in cross group social interaction. As such, (high) ethnic concentration is perceived as an obstacle to social interactions. Likewise, Danzer and Yaman (2013:22), assert that ethnic enclaves impede immigrants' integration due to "the establishment of parallel societies in which immigrants get by without interacting with natives".

Another significant aspect of trust has been identified by Fonseca et al. (2012), concluding that trust is not related to language skills, rather to helpfulness amongst the residents, as well as to age, with older people being more trustful towards the residents of Portuguese neighbourhoods than the younger residents (see also Allport (1954)'s view that inter-group trust increases with the amount of social contact and reduces prejudice).

Nevertheless, social contact is limited or enhanced by four factors: both individuals need to have an equal status, they should share common goals, intergroup solidarity and cooperation should exist, and the authorities should be able to offer support when needed (Allport 1954). Commenting on Allport's contact theory, Pettigrew (1998:76) adds another condition to the development and evolution of

social contact. He states that cross-group contact can reduce prejudice only if “[t]he contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become Friends” (see also Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). In other words, it is not superficial contacts such as meeting the same people on the bus on a daily basis, but profound, enjoyable interactions, such as regular conversations which allow participants to learn about each other, that can decrease prejudice amongst groups.

In order to illuminate the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice, Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) take this one step further and try to understand how different prejudice indicators (affective and cognitive prejudice) affect this relationship. They find that although contact with outgroup members can cause reductions in prejudice, these effects vary according to how prejudice is measured. They distinguish between affective and cognitive ties. As such, affective ties to outgroup members (such as cross group friendships based on feelings) are more likely to demonstrate significant and consistent relationships with intergroup contact. Where prejudice is based on cognitive dimensions (represented by perceptions and beliefs about the group), cross-group relationships are less likely to have similar characteristics. In the same line of thought, Fonseca et al. (2013:190) argue that the presence of an intimate friendship network (i.e. affective dimensions), is correlated positively with neighbourhood attachment and thus local embeddedness.

Lancee (2012) proposes that having a native friend can enhance immigrants’ chances in the labour market of the host country. This provides some explanation as to whether fruitful interactions which transform into friendships amongst the minority and majority might enhance migrants’ sense of attachment to the host country. However, existing research (Schlueter 2012, Fonseca et al. 2013) recognises that inter-ethnic friendships are more likely to happen when both parties are highly educated. This may be taken to indicate that only the elite are seen as having sufficient symbolical resources to engage in inter-ethnic friendships.

The interconnections across cities and countries, the transnational networks migrants are often part of, have increased the number of cosmopolitan individuals, especially among the global business elite, who can benefit from it (see Woodward et al. 2009:84, Hannerz 1990:241). Indeed, the cosmopolitans tend to have high socio-economic status and good education (see Favell 2008a:83-99). These characteristics allow them to embrace privileged sectors of activities such as advertising, management etc. which often involve travelling across countries and continents for professional meetings. Nevertheless, in their study of United Nations professionals, Nowicka and Kaweh (2009), found that although the interviewees were eager to travel and meet new people and cultures, they experienced limits to

their cosmopolitanism, such as time shortages, language barriers, stress and health conditions.

Indeed, the cosmopolitans are generally more open to engage socially with people outside their own ethnic group (see Jackman and Vavrek 2011). As Hannerz (1990:238–9) states, “[a] more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity”. The openness, tolerance and allegiances towards the world outside their own community means that cosmopolitan individuals are able to combine both local and global elements which shape their identities and develop senses of attachment which stand in contrast with the feelings the locals might develop. Likewise, Helbling and Teny (2015) discover that there is a correlation between cosmopolitan attitudes and the long periods of time spent abroad, as well as the number of contacts abroad. Positive interactions with people outside of one’s community bring mutual acceptance and understanding.

Roudometof (2005) engaged with cosmopolitans’ openness from a different optic, and notes that they have a low degree of attachment to a locality, while locals have a high degree of attachment to the same locale. Their sense of attachment is also divergent with respect to a state, as cosmopolitans are unlikely to value some attributes the locals might place great importance on, such as holding the country’s citizenship and nurturing a sense of belonging to the country’s mainstream. The decoupling of citizenship from the territorially-bounded nation-state is made possible by immigrants who maintain simultaneous lives in both the country of origin and the host country through transnational practices. Roudometof and Haller (2007) support this claim, arguing that cosmopolitan individuals grow less attached to place, while at the same time they grow more attached to their nation, with variations across European countries. Western European countries were place-orientated (neighbourhood, city), while Eastern European nations were more likely to be nation-orientated (Roudometof and Haller 2007).

Moreover, social relationships represent the site where individuals appropriate and negotiate both their privileges and lack of entitlements, which is discussed in the next section.

### **White identities: Racialising white privilege?**

The modern idea of 'race' emerged from naturalist science and Western European colonial power (Miles 1989, Guillaumin 1995) and it is often associated with modernity, with white people being considered the bearers of modernity. Dyer (1997) examined how white skins have been an euphemism for the ‘modern man’

starting with the 18th century through the immigration laws aiming at assisting European migration into the United States, while rejecting those deemed not modern enough on the basis of their race and ethnicity. Nevertheless, forms of discrimination have been noticed prior to colonialism. Racial discourses were found in China and other communist countries such as Cuba or Eastern Europe (see Law 2012 for an overview of racism in communist and post-communist contexts), but also the Middle East, where whiteness meant beauty and purity, and were attributed to the social elite or nobility (Lewis 1971, Bonnett 1998).

The term 'whiteness' embodies a multitude of concepts, such as capitalism and modernity, in which the West is reflected by progress and industrialisation, while the rest of the world is pictured as traditional and thus representing a distinct culture (Frankenberg 1993:2000). In this context, modernity represents "the abstraction of social cultural practices from contexts of local particularity and their institutionalisation and regulation across time and space" (Giddens 1990). Through practices such as policing and organisation of social boundaries, modernity institutionalises and regulates cultural practices, such as imaginings of belonging to a community or place (Tomlinson 2003:272). The interest of this research lies in exploring the ways in which Romanians' aspirations of belonging are negotiated through social interactions. In parallel, it is argued that aspirations of belonging provide a useful analytical lens to examine respondents' aspirations to modernity.

In his 2002 article, Bonnett (2002:354) uses the term "white modernity" which he correlates with the urban West, while developing countries are often being attributed peasant attributes. He argues that in the course of history, the Western city has been represented as alienated from nature, civilised and civilising and a symbol of white power through its colonial dimension. Similarly, Said (1995) talks about ways in which the West identified itself as modern and progressive in order to represent the Orient as mysterious and backward. Wolff (1994) applies the same theory to the East-West European divide and thus the construction of Eastern Europe. Therefore, the West became the summit of civilisation in opposition to Eastern Europe, which was represented by lower levels of socio-economic development.

The West represents "a set of principles or values inherent within (or associated with) 'European' or 'Western Christian' heritage, culture and history" (Bonnett 2004:26), as well as materialism, and it has established itself as a political entity in contrast to the Soviet Union reflected by social rigidity and conservatism. The West is a central category in the articulation of modernity, and one way for Romanians to embrace modernity is through migration to western countries.

However, the first section of the chapter showed that migration does not automatically entail acceptance from the mainstream, as immigrants often face racism. Racism is “an exclusionary practice and ideology that essentialises and valorises phenotypical and cultural differences to defend and advance the privileges of its users” (Fox 2013:1872). This view is supported by Dawney (2008), who suggested that the racialisation of Central and Eastern European migrants in Herefordshire operated at various levels, such as cultural and visual. The residents of Herefordshire were associating the migrants with criminals, workers and people in need of help, and their clothing preferences were considered unfashionable. By doing this, they were constructing a general type of Central-Eastern European migrants, often situated at the bottom of social hierarchies.

Gidley (2003) uses the term ‘xenoracism’ to explain the new forms of racism, as society no longer categorises people by the colour of their skin, but by their migration status. This was the case for Romanian nationals in France and London until January 2014, when tight immigration controls against them constrained their labour mobility and kept them in low-skilled position and low wages. At the moment, within the context of the EU, they are free movers. Indeed, ‘xeno-racism’, is defined as

*a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe’s doors, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a “natural” fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but “xeno” in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. (Sivanandan, cited in Fekete 2001:24).*

Unlike concepts related to race, whiteness provides a useful lens to analyse Romanians’ experiences as it brings to the fore the importance of class rather than skin colour. Whiteness is not a category reduced to race, but a social one, as the status is of great importance to mark someone as white, not just the skin colour. Whiteness is broadly understood as a marked racialised identity that exists only in relation to other identities, such as blackness, Asianness, etc. (Garner 2007:2, Britton 2013). It is socially and discursively constructed (see Bonnett 2000, Dwyer and Jones 2000, Vanderbeck 2008) and its shades change according to the encounters people make. I therefore agree with Garner (2007:174), who coined the

term 'whiteness problematic' in order to "cover the way of problematising social relations so that the racialisation process is at the heart of them, and that 'white' marks a powerful spot".

While a variety of definitions of the term 'whiteness' have been suggested, this research will use the definition suggested by Frankenberg (1993), who focuses on the relationality of power relations. Whiteness is a social location of racial privilege, a lens through which white people analyse the society and a "set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (*ibid.*:1). Thus, whiteness is "a set of locations that are historically, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of dominance" (*ibid.*:6). To further examine this issue, McIntosch (1988:5-9) brings in the notion of 'white privilege', in order to refer to the invisibility of whiteness which he defines as the "unearned advantage and conferred dominance" (*ibid.*:4) of white people who do not see their white privilege. This takes the form of "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and checks" (*ibid.*:1-2). Whiteness is an invisible privilege which does not easily materialise. Frankenberg (1993) found the same in her research on white women's cultural belongings, arguing that whiteness is an unmarked cultural marker, a "no culture" (*ibid.* 204) equated to self-control, self-consciousness, rationalisation (Dyer 1997:3).

Other scholars have been concerned with the hierarchies of whiteness in order to engage with whiteness from a holistic perspective. Jacobson (1999:73-85) argues that whiteness, in the America of the 1970s refers to colour, freedom, civilisation and Christianity. In this context, at the top of the social ladder were the upper-class Protestants who had a Northern European background, while the Irish were considered uncivilised because Celts were seen as less developed than the Anglo-Saxons. In other words, there are degree of 'whiteness', based on peoples' origins rather than their somatic differences such as skin colour. This highlights the social and discursive construction of 'race'.

However, previous literature has ascertained that shared whiteness means that racialised whites are able to rise above their perceived inferiority within generations and be accepted into the white establishment. This view is supported by Ignatiev (1995) in his seminal work entitled 'How the Irish became white'. He demonstrated that the catholic Irish became, over centuries, an oppressing race in the United States, although they were, initially, an oppressed race. Despite not being allowed to own more than a horse, to teach in schools, to work in the manufacturing or sale of newspapers or books, or to educate their children abroad, they eventually become part of the protestant Anglo-Saxon space. This was achieved by promoting

their class interests through their cooperation with the Germans and by oppressing the African-Americans, aligning themselves in this way with the white Americans. The Irish were strategic in their thinking, as they understood that competition among ethnic groups in America was based on the 'colour line', with whites being superior to blacks (*ibid.*:99-100). Thus, by turning racism onto those perceived as inferior due to their colour and socio-economic status, the Irish made their way into the white American space.

The same is true for Romanians in Western Europe. Romanian immigrants have faced negative press mostly attributed to the marginality and precariousness those leaving the country of origin and heading to mainly Spain and Italy (but also France and Britain) have displayed (McMahon 2016), as well as various activities such as begging, prostitution and pick-pocketing (Tes r 2011). Quite often, the anonymous/invisible Romanian majority, the 'good citizens' (Anderson 2013), has been thought of as having the same characteristics as the visible part of the Romanian population. In the same way as the Irish in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, Romanians nowadays emphasise their work ethic, amongst others, and impute racism onto the Roma and other ethnic minorities in order to gain acceptance into the white British and French dominant space (see Fox 2013).

By analysing power relations within existing racialised hierarchies, whiteness is concerned with how white bodies negotiate their identities in their everyday lives, as well as the way whites try to restore the white privilege (Nayak 2002, Knowles 2006b). This understanding of whiteness is what Twine and Callagher (2008) call the third wave, with focus on the fluidity of whiteness which is reconstructed by history, class, politics and gender. The third wave positions whiteness as a multiplicity of identities that are time and space specific. As such, "whiteness [represents] a form of power [which is] defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented" (*ibid.*:5).

Their work is complemented by Hartigan (1999)'s study of different shades of whiteness. More precisely, he engages with the ways in which boundaries are erected between the white mainstream and the not quite white others. He states that whiteness is defined by the markings of class (determined by occupation, residential location and family history) in ways in which the lower-class is excluded from the privilege of hegemonic whiteness. Whites in working-class Detroit come from marginalised groups and are read as "White trash", which stands in close correlation with their unworthy existence based on a repertoire of characteristics such as morality, hygiene and social property. In the British context, Nayak (2003) has engaged with the white English working class and the ways its whiteness has fluctuated according to variations in social, political and economic discourses.

In their research on Romanians and other Eastern Europeans in Britain, Fox et al. (2015:73) found the high status they should have as white Europeans is offset by the low status given by the employment in precarious positions. Individuals whose whiteness is questioned draw boundaries between themselves and the others in order to acquire privilege. Whiteness is a visible marker for Romanians because of the existence of the Roma and their perceived visual distinctions. The white appearance bestows them certain privileges and they become whitened. In the process, the marked exclusion of the Roma and ethnic minorities serve to create a modern, neoliberal and European Romanian citizen.

At the same time as performing as a whitening strategy, the exclusion of the Roma from the Romanian nation contributes to the process of Romanian nation-building. Romanians abroad become modern by achieving invisibility in the host country through an imagined and performed sameness with the mainstream. Diasporas are a useful site to explore the process of nation-building. Diasporic communities are often engaged in a multitude of 'diasporisation practices' through which they engage with the homeland, such as exchange and fundraising, lobbying to influence policies in the host country, dual citizenship, and consumption of images through communication technologies (Lainer-Vos 2010).

Romanians' ethnic identity is mediated through whiteness (work ethic and white skin) which acts as a platform for the creation of social boundaries. By gradually employing whitening strategies, they become 'whitened' rather than white, as their whiteness is gradually accumulated, rather than being an innate characteristic. In the process, they mark individuals perceived as inferior as 'the Other'. These boundaries are "[s]ocial boundaries [which] are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities" (Lamont and Molnár 2002:167). Boundaries are drawn regarding social differentiation based on various criteria such as work status, economic viability, colour, gender and age.

Performing boundary work represents a strategy to establish who belongs and where they belong in the white social space by deeming them unworthy (Wray 2006:16). Similar to Lamont (2000)'s working class subjects, Hallett (2012:94) found that Salvadoran interviewees deployed discourses of labour and work ethic, and subsequently situated themselves in a space of dignity characterised by a favourable moral position.

According to Lamont (2000:3),

*[m]orality is generally at the center of these workers' worlds. They find their self-worth in their ability to discipline themselves and conduct responsible*

*yet caring lives in order to ensure order for themselves and others. Workers use these standards to define who they are and, just as important, who they are not. Hence, they draw the line that delimits an imagined community of "people like me" who share the same sacred values and with whom they are ready to share resources. These communities may overlap with, or cut across, class and racial lines.*

Stressing the importance of boundaries in the construction of whiteness, Wray (2006) argues that whiteness should be reconceptualised as "a flexible set of social and symbolic boundaries that give shape, meaning and power to the social category white." Understanding how boundary work is performed is important in gaining insight into how people classify both themselves and others and how the groups are ranked (*ibid.*:9). The erecting of boundaries against the others represent accounts of belonging which rest on the rejection of the others from the same social space often imbued with feelings of belonging.

## **Emotional and political approaches of belonging**

The purpose of this section is to develop further understanding on the debates surrounding the concept of migrant belonging through an examination of its emotional and political aspects. Accordingly, it assesses the claim that while migrants may feel 'at home' in the host country, their belonging needs to be recognised by the dominant group (Valentine et al. 2009) through the 'politics of belonging'.

### **Belonging as feeling at home**

The concept of belonging has been a matter of ongoing discussion between scholars. While Bauman (1998), Fried (2000) and Laczko (2005) argue that people are unlikely to develop a strong sense of territorial belonging, others (Pollini 2005, Savage et al. 2005) maintain that migration and belonging can happen simultaneously. However, as this section shows, migrants' emotional connections to the country of origin and the host country are in a process of evolution, which changes the nature of migrants' transnational experiences.

Most studies have engaged with immigrants' experiences between their homes and selves in different places, without treating in much detail migrants' experiences in their new homes (Ehrkamp 2005, Portes 1999, Morawska 2004). Indeed, there is insufficient attention given to migrants' transnational identities and their living simultaneously in two countries, with a few exceptions such as King and Christou (2011) and Waite and Cook (2011). It is hoped that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of migrants' everyday in the context of reception and the

effects these have on their perceptions of home and identifications with the country of origin and the receiving country. Additionally, most migrants' experiences are observed from the standpoint of looking back to their country of origin.

A generally accepted definition of 'belonging' is lacking. A considerable amount of literature conflates belonging and feeling at home (see also Svašek 2008, Antonisch 2010), which emanates from the place the individual calls 'home' as it resonates with feelings of security, familiarity and emotional attachment (hooks 2009:213). As such, it can be different places at the same time (such as the country of origin, host country, or in mobility) and it is a state of mind rather than a physical location. For Svašek, 'belonging' or 'feeling at home' should not be defined "as a static form of rootedness in one physical locality, but (...) as a cognitive and emotional process in which people identify with particular experiences and feel familiarity with their lifestyles" (*ibid.*:215). Conversely, Ralph and Staeheli (2011) have highlighted that home and stability should not be used interchangeably, as some people might feel at home in mobility, while others are more likely to feel at home in one place.

So far, very little research has been carried out on the emotional aspects of belonging, with a few exceptions, such as Yuval Davis (2006), Anthias (2006), and Davidson et al. (2005). Feelings of belonging are felt through emotions rather than through the rules of membership which bind individuals to a group (Waite and Cook 2011). This prompts some to suggest that "[b]elonging should thus be examined as an emotionally constructed category" (Ho 2009:791). According to a definition provided by Svašek (2008:2018), emotions are "processes in which individuals experience, shape and interpret the world around them, anticipate future action and shape their subjectivities".

'Belonging' is not a straightforward feeling, as whilst it can point to a dual sense of belonging (to both the sending and receiving country), it also encompasses the frustrations of not belonging anywhere, and thus creating new social formations in which migrants can bring in elements of both states. This tension is captured by Waite (2012), who noted that

*the UK state desires transnational migrants' senses of belonging to cohere with state discourse; to feel an unaccomplished attachment to the nation and subscribe to a unitary British identity. Yet (...), transnational migrants' feelings of belonging often exist in tension with neo-assimilationist policies designed to promote a core national identity.*

In the same vein, Brah (1997:3) points to the frustrations of belonging to more than one nation-state: "I could not just 'be'. I had to name an identity". This quotation

refers to the frustrating process of negotiating belonging that migrants go through as a result of living in another country. Living simultaneously implies feeling 'at home' in two countries whilst maintaining transnational practices with Romania and reaching the level of spiritual 'cosiness' vis-à-vis the receiving country.

'Being' in a place and 'longing' to be in a place (Probyn 1996) are two different aspects of the notion of belonging which are shaped by the daily experience migrants' have in the country of settlement. The sense of attachment towards the country of origin and the host country can grow stronger over time, but it can also decrease as a result of migrants' experiences in the host country. Accordingly, migrants' experiences of transnationalism can vary. Furthermore, Vertovec (2009) suggests that "[b]elonging, loyalty and the sense of attachment are not parts of a zero-sum game based on a single place". In other words, the less integrated a person is, does not imply that they would be more engaged in transnational practices, or the more integrated they are, the less likely they are to experience transnationalism. Indeed, it has already been established that immigrants can be integrated in the host country whilst being engaged in transnational practices (see Morawska 2003).

While some migrants might develop a sense of dual-attachment, others might feel they belong to the sending or receiving society only. This depends on various factors such as the moment of emigration, the presence and role of family and the type of immigration policies which may shape the type of experiences the migrants have in the receiving country. Social acceptance or rejection (Jayaweera and Choudhry 2008) play an important role in feeling 'at home', hence belonging to a place or another.

Migrants do not only belong to fixed and permanent formations such as countries or cities, but also to new types of formations. Migrants' negotiation of belonging with regards to the country of origin and the host country may place them in in-between spaces of belonging to which they identify. As migrants negotiate belonging, they transform the urban landscapes of cities by creating new spaces (Ehrkamp 2005). These urban spaces evolve into a 'negotiated reality' (Anderson 1991:28) fuelled by migrants' past and present experiences and melancholy. Consequently, they become part of peoples' social consciousness, as they are "lived, actively, in real relationships" (Williams 1977:130). The concepts of 'social spaces', 'in-between spaces' and 'spaces of belonging' refer to the variety of mixed-feelings migrants develop towards sending and receiving societies. Social spaces embody a multitude of concepts which refer to connected networks of social relations through which information, practices and resources are exchanged and transformed (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Transnational migration allows people to belong to various places and homes which are created through connections between 'here and there' (Staehele and Nagel 2006). Moreover, it permits them to create new spaces of belonging which are imaginary deterritorised third spaces away from sending and receiving societies (Soja 1996) where elements of both countries come together: realities and imaginations, everyday experiences and history. The 'bubble' world created by migrants is therefore a 'pick and mix' space to which the migrants belong. However, these spaces are also at the interplay of locations relating to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialisation (Anthias 2008). Since context is important in migrants' lives, the construction of spaces is not always voluntary. It can also be the result of migrants' unwillingness or inability to adhere to the socio-cultural norms of the host country.

The new roles migrants are exposed to in the host society are part of the socio-cultural norms and values available in society or community (Berry et al. 2011:15). Here, they need to have the ability to negotiate the difference between themselves and the others inhabiting the same social space in order to be accepted in the new environment. To belong, therefore, implies migrants' active participation in the everyday life of the host country, based on a constant process of adaptation of their socio-cultural roles in order to be part of the new environment. Bhabha (1996) refers to this process as 'hybridity' and defines it as the way by which the colonial power undertakes the identity of the colonised. Following this line of argument, the migrant's own identity is being transformed into a new one without allowing them to keep any elements of their original identity. Moreover, this does not allow migrants to be transnational as the place of the country of origin is minimised.

Marcu's (2012a) work on second generation Romanians' from Spain experiences of mobility concludes that they live within geographical, mental and symbolic borders. This in-betweenness is also due to the precariousness of their economic positions in Spain, which triggers a lack of sense of belonging to the Spanish society. In another article (Marcu 2012b) she distinguishes between the dimensions of belonging of the Romanian youth. She notes that Romanians who studied in Romania but had no work experience and were currently seeking employment in the Spanish labour market were experiencing a frustrating sense of belonging caused by not having found their place. Furthermore, a second category was composed by the young people who have studied abroad or in Spain and who saw themselves as citizens of the world and who experience a 'multidimensional belonging' (May 2011b). Finally, those who received education in Spain in a 'migration culture' experience a hybrid identity (Bhabha 1996) and imagined themselves at the margins of both Spain and Romania. Similarly, Sandu (2010) asserts that the longer Romanians spend in

Spain, the less likely they are to emotionally connect to the country of origin. Both these studies recognise Romanian migrants' lack of belonging to the Romanian society which is either created in the host country or left behind.

Therefore, feelings of rejection may interfere with feelings of acceptance and belonging, which impact on migrants' identification. Ifekwunigwe (2003) tells

*[o]n an empowered day, I describe myself as a diaspora(s) daughter with multiple migratory and ancestral points in Nigeria, Ireland, Britain, Guyana and the United States; on a disempowered day, I am a nationless nomad who wanders from destination to destination in search of a singular site to name as home.*

Belonging to two cultures and having the strength to communicate this to those whom one interacts presents its own challenges, as one's multiple attachments may be questioned. The force to acknowledge your 'migrant belongings' (Fortier 2000) is often the result of various social categories such as gender, class, education, ethnicity, nationality, to name just a few. At times, when one lacks the ability to embrace their multiple identities, multiple belongings become internalised and the belonging(s) which become externalised are those attributed by the majority.

Local context and relationships with members of the host society influence the notions of belonging and home (Ehrkamp 2005). Indeed, it is expected that social interactions bring both migrants and residents together, which creates a sense of inclusion and belonging among the immigrant population. However, as people change, the social world migrants inhabit changes too. Their link to society is therefore a continuous process of negotiation which impacts on their transnational experiences and sheds light on how migrants construct new identities in relation to both countries.

This study builds up on the definition of 'belonging' suggested by Anthias (2008:8-9), who saw it as "experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion". This implies that one should be allowed to belong by the members of the mainstream in order to feel part of the host society. Class, ethnicity and gender shape migrants' daily experiences in the host country, which, in turn, influence their feeling of belonging towards the country of origin and the host country. This triggers different representations of transnational practices and the same group of migrants will go through different processes in two different countries. These social constructions which can be seen as labels imposed from top-down tend to homogenise the mainstream and exclude the 'others'. Throughout this thesis, the

term 'belonging' will be used to define *a set of affective practices which represent migrants' perception of inclusion in the host society based on social encounters with the mainstream.*

In parallel, this research explores Romanians' home-making strategies in the process of migration through negotiation of attachments to territorial, social and emotional spaces (Boccagni 2014) and the processes through which they domesticise the social spaces, by infusing them with homely elements. Domesticity refers to "[t]he participation of objects and consumption practices in the processes of transforming an anonymous house into a meaningful home" (Vilar Rosales 2010:518) and can have a material aspect, through the use of pictures, national symbols or food (Boccagni 2014). Likewise, it refers to the fulfilling of an aspirational home which is, often, the driver of Romanians' migration. This indicates that, rather than creating a new home in the host country and leaving behind the home of birth, Romanian migrants are engaged in the construction of multiple homes which comprises of both societies, as well as future homes, as home-making is a dynamic process. Home-making refers to Romanians' engagements in everyday practices which contribute to the creation of a home. These are individual practices such as the creation of a personal home conceptualised through economic stability, home ownership and family creation.

As a result of migration during modern times, some scholars have argued that migrants are more prone to individualism due to socio-economic risks. Indeed, financial difficulties may prevent individuals from pursuing their commitment to family and friends (Beck-Gernsheim and Beck 1995:6). In contrast, Lin (2010) has highlighted that tradition and modernity often work together in migrants' quest of modernisation. He argues that in the context of rural-urban migration, Chinese male peasant workers are engaged in a continuous reflection on their traditional gender role, while at the same time evolving in modern settings. Despite their presence in a modern context, their obligations to the family from rural settings remain as strong as prior to migration, which creates a 'traditional modern behaviour'.

Blunt and Dowling (2006:22) suggest that "home is both a physical place and a set of feelings". Nonetheless, feelings of belonging change overtime. For example, returning to the country of origin is not always associated with returning 'home'. In the process of migration, relationships develop, societies develop and change overtime, which results in a disrupting of initial attachments and thus migrants often become 'strangers at home' (Oeppen:2013). Consequently, return visits are "an integral part of the migration cycle" (Duval 2004:52), helping the migrants to become more settled in their identity negotiations. Alternatively, they can illustrate

how different homes are associated with different characteristics and thus serve different purposes.

In this research, the term 'home' will be used to mean *a site of material and affective practices which represents the migrants' perception of their place in society based on the achievement of personal aspirations formed prior to migration and does not entail acceptance of migrants' presence in the receiving society by the dominant group.*

'Belonging' does not only imply migrants' feelings at ease, but it also refers to the rules they need to comply with in order to be allowed to belong politically to the host (Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006).

### **Political belonging**

The high degree of mobility of people is one of the characteristics of this age (Castles and Miller 2009). In this context, the role of the state has been thought to have diminished, with scholars such as Sassen (2001) and Joppke (1998) arguing that the state is losing control and forms of citizenship outside the confines of the nation-state emerge, with citizenship being better described as "post-national citizenship" Soysal (1994).

Although people are considered to be more mobile than ever, with the total number of international migrants reaching 244 million in 2015 (United Nations 2016), they are not always free to travel or to move to other countries. Whyte (2008) explores the 2006 analysis of the world visa-free regulations issued by Henley and Partners, a Swiss firm specialising in immigration, consular and citizenship law. Analysing the study based on 195 countries, Whyte (*ibid.*) concludes that visa-free access is granted mostly to wealthy, democratic and Western countries, while poor countries are less likely to enjoy the privilege of free travel. Western European countries enjoy freedom of travel, while this reduces further towards Eastern European countries. He finds that the long-standing members, who joined the EU in 2004, enjoy no mobility restrictions, while Romania and Bulgaria, who have been members since 2007 fall in the third class, with Turkey and former Yugoslav and Soviet states in the lowest class (*ibid.*:141).

The need for a visa for mobility purposes depends therefore on the nationality inscribed on the passport. Countries are still capable of regulating the flow of people through a system of visas and passports (Wang 2004, McMahon 2012). In the EU, Romanian nationals should have been no longer required to hold visas for residing in the EU free movement space starting from 2007. Nevertheless, transitional measures were put in place in 15 member countries (amongst which were France and Britain), which aimed at balancing the flows of Eastern Europeans

seeking work in Western Europe. Commenting on the case of Romanians in Italy, McMahon (2012:211) reminds us: "Union citizenship has not resulted in equality, as labour market access remains limited and the political rights of Italians and Romanians are quite distinct". This is the case for Romanians in Britain too, where the British media reports that the British government was considering negative ads to prevent Romanian and Bulgarian citizens from migrating to Britain, were launched in 2013.

The rules migrants need to comply with in order to become citizens of the country they live in, or even to work, are referred to as 'politics of belonging' by Yuval-Davis (2011). They are situated temporally in the sense that political developments cause repercussions on the politics of belonging; spatially as their effects are heterogeneous; and finally intersectionally, as they impact different people in different ways (*ibid.*). Through an exercise of power, the politics of belonging classify people into those who are excluded from full membership and those who are allowed to become full members of the society according to their gender/ethnicity/class. Indeed, as Anthias (2008:9-9) observes,

*it is important to relate the notion of belonging to the different locations and contexts from which belongings are imagined and narrated: these locations are trans-locations in terms of a range of social positions and social divisions and identities such as gender, class, stage in the life cycle and so on.*

These categories are characterised by a certain form of subordination (Anthias 1998) which produces "hierarchisation, differential resource allocation and unequal social and political positioning" (Anthias 2001:369). Nevertheless, they are part of the social life: class refers to the production and reproduction of economic life, gender is understood in terms of production and reproduction of sexual difference, and ethnicity refers to the collective bonds regarding origin or cultural difference (*ibid.*:377). The politics of belonging thus include and exclude citizens in order to make sure that only those 'eligible' can enter someone else's home.

Marshall (1950:8) defined citizenship as "a kind of basic human equality associated with the concept of full membership in a community (...) of citizenship". He identified four elements that might be subsumed under the concept of citizenship: civil, political, social rights and responsibilities. For Marshall, citizenship signified membership into a political community which granted its members equality amongst themselves through the access to political and social rights, as well as their duty to accomplish various responsibilities. This definition is somewhat outdated and criticised as a result of globalisation and transnationalism, especially in Europe, where the EU has reduced member states' monopoly over who is allowed or

rejected. More explicitly, citizenship is a set of practices (cultural, symbolical and economic) and both rights and duties, such as civil, political and social, which define peoples' membership in a polity (Isin and Wood 1999:4).

Joppke (2007:38) distinguishes between three aspects of citizenship: citizenship as status, which refers to membership in a state, citizenship as rights, described as the capacities and immunities linked to such status and finally citizenship as identity, "which refers to the behavioural aspects of individuals acting and conceiving of themselves as members of a collectivity, classically the nation, or the normative conceptions of such behaviour imputed by the state". He goes on to explain that citizenship as identity addresses the unity and integration of society. Other authors such as Bauböck (2006:16) differentiate between nationality and citizenship. Nationality refers to aspects of the relationships between an individual and sovereign state. Citizenship is about the legal dimension of this relationship that is regulated by domestic law and legal affiliation. Since at the time of writing up the doctoral thesis the transitional agreements regarding Romanians' insertion on the labour market in France and Britain have ended, the politics of belonging refer to the citizenship or the nationality individuals hold (for the purpose of this study, nationality and citizenship are used interchangeably).

Hammar (1990) and Castles (1994) contrast between formal citizenship and substantial citizenship. The former refers to the membership of a state, while the latter is concerned with the rights and duties in a state one has. In theory, the two types of citizenship should correspond exactly, but in reality they apply differently to groups of people who differ from the mainstream, such as immigrants or ethnic minorities. Immigration challenges the concept of citizenship and of national identity, as the new-comers are not perceived as belonging to the host nation-state due to their inability to integrate into the larger society (Clarke et al. 1998:46) and the challenge they pose to national identity. National identity is perceived as a set of characteristics attributed to individuals who share cultural and ethnic similarities.

Consequently, they are exposed to unequal treatment by the mainstream and are subject to exclusion. Citizenship becomes a form of social closure, which restricts the participants of certain non-citizens (McMahon 2012:2012). It is therefore understandable why immigrants may want to become naturalised: mainly to avoid the constraints associated with their own citizenship (see Jansen 2009) from a visa free travel perspective, or to enjoy the bundle of rights associated with the membership in the host country. Despite this, very few attempts have been made to examine the meaning individuals attribute to a new passport.

Other than for a mobility significance, which has been outlined at the beginning of this section, visas and passports are institutional devices that connect individuals to

nation-states, which indicate the sovereignty of the state and the citizenship of its possessor (Wang 2004:355). The importance of passports in the global classification of people has been highlighted by Brubaker (1992:31): “citizenship is an international filing system, a mechanism for allocating persons to states. The citizens of a given state comprise the fraction of the world population that ‘belongs’ to that state, than to assume other state.” As such, people are classified according to their nationality, ethnicity, but also gender, class, age, race, in ‘desirable vs. undesirable’ and ‘trustworthy vs. untrustworthy’ (Gilboy 1991), or citizens and aliens (Bauböck 1994). Other authors suggest a threefold stratification between citizens; ‘denizens’ or permanent residents; and ‘helots’ or ‘margizens” who do not enjoy the recognition of the previous two categories (Hammar 1990, Martiniello 1994). On the basis of these categorisations, people are admitted or refused entry into another state, while at the same time being attributed stereotypes that their nationality engenders.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to provide a summary of the literature relating to the way inclusion and exclusion operate in migrants’ everyday lives through social relations, whiteness and belonging. Rather than looking at the interaction between immigration policy and immigrants’ inclusion and exclusion, this research explores how inclusion and exclusion are embedded into migrants’ everyday lives at a local level. As such, it focuses on migrants’ interpretations of their social encounters within the destination country. European states (and others) are becoming less culturally homogenous and more ethnically diverse. In this context, where immigrants are generally perceived as a threat to social cohesion, this research is interested in exploring how this has been lived by migrant groups in the host societies, and what the character of social relations between immigrants and the dominant group is. It explores the daily negotiation of ethnic difference through social contacts in the destination context.

Gender, age, as well as social class and education determine individuals’ attitudes towards immigrants. The lower-educated and male tend to be more negative in their views about immigrants (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, Fonseca et al. 2013). Moreover, Fonseca et al. (2013) discovered that younger cohorts of immigrants present higher levels of intermarriage than the older groups. It emerges that high-skilled immigrants, who tend to socialise with highly educated individuals, are more likely to be socio-culturally integrated (see also Schlueter 2012, who finds that interethnic friendships in a German town are more frequent if both parties are born in the host country and have high education). Furthermore, since women tend to

present lower levels of racism, immigrant men might be less likely to enter mixed relationships and thus achieve cultural integration (see Heckmann 2005:28 on the role of intermarriage as an indicator of cultural integration). Indeed, Muttarak (2014:72) noted that “[o]ne of the most commonly used indicators of social interaction between immigrant communities and mainstream society is intermarriage”. Lastly, immigrants of a relative young age, such as university students or early career professionals, are more likely to engage in social interethnic relations than older immigrants.

The theory, however, presents two major shortcomings. Firstly, it does not consider that prejudiced people are unlikely to be willing to create social contacts with members of minorities/majorities. Secondly, it only elaborates on how people can engage in social contact once the groups have been established, without exploring the process through which the contact is produced and the reasons (see also Pettigrew 1998:80, Fonseca et al. 2013). Moreover, it is questionable whether positive attitudes towards one member of the minority/majority translates into a generalisation of lack of prejudice towards the group members. This can also be a rather simplistic approach of the formation of interethnic friendships, as these often depend on multiple variables such as personal preference, opportunity structure and migrants’ integration (see Muttarak 2014:73-75). Indeed, Muttarak (*ibid.*) identifies the concept of ‘homophily’ as a significant factor influencing interethnic contacts. By ‘homophily’, she understands a multitude of factors such as language, nationality, culture, which make people more likely to associate and create friendships with some people rather than others.

Furthermore, while the literature is dominated with debates around racism and discrimination in Western contexts, it pays less attention to how individuals perceived as inferior discriminate against those they see as inhabiting a lower social status. The current research adds a new dimension to the concept of whiteness as a site of dominance, by conceiving it through Romanians’ eyes, in relation to those who they see as dominant (the French and the British) and the ones perceived as dominated (the Roma and other ethnic minorities). In other words, Gypsiness allows Romanians the privilege to embrace their contested white identities. Romanians are an interesting study group, as they perceive their skin tone and European roots as markers of whiteness, and thus as a system of differentiation between them and those perceived as less white. However, they are not seen as white by the citizens of the countries they interact with and thus their belonging to the host country is brought under scrutiny.

‘Belonging’ connects the individual to the society. People’s daily experiences in the host country impact on the feeling of attachment migrants have towards the country

of origin and the host country. This impacts on the nature of migrants' experiences of 'home' as it sheds light on the connections they have with the places they inhabit/long for. However, there are aspects which remain unknown, such as the conceptual distinction between 'home' and 'belonging', which this study is attempting to unpack.

Discrimination and the type of social interactions are just two of the many examples of factors which determine migrants' acceptance or rejection of the places they inhabit. In this context, passports can provide "the institutional foundation of trust during international and transnational encounters" (Wang 2004:359) and act as a 'status enhancer' for the 'underclass'. Then, the "mobile subjects" (Lash and Urry 1994), the cosmopolitans, may not enjoy the levels of freedom they think they are entitled to on the basis on their socio-economic status. Despite this, little is known about individuals' stories of naturalisation. This research seeks to remedy this by analysing Romanians' imaginings of citizenship in France and Britain.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Approaches To Researching Romanians' Lived Experiences In London And Paris.**

#### **Introduction**

This phenomenological inquiry aims to contribute to an understanding of Romanians' lived experiences through social encounters in London and Paris and the effect these have on their ties to the country of origin and the host societies. The phenomenon studied was Romanians' affiliations to the origin and host countries from different points of experience and it evolves around the meanings the participants themselves attach to their migratory journeys and status as migrants. The study was based on empirical research undertaken in order to explore, understand and interpret Romanians' daily experiences in London and Paris. It is explanatory, built on participants' feelings, perceptions and lived experiences and it rests on a double interpretation of the social world – by the participants and by myself. The comparative nature of the study resides in its focus on Romanians' everyday lives in two socio-cultural contexts. This sheds light on the relations and differences between these locations and on the variations in migrants' lived experiences revealing different senses of belonging and transnational experiences.

Researching individual everyday lives has been subject to criticism “for [its] excessive individualism, not recognising that it is in understanding how individuals construct meaning that then provides us with knowledge of how social reality is itself constructed.” (Harrison 2009:xxxii). The approach taken in this research sees participants' lives within broad social constructs and it explores the ways in which their daily interactions with the host country's residents influence their social worlds. As Rustin (2002:48) argues, the “individual case becomes the point of discovery and the starting point for inference about social structure”. By studying personal experiences and their relationship with their social lives, we can get an insight into participants' outer lives. Belonging is understood as linking society to individuals (May 2013) and is conceptualised through experience, social relations and affect.

The specific questions which drive this research project aim to contribute to understandings of migrants' senses of belonging and social relations. This are:

How do social encounters influence Romanians' senses of belonging towards the country of origin and the host society?

What is the relationship between social relations and belonging for transnational migrants?

In particular, the following sub questions are analysed:

1. How do processes of inclusion/exclusion through social interactions affect Romanian migrants?
2. How do Romanian migrants understand the meaning of home as a result of migration?
3. How do power relations play out in Romanians' negotiation of belonging and their aspirations to modernity?
4. What are the drivers for Romanians' naturalisation as Western European citizens?

In this chapter I show how I gathered the data which has enabled me to understand how Romanians' lived experiences influenced their senses of attachment to the sending and receiving contexts. I start by discussing the design process, the theoretical paradigm underpinning the research and how participants' characteristics affected the data collection. Next, I explore my positionality and how I navigated between the insider and outsider roles. Finally, I examine the methods used in this research, and provide insights into how the data obtained was analysed.

## **Project design**

This section provides an overview of the project design of this study. The theoretical stance underpinning this research is explored before moving on to the challenges encountered during the access, recruitment and sampling process. Since context shapes migrants' lived experiences, it also investigates the role of location during the interview encounter and that of cities in migrants' lives.

### **Understanding human experiences theoretically**

The aim of this research was to interpret how human experiences are seen, understood and enacted by participants. The everyday is "where we live our lives" (Pink 2012:30) and it is the result of relationships between environments and practices. Migrants' interactions with locals contribute to their personal constructions and deconstructions of their lifeworlds and ultimately to their understandings of their affiliations. Individuals' racial identities are constituted through everyday investments which rely on power dynamics and have emotional, material and embodied effects for individuals (Gunaratnam 2003).

Consequently, the interpretivist ontology was privileged, as it “focuses on the way that people make sense of the world, especially through sharing their experiences with others through the medium of language” (Easterby-Smith et al 2008:58). Furthermore, reality is socially constructed by the people who experience it and its meanings vary (Darlaston-Jones 2007), in line with peoples’ backgrounds and their socio-economic demographics.

This research draws on the lived experiences of 64 (non-Roma) Romanian participants as well as the insights of 12 informants, who give accounts about their interpretations of the social reality they inhabit. The reason this study warranted a focus on non-Roma Romanians was due to the paucity of research on Romanians not belonging to the Roma ethnicity, in comparison to the variety of studies that have addressed the daily lives of the Roma. To date, the experiences of Romanian Roma in Western Europe have been widely investigated by individual academics (Cousin and Legros 2015, Pantea 2012, Vlase and Voicu 2013), as well as by European projects involving both Eastern European and Western European partners, such as the large study coordinated by the University of Manchester, entitled ‘The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects and future engagement strategies’. Other studies (Kaneva and Popescu 2013, Popa 2017) have explored the tense relationship between nonRoma and Roma Romanians. Nevertheless, the attempts to study and understand the daily lives of non-Roma Romanians are not as numerous, particularly in the French and British space. Moreover, there is a lack of consideration of how high-skilled Romanians experience life in the host countries, which is addressed in this thesis.

This study addresses the relational and context-specific nature of identities, as well as their construction and negotiation socially (Gunaratnam 2003:21). It examines how social categories are constructed and how they affect Romanians’ relationship with their social worlds. The position of men and women according to various social positions such as class, age and time spent in the host country differ and thus the inclusion/exclusion of their everyday lives operates in different ways. Their identities are produced and reproduced through everyday processes which alter the relationship the individuals have with society.

Therefore, data collection and analysis lend themselves to phenomenological inquiry, which acknowledges that social reality is the product of individuals’ understandings and their interpretation of it. It attempts to understand how phenomena were interpreted by the research participants whose life worlds form the subject of the thesis. Cohen et al. (2000:3) suggest that phenomenology is most useful when the “task at hand is to understand an experience as it is understood by those who are having it”. Nevertheless, I move beyond simply understanding their

lifeworlds and I engaged interpretively with participants' nature and meanings of the social worlds as well as their relation with the social worlds. The interpretations people have of the social world are culturally derived and historically situated (Crotty 2004:67). In line with hermeneutic phenomenology, it is believed that the description of actors' worlds is itself an interpretive process. This will be further elaborated in the section dedicated to data analysis; it suffices for now to say that the meaning of experiences is interpreted through themes (Sloan and Bowe 2014). Specifically, while "phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experience, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the 'texts' of lived experience" (*ibid.*:10).

This approach suggests that phenomena can only be understood in their deepest form, and consequently recounted and interpreted, by having access to the subjective perspectives of those who have lived them (Merleau-Ponty 1945). This perspective of the worlds Romanian participants live in and their lived experiences, comes by focusing on the meanings they ascribe to these experiences. Their everyday experiences as immigrants are the phenomenon this study seeks to understand and interpret. Welman and Kruger (1999:189) state that "phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people". This meant that I entered the field with a lack of knowledge regarding Romanians' lived experiences (this had implications which will be developed further).

Phenomenology explores how individuals view and interact with the world. Since this study seeks to understand how Romanians' senses of (non-) belonging are shaped by their social interactions in the host country, phenomenology is an apt methodological choice. It allows for the Romanians' experiences and feelings to be examined from the participants' views by shedding light on how their affiliations are affected by the social worlds they inhabit. By interviewing a variety of Romanians in London and Paris, this research explores the multiple interpretations of reality from the perspective of people experiencing it, and thus participants' variety of senses of belonging.

### **Access, recruitment and sampling**

This section explores the key characteristics of the Romanians interviewed in London and Paris and how these influenced the research process at various stages: recruitment, interview location and ethics. This context required a significant degree of flexibility in order to build a rapport based on understanding and sensitivity to participants' lives, which allowed for rich data to be collected (Grafanaki 1996:331).

The following extract is a testimonial of how precarity and history play out in the lives of Romanians:

*I accompanied a man in his 60s to a Social Security branch to help him with some interpreting with the officials. At the beginning, he asked me if he could pay for lunch as a thank you. I politely declined and suggested instead to meet up with him and his wife at a later stage to discuss about my project. He agreed, but he equally insisted to give me €20 for my help. I declined. He seemed surprised and said to me "But we are Romanians!" (Field work notes, Paris, March 2014)*

This story is an insightful account of relationships between Romanians abroad on the basis of a shared past. The awkwardness of the situation and the participants' not understanding my reasons of not accepting the money reflects the ambiguity of such relationships when the parties do not know each other but assume similar characteristics and conduct (see the positionality section).

Many of the possible respondents who declined to take part in the research were low skilled. Should I have recompensed them with gift cards or an hourly rate for their time because they were Romanians and they were doing me a favour? Paying for a coffee or food during the interview was a contentious issue. Most participants (mainly men) offered to pay for the consumption, on the basis that I was a student or because of my gender (see also Moroşanu 2015b). Indeed, a male participant mentioned his duty to pay: "Let me be a gentleman till the end". The decision not to financially compensate them was made on the basis that given the legacy of corruption in Romania, this could have been misperceived and understood as a form of fraud rather than a compensation for their time.

Romanians' vulnerability and their depiction by French and British media together with the post-communist legacy posed a number of difficulties during the research journey, mainly regarding recruitment, interview location and ethics.

The interpretivist philosophy suggests that social reality only exists through the medium of people who see and interpret it. Furthermore, it relies on the interactions between social actors and the context within which they go about their everyday lives. This research was interested in exploring the interpretation of the social world by a variety of individuals, which influenced the eligibility criteria and the choice of the two geographically separate contexts for a greater variety of individuals to be interviewed.

Participant recruitment of both low and high skilled Romanian men and women was based on three main criteria. First, eligible participants needed to have left Romania

after the fall of communism. Second, they had to be working at the time of the interview. Third, they had to have spent at least two years in the host society.

Unlike quantitative studies which rely on high numbers of participants, this qualitative project acknowledges that a small number of participants produce multiple views of social reality. This meant that the findings are not transferable to the entire Romanian population. Moreover, not all Romanians' lives are represented by this study. Students, former political refugees as well as Romanians who arrived in the host country at a time when they were not targeted by negative public attitudes (namely before 1989) are missing from the study. They might have been likely to have better experiences in the host countries due to their status, and more negative views of sending country.

After two years in the host country, the immigrants may be somewhat 'settled' and thus benefit from a better livelihood, which could translate into a (lack of a) sense of attachment to the receiving and sending contexts. However, since this research is interested in migrants' feelings of belonging towards the sending and receiving societies, it is argued that the participants need to have spent at least two years in the host country in order to develop an understanding of the context of destination and thus to a more enduring sense of belonging towards both societies. Thus, their experiences are considered to be better grasped.

The two year period in the host country means that this research did not explore the lives of the migrants who were in their early stages of 'integration' and who might have provided information regarding the challenges encountered at the beginning of their migratory journeys. This initial period is of high importance for migrants' integration process, as during this time they may decide whether they settle or return on the basis of the suspicion they are regarded with by receiving communities (Hugo 2005:1). Indeed, Eastern Europeans living on temporary assignments from agencies during their first months often have no option other than living in overcrowded accommodation and can barely afford to pay rent (Maroukis 2015).

The criteria were somewhat loosened in that other participants were able to qualify for the project, such as Romanian job seekers, elderly people who had finished their professional activity and working students. The criteria were adapted to fit the socio-demographic characteristics of the populations found in the field. This allowed for a wider understanding of the challenges Romanian migrants may face in 'real time', such as looking for a job. This project did not only engage with the 'success stories' of those migrants who were employed, but also with the less fortunate accounts, which provided a strong narrative of their daily 'struggles'. Equally, the

Romanian elders provided useful narratives for the understanding of their fluid positioning towards the sending and receiving countries over the years.

The sampling method used was non-probability purposive, which allowed identification and selection of potential respondents who met the criteria for the areas of investigation (Mason 1996:93). This was combined with snowballing techniques from multiple sources which provided different referral chains (Sadler et al. 1971). Other than proving to be very effective in recruiting new participants, snowballing also allowed for an identification of Romanians' sense of belonging to a Romanian group through social networks. Participants with a variety of backgrounds were selected for an overview of the diversity of circumstances to be provided.

The privilege of having access to individuals' experiences is defined as the process through which the researcher is engaged in continuous exchanges with their interlocutor until the discussions (which take place during the recruitment process or the interview itself) lead to the events and experiences the interviewer is interested in (Molloy 2015). Approaching participants is not a straightforward process (Birch and Miller 2000, Dickson-Swift et al. 2006) and it can vary considerably between groups (Wanat 2008). The nature of their social structures are important in order to better negotiate entry and get official approval from the right persons (Berg 2004). Consequently, the relationship I developed with the participants was crucial in order to gain access to their lived experiences. This will be explored in more detail in the second section of the chapter.

While the recruitment of Romanians in professional jobs was relatively easy due to their interest in the research, the recruitment of people having precarious jobs (namely builders and room attendants) proved to be difficult.

Many participants argued that their experiences were not relevant and my research would benefit from more intellectual accounts. Similarly, the contacts who introduced me to the 'low skilled' participants felt embarrassed about connecting me to those inhabiting perceived lower social statuses than me. One of the contacts suggested that the future participant "was not very intelligent", while one gate keeper was concerned with how I would enjoy attending a barbecue with "not very educated people". My disclosure of my first job as a receptionist in a hotel in Metz (France) during my undergraduate degree helped in the interaction with the gatekeepers and low skilled participants. Both contacts introduced me to their personal contacts once they realised that I was not holding a judgemental attitude towards those seen as less educated than me. While a non-judgemental attitude allows participants to elicit information (Grafanaki 1996:331), it also creates a warm

environment characterised by trust in which the participants feel comfortable and are more likely to help the researcher in finding new participants.

Moreover, the perceived 'earnings gap' between what they hoped to earn and what they really earn, as well as the fact that Romanians in Romania associate co-nationals from abroad with a high earning status, made the possible participants reluctant to share their experiences which they may have felt as unsuccessful. Faced with an insider researcher, the participants were embarrassed by the gap between perceived financial expectations in migration and the reality in practice.

A potential participant I was put in touch with declared that she did not want to talk about her life in France on the basis that

*[a]s long as you are willing to participate in the research, one needs to be honest and open. (...). I cannot say it [could be] indiscrete, because I haven't got that far, but I do not want to either. I have worked for the payroll department and as you probably know, salaries are confidential, and I have learned not to talk too much about some topics.*

In a similar vein, I was referred to by a participants' husband as "the Queen's spy" or "the James Bond Woman", which alluded to my role as an investigator who was observing secretly. Although the appellation was somewhat meant to be perceived as a joke, this probably implied a curt reflection on my double status: educated in a British context, I was making uninvited enquiries into a community I was assuming to be the member of. National sameness was problematic, as I was seen as official threat. This was precisely at the core of my 'undercover' status, as I was perceived as holding two antagonistic memberships: a British institutional membership and a Romanian social membership. This irony was also meant to hide a feeling of uncertainty and discomfort in front of a researcher who asked focused questions and took notes.

I was naively convinced that since I was an 'insider' on the basis of my Romanian nationality and upbringing, the process of recruiting co-nationals and interviewing them would be easy experiences because I owned the 'cultural codes' and vernacular language. However, as it turned out, my 'sameness' to the Romanian community was questioned on a personal level and it created difficulties in recruiting participants. My 'Romanianess' was often not enough to create a space of confidence between the participants and myself. The shared national sameness created distrust and my personal membership to the group under study meant that I had my professional activity largely questioned.

It is the 'encounter with self' Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001:131) that made the participants acknowledge possible conflicting personal identifications such as

values and behaviours which trigger tensions, and ultimately contribute to co-ethnic mistrust (see Hunter 2005). The 'defended subject' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000), then becomes hesitant at the least and abstains at the most to narrate the experiences which they may recognise as threatening or distorting their sense of self (S. Hunter 2005). Taking the example of this project, Romanians became evasive in moments when they were asked to speak about their vulnerable status or about their employers. Due to shared ethnicity, the participants were assuming a pre-existing relationship between myself and themselves, which meant that I was seen to embody the fears they were running from (mistrust in public/civil servants, researchers, or officials due to the communist legacy). In order to minimise the potential of participants' defence mechanisms coming into play, I paid particular attention at reducing the prior framing. For example, I would not let the participants know that I was taking for granted their precarity due to the sectors of activity or I offered my own stories as an immigrant in France and Britain (see S. Hunter 2005).

Given the divisions and scepticism in the community, it turned out to be difficult to liaise with the community at the very beginning of my arrival in London and Paris. Sensing the importance of gatekeepers, I made good use of my personal contacts who introduced me into the community. Gaining access to groups through gatekeepers has been associated with issues of power regarding influencing participants to take part in the research or shaping the research design (see McAreevey and Das 2013 for an overview).

Building relationships with the gatekeepers (Feldman et al. 2003) varied according to the context. In Paris I approached a French General Practitioner (GP) who had Romanian patients. The GP did not attempt to exert influence on the research, rather her altruism was due to her emotional bond with Romania due to her deceased father having emigrated from Romania in the 1950s. She was also speaking (albeit rusty) Romanian, which meant that most of her patients were coming to her practice for her language skills. During my weekly visits to the primary care clinic, I would be introduced by the GP to the Romanian patients as a student. I approached around 20 Romanians (mostly in their 50s) with whom I had very general conversations about their migration stories. I was careful about the topics discussed as in the waiting room, there might have been other people who understood Romanian.

While some of them may have accepted to talk to me as a sign of loyalty or reciprocal favour towards the GP (Homan 2001), it was relatively easy to establish who was genuinely interested to answer my questions and who was coerced, as many refused to have a 'formal' interview, but agreed to have an informal conversation in the waiting room. I allowed them the right of refusal in order to avoid

implied coercion imposed by the fact that I was introduced by the GP. The access was still negotiated with the potential participants; the gatekeeper only provided a trustful platform for the research encounter to take place in. Five patients (three women and two men) expressed their further interest in the research and invited me into their homes to conduct the interviews. Overall, I consider that the presence of a gatekeeper affected positively the research, as I overcame the barriers to accessing participants. At no time during the social conversations or interviews did I feel that I was associated with the GP, as some of the individuals I interviewed were rather critical towards the GP.

The importance of mutual contacts was highlighted by a former participant in my MSc dissertation project whom I had the opportunity to meet again during my PhD fieldwork. When a mutual Croatian friend emailed her about my MSc project, she did not want to meet me because she associated me with Romanians from the Romanian Cultural Institute who she perceived as unmotivated in their professional endeavours. Similarly, in order to verify and validate my 'genuine' character, the husband of a personal contact asked whether we knew each other before my arrival to London for the purpose of my fieldwork or we met through the research. This shows that liaising with co-nationals is not always a straightforward process due to suspicion amongst those sharing the same nationality.

The above events may explain why I was introduced by a personal contact to future interviewees as "a very interesting expat", rather than 'a Romanian PhD student' or 'a Romanian friend conducting research'. Interestingly, she did not choose to place me in the Romanian category in order to highlight my membership to the group I was researching, but used my foreign linkage, to classify me as an expatriate rather than an immigrant, which is associated with poor individuals (Green 2014). Social class here represents a marker of difference from other Romanians who are seen as immigrants based on their lack of social and cultural capital. It is a characteristic which is aimed at enhancing trust and reliability.

### **The role of place in immigrants' lives**

Difference between the interviewee and the interviewed is constructed through the play of power relations within social and geographical spheres (Gunaratnam 2003). Many participants, mostly the elderly and people with lower education preferred to be interviewed in their homes, as opposed to interviews with high skilled individuals, which often took place in public spaces. The desire to conduct the interview in personal micro-cosmos meant that the social differences between the researcher and the researched were negotiated by the participant.

Since many low skilled Romanians tend to work long hours, including the weekends, to which they add long commuting time, they had very little disposable time to dedicate to the research. Meetings had to be often scheduled or cancelled at last minute due to work assignments or took place late in the evenings. The location of the interview needed to be safe and familiar for the interviewees to feel comfortable as sensitive topics were to be dealt with (see Elwood and Martin 2000:656 for a similar argument). A participant who worked as a builder alluded that, given the content of the interview, the location of the interview affected communication. His concern with confidentiality is evident from his statement: "Come to my place. (...) Don't take me to a coffee place, given what you want to find out". Indeed, interviews can "re-stimulate painful memories or unresolved emotional conflicts" (Grafanaki 1996:334).

Sensing my hesitation, that of going into the home of a male participant I did not know, he assured me that his female partner would be at home, providing therefore a safe context for me to conduct my interview in, which I accepted. Since in London it was difficult to approach low skilled participants, going into someone's home was my only option to interview a member of a hard to reach group. As Riley et al. (2003) put it, "I endured discomfort because my need of these participants was greater than their need of me".

Additionally, his reluctance to be interviewed in a local café in an area populated by Romanians might point to the divisions in the Romanian community. He might have felt uncomfortable narrating his migratory experiences in a public space potentially visited by Romanians. With this in mind, when interviewing participants in cafes busy with other Romanians, I chose to move the conversation to a more private corner of the venue for the interview not to be overheard by other Romanian clients.

Although carrying out the interview in the respondent's home might have fostered a comfortable environment for him, the change of location felt somewhat disempowering for me. By accepting to go into his home rather than a café, the location changed from being a convenient space for me, to becoming a convenient space for him, with the interviewee having control over the research process. By negotiating the social space for the interview encounter, I was negotiating the way I would "access the truth" (Gunratnam 2003:158). The qualitative research interview was a dynamic encounter in which power relations shifted and were continuously negotiated, rather than being a "hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution of interviewer and interviewee" (Kvale 2006:484).

In line with phenomenological analysis, this approach acknowledges the importance of the socio-political context in the participants' world (Smith 2007, O'Brien and Tribe 2014). This informs their experiences, the meanings they attach to them and

thus their affiliations. Specifically, Romanians' daily interactions with the citizens and non-citizens of the destination reveal insights into the extent to which context matters in immigrants' lives. This approach sees identities as relational and constituted through social interactions. Migrants are shaped by various forms of power which happen through interactions at all levels: by socialising with locals in professional and personal spheres; and through social mixity or the absence of such diverse contexts in their lives. As Massey (2004:1) argued, "we do not have our beings and then go out and interact, but (...), our identities, are constituted in and through those engagements, those practices of interaction".

The data collected across London and Paris offered contributions to the research questions which could have not been achieved through one setting. This is due to the specificity of the sites chosen, which clarify the links between experiences in different socio-cultural contexts. Building upon Pedwell (2008) 's work, it is argued that theorising 'connections' between differently located experiences helps ground both the effects of national legislation and the ways in which belonging is experienced. The concept of 'connections' refers to the ways in which practices, subjectivities and experiences are entangled and interdependent (*ibid.*:91).

This thesis investigates the role of context in Romanians' feelings of attachments towards the sending and receiving societies. Consequently, a focus on neighbourhoods might have been more relevant in the study of interpersonal interactions (Bloemraad 2013). Nevertheless, immigrants' incomes largely influences the residential patterns. While low skilled Romanians are subject to gentrification and are congregated in 'enclaves' in the outskirts of the cities, Romanians with professional jobs live in more affluent areas, where they 'blend in'. This research was interested in how both working and middle class Romanians interacted with the locals in two socio-cultural contexts in order to shed light on the parallels in their incorporation. A focus on the city provided the mix in socio-economic status, which would not have been possible at a neighbourhood level.

Indeed, cities benefit from highly educated migrants and they equally rely on migrants on low wages to sustain their infrastructure (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009). The tense social relations mediated within the city (Keith and Cross 1993) redraw the urban boundaries by creating both social divisions and unity. The racialised social processes migrants participate in influence their sense of allegiance to the local community. Their individual experiences are created by layered social encounters including gender relations and social positionalities. The routine of the everyday life happens locally, where individuals work, live, send their children to schools and use government services (de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016, Martiniello 2013). These local administrative units have various powers such as

regulatory, policing or taxation, which contribute to migrants' lives and generate feelings of loyalty (Glick Schiller 2012:28) towards the place inhabited. Equally, encounters and social relations happen at a local rather than a national level. Thus, migrants' (non-)integration happens at a local level since the city accounts for migrant integration more than the national (Martiniello 2013).

This study explores the lived experiences of 64 Romanians as well as the insights of 12 key informants in two global cities, Paris and London. Using two sites "improves theory building" (Bryman 2012:74) as it casts light on migrants' life stories in different migration-regimes and provides an insight into the places which better accommodate the Romanian diaspora. By theorising belonging and social relations within the city, this project contributes to the growing literature which acknowledges the importance of the relationship between cities and migration (Glick Schiller 2012), in that migrants get shaped by their experiences in local environments.

A view on cities generates an understanding of belonging from different points of experience. Belonging not only encompasses geographical spaces, but also involves embodied and imagined negotiations of space (Ahmed 2000), which often take the form of 'in-betweenness' or 'diasporic space' migrants inhabit. Consequently, the comparative approach offers a new framework where "attention to the local can be used to probe and complicate understandings of dominant discourses and their links to wider sites of social relations" (Gunaratnam 2003:178). It allows for new meanings, experiences and the connections between them to be discovered.

The reasons which underpinned the selection of London and Paris were fourfold. Firstly, from a research perspective, capital cities are home to larger numbers of Romanian immigrants as well as a variety of Romanian institutions. This meant that the Romanian community would be visible through the presence of ethnic shops, churches etc. This facilitated access to potential participants and their recruitment.

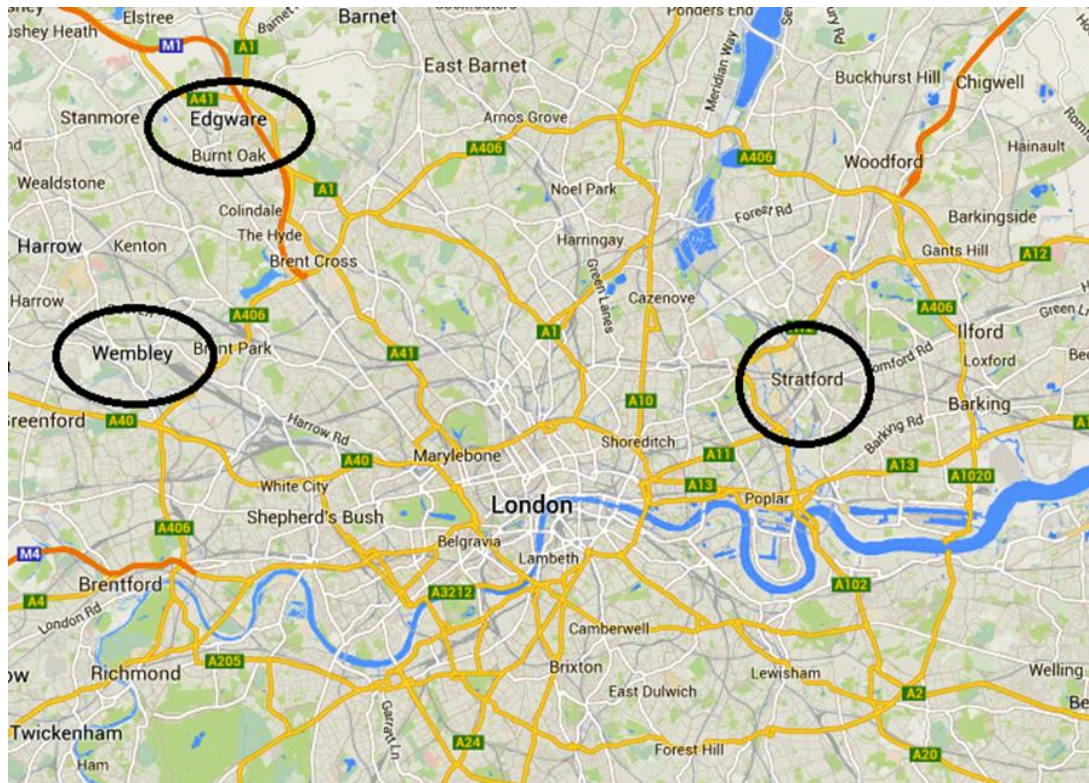


Figure 1 - Romanian ethnic enclaves in London

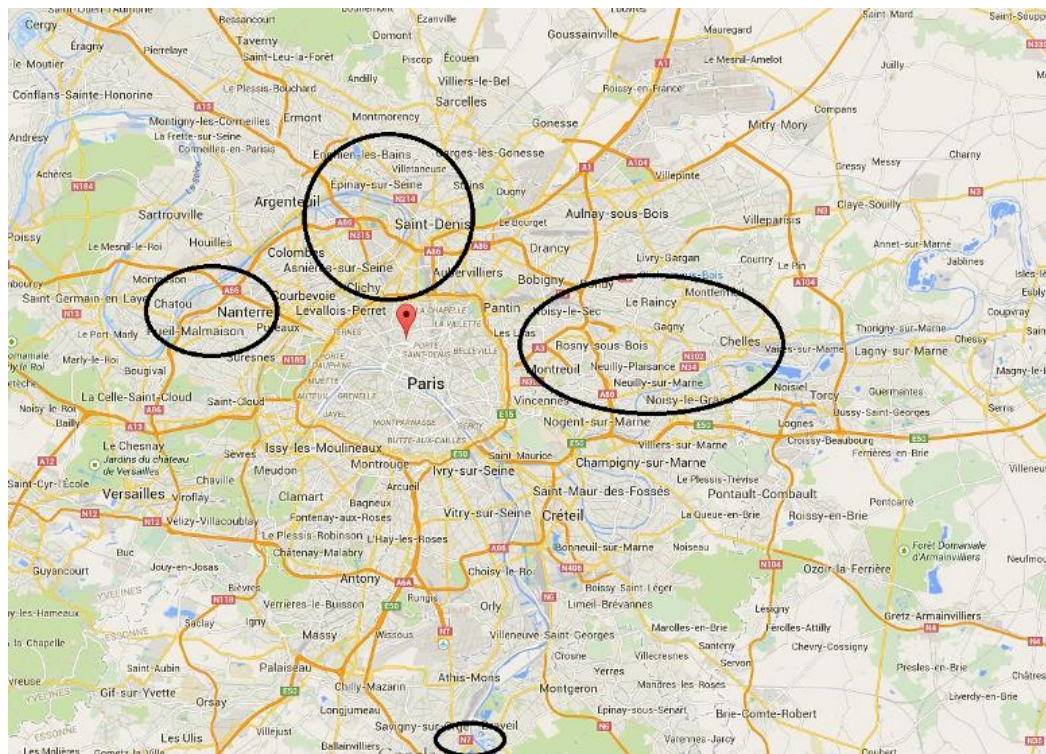


Figure 2 - Romanian ethnic enclaves in Paris

Secondly, the choice of London and Paris provides a holistic view into the characteristics of Romanian migration from both a temporal and socio-economic perspective. France was initially a land of immigration for Romanian intellectuals (emigration which started during the communist regime), with the characteristics of

the migration flows starting to change after the fall of communism. By contrast, London is home to mainly low-skilled Romanians, many of them working in the building industry. Currently, Paris still hosts a large number of organisations dedicated to Romanian artists and professionals, organisations which are absent from the London context. In line with interpretivist philosophy, which assumes that social reality rests on the meanings individuals attribute to their social realities, the choice of two settings contributed to the variety of interpretations of the social worlds sought for by the study. As de Gialdino (2009 paragraph 38) argues, “[t]hat surrounding world, constantly seen as the background, the arena, the permanent basis for researchers' subjective mental work, is precisely what enables them to become a topic of reflection”.

Thirdly, in Britain, Romanians occupied a central place in the media in 2013 and 2014, with articles focusing on their ‘massive influx’ to the UK and their portrayal as criminals and Gypsies (Vicol and Allen 2014). In response to the negative image both in press and television (see also the Channel 4 documentary ‘The Romanians are Coming’), the documentary ‘13 shades of Romanian’ was released. It portrays the stories of 13 Romanians who live, work and integrate in British society. A similar documentary entitled ‘Stigmatised: Romanians’ testimonials’ (‘Stigmatisés, paroles de Roumains’) was produced in France in 2012 by a French couple. It depicted the daily lives of eight Romanians settled in France.

Fourthly, having lived in both London and Paris, made the research process smoother due to my familiarity with the two cities and the presence of Romanian contacts who also facilitated recruitment. The fieldwork was preceded by a process of ‘mapping’, which took place for approximately one month before each fieldwork trip. During this period I familiarised myself with the social network groups dedicated to the Romanian community and various organisations I could liaise with. Numerous Romanian organisations such as the Romanian embassy, Romanian ethnic shops, Orthodox churches, Romanian schools and Romanian media were approached.

The fieldwork was conducted in both underprivileged and affluent neighbourhoods in London and Paris. The presence of the Romanian community was visible in the outskirts of the cities, as Figure 1 and 2 show.

The London-based part of the fieldwork took place between September and November 2013, a period of tabloid and political frenzy regarding the potential arrival on British soil of large numbers of Romanians (and Bulgarians) in 2014. At the time of the fieldwork, Romanian workers in Britain needed right to work documents. In London 25 participants (12 men and 13 women) were interviewed, holding various positions ranging from cleaners and builders to engineers.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with six key informants (an Adventist pastor, an Orthodox priest and four key informants actively involved in the community (see Appendix A for a list of participants and key informants). In both London and Paris I took part in multiple individual and group informal conversations during social, educational and political events.

The associative scene was rather active. To name just a couple, the organisation 'My Romania Group' (which has since closed down) was involved in organising events such as job fairs and English and Romanian language classes, sometimes in collaboration with the tabloid newspaper, 'Ziarul Românesc' (Romanian Newspaper). The magazine 'Romania in Contact' and its founder were engaged in an array of fashion or children events. The visibility of the events organised allowed me to get an understanding of the Romanian community, map and engage with it.

In London I undertook a one month internship with the Romanian embassy which was meant to facilitate the fieldwork and assist with gathering information about the Romanian community. However, I did not find the embassy staff to be cooperative as there was a lack of information on the events organised by them which would have benefited my research. I was not given any information regarding the Romanian community on the basis that "they did not have any official documents". As well as not benefiting my research, my presence at the embassy associated me with the Romanian government and it became difficult when explaining to the participants my link with the embassy. My perceived affiliation to a Romanian political organisation negatively affected the perceptions and willingness of participants to disclose information. This is explained by the general mistrust in Romanian institutions which often stems from political discredit and institutionalised corruption (Volintiru 2012), which will be explored further. As a result of these drawbacks I decided to end to my 'internship' earlier than anticipated.

The fieldwork in Paris occurred from February to May 2014, after the removal of restrictions on the labour market for Romanian nationals. The temporal and spatial dimensions allowed me to 'follow' migrants' lives before, during and after the changes in immigration policy, which sheds light on differences and similarities in their lived experiences. The lifting of restrictions, together with less aggressive media coverage regarding Romanians' activities and a more successful snowballing effect explain the smooth character of participant recruitment.

Overall, I found the Romanians from Paris more trustful regarding my research, which is demonstrated by the multiple entries into the community. Additionally, it may also have been their desire to altruistically help me (Lowe & Paul 2006). Many people invited me into their homes, which allowed for in-depth conversations and a thorough understanding of their daily practices and engagements with the

sending and receiving society through phone conversations and TV watching. Teodora, one of the participants in this study, whom I recruited through a Facebook group called 'Români la Paris', introduced me to her circle of friends working in the building/cleaning industry, with whom I spent several weekend afternoons. Although I did not interview them, I had numerous social chats which allowed me to contextualise Romanians' experiences. The participants were 25 women and 12 men (37 participants in total), as well as six key informants (a shop owner, a French GP and four French members of Romanian/French twinning associations). Furthermore, three students were interviewed, which helped contextualise the Romanian student population in France. Also, a Romanian woman in her 20s who, after having lived in Strasbourg and Paris, returned to Romania only to come back to Lyon (see Appendix A for a list of participants and their socio-economic demographics). This interview, offered insights into the feeling of 'in-betweenness' expressed through multiple trajectories between the two countries.

Unlike London, in Paris, despite the multitude of organisations for Romanians, albeit many of them presided over by French nationals and having a humanitarian perspective, there seems to be fewer social gatherings for the Romanian community. Other than the activities organised by the Romanian Cultural Institute, the main organisations for the Romanian diaspora target students.

## **Methods and Positionality**

Interpretivist ontology is backed up by an epistemology which is grounded in the meanings social agents attribute to their social worlds. These interpretations could only be conveyed through communication. Consequently, the research approach adopted was qualitative mixed methods. It used narratives, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, participant observation and informal social conversations with individuals and with groups and it acknowledged the uniqueness of each social actor's interpretations. Preliminary analysis and remarks were noted during or after observations. These methods were chosen because the study sought to understand participants' experiences and perceptions in their own words and frames of reference. Using multiple sources of evidence improved data collection as it enhanced its validity (Mason 2002b).

### **Semi-structured interviews embedded with narratives**

The interviews aimed to access Romanians' migratory experiences, the meanings they attribute to these (see Lindseth and Norberg 2004) and how they affect their daily realities. Elements of the social can be explored by listening to, interpreting and gathering knowledge from the participants (Mason 2002b). The interview

encounter offered me the possibility to analyse participants' social cues in order to validate the accuracy of the discourse. A holistic interpretation of both social cues and respondents' statements was ensured, which validated the data. The interviews were recorded using a dictaphone, and then transcribed verbatim. Following Hammersley (2008)'s advice, the interpretations of interview-data were checked through participant observation.

Research suggests that migration is an intrinsically stressful experience (Bhugra 2004, Burnett and Fassil 2002). Using questions like 'Can you tell me more about this?', 'What do you mean?', 'What did you do then?', 'How did/do you feel?', I focused on detailed answers of the respondents' experiences and tried to capture their feelings regarding the experiences narrated. The interview did not include a set of questions, but a few generic questions concerning the themes developed in the thesis, all the other questions evolved from participants' answers (Pollio et al. 1997). This allowed each respondent to command the direction of the interview (Madison 2006:5) within the confines of the overarching theme, 'belonging'.

Furthermore, given the precarity many Romanians experience in the British and French labour markets, the questions were elaborated in order to capture the potential tensions in the professional sphere. Also, the increase in negative depictions of non Roma and Roma Romanians in the British (and to a lesser extent) in the French media before the 1st of January 2014, had an influence on Romanians' everyday activities and practices. Although at the initial stage of the drafting of the interview questions I had not anticipated asking questions about the Roma/non-Roma Romanians relations and the tabloid media, their relevance to the interviewees' lives soon became evident. Consequently, I adjusted my interview schedule to incorporate the participants' opinions on these aspects. This was possible due to the opportunity the participants had to convey their everyday experiences in an unstructured context so that they focus on the social elements they found significant. Rather than emphasising similar elements in each interview and asking standardised questions, the approach used was situational, dependent on the events that had already taken place in participants' lives.

I felt I had a professional responsibility towards the participants to give them something back in exchange of their testimonials. This took the form of reciprocity during the interview encounter, which allowed for an examination of the multiple ways difference enters research situations. Knowing how much personal information to share with the participants for report building and reciprocity purposes (Mitchell and Irvine 2008:37) was at times problematic, as I was wary of talking too much about myself rather than listening to the participant. Amongst the participants interviewed, class was the main factor which determined the level of

self-disclosure. Interviewees having low status jobs were more inclined to listen to my story, but they would not have dared to ask me any questions.

The level of disclosure I was comfortable with was considered prior to the research process so that I would not feel vulnerable following too much self-disclosure (Dickson-Swift et al. 2006). Hayman et al. (2012:1) define the two-way story sharing as “[t]he researcher deliberately and strategically discloses relevant stories that promote safety for those who might otherwise feel threatened or at risk when sharing personal information”. Since the information could easily be shared outside of the interview encounter non-anonymously, I had to carefully select the stories.

### **Participant observation**

During the fieldwork I did not live with Romanian immigrants or in areas with large number of Romanians. Nevertheless, I was visiting these designated ‘Romanian areas’ on a regular basis either to interview participants or to simply explore the areas. I consider I was fully immersed in the community, as I was going shopping with the participants, walking them to work, going for walks with them, being introduced to their friends, eating with them and even occasionally sleeping in their homes. I inhabited the same social space as the participants and we exchanged experiences and opinions. As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argue, “[t]he epistemology of participant observation rests on the principle of interaction and the “reciprocity of perspectives” between social actors”.

My geographical presence in London and Paris for a total of seven months allowed me to participate and get involved in a multitude of events such as political (protests), cultural (at the Romanian Cultural Institute) and social (parties and social gatherings I was invited to by the Romanians who took part in the study). This allowed me not only to observe the dynamics of the meetings described in the interview, but also to have sporadic and/or ongoing social conversations with individuals, recruit some of the future participants (Torres 2008) and observe the social dynamics between the participants in the event. In Paris, my presence at the events of the Romanian Cultural Institute also enabled me to interact with French people who attended the events and get an understanding of their views on the Romanian events and Romanian society which offered valuable insights for the context of the research project. All the community members met during these events were informed of my status as a researcher and the project I was undertaking, which meant that I had to constantly introduce myself and my research throughout the events (Kawulich 2005).

## **An insider from afar: navigating insiderness and outsidersness**

Insider research represents “social interviews conducted between researchers and participants who share a cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage” (Ganga and Scott 2006:2006). It is argued that insiders usually gain easier access to the group and build relationships based on trust and collaboration (Clifford and Marcus 1986, cited in Sherif 2001, Dwyer and Buckle 2009, Chereni 2014). But what is it to be done when such trust is missing amongst the members of the group studied because of internal divisions? What if the so-believed insider position triggers questioning rather than legitimacy, divisions rather than togetherness, difference rather than sameness?

As I was embarking on my fieldwork journey, I was eager to engage with Romanians. Although I had never purposefully rejected making Romanian friends, I did not have significant contact with Romanian nationals in either France or Britain. I was looking forward to engaging with Romanians, to learn from them and find out more about their experiences. As well as a professional curiosity, discovering the Romanian community was also a personal desire to discover ‘my people’, curiosity which was not equally shared, as the following extract shows:

*For me it was somewhat exotic to hear Romanian and see Romanians [on the streets of North West London], because I have not been exposed to Romanians. [However] they do not share the same desire, since they live here, amongst Romanians. On the contrary, they are disappointed because they live with Romanians. For them, it is almost like living in Romania, why would they be excited to meet another fellow Romanian? (Field work notes November 2013, London)*

Malone (2003:812) argues that “the most dangerous and difficult place to attempt qualitative research is in a familiar institutional context” due to the lack of “human ability to sufficiently imagine ourselves in others’ position”. A researcher’s knowledge is biased as it is contingent with their positioning which is shaped by their race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, age and physical appearance (Mullings 1999, Kanuha 2000, Bousetta 2006, cited in De Tona 2006). This can be solved by the creation of “positional spaces” characterised by trust and cooperation (Mullings 1999:340) in which the researcher can negotiate their insider/outsider position depending on what is desirable in the process of procuring information. It is a ‘space between’ the insider and outsider status defined by “an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one’s research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience” (Dwyer and Buckle 2009:59). It is represented by the empathy of an insider and the objectivity of an outsider.

Nevertheless, losing 'outsider-ness' in order to claim 'insider-ness' is not a zero-sum situation. There are methodological and ethical challenges associated with both roles (Sixsmith et al. 2003, Ganga and Scott 2006) and the researcher may move between these states willingly or unwillingly. Both roles are negotiated by the researcher and the participants. On the one hand, the researcher navigates between insiderness and outsidersness in relation to the encounters made, as well as topics of conversation (Mullings 1999, Frykman 2004). On the other hand, the participants may sporadically place the researcher in one category at the time, as a result of the researcher's knowledge, and various social differentiations. This oscillation, or "[t]he ambivalence of the researcher's position" (Ouaterra 2004) addresses power imbalances between interviewers and the interviewee (Chereni 2014).

I argue that my insider identity, that of holding the same membership as the population studied, negatively affected the way I was perceived when I entered the field. However, my outsider identification (mainly Western education, lack of knowledge about the Romanian community, personal life, but also looks and lack of geographical proximity) allowed me to negotiate my positioning and be perceived as an 'insider from afar'. On many occasions, I had to emphasise my non-affiliations with Romania in order to dwindle peoples' mistrust. Romanian researchers are associated with the Romanian government which the public is discontent with due to its inability to tackle corruption, amongst other things. In other words, the fieldwork "nativis[ed] [me], shaping [me] into an interpreter and objective authority" (Sherif 2001:438). I do not pretend that I was seen as an insider into the Romanian community, but rather I worked my way into the community. Due to the combined identity I was attributed, I was perceived as the product of both the East and West and thus trustworthy, fair and reliable, characteristics associated with the West, but also empathetic, correlated with my Romanian side.

Although I shared with the participants in the study the 'migrant' status, our reasons for being in Western Europe were different. While many Romanians had left Romania because of high unemployment rates, my reason was to pursue my studies. This generated a complexity of relationships between me and the respondents; a relationship in which I was seen as 'different' because I had not experienced the harshness of life in the West in the same way. My student status was, however, positively interpreted, when associated with my French and British qualifications. My attachment to a Western European institution engendered some psychological comfort amongst the participants and enabled me to escape the ascriptive negative roles associated with my Romanian upbringing such as pride, poor education, political affiliations or corruption. I was embodying the

characteristics associated with the West, such as fairness and reliability and thus not totally conforming to Romanian norms (see Altorki 1988).

The importance my Western affiliation played in the recruitment process was made clear by one of the participants from Paris. He was predisposed to distrust regarding anything that might have any links with Romanian public institutions and wanted to be sure that I was not working for the Romanian government and that my project did not have any Romanian affiliations before he would allow me to interview him. He asked me several times (when we were first introduced as well as before the interview) if the research was related in any way with the Romanian political space. It was not until I told him that I was funded by a British university and that I had left Romania ten years before that he agreed to be interviewed. This is an example of how the participants' understanding of my role oscillated. If at the beginning of the conversation my position was that of 'guilty by association' with post-Communist institutions, it then fluctuated to 'innocent by dissociation' from the Communist legacy (Mishler and Rose 1997).

My status as a doctoral student was useful in that it was regarded with respect. For example, Catalin, a participant from Paris, argued: "Those people who have a degree are respectful and reliable (...) compared to many of those who only have A levels (...)". I was entrusted with participants' testimonials on the basis that my education was granting me the advantage of using the information in a reliable manner and for the purpose of knowledge production.

Ethnic matching is seen as the solution in overcoming power dynamics in the sense that "[r]ace' and/or ethnicity, in research with minoritised research participants, are seen as defining the emotional and ethical dimensions of the interview interaction in ways that eclipse differences of gender, class, age, disability and sexuality" (Gunaratnam 2003:83). Nevertheless, shared nationality was not always the criteria used by participants in perceiving my insider/outsider role. Religion and gender are two characteristics which located my social identity outside of the Romanian community.

As an orthodox Romanian, I experienced a feeling of uneasiness in liaising with Adventists due to their marginalisation in the Romanian context by the orthodox majority. Nevertheless, this psychological discomfort faded away once I informed the participants that I have Adventist friends and I had been to a Romanian Adventist church. This provided a mental 'bridge' between our religious identities which helped me to negotiate my way into the Adventist community. One of the men I had a short conversation with addressed me using the term 'sister'. When he realised that I was not Adventist, I was coined as a 'Christian sister'. This

separation was based purely on religious grounds, not on the concept of membership to the same 'imagined community'.

My role as an educated woman was accepted amongst the Romanian elites interviewed. However, my personal identity category, that of an unmarried woman at the age of 28 was questioned largely by the working class female participants, who did not see me as an 'adult' or as a woman with rich experiences (Shinozaki 2012). In a very family orientated population, I was asked if I had or wanted children and indirectly reminded that life means personal fulfilment through the existence of children. This however, meant that the participants were teaching me about life, rather than just sharing their experiences. This was rather disempowering as I was perceived as a student seeking information who was dependent on the interviewee (Mullings 1999).

Papanek (1964) argues that in the Pakistani context, Western women are able to escape the gender role commonly attributed to native women by negotiating their role due to the "foreigner [who] tends to permit more flexibility and mobility for the foreign female researcher that would be possible for local women" (Altorki and El-Solh 1988:6). Unlike her, my gendered Romanian identity was questioned due to my independent lifestyle. When a female participant found out that my boyfriend, with whom I was living in Leeds, was still there while I was living in London conducting my fieldwork, her reaction was one of disapproval towards my personal life, which was not operating according to Romanian standards: "And he agrees for you to be here? You are like the English!". By this, she meant that I was distant and not capable of a loving and caring relationship. I was also reminded that I did not fully belong to the Romanian group on the basis of my looks and clothing, which were associated with a Western appearance, as well as due to my absence from Romanian circles during my migratory journeys.

Being a woman however helped in the process of interviewing men. Teedora, a participant from Paris, herself explained that had I been a man I would have not had the same success rate in interviewing low skilled Romanian men. According to her, many Romanian builders are single, separated or with wives back in Romania, and although they do not necessarily think that our professional meeting could take a more personal turn, they still hope that something could come out of our meeting. Indeed, a male participant agreed to meet me for an interview only if his wife would not find out, even though I made it clear from the beginning what the interview encounter would consist of. This shows that not nationality, but other social divisions such as social positions are at the basis of the insider/outsider experience, like gender, occupational and migration status (Moroşanu 2015b).

My outsider status was equally embodied by my lack of knowledge regarding participants' vulnerable position and labour market conditions, knowledge which I should have held as a member of the Romanian community. The questions I was asking such as whether the participants had legal documents to work in the host country and the sectors they were working in provoked a feeling of uneasiness and shame amongst the participants. This translated into their hesitation in answering my questions. This is in full accord with Fahim and Helmer (1980)'s argument:

*The local anthropologist may not be taken seriously by informants if he probes types of behaviour that informants view as commonly shared knowledge (...). Recognised as member of the society within which he conducts research, he is subject to cultural expectations of his informants. To challenge certain norms may mean risking estrangement or ostracism.*

Luckily, this theme ended once my knowledge expanded and I stopped asking questions about obvious situations. Rather, I was taking the irregularity and the sector of activity for granted and I was introducing it as a given. Negotiating my way into the community was therefore possible once I gathered the knowledge regarding the vulnerable status of the Romanians inhabiting under privileged socio-economic groups. Contrary to Asselin (2003)'s argument which reads that for successful fieldwork, the insider researcher should enter the field with no knowledge about the phenomenon studied, I found this experience to be rather problematic as it was generating feelings of discomfort amongst the participants. Instead, my sharing of knowledge about their specificities of hardship was reassuring as they could find in me an empathetic ally sensitive to their issues. Indeed, researchers (see Aitken and Burman 1999, cited in Gunaratnam 2003) have observed that when conducting research with black participants, if white researchers share knowledge and concerns about racialised differences, this helps equilibrate power dynamics during the interview process.

This shows that although outsider characteristics are appreciated in order to gain trust, the researcher needs an air of insider's knowledge in order for participants to feel comfortable during the interview process. Another way I gained participants' trust was through empathy.

My social background and gendered identity enabled me to empathise with the participants' experiences and thus create "insider empathy" (Sixsmith et al 2003:581); which enriched the data collection through the exchange of personal stories. Being empathetic, however, had its own implications.

Firstly, I sometimes had to act out emotions to show my supposed identification with their experiences in order to make the participants in the research feel

comfortable in my presence. Of the use of empathy, Hochschild (2012) mentions the commercial uses of emotions. This refers to researchers needing to 'fake friendship' in order to gather data, which leads to "the commercialisation or 'commodification', of the skills of 'doing rapport' in less-structured qualitative interviews" (Duncombe and Jessop 2002:5). At times I felt I needed to internalise my identity and my own thoughts in order to avoid any verbal conflict with the knowledge keepers who were giving me an insight into their lives.

Secondly, as a co-ethnic woman, I had access to peoples' experiences because I was viewed as able to empathise. I was told by one of the gatekeepers that I am a warm person who can be truly happy and truly sad for the people I interact with, and for her this sincerity she had observed in me was very rare and valuable. This helped in our undergoing interaction. The interview encounters benefited most participants positively, with them mentioning a 'therapeutic effect' (see Bondi 2013, Dwyer and Buckle 2009). However, the psychological therapy/social interview overlap triggers challenges and ethical implications. The conversation may have been misunderstood by the interviewees as an open invitation into a psychotherapeutic space in which they were encouraged to talk to an attentive listener, a platform which I did not have the qualifications and skills to moderate accordingly (Bondi 2013).

However, I noticed that most of the time the participants were not looking for an answer to their problems, but someone who would relieve them from the psychological pain produced by migration, such as discrimination, just by listening. The 'therapy', would take place through their own narration. Another technique employed was that of constant reminders about my role, that of a researcher trying to understand peoples' experiences. Indeed, the "continual intervention" (Duncombe and Jessop 2002:5) proved to be a practical skill in inhibiting the development of too close a relationship.

Given the social divisions within the Romanian communities, and my membership to the group under study meant that I had my activity questioned. A strategy adopted was to be introduced by a mutual contact and to be positioned as a friend to start with and then as a doctoral researcher. This generated comfort, reassurance and confidence and made the participants open up in a way which would not have been possible if I was perceived as a researcher only. Once part of this space determined by social proximity with the participants, I was trusted and could begin my research activity. One of the participants declared:

*Seriously, Claudia, you've given me a feeling of liberation (...)...And you know why? Because I saw you on Saturday [during a barbecue]. Maybe if I hadn't seen you on Saturday, I would have not been like that. And I saw you*

*on Saturday, being very natural. I liked it a lot, and this matters a great deal. To be open, to be yourself.*

This shows that my behaviour was thoroughly analysed and evaluated before a decision was made regarding the participant's involvement in the study. I adopt here Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013)'s concepts of "a compromised public sphere and an idealised private sphere" to highlight the importance of the transition from the public sphere to the personal sphere amongst the participants having experienced the Communist rule. By moving from one sphere to another, I was seen as a trustworthy friend rather than a researcher taking an attitude of enquiry.

This section investigated the complexity of my social positions. My insiderness was due to my membership of the group and the empathy bestowed by my Romanian upbringing. My outsiderness was reflected by the multiple identities I was attributed by the participants: mainly my Western education and my lack of knowledge about the emotional and practical sufferings and vulnerabilities experienced by the Romanians researched. Interestingly, rather than acting as a boundary, it is precisely these 'other-ing' elements which allowed me to overcome the mistrust and scepticism associated with my insider status. My Western credentials counteracted the negative effects my Romanian upbringing might have had.

## **Ethics**

Social discourses are captured by lived experiences that have emotional and embodied consequences for individuals (Gunaratnam 2003, S. Hunter 2005). Engaging with issues around migration such as highly emotional experiences of discrimination resulted in participants' distress and at times even crying. Although I was conscious of the importance of not asking disturbing questions which may trigger anxiety, I did not know what experiences the participants had had prior to the interview in order to engage appropriately. However, Knowles (2006a) argues that researchers should not look for a 'consensus' when interviewing participants. Challenging participants can reveal other angles of the topic, but it is essential that they do not feel intimidated so that they can voice their opinions. In other words, both the researcher and the respondent should see the interview in a 'constructivist' way in order to generate new information about research topics (Roulston 2010, 2011). Given this 'sensitive' nature, the research had to meet the ethical requirements outlined in the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics. Data was stored on the researcher's password protected Leeds University computer system which was accessed remotely when not on campus. Participants' anonymity was assured through the use of pseudonyms.

Conducting research amongst economically disadvantaged Romanians, often found in irregular situation meant that two main ethical challenges needed addressing: their irregular status and their poor education. Given some Romanians' undocumented status, they were reluctant to engage in unnecessary conversations, notably with a researcher who was seen as representing an institution. Moreover, a large number of builders received cash-in-hand and they did not declare the earnings for tax purposes, and were therefore reluctant to hold discussions regarding their financial means. Because they were violating the law, any information they were giving may have involved risks for themselves (Düvell et al. 2010). Indeed, if informed by the researcher, British governmental institutions could have caused the 'irregular' worker to become unemployed. The following excerpt reflects the tensions resulting from an encounter between a 'vulnerable' worker and myself.

*Whilst I was waiting for a key informant, I engaged in a conversation with a Romanian man who was doing some construction work in the building owned by the interviewee. The builder was very talkative to start with and it seemed that he would be interested in engaging in an official interview for the research. However, when he was informed about my role and the research project, he abruptly ceased talking and he would not say what that was due to. (Field work notes, September 2013, London)*

His reaction could be due to two factors. On the one hand, due to his vulnerable status and the relationship he had with his boss (whom I was waiting to interview), a faux-pas would not be tolerated and thus he could have been fired. On the other hand, it can also be explained by his vulnerable status in terms of lack of the documents allowing him to work in Britain and the fear that I could have been a representative of a public institution who could have punished him due to his irregular work.

Another challenge which had to be addressed in order to rightfully convey the participants' experiences was the 'insecurity of meaning' (Gunaratnam 2003). This represented "instances and process in which the meaning of particular words, phrases or gestures are noticeably unclear and are wide-open to different interpretations and reasons" (*ibid.*:141). Some participants' capacity to verbalise and convey meaning to their experiences was limited due to their poor education.

For example, one of the Romanian participants from Paris in his 60s was referring to his residence permit in France as a French identity card, which implied that he was a French national. It was not until he showed me the exact document that I understood that what he was referring to as an identity card was in fact a 'carte de séjour' (residence permit). Similarly, another interviewee in her 60s was referring to

'the monthly pension' she was receiving from the French state, although she had never worked legally in France. What she was in fact meaning was a type of monthly social benefit given to individuals without an income in France.

Consequently, the questions during the interview had to be posed with care without assuming a shared meaning attached to words (Holloway and Jefferson 2000). I had to take extra care in order for the participants to comprehend the aim, risk and benefits of the study. For example, since many participants, albeit elderly were lacking knowledge with regards to a 'PhD course' and 'research project', this had to be explained in words like 'university homework'. The university label, conferred them a safety net as the project would be used to a good end and it was highly beneficial in the participants making an informed decision regarding their participation in the project.

### **Informed consent**

This section details how the communist legacy and the mistrust associated with this influenced my decision regarding written informed consent.

Obtaining informed consent "entails giving sufficient information about the research and ensuring that there is no explicit or implicit coercion so that prospective participants can make an informed and free decision on their possible involvement" (ESRC 2012:29). This usually is represented by a form that the participants sign before the start of the interview. Nevertheless, the requirement to sign an informed consent form may prompt rather than alleviate concerns on the part of prospective participants. This is due to the distrust in paperwork given to Romania's post-communist legacy which was dominated by an authoritarian communist party controlling all aspects of society (see Bunce 1999).

Sheridan and Storch (2009) give the example of Polish women taking part in a study who refused to sign a consent form. They argue that "[t]heir behaviour may be culturally anchored as their socio-political cultural background had partly been formed during Communism" (*ibid.*:8). Yu and Liu (1986:487) find this amongst Vietnamese refugees in the US and state that "[u]naccustomed to expressing their opinions outside close circles of family and friends, unfamiliar with polls and surveys, (...) the refugees could not help but feel confused and frightened when asked to sign the consent form". Signing forms was likely to constitute a barrier to access due to its official connotations.

For this reason, an introductory email was sent to potential participants which detailed the project, the researcher and voluntary nature of the participants' involvement in the research. At the beginning of the meeting, the participants had the project explained and they were asked if they were happy to proceed having

been made aware of all aspects such as the voluntary nature of the interview, the right to not answer any questions perceived as disturbing/personal, the transcription of the interview, the use of pseudonyms and publications. This acted as verbal consent. Both the explanation of the study as well as the oral consents were audio recorded.

As previously argued, association of the research with Romania generated anxieties due to the possible connection between the research itself and the Romanian government. The following section explores how being perceived as a co-ethnic meant that I encountered challenges which were balanced by my attributed outsider status.

## **Data analysis and translations**

This aim of this study was to understand how Romanians' affiliations towards the sending and receiving countries were affected by their social encounters in the host country. The data gathered was used to describe and interpret the phenomenon under study: Romanians' migratory journeys. As a researcher, I interpreted this phenomenon through participants' understanding of it. Therefore, data analysis was influenced by my own way of seeing and understanding reality, a view which falls under the interpretivist ontology, aimed at understanding social process through participants' subjective views on the world.

As already argued in the second section of the chapter, my insider status was not always accepted by the respondents. This, as well as the difference in lived experiences between myself and the researched, helped in distancing myself from the project and treat it from an 'etic' rather than fully 'emic' perspective, the former being associated with insider researchers'.

The data analysis process combined two approaches. From a technical perspective, thematic analysis was used in order to organise the data. Then, the data was interpreted from a phenomenological stance in order to generate knowledge about lived experiences of the everyday from the perspective of the individual.

The ontological assumption was that the process of understanding participants' social worlds is itself subject to my own interpretation of their social world. Therefore, this study engages in a double interpretation of the social world. Firstly, the interviewees' testimonials represent an interpretation of the everyday which is shaped by daily encounters. Secondly, participants' social meanings are once again interpreted from my own point of view in order to de-code and analyse them. This implies that my own interpretation of participants' accounts contributed to and

shaped data organisation and analysis. I was immersed in the social worlds of the participants and was part of the knowledge production through constant reflections on the data I was analysing. The data collection and analysis thus rested on an ongoing interaction between myself and the participants' testimonials in order to generate new theories based on new perspectives of the participants' lifeworlds. In parallel, knowledge is modified through the act of analysing participants' understandings of their social worlds. Thus, ontological considerations come first, followed by epistemological and methodological approaches (de Gialdino 2009 paragraph 53). New ways of knowledge production rely on understanding the social position of the interviewee (gender, age, status etc.) followed by connecting their identities to the emergent concepts. Epistemologically, hermeneutic phenomenological research acknowledges that new meaning is created through subjective experiences and research, with the new knowledge produced being subjective (Kafle 2013:194).

Data analysis is performed applying the hermeneutic cycle, which consists of three stages: reading of the participants' testimonials, engagement in reflective writing of the lived experience of human experience and finally interpreting the data (van Manen 2007).

### **Thematic analysis**

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

Within an initial phase of data analysis, the paper and electronic versions of the transcripts were examined, in order to highlight important quotes which shed light on participants' experiences of social encounters and belonging (Creswell 2007). Each transcript was thoroughly read and key points were identified and noted in the margins of the text. This allowed for an identification of characteristics of Romanians' senses of attachment.

Then, the data from the textual data-sets was interpreted and themes were identified. Various themes such as home, belonging, social relations, media, whiteness, the Roma and discrimination were broken up into subthemes and codes which were then explored in the data analysis chapters. The themes were organised using an inductive reasoning which aims "to establish limited generalisations about the distribution of, and patterns of association amongst observed or measured characteristics of individuals and social phenomena" (Blaikie

2010). In parallel, academic articles about the overarching themes were read in order to engage with the perspectives from the literature.

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

The data was finally organised using van Manen (2007)'s 'existentials', which represent themes that guided me: lived space, lived body, lived time and lived human relation. The chapters draw on these guiding isolated themes as they explored from a temporal perspective the participants' 'relationality with the social space. This sheds light on their attachments to the sending and receiving societies, their lived experiences in the private, public and parochial realms, their experiences from a temporal.

The data analysis showed what type of experiences the actors in the research had and how they perceived and experienced these situations (Moustakas 1994, cited in Creswell 2007) in two social, cultural and political contexts. The perspective from which the analysis of the data was collected and approached (Larkin et al. 2006) was phenomenological, as it fitted the aims of the study. This inquiry is concerned with the illuminating of the specifics of peoples' lived experiences (Lester 1999) by acknowledging that their subjective worlds are indelibly context dependent. Epistemologically, the purpose of phenomenology is to highlight the significance of participants' opinions and interpretations on the events experienced.

## **Translations**

In cross-cultural research, translations from a source language (Romanian and French) to a target language (English) are a key element in analysing the data (Esposito 2001, Regmi et al. 2010) and as a result it is essential that both cultural knowledge and linguistic proficiency are met (Birbili 2000, Larkin et al. 2007). Since the interviews and narratives took place mostly in Romanian, the translations of transcripts needed to be accurate and convey the same meaning in both cultural

contexts (Romanian and English). Due to the high volume of interviews and a preference to work with 'raw' data in order to sense the subtleties of the language, only the quotations and extracts used in the thesis were translated from French/Romanian into English.

Researching in the language of the informants, has an emancipatory objective that "can only be fulfilled by the researcher-translator/interpreter who shares the common culture of those researched" (Ladd 2003:186). Given my epistemological approach, I subscribe to the view that I am a subjective transmitter of message. My social location and background have, without no doubt, influenced the way I translated my participants' experiences. The choice of words to translate their testimonials was equally influenced by the way I was viewing their social world and understanding their experiences. My researcher/translator role was bound to my socio-cultural positioning and linked to how the validity and reliability of the output constructed (Beck et al. 2003, Temple and Young 2004).

Faced with these challenges I was fully aware of, I decided that the best way to minimise subjectivity in translation was by having elaborate conversations with English native speakers about the use of the respective words. Despite these issues, my double role as researcher-translator, meant that biases were minimised as meaning equivalences were mine only and the process of understanding data was only affected by a translator's own background (Temple and Edwards 2002).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the choices and reasons underpinning the methodology and data collection undertaken in this qualitative study.

The interpretivist ontology and the phenomenological approach acknowledged that meaning is created through participants' interactions with the social world (Gray 2013:20). Social reality is thus grounded in peoples' lived experiences of the reality they inhabit, which is context-dependent. Therefore, the precarity Romanians are subject to in the host countries, as well as the memory of communist rule, influenced the research process at various stages: recruitment, the choice of the interview location and it also triggered ethical challenges, such as the absence of written consent forms. The second part of the chapter explored my positionality as a Romanian national conducting research amongst 'my people'. In the field, I negotiated my positionality which was shaped by the participants' attributing me both insider and outsider roles. This status, although it first posed problems when recruiting Romanians, turned out to be an advantage in the long run. The methods used for data collection (semi-structured interviews and participant observation), as

well as the data analysis process and the translinguistic nature of the research were explored in the third and last part of the chapter.

The chapter emphasised the significance of participants' characteristics in shaping the research process as well as the need for the researcher to be involved in self-reflexivity. My insider-outsider status was never taken for granted, rather, it frequently oscillated. Indeed, although I was not initially perceived as an insider, I worked my way into the community by emphasising my outsider attributes.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Contextualising ‘the drama of the Romanian people’.**

#### **Introduction**

During the interviews, three elements were used to reflect on participants’ senses of belonging and their lived experiences in the host country. Despite being conceptualised in different ways, they were referring to the country of origin, the context of arrival and the process of othering they were subject to. A close look at these elements allows for a better understanding of the interviewees’ migratory trajectories and lived experiences.

The first part offers the background information needed to comprehend Romanians’ migratory trajectories and their everyday experiences in the host country. It chronicles the Romanian national context which entails emigration, with a focus on the drivers, the stages and profile of emigration. It then goes on to investigate, from a macro perspective, the impact that emigration has had on Romania and how this is being currently ineffectively tackled by the Romanian government, while the civil society represented by organisations such as The League of Romanian Students Abroad (LSRS) is active in creating a platform for and by returnees. The second part describes the tense relationship between the Roma and ethnic Romanians in the Romanian imaginary. This sheds light on the crucial place of whiteness in the Romanian imaginary and contextualises Romanians’ hostile portrayals in Western Europe. The third part of the chapter discusses the development of employment legislation for Romanian citizens in the context of arrival and provides an overview of the existing associations the Romanian diaspora is represented by.

#### **The context of departure**

This section examines Romanian migration at a micro and macro level. It explores the drivers of migration, such as economic and political factors by highlighting the role of agency for the low and high-skilled Romanians interviewed. It then illustrates the main periods of Romanian migration. Finally, it adopts a macro approach which aims to set out the context regarding the consequences of migration on Romania and the passive responses of the Romanian state.

#### **Determinants of migration**

The rather bleak current state of the Romanian economy, which triggered impoverishment in the population due to meagre salaries and high unemployment

explains, to a large extent, the large waves of out-migration (see Stan and Erne 2014 and Andrén and Roman 2016 for an overview of the decline in living standards). In 2014, GDP growth reached only three percent, which makes it the country with the lowest rates in the European Union.

In such a dismal economic context, where chances for economic improvement are slim, most low-skilled participants felt that emigration becomes the only possibility to create a physical home for oneself by furnishing, building or buying a house. As Vlad, a waiter in London testified: “The situation had become rather difficult, (...) because we managed to buy a flat (...) and we could not afford to pay the mortgage, to cover the living expenses”.

Romanians' choices to emigrate seem to often be constrained by structural factors which undermine their agency in migration. London was an easy and obvious choice for Vlad and his wife, as they benefited from the presence of family members. Although they were not guaranteed a job by the family members, but only accommodation and information, their presence eased their laboral insertion. This contributed to a feeling of security in the new place. Due to the unpredictable costs of migration associated with uncertainty regarding securing a job and a lack of an education that would help in the information seeking process, low-skilled Romanians rely on the mobilisation of networks more than high-skilled participants (McKenzie and Rapport 2010). As Vlad declared, had he family somewhere else, he would have gone there.

Consequently, many low-skilled migrants are rather disconnected from nation-states as containers of socio-cultural norms, but connected to the market opportunities which ease access to work (see also Ciobanu 2015). The webmaster of a large online Romanian forum confirmed that Romanians “do not come to London, they come to work”. Indeed, many participants do not conflate nation states with societies, rather with economic prospects, which also explains their multiple migrations (see Appendix A for a breakdown of multiple migrations). In contrast, the migratory decisions of high-skilled Romanians, are informed by various factors such as language, cultural affiliations and professional advancement.

Debt in Romania was also listed as one of the drivers of emigration. Cora used to work as a low-paid school teacher in Romania, while in London she became a nanny in order to pay off her family's debt. Her statement is one of lack of choice in her migratory journey.

*I left, like everyone does, because of money (...). My father borrowed some money from the bank, my mum had a car she lost and I was having to pay*

*the loan for it. My dad was working as a taxi driver and was not managing to pay the monthly payments, and I was paying for both of them (...). I was only left with four million and half [Romanian money], which was not enough to pay my parents' monthly payments and also give some money in the house, because my mum was not working then (...). And... there was no other solution than me leaving, against my will...*

Cora's story is that of a sacrifice for her family. Due to her parents being indebted, she had to involuntarily leave in order to become the breadwinner. The nonexistence of agency is even more notable in the following excerpt, which depicts her total absence in the migration decision-making process. Her sister and friends considered that Cora had the capability to emigrate to London, a place which they thought of as offering better financial prospects (see de Haas 2011, Bakewell et al. 2011 for agency in migration). Talking about this issue, she stated:

*And they said "Look, you are going to Britain because there is nothing else for you to do here, and there is no other option" (...). Our friend from [London] got my flight ticket, because I had no money (...). I came here, she paid my rent for the first month, because I did not have money (...). After a month, my sister asked me "But do you want to go?" (smiles). (...) After a month, when they had already got my flight ticket, found accommodation, "But do you want to go?". "Well, what can I say? I don't have the choice".*

Cora stresses her absence of choice, as all the arrangements for her migration were made without her prior consent. This story is typical for many of the low-skilled participants, for whom individual choice was absent, as their personal migration was constrained by contextual factors. Their migration is one of subsistence, which allows them to maintain their family's life, and employment is paramount in decisions to migrate. This was validated by an Orthodox priest interviewed in London, who stated that "the only satisfaction is the money which ensures survival, not a standard of living". Migration is depicted as a survival strategy which is part of their everyday lives. Due to financial constraints, migration becomes "quasi-compulsory", a "crucial and necessary act" (Horváth 2008:774).

Likewise, Ciprian, who emigrated to Budapest from Romania only to find himself emigrating again, this time to Paris, in order to pay off the mortgage for their Budapest flat, while his wife and two children are still in Hungary, coins this situation as "the drama of the Romanian people". His phrasing makes us think of the destiny of people of concern who are forced to leave their homelands and as a result they have to live in a multitude of locations to meet their financial expenses and be able to have a decent life.

Thus, the reasons for emigration are generally related to the economic and social environment in Romania. However, the degree to which these factors are considered before emigration largely depends on the profile of individuals. Many low-skilled Romanians interviewed acknowledged a feeling of embarrassment and even humiliation, with regards to their situation in the host society. This was explained firstly by the harsh socio-economic environment in which low-skilled Romanians lived in Romania, which meant that they did not possess enough resources to achieve success. Secondly, the awareness of the precarious sectors they were employed in the host country meant that they experienced a double failure, in the form of the working conditions and meagre pay. The following excerpt taken from an interview with Claudia and Ionut (London) is very telling in this regard. Emigration to the West is perceived as lack of success in Romania, despite their university studies:

*The Romanians who are intelligent enough, with a certain education, did not leave Romania. I mean, those who had a good [financial] situation or did well for themselves are still in Romania. (...) Generally speaking, here (...), you find all sorts of people who left out of necessity.*

Migration thus represents a way out of poverty for those Romanians who did not contrive to make their ends meet in Romania due to insufficient cultural capital. Consequently, they fell into a vicious circle of bemoaning their own fate in the host country, while at the same time ruling out a possible return to Romania until they have met their (financial) goal, ashamed by having to admit their precariousness in the destination country.

Anghel (2013) established that irregular Romanian migrants in Italy climbed the social ladder and gained social status and prestige through migration. Amongst the interviewees in this study the majority of low-skilled Romanians interviewed in London and Paris were giving voice to feelings of failure in Romania which triggered their migration and in the context of arrival due to the precarious employment.

Contrary to Romanians found in menial employment who chose to migrate due to monetary constraints and the need to provide for their family, high-skilled migrants are usually attracted by prospects of improved living conditions and professional/personal development through a satisfying job in the West (see also Goschin et al. 2013). This was achieved through higher incomes, challenging professional activities, as well as a general openness towards the world.

Commenting on his reason to emigrate, Sorin, a university lecturer in Paris, said:

*The morosity from the country. There was a combination of a few things at a personal level, at a [national] level, I mean Iliescu was running the [presidential] elections, Năstase was in power (...). The jobs I had in Romania were not satisfying me anymore either (...). I needed a change. (...) I decided, on the spur of the moment, to leave. I quit everything, I left.*

This tale reflects the personal, professional and political unfulfillment found in Romanian society. Sorin's engineering studies and language skills provided the cultural capital which allowed him to decide spontaneously to leave everything behind and start afresh.

Robert, another interviewee, gives a tale of depersonalisation due to the Romanian political environment, a commonly found thread in participants' tales. He was dispossessed of his right to be proud of his Romanian nationality and affiliations. For him, emigration represents a political protest against the political context affecting his country of birth, a denial of professional and personal growth. "The government does nothing for people. (...) When I left, I swore at Năstase (former Romanian prime minister), because I had to flee and come to the Occident to earn something, to make a living, you know?"

This is a testimonial of disillusionment in the politicians who were meant to improve Romanians' situation in their country of origin and instead compelled them to flee looking for new places where the grass was greener. Dignity was gradually gained through the positions held in Britain, where Robert first worked as a labourer, then enrolled on a university course which eventually secured him a position in the IT sector. In this context, it is difficult for Romanians to feel a sense of national pride, instead they nurtured a lack of faith in Romanian institutions which allowed them to be flexible at adapting to new identities.

Professional advancement is a recurrent theme in the stories of 'migrant professionals' (Meier 2015:6), as fulfilling employment is at the centre of their decision to migrate. Andrei graduated from Bocconi, a well-known Italian university and is working in the City in the banking sector. Although he is not emotionally attached to London, he sees his time in the financial capital as a professional investment which can enrich his career:

*Britain is the place where it makes sense for me to be now, (...) because London is Mecca in finance, because anybody who graduates from finance, if they don't work in London, (...), are thought of as not having been able to, not as not having wanted to.*

Other high-skilled interviewees, such as Iulia, emphasise the desire to be part of a more professional context, where there are less deviations from rules. Iulia's

Bucharest-based work in advertising consisted of her liaising with Central and Western Europe, rather than focusing on the Romanian market, which gave her an insight into the work ethic in Britain, and ultimately motivated her to emigrate. She reported:

*I wasn't working with Romanian markets, and working with other offices from London, I could see the anomalies (...). I was aware that I was earning a lot above average, I was having an extraordinarily comfortable life in Romania: I owned my own house (...), I had a good position in the company. I had an image, I did not have anything to defend (...), I had a good life. (...) I was conscious I was living in a bubble.*

Her migratory journey becomes 'lifestyle migration'; she was after an improvement of her personal and professional wellbeing. Lifestyle migrants are wealthy individuals who emigrate for a better quality of life, such as the renegotiation of work-life balance and the pace of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009:609-610), but also other elements which are identified as shortcomings in Romania, such as cultural exposure and a more open mentality. Through these characteristics associated with lifestyle migration, many high-skilled Romanians challenge the commonly held assumption regarding Eastern European migrants, which label them as economic migrants.

To conclude, low-skilled Romanians' migration is determined by economic insufficiency. They are subsistence migrants who leave Romania to be able to live and aim to provide for their families from back home. High-skilled migrants are involved in a "project of self-fashioning" (Conradson and Latham 2005) who travel to gain personal and professional experiences. As part of their desire of self-improvement and discovery of the world, they seek a better standard of living, despite having relatively successful lives in Romania.

Despite the high levels of out-migration and the negative socio-economic impacts on the Romanian society, there is a considerable lack of national strategies focused on the Romanian diaspora.

### **Socio-economic impact of emigration and the passivity of the Romanian government**

The emigration phenomenon has had a considerable impact on both Romanian economy and society. On the one hand, it is believed to have eased the effect of an economic crisis in Romania, as unemployment rates were kept relatively low, at 7 per cent. By comparison, in 2005 the unemployment rate was 10 per cent in Bulgaria and 18 per cent in Poland (Ciupureanu 2015, Ghețău 2007). On the other hand, emigration is responsible for the large decrease of the population, which in

2011 was 19 million (four million less than in 1989). This has aggravated the state of the welfare system, which has been challenged by the ageing population.

The remittances sent by Romanian migrants alleviated poverty and also boosted consumption. According to a report by the World Bank (2013), Romanians were expected to send remittances in value of \$3.6 billion in 2013, representing the largest volume of remittances sent to a developing country in the region. While monetary flows reduce unemployment issues, they contribute to the increase of prices in real estate and various consumer goods (Delcea 2007:115). A 2008 survey found that 52 per cent of Romanians in Madrid were planning on buying or building a house in Romania in the following two years, in contrast to 32% who were more inclined towards opening a business in Romania (Sandu 2009:59, see also Croitoru 2013 for the transnational entrepreneurial behaviour of Romanians from Austria).

In parallel, emigration has had devastating effects on Romania, revealed by the amplitude the exodus of highly educated individuals such as healthcare professionals (Boncea 2015, Séchet and Vasilcu 2015) and IT specialists (Ferro 2004). The share of Romanian medical doctors that left the country between 1991 and 2004 increased from 3.94 per cent to 9.54 per cent (Andrén and Roman 2016) as a result of poor working conditions, a lack of professional incentives and of a career development system (Galan et al. 2011). This resulted in residents from rural areas having difficulty in accessing medical services (Ciupureanu 2015:10). Against this background, the Romanian Government adopted, in November 2014, a strategy for 2014-2020, which aimed to reform the healthcare system in order to retain personnel (*ibid.*). Another area affected by labour deficit is the building industry, with labour shortages estimated at 300,000 workers in 2006 (Stan 2009:38).

Furthermore, due to family separation, many children find themselves either cared for by their grandparents, or abandoned (Botezat and Pfeiffer 2014). The Romanian General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection reported that there were 82,339 children with one or both parents working abroad in 2014. Parental separation affects their school performance, and it triggers tremendous mental and physical health impacts, such as sickness or depression (Sănduleasa and Matei 2015). In my sample, only four participants were separated from their children. Three of them had children in Romania, one of whom has been reunited with his family in Paris, in the meantime. For example Carmen, a hotel cleaner in London, left her daughter in Romania in her mother's care. Despite the physical distance, she performed her motherhood duties, such as helping with school homework, via Skype.

Despite these negative consequences of emigration, there is still no coordinated strategy to either stop emigration or incentivise return migration. Instead, Romania's labour deficit was partly addressed by bringing in foreign workers to fill in the vacancies, such as Chinese workers in the textile industry (Şerban and Toth 2007, Xiao 2010). In a document clarifying the strategy adopted by the Department, it is mentioned that the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs regards the Romanians living abroad as an integral part of Romanian spirituality" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013:4). According to Trandafoiu (2013:137), this statement "reintegrates Romanian migrant communities into the soul and body of the nation, (...) and it also reminds Romanians abroad of their attachment and core identity".

Interestingly, although the fight against the discrimination of Romanians in the host lands is one of the main pillars of the strategy<sup>5</sup>, none of the projects supported by the governmental strategy in either France or Britain tackle this aspect of the 'action plan'. Rather, the focus is on strengthening the Romanian culture and identity in order to renationalise the diaspora.

While the current governmental agencies seem to be engaged in renationalisation and facilitation of laboral insertion abroad, very few are directed to the integration of the returnees. This is even more important since research (Ambrosini et al. 2011, Hinks and Davies 2015) revealed that half of the migrants surveyed considered returning to Romania in the eventuality of an economic stimulus such as wage increase and a political environment fostering entrepreneurship. Indeed, during the fieldwork in France, I interviewed one couple who had left the host country to return to Romania and ultimately re-emigrated to Paris due to a lack of decent employment prospects. Moreover, two other participants from London and Paris respectively have returned to Bucharest since the interviews.

In the absence of a coordinated strategy on return migration, various sporadic and isolated programmes are starting to emerge. The LSRS, established in 2009, was one of the first to take steps in creating a platform which connected Romanian students abroad with Romania. Their projects include 'Come Home!' launched in 2012, which aimed at bringing Romanian students from back to Romania through the medium of internships (LSRS SMART Internships) or job fairs.

Another relatively new project, launched in 2015 and run by The Foundation of Romanian Business Leaders is 'Repatriot', which provides assistance to returnees in opening businesses.

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<sup>5</sup> The negative press Romanians receive was frequently listed during the interviews as the area the Romanian state should ameliorate.

Nevertheless, return does not always translate into a smooth 're-integration', as migrants' cultural norms and values change over time, while at the same time, the country of origin might have developed in ways not perceived by the migrants (Hammond 1999). De Bree et al. (2010:490) argue that "[r]eturn migration is thus best understood as a new phase in which belonging to a 'place' and 'community' has to be renegotiated". Consequently, projects supporting the socio-cultural reintegration of returnees are needed.

The necessity for policies and programmes reaching out to the diaspora is supported by the encounters made during the fieldwork stage. Loredana, her husband and two sons returned to Romania from Paris, but found re-adaptation required a considerable amount of effort, especially for her husband and her children. Her sons underwent difficulty in the Romanian education system, while her husband decided to return to France as the money he was earning in Romania was not satisfying him. Consequently, the family returned to the former host country, which, in the process, has been infused with homely attachment due to them feeling at ease in the French context.

In light of Brexit, Romanian economists, politicians and academics have speculated about the future of Romanian immigrants in Britain. While some of them suggested that many Romanians might subsequently emigrate to France, others consider that many might return to Romania. Adrian Mitroi, a professor at the University of Economic Studies sees in Brexit a favourable opportunity for Romania, as many high-skilled Romanians undervalued in Britain would seek to go back (Ionaşcu 2016). The beginnings of a public discourse regarding a potential return of Romanian migrants may be due to the visible consequences of mass emigration, which has resulted in economic immigration into Romania from East Asian countries. In general, nation-states tend to privilege the return of ethnic migration rather than the 'import' of immigrants of other nationalities, as this rationale is compatible with the idea of ethnic nationhood in the sense that it does not disrupt the concept of cultural similarities which is at the basis of nations (Tsuda 2010).

The cultural homogeneity often used to describe the Romanian nation-state is also disrupted by the Roma minority. Romanians often blame the tense relationship between Romania and the West on the Roma minority, who cause the international lack of prestige and are often the cause of decisions to return to the country of origin.

## **The Roma, the 'other (-ing)' self**

Having been under foreign influence such as Habsburg and Russian occupation as well as Ottoman suzerainty, the nation that became Greater Romania in 1918 had only one dream: that of creating a Romanian state with and for ethnic Romanians and, in the process, obliterate any traces of disparate foreign populations within its borders. At the Romanian pavilion of the New York World's Fair in 1939 the following was inscribed: "Romania has over 20 million people completely united in language, tradition and culture" (Livezeanu 1995). This concept is inherent in Romanian nationalism, where ethnic and religious aspects (the fully fledged Romanian is the ethnic orthodox Romanian citizen), and regional differences (with people of other ethnicities, such as Jews, Hungarians, Germans, Bulgarians, Turks, Russians, Ukrainians etc.) were to be erased in order to highlight a perfect unity of the Romanian people. However this was a false Romanian cultural model due to its denial of ethnical and religious diversity.

The Roma are Europe's largest minority of approximately 12 million people. They are also Europe's Other, a subjugated non-territorial minority at the bottom of social hierarchies not only in Romania, but across Europe, where they are victims of social exclusion, discrimination and racism in housing, employment, education and health (European Agency of Fundamental Rights and UNDP 2012). As opposed to Western countries, Romania is neither an immigration country nor a former colonial power. Thus, the Other becomes the internal Other. The Roma are perceived as the stranger who, despite their long established presence on Romanian soil and holding Romanian nationality, are present in Romanian rhetoric as featuring non-Romanian physical characteristics and behaviour. This section explores the harsh reality of the Roma in Romania by focusing on their contested presence.

Romanians use multiple narratives regarding the Roma, who are gradually marked as Other and consequently rejected from the collective Romanian belonging. The alterity of the Roma and thus their gradual marking as Other is anchored in genetic, socio-economic and cultural narratives.

### **Genetic, cultural and socio-economic classifiers**

In Romanian narratives, the presumed genetic isolation of Gypsies is attributed to scant yet ongoing research regarding their 'founder' lineage and/or their believed proximity with Indian populations which serves to strengthen the ideology that they are genetically distinct due to the remote origins (see also Okely 1983 and Willems 1997 who argue that the attribution of Indian origins to Gypsies serve to exoticise and subjugate them).

Turning now to the cultural classifiers; politically, the Romas from Romania stress the importance of a Roma king over the Romanian president. Prior to the fall of communism, Cioabă was a local illiterate chieftain, who, in 1992, proclaimed himself 'King of all Gypsies Everywhere'. Subsequently, Iulian Rădulescu, his nephew and a convicted criminal, crowned himself the "Emperor of All Gypsies Everywhere". Since the death of King Cioabă, the Roma political arena has been disputed between his son, Florin, and the Rădulescu family (Barany 2004:262).

The term 'gypsy' refers to a group of populations who share nomadism as a lifestyle. The adoption of the appellation 'Roma' in modern public discourse is politically motivated, driven by the idea that ethnic groups should be referred to by their own identifying appellation (Matras 2013:3). The self-appellation of 'Roma', which means 'married romani male' or 'husband', is connected with the Romani movement for affirmation of ethnic identity, and it was officially adopted by the community during the First World Romani Congress of 1971, when denominations such as 'Tsiganes' or 'Gypsies' were rejected (O'Nions 2007:4). The commonality between the two terms resides in the Roma being believed to have been nomads. This, according to Matras (2013:4), "makes the Roma a sub-group of the overarching category of 'travelling peoples'". The ambiguity surrounding the term 'Roma' is also reflected in European institutions' definitions, which use the appellation 'Roma' as a "cover term for diverse populations" (Council of the European Union 2013). Matras (2015:34) sees in this "an inherent feature of the neo-traditional ideology on Roma, one that licenses the traditional image of 'Gypsies' as a lifestyle but re-packages this image under a politically correct label".

At the beginning of the First World War, the Roma were living segregated lives in gypsy neighbourhoods or at the margin of Romanian villages. In order to make ends meet, Roma men specialised in small metal and wooden crafts, while women were offering domestic cleaning to Romanian housewives. They became gradually assimilated in Romanian culture and according to the 1930 census, only 37.2% of recorded Romas declared Romani as their mother tongue, compared to two thirds who indicated they spoke Romanian or Hungarian (Solonari 2015:246). After World War II, Romania did not grant the Roma population the status of national ethnic minority. Many Roma were resettled from rural areas to hastily built blocks of flats in the industrial outskirts of cities, creating Roma ghettos at the periphery of cities (Barany 2004).

In the 1940s, on the basis that they did not make an 'honest' living, they were considered to be a burden and a danger to public order. Approximately 25,000 Romas were deported to Transnistria (a strip of land between Moldova and Ukraine) under the pretext that they would be given properties and land. The only

criteria used to distinguish between ethnic Romanians and Romas in the selection process was the colour of the skin, the Romas being considered to have a darker skin colour compared to the Romanians (Solonari 2015:253-259).

The communist regime (1945-1989), under the leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu, marked an era of Romanian national purity, a period in which Romanians were brainwashed in the spirit of a nationalism which left Romanian history unquestioned. The choice of creatively remembering and forgetting historical elements such as the long presence of the Roma on Romanian territory, their enslavement and ethnic cleansing is what constitutes Romanian nationalism (see Billig 1995:46). The Roma were subject to a process of assimilation and the use of the Romani language was forbidden. Their 'foreign' culture defined by poverty and underdevelopment had to be gradually eliminated (Pons 1999:28-29). As such, they were banned from representing themselves as an ethnic minority or promoting their cultural traditions, contrary to Hungarians and Saxons. The tools and materials used for traditional activities such as metalworking, carpentry, jewellery making were confiscated by the state and they were integrated into a 'Romanian' lifestyle based on agricultural occupations. The elimination of Roma cultural references reflects the denial of the particularities of the Roma ethnic minority within Romanian society (O'Grady and Tarnovschi 2001:9).

Despite their assimilation into Romanian mainstream culture, the centuries spent in slavery allowed Romanians to maintain negative stereotypes regarding the Romas, a group Romanians needed to keep at a distance and construct as the Other so that they are not identified as belonging to the same ethnicity. Solonari (2015:247) argues that Romanians' need to find an inferior group was due to their "extreme anxiety regarding their own inferior status [which] led to the highlighting of differences between themselves and the Romas, a non-European and uncivilised self". The racialisation of the Roma in order to create a homogenous Romanian nation-state is the expression of what Hage (2003) calls 'paranoid nationalism', in that it is obsessed with border politics and a widespread feeling of anxiety regarding the state of the nation. This anxiety manifests itself in the rejection to care for the Roma, who erode Romanian nationalism and bring under scrutiny Romania's European identity.

In Romania, the denomination 'Roma' was introduced in official documents in 2000, through a memorandum, despite Romanian politicians being deeply concerned about its similarity with the ethnonym 'Romanian' (Mădroane 2012:105). In an aim to stop the Roma/Romanian confusion, a Romanian newspaper, the 'Jurnalul Național', launched a campaign in 2009 to gather signatures for the appellation 'Roma' to be replaced with that of 'țigăni' (Gypsy) in official documents.

This provides some explanation as to why concealment of the Roma is taking place in writing, with reports published by the Romanian government defining the Roma as 'Romanian citizens belonging to Romani minority' (Preoteasa et al. 2012). On the one hand, by choosing 'citizens' over 'nationals', the Romanian government might have alluded to their political membership, while excluding them from the idea of a nation bound together. On the other hand, the use of 'Romani' instead of 'Roma' (with both words having the same meaning) might refer indirectly to the onomastic amalgam triggered by the term 'Roma', which is more easily avoided through the usage of the later.

Roma Romanians' attributed Indian origin is supported by some linguistic factors, which attribute Sanskrit roots to the Romani language. Nevertheless, the lack of proximity to any language or dialect still leaves the original ethnic composition of the proto-Roma disputed (Kalaydjieva et al. 2001, see also Okely 1983 who is of the opinion that Sanskrit words may have entered Romani language during trade travels). In Romania, 60 per cent of the Gypsy population speak a dialect of Romani. An important aspect of their daily life is their traditional lifestyle, with girls in some Gypsy groups being married at a young age (15 years old). Moreover, girls under the age of eight are forbidden from being in boys' company unsupervised, which makes school attendance problematic (O'Grady and Tarnovschi 2001:16) and illiteracy rates high.

Another distinctive cultural marker Romanians use to distinguish themselves from the Gypsies is the 'manele' music (see Beissinger et al. 2016 for the cultural and social meaning of the 'manele phenomenon'). Singers like Adrian Copilu' Minune (Adrian the Wonder Kid), Florin Salam (Florin Salami), Vali Vijelie (Vali the Storm) mix popular culture and gypsy music in rhythms from which non-Roma Romanians try to separate themselves. Although relatively absent politically, Romanian Romas are quite visible on the cultural scene (Balcanu 2008).

In a similar fashion, socio-economic classifiers serve to class the Roma as second-class citizens in the Romanian imaginary. Unlike other national minorities, the Roma lived as slaves to the Romanian state, monasteries and nobles through to the XIXth century. Hancock (1987) suggests that slavery was an inherent condition of Gypsies due to their pariah status in the Sudra Indian caste. The commodification of the Roma through ethnic slavery, with the Gypsies being treated as a labour force denied the right to leave Romanian soil, is central to the understanding of Gypsies in the Romanian context, as it created a class system that 'ennobled' the Romanians and developed feudalism (Beck 1989). It allowed ethnic Romanians to feel empowered to subjugate the Roma and to consider them uncivilised, which justified their exploitation and marginalisation. Slavery was

abolished in 1864, yet the Gypsies were not restituted the properties seized during their slavery and were tolerated by the state as second class citizens. This date corresponds with the beginning of the Romanian nation-building process, which started in 1859 through the unification of the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia and ended in 1918, with the creation of Greater Romania.

In 2011 the Roma population was estimated to be 620,000, almost three per cent of the population. The census, however, did not take into account the Roma who registered as Romanians. At present, the Roma represent the poorest part of the population and are commonly pictured as resistant to social and economic integration on the basis of their values being incompatible with Romanian civilised society. They make up 20.6 per cent of all people living in absolute poverty, 3.2 per cent of people living in severe poverty and 44.4 per cent of those living in food poverty. Regarding the field of education, the numbers are equally staggering, as the Roma represent the largest percentage of early school leavers. Furthermore, the 2002 census found that only 21 per cent of the children aged 15-18, belonging to the Roma minority, were still in school, compared to 75 per cent pupils from other minorities.

Consequently, the Romanian government has adopted two main strategies aiming at keeping Roma children in school. One of the programmes was designed to facilitate achievement through affirmative action, by allocating approximately 3,000 places for admission to high school and 500 places for university level. A second plan of action adopted in 2007 was to cease school segregation of Roma children (see Marin and Csontá 2012 for other pieces of legislation regarding the discrimination of the Roma). Yet still, the Roma are the most disadvantaged ethnic group in Romania as well as across Europe. Moreover, they are seen as “genetically inclined to commit crimes (...) lazy and irresponsible” (Csepeli and Simon 2004:133).

In this climate of obsessive hostility against the Roma, one of the proposed methods of solving the Roma ‘problem’ was their sterilisation. In 2013, the Romanian president at the time, Traian Băsescu, declared that fertility rates amongst Romanian women decreased, while the birth rate of Roma women increased. A solution to this ‘problem’ was seen in persuading Romanian women to have more children, so that the Romanian population would not be overcome by the Roma population (Fratila 2013). The deeply racist discourse did not fall upon deaf ears, and Rareş Buglea, a local councillor, declared that a solution to Roma poverty may be the sterilisation of Roma women who have more than five children and live on social benefits.

The above-mentioned classifiers based on genetic, cultural and socio-economic stereotypes gradually mark the Roma as the Other. They are purposefully adopted by Romanians in their narratives, in order to distinguish themselves from a racialised internal self. The same approach, based on descriptors, is used in European policy analysis, which addresses the Roma as 'a social problem' (Surdu 2015:3). The gradual creation of the Roma in Romanians' narratives is the product of their "imaginary unity against other possible unities" (Balibar 1988:49), 'unities' from which the Roma are both excluded and dominated.

The negative characteristics attributed to the Roma in Romanian society also serve, amongst the members of the Romanian diaspora, to justify Romanians' lack of prestige in the Western rhetoric.

### **Prejudice against Romanians in France and Britain**

Romanians have faced negative press in Europe due to the marginality and precariousness they have displayed, conveyed by activities such as begging, prostitution and pick-pocketing (Tesăr 2011).

Despite their status as EU citizens having the right to free movement, Romanian Roma have been deported from France on security and public safety grounds. These hostile representations of Romanians as 'failed citizens' (Anderson 2013) of either a cultural or economic nature, have made visible the Romanian population, on the basis of their association with the Roma, who are perceived as inhabiting a social position at the bottom of hierarchies. This is explained by the unfortunate nomenclature proximity between the name of the country or its inhabitants (Romania, Romanians) and the ethnic minority (Roma), or for demographic reasons, as many Romas come, indeed, from Romania (Woodcock 2007).

The deportation of the Romanian Roma from France evinces their unequal treatment and highlights "the presence of a border between the two countries, distinguishing between those who belong on each side" (McMahon 2012:211). Deportation defines the legal and normative dimension of the political community as it is only applied to those individuals who are seen as not good enough to become a citizen of the country of residence. As Anderson et al. (2011:555) argue, "[m]aking an individual subject to deportation is a way of demonstrating that an individual is not a citizen (...). But deportation may also construct individuals as unfit for citizenship, as not living up to its normative requirements". The Roma deportee is thus denied residence in the host context and membership of the political community.

While Romanians' hostile portrayal in the French media is of an ethnic nature (with focus on the Roma), in Britain it seems to be focused on economic aspects. Due to

the scaremongering media discourse in the British context, political parties were compelled into taking a stand against the free movement of Romanians. The Tory government considered the idea of running a negative advertisement campaign to dissuade Romanians from coming to the UK. In parallel, the eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party ran its electoral campaign on an anti-Romanian ticket, by inciting into the electorate's minds the idea that Romanians would invade Britain and lower the wages, as well as raise the crime rates. The below testimonial taken from an interview with Ion who worked for over ten years in the British building sector, is very telling in this regard: "British peoples' reluctance comes from mass media. (...) Ah, you are Romanians; I have heard you are very... thieves, gypsies... dangerous".

Indeed, the majority of respondents felt that the press is an instigator, as it has spread fear regarding Romanians and in the process distorted British public's perception. By conflating Romanians and Romas, the tabloid media "darkened" Romanians (Fox et al. 2012:692), a disappointment to the majority of Romanians interviewed

A similar tale comes from Sorin, a University lecturer in Paris:

*A few years ago, when they started with the Romas (...), nobody was making any bad jokes, and [then], I realised that I was the subject of bad jokes on a daily basis. [Jokes of the type] 'You can go back home for free, you know they give you flight tickets', (...), 'How is in the caravan?', and all sorts of bad jokes from people I barely knew, as well as from my colleagues who did not understand why I was getting annoyed by these jokes (...). The Italian is stereotyped with spaghetti (...), we are stereotyped with the hands held out and stealing.*

The quote clearly illustrates how Romanians' everyday lives have been negatively influenced by the Roma's presence in France. The French government considers the Roma to be a threat to public and social security, with Jacques Myard, a French MP and member of Sarkozy's former ruling party, declaring that the "European Roma problem" is the way in which the Roma both understand and exercise their right of free movement in the EU (Myard 2010). Roma deportations are thus legitimised on the basis of posing a "security problem" to the French state (van Baar 2011).

The Roma-Romanian tense relationship will be further explored in Chapter Four, but at this stage it suffices to say that the common perception held amongst the Romanians interviewed is that their tarnished image in the contexts of arrival results from the Roma/Romanian amalgam.

## **Contexts of arrival**

The third part of the chapter examines the French and British contexts of arrival of Romanian immigrants. It situates the East-West migration and accordingly it sheds light on the legal challenges experienced in the context of destination and gives a brief overview of the non-governmental platform reaching out to Romanian immigrants in both contexts

Although the information provided in the following sections about French and British employment legislation for Romanian born citizens is no longer applicable, it is of considerable importance as all Romanians interviewed in both London and Paris arrived in the host countries at a time when the restrictions were still applied. This offers insights into their reception in the host countries and thus their everyday experiences confined within immigration legislation.

## **Employment legislation and profile of Romanian immigrants**

The Romanian diaspora in Britain is composed of Romanians who settled here after the Second World War, some anti-communists who came in the 1970s and 1980s and individuals who have naturalised and became British in the 1990s (Trandafoiu 2013:110). A large part of the Romanian diaspora is located in London and Birmingham, and in smaller numbers in the North of England and Scotland (*ibid.*:110). By 2008, the official statistics estimated 32,620 Romanians and Bulgarians who were granted access to the British labour market, and just under 60 per cent of these certificates were issued to self-employed individuals, with most of them living in the South-East, especially in London.

In 2014, the official estimated population of Romanian born citizens in Britain was 165,000 (White 2015), although it is difficult to unpick since many of them may not have applied for a National Insurance Number (NINo) or may have been engaged in short term rather than permanent migration (Vicker 2016). Unofficially, sources from the Romanian community from London estimated at the end of 2013 the population of Romanian citizens at around 350,000. While some authors (Blanchflower and Shadforth 2009), argue that Eastern Europeans are “temporary workers” or “commuters”, others (Cook et al. 2010) challenge this temporal dimension by arguing that considering them as short-term economic opportunists is too limited. Various factors impact on their everyday experiences which shape their length of stay.

Indeed, the interviews carried out in both London and Paris showed that Romanians’ motivations in leaving Romania, their professional experiences in the context of arrival and the extent to which they are able to reconfigure aspects of their identity in a new location, all influence the type of migration they engaged in.

Moreover, the creation of a family unit in the host country often led to the creation of an affective bond with the host society, which influenced their temporal orientation.

British immigration policies are defined by the interplay between encouraging legal labour routes and preventing illegal immigration, in a context where economic growth and immigration are intertwined (Düvell 2011). The public opinion regarding immigration and its association with access to public services (such as social benefits) strongly impacts on politicians' engagement with immigration policies.

Romania joined the EU on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2007, as one of the poorest members. The EU accession treaty allowed other member states to impose transitional restrictions on Romanians' free movement as workers (exception being made for self-sufficient and self-employed persons) until January 2014. France and the UK adopted these measures, meant to restrict Romanians' access to the labour market. Thus, Romanians had to be in the possession of a permit stipulating their status as workers in order to take up employment in both countries.

Before the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014, after which the restrictions for A2 migrants were lifted in the EU, Romanians were subject to complicated legislation and quotas set a ceiling on the number of A2 citizens admitted each year. They were allowed to stay in the UK on an unlimited basis as long as they exercised a Treaty Right as a self-employed, student, or self-sufficient person who was not economically active. Controls were in place through the Workers Registration Scheme, through which Romanians required an Accession Worker Card. The only document a Romanian based abroad was entitled to apply for in order to come to Britain was the Purple card, for which the UK based employer had to lodge an application before the Romanian national could start employment.

Another way of working legally in the UK was through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Schemes and Sectors Based Scheme such as the food sector.

Furthermore, Romanians having a Master's Degree from a British university qualified for the Blue Card, which allowed them to enter the British labour market without restrictions on the basis of them being high-skilled. Romanian citizens became exempt from the worker authorisation requirement and had full rights of free movement after a period of 12 months of continuous legal employment.

The rise in migration to the UK from the A8 countries which joined the EU in 2004 and subsequently from the A2 countries has generated considerable controversy amongst the British public. In 2013, as a response to the public unease, anticipating the full access to the UK labour market Romania and Bulgaria would be granted in January 2014, Prime Minister David Cameron, shared his concerns about the impact this would have on Britain. Plans to restrict access to social benefits and

public services for all EU migrants were announced. These measures included the Habitual Residence Test for European migrants claiming means-tested benefits became more robust and new jobseekers have been prevented from accessing various social benefits<sup>6</sup>.

Many low-skilled Romanians interviewed tended to exercise remunerative activities in precarious positions, such as the building or cleaning industry under self-employment arrangements, which did not have the need of a work permit and satisfied the initially temporary dimension of their migration project. The high-skilled participants interviewed enjoyed the privilege of having the companies they were working for resolving their immigration status.

Unlike Britain, where public discourse is influenced by economics of immigrant arrivals, in France, the legislation and public rhetoric is less forged by a controversy regarding the numbers of immigrants likely to come to France (see also Bleich 2003:115).

France was, between 1840 and early 1990s a welcoming land for the first batch of Romanians, represented by intellectuals (artists, writers, doctors) who, for the most part, arrived as political refugees (see Corpădean 2013). The total Romanian population was estimated at 74,156 in 2013 (Institut National de la statistique et des études économiques 2016). The Romanian diaspora in Paris is at present rather fragmented, represented by the old intellectual migration, new migrants who are university educated and hold professional jobs, the less educated who work in low-skilled sectors, and the Romanian Roma. While many of the high-skilled and the old migrants are relatively invisible since they blended in due to their language proficiency and professional skills, the less educated tend to be visible, despite their presence in relatively small numbers. This compels Diminescu (2004) to qualify the Romanian presence in France as 'visible, but in few in numbers' ('visibles, mais peu nombreux').

The existence of an 'intellectual' cleavage reflected by a chronological dimension was easily perceived in a conversation I engaged in with a Romanian woman who had been in France for over 20 years, where she gained her PhD and worked as a translator. She was clear in declaring that there is no social mixing between Romanians whose migratory paths are similar to hers' and the new comers, because she "came to France for studies, whereas nowadays Romanians come for [low paid] work". This opinion was equally shared by a member of the association *Café des Roumains* in the below quote:

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<sup>6</sup> For a full overview of measures to limit the access to benefits, see Kennedy (2015).

*There is a big cleavage between the two generations of immigrants: the old one who now (...) are in their 60s, (...) and the new waves of immigrants, who are in their 30s and are a very heterogeneous group: students, people in the building industry, professors, artists, while the ones from the previous generation are mainly intellectuals or engineers. (...) They became very rapidly French (...), they never manifested themselves as Romanians in the French public space.*

The respondent alludes to the invisibility the older generation benefit from in the French space. Sadly, although they have succeeded in their endeavours, their favourable outcomes do not counter balance the tarnished image Romanians enjoy, as they have embraced a French identity and thus suppressed their Romanian ethnicity.

Regarding the employment legislation, Romanian workers or students living in France before the restrictions were lifted (1st of January 2014), needed to be issued a titre de séjour to authorise their stay in France. In order to be eligible to undertake a professional activity, Romanians also required a work authorisation. Like in the British case, after having worked legally for 12 consecutive months, Romanian citizens did not need to reapply for a work authorisation when their titre de séjour expired. Individuals who graduated from a Master's course did not need to apply for either a titre de séjour or a work authorisation and had free access to the French labour market.

The restrictive immigration rules affected Romanian participants without a university degree during the job search process. Loredana, a cleaner in Paris, argues that she would have liked to do some professional training, but the fact that she did not have a work permit for a long period, prevented her from developing professionally and relegated her to being a cleaner for over ten years:

*If I had all the documents, a titre de séjour, I would have done [training]. [The absence of documents] stopped me from doing this (...). Sometimes I look back and I am pessimistic. I was 27 years old when I came and I say "so many things I could have done, so many things I wanted to do", but everywhere I went they wanted to see the carte de séjour.*

Not only that the lack of legal documents affected her potential achievements, but it also prevented her from reaching full incorporation into society. She later points to the centrality of employment in integration, which enables the worker to contribute to society and have a decent life. For her, incorporation into society can be achieved only through economic incorporation.

*Talking about integration, you cannot become integrated if you do not work with a carte de séjour. This is not integration. As long as you do not have a payslip... You are not employed, you don't have any rights... You don't have rights! (...) All the doors are closed!*

Institutional discrimination, which refers to the distinctions made by public institutions in the form of immigration laws, stopped Loredana's progression on the labour market. Precariousness here, is experienced politically, through the absence of working documents. A similar account was found in London, where Andreea, who came to London in 2007, found a solution to the harsh employment legislation for Romanian nationals, by buying a black market Spanish passport which permitted her to have access to work.

Most low-skilled participants from both cities expressed their discontent with the discriminatory legislation, which hindered their chances in securing (legal) employment (pre-2015). The inability of Western European policies to ensure that migrants can acquire work represents the major failure of immigration laws (Hansen 2012:3). As such, some interviewees are trapped in low-skilled jobs, while others dodge the system by providing fake passports in order to bypass the difficult work legislation.

The betterment of Romanians' tarnished image abroad experienced through institutional discrimination and daily prejudice is often the reason many Romanians have become involved in projects regarding the Romanian diaspora.

### **Romanian associations**

During the fieldwork in London, the main organisation involved in events for the Romania community was My Romania Group, a non-profit organisation which provided a platform for children to learn Romanian and for adults to learn English in an aim to unite the Romanian community. In this spirit, Iris Rădulian, the then president and founder of the organisation, declared: "I wanted to make this community project to help everyone, to build this relational power (...), and, together, to form a stronger homogenous body".

Iris considers that the main motive which explains Romanians' lack of solidarity and the absence of a 'homogenous body' is the shame they experience regarding their Romanian origins as a result of the stigma they are exposed to, and which impute themselves to their co-nationals: "Do you know what they told me? 'Miss, we do not want to know anything about our country, we are ashamed of it (...) because we are a nation of assholes, a nation of gypsies and of criminals'".

The renationalisation of Romanian children happens by transforming them into proud Romanian nationals, by their learning of Romanian language, geography,

history and literature. This is done in a context in which post-socialist nations rank generally low in national pride measures (Smith and Kim 2006).

At the time of writing the thesis (May 2016), My Romania Group had been replaced by My Romania Community, whilst offering similar services. The Romanian Community Centre, another organisation, serves as a platform offering information about the UK to Romanians wanting to become gas engineers or electricians in the UK. It also provides useful insights into various aspects of life in the UK such as the dental health system. June 2016 saw the founding of another diasporic organisation: Romanian Women in the UK, which aims at creating a platform to assist women in their social, economic integration as well as promoting their businesses. Most of the organisations, as well as nurseries, gyms, driving schools, restaurants, beauty salons, and ethnic shops are to be found in the North of London (Colindale-Edgware), and in the Stratford area. The Romanian Cultural Institute displays Romanian high culture such as documentaries, film festivals, exhibitions, book launches and debates. It tends to draw observers with professional jobs, rather than low-skilled Romanians, which is also indicated by its location, in Central London.

WORC and the AIRE centre are the main British organisations that provide legal advice specifically on EU citizens' rights. They combat EU migrant homelessness in London and support services for migrants who have employment challenges due to work insecurity and precarity. AIRE centre is also involved in giving legal advice to EU women in British prisons by identifying cases of institutional discrimination.

Although the number of specifically labelled Romanian organisations in London (and across the UK) is relatively small, there are numerous British associations supporting particularly the Roma, by offering them legal advice and assistance, such as Supporting Roma Voice, Roma Support and Roma Project, whose main beneficiaries are Roma from Eastern European countries. Moreover, most cities in Britain (and especially Ealing and Barnet local council in Greater London Area) have integrated support schemes for the Roma population in the local council through the New Arrivals, Ethnic Minority Achievement teams.

There is also large number of dedicated publications such as 'Ziarul românesc', 'Diaspora românească', 'Jurnalul European', the bilingual 'Romania in Contact', as well as two diasporic websites 'Romani Online UK' and 'Români in UK' and a Romanian news channel 'Ro 24 TV'. Most of them gather information regarding events and news about the Romanian diaspora worldwide, as well as job offers or flat share ads, although their lifespan is difficult to determine. Equally, Facebook groups are of high importance amongst the Romanians interviewed, as they are used to find accommodation or employment through the networks established.

Unlike the British case, the diplomatic relationships between France and Romania are well established, and have been enriched by Romania's French orientation. French has been for many generations, the foreign language taught in schools, alongside with Russian. The first edition of 'France-Roumanie, bulletin édité par l'Association France-Roumanie' was published in April 1964 in France. As well as listing the events held by the Association France-Roumanie (established in 1948), whose aim was to advance the knowledge of Romania in France, it was also giving information about Romanian economy, culture, sports and tourism. At present, the only newspaper which engages with Romanian issues, 'Les Nouvelles de Roumanie', is edited by French citizens.

The associative platform with a Romanian focus has two realms; twinning associations (run by French individuals), and a few Romanian led organisations. Twinning associations between French and Romanian villages and towns are numerous, while they lack considerably in the British sphere<sup>7</sup>. Their aim is primarily that of producing a cultural relationship between localities of the two countries. However, the brochures often have a humanitarian approach such as the building of libraries in Romania, which is often portrayed as poor and needing help in a material form from her older sister, France. Their humanitarian actions may reflect a patronising approach justified by the will of France to modernise Romania.

A similar approach is undertaken by the British charity Project Romania Chard, which, on its website portrays Romania as a backward and poor land, with photos picturing remote countryside areas with horse pulled carts and dark skinned children wearing dirty singlets. In the British context, charities with philanthropic aims directed at children from Romanian orphanages such as SOS Children's Villages, FARA, Relief Fund for Romania tend to replace the apparently cultural aspect of the French-Romanian bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, this appears to be changing, with the National Trust charity listing Romania as one of the possible overseas working holidays for activities such as architectural conservation, learning traditional crafts or initiation to Romanian cuisine.

Going back to the French context, Café des Roumains is a newly formed organisation (2013), which defines itself online as "a French association involved in the fields of communication, web media and media production". It is widely known for its campaign "Je suis Roumain aussi" (I am Romanian too), which was co-organised with the Association of Romanian Students and PhD Students in France. It was meant to counteract the tarnished image Romanians had in the French press

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.twinning.org.uk/main.htm>

following the amalgam made between Romanian nationality and criminality. It consisted of 13 testimonials mainly from relatively successful Romanians from Paris. A member of the organisation who led the campaign declared that by virtually exposing French natives to Romanians, the negative image can be curtailed.

As detailed by one of the members of the organisations during the interview, the objectives of the campaign were:

*[t]o show who the Romanians are, because I reached the conclusion that many French who know Romanians are very open and usually have a very good opinion about them, (...) or they are neutral (...). But those who do not know any Romanians have a very bad opinion. And then I said that the idea would be for them to meet [Romanians].*

Unlike London, where the Romanian school is a relatively new concept, the Romanian school in Paris is well established in a very luxurious and central location, next to the Romanian embassy. The geographical location of the Romanian school as well as the profile of Romanian parents (high-skilled and mixed couples) visiting regularly the schools for their children to be in a Romanian environment, differs amongst the two Romanian communities under study. The very central location of the Romanian school in the French capital shows its visibility in Paris and possibly its acceptance within the French society, while in London its rather hidden position (in areas where insecurity pervades and close to where Romanians live), may reveal its rejection from the British public sphere and thus the internalisation of Romanian identity.

Like in Britain, in France there are numerous organisations aiming at improving the integration of the Romanian Roma from France, such as A Part Entière, Romeurope and Secours Catholique, with focus on French language classes, schooling and job hunting.

The intensification of cooperation between France and Romania is equally highlighted by the presence of The Ligue for Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Romania-France, with the headquarters in Bucharest and several branches around Romania. They offer a range of services to French companies seeking to open businesses in Romania, such as legal and economic advice, auditing, and the creation and registration of companies in Romania.

Another scheme which has forged cultural mixing is represented by the Erasmus programme, which is less developed in the British space. The internationalisation of higher education enhances the acquisition of human capital and intercultural sensitivity and reinforces their European identity (Jacobone and Moro 2015). A French member of a twinning association interviewed declared that the reason why

she chose Romania for her Erasmus exchange was based on the interest she held for the “famous Eastern-European countries” and the desire to witness Romania’s socio-economic transition towards democracy. The education institutions from Central and Eastern Europe have seen in this a way towards visibility, as they have been actively engaged in the programme (de Wit et al. 2015).

The Erasmus programme is highly valued in Romania, a country which, until the 1990s had its borders closed. Many interviewees chose France for their Erasmus stay due to linguistic reasons, while others had a more long term reasoning, related to their future in the host country. As Gabriela details below, the Erasmus exchange in architecture made the passage easier for her to France and ultimately enabled her to integrate into the Parisian labour market.

*From the beginning, Erasmus was a way out, and I considered staying on in the country I was going to; (...) there were no scholarships in Great Britain, only in one university, and the entry grades were very high, I would have not stood a chance.*

Experiencing France as a student first may ease the path to immersion and may create a stronger bond with the host country.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to put in context and illustrate Romanian migration. The first part explored the national context which, due to its bleak economy and corrupt political system, is seen as a push factor for the Romanian participants interviewed. While low-skilled participants tended to emphasise the absence of agency in migration due to familial financial difficulties, high-skilled participants were more likely to view migration in terms of personal and professional development. Despite Romanians being part of a new cohort of migrants in the EU, they have become, in a short period of time, one of the largest European communities to live outside of the country of origin. While this has caused the brain drain of IT specialists and medical professionals, amongst other consequences, the Romanian government has failed, to date, to make remaining in the country more attractive.

The second section of the chapter looked at a central figure in the Romanian imaginary, the Roma. It argued that Romania is engaged in a process of a white nation-building and part of this is the creation of an Other. It highlighted the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of those perceived as threatening Romanian whiteness and European membership. Unlike Western Europe, where civic nationalism reflected the emergence of modern nation-states, in Romania

nationalism is ethnic, with focus on cultural hegemony, mirrored by ethnic purification.

The third part of the chapter investigated the French and British contexts of arrival. Both countries imposed restrictions on access to their labour markets for Romanian workers which were lifted on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2013. Until then, Romanians were subject to transitional restrictions which limited access to the French and British labour markets. The institutional discrimination (mainly) low-skilled Romanians experienced challenged their desire to integrate and, in the process, make the host country a 'home'. Moreover, the absence of Romanian organisations in the host countries which could advocate against Romanians' encounters with discrimination and prejudice triggered by the foreign media meant that they had to rely on their own persona and become honorary ambassadors of their country of origin. Nevertheless, this study identified a growing number of programmes and organisations, in both Romania and the host society, meant to both unite the Romanian diaspora and renationalise Romanians from around the world.

To conclude, this chapter gave a brief overview of Romanians' migratory journeys, by combining elements which often intersected in their testimonials: country of birth, host country and the figure of the Other represented by the Roma.

## Chapter Four

### A(t) home on the move? Experiences and negotiations of home.

#### Introduction

Migration separates individuals from families and friends as well as from the familiarity of the everyday. Indeed, mobility is experienced as a story of non-belonging which can deepen engagement with the world and people, but also reduces connections to materialities. Often, home has an affective dimension associated with human relations and a more ordinary dimension associated with the routine of the everyday. As Ahmed (1999:341) puts it, transnational movements “involve a splitting of home as a place of origin and home as the sensory world of everyday experience”.

Building upon previous research (Blunt and Dowling 2006) which sees home as multi scalar and relational, this chapter shows that multiple homes are interconnected and interdependent. This stems from participants’ understanding that home is represented by the security of the everyday in London and Paris, as well as the emotional ties to family and family creation. Most importantly, these dimensions of home do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are experienced by numerous participants as contested complementarities which change throughout the respondents’ lives, as Gabriela’s story demonstrates:

*Now I have started to put roots down here and to drift apart from home. (...) There is something that estranges you from home; practically, once you’ve left home and stayed in one given place, when you go back home, things will never be the same again. (...) I mean I do not think I will look at Romania with the same eyes again... Romania will never be entirely my home. I think if I ever decide to settle back there, I will not have the same relationship I used to [have] because there was an uprooting at some point (...). You stop having a place of your own. So once you’ve been uprooted from your homeland, (...) I think I can now live anywhere.*

Gabriela’s account is not about multiple belongings, it is a story about the inability to call a single place home and the inner conflict this triggers. The uprooting gives rise to a struggle to belong resulting from the awareness that she is unable to locate a sense of home, which triggers an emotional turmoil, a “cluster of emotional turbulence” (Christou 2011:253). Mobility often weakens individuals’ senses of

attachment to both sending and receiving contexts and triggers questions about the the changing nature of the concept of home, as well as the possibility of one day, calling a place home.

The above quotation sets up a range of different dimensions of home which will be explored throughout the chapter. It shows that the multiplicity of home pertains to sites and feelings, but also, and more importantly, to the relations and connections between them. These multiplicities allow home to become a hub congregating multiple homes. This chapter thus adopts an open approach in the unpicking of home, focused on the prospects and problems, ruptures and connections. Rather than regarding transnational migration as creating a rupture between homes, it explores it through an interconnective lens.

Tucker (1994:184) argues that “most people spend their lives in search of home, at the gap between the *natural* home [conceived as the home environment conducive to human existence, i.e. dry land] and the particular *ideal* home where they would be fulfilled”. While this can be a “sentimental and nostalgic journey” (Mallett 2004:69), it can also represent a fulfilment for the migrants’ selves. Romanians leave Romania in search of a home in order to fill the gap between the ‘natural home’ (represented by country of origin and family) and the ‘ideal home’ (represented by economic security and cultural aspects found in the host country). Rather than replacing the natural home, the ideal home strategically responds to the missing elements from the natural home.

Consequently, Romania is an ‘emotional home’, perceived as a container of emotions and family ties. The host country is initially conceptualised as a container of economic ties and thus a ‘strategic home’ which makes the act of home creation possible. Nevertheless, the receiving society evolves to become equally imbued with feelings of attachment due to a sense of personal achievement. In this research, the concept of ‘home’ is defined as ‘a site of material and affective practices which represents the migrants’ perception of their place in society based on achieving personal aspirations formed prior to migration and does not entail acceptance of migrants’ presence in the receiving society by the dominant group’.

This chapter seeks to explore Romanians’ transnational lives in order to shed light on how individuals experience and negotiate the meaning of home as a result of their migratory journeys. The first section maps the home norms in the Romanian context which the participants hope to fulfil through migration and, in the process, embrace a state of modernity associated with family and economic stability. It analyses the materiality and immateriality of home through the lived experiences of home as personal autonomy. It also explores how past and present homes coexist in the creation of a new home. Home is dynamic and its enactment changes

throughout migrants' lives due to family relations and economic practices. The third section investigates how temporality is informed by the everyday and the making and the unmaking of both the familiar and the unfamiliar in the understanding of home. It is argued that while aspirational home is fulfilled through migration, the dynamic nature of home reflects its perpetual becoming and its ideal dimension, which cannot be fully attained due its multiplicity.

## **Home as an aspiration**

The pursuit of happiness, whether it reflects economic or familial factors, constitutes the main driver for Romanian emigration. This section unveils the vital role of Romanian home norms, which are used to shed light on the understanding of 'home' for the interviewees. The materiality and familial aspects of the 'aspirational home' provide Romanian migrants with a sense of security and independence over their lives which is largely absent prior to emigration.

## **Home norms in the Romanian context**

During the communist regime, formal institutions outside of the family, such as clubs and unions were controlled by communist leadership and interaction between members and the masses was frowned upon and restricted. Family became the only trusted site for social interaction (Bradatan 2009:393) and everyday life became home-centred. Furthermore, marriage became universal as it facilitated access to home ownership. Urban housing was clustered on large housing estates which became privatised after the fall of communism, resulting in "super ownership" (Lowe and Tsenkova 2003). The national homeownership rate rose from 64 per cent to 98 per cent (Soaita 2015:73) and at present is the highest predominant tenure in the European Union (96.1 per cent) (Eurostat 2015).

In contemporary Romania, there is a stronger preference for the legalisation of relationships in comparison to other EU countries. In 2007, the rate of marriage was the highest in the EU, 8.78 per 1000 inhabitants. Additionally, the average marriage age in 2005 was amongst the lowest in the EU, at 28.5 years for men and 25.2 for women (Popescu 2010). Moreover, in 2002, over 95 per cent of women were married by the age of 45. Similarly, a survey carried out by the Soros Foundation (2008) reported that 76 per cent of Romanians were married or had been married at the time of the survey, compared to only 6 per cent who were co-habiting with their partners. Modern family arrangements such as pre-marital cohabitation as well as premarital sexual relations are not always tolerated, with only half of the surveyed population approving of them, although this is changing (Castiglioni et al. 2016).

This is suggestive of the social pressure in contemporary Romanian society towards marriage (see also Dohotariu 2012).

The same report states that “the family represents the main support (...) for the youngsters, not only emotionally, affectively, but also socio-economically” (Dalu et al. 2008:13). Supporting children economically and housing them is an important duty for Romanian families, especially until they can financially afford to leave the familial nest and move into their own house (Eurostat 2009, Mihai and Butiu 2012:140). Late departure from the familial home has been associated with high levels of unemployment, low wages and a scarcity of affordable housing (Aassve et al. 2007). With regards to the necessary conditions for family creation, the population surveyed declared that the difficulty of owning one’s own home and unemployment posed a significant challenge to the younger generation.

The strong preference towards home ownership rather than renting is explained firstly by the overpriced rental market. Only young professionals with high incomes can afford to rent a property and do not cohabit with their families (Castiglioni et al. 2016:62-64). This is congruent with previous research (Ronald 2008:5), which noted that in many developing countries, home ownership is high because of a lack of industrialisation and urbanisation which stimulates the growth of rental housing necessary for growing numbers of workers. Secondly, the proliferation and even dominance of homeownership is sustained by adequate financing, such as mortgage lending through the First Home Programme, aiming to facilitate access to residential loans for the purchase or building of dwellings. The eligible applicants, who do not already own a residential property, only need to pay 5 per cent of the home’s purchase price in advance. Another source of finance is the flow of remittances from Romanian migrant workers, which increased the purchasing power (Ball 2006).

Thirdly, home ownership is a natural and normal desire to possess a place of one’s own. “We say that every person should have a home, plant a tree and have a baby. The need to own a house comes from here. You also have the fact that all children follow what their parents do and since they were home owners, they want that too”, asserted the Romanian psychologist Elena Iamandi. Home ownership also fosters emotional comfort and security, and transpires legal rights and status (Elliott and Wadley 2013:133). Indeed, “[o]wner-occupation has become embedded with routes to adulthood and autonomy and bound up with discourses of choice and freedom. The owner-occupier has been elevated as a better type of citizen, neighbour and even parent” (Ronald 2008:2).

By investing into goods in a country characterised by low levels of state support, Romanians embrace the independence and accumulation of wealth correlated with

the rights and entitlements of modern citizens, such as home ownership and family life. Home ownership is experienced as a protection from risk reflected by neoliberal times, and the anxiety associated with it, and thus provides a feeling of security in current uncertain times. Similarly, David Harvey (2005) forcibly argues that neoliberalism “has persuasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world”. Because of the complex relationship between political, media and ideological systems and the risks that may occur at the scale of the nation, Romanian home-making becomes “defensive homeownership” (Atkinson and Blandy 2007:444).

Thus, fatalist attitudes towards the future are outweighed by the ideal of home ownership. As already argued, family creation and home ownership are intertwined for the Romanian young adults and are associated with higher levels of emotional wellbeing. Indeed, a survey (Dalu et al. 2008) reported that amongst the young adults (ranging from 14 to 35 years old), the main element which contributed to positive life satisfaction was the family (both family of origin and/or family of procreation), with married individuals considered to be happier than non-married co-nationals (Popescu 2010).

At a European level, average levels of happiness in Eastern European countries are lower than averages for countries in Western Europe (Deaton 2008). However, Kahneman et al. (2006) hold the view that economic growth in the form of rising income does not appear to contribute to higher levels of happiness. This is due to several factors such as the quick erosion of satisfaction associated with purchase and the desire for higher income to meet the evolution in aspirations. With regards to migrants specifically, their increase in income might be outweighed by a rise in income aspirations, especially since their position in the country of immigration might be lower than in the country of origin, due to insufficient language competencies (Bartram 2013:410-411). In his comparative study, Bartram (*ibid.*) did not find any significant difference in the happiness levels between Romanians who live abroad and returnees. When he controls for age, with migrants more likely to be younger than the returnees, he discovers that the returnees are only 0.5 per cent less happy than those who stayed. Levels of happiness are higher among Romanians abroad, who tend to have higher incomes and live with a partner.

In a context in which financial hardship becomes the impediment to a family life and thus to life satisfaction, migration is perceived as fostering a financially safe environment for current and future families. Thus, migration is associated with a rise in the quality of life, rendering possible property ownership, which safeguards family creation. Not owning a property affects the ability to build a family as it does not

meet the core needs of a family such as the stability offered by a permanent shelter. Similarly, in their study of homelessness in Hong Kong, Teo and Chiu (2016:573) reported that the quality of family life was reduced for those who were not home owners, despite having a roof over their head.

In the process, Romanian migrants achieve a sense of modernity through transnational home-making. Migration becomes strategic and home is an ambitious project because of restricted socio-economic means and alternatives in Romania. Thus, home takes on an importance as a set of aspirations enhanced by the quest for material and affective stability. It is an aspirational home because it becomes rooted in migration. Since Romania is represented by the impossibility of achieving these two main goals (family creation and home ownership, thus affective and material stability), the sense of belonging in the Romanian nation is questioned and alienation from 'home' is experienced through disbelief in a country which does not fulfil its duties, such as providing its citizens with security. Wellbeing stems from the practice of modernity associated with free movement to Western Europe. Migration becomes the only viable means of building a home. Western Europe is thus portrayed as a developed land where 'dreams come true' through activities associated with consumption reflected by work and thus production, and Romania is evaluated against the West. As well as a financial utopia, migration is also envisaged as an opportunity to claim a 'citizenship in modernity' (Bordonaro 2009) infused with fantasies of progress such as self-development and emancipation (see also Chua 2014).

### **Home: a set of interconnected relations**

Neoliberalism includes a shift towards market-based economies which triggered the expansion of higher education in Britain and made a considerable change for women. In popular culture, women are no longer subject to family duties, but can choose to delay having a family in favour of professional careers (Wilkes 2015). This is not a given in Romania, but since it is valued in the host country, it enables Romanian women (as well as men) to embrace modernity through entitlement to higher paid, professional occupations.

Lavinia, a London-based engineer in her 30s, married to an Australian engineer talks about the importance of both family and the physical structure in creating a sense of home:

*I think both are home. Home is where my parents are, obviously (...). But also here, because this is one thing which I couldn't have achieved if I had stayed in Romania, to have my own place and be independent. When I left Romania, one of the reasons why I left was that the money that I was*

*making wouldn't have been sufficient for me to own my own place and live my own life. I would have had to live with my parents until now, (...) maybe. Of course, without [my husband's] help, I wouldn't have had enough money for the deposit.*

Home is experienced as a set of entanglements. These are both material, represented by the economic capital to purchase a house, and affective, reflected by the significance of both the family of origin and the newly created one. Home is relational as it represents the relationship between material and imaginative qualities (Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007). While ties with her birth family are not discontinued, it is the new familial entity she has created with her husband, and the house they own, that provides the interviewee with a sense of control over her life and independence, ensuring a sense of personal gratification and pride. Home ownership also frames connections to the wider context. The opportunities and hospitality experienced in London allowed Lavinia to scale the social ladder and achieve status through migration (see Moreh 2014 for an exploration of status in Romanian migration). Thus, home becomes a signifier of achievement.

The changes in autonomy are reflected by greater access to resources in society (Zentgraf 2002), such as a dignifying wage which makes homeownership possible. The London home is not confined to the dwelling, but it extends beyond its physical structure through affective ties and it encompasses the exercise of personal autonomy which results from economic capital. In contrast, Romania symbolises denied independence and fails to accord with peoples' ideals of home; it is thus experienced through precise local attachments to the family. Home is seen as "a contested site shaped by different axes of power and over a range of scales" (Blunt 2005:4, cited in Blunt and Dowling 2006). Moreover, when I asked where she saw herself in the next five years, Lavinia explained that she was not considering any place in particular, but that she would like to have children.

Thus, home ownership becomes the first stage towards the creation of a home, followed by family creation. This multi-stage approach conceptualises home creation as a lifelong, gradual process, rather than a geographically and temporally fixed site; it is a plurality of spaces in which one discovers new ways of seeing and experiencing reality. The host country is initially lived as a strategic home, but it evolves to become a place to which people attach social and personal meanings, as it bestows security for a safe future. Home is dynamic firstly because it becomes, from a house made possible by financial capital, a home imbued with emotions. In its materiality, the host country would not have the potential to become a home without the feeling of security and independence it represents. Secondly, a house is infused with feelings of home which occur through relationships. However, it is also

a stable concept, in that it is represented by the family who is still present in Romania. Its dynamism and stability allow the concept to be understood as both a location and a set of relations that influence identities and senses of belonging (see also Ralph and Staeheli 2011:518). Trajectories of migration create the home, as one has to leave home in order to feel 'at home'.

It can therefore be assumed that rather than identity, home is firstly conceived as a space informed by economic relations which make possible feelings of stability, security and comfort. 'Feeling at home' does not always resonate with the safety and comfort of the hometown or country of origin. Rather, home is recast through materialistic home-making practices, such as home-ownership which enables family creation. The interconnection between the role of family, economic practices and mobility in the creation of home is further explored in the following section.

## **Home as a dynamic process**

The previous section showed that home does not exist by default for Romanian migrants. Rather, it is aspirational and it is created through migration. Blunt and Dowling (2006:23) call these processes 'homemaking practices', and argue that home must be understood as a lived space which is "continually created and recreated through everyday practices". In this way, home is relational, in that it is subject to an ongoing and mediated interaction between the participants, their everyday personal activities and the spaces invested in human connections. This section explores the significance of family and professional practices in the creation of home.

### **Achieving home through family relations**

The association of home with family is not new (see Saunders and Williams 1988), although it has been contested (see Mallet 2004:73-74 for a review). This section explores the meanings attributed to the notion of home through the significance of family. It argues that family anchors place belongingness through personal attachments.

The presence of family in the host country is often quoted by the respondents as making it possible to recreate a home. Most of the participants who have partners and children in either London or Paris have grown to develop a sense of attachment to the host country and as a result they do not envisage a return to Romania. This is rather interesting, as Anghel (2013) found that Romanians of German ethnicity who emigrated to Germany only started intensifying their transnational practices at the moment of family creation with their Romanian spouses. This means that the presence of family in a land otherwise perceived as hostile generates a sense of

attachment and temporary migration projects turn into lifelong projects. This is created through the activities they are exposed to through their children, which connects them to the wider society, as well as through the presence of a family unit, as Andreea put it:

*Claudia: Do you feel integrated here?*

*Andreea: Yes... I feel integrated when I go [with my son] to mothers' groups. I feel this is my world, here, but at the same time I think you will always be a foreigner.*

Andreea came to the interview with her son, who was only a few months old. Although she had lived and worked as a waitress in London for approximately seven years, she emphasises the importance of her new role as a mother above the length of time in the host country in creating a sense of home. She differentiates between her personal view on integration and society's acceptance of her as part of the receiving society. More precisely, she contrasts home and belonging.

Home refers to a set of aspirations *enhanced by the quest for material and affective stability*. It is self-centred and personal as it is infused with the everyday individual elements which Andreea has aspired to and subsequently achieved (family creation in Britain and homeownership in Romania). This is evidenced by the possessive pronoun 'my' when she refers to Britain as her world. She is part of the UK through her regular activities, such as taking part in mother groups, during which she interacts extensively with other mothers. Having children in the UK deepens an affective bond to the host society due to encounters with the local structures and institutions involved in bringing them up (McGregor 2008). Furthermore, children act as a bond between parents and give them a less temporary presence in Britain (Ryan 2015:8-9). Motherhood is experienced institutionally, through the micro politics of being a mother and the sense of integration comes from a clearer understanding of British society.

However, feeling at home in Britain does not imply that she belongs to the receiving society, as she still claims to be marked out as different, "a foreigner". Thus, feeling at home in the host society, which is experienced on a personal level, does not enhance a sense of belonging to it, which is lived relationally and requires invisibility in order to fit in. Peer interaction within institutional frameworks represents a source of (non-)belonging owing to society labelling her as a foreigner. Thus, belonging is founded upon a sense of being part of society, which is constructed through social interactions with the other members of society. As Anthias (2008:8) puts it, it refers to "experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion". The

importance of social relations, which will be further explored in the following chapter, manifests itself through the role of members of the receiving society to validating the migrants' membership and allowing them to belong to the 'social fabric'.

Put differently, home is understood as *a site of material and affective practices which represents the migrants' perception of their place in society based on achieving personal aspirations formed prior to migration and does not entail acceptance of migrants' presence in the receiving society by the dominant group*. In contrast, *belonging is a set of affective practices which represent migrants' perception of inclusion in the host society based on social encounters with the mainstream*. Home is self-focused in that it rests on private elements of the whereabouts of migrants' lives such as family, employment and dwelling. Belonging is outer-centred and the presence of the mainstream as a guardian of belonging, is often evoked. Unlike home, which is an aspiration and its existence is taken by default, (non-) belonging is generally internalised and comes into existence when it is questioned by the mainstream through embodied experiences.

Feelings of non-belonging to the host society are based on experiences, such as the one below. Commenting on interactions between foreigners and British people, Andreea details the lack of understanding from British peers of the difficulties immigrants mothers face without family support.

*Look, (...) I went once to a mothers' group. [One of the other mothers] was English, [and] came along with her daughter. And a Polish woman said 'so good for you, to have your parents here, you get help [from them], because for us it is difficult'. And [the English woman] said: 'Why did you leave?'. That is exactly what she said: 'Why did you leave home?' So they do not think that you have to leave... So they do not understand how difficult it is for you [here].*

The presence of close kin family fosters a sense of home, while social interactions forge feelings of not belonging to the wider society, due to unfruitful social interactions with the mainstream. Indeed, the encounter between a Polish and a British mother serves as an example of the convoluted relationships between Central-Eastern Europeans and British born people. The 'othering' process to which the Polish mother is exposed is perceived as a double misunderstanding. Firstly, the British women did not understand that some migrants need to leave their country of origin in order to build a future for themselves and for their families. Secondly, she did not comprehend the nature of hardship experienced by migrant mothers who do not have close family members nearby to assist them with daily tasks. Othering, while not explicitly worded, serves to explain the foreign status

attributed to immigrants. Othering and racialisation are not always labelled, rather they are rooted in a lack of understanding of aspirations and everyday activities by the dominant group.

The role of both the birth family and the created family in migratory journeys is just as important in the lives of highly skilled participants, who often, consider themselves at home in the world. For example, Mihai's migratory trajectories involved an Erasmus stay in Germany and a return to Romania. After some time spent in Romania, he and his now former girlfriend decided to move to London where he found a job as an online editor. He commented on his ability to move abroad again.

*I see myself as both nomadic and settled. Everything depends on whether I will have children or not. I never say never. I have started from scratch three times, why wouldn't I start again a fourth or 14th time? But what I know for sure is that I would not want to have a family in London. (...) I would like to go to Tokyo for example (...). But it is too far (...) from my parents. Because at the end of the day, that is what I relate [distance] to. London was the compromise they have made.*

Movement does not refer to a nomadic experience, per se, but it is indicative of future possible global experiences. Nomadism is framed by the prospect of family creation. At the same time, it relates to connections and commitments to local communities, represented by the family from Romania. The fragmented world Mihai lives in is brought together by the family of origin, which gives him a grounded sense of home unlikely to evolve over time. His cosmopolitanism, exemplified by the yearning for diverse travel experiences gaining financial and cultural capital, is restricted by translocal elements such as his parents who, although willing to accept his migratory journeys, do so only if they meet the requirement of geographical proximity. As such, although globetrotting may be his idea of home, the current existence of his parents activates in him the necessary duty to find a geographical compromise and to 'settle' somewhere in Europe.

Freedom, as a neoliberal right, allows individuals to embark on a quest for home worldwide and be at home on the move. Thus, the focus shifts from the local to the global. In the process, it is not the relevance of 'where' which is emphasised, but of 'who'. Therefore, home is placeless and 'family-full' at the same time, as it is experienced as infused with social connections. Home-creation takes a transnational approach to family life. As Blunt and Dowling (2006:197-8) argue, a transnational approach to home and mobility allows us to "unsettle the fixity and singularity of a place called home". Rather than conceptualising home as fixed (either the country of origin or the receiving context), a focus on migrants' everyday

lives and considerations of future reflects the deterritorialisation of home through transnational networks and future mobilities.

Migrants tend to live their migratory lives in transnational social fields which gather those who leave and those who are left behind. This experience of simultaneity represents “living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally”, (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004:1003). Thus, social relations connect migrants with family and friends from the country of origin, which allows migrants to live at the same time both within and beyond the borders of nation-states. Although these relations and connections take place at a local level, as they affect individual’s lives, they are transnational due to their stretching across the boundaries of nation-states.

Not unsurprisingly, in line with the vital role of family in his life, during the summer of 2015 Mihai informed me via Facebook that he had returned to Romania and was living in Bucharest, with a new girlfriend. During my visit to Romania in winter 2015/2016, I met them both and discovered that they were expecting a child. This shows the rapidity with which migrants’ decisions may change over an extremely short period of time, and how the possibility of returning is considered (where there was no mention of it during the interview) due to new and meaningful encounters.

While family is a driver of return migration, it is also a driver of emigration. Stefania, who was living with her daughter and grandson in a flat in Paris, briefly alluded to her difficult life in Romania because of her husband’s drinking habits. Romania is perceived as a site of domestic oppression and violence, which transform a home into a place of fear, rather than comfort and security. The meaning of home is thus attached to France and it is achieved through migration. This is in line with feminist literature which agrees that women are “more likely to be raped, assaulted and even killed at home than in any other place” (Goldsack 1999:123). The issue of domestic violence in Romania is believed to have reached alarming numbers (during a 12 month period in 2002, 3,827,000 women acknowledged having been subject frequently to some form of domestic violence) due to economic difficulties, the collapse of communism, the transition to a market economy and increased economic pressures (Robila and Krishnakumar 2005).

### **Achieving home through capitalist production**

Due to the inability to ‘permanently’ return to the country of origin because of a financially uncertain future, most of the participants create a relational connection between Romania and the host country. As such, they develop a repertoire of strategies in order to simultaneously manage two ways of life. The receiving context

is experienced professionally through activities that render possible the existence of a rich social life either nationally or transnationally.

The following quote offers an example of the interdependence between the two worlds. Ramona holds a PhD from a Romanian university. In Romania, she was working as a high school teacher on a very low salary. Given the lack of a financially stable life in her country of birth, she emigrated to France, where she works in Logistics and as a Romanian teacher, and her monthly pay is used to fund her social activities in Romania. Consequently, the interviewee organises her life of mobility through a 'relational settlement' (Diminescu 2008) which incorporates both mobility and settlement. In other words, physical permanency in France is ensured by mobility back to Romania. Ramona commented:

*In France you work like a machine... You are like in a matrix. You come to this matrix, it takes some getting used to and you get back into it... It is a matter of routine. And after that you go on holiday to Romania to have fun. Because that's what you do there... It's good, it is holiday. And then, here you go again, [in France] some serious work needs to get done, there is serious work, you work.*

The sending and receiving societies are depicted as contested complementarities. While Romania is perceived as having a calming purpose, due to its role as a 'holiday' destination, France is experienced as a busy place which echoes a sense of energy. The rhythm of life differs in both locations. Thus, home is lived through the experiences attributed to the rhythm of life. France is homely through the security it offers professionally, while Romania is homely as a result of the social life and its calming nature.

The feelings of attachment Ramona has for France and Romania are interconnected in the sense that she needs to maintain her professional activities in France in order to sustain her social activities in Romania. However, these senses of belonging do not intersect at any point. She constructs well-defined boundaries between these places so that one space does not collapse into another. She is very clear throughout the duration of the interview that she does not feel any emotional affiliation to France. She is part of it professionally, but Romania is the place she feels most strongly about. In Romania, she extricates herself from the French life. She leaves behind all the worries associated with a daily professional life in order to perform 'home' socially.

It may be that this very connection is responsible for preventing Ramona from embedding herself into French culture, forging sustainable relationships and nurturing attachments to France where she has been for four years. She only has

one (Romanian) close friend in Paris and all her other friends are in Romania. Ramona finds herself in a closed social circle due to her late arrival in France, in her late 20s, by which time she already had a solid group of friends in Romania with whom she keeps very strong cross-border connections. Indeed, migrants are often 'connected' (Diminescu 2008) to family and friends through information and technology such as WhatsApp or Skype, which ensures their co-presence in each other's' personal lives at any point of the day.

The maintenance of transnational practices results in a certain estrangement from France, hindering her social integration in France due to the limited time she dedicates to the creation of social relations in Paris. Indeed, she appreciates the civilisation, politeness and financial opportunities on offer in the host country, which represent a framework for her life to develop in, but when in need of friends and family (thus affection), she chooses to return to Romania or visit her parents (who live in Spain). The plurality of attachments nurtured is understood from a binary perspective: attachment to France, as it resonates with her economic wellbeing, which enables Ramona to satisfy her affective needs by frequent trips to Romania and Spain for her emotional wellbeing.

The emphasis of neoliberal qualities such as the work culture from the host country, which makes immigrants active and desirable citizens, allow the respondents to become part and parcel of the receiving context. According to Dyer (1997), the characteristics of white men, which enable them to transcend race and attain invisibility, are encompassed by "[enterprise]" [which is] an aspect of both spirit itself- energy, will, ambition, the ability to think and see things through – and of its effect – discovery, science, business, wealth, creation" (*ibid.*:31). Accelerated speed and whiteness are tantamount to and reflect the spirit of neoliberalism through the power to produce.

The host country embraces the modern norms associated with neoliberalism, such as productivity and energy. By contrast, Romania, due to its status as a developing nation, prevents the interviewees from achieving modernity through a potential career there, owing to the unfavourable socio-economic climate. The Romanian home becomes rooted only in the presence of direct family members, a relationship which is subject to termination on the basis of the parents' existence. Talking about the importance of family in contrast to the lack of connection to Romania as a nation (due to the absence of opportunities), Robert (London) commented:

*To be honest, the only thing that draws me back to Romania is a few friends, my mother, father and some relatives. If my mother and father died, I would break all links with Romania, there is nothing for me to do in Romania.*

Robert worked in Spain before arriving in Britain where he first entered the building industry and after graduating from a British university, became an IT specialist. Migration has triggered the possibility of a stable future, where there is something to do, as opposed to Romania, where there is “nothing for me to do”.

The act of not having anything to do in Romania, and implicitly not belonging to the country of birth, opens the possibility for him to belong to the host country thanks to the possibilities to which he has access. However, although ‘doing home’ can be interpreted as a ‘balancing act’ between past and present, belonging and non-belonging, it is unclear what determines one’s ability to achieve that balance through rejection of one place and acceptance of another (Brickell 2012) and thus produce a home.

Devoid of modern characteristics such as access to an autonomous life, the country of origin acts as a ‘battery’ which allows those living transnational lives to accumulate enough energy to be able to undergo the professional activities in the host country. This energy is stored by family and friends, who symbolise significant sources of belonging. It is a strategy Romanians use in order to adopt their Romanian identity as their primary identity and favourite self-description, which allows them to define themselves against the immigrant identity (Trandafoiu 2013:9). The long distance connection some participants have with Romania is engrossing. At the time of the interview, Lulia had worked in advertising in London for two years. Despite the relative short period of time spent in the host country, she asked me for information about British citizenship, so that she can apply as soon as she is eligible. Although she was interested in creating a political bond with Britain as she was considering settling there, she was still maintaining a strong affective relationship with the country of birth:

*My soul is there, the energy that feeds me is there. No matter how long I am here for, I need to go back there and regain some energy. This does not mean, and I do not want to be hypocritical, that I would return there.*

Holidaying in Romania is about gaining enough strength and energy to perform vigorously back in the context of reception. It is more than what Anghel (2013:86) calls “transnationalism as leisure”, it is a form of spiritual tourism which provides the energy for migrants to have fulfilled professional lives in London/Paris. The modern ideal, that of being successful professionals, is achieved in the host country, but it is sustained and serviced through frequent returns back to Romania. The interconnection between both sending and receiving contexts make possible the production of the modern individual, characterised by a busy life due to professional commitments. The sending country is the source of energy, while the host country becomes the platform for the energy to be released. Thus, home becomes a

personal jigsaw imbued with affective and material dimensions which, when pieced together, constitute a home. Home is thus created by being anchored in both societies.

Working abroad and experiencing Romania as a regenerative space is not lived as a mismatch, rather it represents a complementary relationship in which the professional home from the host country constitutes everything home should stand for: opportunities, security and spirituality. In the process, both lives are joined to fulfil a common purpose: that of attaining the levels of wellbeing the respondents were longing for prior to emigration from Romania. Home is not always a physical shelter, *per se*, rather it encapsulates the interconnectedness between everyday routines which happen transnationally. Romanians combine, on a daily basis, practices and ways of life which (re)construct the totality of home. As Rapport and Dawson (1998:8) propose, “[h]ome brings together memory and longing, the ideational, the affective and the physical, the spatial and the temporal, the local and the global, the positively evaluated and the negatively”.

Taken together, this suggests that home comprises multiple meanings such as transnational social networks, contested complementarities (professional and regenerative social purposes) and complex affective practices which do not exist in a vacuum, but are entangled and contribute to experiences in both societies. Home cannot be stable during mobile times, it does not exist as a fixed and harmoniously unified entity, rather it is a hub which encompasses multiple elements that enhance the creation of a home: family, professional activities and subsequently home ownership. It is thus argued that home is better understood as a process which connects ‘multiple homes’ over time and space. As such, it needs to be researched using a holistic approach, which is comprised of daily experiences, transnational practices and a complex array of emotions.

Moreover, the plurality of ‘home’ should be explored through a material and relational lens using a temporal approach. Firstly, the material lens should be given more attention, as economic practices bring under scrutiny the possibility of home-making. Secondly, the salience of family is another aspect which determines the creation of home from both a temporal and spatial perspective.

Home is initially fulfilled through migration, as it results from the relationship between attachments to families, future plans and economic practices. However, homes are dynamic as a result of encounters between natives and strangers or migrants (see Brah (1997)’s notion of ‘diasporic space’), and these relations shape and change the (once) familiar spaces (Ahmed 1999:342). Home is thus changeable and it becomes a process which encompasses past, present and future in the creation of new homes. Romanians are affected by the dynamism of home,

and home becomes a process which is constructed and deconstructed as a result of lived experiences, as the next section shows.

## **Home as a fantasy**

This section investigates the consequence of elapsed time on Romanians' self-identity and negotiations of home, such as fragmented self-identifications and fragmented senses of home, which merge to bring into being the everyday experienced transnationally.

Feelings of home are created through an understanding and experiences of other places as unhomely, resting on (un)familiarity and feelings of transiency.

## **Half in, half out**

Often, for migrants, "[h]ome is thus neither here nor there... rather itself a hybrid, it is both here and there" (Bammer 1992:ix) as a result of experiences lived in two or more countries. The meanings and affective investments underscore migrants' complex loyalties, which at times are difficult to locate with precision, especially due to the feeling of transiency.

Adelina followed her French boyfriend to Paris in 1990. She subsequently married another French man and together had three children. They eventually divorced and at the time of the interview she had a Romanian partner. After over twenty years spent in the French capital, a period during which she returned on a regular basis to Romania thanks to her job as an air hostess for Air France, she defines her multiple identities in rather contested, but complementary ways.

*I have never felt fully French or fully Romanian. It is a sort of a hybrid which I get on very well with, you know? It does not disturb me. I can be flexible and adopt one or other identity, or have them both at the same time, there is absolutely no problem.*

Her fragmented self-identification as half French and Romanian through the visualisation of her personhood as 'hybrid' points to her strong sense of being both French and Romanian. She further explains the meanings she attributes to her own sense of being half Romanian and half French, identities which give rise to a new identity by which she feels represented.

Despite the long period of time spent in France, she only feels half French

*because I do not have my roots and my history here. (...) The more time passes, the more I get rooted because I create roots through the time spent here, but I did not have roots [prior to my arrival]. (...) I do not have a familial history here.*

Roots are of two types. Firstly, everyday roots are created through daily practices, by being exposed to the socio-cultural and economic environment of the host country. These ties to the host country emerge through the daily interactions during migrant's presence in the host context. Secondly, blood roots are what differentiates, in Adelina's opinion, 'fully fledged' French nationals from French naturalised citizens. Blood roots are transferred genetically and thus the absence of a family history prior to her arrival on French soil causes doubts about her sense of French identity. Although she has lived for over twenty years in France, the lack of a genetic connection to France resonates with the lack of a connection to the French nation. The rupture experienced by Adelina is of a temporal nature, explained by her present in France which consolidates her future, but a lack of a past family presence which can secure a homogenous French identity. Nevertheless, the temporal rupture is created by an identity unity which defines her personhood.

She maintains ties to Romania while at the same time becoming embedded in France. As such, the feeling of transiency experienced with regards to Romania is due to present absence but past presence through continued family ties. This shows that both her French and Romanian identities are equally intricate due to intertwined elements, such as her living in fluid transnational social spaces.

*And in Romania it is the other way around. I have everything, the invisible part, but I do not spend my daily life there. And maybe I do not have some elements. For example elements from TV shows, or terminologies (...). I do not have them because I do not watch TV.*

The sense of in-betweenness triggered by the feeling of transiency is not new. Waite and Cook (2011) report that these feelings are reflected by acknowledgements that identities are complicated and non-unitary through links with the country of origin. In other words, "[t]he narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home" (Ahmed 2000:78). In this context, the sense of no home facilitates mobility because of the flexibility to adapt, but hampers the process of developing allegiances to any of these places and thus the possibility of creating a new home. At the same time, by not pledging allegiance to one particular entity, migrants overcome the emotional struggles of having to decide to which place they belong (Richter and Nollert 2014).

Identities are inextricably interwoven, Romanian migrants become the product of both their Romanian past and French present, achieving a hybrid unity. Identity is not fixed to one single home, rather it is fluid. The multiplicity of selfhoods, alluded to by Romanian respondents, is evident in the loyalty and commitment they express towards people and communities situated in various locations. "Translocal

subjectivities” emerge through both geographical mobility and ongoing emplacement (Conradson and McKay 2007:168). As the connections to places deepen, the attachments become enacted in multiple places which are anchored in feelings of familiarity.

### **Home investments in the familiar**

Conceptualisations of home as familiarity or unfamiliarity have been found in reference to both Romania and the receiving country. Sorin lived in Paris for over ten years, where he completed his doctoral studies and is now working as a lecturer. Despite the lengthy period spent in France, he shows that it is not the time spent in a country that creates a homely bond based on familiarity, but rather the lived experiences. Having encountered discriminatory attitudes whilst searching for employment and within the work place, he has a rather pessimistic outlook on his perceived cultural estrangement from French society:

*You do not understand some things, because there are cultural blockages. I mean you say some things and then they pluck at your sleeve and they tell you “You see, when you say that, I do not know if you understand, but here it means this...” And then you realise that some things that pass amongst us, for example to yell, do not pass here.*

Home for Sorin represents a lived experience based on the connection between place and community, “the association of an individual within a homogeneous group and the association of that group with a particular physical place” (Warner 1994:162).

While Sorin points to the familiarity and social acceptance he attaches to Romania, most of the participants emphasised the intuitive connection to the way Romanian society works, which changes over time. Reflecting on socio-cultural re-entry into Romania, Corina (Paris) commented on the fact that it is undermined by ‘reverse cultural shock’ (see Liu 2014, Gaw 2000) embodied by her disorientation in Romania, after 22 years spent in France:

*I constantly need someone with me to tell me what you can and cannot do. Even when it comes to jokes... My brother is always with me, my bodyguard: [He warns me:] “No, you cannot say that”. They have their own social codes. I am an outsider.*

The use of a chaperone during return visits to Romania was not uncommon amongst participants, who agree that Romania has evolved in ways they have not witnessed. Chaperones act as mediators between returnees and the society, whose duties are to re-familiarise the insider from afar with the land of origin. The ‘socio-cultural liaison officer’ alleviates the returnee from the confusion (s)he might

experience if confronted with unforeseeable socio-cultural codes or the feeling of losing their bearings (see also Adler 1981:343). This is done through frequent reminders and cues about the appropriate use of jokes or more practical day to day activities, such as the correct use of new Romanian money in moments when confidence during daily interactions is lacking.

Migrants gain new perspectives through migration. The once Romanian home does not stand up anymore to their expectations and the relation with this is disrupted. Home is not always recognised and rationalised in the consciousness, rather it is felt through the everyday, materialised in the presence of family and economic practices. This is also the case with Loredana and her husband and children, who after a few years in Paris returned to Romania only to find themselves re-emigrating back to France.

*Look, to be honest, if I looked back in time, I feel at home [in Paris]. I do not have that feeling of a foreigner anymore. When I go to Romania and I spend some time there, I want [to come] home. I have not lost the sense of being at home in Romania, but I do not want to stay too long [there]. I do not know why. I spend some time there, but I do not have my purpose there anymore. Here, I have my children, my job, everything.*

Feelings of attachment to France and Romania are entangled in Loredana's testimonial. However, a clear distinction is made between belonging as 'being part of the Romanian social fabric' ("I have not lost the sense of being at home in Romania") and considering the country of birth, home ("I do not have my purpose there anymore"). Home is experienced through the everyday, where she achieved the home for which she initially left Romania. Romania was not an ideal home before migrating to France, as home-creation was the driver of migration. Rather, it became home through migration (and home ownership in Bucharest) and it has been downgraded to a country of origin through subsequent migration. Indeed, "[m]ovement may necessitate or be precipitated by a disruption to a sense of home, as people leave or in some cases flee one home for another" (Blunt and Dawling 2006:2). Although France is infused with feelings of home, it does not mark the completion of the migration cycle, but a reaffirmation that home is a quest.

### **Home as an ideal**

Since the everyday is lived in Britain, the unknown is reflected by the country of origin, while the familiar is encapsulated in the host country. Connections to the host country are highlighted through stability and thus freedom from risk. This theme came up in the discussion with Emma, who had spent over ten years in London. Her migration to Britain was precipitated by her Romanian husband, who

was already there, despite her not being fully convinced about the benefits of living abroad.

*Realistically speaking, here I feel I know what everything is about. In Romania, I always dream that, maybe... It is like a lucky strike, you know? I think that if I were to go there, some company would trust me to give me a job, and I would be very good at that job, and I would get on with everyone, and I would learn very quickly how everything works, and that would be it. But... These [thoughts] are (...) only a fantasy, and I cannot rely on this. Yes, it is a fantasy, it is something I think about many times, it would be nice. But there are many unknown elements in this fantasy...*

Time is a powerful force in migration; it transforms the familiar into the unknown, the insider into an insider from afar. The connection with London as home has become unavoidable due to the knowledge acquired about the society and thus the level of stability attained. Everyday practices reflect stability and thus inform a sense of place and community. As Skey (2013:94) noticed, “everyday practices, talk, material objects and spatio-temporal arrangements, underpin a meaningful and stable sense of ‘ordered reality’”. The host country represents the political, institutional and economic framework in which individuals go about their daily lives. In the process, the centrality of Romania is undermined by the familiarity, routinised activities and financial independence in the host country.

By contrast, Romania, engenders uncertainty and potential hazard, a gamble, it is an unknown fantasy, an exotic land which she hopes to one day have the chance to (re)discover. It goes as far as to become an aspirational and thus home, conceptualisation which is usually attributed to the host country prior to emigration. Home is both rooted and uprooted and it encompasses both lived and desired dimensions (see also Ralph and Staeheli 2011:525).

Lived experiences are part of the everyday in the host country, while imaginative experiences are often related to Romania. Since these feelings and imaginings are spatial, home is a “spatial imaginary” defined as “a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places” (Blunt and Dowling 2006:2). Home as a place in which everyday practices occur and home as the imaginary thus merge to allow individuals to create a feeling of home infused with imaginative and affective senses of home.

Home has a fluid and performative dimension which refers to its perpetual becoming through the process of ‘pick and mix’ from various cultural settings. For

migrants who left the country of origin at a relatively young age in order to study abroad, social reality is continuously being transformed through social encounters and in the process they are themselves changed by their surroundings. This is typified by Gabriela, who came to Paris through the Erasmus exchange programme to study architecture five years prior to the interview: “The more you live in different places and you create various realities, the more you construct your own ideal [reality]. You understand that it is difficult to find a place which meets all your realities”.

Mobility is a journey; not only a discovery of a place which one could (not) call ‘home’, but also a journey of self-discovery, and formation. This journey entitles the migrant to come to terms with her migratory journey by discovering that the ‘arrival point’ (Baas 2013) is far from being a place she can get to. Mobility frames migrants’ personal projects (transition to adulthood and building a family unit) and home becomes unattainable.

The desire for mobility does not stop migrants from considering the making and the unmaking of familiar spaces. This might further indicate that in order to potentially find the ideal homely place, the place to which Gabriela can relate to and feel attached, future multiple migrations become a necessity. As Ahmed et al. (2003:1) argue “[b]eing grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached“. By referring to home as lived ‘as’ and ‘through’ a plurality of experiences, Gabriela challenges the ideas associated with global citizens. She dreams of a place she could call home, but she understands that this can only be imaginary. This is due to her migratory journey, which has exposed her to an array of experiences, different ways of seeing and understandings of the world, which cannot be found in one given reality but rather in a variety of realities. In the process of mobility, her self is shaped not only by the new relations in the country of residence, but also by the distance she is exposed to from the country of origin. This allows for new subjectivities and emotions to emerge (Sheller and Urry 2006) and different places to call home.

While the emotional connections to the past forge emotional constructions of home, they also shape migrants’ conceptualisations of familiarity and the unknown. As such, the understanding of home changes due to migratory experiences, as she puts it: “Then I was connected to Romania because it was everything I knew. I couldn’t see myself anywhere else”.

This section has demonstrated how migrants understand and negotiate emotionally the relationship between the sending and receiving context. Once more, the centrality of a solid family structure in the host country seems to denote the Romanians’ affective conceptualisations of the interconnection between their past

and present physical presences. Past, present and future homes coexist and contribute to the creation of an ideal home.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter was the dimension through which Romanian migrants combine and negotiate elements from both sending and receiving countries to fulfil their aspirations of home.

France or Britain do not become a new home by devoiding Romania of homeness status, instead, they represent a strategic home which evolves into a home infused with affective ties through family creation, material assets and economic stability. In the process, discourses regarding the host country are often imbued with pragmatism, while Romania is often referred to in terms of family and social circles.

The interplay between physical and emotional senses of home was further explored in the first section, which focuses on the elements that contribute to the multidimensional aspect of home. For the participants in this study, home is initially perceived as a personal aspiration, encompassed by family creation and home ownership. Personal autonomy, which ensures home-creation and allows Romanians to embrace the modern ideal, is achieved through migration. Home is thus represented by the merging of material and immaterial spheres, which represent a source of affective ties and security, and which evolve over time, pointing to the dynamism of the sense of home.

The second section canvassed the notion of home from a relational perspective, as an experience likely to change over time, due to family creation and economic activities. This sheds light on how an unfamiliar environment at the outset can become home due to its potential to provide the migrant with a safe context to evolve and be in.

This section draws a clear distinction between home and belonging. Home is understood as a site of material and affective practices which represents migrants' perception of their place in society based on achieving personal aspirations prior to migration and does not entail acceptance of migrants' presence in the receiving society by the dominant group. In contrast, belonging is about migrants' understanding of their place in society based on everyday encounters with the mainstream. While Romania is experienced as a regenerative space, the host country is characterised by the professional busyness of the everyday. By achieving home through capitalist modes of production, the participants embrace the modern ideal, that of being individuals with professionally successful work lives. If aspirational home standards are achieved through migration, belonging is brought

under scrutiny through the time spent abroad and a loss of familiarity with the country of origin.

Nevertheless, associating Romania with unfamiliarity does not imply that the country of origin does not represent 'home' any longer, rather that one can no longer belong there.

The third section shows that due to its constant evolution and unfamiliarity, home needs to be created afresh and becomes a fantasy place. However, it is important to note that the elements which contribute to the creation of home are constant; whilst the process through which these are negotiated and achieved is dynamic from a social, temporal and geographical perspective. Indeed, family and economic stability are still at the heart of migratory experiences or determined by aspirational home. The quest, involving possible multiple migrations reflects the dynamism involved in home-making. Therefore, the creation of a normative home becomes an open-ended process.

Thus, home does not stand for a stable unity. Rather, it is a slippery concept reproduced time and time again. It evolves from an aspirational home, to multiple homes interconnected across time and space, to finally be conceptualised as an ideal. This points to the fluidity of the notion of home and the interconnectivity between both here and there which allow home to be conceptualised and experienced. As such, future research should address the layers that make a home 'home', rather than trying to decide whether home is one or a multitude of countries. Home is a multidimensional construct that travels across spaces and is defined as multiple experiences, feelings and relationships. It is not tied to physical structures, but extends far beyond. It is rooted in relationships (such as family), routine actions, imaginary and resources, and more importantly, it is related to the overlapping relationship between these.

Indeed, home is a nexus comprised of both the sending and receiving societies, which highlights the fulfilment of home through migration, since the two contexts are not easily separated. Further research should engage with home from a holistic approach, exploring the way both societies create a home which challenges the container theory of society and spans across borders rather than lying within national borders. Therefore, transnational migrants are often houseless, but not homeless, because home is conceptualised through social relations.

Romanians' modern beliefs in the right to property ownership and thus family life allows them to embrace the comforts of a civilised life and engage in home-making practices. In parallel, whilst searching for home, they interact with the host contexts. Indeed, home and belonging illuminate the type of relations between migrants and

host contexts, such as social and structural boundaries. Human differences are the result of multiple factors, such as the state of societies in which people go about their daily lives (Martens 2009:344).

Modernity also impacts on peoples' lives through the exclusion of some from these entitlements and privileges. Giddens (1991:1) writes that "[late] modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience... the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace... with the self". Romanians experience this institutionally and socially through social relations with the mainstream, as the following chapter will show. Although Romanian modernity is achieved through home ownership and family creation, their visibility in the host country is a reminder of their lack of Western modernity. Modernity is thus experienced as both oppression and liberation.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Encountering the other: the relational nature of belonging.**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter highlighted the significance of people in Romanians' lives, in relation to home creation. In that respect, home is a dynamic process which evolves over time due to encounters. While home is lived as a moral impetus, an aspiration and is thus self-centred, belonging is about the sense of being part of society, which is constructed through social interactions with other members of the society. As a personal experience, belonging connects the individual to society because "our sense of self is constructed in a relational process in our interactions with other people as well as in relation to more abstract notions of collectively held social norms, values and customs" (May 2013:368). Here, the term 'belonging' is understood to mean 'relational belonging' and it refers to a set of affective practices which represent migrants' perception of inclusion in the host society based on social encounters with the mainstream. It *requires the presence of the mainstream as a guardian of belonging entitlements*. Therefore, it is of great importance to explore migrants' relationships in the host country, in order to understand whether the relational gap in their lives can be filled by the host country members.

Indeed, belonging is a human need (Maslow 1954). Krause and Bastida (2011) show how Mexican Americans who are part of religious congregations develop a greater sense of belonging and meaning in life compared to those who are less involved. Goizueta (2002:122) goes on to point out that the "community is the very source of personal identity. Individuals are not building blocks of community; community is, instead, the foundation of individual personhood."

The encounters between Romanian nationals and the mainstream offer a platform for Romanians' questionings of belonging to occur. The central thesis of this chapter investigates how Romanians' sense of belonging towards the sending and receiving society is constructed through relational dynamics. It is argued that people (strangers, acquaintances and friends) induce participants' awareness of being othered. Furthermore, they determine the relationships Romanians have with the locations inhabited, and thus influence their senses of belonging.

This study differentiates between mundane and meaningful social interactions, which inform how differences are negotiated in the quotidian encounters between Romanians and the cultural others. Mundane interactions are represented by

superficial encounters with individuals we interact with in the parochial or public contexts. They are banal in that they happen at the work place or during grocery shopping as a result of co-existing with other individuals, rather than triggered by a personal desire (and acting upon it) to interact with the members of the society. Meaningful social interactions are deep, based on mutual support and friendships and they happen as a result of shared wish for socialisation in the public, parochial and private realms. They are purposeful, as they result from both parties' intentions to be engaged in social interactions.

This chapter sets out the everyday of Romanians in France and Britain which is foregrounded in interactions across lines of ethnic difference. The question this chapter addresses is 'How do Romanians perceive the host context and their place in it as a result of their everyday social involvements?'. It is divided into three parts. The first part contextualises the chapter by providing information of how Romanians develop mundane and meaningful relationships in the host country with those who inhabit different social positions to themselves. The chapter goes on to highlight how Romanians negotiate their ethnic belonging through everyday lived experiences as migrants in London and Paris. In line with previous research (Moroşanu and Fox 2013) amongst Romanians in London, this research found that the participants have different strategies of coping with stigma: "strategies that invoke ethnicity, and strategies that deflect ethnicity" (*ibid.*:440). Consequently, the next section focuses on how Romanians reaffirm their ethnic identities following on from the everyday social contacts they engage in. In turn, the final section engages with how the participants suppress their Romanian ethnicity as a result of the daily interactions with the mainstream. These two ramifications, the reaffirmation and suppression of ethnicity, affect the nature of their attachments towards the sending and receiving societies.

### **Romanians' bodily encounters in private, public and parochial realms**

Building upon Lofland (1998)'s work which uses Hunter (1985)'s framework, this section differentiates between the public, the parochial and private realms, which capture Romanians' complexity of social life in the city. The public space exists at the street level and it is represented by casual encounters we make, such as when going to the shops, or meeting strangers during job interviews or house hunting. The parochial realm encompasses people such as neighbours, work colleagues, acquaintances met through various organisations and networks, and people we meet regularly without developing close relationships with them. Finally, the private sphere is composed of the people we maintain close relationships with such as

friends and kin, people who we welcome into our homes and create intimate relationships with. These spheres are social rather than physical locations in which individuals relate to other people, defined by “the consequence of the proportions and densities of relationship types present and these proportions and densities are themselves fluid” (Lofland 1998:11).

The remaining part of this section explores the Romanians’ interactions in the public, parochial and private spheres, with focus on the housing, labour and personal spheres.

### **Encountering strangers in the public realm**

This section discusses Romanians’ interactions with the least familiar members of the mainstream, who represent the strangers, defined as individuals we do not know and we do not recognise (Morgan 2009:3). These encounters take place whilst seeking employment and housing, and how these encounters influence the understanding of their place in the host society, and therefore their attachments.

In their study which considers four of the largest ethnic minorities in the Greater London Area (people with Eastern European, Indian, African or Arabic/Muslim backgrounds), Carlsson and Eriksson (2014) found that there is widespread discrimination in the housing market against all the four ethnic minorities. Applicants with an Arabic/Muslim name, followed by applicants with an African or Indian name have the smallest probability of being invited for room viewing. In comparison, Eastern European individuals (the largest group is people with a Polish background) tend to experience substantially less discrimination on the housing market, shown by higher invitation rates. They also report that applicants with high-skilled jobs face more discrimination than applicants with low-skilled jobs, which they explain as being due to statistical discrimination. The degree of discrimination depends on the ethnic residential concentration, in that there is more discrimination in areas where the ethnic share is higher.

In the labour market, research has suggested that Eastern Europeans specifically tend to be subject to discrimination which takes the form of longer hours at work, lower wages and their concentration in low-skilled jobs despite their educational qualifications (see Cook et al. 2010, Fox et al. 2015). Scholars agree that immigrants’ incorporation in the labour market is often difficult and unequal. Indeed, foreign born ethnic minorities have a higher unemployment rate in both the United Kingdom (Dustmann et al. 2005) and France (Le ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi, de la formation professionnelle et du Dialogue social 2014, Beauchemin et al. 2010).

As already explained in Chapter Three, Romanian nationals in France and Britain needed a work permit, until the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014, in order to enter the labour market. However, this was not the only barrier to the labour market encountered by the participants, with many highlighting discrimination in access to employment on grounds of foreign origin as the main cause of concern.

Marta who works as an auditor talks about the 'ethnic penalty' (Carmichael and Woods 2000) she has had to pay on the French labour market, despite having a French university degree and being fluent in French:

*The difficulty did not consist in the interview itself, to express myself, even more so since this is my job, to talk to people. The difficulty was to get a job interview. It is a nationality issue. (...) At some point, I did not put native tongue Romanian, or I was not putting the Romanian nationality anymore [on the CV].*

The discrimination based on nationality she refers to takes the form of the lack of opportunity to be considered as a suitable candidate.

In London, discrimination on the basis of nationality also surfaced amongst low-skilled Romanians. Commenting on this, Ion, who works as a builder, stated:

*If you want to get a better job, and say, you go to the Mall, you cannot get in, because there are 70 Indians, and 20 English people working there already. And you, as a Romanian or Bulgarian, want to get a job there, they automatically ask... "Who is this guy?"*

Romanians' status as 'new migrants' in Britain poses problems in access to employment, as they are potentially only considered for positions after the British, but also after more established communities such as the Indians.

New migrants are perceived as increasing competition in a labour market already characterised by scarce job opportunities. As Favell (2008b:711) notes, "where there is conflict with the 'natives' over jobs and resources the reaction gets expressed in populist and xenophobic terms". However, more recently, Khattab and Fox (2016) noted that East Europeans were not affected by recession in terms of job loss. Pre-recession they were found to have experienced higher rates of unemployment than British workers, which dropped post-recession. However, this came at a cost, as Eastern Europeans accepted jobs below their qualification levels.

High-skilled Romanians from France were more likely than their co-nationals from London to express accounts of discrimination at the point of entering the labour market (such as difficulties accessing and securing jobs). A possible explanation for

this may be that many high-skilled Romanians working in London made job arrangements prior to their arrival in the host country. Moreover, the nature of their employment sectors (engineering and banking), facilitated their job hunt, as they were entering sectors with high demand in Britain. Nevertheless, the participants from London revealed unfair treatment which took the form of low wages or the need to prove themselves (such as working longer hours than their colleagues) whilst already in employment.

In France however, four participants in high-skilled positions at the time of the interview (Marta, Giorgiana, Patricia and Sorin) mentioned unequal treatment in the form of difficulty in finding a job. Interestingly, the fact that all of them had graduated from a French university did not seem to help their incorporation into the labour force. Moreover, one participant (Giorgiana, who did not explicitly label the difficulties experienced as racism) more than a year after finishing her Master's degree in Paris, was still working in a clothes store, in an unskilled job. Low-skilled migrants in both cities stressed the importance of Romanian social networks in gaining access to jobs. The reliance on informal channels may be an efficient method to find employment as they are less dependent on formal means which may unveil discrimination.

Unlike racist attitudes experienced in the labour market, discrimination in the housing market is not as recurrent in participants' discourses. Once more, low-skilled Romanians in London are more inclined towards house sharing found through social networks. The pattern is that one person rents the house and sublets the rooms to individuals. In Paris, very few low-skilled Romanians live in shared housing. This is partly explained by the rental prices, which are lower than in London, and many participants have families and prefer to rent a place by themselves. In both cities, their housing tends to be in predominantly Romanian zones, areas with ethnic shops and restaurants. In contrast, high-skilled migrants have a tendency to live in the city centre, or in residential, leafy and affluent suburbs.

Vlad, a waiter in London for two years, tried to rent a flat with his sister and wife, but the agreement did not go through, as the landlord expressed doubts at the permanent nature of his employment.

*We went to the letting agency, we brought along all the reference letters, proof of address, payslips (...), we offered as much as they asked, and he (...) said "I don't want to [rent you the flat], because if you or your wife lose your jobs, you cannot pay the rent anymore". I find it very weird, to think like this.*

Vlad expresses his curiosity at the landlord's final decision; although at no point does he label his attitude as racist. The non-explicit expression of a negative attitude towards him does not trigger any questions regarding the nature of the verbal exchange. However, the absence of a credible reason for renting out the flat creates a space for mild interpretations of racism (as non-existent at the least and futile at the most). Other than Vlad, no other participant mentioned obstacles accessing rental properties. The difficulty in finding accommodation is explained by reluctant estate agents, who have in mind an ideal tenant, with immigrants often falling marginally above unemployed people (Dawney 2008).

In the Parisian housing market, interviewees' experiences differ little from Vlad's. Previously, Marta reported the discrimination experienced on the labour market. Later during the interview she also commented on her experiences on the housing market. She found that letting agencies were more likely to rent out properties to foreigners, rather than private landlords. Below she describes her encounters with private landlords, during which she was made aware of her difference as a foreigner.

*[Private owners] ask you how long you have been here for and what you do. I was earning enough, everything was OK, but the fact that I was Romanian... They were noticing your accent and were asking you where you were from, what you do here (...). That's what I felt, and I started looking [for a flat to rent] through letting agencies.*

Both interviewees have a permanent position in their respective employments, salaries to cover the rent and were able to produce all the documents required in order to meet the requirements of the rental agreement. However, in Vlad's case, the landlord associated Vlad's nationality and employment (waiter) with potential job insecurity and therefore inability to pay the rent. Marta, however, occupies a position as an auditor for a nationwide French company. She understands that following her interactions with the potential landlords, the only element which posed an issue was her nationality.

These two testimonials are examples of how Romanians are made aware of their difference through public encounters with the mainstream. Due to the lack of subtlety of racism in France as well as the propensity of it (as Marta has given various examples of discrimination during the interview which will be examined later) it tends to be more easily detected by the participants. This is not to say that discrimination of Romanians by British people does not exist, rather it is not identified by the participants as it is not explicit. Consequently, it takes tacit forms which are arduously identified as being related to the interviewees' nationality as such. This is perfectly captured by Beatrice, an accountant in London, where she

has lived for four years, while taking regular trips to Spain, to visit one of her sisters settled there.

*I would like (to go to) Spain, but from other points of view, I know I would never get there. Because I do not want to be ashamed to say that I am Romanian (...). Here, (...) you have the advantage that the English are polite and politically correct. (...) If you are polite enough not to say it to my face, it's fine. We can live together. (...) And I think the Spaniards lack this, (...) I have heard many times that people are being insulted because they are Romanian.*

British peoples' political correctness is the reason why, although Beatrice is tempted to move to Spain, she does not do it, as she reckons racism to be more overt than in the UK. She praises British peoples' ability to tolerate people irrespective of their background, which means that people of different origins can live peacefully as long as everybody is aware of the boundaries which should not be crossed during public encounters. Yet, this 'civility towards diversity' (Lofland 1989) does not imply mutual acceptance of the social differences. Instead, it refers to peoples' capacity to live with individuals of different backgrounds and treat them the same (see also Wessendorf 2014). Agreeable relationships emanate from the absence of meaningful interactions and the presence of mundane interactions. Conviviality is experienced as a process of "cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculturalism an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas" (Gilroy 2004:xi). It is a banal everyday conviviality based on the presence of mutual respect and the absence of curiosity about the 'other', rather than the absence of racism.

Whilst amongst both groups of Romanians a number of interviewees expressed their feelings of being discriminated against on the basis of their nationality, the participants from Paris were more likely to have felt racist attitudes or unequal treatment. Moreover, amongst the participants from London who gave accounts of differential treatment, only two explicitly used the word 'discrimination' or 'racism' to describe the situation (Iulia and Ion). The others used softer language, such as "not being respected in poorly paid jobs" (Emma), "not being able to get as much leave as their colleagues" (Cristi), or "British people differentiate between foreigners and themselves" (Robert).

Other participants (found in low-skilled employment, such as Mia) had encounters they qualified as racist mainly with black or Muslim people or foreigners such as French and Italians (Andreea) either at the work place or when applying for a NINo, who see their nationality at the basis of the conflictual relationships. The remaining participants did not consider their experiences as having had a racist connotation.

Populist attitudes are to be also found in the parochial context, in the relationships between Romanians and their French/British work colleagues, and neighbours, as the next section outlines.

### **Encountering acquaintances in the parochial realm**

The people Romanians interact with in the parochial realm are acquaintances and sit between strangers and the close kin (Morgan 2009). People spend most of the day in public and parochial spaces, interacting with both strangers and acquaintances. These encounters, not only construct the “fabric of the everyday life“, but they also “determine the quality of people’s personal life“ (May 2011a:115), as these contacts shape peoples’ connections towards the spaces they inhabit both bodily and affectively. The parochial realm is, like the public realm, invested with human relationships in the neighbourhood and the workplace.

“Individuals brought together through shared employment or business should form sociable relationships over and above what is strictly prescribed by immediate practical concerns”, noted Morgan (2009:35). While the work space has the capacity to nurture meaningful relationships by bringing people of various backgrounds together, it can also reflect the practices of difference such as religious attitudes, food and socialising practices that act as obstacles in creating enriching relationships in shared spaces (Andersson et al. 2013).

Below, Ilaria, who works as a recruiter in Paris explains that she did not encounter any structural discrimination during the hiring process. Rather, negative experiences started occurring in the work place, as her comment illustrates: “During the hiring process, I had no issues. I had [problematic] colleagues. (...) Looking at my watch, a colleague asked me ‘Is this stolen?’”.

In the French context, racial prejudice takes the form of everyday racist jokes and condescending behaviour (see also Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme 2009). Individual discrimination prevails amongst high-skilled Romanians from Paris. For the participants from London, discrimination, as already argued, takes a structural form such as exploitation or low pay, rather than having an interrelational dimension, as Iulia details below. She is an account director in the advertising industry and is of the opinion that her exploitation, in the form of a lower wage than her work colleagues, is due to her being a foreigner (generally) rather than being Romanian (specifically).

*They discriminate... What was I telling you earlier about my frustration that I am underpaid? They discriminate (...). But it is related to the fact that you are a foreigner and you do not know the context. (...) You are very*

*vulnerable. They take advantage of your inferiority complex. (...) Maybe with English people it is harder.*

In the French context, the discourses tend to be of a social nature, with discrimination emanating from interaction with French colleagues. Marta explains how in 2013, when she first arrived in the company, she integrated very well as her colleagues were sociable and welcoming. However, the discourse changed following the economic crisis, with the focus on competencies shifting to the presence of foreigners. Rather than having her skills valued, she had her ethnicity undervalued.

*There is a canteen at work, and we all meet there, we talk about different things, laugh about Romanians... And at some point the conversation turned to "We were told that starting December, the staff will be cut back by 50 per cent". And from then on, they started "There are too many foreigners anyway", "The foreigners take our jobs". At the beginning they were saying we have got the skills. Now they say we take their jobs. (...) [Before] in the canteen, we were sat 20 at the table, now we are five here, five there...*

This view is supported by Favell (2014), who noted that in exclusionary labour markets, access to jobs is limited by discrimination (ethnic), and migrants are often found in low paid and low status jobs, without recognising skills and qualifications. In contrast, in exploitative markets, migrants are frequently underpaid but less likely to be discriminated against on a market open to European workforce.

Other respondents talked about their encounters with the French mainstream as deeply stigmatising. Ciprian lived in Budapest and came to Paris to work as a builder after he lost his employment in Hungary. He recalls the stigmatising encounters with French nationals, during which he was reminded of the crimes committed by Romanians. He tries to escape the ascribed stigma by explaining that despite the media focus on Romanians' immoral character, there are also many virtuous Romanians: "I was trying to explain to them that there are also many good Romanians, there is a rotten apple in every group (...) and we should not generalise".

For Goffman, stigma arises from the discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity. Virtual social identity is a characterisation we imbue people based on the assumptions we hold of them. Actual social identity refers to the real attributes the individual possesses (Goffman 1963). Stigma happens when individuals are reduced to a "tainted, discounted [person]" (*ibid.*:12). He goes on noting that "[t]he term, stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (*ibid.*:13).

High-skilled Romanians from Paris are more likely to give voice to their encounters with discrimination and stigmatising behaviour than their counterparts from London. This may be explained by the fact that they were first students and then employees in Paris. As such, they need to overcome two barriers: structural barriers represented by high unemployment rates amongst new graduates (regardless of their belonging to the majority or to a minority) and personal barriers, due to their nationality. The recurrent perception of the local context as hostile towards them is due to the nature of racism, which in France is more overt and frequent than in the UK.

Indeed, the frequency of discriminatory acts and the time spent in the host country seem to be paralleled by racist awareness. This is supported by the claims of some interviewees who have been in London for more than seven years, and who perceive the environment as hostile. Generally speaking, Romanians in high-skilled positions in London did not have negative social interactions in the work place. An explanation could be the better English language abilities and high levels of education attainment, elements generative of good communication skills and thus their ability to engage in relations with the mainstream.

This may be also explained by the absence of British people in their workplace (see also Spencer et al. 2007 for a similar argument), and an over presence of foreigners. Indeed, Romanians' interactions with French people are higher in number than for the interviewees from the UK, due to French peoples' presence in the work place.

Sorin's experience is very telling in this regard. Currently a lecturer in a diverse Parisian university, he contrasts his current experience to that as a doctoral researcher in a far less inclusive institution.

*Sorin: [in the previous work place], when we [the foreigners] were going to lunch or to have a coffee, (...) we were at the immigrants' table. And next to us, the French peoples' table.*

*Claudia: Where you work now, is it easier to interact [with French people]?*

*Sorin: Well now, where I am, it is extremely multicultural. At some point, we were six people in the office and there was only one French woman. Africa, America, Asia, everything you want. When you have such a mix, you do not really have any groups, because French people are a minority.*

Due to the diversity of the work place in his current employment, his experiences are mainly positive, unlike his previous professional experience as a PhD student, where French and foreigners were living mostly segregated lives. This means that physical proximity with French people is followed by clashes and thus divisions. The

absence of French individuals, however, is characterised by positive daily experiences. This suggests that the contacts with the unfamiliar, rather than creating a space of mutual understanding, vilify Romanians' presence (Valentine 2008, Gawlewicz 2015) evinced by French work colleagues. Consequently, regular negative attitudes encountered by respondents in Paris, to the point that they become habitual, result in their understanding that they occur due to their membership<sup>8</sup>.

The work place is not the only space for values and attitudes towards difference to be examined. Like work colleagues, neighbours are a set of acquaintances who have a partial knowledge of our lives and with whom the interactions are often of a fleeting nature (Morgan 2009:22). Our encounters influence the sense we have of the space we inhabit and thus they have the potential to transform the neighbourhood into a pleasant and familiar space in which we feel at ease, or into a space which is unfamiliar and lacking a sense of security and comfort. Indeed, in their study of belonging in Manchester, Savage et al. (2005) noted that the residents' sense of belonging depended greatly on the people living in the same neighbourhood.

In her description of neighbourhood relations, Mia, a married mother of two who owns a small coffee shop in London, acknowledges that one of the reasons why she might consider returning to Romania, despite the seven years spent in Britain, is due to the loneliness she feels. She criticises the solitude encountered in the semi-public space of her neighbourhood. Her neighbour, as she explains, is extremely reluctant to have conversations, despite her numerous attempts:

*I moved in, not long time ago, and I try to have a relationship with my neighbours. [Despite my attempts, we only exchange a few words] "Hello, hello, goodbye, goodbye". "How are you?" and that's it, nothing more, you know? If I try to say "How was your day today", it is in vain. "It was alright, yeah", and they go inside.*

She feels nationality and the hostile media coverage are perhaps reasons why her next-door neighbour refuses to engage with her in an ordinary conversation, and that they employ 'distancing mechanisms' (Crow et al. 2002), which she understands as a non-recognition of her right to belong to the society she inhabits. She goes on:

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<sup>8</sup> Equally, this may mean that low-skilled Romanians, who are more susceptible to experiencing discriminatory attitudes, need to be exposed to overt discriminatory language on a recurrent basis in order to perceive discrimination as such.

*I think they do not really like... the children in the garden, they are a bit noisy, you know? (...) Racism, maybe they have heard us [speaking], or indifference... All these articles about Romanians in the news... You know how much they have affected me, living in this country?*

The absence of relationships and practices of community outside her close family pushes Mia to refer to London in terms of non-belonging, as this does not accord with her experience in Romania. Community can provide people with support networks which help them connect to other people (Calhoun 2003). Perceived racism may explain why Cook et al. (2010:733) found that Eastern Europeans are seen by established community members as having a tendency to engage with fellow nationals. At times, it is not ethnicity which gets in the way of fruitful social relations, but the length of stay and not following the often tacit rules of the place. Nevertheless, newcomers often tend to be perceived as more foreign than long term residents (Wimmer 2004). Nevertheless, alienation from London happens through the lack of social relations, which directs the participant to characterise the area inhabited as unfriendly.

In contrast, Giorgiana and Ana-Maria, who live in two leafy Parisian suburbs, refer to a close-knit community they are part of in their respective neighbourhoods. Their use of neighbourhood facilities (such as the bakery) provide them with a sense of familiarity. For example, Giorgiana expresses her attachment to the neighbourhood she lives in by highlighting the way she is treated, which corresponds to the way she wants to be approached, and which is different from the interactions in Romania. As such, she creates a sense of belonging to the places she lives in, through the very space, which reflects her own way of seeing things.

*Wherever you go to the [bakeries] in the neighbourhood, (...) the [bakers] talk to you. For example, where I go, the lady does not talk to you because she has to. You can tell (...) she wants to talk to you (...). And she says 'as usual, that baguette'. "As usual". She remembers you and she knows [what baguette you normally buy]. And of course, there are other things here that are inexistent in Romania.*

The role of mundane encounters in fostering a sense of belonging to the local context is even more significant since when she first arrived, Giorgiana was emotionally affected by the negative welcome she experienced. Despite having a French partner, which could have facilitated her social immersion, she had to overcome everyday stigmatisation:

*I would feel alone in front of the wolves and I would always feel the need to justify myself, to explain to them, you know? And it turned out to be too big*

*an effort, because you would talk to people and they would look at you in a "You can say whatever you want, because I will not change my opinion" kind of way.*

Although fleeting, these encounters with friendly people contribute to the sense of familiarity the participants develop for the area. Their senses of belonging are anchored in relation to the acquaintances they meet regularly without the parties forming deep friendships. These mundane social interactions, which do not progress into deep relationships, contribute to a general sense of friendliness attributed to the area of residence (May and Muir 2015, Savage et al. 2005). Consequently, the neighbourhood becomes a source of belonging when it is inhabited by good people and it is experienced as a community.

While neighbour relationships are of great importance to the participants in the study, these are experienced heterogeneously. On the one hand, low-skilled respondents point to the lack of community and the need of enduring and profound relationships in the areas inhabited, as well as the unfamiliar layout and appearance of the suburb. On the other hand, the high-skilled, while embracing the fleeting friendly relationships, also positively experience the anonymity these passing encounters reflect, as they have their privacy respected and construct their ideas of friendly belonging on the ideas of 'friendly distance' (Crow et al. 2002). These propinquitous encounters have the potential to reduce the cultural barriers between Romanians and host country members and lead to convivial interactions with the mainstream.

Unlike London, non-deliberate discrimination and patronising attitudes in the work place seem to be the norm for Romanians in skilled positions in Paris. This may be due to the fact that Romanians from Paris are more likely than the interviewees from London to interact in the work place with local citizens. Both high and low-skilled Romanians from London, point to a scarcity of British people in their professional circles, as well as the generally good work atmosphere which may be based on the absence of meaningful interactions.

At the neighbourhood level, high-skilled Romanians from France are more likely than their co-nationals from London to refer to the neighbourhood as fostering good relations, but this may be attributed to their residential location. While high-skilled Romanians from London tend to be present in inner London, the respondents from the French capital live in the affluent Parisian suburbs, which are more likely to be populated by 'long term' residents, which increase the level of familiarity, and thus belonging to the area.

Most low-skilled Romanians in both London and Paris, do not seem to express a strong attachment to the area they reside in. Nevertheless, their responses are somewhat opposing, as while pointing to the presence of many Romanians in the neighbourhood as a negative characteristic, they also confirm that they would have felt even lonelier had it not been for the presence of conationals, whether they were friends or family. The role of friends in fostering or curtailing a sense of belonging is examined in the subsequent section.

### **Relationships in the personal sphere**

With considerations to the 'private realm', this section refers to friendships and other types of close social relations in social milieus. Often, for migrants who left behind their families, friends become a second family. Creating and maintaining social ties, however, is facilitated by sharing similar characteristics (McPherson et al. 2001) such as class (Li et al. 2003) or ethnicity (Andersson et al. 2012). Thus, meaningful interaction with the others is going to be dictated by common elements which lead to convivial moments. As Glick Schiller et al. (2011:404) note, "the process of engagement with others is always going to be with particular individuals with whom one may want to identify or share moments of 'conviviality'".

This section starts with a quotation which is very representative for the Romanian participants from Paris who have in their personal circles French friends with whom they socialise regularly. Sonia joined her husband, Aurelian, in Paris, where he works as an engineer. They often socialise with Aurelian's French work colleagues. She details how during social interactions with the mainstream, her ethnicity is questioned by her husband's work colleagues due to her looks.

*Sonia: And [the work colleague] asks me if my parents are Romanian. And I said "yes". "And you live in Bucharest?". "Yes". "And you are Romanian?". "Yes". (...) "You really don't have Spanish or Italian roots?" "No". He waits for a bit and he asks me a third time: "You really are Romanian?"*

*Aurelian: (...) he could not believe it.*

*Sonia: Exactly. (...) They think Romanians look a certain way. And you ask them: "What do they look like?" "They don't look like you".*

Social interactions depend on how the others perceive and validate our identities. In this case, the work colleague needs to understand Sonia's identity in order to position her on a social hierarchy, which will influence their social interaction. He tries to disambiguate her ambiguous, perceived identity by deconstructing the stereotypes he associates with Romanian nationals. The ambiguity resides in the mismatch between her racial affiliation, looks and social status.

The participants' race-related facial cues become ambiguous, as they do not match the ideas the populace has about Romanians. Physical appearance activates particular racial categories and stereotypes in peoples' minds, which influence their perception of individual's ways of being in society. In other words, when one sees a camp of Romanian Roma on the news, they will pick up some physical elements (dress code, skin tone) and associate these with a certain behaviour linked to beggars and thieves and thus categorise those individuals as belonging to a subordinated group and having a low status. This will then be applied to Romanians as a group. Consequently, when meeting a white skinned and well dressed Romanian, the perception of physical characteristics may be influenced by racial category labels and social beliefs (Eberhardt et al. 2003). The mismatch between the visual perception (facial cues) and the social perception (stereotypes) of this individual is at the basis of the desire to find out more about the interviewee in order to determine their attachment to one group or another.

In other words, Sonia is perceived as not resembling the (stereotyped) idea of Romanians, and therefore not being a genuine Romanian. Similarly, M.L. Hunter (2005) explains how light-skinned Blacks and Mexican Americans are seen by the others as not looking similar to their groups who are considered to look darker-skinned and therefore may be considered less authentic. Because of the observer's understanding of Romanians' racial background, the respondent does not fit fully into the system of white privilege, but at the same time she cannot be placed in the 'Romanian' box either because of her appearance and social capital.

Individuals have multiple racial identities: 'internal', 'expressed' and 'observed', which refer to how we perceive ourselves, what we say we are to our interlocutors and finally, what the others perceive us as (Harris and Sim 2002). However, the identities the individuals express are not always accepted by the others (Brunsma 2005). This has implications on how individuals construct and state their racial identities. Their socially mediated appearance, which refers to the ways the others make assumptions about one's identity based on their appearance, can be at the origin of very stressful situations (Campbell and Troyer 2007). Because of the challenging of their identity, Romanians may be prone to a destabilising process, which triggers discomfort regarding their own identity and therefore feelings of subordination towards the others. Furthermore, it can make the individuals subject to these racial misclassifications adopt the normative white identity in order to reduce the tension (Harris and Sim 2002) associated with having to explain their racial background.

Unlike the participants from Paris, most participants from London do not have local citizens in their group of friends. As Mihai puts it bluntly, the relationships with

British people are considerably lacking, mainly because of the absence of British people in the work place: “To quote from the Classics, [the relationships with the British] are superb, but are notoriously lacking. (...) Not because I do not want them to take place, but because I don’t have the opportunity”.

Interethnic friendships between Romanian and British individuals are largely absent due to the relative lack of British people in London. Similarly, Mircea, a participant who lived in York before moving to London, explains how in the North he made British friends, whilst in London he only met foreigners. Very few of the participants from London acknowledge the presence of British people in their close social circles, such as Beatrice and Cosmin, who have both studied abroad (in Edinburgh and in Germany). This may have facilitated their social interactions, as they came to London with a wealth of socio-cultural capital, knowing the codes of a foreign culture and enjoying full language proficiency. Nations are collectivities represented by an easy way of communication amongst their members (Deutsch 1966). Consequently, global elites in large cities share more commonalities with their foreign counterparts than with members of the non-elite in their own countries (Sassen 2002:24).

To conclude, the pattern that emerges is that Romanians in London do not appear to be surrounded by a significant number of British people in their personal sphere. The participants from Paris are more likely to interact with French people in the parochial and private realms, which seems to contribute to their negative daily experiences in the destination context.

For the Romanians interviewed in Paris, meaningful social interactions with the mainstream, rather than fostering a familiar social space characterised by mutual knowledge between the interlocutors; produce a space in which difference is acknowledged and become a divider between Romanians and the dominant group. Even mundane encounters in the neighbourhood have the ability to foster a sense of belonging to the local community.

In London, the absence of meaningful ties seems to suggest the fostering of a positive environment. This is exemplified by Romanians’ testimonials from London, who do not seem to perceive discrimination in the same way their co-nationals from Paris do. This is not to say that the participants from London enjoy a significantly more positive treatment than their co-ethnics from Paris. Rather, the forms discrimination takes are less visible to the naked eye. As Trandafoiu (2013:72) explains, “[t]he rarity of planned, targeted and personal racist attacks does not prove that racism is absent. Rather, (...) racism is experienced as a subversive phenomenon, which adds to its insidiousness”.

Romanians do not always fail to realise the discrimination they face. Yet, by acknowledging discrimination, they would limit their claims to belonging to the host society. Indeed, de Coulon et al. (2013) and Friebel et al. (2013) found that nationals' negative attitudes affect Romanians' from Italy intentions to leave the host country and return to the country of origin. Moreover, they also discovered an increase in desires to return amongst those Romanians who were following the media debates depicting anti Romanian discourses.

Low-skilled Romanians do not envisage London or Paris in terms of spheres of belonging, but rather as professional spaces. Accordingly, they operate on the binary relation: Us (Romanian, economic migrants) versus Them (the mainstream), which voluntarily creates a social barrier from their very arrival into the host country. Their belonging in the sense of 'feeling part of the social fabric' (Anthias 2008) is high towards Romania at the point of arrival in the host country, and low towards the context of reception. It generally does not change significantly throughout their migratory experience due to the absence of meaningful relations with the mainstream and relative unfavourable mundane experiences (however family creation seems to alter the relation towards the host country, this is further explored in Chapter Seven).

Most high-skilled Romanians present a high sense of belonging towards the receiving context at the point of arrival in the host country. However, its linearity is not guaranteed, it fluctuates as they experience limits to their acceptance into the mainstream imposed by members of the receiving society. Even so, the respondents have the potential to have their sense of attachment to the host country reinforced through positive mundane social interactions. Social interactions which foster a sense of belonging to the host-nation come from the absence of meaningful interactions and the presence of positive mundane relationships, characterised by conviviality, mutual tolerance and amiability rather than strong friendships.

As already argued throughout the chapter (and the thesis), the encounters with discrimination Romanians experience cause them to question their identity and reassess the nature of attachments towards the sending and receiving societies. This shows that belonging is validated and contested during everyday interactions on the basis of perceived sameness and difference. In this line of thought, the next section explores the ways in which stigmatisation is experienced from the perspective of the Romanians interviewed.

## **Reinforcement of Romanian ethnicity and devotion to Romania**

The following two sections are concerned with the ways in which Romanians' senses of belonging towards both contexts rest on fluctuations in their ethnic identities best illustrated by their understanding of relations with the members of both the sending and receiving societies.

People's attachments are relational, as they are informed by the exchanges with the members of the mainstream. "People tend to care rather more about the people they love than the definition of who exactly they are" (Miller 2010:125) because relationships offer a sense of familiarity and thus create a sense of ease and place, of belonging (see also May 2013). Ethnic identity is thus shaped by everyday interactions because it is enacted in accordance with everyday situations. Members of the dominant group are central in constructing a sense of belonging to wider structures, as they are the gatekeepers of the social spaces which migrants seek to become a part of. Indeed, the sense of belonging emerges relationally, both in terms of 'we-ness', those who are marked as similar and in terms of 'otherness', those who are marked as different (Anthias 2008:8).

The following investigates the coping mechanisms Romanians use to overcome stigmatisation. The two strategies depicted below lay out the positive tactics of embracing Romanianess which, in turn, alienate the participants from the host country.

### **Ethnic solidarity**

Encounters with culturally different people are characterised by lack of familiarity and thus uncertainty and discomfort, which convert social encounters into sites of exclusion. As Merry (1981:125, cited in Ahmed 2000) declares, "[e]ncounters with culturally alien people are defined by anxiety and uncertainty, which inhibits social interaction and reinforces social boundaries". Many participants (mainly from Paris) acknowledged that the negative daily interactions in the host country have triggered resentment towards the majority. While some of them declared having avoided interaction with the mainstream, others, like Ilaria, are more precise in their testimonials.

The next statement illustrates how Ilaria, who had recently broken up with her Romanian boyfriend, talks about the importance of personal relations whilst mobilising her opinions and actions as a form of non-belonging.

*I couldn't have a French boyfriend (...). I can't start on an equal footing. (...) Not that we [Romanians] are inferior, but I have the impression that that's*

*how he sees me. I do not consider myself inferior, but them... (...) [might do]. (...) I start from this: What is he going to think because I am Romanian?*

By bringing together people of different cultural backgrounds, mixed relationships facilitate the integration of the partner belonging to a minority group and reflect dimensions of integration, as they indicate the “dissolution of social and cultural barriers” (Khoo 2011:101, see also Song 2016:2) in a multi-ethnic society. Indeed, Iulia from London confirmed that during her relationship with her British partner, London became home. This changed however when they broke up and the capital city became a hostile environment.

Living in a racialised context (in the previous section Ilaria explained how she was similarly accused of being a thief for owning a watch her work colleague admired), Ilaria has an understanding of the racial dynamics before they actually occur. This generates a greater social distance between her and a hypothetical partner purely on the basis of her perception of them not inhabiting the same social space and thus not being ‘equals’ due to ethnic boundaries. Her self-awareness regarding her racialised identity represents an obstacle in an affective relationship characterised by the intersection between race and gender. Ilaria copes with perceived discrimination by embracing a low sense of social belonging to the dominant group and increasingly identifying herself with the socially devaluated Romanian group. Unsurprisingly, she since returned to Romania, where she is in a happy relationship with her Romanian partner.

Self-social segregation and reappraisal of ethnic solidarity seems to be the consequence of a harsh social environment the participants have experienced. In parallel, many Romanians point to the importance of the Romanian community, without which they would have felt lonely and would have had to endure social hardship. Gabriela is one of the respondents who found emotional refuge in the Romanian church community, as her statement illustrates: “Paris did not really agree with me, and honestly, if it wasn’t for my group of very good Romanian friends, I think I would have left a long time ago. But anyway, I have said to myself that at some point, I will leave”.

The Romanian community which she discovered in the Romanian Orthodox Church enabled her to have a fulfilled life and attain a level of wellbeing which was inexistent prior to the discovery of the community. This is invoked by other participants, who admit that liaising with Romanians (as well as foreigners) is facilitated by the fact that “we come here with a gap in our repertoire of friends” (Claudiu). Also, the bond created by sharing Romanian identity makes it easier to relate to the co-nationals. Not being perceived as belonging to the French community, they turn to co-ethnics who may sympathise with their experiences.

They create boundaries as they are denied the embracement of cosmopolitanism. Thus, their reactive ethnicity forms in hostile environments and is “an alternative reaction [which] may lead to the rise and reaffirmation of ethnic solidarity and self-consciousness” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:152, see also Diehl and Schnell 2006).

Contrary to other studies (Bossuroy 2011:3), these excerpts show that not only individuals with limited education, but also high-skilled immigrants have a devotion to and identify with their ethnic group. Amongst the high-skilled professionals in both host contexts, most of those interviewed admitted that a large part of their social connections are composed of either members of the Romanian community or foreigners, such as Eastern Europeans (Poles, Bulgarians etc.) or Latins (Spaniards, Italians or Latin Americans). This is possibly facilitated by Romanians’ dual allegiance: Latin, but surrounded by Slavic nations.

Gabriela’s testimonial confirms the above, and it is representative amongst the high-skilled Romanians, who embrace diversity.

*Claudia: Which nationalities do you find it easier to get on with?*

*Gabriela: It is obvious, with Italians and Spaniards (...) They are more open. At least the Italians, I think they are exactly like us (...). And the Spaniards are always ready to party and always open towards all nationalities. I think they are the closest to us. I worked at some point with Bulgarians... Of course, the people from East are, without doubt, the easiest to approach. Again, I got on the best with two Polish women (...).*

While the professionals are very eagerly acceptant of social diversity and all that it entails, the low-skilled Romanians tend to be rather disinclined to embrace diversity. Many of the low-skilled participants interviewed were surprised at my living with French and English people in Paris and London during my fieldwork. A Romanian woman who was working in a Romanian ethnic shop in London, around the Colindale area, asked me if I was not afraid to live with English people. Although I asked her what she meant by that, my question remained unanswered. This attitude was not uncommon amongst the low-skilled workers, who show their unwillingness to interact with those of different backgrounds, based on various prejudices.

Living with Romanians, in an area of London with one of the highest densities of Romanian immigrants may bring her closer to home and ultimately, she can feel at home abroad. She is able to have the same routine she used to have back in the country of origin whilst speaking in her mother tongue. Even more so, due to internalised hostility towards Romanians in the press, she may feel unwelcome in areas heavily populated by British people, which justifies her desire to live

comfortably in a Romanian enclave. She creates her own space of belonging, a bubble in which she feels protected from the hostility she would otherwise be exposed to, by interacting with British people (see also McGhee et al. 2015 for a similar argument regarding Poles in Southampton). Unsurprisingly, a number of those living in these areas seldom venture outside of these areas, and very rarely do they go to the city centre.

As is the case with post-accession Poles in London (see Ryan 2011), it is worth noting that high-skilled Romanians, who are competent English speakers, do not live in the popular Romanian areas. Interestingly, while in the British context the rejection of encounters with British people was referred to numerous times by the low-skilled Romanians, in the French context; this was noted by both high-skilled and low-skilled Romanians.

Other than rejecting interactions with French/British people, many Romanians emphasised their dissociation from the host country by reinforcing the education and work superiority of Romanian immigrants.

Ethnicity reflecting ethnic belonging peaks in the following extract. Gheorghe had spent over forty years in Britain, and was married to a British woman, while being immersed in the Romanian community from N-W London through his professional activity.

*But us, the Romanians, we will escape this blaming crisis, because we have hardworking people... We are fit in body and mind. The children are top pupils in any English school. (...) So they have started to understand that we have value. We respect their traditions, we respect their laws.*

Gheorghe's evaluation of Romanian children as top pupils in English schools is achieved by indirectly denigrating British children, whose skills are disparaged. The social and psychological 'value' of the Romanian community is perceived to becoming greater through the medium of the children who integrate well in schools. However, this stands in stark contrast with current studies, which have found that Eastern European pupils perform below national average in English schools (Tereshchenko and Archer 2014), due to their low levels of English language.

Like Gheorghe many other respondents commented on the hardworking nature of Romanian people in order to erect boundaries between themselves and those perceived as not deserving to inhabit the same space as them.

Awareness of stigmatisation on the basis of a tarnished reputation, lead to Romanians' adopting at the least indifferent and at the most negative discourses towards the majority, implicitly inflating their Romanian ethnicity. Indeed, by understanding the normative aspects of the culture of the host society, immigrants

may choose to alienate themselves from this culture. However, not all interviewees were open to creating new friendships with co-nationals. Many detached from their Romanianess in order to conceal their stigmatisation.

## **Suppression of Romanian ethnicity**

Romanians are well aware of their stigmatisation by the local population. By engaging with the dominant group, acting like them and reproducing negative discourses targeting Romanians, they dissociate themselves from other Romanians with the intention of becoming part of the local community. The next two subsections illustrate two approaches Romanians use which deflate their ethnicity and highlight their bond to the host country: embracing sameness with the mainstream and showing fragmented solidarity towards the co-nationals.

### **Embracing sameness**

While high-skilled Romanians in both destinations generally did not refuse to declare their nationality (although some of them tried to subtly hide it during job interviews as described in the first section of the chapter), low-skilled migrants seems more concerned about this. Mia, a coffee shop owner in East London, details the interactions with her customers:

*There are many racists here. (...) They come [to the coffee shop], "Wow, it is so pretty, the food is so good, but where is the accent from?" And when I used to tell them that I am Romanian, everything totally changed (...). And many times, (...) I lie and say I am Hungarian.*

Similarly, a participant's husband from Paris, who was a Romanian of Hungarian ethnicity (although not in the possession of a Hungarian identification card), declared that, when asked, he prefers to say that he is Hungarian because "there are no Hungarian beggars on Champs Elysées". He cherishes silent and administrative-only manifestations of his ethnicity, such as Romanian identity documents when needed, and rejects overt ethnic displays.

Other respondents, such as Ciprian from Paris, declared that during social encounters, they do not immediately reject Romanianess, but they first ensure that the interlocutor has a good opinion of them and only then decide to inform them about their nationality.

*If there are people I want to engage with, who want to know me first as a human being, and then as a Romanian, (...) I give them other answers, (...) at the end I tell them where I am from. Because it completes who I am.*

Like Mia, Ciprian purposively chooses to outwardly minimise the significance of Romanian nationality with the intention of being treated as equal by his French counterparts. Inwardly, his Romanianess is of high significance for him, as “it completes who I am”.

Other Romanians, like Loredana and her husband (Cornel) chose to keep a low profile. Despite having spent over 14 years in France, their (until recently) undocumented status, as well as a lack of French language skills, gave them with an understanding of their social position in the French space.

*We have been through many things here, in France (...). And we have got used to this way of living, that I do not take [things] personally anymore. We are in a foreign country, and we try (...) not to stand out, through our way of being... In the past we were speaking French very badly and we were standing out... And now, you don't have the accent... (...) But you know their mentality (...). And you try to integrate, not to stand out, you know? There is nothing else you can do about it.*

Here, Loredana understands her social location as a foreigner in France as holding a lower status than the French citizens, who are in their own country: “We are in a foreign country, that's how we should be”. Thus, she experiences the demarcation of spaces of belonging which she cannot be a part of. By keeping a low profile, she tries not to be in the spotlight, which seemed more difficult in the past due to her and her husband's poor language skills. This has been found amongst other communities, such as Brazilians in London (Evans et al. 2007) or immigrants in the Czech Republic (Tollarová 2011).

As their language skills improved, they could communicate freely and thus were able to access information about the place of residence and interact with the locals, which increases their levels of social and economic integration (see Kaushik et al. 2016 for an overview). Their language skills enable them to be involved in verbal exchanges with the locals, and consequently being exposed to their thoughts, and mindsets. This allows them to know how to act in the foreign land and transform the space into a familiar location. Nevertheless, although she considers that they have acquired good French language skills, their foreign accent still acts as a barrier and labels them as foreigners. Indeed, this is congruent with Creese (2010)'s and Akomolafe (2013)'s conclusions, who understand accent discrimination as a source of excluding and marginalising immigrants (but see Colic-Peisker and Hlavac (2014) for a counter argument).

Another tactic, commonly used by high-skilled Romanians, which allowed them to ‘blend in’ the mainstream, was that of not taking jokes or negative discourses

regarding Romanians personally. Cosmin, who works in the London based banking sector, after having studied in Germany and Switzerland, is of the opinion that 'playing along' and not being offended by jokes regarding the Roma, is facilitated by him not being represented by his Romanian ethnic identity.

*[At work] we are mainly men. The jokes we make are not very PC. They say things about the gypsies, I tell them that the Scots are cheap. (...) But I always play along. I mean... because I do not feel targeted by these things. If the fact that you are Romanian represents 90% per cent from who you are, then, clearly, every single minor thing someone says about Romanians affects you directly.*

Cosmin's story stands in stark contrast with that of Ciprian's, for whom being Romanian completed his identity puzzle. In contrast, Cosmin does not consider himself solely represented by his Romanian identity, which facilitates his acceptance of jokes conflating Romas and Romanians. By renouncing his difference and capitalising on the similarities between himself and the mainstream, he considers himself immersed in British culture and thus included in the dominant space.

In order to develop a strong sense of who they are, people need to know which elements make up their identity, which elements they are represented by, such as language, ethnicity and place belongingness. In contrast, those who question their sense of place belongingness may do so because they do not have a strong sense of who they are. This may be prompted by the idea that there are "a range of spaces, places, locales and identities that we feel we do not, and cannot belong to" (Anthias 2008:8).

Most of the negative discourses the participants refer to are related to the Roma minority. By not taking personally these discussions which cause amusement, they dissociate themselves from the Roma. Suspecting the other as a bad citizen, permits Romanians to position themselves against them. Indeed, the good citizen "is a citizen who suspects rather than is suspected" (Ahmed 2000:28). As such, they can achieve recognition by becoming insiders by blaming the Roma (which is explored in Chapter Six).

The participants dwindle away the interlocutors' fear of difference through common conversational topics and humour, and thus by passing as non-Romanians discursively. In parallel, while adopting a new ethnicity, they distance themselves punctually from their Romanian ethnicity and claim acceptance and belonging into the mainstream. This form of "ethnic switching" (Nagel 1995) happens when people who previously identified themselves as Romanian, change indirectly to a different

ethnicity. Nevertheless, 'going native' has to be validated by the majority. The participants need to be part of social structures, and to engage in friendships with the French/British in order to transcend their position and eventually be seen as natives. In the process, relations of power are secured through a process of destabilisation, put in place by the native, who perceives differences and thus ensures their power in social encounters (Ahmed 2000:125).

'Ethnic switching' was not only alluded to as being enhanced by the participants (admittedly because of social pressure), but also as an assimilating process imposed upon them by the members of the host country, in particular the French nationals.

Ciprian, a builder in Paris for two years, illustrates that while he was admitted into the French 'home' by French colleagues; his belongingness was questioned on the basis of his 'non-French' practices:

*I've been asked by fully fledged French people "If you live here, why don't you speak French?" So I was asked to do things which meant assimilation. "Why don't you think, it is also your home". (...) I was asked "What are you doing tomorrow?" "I'll go to the church, as usual". "Why would you?" So you want me to be French, but you want me the way you are. (...) Your liberty to be who you want to be is breeched.*

His poor French and religious practices meant that he could not be accepted into the French mainstream unless he conformed to the rules of the French 'homogenous' community. The homogeneity of the nation is based on "forms of living, through personal histories and everyday routines and consumption" (Byrne 2002:26), and only those who become similar can be treated as similar (Brubaker 2001:534). Luiza, another participant from Paris, alluded to the notion of imposed sameness coining the French etiquette of greeting by kissing on the cheek both men and women: "At work they understood that I don't kiss and we don't kiss. [A work colleague] told me 'I know that in Romania you don't kiss, but you need to become French, so we kiss every morning' (laughs)".

Romanians' perceived differences, as church goers, lack of fluency in French and not indulging in kissing represent the boundaries which prevent them from assuming the place French people enjoy in their homeland. The requirement to free themselves from their Romanianess, are experiences as 'domestication' in order for the participants to embrace normality. In the process, the boundaries of respondents' familiarity are shifted.

These examples show Romanians' claims to membership of the host country through their self-ascription of characteristics perceived as belonging to the

dominant group. The next section explores Romanians' lack of ethnic solidarity as a response to their tarnished image in the destination context.

### **Ethnic isolation**

This last section of this chapter continues to engage with Romanians' approach to contesting stigma by discarding their ethnic identity through rejecting interaction with conationals. Consequently, their ethnic solidarity is undermined by the negative press and stigmatisation they are subject to, as they become "confronted by stereotypes and versions of their own ethnicity reflected back to them" (Ryan 2010:365).

Numerous participants declared trying to demarcate themselves from the Romanian community, which does not enjoy a good reputation since, more often than not, it is reduced to the Roma minority, beggars or thieves. Many discourses revolved around the bad behaviour of fellow Romanians, which meant that the bad press of Romanians' was based on genuine reasons and thus deserved. Avoidance of conationals meant that they were not sharing similar characteristics with the 'failed citizens'. Nevertheless, this strategy reinforces the significance of ethnicity negatively, as it reproduces the negative attributes and stereotypes regarding the Romanian community and it maintains the salience of ethnicity as a way of choosing who is allowed entry and who is refused entry into a group (Moroşanu and Fox 2013:440).

Regardless of their views on the mainstream and ethnic minorities, many Romanians point to a lack of ethnic social networks. This is not uncommon amongst immigrants (see Amit and Bar-Lev 2015). The difficulty encountered by some participants to make new friends (amongst the dominant population) drive some of them to turn back to members of the Romanian diaspora, although they had not initially planned to do so, as Iulia admits:

*I did not want to be in touch with Romanians when I arrived here (...). This group of Romanian friends I have, we got together out of need, I mean, (...) we do not necessarily have friends, [so we] meet and throw a party, go to a show.*

Romanian media continuously reports foreign articles and programmes, which cast Romanians in an unfavourable light<sup>9</sup>. Consequently, Romanians' self-awareness

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<sup>9</sup> Article in The Daily Mail entitled 'Romanians are seven times more likely to be arrested than British people' published in Adevarul (2013) [http://adevarul.ro/international/europa/daily-mail-romani-britanici-1\\_52aa9080c7b855ff56ab4d99/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/international/europa/daily-mail-romani-britanici-1_52aa9080c7b855ff56ab4d99/index.html); article published in Evenimentul Zilei (2015) about the programme 'The Romanians are Coming' broadcasted on Channel 4,

regarding their racialised position within the British and French societies deters them from socialising with co-ethnics. Indeed, many Romanians interviewed adopt the Western rhetoric and stigmatise their co-nationals with the intention of setting themselves apart from the stereotypes associated with the Romanian community. This is not uncommon amongst migrants (see King and Mai 2009 on Albanians in Italy, or Ryan 2010 with reference to Poles in London). Similarly, Toruńczyk-Ruiz (2008:61)'s research on Polish migrants in the Netherlands suggests that Polish migrants in Europe represent "a new category of individualistic migrants", who avoid attending formal Polish groups and institutions. This does not mean that the participants in this study avoid Romanian shops; rather, these are functional and mundane interactions in order to buy products, rather than seeking friendships (see also Gill 2010:1166).

Many Romanians from London expressed a feeling of aversion regarding the areas they were living in on the basis that it had too many Romanians or foreign looking people living there. This was mainly opined by low-skilled Romanians who were living in the predominantly Romanian enclaves, on the outskirts of the capital city. Low-skilled Romanians are more likely to be exposed to and/or aware of illegal activities of other Romanians, such as exploitative employers, the existence of an underground market of fake passports and certificates allowing individuals to work in the building industry. The professionals interviewed are less likely to be knowledgeable about such information, which explains why overall, they were found to be more trustable towards their co-ethnics. However, several professionals kept themselves apart from going to events organised by Romanian institutions. Ina has lived for seven years in Paris, where she joined her Romanian husband. She currently works in the health insurance sector. She reports that she has already attended various events at the Romanian Cultural Institute, but although she enjoyed some of the shows, others were highly disappointing, as she details below:

*[After a Christmas carol show], the Christmas dinner was horrible, everybody was pushing to eat... (...) Generally speaking, I always think I will come across a Romanian who will try to ask me lots of questions, and I hate it. (...) And I know that if you go into a community like this, especially with people you do not know, you will get the eternal question 'and what do you do for a living?'*

The inquisitiveness Romanians display towards their co-nationals' lives causes Ina to refrain herself from celebrating such events and ultimately, to suppress her

affiliation to Romanian group and culture. This is not to say that she does not interact with Romanians. On the contrary, all her close friends are Romanians, with French people maintaining only mundane social relations at work. It is rather meeting new Romanians she is reluctant to do.

Sandra and Luiza from Paris have the same view. Moreover, as they point out, given the relatively small geographical distance between France and Romania, they would much rather go to Romania to socialise with their friends rather than attending such events with participants whom they may not relate to.

*Claudia: Do you go to the Romanian Cultural Institute?*

*Sandra: We said it is not good to befriend all the Romanians from France.*

*Luiza: Yes, it is best to be selective. I do not like it, there are very many Romanians, and I have met some at work, because we have a group, and we go out on Friday amongst Romanians, and some of them are very..., some of them did not come from the outset, because they think it is degrading to go out with Romanians... They barely say 'hello', very quietly. (...) So that no one notices.*

*Sandra: The thing is that if you came here, it is not as if you wanted to break off with what is happening in Romania. (...) [But if] I am in France, I try to connect with French people. I miss Romania, I get on a plane and in two hours I am there.*

The above testimonial is significant as it sees the Romanian mal-être, which is the shame they experience at holding a nationality too often associated with negative elements, from a personal and a community angle. As Sandra states, the refusal to interact with other Romanians is a two way process: the two participants want to reduce to a minimum the interactions with other Romanians, whilst admitting, that other Romanians from their work environment do the same, which, reinforces their desire to set themselves apart from people who are ashamed to be Romanian. At the same time, dedicating time to Romanian events, is seen as a waste of time which could be dedicated to immersing themselves into French culture, by getting closer to French people. Nevertheless, connecting to the dominant groups is not always without its problematic aspects, as this chapter has shown.

There are also respondents who seem to be embracing both cultures, although they put limits on this. The next excerpt is from the interview with Ionela, a Responsible Investment Advisor, with a Scottish partner, who praises all the forms diversity takes in London: people diversity, culinary diversity, as well as the diversity of daily experiences she is very fond of.

*Ionela: First of all, my friends are Romanian and I already feel that I have this connection to Romania.*

*Claudia: You do not need to develop it even more.*

*Ionela: No, I do not. I mean, I do not want to either, maybe it is an evasive answer in a way, but what I like a lot in London is peoples' diversity (...). If I were to dedicate myself solely to the Romanian community, I would miss out on diversity. (...) The food diversity you find here, I think it is fantastic. (...) And I do not know, the diversity of life experiences, maybe it sounds vague, but in general, peoples' diversity you meet here.*

In the above statement, Ionela is very clear about her relationship with both the diversity to be found in London, as well as her relationship with Romanian related events and people from London. By spending too much time focused on her Romanian side, she would be missing out on the variety of people and experiences she can take advantage of in the host destination, which are inexistent in the Romanian context. As such, she practices what Glick Schiller et al. (2011:402) call 'cosmopolitan sociability', which consists of "forms of competence and communication skills that are based on the human capacity to create social relations of inclusiveness and openness to the world". Ionela's practices of 'cosmopolitan sociability' are reinforced by her agency in deciding to refrain from performing her Romanianess by dedicating herself to the Romanian community (being surrounded by solely Romanian friends, attending Romanian festivities and going to Romanian restaurants). Instead, she is actively performing her cosmopolitan identity by deciding to embrace the diversity she not only witnesses, but also embodies in London.

This section showed Romanians' strategies of coping with stigmatisation. Low-skilled Romanians appear to be trying to identify with the mainstream or other ethnicities (such as Hungarian, but also Spanish) rather than their ethnic social grouping in an aim to mitigate the effects of racialisation during social interactions with the mainstream. However, they are part of the 'social fabric' of Romanian nation in the sense that they live in Romanian areas, cook Romanian food, work with Romanian co-nationals. By contrast, high-skilled Romanians are more likely to reject the Romanian 'social fabric', but are vocal in the affirmation of their Romanian ethnicity during social interactions with the dominant group. The salience of ethnicity was reinforced through these acts, which showed that Romanian ethnic identity was deflated in order to assume another, stronger, identity.

## Conclusion

This chapter sought to determine if and how Romanians' senses of belonging to Romania and the country of residence vary according to their everyday encounters in the host country. The first section explored Romanians' social encounters in the public, parochial and private spaces in London and Paris, and investigated how inclusion and exclusion into the mainstream operate and how interethnic interactions may occur. It argued that low-skilled Romanians in both contexts manifest a strong sense of relational belonging towards Romania both at the point of arrival in the host country and at the time of the interview, which could be due to the lack of significant mundane and meaningful interactions with the mainstream. On the contrary, high-skilled Romanians appear to have a strong sense of belonging towards the host country reaffirmed as a result of positive mundane interactions.

The next two sections unpacked Romanians' narratives of ethnic belonging to the country of origin and the host country by depicting the variations in Romanian ethnic identification as a result of their daily interactions in the host country. The investigation of the inflation and deflation of Romanians' self-identifications provided insights into the webs of belonging they inhabit, and subsequently the nature of attachment towards the sending and receiving contexts. Their self-identifications shed light on the attachments migrants develop towards both societies. Romanian respondents, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, socialised with Romanian coethnics and highlighted the professional and educational abilities of the Romanian diasporic group, which reinforced the salience of ethnical belonging. Indeed, feelings of discrimination increase their ethnic identification and awareness and result in a reduction of the feelings of commonality with the majority (see also Platt 2014). Furthermore, the interviews with both low and high-skilled Romanians revealed strategies of coping with stigma, which took the form of their suppression of Romanian ethnicity. This was achieved by trying to become invisible in the host country. Amongst low-skilled participants, this was achieved by pretending to hold a different nationality, or keeping a low profile. In contrast, high-skilled Romanians hoped to attain invisibility by reproducing the dominant negative discourses about Romanians, such as jokes conflating the Roma and Romanians or by avoiding public interactions with fellow Romanians, which would otherwise bring them face-to-face with the 'ethnically familiar' they are trying to avoid. In contrast, low-skilled Romanians are likely to suppress their Romanian ethnicity during social encounters with the mainstream.

To put it differently, low-skilled Romanians appear to be part of the Romanian 'social fabric' despite social attempts to internalise their Romanian ethnicity.

Conversely, high-skilled Romanians are likely to consider themselves part of the 'social fabric' of the host country while at the same time verbalising their Romanian ethnicity. Unsurprisingly, some participants highlighted both the inflating and the deflating of ethnic identity, dependant on the situation, which reaffirms the fluidity of ethnicity (see also Moroşanu and Fox 2013). However, it seems that it was more likely for the low-skilled to reinforce their ethnicity (with exceptions). This was likely explained by, that whilst the high-skilled could more easily negotiate or opt out of stigmatisation due to their socio-cultural capital, this was highly unlikely for the low-skilled participants. Moreover, many of the high-skilled had experienced multiple migrations, which stressed their cosmopolitan identity rather than purely Romanian, or allowed them to better identify with the host country.

To conclude, this chapter highlighted the importance of positive mundane social interactions in migrants' everyday lives in the forging of a sense of belonging to the host society. It further showed that Romanian ethnic belonging and social belonging towards the host country can coexist, as ethnic identification is not always a predictor of relational belonging. Indeed, Romanian who endorsed social distance from Romanian ethnic groups reported high levels of ethnic identification. The fluid understanding of ethnicity allows for an understanding of the way Romanians' attachments to sending and host contexts as well as their identities oscillate. Romanians' ethnicity becomes either salient or insignificant as a reaction to encounters with the mainstream, in which they have become aware of their stigmatised status.

In parallel, it showed that the negotiation of ethnic belonging happens as a result of social interaction through which they understand their racialised status in the social hierarchies of the host country. Building upon Raymond Williams' 'structure of feeling', Schein (1999:363-64) argues that "people not only position themselves vis-à-vis modernity through multifarious practices but also struggle to reposition themselves, sometimes through deploying the very codes of the modern that have framed them as its others". Applied to Romanian migrants, this translates to a shift in the nature of aspirations. Therefore, if at the beginning of their migratory trajectory, they were driven by a desire to fulfil the aspirational home and thus achieve Romanian modernity (Chapter Four), in the host country they understand their precarious status through social interactions which activate their aspiration of 'relational belonging'.

As such, they embark on a journey towards recognition and acceptance within the host country, which takes place relationally and institutionally, as the rest of the thesis unveils. In the process, racialisation in the host country changes the focus from Romanian modern aspiration to host country modern aspirations. Aspirations

to modernity are reconstructed through migration. Modernity becomes understood as racial domination and thus superiority of the mainstream, and the only way to embrace it is by performing it.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Questioned Europeans. Light skins, dark status.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter sets out to examine how Romanians from London and Paris are invested in whiteness and the inconsistencies this creates when they realise their white European identities are questioned. It explores how the participants' relation with the wider host society is shaped by being exposed to ethnicised relations and structures despite not questioning their position prior to emigration. A key aspect to this is the representations of the Roma in the Romanian context, which are grounded in societal practices of stereotypes and discrimination. The Roma are portrayed as bearing the othering markers, placing them in ethnicised structures.

The first section analyses the often tortuous relationship between Romania and Western Europe typified by Romania's wish to belong to the Western space, which often takes the form of constant appreciation and appropriation of occidental socio-cultural models. It engages with Romanians' admiration of the West and the national anxieties about Romania due to its non-Western, uncivilised and thus 'not white enough' profile. Romanians are often labelled as second-class Europeans; due to their cultural and economic precariousness. While Romanians are phenotypically white, they are often not accepted as members of the same race by the members of the country they reside in. How they claim whiteness in relation to the white Western European space is explored in later sections.

The second section engages with how gender and professional occupations intersect with whiteness to produce different experiences for the respondents. It differentiates between symbolic and financial elements which are relevant in the societal evaluation of Romanians' whiteness. In France, Romanians' inclusion in the white space is experienced culturally, while in Britain it manifests itself more economically.

The purpose of the third section of the chapter is to reflect on Romanians' claims to whiteness on the basis of their white European heritage. Incidences of social relations between non-Roma and Roma Romanians in Romania are largely in-existent due to enduring segregation and social distance. Nonetheless, in Western Europe, Romanians' whiteness is constructed through racialised practices and discourses regarding the Romas and visible minorities. By becoming oppressors of others, the Romanians aspire to be allowed entry into the white space of the host country.

This chapter argues that anxieties due to the absence of a nation-building project for the Romanian nation, are confronted through whitening strategies which have racialised, classed and gendered dimensions. Through the enactment of strategies which aim at both racially marginalising and concealing the presence of those constructed as Others; and socio-culturally elevating strategies regarding their own persona, Romanians become 'whitened', contributing to Romanian nation-building which aims to position the country of origin in a modern and thus civilised light.

## **Romania and the West: Tales of anxious nationalism**

This section frames Romanians' anxieties and worries about the nation-building process. This revolves around past and present insecurities about Romania's socio-political status in the world as well as the bad public image Romanians have in relation to migration issues, which prevent Romania from attaining modernity.

### **National civilising anxieties**

The domination of the West in Romania dates back to the WWI, when France supported Romania's territorial claims hoping to extend its influence into Eastern Europe, which was implemented through cultural schemes such as the sponsoring of French-speaking Jewish schools. Some regions, such as Bessarabia (which had been a free territory for longer), received applications from individuals to work in the education sector. One of the applicants for such a teaching position was a graduate of the Sorbonne, who taught Italian and French. He argued that knowledge of French language would bring russified Romanians closer to Romanian culture and language, while proximity with the Italian language would reaffirm Latinity in the attempt to outstrip Slavism. In the Romanian imaginary, the Latin origin of the national language serves a dual purpose: to assert their uniqueness in Eastern Europe and to claim membership to the neo-Latin family (Trandafoiu 2013:31).

In other regions, such as Transylvania, which had cultural affinities with Hungary and Germany, France failed at enjoying cultural influence. Here, German and English newspapers were published, and the youth would go to study in Austria or Germany, rather than France as in the rest of Romania (Livezeanu 1995:138). Socio-cultural norms were thus imposed by the elite and political class (both Romanian and Western) in order to create the nation mono-culturally and stress its Latin origins and proximity to the West.

During WWI, while covering the Eastern front, John Reed reported from the Romanian capital: "If you want to infuriate a Romanian, you need only to speak of his country as a Balkan state. 'Balkan!' he cries. 'Balkan! Romania is not a Balkan state. How dare you confuse us with half-savage Greeks or Slavs! We are Latins'"

(Todorova 1997:46). This is consistent with other authors, such as Antohi (2002, paragraph 13), who highlighted Romanians' need to substantiate their superiority by distancing themselves from their neighbours, while at the same time connecting the country to the West: "from the first decade of the nineteenth century on, [Romania] has distanced itself symbolically from the Balkans. This distinction (...) is consistent with the overall Romanian (...) symbolic shift to the West".

In Romanian society, the West was often associated with France, which was seen as a model of civilisation. France became a model for Romania with young intellectuals leaving for France as early as the 1830s and the political, judicial and administrative systems copied the French framework. The continued presence of a monarchy in Romania was the only element which did not match with the Latin sister. This led the intellectuals to compare it to Belgium (which is a smaller country than France, but still a monarchy and largely francophone), and Romania started to call itself "the Belgium of the Orient" (Boia 2015:214). Of interest is the reference to both the West and the East, indicating that Romania was positioned geographically and culturally at the crossroads between two camps: the Occident and the Orient. In 1989, after the fall of the Communist ideology, the transition towards capitalism was accompanied by a recreation of the relationship between state and nation (Brubaker 1996). Nationalistic discourses targeted the Roma, a minority which lacked political representation and whose position was that of 'imperfect citizens' (Sigona and Monasta 2006).

Romanians' obsession with Western models of nation-building is reflected in contemporary politics in the 2014 election of the current Romanian president, Klaus Iohannis, a member of the German minority, married with no children and of Lutheran religion. His rival, Ponta, attacked Iohannis for not being a true Romanian:

*It's nothing bad about Mr Iohannis being a German ethnic, but no one can accuse me of being a Romanian ethnic. We live in Romania after all and I am proud to be Romanian. (...) It's nothing bad about Iohannis being a neo-protestant, but no one can reproach me of being an Orthodox* (Bieber 2014).

Moreover, Ponta's nationalist campaign, which drew on his solely Romanian roots, was formulated around his electoral slogan "Proud to be Romanian and Orthodox". In the run-up to the presidential election, Iohannis campaigned as a pro-European who wanted to ensure the rule of law and a pro-Western approach in foreign policy. His German ethnicity, which is a testimony of his proximity with the West, allowed him to transcend the minority-majority cleavage, which would not have been possible for any of the two largest minorities from Romania, the Roma and the Hungarians.

By having an ethnic German ruling the country, Romanians feel the socio-cultural distance between them and the European Union has the potential to diminish. In a country where Romanians are ashamed of their national identity due to internal corruption scandals and the bad image Romania has abroad, Klaus Iohannis won the elections on the basis that he was not a 'pure' Romanian and consequently better than his Romanian rival. Klaus Iohannis' election was seen as a victory for those who voted for a more culturally modern, civilised and a more European Romania.

The search for non-Romanian models is reinforced by Romanians' strong beliefs acquired through movement and increased proximity to Western Europe that Romanian products and services cannot possibly compete with their Western equivalents. This was obvious during my last trip to Romania in December 2015, where I was able to see numerous adverts for various products which were advertised as having Western origins (such as Swedish or American beauty products and medical equipment) and thus assumed to be of superior quality.

The dominance of Western Europe is communicated through technology, culture and history (imperialism). Ion, who lived and worked in Greece for seven years before coming to the UK ten years ago, justifies his presence in London as being in the best interest for his son, who was one year old when his parents arrived in Britain. Ion believes that for his son, growing up in the UK is marginally better than Romania. He points to the advances of Britain:

*And I had to choose between my success in life and that of my child, you understand? The balance was leaning to his side, (...), with the idea in mind to help him stay in a society which is more... more, more. Because you cannot compare it, from all points of view: economic, social, historical (...). Although we find it difficult to blend in and get absorbed by [this] country.*

This quote shows the father's relinquishment in order for his child to have a better future in a country which is viewed to be economically, socially and historically superior to Romania. The sacrifices he is making for his son's future are of a dual nature, practical and symbolic. Firstly, as a builder in London, Ion barely makes ends meet. In Romania, he would enjoy a better quality of life as he would work in his brother's company, earn a lot more money and would have a company car. Secondly, his presence would not be questioned in Romania the way it is in Britain, where he is deemed as unfit and thus not allowed to belong to the community. The quest for modernity triggers feelings of affective unease.

Britain and France are often viewed as modern and civilised utopias by the participants. Many of them negatively contrast Romania, which lacks material

prosperity, beautiful architecture and public law, with the host country. The articulation of Romania as unmodern through its absent civilisation happens through portraying the rest of Europe as modern. Anxieties about Romania's lack of modernity, which arise from the feelings of inferiority with regards to the West, and superiority with regards to Romania, are expressed through critical discourses. The inferiority and superiority complexes arising from perpetual comparisons between countries originates from a profound "diasporic reflexivity", which refers to "identity reflections as a result of the coexistence of the self within multiple spaces of interaction" (Trandafoiu 2013:23).

Romania's (lack of) modernity is constructed in relation to other modernities, which are taken as a benchmark. Since there is no popular understanding of a Romanian modern nationhood, it is constructed (and at times amplified) by comparisons with the modernity of foreign lands. This may indicate that contemporary Romanian nationhood is the product of diasporic imaginings of modernity operating transnationally, through the impingement of Western European values and norms, while simultaneously denying the existence of Romanian elements deemed 'unfit' for meeting modern (Western) standards, such as the presence of the Roma and a backward Romanian lifestyle. The intertwined connection between centre and periphery is evident: it is only by being excluded from Western modernity that Romania can ascertain its missing elements and can, consequently, imagine the creation of a modern state. The penetration of modernity into Romania happens through diaspora.

Other responses to this included Sonia and Aurelian's, who summarise their imaginings of French peoples' pride in their heritage which drives them to share their knowledge as a way to raise interest in their culture amongst other people. This stands in stark contrast with Romanians' lack of self-worth and national pride

*If you don't know a French product, you will find somebody, in any patisserie or bakery, who will explain to you very proudly what that is and where it comes from. Nationalism has both positive and negative parts. It is a good thing, seen through the eyes of a Romanian, because when we go back (...), we are effectively shocked because nobody is proud of their country, Romania, anymore.*

The French nation is imagined to be represented by 'positive nationalism', reflected by national pride. In contrast, the Romanian community is imagined to display a tainted attitude towards their national produce, which translates into complexes of inferiority. As such, anxieties about Romanian nationhood, alluded to by the use of "shocked" are mirrored by the 'decline of hope' in an era in which people deny the responsibility of caring for the others, and thus caring for the nation (Hage 2003:47).

During the Romanian nation-building process, the French example of nation formation was taken as an example by the intelligentsia. Similarly, at present, Romanian immigrants look up to the members of the host country whose expressions of national pride keep restating the nation. Whereas French whiteness is safeguarded by national pride, Romanian investments in whiteness are framed by anxieties of nationhood and the right of its nationals to worry about it. Romanians' narratives of 'aspirational whiteness' are grounded in apprehension about the absence of appreciation of the nation's cultural capital. Depicting the exact elements which contribute to Romania's 'backwardness' allows the interviewees to instil some faith in a future civilising project.

Thus, whiteness becomes an aspirational identity which is constructed in the process of longing for the white space. It becomes a "fantasy position and a field of accumulating whiteness" which is enacted through the actual longing for its privilege (Hage 1998:58), as well as through racialised everyday practices (see Byrne 2006 a,b).

As an imaginary goal, whiteness is performed through the deployment of various strategies which allow Romanians to become whitened and in the process, for Romania to become modern, Western, and the bearer of modernity and civilisation. Whiteness is not innate for the participants; thus, Romanians in this study are not initially white during their encounters with the dominant mainstream. Rather, their whiteness is gradually amassed through multiple strategies, such as outward looking (by discriminating against the Roma and ethnic minorities) or inward looking, by highlighting their personal capital. Romanians are whitened rather than being read as white. As Hunter (2010:454) puts it, "[i]t is because whiteness is accumulated as a form of material and symbolic capital that it is better to think in terms of *whitened* rather than white people".

Whiteness is a 'fantasy position' often associated with Western European expansionist practices (Hage 1998). While European whiteness became the epitome of civilisation, the colonies became racialised. In the absence of a colonial past, Romanian nation-building is anchored in strategies through which the citizens become whitened individually rather than as a nation, through racialized, classed and gendered practices, rather than through colonial legacies. Whiteness becomes an aspiration to Western civilisation, an imaginary position rendered tangible through the individual enactment and display of whiteness rather than through a public national strategy.

The negative media portrayal and the absence of strategies from the Romanian government aimed at counteracting the hostile environment created by British and French public rhetoric, force many interviewees to rely on their own persona to

handle the negative reputation. Consequently, teaching French/British nationals Romanian board games, inviting them to Romanian cultural events, or to Romania itself, were often listed as cultural facilitators aimed at improving the natives' opinion about Romanians.

Lavinia, a London-based engineer, explains in great detail that inviting British friends to Romania for her wedding to her Australian fiancé had an underlining objective, to show them a different Romania from the one unfavourably depicted by British tabloids.

*The reason for me inviting a lot of friends from here to Romania was to be a sort of unofficial ambassador, and to actually transform them into Romanian ambassadors. So when they come back to Britain, they will start talking about Romania in a different way. I want them to know that it's a beautiful country, not full of gypsies.*

Most Romanian participants think of their everyday life in the receiving societies as having a political and transnational dimension. In a context where Romanian politicians do not face up to Romanians' situation abroad, they become honorary ambassadors determined to frame Romania in a modern light. Equally, this allows Lavinia to overcome the stigmatised condition associated with being Romanian by improving the image of Romania in Britain, which is often correlated with a low socio-economic status.

### **'Dirty Romanians': individual anxieties**

Eastern European countries are often grouped together according to ideas about civilisation and barbarity, in opposition to Western Europe (Garner 2007:63). Romania, often bundled together with the Balkan states, has been represented as the Other whose inhabitants "do not care to conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative by and for the civilised world" (Todorova 1997:3).

There are a multitude of studies which have engaged with the notion of hierarchies of whiteness of phenotypically white individuals who lack the economic and cultural capital to perform whiteness. In the US context, the racialisation of East Europeans was conspicuous at the beginning of the 20th century on the basis of cultural perceptions. In 1926, Serbo-Croatians were placed towards the bottom of a list of forty ethnic groups (above Negroes, Filipinos and Japanese) which white Americans were asked to rank according to their association with the members of the group. Above them were the Poles, who were placed close to the middle of the list. This convinced Barrett and Roediger (1997) to consider Eastern Europeans (as well as Catholic, Southern and Central Europeans) as 'in-between' people, by placing them above African Americans, who were paid less for similar jobs than

immigrants but below white Americans. Whiteness was not inhabited automatically by white Europeans, but approached gradually, as it was determined by cultural and political power, and not by skin colour (*ibid.*:9).

Likewise, Hartigan (1999) engages with the ways in which boundaries are erected between the white mainstream and the 'not quite white' others. He shows that whiteness is defined by the markings of class (determined by occupation, residential location and family history) in ways in which the lower-class is excluded from the privilege of hegemonic whiteness. Whiteness is performed through cultural capital and it is safeguarded by highlighting the perceived differences of those who are excluded from the privilege of whiteness. Hence, the social construction of whiteness rests on both cultural and socio-economic factors that mitigate Romanians' daily experiences in the host country.

Employment is one of the elements which characterises the construction of whiteness, as whiteness itself is imposed by white men in positions of power, who inhabit a privileged space characterised by white collar jobs. They represent an idealised labour force and embody whiteness, as well as dictating the intertwining of class and racial dynamics. This is what Roediger (2007) calls "the wages of whiteness", referring to the division of labour during the US industrial revolution, in which slavery was a key economic component and the blacks were perceived as 'anticitizens'. Not only was the conflation of race/labour evident, but white people who lost their jobs found themselves inhabiting the working class and thus being to some extent stripped of their whiteness. The stratification of citizens according to their race (in the US, but also in Romania, as discussed in Chapter Three with regards to the Roma) informs the nation-building narrative, which rests on the ascription of inferior characteristics to real or imagined phenotypical features which justify the manufactured institutional societal dominance of one population over a marginalised population (Stanfield 1985:161). Similarly, Thandeka (2007) shows how the 'good' white only exists in relation to a 'bad' white self, while at the same time the 'good' white's existence is undermined by the presence of the latter.

The past hierarchies are also salient in contemporary neoliberal times, during which the 'disposable' populations whom the state does not protect, but rather manages and controls, become racialised on the basis of their culture and are often perceived as backward (Lentin and Titley 2011). Modernity and culture have become the demarcation line which promulgates boundaries between 'West/East', 'good/evil' and 'us/them' (Lewis and Neal 2005:435). Immigration is often associated with cultural decay such as alcoholism, violence, the presence of gangs and thus lack of safety etc. and consequently the loss of 'community' (James 2014). In Britain, the securitisation of borders against the flow of immigrants was at the

heart of the Brexit campaign in order to keep precarious Eastern Europeans outside of the country. This was facilitated by the increasing influence of far-right politics such as UKIP, as well as a growing “white English victimisation” (Redcliff 2014:579).

The neoliberal project ensures that racial structures are enforced through policing for the good ‘we’ to be protected from the bad ‘other’, while at the same time rejecting any acknowledgment of racialisation, creating what Goldberg (2009) calls racism without race. Articulations of race and racism are banished from the public lexicon, with the West promoting itself as intrinsically non-racist. As such, increasing racialisation is not performed through race, but through class and cultural identifiers, a “less obvious and hidden place” (Kapoor 2013:1034).

The following quote typifies how a precarious social status operates in the social construction of whiteness. Ion works as a builder in London, where he has lived for over ten years.

*You, living every day with this fear and angst for what tomorrow brings, need to work every day. As long as the bread and the knife are in their hands, them, meaning the system, you do not really have a choice, but you have to keep going.*

His ‘un-whiteness’ is due to the precarious nature of his job, as reflected by the very powerful metaphor ‘the bread and knife are in their hands’. He is one of the precariat represented by the ‘flexiworkers’ (Standing 2009) who have a non-regular employment status. The subordination he feels with regards to ‘the system’ is due to the lack of job security and thus the uncertainty of life. Economic precarity triggers a spatial precarity, which is not determined by an institutional authorisation giving him permission to stay, but by his vulnerability in the British space.

Ion’s physical whiteness does not protect him from being subject to precarious jobs. “As long as the bread and the knife are in their hands” makes us think of the institution of slavery and the power in the hands of the system. This can be represented by employers and the British Government, which empower the immigrants through immigration documents and employment. Whiteness is seen as “the ultimate symbol of superiority” (Bonnett 2000:21), and its paradox consists of its physical availability to all Europeans, but its moral denial to those who are perceived as unable to carry it. Indeed, Ion is still marked as Romanian, a label which seems to be taking over his white identity. The ability to inhabit it is dictated by the financial means of those wishing to inhabit it. Whiteness involves power relations reflected by relations of dominance (Garner 2007:11) between the dominant and the domineering.

Economic precariousness also subverts the host country's membership and implicitly the acceptance into the normative space of whiteness. Ion is unable to obtain whiteness because whiteness is a "social ideal" which is associated with the European white race (Bonnett 2000:1-21) often with an imperialistic past. Since a British passport may symbolise one's attachment to the mainstream culture, the refusal of the British passport may be associated with a feeling of not belonging to the mainstream culture. Ion does not assume a British identity because his wish for one is counteracted by his negative experiences which have reminded him of his position in the British space. Below, Ion details the reasoning behind his decision not to naturalise: "It doesn't interest me. Will I get a better income if I apply? I need to pay £1,000-£1,500 to get it. And it is not because of the money, but... I don't know... Will that make me any whiter? Do you think so?"

Ion is a white skinned individual. His comment is not as much about his skin colour as it is about the privileged space he does not belong to. It is not because he shares the white skin colour of the people belonging to the British space that he anticipates entering whiteness upon naturalisation. Whiteness here is about power relations and about the agency he is deprived of. The reluctance to become British may be triggered by his understanding that poverty places you in a different social group nowadays in the same way as Victorian bourgeoisie associated the working class with non-whites in the XIXth and XXth century (see Bonnett 2000). Low-skilled Romanians see themselves marginalised and 'othered' because they fall under the 'poor' label, being therefore ashamed by the class they belong to. Ion understands this and as a result he cannot feel at home in a host country, although he has been there for ten years. His rejection of a British identity makes him inhabit a land where only "wandering souls" live, as he later explained it.

The 'passport of privilege' (Kalra et al. 2005) Ion holds as a member of the 'white race' allows him to move freely within the EU and live in a 'civilised' country. However, he is not willing to take this privilege one step further because he does not see himself fit for inhabiting the white space inhabited by British people, that 'community of value' (Anderson 2013). The difficulty for Romanians to fit into British society may be explained by the inability to reconcile their need to belong by developing a common understanding of the host country and also to preserve a certain sense of difference (Jovchelovitch 2007).

Race is an abstract signifier which separates groups socially, politically and economically on the basis of various positions such as ethnicity, religion nationality and skin colour. Despite the silencing of race from political discourses during neoliberal times, race is still the main element which creates the West in relation to the racialised other (Lentin 2008). This is evident in the French context, where the

ethnic component, is often perceived by the white French mainstream as low status. Anti-social behaviour has been at the forefront of actions attributed to Romanians and is the cause for their bad reputation. During our interview, a member of the association Café des Roumains, commented on the usage of the adjective 'Romanian' in France:

*[Romanian as a negative characteristic] has entered the vocabulary... The hashtag 'Romanian' (...) is used in contexts which have nothing to do with the nationality. During Eurovision [when the French came last], [the French] said 'we did it Romanian style', which means 'we begged [for votes]'.*

This opinion is shared by other respondents from Paris, who had already come across the word 'Romanian' being used in contexts such as 'dirty Romanian' ('sale Roumain'). In both cases, class is bound up with social identity and results from social practices which are attributed to Romanians, such as begging. Consequently, the word 'Romanian' has become a way for French people to describe undesirable activities which they would not normally attribute to French people. 'Dirty Romanian', which is similar to "white trash" (Wray 2006), is composed from a marker of social class, "dirty", and a marker of ethnicity, 'Romanian'. 'Dirty Romanian' refers to the low social position held by Romanian nationals in the French space as well as the threat they pose to the French mainstream due to their underclass. Trandafoiu (2013:129) reached a similar conclusion in her example of Romanians from Italy, where they were treated as "shitty Romanians". As well as racist public discourses, Sonia (Paris) gave me an account of the racist comments she faced when looking for a job. She used to work in Bucharest in the financial sector and relocated to Paris due to her husband's work. Although they are financially well off, she wanted to gain some experience in the French banking sector to complement her Romanian professional competencies.

After a couple of interviews for a position, she discovered that the job description and the salary (approximately €700 per month) were not equivalent to her experience. This led her to refuse the position, which turned out to be more of a placement than a job in banking. This came as a surprise to the interviewer, who asked his secretary to make sure that Sonia was "aware of the fact that being from Romania, she would not be able to earn a better salary in France". The same interviewer asked her during the job interview where she lives, and he was astonished when he found out that she was residing in a leafy Parisian suburb: "[You live in] Medon? How can you afford to live in Medon? It is not exactly a cheap place".

Although she adopts the kind of economic and symbolic capital that are meant to have recognition and value in the French society (she has a car, she is well

educated, her husband has a good job with a respectable French company and they live in a wealthy area of Paris), her discourse reflects the impossibility to move out from the margins of whiteness into the normative space of whiteness. There is a perceived mismatch between her social capital and her racial identity, which tends to be associated with low status by her interlocutor (see also Ong 1999). Ong (*ibid.*:89) argues that “symbolic capital reproduces the established social order and conceals relations of domination”. However, in these transnational movements, the migrants need to convert their economic capital into cultural capital in order to navigate the social norms of the host societies. The fact that Sonia “should be aware” of her Romanian origins points to the issue stopping her from being accepted on the French labour market: her nationality. Her educational background, her professional experience in finance, as well as the financial power represented by her assets do not facilitate her integration, which is overshadowed by her ethnicity.

Similarly, Marius, who is a student in Paris and works for a start-up company doing research, has experienced a variety of identity transformations due to his multiple migratory trajectories:

*I have never realised that I can be from Oltenia [a geographical region in Romania] until I went to Bucharest and I never realised I was Romanian until I went to Saint Petersburg. And in France I realised that I can be a gypsy at the same time.*

This powerful quote points to the fluidity of whiteness which is determined by the context you are in and the multiple identities you are believed to have dependant on the people you interact with. It was the first move, to the Romanian capital, that made Marius reflect on his identity which was not the product of his own perceptions, but of the majority’s assignment of labels. His highly contested racial identity shows how racial meaning is “arbitrary, whimsical and shifting” (Vargas 2014:2294). He never had to think about his whiteness in Romania as he was a member of the ethnic majority. Before coming to France he was an internal migrant and an immigrant, whilst in Western Europe his identity has been taken over by a denomination which he does not consider to rightly represent him. The process by which Marius forms an opinion of himself operates through the public apparatus, in that his identity fluctuates according to the lines of experiences in the context he is in and the collective opinion of the dominant group regarding Romanians.

While in the British space economic components prevail over cultural elements, in France, economic barriers are subordinated to cultural barriers. However, the cultural capital which seems to be highly regarded in France does not refer to education, as in Britain, but rather to ethnicity. According to Bourdieu (1986:84), this

capital called 'the embodied state' cannot be bestowed as a gift. Rather, it needs to be inherited, "[b]ecause it is thus linked in numerous ways to the person in his biological singularity and is subject to a hereditary transmission which is heavily disguised, or even invisible". This type of cultural capital refers to the values and norms inherent to a society, which is not transmissible to individuals who lack a family legacy of living in France. It is "an acquired set of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, experiences and so forth that equip people differently for their life in society" (Garner 2007:49). For Romanians, their Romanian ethnicity, rather than acting as a cultural bond which would bring them closer to French people (on the basis of their shared Latin roots), acts as a cultural gulf separating the parties.

Romanians' self-identification as mono-racial whites as a result of their personal perceptions of racial identity do not match the other's understandings of their racial identity. They experience "racial contestation" (Vargas 2014:2282) and they "find themselves at the margins of whiteness, betwixt and between notions of racial domination and marginalisation". Since Romanians are not seen as conforming to the French group culture (which implies that French culture is homogeneous), this model of social interaction based on exclusion promotes social separation and reinforces the dominating-dominated relationship (see also Fraser 2001). Many Romanians then choose not to engage with French people in meaningful social interactions, the nature of contacts being purely in the professional sphere. Romanian peers fulfil their social needs.

Fortunately, there are ways for Romanians to gradually inhabit the normative white space. The whitening practices Romanians employ are of two types. They encompass on the one hand the construction of national and ethnic purity (with anti-Roma as well as other ethnic minorities feelings enflamed); this 'ethnic' plan of action permits them to become culturally whitened. On the other hand, their proximity to the West is restated by their impersonation of a white person's imagined characteristics such as work ethic and appearance, which translates into gendered and economic whiteness.

### **Inward-looking whitening strategies**

Romanians' low status, characterised by cultural and economic precariousness, is the main driver in the quest for modernity which rests on attaining whiteness. This section sets out to examine the role of social positionings in allowing Romanians to transcend their Romanianess and embrace an imagined whitened social position. Whiteness broadly refers to the ability to be invisible in the eyes of the dominant group; for this purpose, Romanians' success and failure in achieving whiteness in the host country, are investigated.

## **Work ethic and occupation**

The values of capitalism consist of aspiration to the accumulation of capital, the consumption of goods, home ownership, self-realisation and liberty (Garner 2007:48). In this context, the neoliberal 'fast, flexible and fun' characteristics of consumerism are often attributed to white westerners (Bonnett 2002:439). Lamont (2000)'s working class interviewees place a great deal of importance on the value they attribute to their families as they try to differentiate themselves from white-collar staff they perceive as selfish and very interested in money. As such, whiteness can be represented as "an embodied and material accomplishment" (Andrucki 2010:360) which allows Romanians to turn away from the non-modernity associated with the East and to show to those left behind that through transnational migration, they have been able to embrace the characteristics associated with modernity, such as work ethic and high occupational status.

Whiteness here, points to the identification with a code of cultural practices which constitute respectability, such as self-sufficiency, community orientation, civility and the work ethic (Garner 2012). In the process, they perform racialised boundary work which they use to propel their status and to exclude those perceived as undeserving to belong to the host community.

In the UK, the neoliberal regime makes the ownership of financial capital one of the ways through which one can acquire high social status and therefore gain access to the white space through occupational prestige. Most academics agree that class is not exclusively defined by employment characteristics, but equally by economic, social and cultural capital (see Bennett et al. 2009, Savage et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, following on from the BBC 2011 Great British Survey (the largest national survey of its type ever conducted in Britain), there have been identified seven social classes according to an individual's employment position and thus their income. The survey differentiates between employees and employers as well as between employees who are on a labour contract and employees who are in a 'service relationship', such as professionals and managers (Savage et al. 2013).

In the same way, Lamont (1992) showed that amongst the French middle class, the display of cultural capital such as distinctive tastes and lifestyles reflected their command of high culture. In contrast, in the US, she highlighted the role of educational and occupational attainment in familiarity with high culture. Trying to conceptualise middle class American and French men's understanding of status, she explored the symbolic boundaries her respondents erected between themselves and the others deemed superior or inferior. Consequently, it was found that socioeconomic boundaries are stronger than cultural boundaries amongst the participants from America, while in France cultural boundaries prevail over

socioeconomic boundaries. This may reflect differences in the whitening strategies Romanian respondents embrace: while in Britain socio-economic practices are likely to be highlighted, in France, cultural norms might be stressed.

Previous research shows that British employers associate Eastern European immigrants with a strong work ethic (see Anderson et al. 2006:78). Nevertheless, 'work ethic' might allude to their servility, caused by their precarious status. Their work ethic thus corresponds to employers' "subjective needs and job requirements" (Anderson and Ruhs 2008 30-31). This was equally shared by a Romanian man interviewed in Paris, who has a small business hiring Romanian builders. He stated that Romanians "are more assuming, they can do overtime if you need them to" (Tiberiu).

The main tactic adopted by Romanians in order to cope with ethnicised stigma (and thus become whitened and gain membership into the dominant group) is by emphasising individual and collective achievements. This view is supported by Parutis (2011) who writes that low-skilled Lithuanians and Poles from London are conscious of their low status and they try to boost it by emphasising their skills.

The participants in this study highlighted ethnic work ethic, which contrasted them not only to the British or the French, but also to other ethnic minorities. Ethnicity reflecting ethnic belonging peaks in the following extract: "But as far as the quality of work is concerned, Romanians are 100 per cent better than the Indians"

The same type of discourse is found in Paris with regards to North Africans, whose labour quality is considered to be below Romanians'. However, the "poor whites' vanity" is based on fact and illusion (Thandeka 2007:50). They had the racial privilege of not being slaves and legal rights as citizens because they are white, yet this does not entitle them to a high status in the host country's hierarchy by default. Consequently, this is done progressively, by highlighting their work ethic, which legitimises them to situate themselves above other ethnic minorities. In other words, they have an "image of themselves as excellent market actors, [who] have adapted to the new culture as mobile, flexible workers, and now demand full rights as European Union citizens" (Jordan 2002). This offers the participants the opportunity to embrace the characteristics associated with white identities and thus enter the white space inhabited by British people (see Fox 2013:1879). It represents a way by which Romanians consider themselves to be 'respectable' (Nayak 2003:309) whites, which differentiates them from other ethnic minorities.

Looking further at the tarnished image Romanians suffer from, Andrei, who studied in Italy before taking up a position in the banking sector in the City, uses

Romanians' honest and dishonest activities to distinguish between those enjoying a stigma free experience and those less fortunate in their everyday lives:

*I studied in Italy, at Bocconi, in Milan. And, the same thing I think I would notice here, I observed there. No problem [if] you are a student, an honest worker... (...) I had no shame to say I was Romanian, [nor did I get] an adverse reaction (...). [In my London office] nobody knows I am Romanian, except (...) my team. Why would a client care that I am Romanian? Would (s)he think that I steal his money? What the hell...*

The emphasis of Romanians' labour superiority to overcome stigmatisation and thus enter the dominant space is consistent with previous research amongst Eastern Europeans in London (Datta and Brickell 2009, Moroşanu and Fox 2013). Highly educated Romanians are successful in attaining invisibility in relation to both their co-workers and the media. This appears to upset some interviewees, as their non-recognition as Romanians by the dominant group labels them as 'different' from visible Romanians. Ionela holds a degree from a British university and at the time of the interview worked as a Responsible Investment Advisor. She is pinpointing the stigmatising stereotypes associated with Romanian people, such as unskilled labour.

*Ionela: My work colleagues (...) do not think of me as being from Romania. (...) I would like them to think of me as being from Romania, because, then, implicitly...*

*Claudia: Would improve the image?*

*Ionela: Yes, exactly, I mean, they only think of those from Romania as Romanians, and then, in a way, they treat my colleagues from Romania, indirectly, a bit... 'patronising' maybe is not the right word, but, you know, when a company outsources some activities to Romania, these are not (...) fundamental, a sort of support.*

Here, whiteness is passively embodied and allows high skilled professionals to overcome the barriers erected, but its non-contagious characteristic prevents other Romanians from benefitting from it. The articulation of class in transnational mobility allows high-skilled Romanians to enact their 'wages of whiteness' in the host country while at the same time remaining loyal to Romania.

In the same line of thought, Ioana would like her 'successful people', underrepresented in the media, to escape invisibility, which is here felt like a burden emotionally difficult to bear: "But why does nobody talk about us, those who have good jobs?". Thanks to their economic and social capital, both participants are able to escape definition (Bonnett 2000), but they do not see this as an empowering

element for the Romanian people as a whole, as their invisibility prevents them from being associated with the totality of the Romanian group, which does not help Romanians as a group to overcome stigma. This points to their community attachment with which they want to maintain closeness.

By wishing their invisibility to disappear, they want British society to look at the 'good citizens' who are to be found within the Romanian community, doing high skilled jobs, and not only the stereotyped 'failed' citizens involved in begging or pick pocketing, often depicted by British tabloids. Even most of the literature on Eastern Europeans, and Romanian immigrants specifically, explores only the lives of low-skilled immigrants. High-skilled Romanians' identity is invisible in the mundane day-to-day life because they are seen as fitting the white norm and benefiting the society because they are educated and wealthy individuals.

Both Ionela and Ioana are aware of their 'whiteness privilege' and status which they have achieved through cultural capital accumulated throughout their life, through hard work and studying at some of the best British and Italian universities in their field. Whiteness is therefore not always a given attribute; a characteristic individuals are born with and have by default. It is a process that is gradually earned, but which needs validation from the dominant group.

'Us' and 'them' are social constructions which are time and context-dependent (see the Irish and the Italians, who were not seen as white in the past in Britain and the US) and are still applicable nowadays. However, contrary to past hierarchies of whiteness, highly educated people coming from countries deemed 'uncivilised' are not experiencing the effects of racialisation in the same way the low-skilled co-ethnics would, and the above two interviews are a perfect example of this. This is of course, valid only in Britain, as in France most Romanians belonging to privileged socio-economic groups did not embrace the same invisibility discourse.

Contrary to Fox and Moroşanu (2013), who observed that Romanians resorted to individual backgrounds and discourses which brought forward their personal skills, rather than speaking in the name of the whole Romanian community, in this study both individual and community orientated discourses describing achievements were depicted. While low-skilled Romanians tended to speak in the name of the whole community by highlighting the work ethic, the high-skilled respondents adhered to more individualistic discourses which depicted the high-skilled nature of their professions.

This may be due to low-skilled Romanians' proximity to those perceived as inhabiting low social status such as the Roma. More awareness triggered feelings of national guilt. Indeed, Andrei, who works in finance in the City, emphasised his

individual skills, compellingly noted that: “It is not us [the high-skilled] who create this [negative] image, I cannot possible create a bad image. (...) I have a job, I am living my life. (...) Those who spoil the image are the beggars”. In his opinion, he is not targeted by the negative discourses as he has a high paid job in a London bank and as such it is not his duty to change Romanians’ negative press. Despite Romania’s incapacity to embody, in respondents’ views, modernity and civilisation, they still regard themselves as belonging to the European space on the basis of their work ethic and high-skilled occupations in the host country which implies adherence to the modern West.

Not all Romanians become ‘whitened’ through the medium of work practices. The remaining part of this chapter engages with a view on the relationship between Romanians’ whiteness and gender.

### **Gendered and corporeal modernity**

Aesthetic standards are key in the process of nation-building. Van Esterik (1996) illustrates how in Thailand, Prime Minister Phibul’s attempts at nation-building in the 1930s focused on the ‘modernising of the Thai woman’s appearance through hairstyle and clothing. Image thus becomes central in the process of seeking a Western image. A similar account is given by Bozdogan (2015) in relation to Turkish modernism and nation-building. He argues that one of the ways modernity was constructed, was through the idealised image of Western-looking women who would counteract the exotic fantasies associated with the Ottoman harem. A 1930s editorial in the nationalist publication ‘Türk Yudu’ entitled “The Difference between the Old System of Government and the Republic” illustrated a thread of associations between politics, women and architecture. The workings of the past are associated with a veiled woman of the Ottoman Empire, while the modern Republic is embodied by a liberated woman wearing a straw hat, pleated skirt and high heeled shoes, symbolising progress.

The otherness Romanians are being attributed is largely due to the phenotypical and cultural characteristics many French people tend to associate Romanians with, as the previous section has discussed. The media is very quick to pick up these attributes, as an article published on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 shows. The article mentions a woman who notified the French police about the Belgian born ringleader of the November Paris terrorist attacks. She states that when she met Abaaoud (who was coming out of a bush), she was under the impression that he was Romanian due to his appearance: “He had a bobble hat on his head, orange trainers and a bomber jacket. For me he was a Romanian” (Le Figaro 2016). This summarises how French people perceive Romanian nationals. Due to their scruffy appearance, they belong to a subculture.

Looks translate into a lack of sound moral character, which is centred around characteristics such as lack of honesty, integrity and ethics. Visual characteristics are related to internal characteristics and moral characteristics prevail over visual characteristics. By drawing on Judith Butler's work on gender performativity, Byrne (2006a) has shown that racialised practices produce differences rather than being their output. At the core of racial differentiation stand the perceptual practices of seeing bodies which look or sound distinctive from the norm. Byrne (2006a:74) claims that

*[r]ace needs to be understood as performative and, more specifically, as a product of perceptual practices. It is through such perceptual practices that externally evident physical differences are seen and categorised as racialised differences, and the various inferences are drawn from these differences.*

In other words, the visual becomes representative for the cultural. Skin tone, looks and clothing become associated with racialising practices which categorise by attributing them inferior moral characteristics. Cultural differences are in this view attributed to individuals on the basis of their physical differences.

As such, looks take on a gendered meaning in the sense that women are constructed much more than men. Female Romanian bodies become a “corporeal canvas for ethnic experimentation” (Nayak 2003:317), on which Eastern cultural markers such as poverty, sexual promiscuity can be read. In turn, a Western look ensures their emancipatory status. Thus, they are deemed civilised in the way they look on the basis of their body image and outfit style. Bodies become politicised in the sense that when positively read by the mainstream, they embody the Occident rather than the Orient, the liberal rather than the traditional. As Skeggs (1997:83) argues,

*[b]odies are the physical sites where the relations of class, gender, race and sexuality and age come together and are embodied and practised. ... Class is always coded through bodily dispositions – the body is the most ubiquitous signifier of class.*

Cultural differences are often articulated through fashion. Ilaria talks about how she is not identified as a Romanian by the French people she encounters due to her physical appearance. She details how a French work colleague argued that it is because she is

*“too pretty and well-dressed compared to an Eastern European, and nobody thinks you come from there”. When they think of Eastern Europe, they think of poor people, beggars, because they are manipulated by the media.*

Physical appearance is important in the process of status determination and racialisation of women, with light skin often being depicted as an advantage for women (Hunter 2002). Whiteness of skin acts as a “bleaching” agent (Moraga 1983) in that the whiter you look, the more ‘white’ traits you are attributed such as intelligence and civility (Hunter 2002). The skin tone and overall appearance play an important role in Romanians’ negotiation of whiteness as privilege. For Ilaria, the style of clothing differentiates her from the common held assumptions regarding Eastern Europeans and she is thus positioned as Western. Clothing becomes a powerful marker of difference of a homogenised Romanian group within French society. However, it seems that this right is reserved for women, who can perform gender and femininity through clothes and thus achieve whiteness. This is supported by the high rate of women in mixed relationships in France, which was not found in Britain (but see Moore 2013, who argues that Eastern Europeans are portrayed as racially white and culturally other through their clothing and general personal appearance by English people). The display of a Western appearance becomes a cultural label which illuminates how Romanian women can move up ethnically, be successful and embody progress and modernity (see also Nichols 2014 for a similar argument regarding Argentinian women).

Interestingly, even some men seem to be aware of the advantage women have in migration. Alin, a sommelier in London argues that

*as a man, it is harder to make British friends, they look at you as an outsider, they are snobbish. (...) [But when] they see you, beautiful and nice [referring to the female interviewer]...*

A commonly held view was that not only do Romanian women feel the social pressure to not be identified as Eastern European, but even more so as not belonging to the Roma ethnic minority. Valentina explains how in Paris, French people do not recognise her Romanian roots and she is told that she does not look Romanian:

*that’s what I am told, that I do not look Romanian, that I am white, (...) because for them, the Roma are a bit darker, and they think that all Romanians are like that. I explain to them immediately that the Roma come from India, that they have been here for centuries.*

According to Valentina, the constructive nature of the human perception refers to the fact that in a system of power relations, the balance leans towards the French individuals who assign a label to her identity, that of ‘not looking Romanian’ on the basis of her white skin tone. Both physical features such as hair and skin colour and

stereotyped expectations are used by individuals in labelling other's race and creating racial categories.

While phenotypically Romanians possess the characteristics needed to blend in within the white French space, they do not possess the cultural whiteness in order to enter it. They need to embrace 'normality' in order to be accepted in/by the mainstream. Moore (2013) shows how English people construct shades of whiteness which create forms of exclusion for Eastern Europeans on the basis that although they are racially white, they are not culturally white. There is a "spectrum" of whiteness (...) with the 'most white' at one end and the 'least white' at the other" (*ibid.*:14). Various elements such as clothing, hairstyle, the ability to speak English as well as the form of employment determine how white Eastern Europeans' 'culture' is perceived.

Fassin (2006) explains that the confusion around the following categories: foreigner and immigrant, foreigner and of foreign origins, racial and ethnic, do not refer to a correct definition of these categories, but reflect the fact that French people continue to be perceived as not being French because of their skin tone. He argues that the often used expression 'Français de souche' designates individuals who see themselves as white. Black was the colour attributed to colonies and was positioned at the very bottom of social and racial hierarchies of the French Republic (Ndiaye 2006). In contrast, the white colour became a constitutive element to French national identity.

While whiteness was referred to during the interviews surrounding ideas of power relations and socio-economic elements in both contexts, in Paris, the importance of the white skin was also highlighted. This may be due to the fact that white skin is a marker of differentiation for Romanians in Paris from the Roma more than for the Romanians from London because of the media scrutiny of the Roma deportations in the French context. This may reflect differences in the way discrimination operates in both contexts: while in France it takes a cultural turn, based on appearance, in Britain it adopts a labour related economic dimension.

The importance of socioeconomic status in liberal countries has long been documented. In her study on American and French working class, Lamont (2000) found that French workers are less likely than their American counterparts to think of moral worth in terms of socioeconomic status. Moreover, the French were not found to blame the poor for their scanty wage or to erect strong symbolic boundaries between themselves and the poor. This can provide useful insights into the way the Romanian immigrant is imagined in the French and British spaces. The French media have a tradition of writing about Romanian prostitution networks (see

for example Borredon 2012), which has portrayed Romanian women as sexually promiscuous, 'easy', but also eager to find a Western husband.

Furthermore, discourses about the Roma are more prevalent in France than in Britain, due to the high numbers of Roma ethnics. In contrast, in Britain, the focus tends to be on the impact of Romanian immigration on British jobs and wages. Roma women are generally more visible than Roma men through the choice of their clothing, such as large, long and voluminous skirts and their hairstyle, the hair twisted in tresses (Serbis 2008).

Racialisation is not only about colour, but also about the relationship between bodies and culture. As such, Romanian women embodying the Western woman ideal characterised by white skin, straight hair and fashionable clothes, acquire the French cultural capital and subsequently the set of values and cultural norms associated with the West. Consequently, the Romanian immigrant is imagined as a man in Britain and as a woman in France, which influences the nature of discrimination and the access to normative whiteness: through cultural means in France and through economic means in Britain. This correlation is surprising because the gender split between Romanians in France and England/Wales is almost identical, as the table below illustrates.

**Table 1 - Romanians in France and England and Wales by gender.**

Country	Male	Female	Total	%Female
England and Wales	40,418	39,269	79,687	49.3%
France	36,923	37,365	74,288	50.3%

Source: INSEE 2016 and ONS 2011

This section illuminated the significance of looks for Romanian women to become whitened, embody modernity and thus contribute transnationally to the civilising process in which the diaspora is engaged.

To conclude, the white privilege of invisibility is given to those who renounce personal cultural practices and embrace liberal values such as work ethic and a Western appearance. Liberal values define the European system of organisation, from which groups perceived as non-modern are excluded on the basis that they cannot or are unwilling to enter this system (Lentin and Titley 2011).

In Romanian discourses, whiteness is equally used as the marker to differentiate between Roma as well as other ethnic minorities in the host country and non-Roma. By imputing racism to those perceived as racially inferior, Romanians can insert themselves in racialised spaces inhabited by white French and British people.

## **Outward looking whitening strategies**

White experiences are relational in that they are social encounter-dependent. The white privilege is generally internalised for Romanians; it is actively displayed only when their whiteness is threatened or challenged by mainstream discourses.

As argued in the previous section, Romanians' right to worry about Romania's lack of modernity and of patriotism, permits them to embark in a process of 'whitening' which allows them to become 'whitened'. This section explores respondents' racialisation practices deployed in order to embrace fantasies of ethnic inclusion. It sets out the construction of internal ethnic hierarchies within groups that interact within social hierarchies of the context Romanians are moving into. It firstly engages with one of the ramifications of 'aspirational' whiteness, that of anxiety and tension manifested towards the presence of the Roma in the Romanian nation. Secondly, it reflects on the way both the Romas and ethnic minorities in the host countries are used as a tool in interviewees' pursuit of whiteness.

### **Whiteness, a pillar of Romanian nationalism**

Whiteness as a form of power is involved in framing and reworking social hierarchies. When individuals are not perceived as being worthy to inhabit the normative white space, it exposes racial domination and subordination. The purpose of this section is to reflect on the ways in which Romanians reject the virtual social identity (Goffman 1963) they are being attributed by transferring the stigma to the Roma.

Romanian nationalism has its roots in the oppressive reality which has portrayed the Roma as the unassimilable Other, as already suggested in Chapter Three. As Garner (2009:13) notices with regards to Irish Travellers, in Romanian imaginary, the Roma "are ostensibly white, but racialised culturally as dirty, backward, lazy, thieving and above all, beyond the reach of the mainstream economy". The existence of this dimension of whiteness as socially and culturally empowering represents for Romanians the only available stepping stone towards claiming whiteness they can be actively invested in. This is an active whitening strategy as Romanians purposefully deny the presence of the Roma from the same social space. The unfortunate Roma-Romanian amalgam is a driver for Romanians' obsession with ethnicity. They reject this racial connection by adopting a racist discourse towards the Roma. The following excerpt from an interview with Gheorghe from London summarises Romanians' conventional attitudes towards the Roma and the importance of ethnic differentiation.

*Claudia: What is the relation between non-Roma Romanians and Roma Romanians?*

*Gheorghe: Between us and the Romas?*

*Claudia: Is there one?*

*Gheorghe: Yes. (...) They get on the plane and go for a pick pocketing round or the cards games. (...) They get deported on the tax payers' money and then come back. That's where the blame\* [in English in the interview] comes from. It does not come from those settled in our society. (...) Why do we have a certain distrust against them? Because, when a Roma does something, and usually they do a bit too much, everybody says 'the Romanians'.*

In the Romanian imagination, Roma ethnicity is read as low social status, due to their slavery and thus oppression, and their image which is fraught with negative bias (Csepeli and Simon 2007:135). Despite a shared nationality and a semantically similar name, Romanians consider themselves to be different from the Romas, who have a culture of their own and are perceived as uncivilised on the basis of negative identifiers and deviant behaviour, such as pickpocketing or begging. By assigning negative values to the Roma, the respondent defines himself as the opposite of these characteristics.

Roma Romanians are not seen as inhabiting the same space of membership as 'Romanians'. Gheorghe's question "Between us and the Romas?" is meant to clarify the correlation used between Romanian nationality and Roma ethnicity. His question refers to the refusal to acknowledge my labelling, and thus the existence of the Roma in the Romanian nation. The category of identification 'Romanian Roma' is not validated, and in the process the interviewee represses the Roma's whiteness in order to put forward a white self versus a non-white other (Hage 2005).

In the perspective of defying easy categorisation, Romanians adopt strategies which allow them to put forward a hybrid sense of identity (Laoire 2008), redefining the Romanian national identity and the proximity to Western national identities. The most common strategy has been that of stressing the difference between the Roma and non-Roma Romanians in order to enter the French dominant space. By doing this, Romanians negotiate their own sense of Romanian identity by distancing themselves from the dominant stereotype, that of 'all Romanians are Romas and all Romas are engaged in criminal activities'. This is done through depicting the Roma as not belonging to the Romanian national space and the revoking of their Romanianess.

The rejection of the association Romanian-Roma, a relation which would otherwise create a danger of racialisation of Romanians as a whole and call into question

Romanians' whiteness (Fox et al. 2012) allows Romanians to claim access to and secure their position in the white European space. Other responses to this issue included Lavinia's, who brings in the European dimension in stark contrast with the Roma's non-European social position from a temporal perspective:

*When you hear about Romania there is always something about gypsies (...). Because of these things, the image is distorted. (...) When we were in New York, on the Wall of Fame or on those pavements, you would see 'Queen Mary of Romania'. [The Romanians] were European before, then there were 50 years when they weren't European anymore.*

This is an example of how the conflation Roma/Romanian "colours racial perception" (Saperstein and Penner 2010:92-23). The tension highlighted resides in the ascription of negatively perceived attributes such as Roma to the whole group of Romanians. Furthermore, although a European minority due to their Romanian nationality, the Roma are not perceived as such. Instead, they are seen as having low social status due to their unemployment, residential segregation or low education. By extension, those associated with the Romas are devoid of the European whiteness and Romanians are not considered to be part of the European space. It is racialisation that raises awareness about the salience of their European identity, while whiteness offers them a winning advantage by making possible the erection of cultural boundaries between participants and the Roma.

This nationalist rhetoric draws on "governmental belonging" (Hage 1998), which refers to a type of belonging that involves the belief that one has the right to contribute to the management of the nation so that it remains a familiar space, a home. The public discourse regarding the Roma is generally informed by nationalist practices of exclusion of the undesirable Roma, who are perceived as taking over the declining white Romanian population. The Romas are thus perceived as the strangers that transform the Romanian national space into an unfamiliar land and challenge Romanian nationhood, built on security and a sense of community. The neoliberal European self is protected by excluding and diminishing the protection of the others. Although these examples of how the othering of Romas works in the Romanian discourse are rather isolated, it shows how the narrative of exclusion of the Roma from the Romanian space operates and its connections with the past.

Consequently, the Roma are perceived as holding back the Romanian nation's opportunity to be seen as belonging to the European space due to their association with 'Eastern European poverty' (Vincze 2014). Indeed, in 2001, Petre Roman, Romania's then Foreign Minister, stated that the government's obligation was "to protect 23 million Romanian against a few thousand Gypsies who are preventing the country from getting off the EU visa blacklist" (Woodcock 2007:502). The Roma

were the scapegoat which prevented Romania from entering before 2007 the space of the European 'powerful'. The Roma are often brought into Romanian media discussions by contrasting them to ethnic Romanians' good character either within or outside national boundaries. Articles regarding their visibility in France (Tita 2010) or Italy (Dimitriu 2011) as well as their general unlawfulness (B1.ro 2016) are commonplace in Romanian press (see Balcanu 2008 for an overview).

Other than rejecting the Roma/Romanian dichotomy which reinforces Romanian superiority, Romanians also forcefully ignore the existence of the Roma, as Adelina from Paris explains. As a child in Bucharest, whenever she was visiting her grandparents, she was allowed by her grandmother to play with the Roma children. Although she was only five or six years old back then, she remembers being distressed by their pitiable appearance due to their lack of clothes despite the harsh winter:

*I remember it because I found it very strange, that those kids were barefoot, while we were muffled up to our necks with winter scarves, and two pairs of gloves, and they were barefoot... (...) And the weird thing was that nobody came out (...) to say "here is a scrap of clothing". (...) As if they were not people. (...) As if (...) they are not part of the same thing with us, something not even the animals [would benefit of]. Animals are fed. Gypsies are invisible, nobody sees them.*

The above quote is a perfect illustration of the construction of the Roma, who represent anti-modernity and rurality in the Romanian imaginary. Since Romania tends to be segregated (in terms of housing and, to a certain, extent education), Romanians never need to think about the Roma, who are largely physically absent from Romanians' daily lives, while being culturally present as a reminder of Romanians' superiority. As Crowe (1991:73) argues, "keen sense of Romanian nationalism [...] combined with the natural animosity and stereotyping of the Gypsies throughout the country, has kept alive and encouraged an 'ethnic hierarchy' that deals with the Gypsies as an inferior race or class".

Another example of Romas' nonexistence is the defensive nation branding campaign 'Romanians in Europe' (wall-street 2008). It was launched in 2008 by the Romanian government body Agency for Governmental Strategies in an aim to promote an 'image of normality' of Romanians in Spain and Italy, the two Western European countries which represent primary destinations for Romanians. It did so by featuring successful ethnic Romanians being praised for their skills and interacting with the locals, embodying perfect European individuals who adapt easily to other cultures and do not pose problems. The videos are an attempt to show that Romanians can be easily integrated in the host country. The absence of

the Roma from the campaign is suggestive of the Romanian government active strategy to break away from the Roma/Romanian dichotomy.

The campaign was a response to the negative media coverage of Romanians and anti Roma rhetoric in Italy following the death of a 47 year old Italian woman who had been brutally beaten in Rome and died of her injuries. The man found guilty and arrested was a Romanian Roma. Kaneva and Popescu (2014:507) argue that this campaign “was intended as a defensive reaction to anti-migrant attitudes and as a putative response to public perceptions about Romania’s contribution to the “Roma problem”“. The campaign generated significant media coverage in Spain and Italy and it had relative success, as the “bad or very bad” opinions about Romanians in Spain decreased by 10 per cent (*ibid.*:513).

In parallel, a rather unpopular extreme right party, Noua Dreaptă (The New Right), launched a campaign in which it exploited Romanians’ eternal obsession with their labelling as Romas, and more precisely it focused on foreigners’ inability to tell Romanians apart from the Roma. A poster from this campaign displays two photos. The photo entitled ‘Romas’ features a dark skinned mixed group the women wearing headscarves. In contrast, the photo picturing the Romanian family, displays a family of five, with fair skin and blond hair, who belong to the white European space. The pictures also reflect the class of the two groups through the background chosen. The Romas are set against a background of grey building blocks of flats, while the Romanian family are set against a studio blue background. Thus, ascription of whiteness reflects the high socio-economic status of Romanians. The caption reads “Notice the difference! Gypsies (Rom) and Romanians are two different peoples!”. The colours used for the writing of the word ‘Romanians’ (Romeni) are the colours of the Romanian flag, in contrast to the word ‘Gypsies’ (Rom), which is written with black ink. Once again, this demonstrates the place of the Roma in Romanian national identity, more precisely their non-belonging to the Romanian nation.



Figure 3 - Noua Dreaptă (The New Right) campaign poster

This shows the centrality of whiteness for Romanian nationalism. Indeed, one element that surfaced from the interviews was that ethnic Romanians categorise themselves as white consciously and they see their phenotype as a crucial pillar of the Romanian white nation, from which the Romas are excluded on the basis of their categorisation as non-white. The Romanians from France are more likely than their counterparts from London to refer to the marker that distinguishes them from the Romas as being skin colour. This may be due to the long presence of Romanian Roma in France, as well as the significance of corporeal markers in the continental context. The next episode which took place in a Romanian orthodox church in the French capital is a testament to Romanians' conscious association of the less white bodies with the Other and it reflects the place of the white colour in the Romanian national imaginary. White represents the norm, with other skin tones being questioned.

*One Sunday morning, during the mass in a Parisian orthodox chapel, the Romanian priest was about to make an announcement. He encouraged all French people to pair up with Romanians so that the interpreting into French could be assured for those who did not understand Romanian. The priest looked around the congregation and his attention was caught by a black and white mixed race woman, whose skin was rather dark. The priest assumed that she was French and thus asked her if she had a Romanian person next to her so that she can understand the announcement. She said she was Romanian. (Field work notes, Paris, June 2014).*

As has been noted, the social construction of whiteness is intertwined with Romanian nation-building in participants' nationalistic discourses through the active

rejection and concealment of the Roma from individual and public discourses. However, movements in and out of whiteness do not happen only through the presence of the Roma, but also by directing racism towards ethnic minorities on the soil of the host country.

### **Turning racism against ethnic minorities**

The lack of strong patriotic feelings towards Romania expressed by continuous comparisons with the West is at times combined with huffishness towards the host country. Consequently, Romanian immigrants often “become moored in a no man’s land brought about by their double alienation” (Trandafoiu 2013:36). Hierarchies of countries are often constructed in an aim to lessen the ethnic superiority of the host country. Germany is often situated at the top of the hierarchy, with Carmen, a cleaner in London arguing that: “I have been to Germany, I liked it more because there were less nations”. The hierarchy of whiteness is thus perceived as being undermined by the presence of visible minorities, not white skinned individuals.

Whiteness is a relational concept which refers to the positionalities people adopt towards the encounters they make. Otherness becomes highly objectified and racialised (McDowell 2008). It is a fluid space which may change its form as a result of the lived experiences people have and the capital they accumulate. In the process, people can move both into and out of the categories of identity ascribed to them (Linke 1999:33). By reproducing the social hierarchies which create internal borders between the white and less white (Garner 2007:63), some Romanians position themselves outside British whiteness, but within European whiteness. The white European space Romanians belong to entitles them to place themselves above the spaces occupied by other ethnic minorities, as reflected by Paul, a retiree from Paris, who lived in Parisian suburbs for over twenty years: “Not more than 17 million are French French, clean, clean. The remaining up to 73 million are Arabs, black people, Chinese”.

It is not surprising that Paul refers to ‘Arabs, black people and Chinese’ as altering the image of France, as their facial appearance such as skin tone or facial features makes them prone to racial categorisation. They are perceived as deviant from the normative white identities of the French nation (Macé 2007) on the basis of their alterity and thus they are seen as not fitting in. Paul’s claims to whiteness are not explicit, the contrast with other immigrants is sufficient to “whitewash” (Fox 2013) him. His physical whiteness, even if he belongs to a somewhat vulnerable socio-economic group, enables him to categorise the non-white bodies. While obsession with colour can be due to the relative absence of colour in Romania (Parutis 2011), it is still one of the markers of difference used by Romanians in order to distinguish themselves from other British minorities (Fox 2013). As possessors of whiteness,

Romanians often think they have the right to exclude the others who look by colour less white. The membership to this group is thus securely protected. Assisting in this process is the fact that Black people continue to be considered the most notable racially different minority, which means that the white space can get stretched to include other minorities (Warren and Twine 1997).

Given the fact that they are white by colour, Romanians' claims to whiteness allow them to inhabit a privileged space, in comparison to other ethnic minorities who are seen as having a less white skin and therefore a lower status (McDowell 2008). According to him, the less 'visible' immigrants are, the more 'genuine' the country is. He does not consider 'not visible' immigrants (such as other Northern/Eastern Europeans) as contributors to the visual diversity of France, as they blend in his imaginary of French society, which he identifies as a "clean", white society. Here, the presence of the other is seen as an invasion which changes the dynamics of the French social space, which does not resemble the imagined white French nation (Garner 2012). Paul's perception is, obviously, erroneous. Sabeg and Méhaignerie (2004) documented that in Metropolitan France there were 51 million (85 per cent) white people of European origin, 6 million (10 per cent) North African people, 2 million (3.5 per cent) Black people and 1 million (1.5 per cent) people of Asian origin.

By adopting the social and ideological practices of the dominant society such as denigrating some groups of immigrants, the respondents can improve their social status (Roediger 2007, Gerstle 2001) and strategically embrace whiteness and its privileges (see also Saliba 1999). Although many Romanians in Britain are to be found in precarious jobs, they have a "trump card" (Fox 2013:1880) which is represented by their whiteness they experience as a form of cultural capital. Consequently, they can put forward their "putative whiteness to turn racism against others" (*ibid.*) and therefore hope to become members of the British society on grounds of shared whiteness.

The following quote is revealing in Andreea's quest for a 'pure' host country, particularly in relation to her son's education: "I want to send him [my son] to a school where there are British people, not foreigners [Referring to Polish and Black people]".

The 'us' versus 'them' discourse/dynamic dismisses her son's association with immigrants, who are here stripped of their whiteness, whilst advancing the importance of surrounding her son with British people, implicitly emphasising the superiority of the British people. This may refer to both a linguistic and spatial aspect. It may be considered more difficult to learn English if surrounded by foreigners. In contrast, being surrounded by British people (who speak English

natively) can facilitate the process of language assimilation and of integration into a homogenous mainstream. At the same time, the interviewee expresses fears of loss of familiarity (Garner 2012) of the British soil she inhabits, which does not resemble the soil she might have imagined. Indeed, the space becomes foreign if not inhabited by enough British people. Getting the 'racial mix' right (Byrne 2006b:1008) is important not only to her son's social and academic development, and his acquisition of British social and cultural capital, but also to Andreea's whitening.

Nonetheless, Andreea wants to ensure that her son becomes British while not forgetting the ties to his parents' homeland. Consequently, she expressed interest in the Romanian Saturday school where she is considering taking her son once he reaches a certain age so that he learns the Romanian language. Indeed, the children of migrants can stay connected to their parents' country of origin, while at the same time construct strong ties to their birthplace (Sommerville 2008). This is even more interesting since previous research (Howarth et al. 2013, see also Byrne 2006b) has shown that most of the mothers whose children were likely to experience racism (due to their mixed-race background), were choosing to send them to a school which had a bad reputation. Their belief was that the uses of racism would be more explicit in such a school, and therefore would be easier for their children to identify and resist them, than in a middle-class school (Howarth et al. 2013:10).

This section explored the ways Romanians achieve whiteness in the host society. More precisely, it analysed the ways in which Romanian participants become whitened by racialising against those perceived as less white. Indeed, the 'governmental belonging' gives Romanians the entitlement to reproduce racialised practices and illuminates their aspiration to whiteness. By becoming individuals who have the right to worry (Hage 1998) about the racial mix found in the host country nation, they impersonate the powerful and privileged dominant white group.

To conclude, Romanians see their white skin as a marker of inclusion in the community of European nationals. By imputing racism to those they perceive as racially inferior (on the basis of colour), Romanians adjust their position in the racial hierarchies in the host country. In other words, they became whitened by turning racism towards the others (see also Fox 2013, Garner 2007).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter engaged with Romania's nation-building project through the medium of the diaspora from London and Paris. It explored the ways ethnicity and economic

capital play out in Romanians' inclusion/exclusion in the host countries. Although not perceived as white despite their European identity based on their ethnic and economic precariousness, Romanians have the ability to gradually become whitened. Two strategies are employed to this effect: inward-looking and outward-looking.

Firstly, high-skilled participants emphasise their occupational status, while low-skilled respondents are more likely to stress their work ethic, which distinguishes them from other ethnic minorities whom they perceive as lazy. At the same time, Romanian women from France were found to highlight the salience of the relationality between appearance and the process of whitening, with feminine European bodies being able to transcend the ethnic precariousness.

Secondly, Romanians become identified as white by reproducing the racialised norms from the host country. Thus, the social construction of whiteness is reliant on affective processes which create an image of the white Romanian self as a meaningful and good subject in contrast to the bad Roma or ethnic minority member (see Hunter 2010:456). On the one hand, whiteness is constructed around the assertion of Romanians' purity through the denial of the existence of the Roma from the national discourse, which ultimately safeguards proximity to the West. On the other hand, Romanians uphold racial purity by overtly revealing the presence of ethnic minorities in the host context as contributing to a loss of authenticity. Nevertheless, most of the participants were found to display racist discourses towards the Roma. This opinion is also shared by Fox (2013), who argues that whilst Hungarians tend to target their racism towards British ethnic minorities, Romanians were more likely to be racist against the Roma. Both ethnic and racial practices are manifestations of aspirational whiteness which contribute to Romanians' becoming whitened.

This chapter established that through the creation of different Others as well as economic and celebratory strategies regarding their appearance and work ethic, the Romanian diaspora becomes whitened. The strategies of racialisation towards the Roma and other ethnic minorities present in the host country are employed for the purpose of 'ethnically whitening' the participants. In turn, the class component of the whitening process is tackled through celebratory strategies of their own persona. Consequently, it contributes to the Romanian practices of nation-building which aim at positing the country of origin in a modern and thus civilised light. This shows how whiteness is created and sustained globally, from a context which is not the West.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Europeans in becoming? Romanians and Western European passports.**

#### **Introduction**

Migration is, often, lived as a process through which migrants can embrace modernity (Vigh 2009) and/or repress from their consciousness the underdevelopment of the countries of origin (Vathi and King 2011) in order to produce and secure a stable future (Cole 2014). Previous chapters have established the role of social interactions in the feeling of belonging towards the host society, as well as the role of social class and ethnicity in migrants' lives.

The argument Chapter Six put forward was that France and Britain are perceived by the participants in the study as modern (and thus representing whiteness) due to their urbanisation, economic power and civilisation. In contrast, underdeveloped Romania is connected with stagnation. Another way for "white modernity" (Bonnett 2002) to be attained by desirous Romanian nationals and consequently benefit from the privileges associated with it (such as the perception of inhabiting the same space as the citizens), is through the possession of a Western European passport. By identifying the host country citizenship as the epitome of modernity, Romanians are imagining a less vulnerable status for themselves not only in the context of reception, but worldwide.

This chapter analyses from a bottom-up perspective Romanians' complexity of imaginings surrounding their reasons and rationale for applying for naturalisation. Citizenship influences peoples' everyday experiences due to the levels of scrutiny they might be subject to. Comprehending interviewees' decisions to naturalise provide useful insights into their daily lives in the host countries and the interplay between the (absence of) belongings towards the sending and receiving societies.

The politics of belonging classifies people into those who are excluded from full membership and those who are allowed to become full members of society according to their gender/ethnicity/class. These categories are characterised by a certain form of subordination and inequality (Anthias 1998), which produces "hierarchisation, unequal resource allocation" (Anthias 2014:166), as well as differential social and political positioning. These social constructions tend to homogenise the mainstream and exclude the 'others'. In this context, a passport of

the host country entitles its possessor to presume that they can easily integrate into the prevailing group.

This chapter is not interested in the pathways to membership from a political perspective (nationality law). Rather, it explores why Romanians may or may not take up a second nationality and if and how their projects of belonging are validated or contested by the members of the host country they reside in. It unravels the individual practices of citizenship of Romanian immigrants from London and Paris. This chapter is interested in the following questions: Who claims dual citizenship and why? Is it for practical convenience, such as enhancing visa-free borderless travel outside of the European Union, which guarantees mobility security? Or is it for affective reasons such as the desire to become part of the host country's community and ensure identity security?

The first section of the chapter discusses the reasoning for naturalisation. It investigates how Romanians situate themselves symbolically and practically in relation to the host country and the nature of barriers believed to evanesce through naturalisation. The second part unravels to what extent the imaginings of citizenship meet their expectations for the participants who are dual nationals. The third and final part concludes with the decision-making process in considering the acquisition of citizenship as well as the profile of Romanians participants who anticipate their possible naturalisation.

It is argued that feelings of marginalisation influence Romanians' intentions to naturalise. The type of intentions differ amongst the participants from London and those from Paris. The respondents from Paris attribute their marginalisation within and outside of French borders to their ethnic origin. The London-based participants associate the need of a British passport with instrumental reasons such as visa-free travel to non-EU countries. More precisely, Romanians from Paris adopt an inbound look and intend to seek citizenship to mitigate the effects of discrimination. In contrast, Romanians from London latch on to an outbound look on naturalisation, which is considered for its visa-free mobility enhancing characteristics.

## **Imaginings of citizenship**

This section focuses on unpacking the decision-making process associated with application for a British/French passport. This allows for a better understanding of the situations under which migrants in London and Paris apply for a foreign passport, and whether similar motivations apply to both groups from both contexts. It is argued that that since the position Romanians occupy in France and Britain is at the margins of the society, a passport is perceived as a tool to move up

ethnically, politically, economically, legally and socially. The passport is (illusorily) perceived as a solution to everyday issues such as exclusion from the mainstream due to discrimination.

### **Legal discrimination**

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

At the time of conducting the fieldwork, Romanian nationals enjoyed freedom of movement to both France and Britain. Nevertheless, many participants recall negative treatment by the case workers in charge with their visa application prior to 2007, when Romania joined the European Union. Such is the case of Emma, who describes the humiliation she experienced in Bucharest during the visa application process to visit her Romanian husband in London, at a time when Romanians were not enjoying freedom of movement:

*I had a very bad experience at the embassy, or whatever it was, British consulate, when I went to collect my documents, (...) because they asked me to bring along photos to demonstrate that I am married to [her husband], and I came with some photos... I did not have very many with the two of us (...). And I had many from the wedding. And the lady from the counter told me that [these photos] do not demonstrate anything. I felt like a second class citizen. (...) I left and I started to cry, I thought I would not get [the visa] and I felt humiliated. How can I demonstrate it? I have all the rights to go see my husband!*

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

The socio-cultural and political attributes of the host country passport, which translate into Romanians’ ability to surmount the challenges associated with their second-class citizenship, was an opinion held by numerous participants. Andreea, a stay-at-home mother from London, ponders about her sister in law’s motivation for

applying for a British passport, and understands it as an improvement of current socio-cultural status. "She has been here legally from the beginning and wanted from the bottom of her heart to be a British citizen. And her baby is British. (...) But it was her dream. It probably is a step forward".

A "step forward" toward a destination is an onward movement in the life journey, it is a step towards progress and thus modernity. British citizenship becomes associated with progress, which represents the West and is perceived as modern and civilised (see Bonnett 2004:40-60 for more on the idea of the West in the Soviet Union). The acquisition of British citizenship as a process started as a dream of citizenship and culminated with its realisation. It allows Romanian immigrants to move socio-culturally from Eastern Europe, the margins of Europeaness, towards Western Europe, its centre. The host country passport is thus often perceived as an ethnic status enhancer, permitting Romanian nationals to racially identify themselves with Western Europeans whom they perceive as superior.

Romanians' often tense relationship with their national identity, which is largely due to their experiences of second class status, activates in them an identity quest which can be halted through the ownership of a 'truly' European passport, as Casian seems to believe, based on his interaction with co-nationals over seven years in Paris:

*It is easier to adopt an already well defined identity, and I mean here French or English, or countries with relatively strong national identities, (...) because you question yourself less, and you are French, full stop.*

Romanian nationality is detrimental to the respondents' prestige because it alters the mainstream opinion regarding Romanian nationals. In reverse, French/British membership is perceived as improving the social status of stigmatised groups. It equals invisibility and thus self-insertion into the dominant group, achieved through less interrogations and the need to prove yourself as a result. Consequently, it guarantees its citizens a certain social status and a strong national identity which is not challenged in the way the Romanian one is. This is similar to what Skulte-Ouais (2013) found in her research on Lebanese nationals having applied for a second (Western European) passport. As she notes "the Lebanese state is generally regarded as 'weak', that is, it lacks the autonomy as well as power to effectively and consistently impose itself as the final authority in the realms of politics, society and even economy" (*ibid.*:136).

Nonetheless, the "already well defined identity" Casian mentions is more likely to be activated abroad or during border-crossing, as often, in the host country, one needs national cultural capital in order to be allowed to enjoy the newly acquired identity.

Indeed, when asked about whether they might consider applying for a British/French passport, numerous participants also reflected on the legal discrimination they had been subject to when attempting to travel outside of the EU. Robert points to the stress of certain border-crossings and the restrictions of the Romanian passport, which does not allow him to travel freely from Britain to Canada to see his family.

*My cousins live in Canada, I have never seen their children, only on the internet or in photos. And I wanted to go to Canada when I was a student and I did not get the visa. (...) [T]he immigration officer was not satisfied. (...) And yes, it is all about mobility.*

The ability to travel represents, for Robert, the main reason in lodging an application for a British passport as soon as he becomes eligible. British affiliation becomes a legal requisite which allows increasingly free movement due to its visa-free or visa-on-arrival access. A Romanian passport was not enough to ease the stress of border-crossing unlike a British document, which would allow the possibility of travelling and being reunited with his family and thus relieving him of the frustration he expresses when he needs to travel.

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

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

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

Consequently, this caused her to regard a French identity card as beneficial: "it is better when you show them a French ID than a ... [Romanian ID]". This belief held with confidence is shared by numerous participants. For example, an Orthodox priest interviewed in London, who claimed that as possessors of a British passport, Romanians "gain a bit of trust in front of the British [and] you are not subjected to a shakedown at the Romanian/Hungarian border". These examples point to the transnational dimension of Western citizenship, which becomes a prerequisite for equality outside of the host polity which allocates citizenship. Indeed, despite both

Robert and Adina having the work permits necessary to live and work in the host country, the necessity of a foreign passport is explained by the protection the second passport offers to its citizens found outside the national borders. Most participants considered that a French or British passport would allow them to be less likely to be regarded with suspicion. This comes despite the Directive 38 (European Parliament and Council Directive 2004/38/EC), which reads:

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

While passports can be associated with a feeling of belonging and loyalty to the state that issues them, they can also have a political dimension, due to their capacity to define peoples' statuses based on the country of issue. For example, people can be allowed to enter, reside or work in a given country based on their passport. In theory, all European citizens enjoy similar rights conferred to them by being citizens of states which are members of the EU, however some citizens are seen as enjoying these rights more than others. The effectiveness of European citizenship in ensuring equality between citizens is therefore questioned, as it has resulted in a distinction between citizens and non-citizens which is still maintained, despite it being against Community law (see McMahnnon 2012 for a legal analysis of this regarding Romanians in Italy). For Romanians, political membership of the host country is imagined as translating into European membership which they are excluded from on the basis of their Romanian nationality (see also Byrne 2012:536).

The advantage of a foreign passport is equally mentioned while travelling back to Romania. Claims of a strong bond with Britain are relatively absent from Romanians' discourses, with one exception, Alexandra, who spent over ten years in Britain and considered British nationality as having more than just a bureaucratic practicality. She refers to it as "an ideal" and "achievement", words which demonstrate its symbolic and appraising significance and desirability as well as her feelings of accomplishment in holding it.

*[British citizenship] has been an ideal for me... I have always wanted to come here. In a way it makes me more confident. (...) When I went to Romania with the [Romanian] ID and the British passport, I was afraid to go just with the Romanian ID, I said I should have the passport too. (...) A sort*

*of security... (...) And it is an achievement for me, you know? It is an achievement.*

Alexandra is able to perform her Britishness outside of the British space, in transit, where she has the capacity to choose the nationality which confers her more support. British nationality is an attainment which has superior social status to Romanian nationality during mobility and it represents a protective mechanism against legal and political challenges which a Romanian passport may not be able to override.

In this context, a Western European passport becomes an empowering tool allowing Romanians to climb up the integrity and genuineness ladder. It is a confidence-building instrument allowing them to regain their often questioned European identity and it eases their transnational mobility by not being subject to suspicion or even enmity. A foreign passport enables them to have agency rather than being passive subjects in front of immigration officers.

Thus, members of stigmatised groups, who are also holders of a Western European passport, have the possibility to counteract their marginalised status in transnational mobility, when they are able to choose their ethnical determinations. Not only do they move from the geographical margins of Europe into the modern Western sphere through mobility, but subsequent mobility allows them to also move from the socio-cultural margins in the context of reception into a more central location where their newly acquired political membership is recognised. Identification is situational; the participants themselves chose when to identify themselves as British and when to identify themselves as Romanians. The political bargaining process of their nationality counteracts the precarious status of their Romanian identification. Their cultural ties to France and Britain are recognised abroad, where the elements required to be accepted into the British/French mainstream are unknown, such as parentage, birth or customs.

It has been argued that citizenship is undermined by migrants who naturalise for pragmatic reasons without showing loyalty to the context of reception (see Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006). Nevertheless, since naturalised citizens' identification is not contested culturally outside of the borders of the nation state, it can strengthen rather than undermine a nation's identity, as their recognition abroad might trigger stronger senses of loyalty towards the host country. Rather than becoming deteriorated, host country attachments become anchored through mobility.

### **Socio-political discrimination**

As briefly explained in Chapter Six, Romanians' claims to 'Frenchness' reside in their Latin origins, which, according to them, means that they share socio-cultural

characteristics with the members of the mainstream. However, since they are not culturally recognised as Latin due to the negative press, many of them (hope to) acquire French citizenship with the belief that this will allow them to belong to the dominant group without having their identities called into question by the mainstream.

Luiza is a perfect example of this. The motive she sets out for naturalisation resides in the creation of a link between her and the French state, which she considers essential since she does not consider returning to Romania, particularly since she is in a happy relationship in Paris. Formal membership is perceived as French cultural capital and the more of this capital she accumulates; the more likely she is to be considered a national of the French society (see also Hage 1998:53) with the full political rights associated with citizens.

*Even if you get [French] citizenship, you won't be considered fully fledged French... They will always have, even if they trust you, a thing, [because] you are not French after all. (...) But if I have decided to have my life here, at the end of the day you have to vote in this country, you need citizenship in order to vote (...). I will certainly need it, because if I don't take it, I will always feel like a tourist. (...) I will feel more integrated (...) and it will certainly facilitate many things.*

This emotionally loaded statement associates nationality with benefits that derive from naturalisation, such as being a prerequisite for voting rights and the facilitation of everyday administrative endeavours. Naturalisation is imagined as access to a full equal status materialised into full participation in the polity and having a voice in the socio-political matters of the host society. By positioning herself as equal in the society due to elements other than just access to work, such as having political rights, her sense of loyalty and belonging to France increases. Indeed, in her study on New Zealanders in Australia, McMillan (2016) found that the participants who were not entitled to welfare benefits on the basis of their foreign status, reported strong feelings of exclusion, rejection and discrimination, despite their otherwise successful socio-economic integration in the country.

The French state is imagined as a friendlier place through the embracing of French citizenship. For Luiza, the emotional politics of naturalisation consists in her becoming a member of the host polity by having her emotional and political affiliations validated by the polity rather than by French citizens. This is due to the fact that “group identities such as those based on racial, gender, ethnic and linguistic aspects conflict with citizenship, because while citizenship signifies ‘universal’ attachments, group identities are particular” (Isin and Wood 1999:3). The “citizenship premium” (Graeber 2016:6) she acquires differentiates her from the

non-citizens, the tourists, who do not enjoy similar privileges. Just like the Roma and other ethnic minorities (Chapters Three and Six), the tourists are constructed as the 'unworthy to belong' to the nation-state in order for Romanians to justify their 'worth of belonging'. While the Roma were excluded from the Romanian national imaginary on the basis of their ethnicity, tourists are excluded due to their temporal status on the French soil. Citizenship thus consolidates the permanent nature of her stay in France.

Nevertheless, feelings of ambivalence about the exact expectations of naturalisation were not uncommon. Despite previously stating that naturalisation does not imply social acceptance into the mainstream, later on in the interview Luiza shows some doubt: "I will feel that I am perceived differently because I am not French, or maybe it is all in my imagination. But maybe when I get the citizenship it will disappear."

This statement is about self-constructed definitions of belonging despite ascriptions of non-belonging. French nationality is perceived as transcending the socio-cultural boundaries she currently experiences in the host country. The citizenship privilege is associated with social advantages that derive from naturalisation, such as being welcomed into the French community on the basis of sharing a common self-identification and a political membership. French citizenship thus allows her to silence French nationals who question her presence on French soil and to move on from the margins of French society into the mainstream, to integrate. The space inhabited at the moment, characterised by ambivalence attributable to her foreign nationality, would be replaced with a safe space, on the basis of her newly acquired membership.

While Luiza emphasises the social and political dimensions of belonging shored up by citizenship, other respondents, such as Cosmin (London) is more pragmatic in his decision to eventually apply for a British passport. During a Facebook conversation in July 2016, he emphasised the bureaucratic convenience of a British passport in terms of political uncertainty, such as Brexit: "It is simply a hedge in case the UK leaves the EU and I would need to obtain other documents later on."

The political rights that are enshrined in Cosmin's Romanian passport are superseded by his unavoidable need to overcome the British bureaucratic barriers which may be imposed on now, that the UK has decided to leave the EU following the 2016 referendum. Rather than an affective affiliation to Britain, a passport represents to him a reliable resource he can fall back on in order to avoid any unnecessary barriers which may impede his right of residence and professional progression. In this case, identity politics is replaced by global capitalism. His flexible citizenship entitles him to "respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing

political-economic conditions” (Ong 1999:6) in an era where culture is replaced by global capitalism.

Consequently, in moments of political instability such as in the wake of Brexit, combined with the national paranoia regarding immigration and the potential of legal limitations on the rise (right to work, benefit entitlements) naturalisation is considered. Similarly, Ryan (2015) noted amongst Polish interviewees that growing concerns regarding Britain’s membership in the EU and the growing UKIP anti-immigration rhetoric resulted in people applying for a British passport and in the process strengthen their political attachments to Britain.

In parallel, political instability in the receiving society also reaffirms the salience of Romanian passports, ascribable to their (continentally) European dimension, such as free movement in the EU.

In the aftermath of Brexit, I emailed Emma, a dual national respondent from London, to enquire about her views about her Romanian passport, after the success of the Leave campaign. In her answer, she detailed:

*With regards to the passports I own, they both have more value at the moment. One (the British) means that I do not need to struggle (...) to ensure my future. The Romanian one expires around October time and I was thinking not to renew it anymore, but now I think I will do it in the next two years – it clearly has more value now.*

This might further indicate that the usefulness and value of passports change over time due to national events leading to political uncertainty.

This section has shown that Romanians invest identity in French citizenship. Wanting to validate their French connections or wanting to better fit in the French context came to the fore as the reasons to apply for a French passport. In contrast, Romanians from London mainly considered a British passport for practical reasons.

### **Economic discrimination**

Citizenship often represents a necessary condition for equal participation in society, such as equal access to work. Two female participants, who had been in Paris for over 20 years at the time of the interview, acknowledged that the reasoning behind their naturalisation was their eligibility for job vacancies which at the time were only available for French citizens. Adelina who has worked as an air hostess for Air France since her arrival in France, explains:

*Firstly, I took [French nationality] because in France you get dual citizenship and because if I am in France I thought I should acquire it. Secondly, I told myself that there are many jobs you cannot get if you don't have the*

*nationality. The same goes for my current job, I couldn't have done it without the nationality.*

Citizenship is experienced as a requirement for the development of career prospects through laboral insertion and economic equality, as it improves the chances of being economically active due to the increase in jobs one can apply for. This is consistent with previous research from France (Fougère and Safi 2011), which establishes that naturalisation increases immigrants' chances of employment on average by 20 per cent for both men and women, as well as their likelihood to be found in stable employment.

Working for the French public sector might be interpreted as a desire for stability and full acceptance in France both socially and economically, as immigrants enter a space generally reserved to citizens<sup>10</sup>. Yet, what both participants had in common was the moment of emigration from Romania, as they both left during or shortly after the 1989 revolution, when the communist leader was overthrown. Leaving Romania at a time of violent civil unrest, might have favoured their wish to settle in the host country and thus aspire to enter the French space through employment in the public sector. Despite the length of time spent in France (over 20 years), both Adelina and Dorina go to Romania regularly (up to four times a year) and pay visits to their friends and families.

Adelina has a Romanian partner at the moment, although the father of her three children is French. What is striking about both these female participants is the fact that their children are not fluent in Romanian. Dorina, the second respondent, said this was due the French teachers, who encouraged her to speak to her daughter in French rather than Romanian. This has long-term consequences on the transnational lives of their children, who, by not being completely fluent in their parents' mother tongues may not nurture a desire to visit Romania. Consequently, although they may be ethnic Romanian, they may not be engaged in transnational activities. For some interviewees, everyday experiences in the host country, while it does not drift them apart Romania physically, as they still return regularly or own properties, it deliberately estranges their children emotionally from their parents' homeland.

The importance of French citizenship is also emphasised in terms of building a life in the host country, which often starts with employment and a stable home. Teodora, who works as a nanny in Paris without a work permit, and despite holding

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<sup>10</sup> During my fieldwork in London, I did not meet any Romanians who held roles in the British public sector.

a university degree in tourism, argues that both she and her husband consider the acquisition of a French passport necessary to build a viable future in France:

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, with a new (and stronger anti-immigrant) discourse being promoted by the right wing French party, the Front National, being officially employed offers Teodora more security. This is also the case in Britain, where “constructions of the anti-citizen or of those who could/should not belong become stronger” (Byrne 2014:126). Commenting on the political precarity caused by economic precarity, Ilaria, who has a permanent position in a recruitment agency in Paris, details:

*Ilaria: Luckily, I am employed.*

*Claudia: Sorry?*

*Ilaria: It is good I am employed, I am safe.*

*Claudia: What do you mean?*

*Ilaria: They said... The Front National... They want to send back foreigners to their home countries after they finish their studies (...). Or if they live for too long on the Jobseeker's Allowance, (...). If you come here, you have to work, something like that.*

This indicates her awareness of the political situation in France. The fear she expresses is fostered by her political status as an immigrant, but this is counteracted by her economic status, that of an employee in a permanent position in France. Many respondents saw the acquisition of French citizenship as a way to mitigate the effects of discrimination, as a pathway to inclusion in the French space. As such, naturalisation was not the outcome of life satisfaction in the host context (as Massey and Akresh 2006 and Amit and Bar-Lev 2015 found), but rather the outcome of unfulfilled expectations and the belief that their lives could noticeably improve if naturalised as French. French citizenship may have a ‘signalling effect’, in that the naturalised respondent is perceived by future employers and contacts as having better integrated, through the time spent in the host country and language fluency (Liebig and von Haaren 2011:17). This is in line with previous research (Carrillo 2015), which reported that Arabs in France are more likely to apply for naturalisation than other ethnic groups because they are using this as a strategy to “solidify their belonging to the ‘in group’” (*ibid.*:17).

Rather than severing attachments to the host country, perceptions of discrimination prompt Romanians to acquire citizenship. French nationality thus emerges as a need to belong despite unequal treatment and a longing (albeit naive) for equal treatment. This contradicts Phinney et al. (2001) findings, which demonstrated that experiences of being ‘othered’ impact negatively on migrants’ commitment to the host country.

This is explained by the fact that discrimination makes one feel insecure, an experience which can be counteracted by political membership into the host polity. Furthermore, an implication of this may be that the ultimate aim of the French passport is the desire for permanency on French soil. In contrast, Romanians from London were more likely to attribute to the British passport more practical values, such as the visa-free travel. British citizenship becomes 'instrumental citizenship' (Aguilar 1999) which refers to the acquisition of a secure, legal status of the host country, without any personal and affective meaning. As such, it equates to temporary residence and does not imply permanence as in the French stay.

Their temporary presence in Britain is likely to be influenced by the respondents' migratory paths prior to their arrival in Britain and Paris. While Romanians from London are more likely to be global citizens, having lived outside of Britain and Romania before arriving in London, Romanians from Paris often experienced extensive internal migration in France before moving to Paris. Many of the respondents from Paris had studied in at least one place outside of Paris before finding work in the French capital (see Chapter Three), resulting in an increased probability to settle (see also Findlay 2011).

This section explored the meanings and values Romanian nationals attribute to a Western European passport. It has shown that the understanding of citizenship varies considerably amongst the participants in this research, who distinguish between symbolic and practical understandings of citizenship. The former set of values refers primarily to the prestige and pride enshrined in Western citizenship, which is often seen as helping participants from both host polities to climb up the European ladder. A second meaning was found amongst Paris-based participants, who imagined the French citizenship to be beneficial in 'feeling less foreign' and ensure a stable future in the host country. The practical understanding of citizenship comprised of the visa-free characteristic of the (mainly) British passport which allows the participants to embrace borderless travels. Belonging to a group initially excluded from is achieved in transnational mobility through the use of the Western European passport. Although ascribed within national borders of the host country, Romanians' nationality becomes chosen outside of its borders, when they become placed in the web of relationships they are initially excluded from. To put it differently, geographical distance means socio-cultural proximity. By transcending the limits to ethnic belonging, a French/British passport acts as a transnational ethnical enabler rather than national, which restates the fluidity of ethnicity that operates cross-spatially. This shows that transnational mobility of marginalised groups can coincide, at times, with equality.

To conclude, citizenship of the member state is imagined as a response to the issues the participants are experiencing in their everyday lives in the host country and outside of it. Citizenship thus becomes a prerequisite for equality outside of the host country. Nevertheless, the ambivalent imagined equality within the borders of the host polity remains illusory, as the next section illustrates.

### **Societal practices and lived experiences: The limited reality of dual citizenship**

The previous section investigated the imaginary values attributed to a British and French passport by the participants in this study. In contrast, this section engages with the reality the participants experienced post-naturalisation. It considers the limits of a Western citizenship by highlighting the ascriptions of non-belonging attributed to the Romanian participants in the possession of a British/French passport. It argues that everyday society practices are paramount to Romanians' conceptualisations of belonging to the receiving society. Rather than the possession of the host country passport, everyday experiences forge a sense inclusion into the mainstream and thus validate Romanians' membership to the host society.

### **Reconsideration of allegiances**

The first section of the chapter argued that the deciding factor for applying for a Western was various forms of discrimination Romanians experienced. This explains why many participants (mainly from France) are ready to acquire the host country citizenship, expecting to be accepted as full members of the host society. Alina is the only participant from London who sees a British passport as equivalent with integration. In the previous section, Alexandra, a Romanian female of Hungarian ethnicity having lived in London for over ten years, talked about the meaning she attributed to British citizenship, the pride she felt when becoming British. However, later during the interview she reflects again on the present significance of her British membership:

*Alexandra: I came here with an open mind, I wanted to integrate, (...).  
Anyway, this is an ideal which will never happen...*

*Claudia: You've got a British accent, you've got the passport, you could easily say you are [British], but...*

The conversation takes a less positive note when she continues referring to her experiences as a British citizen: "Yes, but I am not. That's the reality. I am not born here, I don't have an English family, I will not have completely their concepts, their thinking".

Belonging is interpreted as 'fitting in' on the basis of a past history often represented by family ties and 'a special way of thinking', a shared culture. It is "about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion" (Anthias 2008:8). However, proof of membership is not enough to facilitate migrants' proximity with the British nation and to be considered 'one of them'. She understands its limits, such as socio-cultural elements which prevent her from being fully immersed in the host country's culture. The lack of sense of sameness Alexandra experiences and the lack of recognition of herself as being 'one of them', trigger in her a reaffirmation of the feeling of belonging towards Romania and the UK that change throughout her life:

*I am not going to forget where I come from, do you understand? And I do not want to forget. Up until now I was like... I wanted to be like them [the British]. But now I realise that I, too, have an element which... even better... [emphasises] my own personality. Not necessarily Hungarian or Romanian, but where I come from.*

Interestingly, it was not until she had a British passport that she felt comfortable enough to embrace her Romanian affiliations. Alexandra becomes aware of what separates her from those inhabiting the British space through daily encounters and interactions. She is reminded of the impossibility to reconcile her Romanian-Hungarian roots and local upbringing with the British context she now lives in. As a result, she acquires a sense of self and understands what the limits of her belonging are and the societies she is allowed to (not) belong to. Unlike Yanasmayan (2015), who observed amongst Turkish participants in Britain that the recognition of multiple affinities enlarged the emotional landscape with respondents expressing loyalties to both societies, Alexandra's case demonstrates that the affective scope regresses following naturalisation. The continued feelings of exclusion she has experienced have compelled her to rethink her affective ties and affiliations towards both societies.

Since she does not feel accepted in/by British society, this triggers in her feelings of disconnection within the context of reception and reconnection with Romania. Here, the 're' from 'reconnection' is very important, as it indicates the creation of a link between the interviewee and Romania, which did not exist for a period of time. This might indicate that not having their political membership recognised by the members of the host society, immigrants can revert to an initial sense of Romanian identity.

Alexandra's story is equally similar to that of other respondents from Paris, such as Dorina from Paris. Asked about her thoughts upon having the French passport issued, she details:

*It was a big joy, I saw Chirac's signature. A big joy, I was extraordinarily happy (...). I cannot say I am as happy now, because everything has fallen into place, I do not find it extraordinary, that I have French citizenship. But then I thought of it as a realisation. It was the completion of my desire to integrate into French society.*

The "extraordinary happiness" she refers to was due to her loyalty to French society being materialised into a French passport. Unfortunately, her dream was shattered by discriminatory societal practices either at work or in social circles. She explains how when she saw a job vacancy and called the recruiters only to be told that the job no longer existed. However, when her manager called for the same vacancy, an application form was immediately sent to her. While she justifies this differential treatment on the basis of her foreign accent, in her personal life, discrimination is explained by her Romanian nationality. She details how her former partner's family disagreed from the beginning with their relationship:

*They disagreed with their son living with a Romanian (...). For example, they would often tell me 'I saw some Romanian gypsies' (...). They did everything they could so that things don't go well between me and this partner.*

It can therefore be assumed that political membership needs to be validated by the adoptive country through everyday professional and personal practices, rather than through immigration policies, for immigrants to feel included in the host society.

### **Space of ambivalence**

Sorin, a university lecturer from Paris explains how his trade-offs made by moving between nation-states in the pursuit of a professional career did not prove to be advantageous.

*Oh, I have been deeply disappointed for many years now [by France], especially when I would see that I cannot obtain anything [professionally] here. Deep disappointment. But I was equally disappointed by Romania. And in the end I embraced the status quo [in France].*

When he decided to return to Romania as he was unable to find a decent job in France after graduation, his hopes were dashed by his potential colleagues who associated his foreign education with feelings of superiority and thus rejected him from the Romanian professional sphere.

*[In Romania] I was told "OK, now you think you are clever because you got your PhD from Paris?" (...) When people find out that I got my PhD from Paris, there is this hatred and jealousy... (...) because "You've been there and now you want to show us that you are more clever?"*

Although he did think of France as a potential home when he first arrived there, this has gradually changed. In France his daily experiences in the professional and social sphere have reminded him of his status, that of a foreigner.

The in-betweenness he experiences is due to his 'reading' as Romanian in France and as French in Romania. Migration gives rise to a destabilising sense of identity which makes him experience a double displacement in the sense that they feel out of place, in both the sending and receiving contexts, or 'double alienation' (McAuley 1996). It is a story of affective paradox, reflected by the fact that the attachment to the host country cannot be reached due to cultural distance, while the identity to the country of origin is threatened as a result of geographical, temporal and professional distance.

Due to their rootedness being questioned in both locations, migrants often feel out of place in both societies and they inhabit the space in-between, which is a space of ambivalence due to their exclusion from forms of belonging. As a result of this dual disappointment, Sorin does not foresee himself permanently in Paris, but is not considering returning back to Romania either. He is open to new migratory journeys.

A French passport, however, seems to come in handy when dealing with French authorities during identity checks. As such, he escaped being labelled as a Romanian (and implicitly a Roma), but is being ascribed a neutral label, that of a foreigner. This implied that although there is no inherent difference between ethnic, racial and national collectivities, as they are all constructed around us and they are binaries from the dominant group perspective (see Yuval-Davis 2011:84), these differences matter to the less privileged. Romanians' construction as Gypsies forces them to embrace another identity in order to separate themselves from the stigmatised identification attributed. Rather than excluding the Roma from the national imaginary, Sorin chooses to exclude himself from the Romanian space in France and thus he evolves in less contested ways. In other words, possession of a passport and formal citizenship (membership into a national polity) (Hammar 1990) does not result in substantive citizenship (possession of a state and duties in a state).

The relational nature between everyday experiences in the society and the affective ties migrants have towards sending and receiving societies are important in the

construction of belonging. Indeed, as Anthias (2006:21) argues, “[i]t is (...) through practices and experiences of social inclusion that a sense of a stake and acceptance in a society is created and maintained”. Most participants refer to inclusion through social and professional societal practices. Nevertheless, Corina who had been in Paris for over 20 years emphasises the salience of earned citizenship. The practical fulfilment of duty represented by the payment of taxes completes her emotional connection to French society.

*Claudia: What did you feel when you took French citizenship?*

*Corina: It was great. I felt less foreign. Yes yes yes. Actually, the first moment, (...) when I felt less foreign and more of theirs’, accepted, if you want to call it like that, was when I got taxed on my income. When I paid the first taxes, (...) and I paid taxes before becoming a French citizen (...). Even more so since my husband, was severely ill, I had to call a few times the ambulance, very expensive interventions, which were free. I felt I was owing something (...). I was benefiting from something I was not paying towards.*

Here, claims to connection with the French space are made through economic ties, by giving back to the host society the acts of financial kindness which she and her family have taken away due to health issues. Her status as a foreigner in France is diminished by her ability to pay taxes and then by her citizenship. At the moment of the interview, Corina did not possess a Romanian passport or identity card, although she was planning to apply for one in order to vote in the Romanian 2015 presidential elections. This shows that the length of stay in the host country does not reduce transnational political activities.

This section revealed the tension between the individual’s possession and the society’s acceptance of migrants’ political membership. It argued that it is not political membership that allows Romanian participants to feel included in the mainstream, but everyday practices and interactions such as social and professional linkages and financial investments. Citizenship is experienced and embodied during everyday interactions and practices rather than through legal membership via a Western passport. As such, a Western passport has limited positive effects on Romanians’ everyday lives in the context of reception due to the non-recognition of their membership despite their naturalisation.

## **Predictors of naturalisation**

This section provides an analysis of socio-economic and residence characteristics of the Romanian nationals from London and Paris who are likely to consider naturalisation. Despite relatively high numbers of citizens seeking naturalisation,

literature examining dual citizenship is fairly recent (Skulte-Ouais 2013). That prompted Joppke (2007:44) to argue that “[w]hat ordinary people associate with citizenship is one of the biggest lacunae in the literature”. This is also shared by Szewczyk (2014), who admits that there is still no information regarding the reasons why people acquire citizenship. In academic research, migrants’ perspectives of multiple citizenships are generally omitted (with a few exceptions, such as Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006, and more recently Harpaz 2013, Byrne 2014, Yansamayan 2015). Generally, the meaning of citizenship and of passports are analysed in current literature using a top-down approach, as a classifying device within the hierarchy of mobility, or as a theoretical concept in international mobility (Torpey 2001, Macklin 2007).

In her study on Israelis with a European passport, Harpaz (2013) argues that the second nationality is better defined by the notion of ‘passport citizenship’ which points to its understanding as private property, rather than loyalty towards the country issuing it. He explains that while the Israeli nationality retains the individuals’ identity, the second citizenship is seen as ‘just a passport’ which can improve the family’s livelihoods by securing economic and political privileges due to visa-free mobility. Also, a European passport has the power to exclude the Israelis who do not own one. Therefore, “the European passport serves as a portable status symbol that allows them to reproduce Israeli ethno-class hierarchy abroad and experience it as a justified part of a global European-dominated hierarchy” (*ibid.*:192). Nevertheless, Harpaz does not explain how different European passports are perceived by their Israeli possessors. Rather, he considers Eastern and Western European passports as having an identical value in the eyes of their new possessors. This study explores the meanings Romanian nationals attribute to two Western European passports, which are often the symbol of modernity (see Chapter Five).

Generally speaking, the level of development of the country of origin is a crucial factor in the drivers of naturalisation, with individuals from relatively poor countries being more likely to apply for citizenship than individuals from richer countries (Vink et al. 2013). Following this line of thought, it is expected that the more vulnerable immigrants are, the more benefits they would associate with a Western passport as it might be seen as a key to full rights. However, Dronkers and Vink (2010) identified a positive correlation between socio-economic status and naturalisation rates. Personal attributes matter in the process of naturalisation, such as education levels (Bloemraad 2006) or the neighbourhood they live in (Duncan and Waldorf 2009), with immigrants from well-assimilated immigrant enclaves more likely to acquire citizenship. In a study amongst immigrants in the United States, Massey

and Akresh (2006) found that those expressing a high degree of satisfaction in the host country are more likely to consider naturalisation and implicitly more likely to intend to remain in the United States. Interestingly, the individuals with high earnings and ownership of a property in the United States were less likely to consider taking up US citizenship. Nevertheless, the research for this study indicates that the importance attributed to naturalisation is remarked amongst Romanians from France, who, despite experiences of discrimination, were more inclined than the participants from London to acquire French citizenship.

The remainder of this section contextualises Romanians' through processes regarding the possibility of acquiring a Western European passport. In so doing, it explores the profiles of those who consider enrolling on the journey to acquiring citizenship of the host country. It argues that there are three broad factors which influence the path to naturalisation: eligibility, utility and imagined length of stay.

### **Eligibility**

Approximately 125,800 foreign citizens acquired British citizenship in 2014 (Blinder 2015), compared to 105,613 in France (Direction Générale des Etrangers en France 2016). Although there are several routes to naturalisation, usually foreign nationals qualify to become British after a total period of six years in the host country as qualified persons. In France the length of stay is five years. In theory, individuals are also eligible to naturalise after two years of studies at a French university. However, in practice, this is unlikely due to their lack of direct financial resources from employment (Fassin and Mazouz 2009).

From an immigration policy perspective, at the time the study was conducted, many low-skilled Romanians were not in the possession of work permits from the host country's government which would have allowed them to be legally employed. Other participants had not spent the required period of time in order to qualify. Therefore, host country citizenship was expected to be obtained in a relatively distant future, when they might be eligible, which means that they were rather neutral or ambivalent with regards to a possible future naturalisation (see McNevin 2013 for more on ambivalence and citizenship amongst irregular immigrants).

Immigrants who want to naturalise as French or British citizens need to pass language and history/culture tests<sup>11</sup>. The lack of personal resources such as knowledge about the application process, as well as French/British history and language skills, often hinders individuals' chances of successful application. Participants found in low-skilled occupations, such as Catalin, who works as a

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<sup>11</sup> 'Livret du Citoyen' (France) and 'Life in the UK Test' (UK).

builder in France with fellow Romanians and thus does not have the opportunity to improve his French, were less inclined than their high-skilled counterparts to consider naturalisation. Talking about the lack of cultural capital which hinders his naturalisation as French, Catalin said: “You need to know the language well if you want the nationality. (...) You need to know French history. You need to pass a test“.

Thus, educational attainment is one of the main factors which dissuade low-skilled participants from applying for a foreign passport. In the UK, the citizenship test focuses on questions about life in the UK which gives practical information about living in the UK or about history, but which is far from being essential in peoples' everyday lives (Byrne 2016). Cultural capital, such as French/English language ability and the ability to engage with the exam questions, matter in decisions to naturalise. This is consistent with findings in the literature (see Yanasmayan 2015, Bloemraad 2004) which claim that highly educated migrants are more likely to desire and acquire dual citizenship.

## Utility

Many believed that a new passport would not change how they would be perceived in the country of residence, as cues such as onomastics and accent would still make them prone to discriminatory attitudes and thus unwelcome. The awareness of their status as foreigners and thus not being welcome into the dominant space of the host land contributes to their ethnic identification, as they develop a sense of awareness of their markers of difference.

Mircea, an IT professional in London, after having lived in York for a few years, does not perceive great benefits associated with British citizenship. This is probably due to the prospect of settling in the UK, which he sees as unattractive, in contrast to Spain, where his brother and his family reside.

*I don't consider applying for a British passport. For now, it would not bring me any benefit, or at least I do not know of any. Anyway, no matter what passport I have, I would still be Romanian. It is not as if I would become British overnight, so I remain what I am [grin]. Which is not necessarily bad, since it's still me [wink].*

The value of European citizenship consists in its access to a common space of free movement and equal rights. Indeed, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012/326) provides that “every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union”. Since Romania is a EU member state, Romanian citizenship, on the whole, grants the same degree of benefits and rights as British citizenship. It can therefore be assumed that a Western European

passport does not become a requisite any longer, as Mircea enjoys similar rights as British citizens in the host polity. In the same line of thought, Dronkers and Vink (2012:395-409) argue that taking up the citizenship of another EU member state “would provide relatively little in terms of substantive benefits of citizenship” and, as such, European citizens are not interested in acquiring a second European citizenship. Nonetheless, Graeber (2016) finds that the Euro crisis which had wide ranging political and economic consequences reactivated the acquisition of a Western European passport amongst EU nationals residing in other European countries. This is in line with this research, which found that in times of significant political uncertainty and turmoil, such as the Brexit, Romanian participants from London are likely to consider naturalising as British citizens.

Mircea’s opinion was not commonly shared amongst high-skilled and implicitly high earning Romanians interviewed in the UK. Many of them highlighted the importance of a Western European passport in terms of mobility benefits which translated into the ability to travel more easily to non-EU countries. The mobility implications of a foreign passport were not considered as fundamental by low-skilled participants, who tended to divide their lives between the country of residence, where they have their professional activity, and Romania, where they go on holiday. Furthermore, low-skilled Romanians who lack financial means and are engaged in money-saving activities were of the opinion that taking a holiday does not outweigh the benefits of saving money for the purpose of accumulating assets such as buying or building of properties. Take for example Andreea, a former shop assistant and currently a stay-at-home mother. She and her husband have chosen to invest their hard-saved money in properties rather than holidays, and now own a flat in Romania which they rent out and plan on buying a house in the UK. She stated: “[In Romania] everybody goes on holiday to the seaside. I have only been once on holiday, for my honeymoon, but back home everybody goes on holiday”.

Consequently, given their low socio-economic status, low-skilled Romanians do not enjoy the logistical benefits of a Western European passport, such as travelling visa-free. By contrast in France, the utility of a Western European passport was highlighted as a necessary tool to overcome perceived systematic discrimination. The political adherence to the French dominant group emerges due to rejection by the mainstream.

Indeed, for Tiberiu, a male participant from Paris who works in the building industry, French nationality was synonymous with integration and the hope that getting naturalised would alleviate some of the inequality he faces, which is expressed by the following statement: “so that the French do not mock us any longer” (smiles). Tiberiu had “heard that racism exists [in French society]”, and therefore even gave

French names to his children in order to overcome any potential racist incidents. In this case, negative images (rather than experiences) of the host society, have determined future decisions regarding naturalisation. He and his family are in the process of applying for French citizenship, while at the same time they have become house owners in Romania. This dual rooting takes a material form in Romania (due to his parents' pressure to own a property in Romania) and a symbolical form in France, a dimension which is meant to become beneficial in the long term, as he does not see himself returning to Romania, but staying in France or even emigrating to other places with his family.

This section has discussed the usefulness attributed by Romanian participants to the host country passport. Intentions to naturalise generally differ amongst low and high skilled participants, with Romanians in low status employment (from both London and Paris) being less likely to enjoy the practical attributes of a Western passport (such as mobility). After controlling for socio-economic status, the Romanians from Paris were found to be more likely than their co-nationals from London to consider acquiring a French passport, a document thought to reduce daily encounters with discrimination.

### **Imagined length of stay**

The length of time spent in the host country was also considered in participants' aspirations to French or British citizenship. As opposed to high-skilled respondents, who tended to have less of a definite answer with regards to their long term plans, many low-skilled participants imagined their stay in the country of destination to be of a temporary nature. Cora, a teacher in Romania, has worked as a nanny in London for over three years in order to pay off her family's debts. The so-believed temporary nature of her stay in London hinders the naturalisation process, as she reported:

*Cora: I haven't got any papers and I haven't inquired...I haven't applied for any of these because every day I have spent here, I said it would be the last one. This is why I never looked into getting my papers. (...) I didn't get them [the papers] because I didn't want to stay.*

*Claudia: And you still don't want to stay?*

*Cora: I still don't really want to stay...*

Cora's testimonial typifies the stories found in both London and Paris amongst the low-skilled participants. Although they often find themselves in a 'permanent feeling of temporality', many respondents refused to become documented on the basis of a very imminent future return. As such, they postponed regularising their status, which, in turn, conferred a justification for their impermanent stay. Due to the

temporality she attaches to her presence in London, Cora is both legally and socially in limbo. Temporality here refers to the uncertainty she experiences, which influences the nature of her anchorage in and engagement with British society. She is unlikely to sustain her social life outside of the work sphere due to the long working hours which allow her to save money and ultimately return to Romania.

Very few, such as Andreea (London) take into account their achievements in the host country, which would have an effect on their length of stay: "One does not leave anymore if everything goes well". At the beginning of their life in the host country many Romanians consider returning to Romania, but after time and reflection on factors such as professional security and children born in the host country, their opinion changes in favour of settlement in the destination country, as the next excerpt shows: "I have not thought about this. [The British passport] does not interest me much, but if I will remain here, I probably will [apply]. But I do not know if I will remain. I do not know, I haven't decided yet".

Therefore most low-skilled respondents' rejected engaging in formalities with the host country. The notable exceptions were couples in their thirties, who felt a sense of commitment towards France or the United Kingdom and even a sense of belonging, as they had arrived in the host country at a relatively young age (mid 20s, early 30s) and have since built a family. This may imply that the presence of immediate family in the host country (spouses and/or children) as well as the stage of life they are in increases the chances for low-skilled migrants being willing to apply for a passport of the host country. Indeed, as Byrne (2014:120) argues, "[t]he impact of obtaining new citizenship on individuals depends on (...) what stage of life they are in and the nature of family networks".

It emerges that transnational practices amongst participants with young families may weaken over time, as Andreea becomes more settled in Britain. Indeed, during the interview, she mentioned that she and her family have not returned regularly to Romania and have not brought their family over for visits for financial reasons, as they bought a flat in Romania and they are also saving money to buy a property in London. Nevertheless, although mobility related transnational practices diminish over time, Andreea dedicates some of her free time to reading Romanian news and speaking on the phone with her family.

Casian works for Doctors Without Borders, a French organisation delivering medical care to people affected by conflict or healthcare shortages. He is separated from the French mother of his child and had lived prior to the interview in France, Romania and Italy (where his parents reside). He is equally resistant to the acquisition of French citizenship:

*I thought of applying [for French citizenship], but I didn't want to [in the end]. I do not want to be French. Actually, I do not want to be anything. (...) I have been a nomad for the past six months, so I do not feel like any nationality.*

His rejection of national labels resonates with his extensive personal and professional travels. A citizen of the world due to his time spent as a nomad, Casian transcends state boundaries and is yearning for a world in which equality prevails. "I do not want to be anything" is a longing for equality and humanitarianism. He becomes a cosmopolitan for whom emotional affiliations to nation states are not reflected by the legal connections. In his view of the world, "[c]osmopolitanism is even more closely linked to a liberal belief in basic human rights, which all individuals should enjoy, but implies an ideal of a world community uniting in some sense individual bearers of rights" (Carter 2001:2). While his rejection of legal memberships all together is explained by his recurring travels which do not tie him to any specific place, the absence of close kin relationships in both Romania and France might be the real cause for his lack of anchorage in nation-states.

Romanians' social positionings, such as knowledge of the host country language and age influence Romanians' understanding of naturalisation and therefore intentions to become French/British citizens. As such, the language and knowledge of the country as well as the mandatory legal stay of five or six years deters participants in menial jobs to naturalise as French or British citizens. However, the naturalisation rates of low-skilled participants increase significantly when their future plans ground them in the host country due to family ties through marriage or children as well as home ownership or permanent employment. Moreover, as expected, marriage to a host country national is highly correlated with participants' probability to be or consider becoming citizens. Since mixed couples were more present in France than in London, Romanian women (especially) were more likely than their co-nationals from London to possess a Western passport.

High-skilled Romanians from London conceptualised their interest in naturalising for practical reasons such as visa-free travels. Their status as high earners made them more inclined to engage in international travel and thus enjoy the advantages of visa-free travel. The burgeoning interest in mobile lives might be explained by the fact that a number of the interviewees from London had lived in other countries before coming to Britain. The legal benefit of a Western passport was considered after perceptions of discrimination during cross-border movements, when they endured unequal treatment due to their Romanian passport. This means that when the UK leaves the EU, the numbers of Romanian nationals naturalising as British citizens could increase in order to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic inconvenience and legal discrimination during re-entry in the UK.

In contrast, Romanian participants from Paris were found to embrace their French nationality with a more inbound approach: that of settling in France. This can be attributed to the fact that many Romanians from Paris had lived in other French locations before 'settling' in Paris, which might have strengthened their affective affiliations with France. Furthermore, feelings of 'foreigner', stigmatisation and desire to integrate often overlap and are related in migrants' discourses regarding the eventual desire to apply for a French passport. As such, French nationality acts as a bridge towards erasing the boundaries that separate the self from the others. Its purpose is to create a symbiotic relationship between themselves and the state and overcome the potential barriers that might undermine their everyday experiences. Yet, this transition has to be assessed and approved by the mainstream for the Romanian individual to feel welcome in the space inhabited by citizens, as they have the power to validate Romanians' inclusion into French life.

Amongst the low-skilled from both locations, the presence of family in the host country increased the consideration of naturalisation. High-skilled participants from London regarded the British passport as a visa-free mobility enhancer, while the co-nationals from Paris considered it as a strategy to move out of their marginalised position and be subject to equal, non-discriminatory treatment in France and abroad. Family ties in the host country emerged as the main legal anchorage in the host country for the low-skilled, while the high-skilled understood it in terms of mobility (British case) or equal treatment (French case).

Thus, Romanian citizens are engaged in the pursuit of Western citizenship because of a scarcity of legal rights attached to Romanian legal citizenship or due to close family ties in the context of immigration.

## **Conclusion**

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

temporary, they are prepared to improve their situation in the host country. Uncertainty about permanence is dispelled gradually through (the thoughts of) owning a French passport.

In contrast, Romanians from the UK envisage temporal disruptions in their stay in Britain. British citizenship was mainly sought for mobility reasons, which might correspond to Romanians' plans to one day leave Britain. The temporality of the British experience reflects the ambivalence towards the host context and perhaps the desire to return to Romania.

This can have future negative implications for Britain, such as brain drain (see for a similar argument Szewczyk 2014). Also, if citizenship of a given country reflects a genuine bond based on loyalty, this connectedness between the temporary immigrant and the context of arrival is challenged by the temporary nature of the migrant's presence which shifts conceptions about national loyalty and belonging (see also Bauböck 2011). Not needing a visa to undertake lawful employment in Britain means that temporality is not imposed by political structures and regulations, and offers flexibility to migrants to follow their personal strategies rather than being tied to a place. Romanians' timescales encompass the present and stretch into a linear future in France and a fragmented future in Britain.

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

To conclude, this chapter was not interested in how exclusion and boundaries are maintained by political actors such as the state. Rather, it explored how processes of inclusion, exclusion and differentiation provide insights into the limits of both a Romanian and a Western passport. It showed that although there is a diversity of reasonings behind naturalisation, Western citizenships allow Romanian

respondents to embrace a sense of security they lack without it: identity security and mobility security. French and British naturalisation, from Romanian applicants' perspective, represents strategic naturalisation. This highlights the second class status of Romanian citizenship at the European level, where all member-states are not perceived as equal.

The similarities in both contexts reflect Romanians' periferical social location. Indeed, the European liberalisation of mobility rules did not engender the presence of equal rights. While citizenship of the host society does not translate into being welcomed into the 'social fabric' of the host society, Romanians' acceptance of the British/French cultural membership is achieved during transnational mobility, when the ethnic dimension of citizenship becomes acquired. Thus, a Western European passport becomes the conduit for modernity and therefore whiteness through its political, legal, economic and cultural ability to allow Romanians to embrace equal treatment outside of the borders of the host country.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of EU citizenship, and one of its founding principles, has been to create, through the elimination of national borders, a space defined by a rejection of nationality based discrimination (Maas 2008). As well as an economic project, European integration is a political project intended to create a common European status by virtue of European citizenship. Yet, despite the political and economic rights the Romanian diaspora can enjoy in the EU as a result of the harmonisation of policies, their European identity is still questioned during social encounters with the mainstream. Indeed, just like Favell (2008a)'s 'Eurostars' who experience little everyday discriminations, the Romanians interviewed (both high and low-skilled) implicitly or explicitly refer to the European citizenship they are still excluded from due to their national belonging.

Therefore, participants' practices of belonging can be interpreted as a strategy to move from the margins both ethnically and institutionally. As such, this study sought to explore Romanians' allegiances towards the sending and receiving societies through the prism of social relations in London and Paris. Romanians' aspirations to belong to host societies offer a useful lens to understand and analyse the second-class citizenship Romanians perceive themselves to embody and their journey towards the correction and counteracting of misconceptions and stereotypes. The variety of experiences of (non-)belonging is captured by the diversity of participants' demographics such as age, skills, gender or time spent in the host country through lengthy semi-structured interviews in London and Paris.

This chapter further summarises the main findings of the thesis. These are accompanied by reflections on their empirical, theoretical and methodological contribution as well as the limitations of this study and potential directions for future research.

### **Main findings: from aspirational home to aspirational belonging**

The empirical component of the thesis starts with Chapter Three which contextualises Romanian migration, with focus on departure and arrival. Low-skilled Romanians tend to experience migration as imposed upon them due to financial constraints, whilst high-skilled Romanians understand it as a practice of their European identity, that of having the right to be at home in the world. Nevertheless, their status as European citizens is perceived to be at odds with their associations

with the Roma, which makes them prone to discriminatory treatment during social encounters with the mainstream. It was argued that Romania is engaged in a process of a white nation-building which rests on the exclusion of the Roma from the Romanian discourses, who are seen as belonging to an inferior, non-European race. Equally, the chapter argues that for many low-skilled migrants, migration is depicted as a failure, due to their inability to secure a dignified lifestyle in Romania. This is in contrast with most research on migration (see for example Anghel 2013 regarding Romanians in Western Europe), which tends to depict migrants as inhabiting socio-economic privileged spaces in comparison to those left home.

Chapter Four argued that due to national social pressures exerted on Romanian citizens with regards to home ownership and family creation, migration is believed to represent a route to home creation. More importantly, the meaning of home does not change throughout the lifetime of the Romanians interviewed. Rather, the process through which they aim to achieve home changes, such as the importance of localities for future family creation. As such, home is both dynamic and static. It is dynamic because home-creation is a journey one embarks on in order to achieve an aspirational home. It is static because its components remain constant: economic stability, which enables family creation and home ownership.

Unlike Russell (2009:327), who argues that home “cannot exist as a stable and unified entity” due to its spatial, familial and social arrangements as well as a plurality of emotional attachments and experiences, this research has shown that home is anchored in static personal aspirations. Nevertheless, its dynamism comes from the multitude of strategies adopted to fulfil these personal objectives. These strategies are either of a temporal or spatial nature, as they involve transnational connections and methods of achieving home which undergo alteration due to the passing of time. Thus, while ideals of home seem to be stable, the process through which they become reality seems to be fluid. Thus, migration is believed to improve migrants’ economic circumstances and contribute towards their pursuit of independence and stability and the ability to create a home. In other words, migration is largely experienced as a personal stepping stone which allows for the transition from barbarism to civilisation in order to achieve modernity.

Chapter Five adds to the materiality and affect duality. If the previous chapter focused on the ways in which the host country is seen as a means to progress, this chapter explores the ways in which the receiving setting creates the othering experienced by Romanian participants through social encounters with the mainstream. Belonging or non-belonging thus arises from Romanians’ understanding that they cannot belong to the dominant space. Indeed, “[b]elonging questions often emerge because we feel that there are a range of spaces, places,

locales and identities that we feel we do not and cannot belong to, in the sense that we cannot gain access, participate or be included within” (Anthias 2008:8). The encounters in the host society inform Romanians’ senses of their self-determined and ascribed ethnicity.

The inflating or deflating of their Romanian ethnicity provides useful insights on their relational belongings with both the sending and receiving societies. Romanians from London who identified forms of discrimination in the labour market, tended to be of a professional nature, with exploitation as its main form. In France, however, most of the accounts of racism and/or discrimination were through interpersonal channels, represented by dismissive or patronising behaviour from co-workers. This could be due to the fact that in Britain convivial relations are characterised by a relative indifference and curiosity about peoples’ worlds and backgrounds (Wessendorf 2014). Another possible explanation for this is the absence of relationships with British people amongst a large proportion of Romanians in London. Moreover, in the British case, social relations very rarely translate into relations in the private place between Romanians and British people (*ibid.*). In France, however, mixed social relations between Romanians and French nationals are relatively common, which translates into physical togetherness but social divisions remain. By belonging to a cosmopolitan social space characterised by a multi-ethnic mix, Romanians inhabiting privileged economic and social spaces in Britain, escape the pressure to belong to British society. In France, since they interact more with French citizens, they are more exposed to negative remarks. Multiple discriminations in France meant that the interviewees were associating it with their nationality, while in France it was justified mainly by labour market characteristics such as scarcity of jobs.

This is consistent with a burgeoning body of research arguing that persistent awareness of difference clarifies minority members’ understanding of the discrimination associated with their identity (see Ramos et al. 2012 for an overview). In Britain, due to relatively few accounts of discrimination, it is attributed to structural factors, such as labour market conditions. Furthermore, this chapter also showed the ways in which social interactions with the mainstream influence Romanians’ inflation and deflation of ethnic identity, which provides insights into migrants’ negotiations of ethnic belonging. Anthias (2002) argues that the processes of identification and dis-identification during social interactions are essential in the construction of an individual’s translocational positionalities. Moreover, they reflect the yearning for acceptance by the dominant group in order to be recognised as European citizens. Thus, the sense of aspirational home captured in the first chapter is replaced by a sense of aspirational belonging during

social interactions. This may be taken to indicate that daily experiences in the host country change the nature of the quest for modernity. If in Chapter Four modernity was characterised by family and home ownership, in Chapter Five, modernity is experienced relationally, through inclusion and exclusion into the mainstream. Romanians' yearn for relational modernity is activated through social interactions, as a result of their yearning for sameness in the host country.

Chapter Six investigates one of the strategies employed by Romanians to highlight their white European identities during social encounters with the mainstream. Whiteness 'as a form of power [that] is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented' through a multiplicity of practices (Twine and Gallagher 2008:7). Romanians' understanding of their status as second-class Europeans is associated with their low socio-economic and cultural status. While the cohort from London tend to emphasise more vehemently their work ethic and high occupational status, Romanians from Paris seem to be engaged in a process of ethnic distinction between themselves and Romanian Roma on the basis of white skins and socio-economic status. Ironically, the Roma are both the cause of Romanians' destitution of whiteness and the legitimisation of their demands of membership to the white space. As such, Romanians adopt a racist topoi with reference to Romanian Roma, who are blamed for tarnishing Romanians' reputation abroad (and thus creating the inferiority complex), in order to highlight their European membership. Their inferiority/superiority complex is intensified in migration, and instead of displaying patriotism towards the sending or receiving country, they "become moored into a no man's land brought about by their double alienation" (Trandafoiu 2013:36). Trandafoiu (2013:47) explains that this oscillation between inferiority and superiority, is between "a patriotic complex of superiority produced by the Romanian national education system, and the inferiority felt by Romanian tourists or migrants in real interactions with ethnic others in authority, while queuing for a visa and being turned down as undesirable". Thus, modernity is achieved by Romanians firstly by restricting the idea of nation to a community imagined as white through the exclusion of the racially othered Roma and of other ethnic minorities from the host country. Secondly, by stretching the concept of nation to an all-encompassing context of reception to which they consider themselves to belong and consequently become 'whitened'.

In Chapter Seven, the focus moves on to institutional strategies aimed at acceptance of Romanians' membership by the mainstream. The Romanians interviewed in Paris were more likely to explicitly refer to discriminatory treatment and thus attributed to a French passport potential properties which would allow them to embrace equality. In the British case, the incentive to naturalise is

represented by the capability of Western passports to successfully achieve mobility. Their Romanian nationality is not enough to ease the stress of border-crossings unlike a British document, which can create the possibility of travelling outside of the EU without significant visa restrictions. Moreover, the European citizenship Romanian nationals possess allows them to be part of two (or more) countries and to express allegiance both to the host country and to a transnational community, which reveal multiple loyalties and memberships (Kastoryano 2002). The interviews revealed that although affective belonging towards the host is not entirely absent from participants stories (expressed through their desire to become part of the 'social fabric' of the dominant group), their non-recognition of sameness triggers in them affective repositioning towards the country of origin or in ambivalent spaces of belonging. This accords with Antonisch (2010)'s observation that, despite migrants' willingness to assimilate, cultural or embodied traits expose them to social practices and public discourses of exclusion, rather than allowing them to embrace sameness.

### **Empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions**

Empirically, through qualitative interviews, this study has amassed original data about the lifeworlds of Romanian immigrants, structured around four main themes: home, belonging, whiteness and citizenship. It illuminated not only how Romanians experience boundaries, but also how they draw boundaries between themselves and others in order to protect and enact their European identity.

In her 2009 paper, Bridget Byrne argues that where whiteness is marginal (experienced by the working classes), it is emphasised and analysed in research. By contrast, where it refers to privilege, it is ignored. This research argued that a more nuanced way of engaging with whiteness holistically is through teasing out the creation and experience of symbolic boundaries that individuals draw between themselves and the others perceived as inferior or superior. It has provided a deeper insight into how whiteness is experienced holistically, both from the margins and the centre. It has illustrated Romanians' double status as both oppressors and victims.

While there is growing evidence suggesting that Eastern Europeans have been targets of racism (Spencer et al. 2007, Dawney 2008, Fox et al. 2012), to date, there has been very little research investigating how Eastern Europeans racialise other groups (Ryan 2010). To examine racism from the vantage point of migrants themselves, Fox (2013) carried out research on Romanians and Hungarians in Bristol, in the South-West of England. He observed that both groups use racism to both "define and defend their precarious position in the UK's racialised hierarchies"

(*ibid.*:1872). Romanians tended to construct the Roma as racially inferior, while the Hungarians' attention was mostly directed towards British ethnic minorities such as blacks and Asian. The interviews conducted in London and Paris revealed more nuanced evidence. While most of Romanians interviewed, indifferent of their socio-economic status and location, erected ethnic boundaries between themselves and the Romas, low-skilled respondents were more likely to impute racism to minorities in the host country, such as Poles and Indians in Britain or black people in France.

The nature of the boundaries created reveals insights into the social position inhabited by Romanians. It can be argued that most Romanians focus their racialising strategies on the Roma in an attempt to create an ethnic dividing line which could counteract the unfortunate proximity of nomenclature. In addition, the low-skilled, not only need to overcome the Roma-Romanian amalgam, but also need to overcome other barriers due to their precarious socio-economic status. While both high and low-skilled Romanians experience an internal ethnic conflict between themselves and the Roma, low-skilled Romanians also refer to an external one, represented by their position vis-a-vis other racialised ethnicities. These findings might suggest that if high-skilled Romanians are successful in securing their Romanian ethnicity with regards to the dominant group, they can place themselves at the top of host country's racialised hierarchies. In turn, low-skilled-migrants, due to their precarious socio-economic status, need to claim their ethnic superiority (by distinguishing themselves from the Roma), but also their superior work ethic (in contrast to other ethnic minorities). Thus, whiteness is thought to be accumulated as both cultural and economic capital through racialised practices, which allows Romanians to become 'whitened'. In parallel, whiteness frames Romanians' conceptions of nation-building, which rests on everyday manifestations of racism (Stanfield 1985).

Additionally, this study offers some important insights into the distinction between the concepts of home and belonging. Previous studies on home and belonging have failed to give sufficient attention to the theoretical differences between these notions (Antonisch 2010). They have often been used interchangeably to describe the same feelings of safety, security or 'at home' (see for example Binaiisa 2011). This study has attempted to show the centrality of notions of home (initially) and belonging (subsequently) in the migratory journey.

In this research, home was defined as a site of material and affective practices which represent migrants' perception of their place in society based on personal achievements resulted from their individual aspirations prior to migration. In contrast, belonging is about migrants' understanding of their place in society based on everyday encounters with the mainstream. More precisely, while home is self-

focused due to its aspirational component and rests on the fulfilment of material and emotional needs, belonging is outward focused as it reposes on its rejection or validation by the mainstream. The conceptual differentiation between the two concepts provides a useful analytical tool to shed light on the stages of migratory journeys as well as the gains migrants hope to achieve from this migration: personal (through home-creation) and social (through belonging).

Lastly, this study has engaged with migrants' perceptions and imaginings of citizenship, a perspective which, with a few exceptions (see Byrne 2014, Ehrkamp 2006) is largely omitted. Instead, most studies have investigated citizenship from a political perspective. This research confirmed the importance of migrants' views on imaginings of citizenship in providing useful insights into migrants' attachments to the host and sending country. For example, Chapter Seven argued that Romanians' views on naturalisation may reflect a temporal desire to stay in Britain (which can represent the source of anxieties felt by the mainstream population; (see Cover 2015 regarding the Australian case) or a more permanent residence in France. Timescales in migration offer an insight into where migrants situate themselves and how long for, which reflect the sense of attachment migrants have to the place inhabited (which can materialise in legalisation of the status, family creation, home ownership etc.). Indeed, as well as a spatial process which consists of moving to different geographical locations, migration is also a temporal process. For example, a study by Bastia and McGrath (2011), found that Bolivian migrant workers in the garment industry were prepared to put up with long working hours and below average pay as they saw themselves in the host countries on a temporary basis. Despite this, the migration scholarship has not engaged with the temporality of the migratory process (see Griffiths et al. 2013 for an overview).

Moreover, a focus on migrants' interpretations of citizenship sheds light on their interpretations of integration into the host nation. If the cohort from London were given the illusion of 'being whitened' through daily interactions, those interviewed from Paris, through the emphasis they placed on a French passport, might have been lured into 'becoming whitened' through the possession of a French passport.

From a methodological perspective, many researchers agree in that investigators who have links with the community "can develop a greater understanding of the experiences and social realities of the members of that community...result[ing] in greater levels of trust" (Coupal 2005 paragraph 17). However, this can also be associated with difficulties to detach oneself from the research and adopt an objective stance on the project due to the high levels of personal involvement. Nevertheless, I found that being an insider was initially associated with low levels of psychological comfort and trust. But rather than approaching my presence in the

field from the perspective of the insider-outsider duality, it has been argued that a more useful conceptualisation is that of 'an insider from afar'. While my insider identity proved to pose problems during the initial recruitment process by triggering distrust, it proved to be useful at the interview stage, as I was attributed empathetic characteristics. As such, my outsider identity, that of having been educated in a Western European context, had to be emphasised during the access and recruitment processes, which conferred an ethical dimension to the research, largely absent from the Romanian context<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, my two perceived identities had to be constantly negotiated in order to enter the community and be trusted.

## Limitations

The findings in this study are subject to at least three limitations. First, for many Romanians interviewed, social life is anchored in transnational practices (explored in Chapter Four). Therefore, this PhD would have potentially benefited from a multi-sited methodology, following migrants' in Romania. By restricting the fieldwork to London and Paris, I was somewhat confined to national/city borders which may have prevented getting a better insight into migrants' expressions of belonging to Romania. However, the principal interest of this study was found in the way daily encounters with the mainstream in London and Paris influenced Romanians' understandings of belonging towards the host country and consequently how this shaped the nature of allegiances towards Romania. A full discussion of the nature of allegiances towards Romania would have lied beyond the scope of this study.

Second, another potential problem is that social worlds are subject to social change. This was evident throughout the thesis. One example was that of two participants returning to Romania within months of the interview while there had been no mention of an immediate return during the interview. Another example was the participants/perception of a Romanian passport which increased in value (due to its European dimension) following the British vote to leave the EU in June 2016 (Chapter Seven). These are just two examples of how experiences change over short periods of time due to either events in the host country (of a political or economic nature) or in the sending country (family creation). The possibility of developing longitudinal research, or the ability to maintain contact with the participants and engage in follow up would facilitate the construction of migrants' life trajectories and thus contribute to a better understanding of their experiences

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<sup>12</sup> Romania has been home to multiple scandals of plagiarism and poor quality of PhDs in the last few years. See, for example [http://www.stripesurse.ro/liliana-minca-are-un-doctorat-o-licen-a-i-doua-masterate-luate-in-acela-i-an\\_1147649.html](http://www.stripesurse.ro/liliana-minca-are-un-doctorat-o-licen-a-i-doua-masterate-luate-in-acela-i-an_1147649.html)

and how attachments change overtime. Nevertheless, this research aimed to understand migrants' variety of experiences and practices of belonging at a certain point in time, rather than how these fluctuate over time, which was also beyond the scope of the study.

Third, the research was conducted (and written for the most part) in a pre-Brexit scenario. Therefore, the interviews with participants in London did not address the effects of the political instability on respondents' future plans regarding their presence in Britain. Chapter Six briefly examined the changes in the role of the Romanian passport attributed to the referendum, based on follow-up emails with one participant. Nevertheless, these results may not be applicable to the wider population. Another significant aspect of Brexit is the possible changes to Romanians' political belonging. Indeed, many participants may decide that British naturalisation may secure their presence in the host country. The possession of a British passport might strengthen their attachments to the context of reception and consequently ground them in Britain.

## **Future research**

Belonging is not limited to permanent residency or the possession of a passport, but also to structural factors such as everyday activities, labour market participation, relationships etc. Future literature exploring migrants' experiences (and integration) in the host country should capture migrants' attachments to the host country relationally, with focus on how the social interactions in the host country and structural dimensions shape their positioning vis a vis the majority and thus the attachments they nurture towards the context of receptions. Their experiences of inclusion and exclusion influence their senses of belonging to host country (McMillan 2001).

Naturalisation might harbour migrants ethnically in the receiving nation. At the same time, the newly acquired passport deployed outside of the borders of the nation state becomes a resource for guaranteeing equal treatment (see Chapter Seven). In order to deepen our understanding of experiences of ethnicity and citizenship, future research should engage with how ethnicity is perceived by dual nationals, when they can incarnate the ethnicity of the group they are excluded from.

A way of enlarging our understanding of contemporary migration might be by investigating how the rise of the Right Wing in Western Europe influences migration decisions from Central-Eastern European countries, where the media report the attitudes towards specific groups of migrants.

## **Final remarks**

This study has contributed to the understanding of contemporary migration in London and Paris. Romanians' status as political actors has a transnational outreach (see also Trandafoiu 2013). Indeed, in their discourses, the interviewees not only referred to their migrant condition, but they made mention of Romania as a nation-state and the importance of a positive diasporic image in order for their country of origin to be represented by 'good citizens', not by the 'bad' ones who succeed at damaging its reputation. This may be beneficial for Romania, as its reputation may shift into one being associated with appreciative characteristics.

Romanians' claims of belonging to the host country community should be read as attempts to embrace a modern European identity they have been denied. Practices of belonging to reaffirm Romanians' Europeaness rest on strategies deployed at various levels; at an individual level through home ownership and family, at a meso level through belonging to the host society, at a macro level through whitening practices; and globally through the possession of Western European passport. Nevertheless, Romanian nation building is under scrutiny due to the presence, in participants' discourses, of specific personal attachments and lack of bonds towards the nation.

Through frequent returns to Romania, pictured as a regenerative space, Romanian migrants contribute to the modernity of the host country rather than Romania, because they are fulfilled professionals in Britain/France and fulfilled holiday-makers in Romania. Moreover, the visits to Romania, rather than acting as bonding ties to Romania, contribute to a general state of diasporic morosity caused by slow socio-economic and political advances in the country of origin. As such, since the link with Romania is gradually broken through home creation in the host country, but belonging to the host nation is questioned, Romanians' migratory quest shifts from one centred around an aspirational home, into a new migratory journey, that of aspirational belonging.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

A8 - Accession 8: EU Member States which joined on the 1st May 2004

A2 - Accession 2: EU Member States which joined on 1st January 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania)

GP – General Practitioner

ESRC – the Economic and Social Research Council

EU – European Union

EVW – European Voluntary Workers

NINo – National Insurance Number

UK – the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

LSRS – Romanian Ligue of Students from Abroad

UKIP – United Kingdom Independence Party

FN – the Front National

## Appendix A – Participant Details

For reasons of anonymity, given that these individuals were well known in a relatively small community, I will not disclose their real position in the group or reveal any characteristics which might make them easily identifiable (Hopkins 2008).

<b>(Key) Informants London</b>	<b>(Key) Informants Paris</b>
Owner Romanian magazine	Romanian student
Community leader	Returnee currently living in Lyon, France (France – Romania – France)
Journalist Romanian newspaper	Four French individuals involved in the organisation of events/trips between Romanian and French villages/towns
Marketing advisor Romanian newspaper	
Orthodox priest	Owner, Romanian online ethnic shop
Adventist pastor	

### Romanian participants interviewed - Paris

Paris							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Considers Re-emigration/ Return	Employment
Adina	29	5 years	Female	Single	No	Yes (London)	Product manager
Ilaria	27	7 years	Female	Single	Yes (Lithuania) from France	Return	Recruitment agent
Teodora	32	8 years	Female	Married	Belgium	No	Nanny in Paris
Adelina	45	14 years	Female	Divorced from French husband, three children; Romanian partner	No	Return	Flight attendant
Ana-Maria	34	3.5 years	Female	PACS (civil partnership) with partner from Benin, one child	Internal migration in Romania No	No	Project manager Graphics
Catalin	Late 40s	6 years	Male	Child in Romania from previous marriage; Romanian Partner.	Internal migration in Romania Germany Circular	Yes-retirement	Builder
Aurelia	58	13 years	Female	Divorced, two adult children in Italy and Romania	Serbia	Return	Former nanny, cook, cleaner. Now - social benefits

Paris							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Considers Re-emigration/ Return	Employment
Sonia	34	1 year	Female	Married	-	No	Job seeker
Aurelian	31	2 years	Male	Married	-	No	Engineer
Ina	30s	6 years	Female	Married	No	No	Health Insurance
Loredana	40	14 years	Female	Married	Circular	No	Cleaning
Cornel	40s	14 years	Male	Married	Circular	No	Building
Viorel	40s	5 years	Male	Married, wife and two children from Romania have joined him in France	Italy	'No but maybe'	Building
Marius	20s	1.5 years	Male	Single	St Petersburg for a course Internal migration in Romania	Future multiple migrations	Research, waitressing
Casian	30s	7+ years	Male	Divorced from French wife, one child	Italy, circular Romania	Future multiple	International Development
Sorina	57	1 year	Female	Divorced, one daughter in London	Italy - 2 months	No	Baby sitting/cleaning
Alexandru	50s	11 years	Male	Single	No	Maybe multiple	Engineer

Paris							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Considers Re-emigration/ Return	Employment
Giorgiana	30	3 years	Female	PACS French partner	Internal migration in Romania No	No	Sales assistant and advisor in a clothes shop, looking for a job in web communication
Izabela	30s	7 years	Female	Married to Moldovan-Romanian	In Romania before France	Possible return to Romania	Make up artist
Dinu	30s	11 years	Male	Married to Moldovan-Romanian	In Romania before France	Possible return to Romania	Building industry
Claudiu	30	6.5 years	Male	Engaged to a Romanian	Nice before Paris	No	Programmer in a bank
Patricia	20s	7 years	Female	Engaged to a French	Nice before Paris Liban before France	Maybe return to Romania	Jobseeker film making
Marta	20s	-	Female	Married	Orléans and Lille	No	Auditor
Sandra	30s	3 years	Female	Husband in Romania	No	Return	Cost controller
Luiza	30s	0.5 years	Female	PACS, Turkish partner	Circular	No	Economist
Corina	mid 50s	22 years	Female	Widow, one daughter in France	No	No	Interpeter

Paris							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Considers Re-emigration/ Return	Employment
Tiberiu	30s	18 years	Male	Married, two children	No	No	Building industry
Paul	mid 50s	20 years	Male	Married, three children in Romania, Belgium and France	Circular	Return	Retired
Aura	mid 40s	On and off since 1998	Female	Divorced from French husband, two children	Circular and Nigeria	Multiple OR return	Law sector on and off
Dorina	mid 50s	32 years	Female	Single, one daughter	No	No	Admin public sector
Adrian	early 30s	5 years	Male	Single	No	No	Elevator maintenance
Stefania	56	11-12 years	Female	Separated, one daughter and one son in France, three sons in Romania	No	No	Cleaning and classes to take a monthly income from Fr
Iuliana	early 30s	2 years	Female	Husband in Romania, daughter and mother in France	No	Return	Ophthalmologist

Paris							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Considers Re-emigration/ Return	Employment
Ramona	31	3.5 years	Female	Single, Parents in Spain	No	No	Romanian lessons & Logistics (Medical sector)
Ciprian	mid 30s	2 years	Male	Wife and two children in Budapest	Budapest	Budapest	Building industry
Sorin	mid 30s	13 years	Male	Single	No	Yes/yes	Uni Lecturer
Gabriela	mid 20s	5 years	Female	Moldovan-Romanian boyfriend	No	No	Architect
Valentina	Early 20s	2 <sup>nd</sup> generation migrant	Female	Single	No	-	Student, small jobs

## Romanian participants interviewed - London

London							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Re-emigration/Return	Description
Cora	30	3 years	Female	Single, mother in London, plans to bring dad	No	Return	Nanny
Ionela	Late 20s	4 years	Female	Scottish partner	Nottingham	No	Responsible Investment Advisor
Mircea	31	6 years	Male	Single	York	No	Software engineer
Mihai	32	3 years	Male	Romanian girlfriend	Germany	Maybe	IT/journalism
Vlad	23	2 years	Male	Romanian wife and extended family in London	No	Return	waiter
Ionut	29	5 years	Male	Wife and family in London	No	Potential return?	Former builder, now engineer MSc student UCL
Claudia	26	3 years	Female	Husband and extended family in London	No	Potential return?	Hotel receptionist, will start MSc engineering UCL
Beatrice	29	5 years	Female	Single, one sister in London, one in Spain	Edinburgh circular	No	Accountant
Iulia	34	2 years	Female	Single	No	No	Account manager – Advertising industry

London							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Re-emigration/Return	Description
Lavinia	34	5 years	Female	Australian husband	No	No	Engineer
Bogdan	25	6 years	Male	Married, family In London	No	No	Building industry
Emma	30	6 years	Female	Married, sister in London	No	Return	HR
Carmen	mid 30s	0.5 years	Female	Separated, (former partner in Canada), daughter in Romania	No	Possible return	Room attendant
Rebecca	mid 20s	1 year	Female	Romanian fiancé in Ro planning to come to London	Ireland, circular	Possible return	Room attendant
Alin	early 30s	4-5 years	Male	Single	Ireland	Yes	Sommelier
Cristi	29	7 years	Male	Single	France, Italy, Spain, circular	No	Cook
Catalina	35	9 years	Female	Married, two sons	France	No	Translator/Charity shop owner
Ion	late 40s	10 years	Male	Son, former wife and actual partner in London	Greece Circular	No	Building industry
Cosmin	27	3 years	Male	Single	Germany and Switzerland	No	Research finance

London							
Participant	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Re-emigration/Return	Description
Andrei	25	1.5 years	Male	Romanian girlfriend	Italy, internship Romania (circular)	No	Finance
Alexandra	-	10 years	Female	Indian partner	No	No	Immigration consultant
Gheorghe	60s	41 years	Male	Children from previous marriage with Ro, marriage with Brit and child	No	No	Restaurant owner
Mia	30	7 years	Female	Married, 2 children	No	No	Café owner
Ioana	mid 20s	1.5 years	Female	Romanian boyfriend	Italy	No	Finance
Andreea	early 30s	7 years	Female	Married, one child	No	No	Former waiter, no maternity leave
Robert	mid 30s	7 years	Male	Partner from Kuwait	Spain (2003-2007), 2007 onwards UK circular	No	Former builder, now IT

