*EMOTIONS ON THE MOVE: BELONGING, SENSE OF PLACE AND FEELINGS
IDENTITIES AMONG YOUNG ROMANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN SPAIN*¹

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Abstract

This article examines the experiences in terms of belonging and sense of place among young Romanian immigrants who came to Spain in search of opportunities for professional development. The research detects and analyses the process of mobility, the search for job opportunities and the necessity of working below one's level of training or education, which induces young people to re-construct a new and complex identity. By means of the qualitative method of in-depth interviews, the analysis highlights the role that emotions play in young peoples' discourse while underscoring the ability of the interviewees in re-creating their identity and building a place even during the midst of a turbulent and insecure process. The conclusions signal the creation of a new and multiple identity which is complex and fluid and specific to persons on the move.

Keywords: Identity; Immigrants, Labour market, Work, Youth culture

Introduction

After Romania's entry into the European Union (EU), the movement of people from Romania to Spain increased considerably. The intense flow of mobile citizens from Romania to Spain included young educated people who left their country in search of professional opportunity. The paper analyses the mobility experiences of young Romanians in terms of belonging and reconstructing identity. Moving from one home to another among several countries, cultures and languages is not only a matter of physical displacement but also interior experiences (Suleiman 1998). As noted by Silberstein (2000) and Ben Yoseph (2005), different places create experiences that, at the same time, produce memories which are wrapped in feelings and that play an important role in constructing identity. Therefore, the research questions posed are linked to the universe of feelings that can be noted in the discourse of mobile young people.

In the first place, how can emotions be conceptualised so as to understand their role in the process of human mobility? How are they interpreted by young people and what are their feelings in relation to their decline in professional status that they experience when they enter the Spanish workforce? How do they perceive the loss of opportunities for professional achievement in their own country as in Spain?

Secondly, taking into account the fact that the emotional relationships immigrants have with places are of belonging and inclusion or isolation and exclusion, as well as the fact that, as pointed out by Winkel, Saegert and Evans (2009), integration comes about in distinct social, economic and historical contexts, we ask: What role do emotions play in memory linked to place of birth? To what extent do feelings influence the creation of ties

of belonging to the places in the receiving country? How do young immigrants interact emotionally with persons of the receiving country?

Thirdly: Can the European policy of free circulation of people provide support to creating, on the part of young people, a space for flexible and hybrid movement that incorporates elements of their place of origin and the receiving country over the background of emotional dynamics that characterises their lives? How do young persons construct their multiple identities?

Therefore, it is important to analyse how movement causes turbulence, dislocation and constant searching in the lives of young people.

This study is structured as follows. After a presentation on the process of mobility on the part of young Romanians, the first section offers a review of the most relevant literature concerning the migration culture of young people, which is linked to low levels of employment among European university graduates and the complex process of identity reconstruction over a background of emotional dynamics. Then, following a qualitative analysis of young peoples' discourse that begins with the perception of a new reality in the receiving country, it continues with the sense of place and belonging and ends with the perception of an identity of migration culture. The conclusions speak of the creation, within the European framework, of a multiple, fluid identity among young people on the move.

Mobility of young people in the context of Romanian migration to Spain

The migration process of Romanians to Spain began in 1990 following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the transition to democracy and free markets in Eastern Europe. While faint at first, and as the transition towards democracy and a free market in Romania

became evident as part of Community policy, the flow of immigrants increased during the second decade, especially after 2002 and the opening up of the Schengen treaty area to Romania. Border dynamics and the entry of Romania to the EU, in 2007, transformed Romanian migration into an intense movement, in both temporal and spatial circuits, throughout Community territory (Marcu 2010). In April 2011, the largest single ethnic collective in Spain was comprised of Romanians: 850,000 were registered.³

The migration process on the part of Romanians is comprised of three stages: 1) The 1990-1996 period is characterised by the pioneers of migration who created the network; 2) The 1997-2002 period is characterised by the difficulty imposed upon movement by the EU migration policy; 3) The period beginning in 2002 to the present is characterised by the opening up of the Schengen area borders to Romania and its subsequent admission to the EU (2007), which marked a significant growth of mobility on the part of Romanians to Spain. It is, precisely, this last stage which incorporates young immigrants, the mobile citizens of an expanded EU, who are seeking strategies of improving their job prospects in Spain. In this manner, a culture of migration among Romanians has arisen over the last decade.

According to Eurostat data⁴, in 2008 (the last year for which data was published), there were 21,000 Romanian students studying in EU countries outside of Romania, while 1056 were pursuing doctorates. In 2011, according to the Student League, there were 100,000 young Romanians with licentiate degrees within European territory who were either employed or seeking employment. In addition, the OECD⁵ notes that there are now 2.7 million Romanians working in the EU (outside of Romania), but only 50,000 work in employment sectors commensurate with their training. As for young people who either

practice university mobility or study in Spain, according to the Romanian Consulate in Madrid⁶, there are 10,000 professionals and third-cycle university graduates and professionals who upon completing their studies plan to find employment in Spain in accordance with their training.

The process of mobility and identity of young Romanians in Spain is scarcely reflected in the literature. However, Sandu (2006) analysed circular labour migration as a life strategy, whereas Elrick and Ciobanu (2009) and Marcu (2011) analysed the recent process of the mobility of Romanians, partial return and transnational practices. As Morokvasic-Müller (1999) notes, immigrants from Eastern Europe show an inclination towards mobility as well as towards the capacity to create extensive networks throughout Europe. An area of such characteristics is built upon precarious and ever-changing solidarities, and its actors are men and women who are prepared to emigrate at any moment and overcome distances and barriers.

Framework of Analysis: creating identity in a mobile world

Research on the part of young people on the move, for the most part, refers to the development of cultural aspects of emigration, including the combination of migration, place and identity (Jones 1995, 1999; Ni Laoire 2000; Marshall and Foster 2002; Molgat 2002). Bauman (2001) and Giddens (1991) analyse the contemporary reality of society and postmodern life and look into the change in values over the past century with respect to how people think of themselves and their place in the world. White and Wyn (2004) describe the emergence of situations in which people have “unequivocal priorities, linked to local communities and shared goals, to the current goal of individualism, “self-information and self-liberation” (p.187). These theoreticians point to the rise of positive attitudes

concerning mobility, in opposition to stability in contemporary society. They defended the fact that individuals link themselves less to social class and geographic origins. In contrast, these people are actively involved in constructing their own biographies. Young people make decisions in a context of turbulence and uncertainty—rather than order and stability (Papastergiadis 2000). However, this process of individualisation was accompanied by a re-alignment of risks as individuals were obliged to accept ever more personal responsibility, develop individual strategies, and learn to manage risks rather than rely on support from social institutions. Jones (1999) traced a map of the experiences of young persons who had left home in dialogue with their process of growth and the risks of work and individualisation.

This article attempts to continue Jones' study in examining the experiences of young people' who are part of the dynamics of the free circulation of people within the framework of an expanded EU. These include the educated classes of the migration culture as well as mobile young people with some education in search of employment. These young people have experienced unemployment as well as employment that is beneath their level of training. Sparrow (2008), Khan and Morrow (1991), Feldman and Turney (1995) examined the situation of young people who are obliged to work at a level beneath their level of training. For them, identity and its re-construction within the context of human movement not only is an issue of individualisation carried out in the process of emigration; it is also linked to the relationship between mobility and belonging and, in particular, through the change in relationships to the place that many theoreticians (Buttimer 1980; Seamon 1985; Tuan 2001) call 'home'. Tucker (1994) conceives of home as a source of identity. Hollander (1991) imagines home in terms of concentric circles that represent an aspect in

the existential experience that includes home, community, family, social and professional environment, civil society, nation, civilisation and the world.

Kaplan (1996) argues that home and identity are forms of position which are part of movement and the journey towards some goal. Therefore, home and away are not in opposition but are concepts that complement each other.

The literature on migration underscores the fact that large numbers of people now live in social worlds that are stretched between, or dually located in, physical places and communities in two or more nation-states (Castles 2000, Vertovec 1999). Hannerz (1996), for instance, discusses people who live in diverse 'habitats of meaning' that are not territorially restricted. The experiences gathered in these multiple habitats accumulate to comprise people's cultural repertoires, which in turn influence the construction of identity – or, indeed, *multiple identities*. Each habitat or locality represents a range of identity-conditioning factors: these include histories and stereotypes of local belonging and exclusion, geographies of cultural difference and class/ethnic segregation, racialised socio-economic hierarchies, degree and type of collective mobilisation, access to and nature of resources, and perceptions and regulations surrounding rights and duties.

When we refer to European identities, these emerge from the confluence of various social processes. Understood as process, these flow through various networks and create new models of identification (Katzenstein and Checkel 2009). Favell (2009) has given the name 'Eurostars' to young professional Europeans who are mobile citizens, enjoy their right of free circulation and live in 'Eurocities', reflecting the cosmopolitan face of Europe. They are considered key elements in the process of constructing European identity by means of mobility and cross-border interaction. Faas (2007) makes reference to young people who

show high levels of knowledge about Europe and consider this is part of their hybrid identities.

In the process of mobility and search, emotions play an essential role in connecting individuals to changes in the environment in which they live. According to Conradson and McKay (2007) and Gray (2008), emotions are fundamental aspects of international migration. As Blackman (2007, p.700) notes, early key theorists in the USA and Britain (Hochschild 1979; Jaggar 1989) sought to place emotion at the centre of sociological thinking in an attempt to breathe life back into the social, so rigorously extracted by structural functionalism.

In order to understand the aforesaid environment, it is necessary to keep various approaches in mind and examine the way people define and exteriorise their emotions. In a world on the move, the ties between people and places are multiple and changing. For immigrants, the link between emotions depends on factors such as age, as part of the circumstances of emigration; conditions of arrival; gains or losses; or obstacles encountered in securing work in the receiving country. As for emotions and their intensity, these depend to a great extent on how a feeling for the receiving country is reached, on perception and self-perception, and finally on the creation of the place. Therefore, the emotional process is complex and frequently contradictory. According to Bhatia and Ram (2004), contradictions, complexities and changes arising among immigrants must be examined carefully since the voices implied in communicating to oneself and with others are not always in harmony with each other.

Svasek (2008) noted that feelings are dynamic processes through which people experience and interpret change and their position in relationship to others, while also configuring their

subjectivities. From this perspective, the ego is related to the world, with its environment, as a function of the past, present and future. Therefore, in the configuring of emotions, both memory (Casey 1987) and imagination (Tonkin 2006) play a role. As pointed out by Kramer, Schoen and Kinney (1984) and Leydesdorff (1992), it is not only the happy events of childhood but also the trauma stemming from events in the past that occupy an important place in the feelings that a human being accumulates throughout life. Burrell (2008) and Fortier (2000) make it clear that a multi-sensory memory about home and place may constitute an important means of an interior dialogue with the homeland and participate in creating a sense of belonging.

In order to understand the echo of feelings as perceived by immigrants, it is necessary to use the qualitative technique of in-depth interviews and explore not only the social, economic and political dimensions of human mobility but also its psychological complexity.

Methodology

The nature of the study – the exploration of the experiences of mobility in terms of belonging and the sense of place among young Romanian immigrants in Spain – suggested qualitative research (Creswell 1998, Lee 1999). As for analysis, grounded theory methodology⁷ (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was used. According to Haig (1995) and Patton (2002), this is the most rigorous qualitative research method.

Twenty-five in-depth interviews were conducted within a framework of appreciative analysis, taking into account the fact that the theoretical sampling does not offer an absolute size of the sample. Rather, the data collected reached the point of saturation whereby no

new data emerged (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The men and women who were interviewed were between the ages of 20 and 35 years old, and had degrees ranging from the baccalaureate level to doctorates. The interviews were collected in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, Castellón de la Plana and Valencia, from July 2010 to December 2010.

Participants in the study can be distinguished by the following characteristics: 1) 2nd generation young people who as infants emigrated with their parents and grew up in a migration culture in a hybrid space, and whose feelings in relationship to the evolution of this migration blossomed during adolescence; 2) Young people who graduated in Romania and emigrated to find work in Spain. The lack of employment in their own country and their departure in search of opportunity led to a loss of some elements of their initial identity and the reconstruction of a new if sometimes turbulent and complex identity; 3) Young people who graduated in Spain or in other European countries and currently live in Spain (including those who came to Spain with an EU Erasmus scholarship).

The interviews were conducted in Romanian and were recorded with the participants' permission. The transcription and translation of the interviews were conducted by the author of this study. The analysis of the information from the standpoint of codes, concepts, and categories⁸ (Allan 2003) identified key relations between the data obtained and conclusions reached (Charmaz 2000). According to the principles of theoretical sampling theory, data analysis began with the first interview and continued throughout the interviewing process. From this, therefore, emerged the concept of the fluidity of identity in hybrid spaces, the importance of feelings in the construction of young immigrants' discourse, and the interpretation of a sense of home and belonging.

Search: Perceiving a new Reality

The movement of young people from Eastern Europe towards the developed countries of the EU in the last few years highlights the fact that leaving behind one's country of origin in search of professional opportunities is a natural step in the process of personal growth. The majority of the participants left their country in search of employment opportunities or after completing studies, but in some cases, there were participants/interviewees who had studied in other European countries or received EU Erasmus scholarships. Except for the children of second-generation immigrants, in all of the other cases, the motives for mobility are linked to studies or job-seeking. In this context, the first issue that comes to the fore as part of the discourse is that finding employment is difficult, as manifested in interviews with people who completed their studies in their home country or in another EU country. In all of the other cases, the interviewees have little or no professional experience in Romania.

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

The initial difficulty and the need to work in any sort of activity is a specific characteristic of mobility among Romanians who, as a legacy from the adult generation, are perceived to be economic immigrants and are therefore relegated to low-skilled employment.

The employment of immigrants in work sectors that are beneath their level of training independent of their credentials is a distinctive characteristic of the Spanish labour market, where, besides the difficulty that Spaniards themselves have in finding work, Romanians cannot yet compete on the basis of equality in obtaining positions in public administration. While expressing the difficulty they have had in their professional lives, interviewees showed emotion in their discourse and reflected turbulence and instability.

In Romania, I didn't work but I did work in Germany and England. I am an opera singer. The impact is difficult. When you arrive, you expect to work in what you were trained for. It saddens me that I found no success, that I did not find my way professionally. In Spain, I tried everything: I worked for a construction company, and in business. My training? I use it to perform at weddings and baptisms but it is not enough to live on. (Male, age 32)

Young people who came to study link the difficulty to the level of dissatisfaction with education in Spain.

It is difficult; I am not happy. I don't want to generalize; I am referring to my experience. I believe that here the level of knowledge is much lower; I expected much more integrity. There are good people, of course, but most are superficial and post-university training disappointed me; I was expecting something different. (Female, age 32)

However, they recognize the fact that having left their country with an EU Erasmus scholarship changed their lives, since it improved their abilities of *adaptation, personal growth and initiative*.

The feelings linked to hardships appear less often among young people of the second generation who came to Spain with their parents during infancy or adolescence. For them, their memories of their beginnings are rather more positive:

Six months before going to school, I went out to play with the children in the park and on the first day of classes I had no difficulty, (Male, age 20), or It was a normal process, nothing strange, (Male, age 21) or even better, “For me, the problems were solved on the first day. I think that children learn quickly and we adapt before older people do. (Female, age 22)

Thus, it is worthy to note that feelings are typically developed during adolescence. In infancy, if children are accompanied by their parents, moving from one place to another becomes something normal and break-ups happen without trauma. Having reached this point, participants noted the important role that their families played in their process of adapting to a new place.

My family protects me. I don't think that I would have been able to study until the age of 25 without their support because I would have had to make a living. (Female, age 25)

However, there were comments about the difficulty of starting up in Spain, which was attributed to discrimination and marginalisation of Romanians:

When I came the first time, I was in the sixth grade, and we went to a town called Mejorada del Campo, where rocks were hurled at us because we were Romanian. They saw us as being

different, because there were many Romanians, and all of us were the same: in other words, bad. This is an issue; this memory haunts me. (Male, age 21)

So, by being unhappy with the receiving society, individuals are forced to become intruders or inept, which in the words of Kristeva (1991) is the 'other'. That otherness is, however, just a face of immigrants' identity, which according to Sarup (2004) is in constant change. The road to another place that may be hostile sometimes changes the individual and recomposes his subjectivity. And in this transformation, each step forward may also mean a step backward. The immigrant is here and there in continuous movement from place to place, trying to re-establish his ego.

Another issue that is notable in this first phase of seeking and perceiving the new reality in Spain is the *impact on the receiving society*. Young unemployed people who have been frustrated in their expectations of work and who do not find their place in society note the loss of friendships and the difficulty of making friends among Spaniards.

In Spain, I have no work, no friends, and I don't owe anything to anybody. (Male, age 30)

The friends of young university graduates tend to be foreigners: *I have friends from Latin America. Well...they are acquaintances, or I stay with people from Eastern Europe; my best friend is a Bulgarian.* When asked about their relations with young Spanish people, they note:

The Spanish will help you but with limitations, but only if you don't enter their turf. When they feel threatened, they retreat. (Female, age 29).

Loneliness appears as a theme in the memory that is linked to emotions.

I feel alone, even though I am surrounded by people... the people to whom you feel closest and with whom you can speak in the same language. (Female, age 23)

And of course, linked to loneliness is the subset of the *obstacles* to getting to know Spanish people in conditions of competition in the labour market:

As a tourist, I never sensed any obstacles. But when you are working or studying, you are competing. And so my companions are cold, reserved, maintain their distance, maybe because we are foreigners. They already have their lives, and I can see how they mark their territory. So, I tend to socialize with people from abroad because we see things in a different way. We face the same problems. All of us came to find a place. They have their place here. If you start a conversation with them, that is good, but don't expect it to come from them. (Female, age 23)

Feeling of place: Longing and re-creating belonging

Massey (1992) asserts that place is established by means of social relations, the effects that come out of this interaction and positive interrelations with other places whether within or without. Fortier (2002) uses the phrase “migrant belongings” in order to capture “the productive tension that results from the articulation of movement and attachment, suture and departure, outside and inside, in identity formation” (p.2). She argues that immigrant populations vacillate between “national identity” and “émigré identity”, producing a “cultural citizenship that is grounded in multilocality” (p.97).

Therefore, the identity of a place is ‘provisional’ or in continuous change. The limits defining place and home are permeable and unstable. Identity and the meaning of place

must be built and negotiated. Nevertheless, this does not mean that memories are always counter-productive, nostalgic or idealizations of the past. What Massey (1992) suggests is that memories and memory can transform the present. The re-creation of belonging can be observed in the issue of *gains (wins) and losses* in the process of mobility. For the most part, participants in the study answered that the most important thing for them was to get out and learn about a new country, while pointing out the opportunities they encountered while they were on the move.

This reveals the appearance of change in the process of displacement and, with it, the impact that the newly receiving society has upon the individual immigrant. The immigrant enters a populous territory that is charged with other emotions and energies that transform people and makes them stronger in their struggle to find a niche in the receiving society: *Now, I am stronger.*

The change is observed especially in the discourse of those interviewees who engaged in partial return. Having left meant missing out on evolution in the space that was left behind. Places change in one's absence, as do people, and when an individual returns and does not adapt, he must leave again and continue his routine and *build another place*. In the emotion of the discourse, then, the theme of *feelings of loss upon return* is installed.

I changed for the better, but with much sacrifice. One loses people, people who are close, moments; you return but life goes on there without you. Life goes on and things change whether you like it or not. You cannot return and say, well, I have seen what is abroad, and decided to return. I tried to do it two years ago, but I did not manage to find anything. I stayed two months, but I had nothing to do. The years went by, Romania changed, friends are no longer the same; it is totally different. (Female, age 27)

Another notable issue in the creation of place is the job security/insecurity binomial. Furlong (2010) points out the difficulty of transitioning from study to work among European youth. The participants in this study, none of whom have an indefinite work contract, were working at the time of the interviews in job sectors that are far below those for which they studied and immersed in overwhelming insecurity.

I am an architect, but I am working as a secretary. What will happen tomorrow, I don't know, because society is in constant change. Now I do have a job, but I don't know what will happen; I could end up in the street; there is no sure thing. (Female, age 27)

According to the participants, the form of struggle against job insecurity is to believe in oneself and in education, not miss opportunities, and build for the future.

Yes, you feel okay; everything is in order. But if you feel you are weak, everyone will attack you. So, I prefer to have confidence in myself, in my training, and if I do so, I believe that people will treat me normally. My status is below the level I was taught during my training. But I am building my future by taking small steps. (Female, age 24)

An important issue for creating place is *Spain* as a society and the perception that the participants have of it. They note that the *place called Spain* must be won by those who go there; a career must be forged while the duty of immigrants is to integrate with Spanish society.

They speak, therefore, of the building of place through effort.

I am living in Spanish society. You have to gain people's trust by what you do. I cannot say: I have arrived, I am a Romanian, I have a Romanian label, you must respect me, or not. Every person from anywhere in the world must work and earn his place. (Female, age 22)

On this point, the participants note Spain, Madrid, as a hybrid place, as a space replete with history and lives. Mobility opens doors to job opportunities and a new culture. Even so, negative feelings emerge, along with disenchantment and disappointment that come with professional set-backs.

Some participants noted the difficulties that they have had in finding their place:

I feel colder, or I feel like I am from nowhere: here, because I have found no work, and in my country, because they tell me, 'Oh, you come from Spain with euro and you think you will take our jobs from us,' and things like that. In the end, we immigrants don't find a place anywhere, because we take jobs away here and in our own country as well. Then... (Male, age 33)

Another issue in the re-creation of belonging is the perception that *participants have of the EU with regard to the free circulation of persons, and Romania's role in this.* We note that the young people of the second generation recognize the EU as a positive factor for Romania and the free circulation of people, even while they do not identify with their country and even consider it "bad luck to have been born there".

I was born in Romania, even though I don't identify with Romania. Anyway, even with bad luck, I have something positive thanks to the EU and can travel freely. Europe saves us--if it continues. (Female, age 31)

The 'mobile' interviewees, who by leaving their country took advantage of open borders and Romania's integration into the EU, believe that the Community structure is a positive thing. They note the freedom to study and seek employment in any country, the drop in the cost of international flights and mobile telephone calls and the rates for wiring money.

I believe that it is a good thing, especially for young people, because you can study in Romania, in Spain, and work in Denmark, France, travel, exchange, without borders. There are not only Bucharest and Madrid, but various cities and various countries, and you can choose to work in any area. (Female, age 23)

Identity in a mobile culture

The construction of place, offers a means for understanding the world while it helps mobile human beings to see who they are and to ask that question of themselves throughout life. The themes that emerged in the re-construction of identity were *the sense of language, the sense of home, the fluidity of identity, personal ties, and the future*. For all of those interviewed, Spanish is the language that they speak most on a daily basis even while they may continue to think in Romanian, or when they get together with relatives.

Some recognize that they are in the midst of knowing the languages well: *"because that is the way it is... We don't know anything; we forget everything... neither Romanian, nor Spanish"* or that they speak a combination of the two languages (Romañol).

The participants who studied outside of Romania recognize that in their case,

It depends on the context...If I speak in Romanian, I think in Romanian. If I find myself in a Spanish context, I think in Spanish. If I speak in English, I think in English...It depends on the details...If they are personal matters, I continue thinking in Romanian, if it is about daily work and life activities.(Female, age 29)

What is most important with regard to the language issue is that all of the young people feel very comfortable in the Spanish language environment and did not manifest loss of any elements of identity, as may have happened to their parents' generation. Even so, there are differences:

I can adapt, but I cannot feel Spain ¡Olé!... like a Spaniard. (Male, age 32)

For those who feel frustration, *Spain receives but does not offer*, most notably in an economic sense, given the context of the country's broader economic crisis. This is why they do not rule out the idea of finding other places for their mobility.

When they were asked about the possibility of returning to Romania, the participants spoke of how difficult it is:

One can always go home and it is the last thing left when other alternatives are exhausted, or when we run up against millions of obstacles, because you can be positive, think in colours, but we know that we are marked since each one of us felt this at least once. So, we are left with consolation. People think of their home, their place, and return. (Female, age 24)

As for a job-related return, the participants were unsuccessful even when they wished to find work in their own country.

I believe that the experience I gained in Spain may help Romania, and that my experience will be appreciated by Romanians. But I don't know what job I could work at there. A return would not compensate me, because I would lose the people here. There are probably good people there, but I have discovered many people here and I would not like to exchange them. They are part of my experience; they are included in my little house of friends. I feel that if I return, I would be going back to the past. It would be a retreat because Romania is in a bad way and appears not to need its people. It does not figure into my plans for life. Returning there causes negative feelings. (Female, age 32)

Nostalgia inhabits some of the participants:

I feel sad because I left. Time goes by, people live and die, you love them, but what can you do for them? Their life is what it is. I go back there feeling affection and sadness. (Female, age 27)

It is by means of feeling and nostalgia that the sense of home is reached. Where is home? Is it the place where one was born and raised, where you live or where your parents live, the place that was left behind, or the place where one lives now? What is understood to be home? According to Sarup (2004), home can be linked to feelings of identity. However, according to the author, identities are delimited by borders. When a border is crossed, one often encounters both hostility and obstacles.

For the participants, their first home is in Romania, even though according to their testimony given while they are there, they are anxious to return to Spain. *When I am at my house in Romania, I want to return here to my house.* They construct their *ego* by means of

memory, and feelings about the past hasten to the present in the form of feelings. The interviewees who have not yet created their niche in Spain, those who have not found a job and those who do not feel well received, point out that:

I understand home to be in Romania. I believe that any person, a foreigner, should not ever think of the home there; it is only a living place and, for the most part, rented. When you asked 'Where are you from?', it is normal to answer 'from Romania'...because you are from there, and that is your home, isn't it?(Male, age 21)

We can deduce, then, that the obstacles and difficulties presented by the receiving country tend to link the individual emotionally back to his country of origin. Inevitably, and unconsciously, the new culture is not assumed into the value system, while there is a longing for elements of the home country coupled with problems of setting down roots. There were participants who at some point in the interview process expressed shame for being Romanian: *When they ask me where I am from, my first reaction is to not tell the truth. They criticise corruption and crime in their country, even while nostalgically recalling the smell of summer in town or Romanian music, because life has meaning when I hear it; the past fuses with the present and there are no longer two worlds but one.*

Interviewees associate home with family and beloved persons. Authors such as Crow (1989), Oakley (1976) and Bernardes (1987) suggest that the link between home and family is so strong that in the end they are the same thing. *If I am with my family, I am home, whether in China, Spain, or Romania.* This is because roots are found in only one place,

but home is the place where one can feel at ease. Therefore, places are not static; they are dynamic.

Emotion leads the interviewees to reflect on their roots and the place they left behind.

Home is where I spent the first years of my life. Also, home in Spain is a practical, provisional home. You will have a home if you work. But the root, root...is where you were born. For me, home is the people. (Male, age 27)

The feelings of identity that flourish distinguish the participants: young people who are studying at Spanish universities and who have studied abroad feel themselves to be citizens of the world; young people of the second generation consider themselves Spanish and then Romanian, in that order, while those who studied in Romania recognise that they have a Romanian identity with some Spanish elements that were acquired during a life on the move.

Therefore, in the case studied here, I found a fluidity of identity upon a turbulent background, (Easthope and Gabriel 2008) in which there are blended elements of the country of origin and the receiving country. As Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1996, p. 11) explain, within their complex web of social relations, migrants draw upon and create fluid and multiple identities grounded in both their society of origin and in the host societies. By maintaining different identities, they are able to express their resistance to the global political and economic situations that engulf them, even as they accommodate

themselves to living conditions marked by vulnerability and insecurity. In this case, we can speak, then, of a multiple, hybrid identity.

This appears to be even more evident among participants representing the second generation:

I consider myself 40 percent Romanian and 60 percent Spanish. The role of identity has legal significance because if I want to travel or seek work, it is easier. I requested Spanish nationality as well. The papers cannot force me to renounce by feelings for Romania, that is to say, a part of myself. No one knows what is inside of me, but while I do wish to have success personally, I don't identify myself with a label, a flag, or with a symbol. (Female, age 22)

More than seeking refuge in the past, some young people situate themselves in the present but try to transform their Spanish place into a hybrid place where experiences of the past are fused with those of the present, where smells and memories are filtered through emotions and transformed. Having reached this point, young people no longer consider themselves guests in Spanish society but have with sentiment woven for themselves a tapestry of a place that shields them, *their home*, which provides a sort of multiple identity where their ego is modified and characterised by difference and similarity at the same time (Niman 2009).

Conclusion: Towards a Multiple Identity?

As the existing scientific literature shows (Blackman 2007), (Punch 2007), (Bagnoli 2007), the issues analysed in the present paper are reflected in the expression of feelings about

identity within the framework of mobility on the part of young people in other regions of Europe and the world. Therefore, the research offers elements for scientific debate internationally, which covers both the mobility of young people in search of employment and the forming of a new and complex identity.

Following the analysis, three types of discourse can be distinguished according to the profile of the young people who were interviewed:

- 1) First, we must point out the discourse of young people who studied in Romania, who had no work experience, and who are seeking employment in Spain. We showed that their discourse is turbulent, sometimes frustrated, at not having found their place. They define their sense of place with difficulty, and their home is Romania or the world.
- 2) Secondly, there are the young people who studied abroad or who are currently studying in Spain. They have realistic consciousness of movement, seeking to assess their ego in the world: *“My body, now, here, my presence is the most important.”* Defining themselves as citizens of the world, by being ‘voluntary’ immigrants, they have the exploration of various cultures as a goal in order to discover and define identity, even though they recognise that all the while they know where their roots are: they know who they are and where they are from. They live in a “multidimensional belonging” (May 2011).
- 3) Finally, we examine the Romanian immigrants’ children who were educated in Spain in a migration culture that incorporates elements of their country’s customs, a fact that moulded their identity and transformed them into persons with hybrid identity (Bhabha 1994) and citizens on the border between their country of origin and the country that took them in. In this case, there appears a fluidity of identity that was created in a hybrid space where young people are immersed in turbulent life but with material and psychological

support from their parents. The conclusion here points out an initial disorientation and a re-building of the ego in a new place of destination.

Therefore, a multiple, fluid identity that is new and complex and which is born in searching and movement is created.

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Notes

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² Post-doctoral Researcher ‘Ramon y Cajal’, (RYC 2009-03834).

³ Spanish National Statistical Institute: Available from: <http://www.ine.es> [Accessed 19 April 2011].

⁴ Available from: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/main_tables [Accessed 1 March 2011].

⁵ Available from: http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en_2649_201185_46462759_1_1_1_1,00.html
[Accessed 4 March 2011]

⁶ Interview, 14 December 2010.

⁷ The theory proposed is a method that starts with the collection of data and, by means of the data collected, the codes from which the information is then extracted are detected. The codes are grouped into similar concepts from which categories that represent the basis for formulating a theory or hypothesis of reverse engineering are formed.

⁸ The interviews were coded and analysed with the Atlas ti (version 6) qualitative analysis programme.