

Passport to move? Mobility in Euro-Latin American multiple citizens

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Introduction and aims

Multiple citizenship practices are rapidly increasing worldwide introducing complex spatialities of national state membership. Scholarly attention in migration and citizenship has mainly focused on the naturalisation route to multiple citizenship and its implications for political transnationalism and social integration, generally adopting a bi-national origin-destination perspective. However, in the context of the European Union (EU), very little research has been conducted into migrant's pragmatic practices of citizenship acquisition and mobility within a space comprised of 32 countries. Specifically, two key aspects remain largely understudied: i) access to European multiple citizenship through ancestry or co-ethnic preference, and ii) its implications for global mobility beyond settlement and naturalisation in a single destination country. In this paper we aim to investigate the mobility implications of multiple citizenship in the EU context, taking a broad continent of origin perspective: Latin American migrants. We focus on Latin-American multiple citizens in the UK and Spain to study the legal and mobility trajectories through which they access and transmit EU citizenship in a context of national and ethnic hierarchies.

Brief theoretical background

A central concern in migration and multiple citizenship studies is whether issues of identity, belonging and citizenship are still shaped by nationally-oriented policies (emigration or immigration) or on the contrary by new, cosmopolitan forms of citizenship beyond nation states usually termed 'post-national citizenship' (Soysal, 1997). Proponents of this view see in the expanding international human rights regime an erosion of the value of individual national citizenship, since all persons should be treated equally against the law in most countries regardless of their passport. In terms of migration rights, Joppke (2010) and Spiro (2008) surprisingly conclude that 'the value of an immigrant visa by far surpasses that of formal citizenship' (Joppke 2010: 12). Despite these views on the 'denationalization of citizenship' (Sassen, 2008), the undeniable fact is that the State remains the only body that can guarantee 'the right to have rights'. The post-national citizenship argument has been criticised (Hansen, 2009) since, amongst various flaws, it somehow misses the starkly unequal mobility opportunities derived from a sort of global 'hierarchy of passports' (Castles, 2005) that assigns a range of life opportunities on a national membership basis, amongst which are increasingly asymmetrical mobility rights. These inequalities are nowhere more evident than with the case of EU citizenship.

The most practical application of EU citizenship (introduced in 1991 by the Maastricht Treaty) is access to a common space of free movement and equal rights now including 32 countries (EU, EEA, and Switzerland). EU citizenship is automatically bestowed upon any citizen of a member State, making all EU nationalities essentially interchangeable, blurring the boundaries between national citizenships, and substantially increasing the worldwide value of any EU passport. However, the far-reaching implications of EU citizenship for non-EU migrants have been largely overlooked. For them, the advantages of acquiring and transmitting the nationality of an EU country are obvious, most importantly access to such an extended space of free movement. From which particular EU country nationality is acquired is not really relevant, and thus migrants follow the quickest and most effective route that grants them access to one EU citizenship, either through residence, marriage, or ancestry (Mateos & Durand, 2012; Cook-Martin, 2013; Tintori, 2011). Once they become EU citizens, they may then wish to move on to another EU country forming a 'transnational triangle' (van Liempt, 2011), move back to their country of origin or other non-EU countries, drawing on the rights associated with their new EU citizenship. However, scholarly attention in EU migration and citizenship has primarily focused on the immigration-settlement-naturalisation view within single destination nations (OECD, 2011; Samers, 2009). By doing so, it has missed the important pan-European implications of EU citizenship and the wider mobility trajectories of these populations both inside and outside the EU. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to gather empirical

evidence of multiple citizenship practices aimed not necessarily as a way to 'integrate' or settle, but quite the opposite, to bypass ever more restrictive migration policies in order to be able to come and go as they please within and beyond the EU.

Methodology

The aim of this paper is to establish and illustrate key mobility and citizenship trajectories that fall outside the expected paths commonly discussed by the migration and citizenship literature. An inductive approach is taken, based on individual migrants and their families conceived as agents adopting flexible and pragmatic strategies to maximise life opportunities, especially mobility rights within a set of 'citizenship constellations' (Bauböck, 2010). We focus on Latin American migrants with EU citizenship (both via naturalisation and ancestry) because of; their growing importance in terms of migrant stock and flows (OECD, 2012), their highly mobile character, the postcolonial links with Southern European nations with *ius sanguinis* citizenship provisions, and the lack of literature in this area compared to migration to North America (Guarnizo, 2008). We use a combination of methodologies; in-depth interviews and innovative on-line research (netnography). Twenty Latin-American migrants with multiple citizenship residents in London (UK) were interviewed, and testimonies from 2860 people who participated in an internet discussion forum on Spanish nationality were analysed following a *netnography* approach (Kozinets, 2010). The interviews were conducted to a selection of three types of Latin-American multiple citizenships, those who: a) naturalised as British citizens, b) naturalised as Spanish citizens but now live in the UK, and c) have acquired any EU citizenship through ancestry. The two methodologies complement each other well, since *netnographic* research permit the identification of major patterns in legal and mobility trajectories, while the interviews allow gaining in-depth understanding of the pragmatic uses of multiple citizenship. This methodological design produced a large body of qualitative data coming from research subjects representing a wide a range of national and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Results

Naturalisation; return and onward migration

'As soon as I get the [British] citizenship, I move back to Mexico' (Raul, Mexican, 6 years in London). The long-term goal of return and circular migration is captured well by this migrant. Obtaining an EU citizenship through naturalisation is perceived as a way to capitalize on years of migration experience, exchanging the benefits accrued by years of residence for an inalienable 'right to return' (Bauböck, 2010). This evidence contradicts the common view of naturalisation in academic and political debates as the final step towards social integration and settlement (OECD, 2011). Instead, the European passport is often cherished as a 'carte blanche' that allows migrants and their families to return home or move to a third country, especially in the Spanish case after the outbreak of the economic crisis. For those who decide to stay, an EU passport does away with the need to renew residence permits in their country of residence, plus opening up 31 more countries of potential work and residence. Furthermore, we find that Spain's naturalisation policy produces further hierarchies of access to citizenship based on 'ethnic' preferences (Joppke, 2005), putting Latin American migrants in a privileged position with regards to Spain's other large immigrant groups; North Africans and Eastern Europeans. Meanwhile, in Britain, new citizenship tests and a cumbersome naturalisation process were seen as a key obstacle to naturalise by Latin-American interviewees. Intra-EU post-naturalisation mobility arose as a commonly followed strategy. A third of the interviewees in London had spent over five years in Spain, where they arrived from Andean countries on tourist visas, and overstayed as irregular migrants for a few years. They then took advantage of the migrant regularizations of the early 2000s, and with a work permit only had to wait for two years before applying for Spanish nationality. After the outbreak of the economic crisis in Spain since 2008, work opportunities practically shut down for economic migrants. Thus a Spanish passport suddenly became an important asset for mobility. They left their families behind in Spain to migrate to the UK following an adaptation strategy. McIlwaine (2011) found a current Latin-American male migration from Spain to the UK, whose main objective is to send remittances to their relatives in Spain, especially in order to pay their Spanish

mortgages while keeping their children in the Spanish schooling system and avoiding further family re-integration and language learning costs. *'I don't want to stay here [in London]. Everything is very expensive, but at least I want to learn English'* (Javier, Dominican naturalised in Spain).

Visas and passport hierarchies: Secondary mobility benefits

When asked why they decided to apply for naturalization or a passport via ancestors, all respondents in London invariably mentioned the mobility advantages associated with European citizenship. The mobility implications seem so fundamental that most migrants are surprised by this question: *'Of course, to travel to other countries'* responds Javier (Dominican naturalized in Spain). No one mentioned a motivation to gain political or civic rights, or because of identity feelings. *'You gain more mobility. That's it for me, because you don't have additional rights'* (Paula, Colombian naturalized British). The mobility advantages materializes in ease of travel for tourism, business or to move temporarily to explore work opportunities in other countries, as well as to circumvent immigration regimes in several countries with a single document. This also applies to third countries outside the EU, especially in the U.S.; *'with the Bolivian passport I cannot go to the U.S. on vacation, but I can with the Spanish one'* as Pedro bluntly puts it (Bolivian naturalized in Spain). Some migrants have even used their Spanish passport to travel visa-free to the US and overstay as irregular migrants for some time. The visa-free travel of an EU passport is especially valued by Latin Americans faced with a tourist visa requirement to travel around the EU (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic). *'For us Colombians is good to have two passports. When you arrive at an airport they immediately think you have something to do with drugs, but with a British passport they just let you through'* (Paula, Colombian naturalized in the UK). Therefore, the tourist visa, and the 'degree of suspicion' that a country infuses in the world, shapes a sort of hierarchy of passports in terms of their mobility rights (Castles, 2005). The Latin American Andean region (Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia), poorer and phenotypically 'more indigenous', suffer more mobility restrictions than countries of more recent 'white settlement', or with a skilled-migration history to Europe (Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Mexico).

Ethnicity, ancestry and postcolonialism

An important path to EU citizenship amongst the study subjects was the ancestry route, a right explored even before having any intention to move. These EU 'ethnic passports' not only benefited the direct descendants of European emigrants (typically grandparents or great-grandparents), but also facilitated the mobility of their spouses and children. Through family reunification rules, these gained permanent resident status and ultimately naturalization in an EU country of residence, not necessarily the one from which the ancestor came from. The case of Argentina is particularly symptomatic of these mobility strategies through ancestry-derived EU citizenship (Cook-Martin, 2013; Tintori, 2011). Approximately a third of Argentinean-born migrants residing in Spain or the UK possess an Italian passport (Mateos, *forthcoming*). Since the 2001 economic crisis, many Argentines stopped seeing a European passport as a family curiosity shifting to view it as a way to escape from the country; *'I had an Italian passport before the Argentinian one, at age 12 [...]. That was my key to move to the first world. It is a tool somehow, that allows easy travel to other countries'* (Irene, Argentinian with an Italian passport living in the UK). Many of these migrants sought their EU passports in the last two decades as the bundle of mobility rights set in the 1993 Maastricht Treaty unfolded over the years as well as the EU expanded to 28 members. *'My friend with Croatian ancestors is waiting for Croatia to join the EU [in July 2013] to apply for a EU passport'* (Irene). For most of them, an EU passport is seen as a 'life insurance' (Ong, 1999), just in case it is needed to exit the country in times of economic or political turmoil, to travel for pleasure to the US, or to study or conduct business where required. For some, it also entails a symbol of status, to reinforce their European *pedigree* in Latin-America. We also found that EU citizenship policies end up intersecting with the already existing hierarchies of ethnicity and social class within Latin American countries, benefiting those who can mobilize their European 'ethnic capital', in order to gain EU citizenship as an 'insurance policy' (Tintori, 2011; Mateos and Durand 2012) leaving other co-nationals without European passports behind.

Conclusion

The 'view from below', based on migrants experiences as agents in 'citizenship constellations' turned out to be very different to the 'view from above', i.e., the individual State view that predominates in the migration and citizenship literature. The Latin American migrants researched here gain EU citizenship primarily because of its mobility entitlements, and are not necessarily interested in accessing political or social rights, or increasing their integration or sense of belonging. This freedom of mobility is used for extended return visits, circular migration, global tourism and business, or for 'onward migration' within the EU, not necessarily for settlement in the EU country that granted them citizenship. This contradicts the breadth of the EU migrant integration literature. We found unequivocal evidence that in a world of increasing mobility inequalities that based on 'involuntary national citizenship' (Cavallero 2006: 98), gaining EU multiple citizenship, irrespective of the EU country of settlement, becomes a life asset that leads to personal freedom and social mobility for the multiple citizen and her/his family. In the common case of access to EU citizenship through ancestry, the randomness of the 'birthright lottery' (Shachar, 2009) may soon be re-opening historic colonial ethnic wounds within Latin American populations. Furthermore, since access to EU citizenship is controlled by disparate national legislation in 32 countries, each with different ethnic preferences, these paper's findings unveil stark inequalities caused by the *re-ethnization* of citizenship (Joppke, 2005). However, against Joppke (2010) and Spiro (2008) praise of permanent residency status vs. the rights of formal citizenship, in this paper we unequivocally find that the mobility rights bundled into formal EU citizenship by far surpass the most generous migrant permanent residence status granted by any EU nation. This is because it entails a permanent and inheritable 'right of readmission' (Bauböck, 2010) in 32 countries and others with visa-free travel for EU passports. Hence, EU citizenship's key exchange value is the global degree of mobility it offers the passport holder, and not the identity, civic and political rights generally associated in the literature with membership of a specific nation.

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