The London School of Economics and Political Science

Freedom through movement?

The promise of EU citizenship and the limits of a transnational life

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Abstract

European Union rhetoric and scholarly debate have made ambitious claims about the promises of European citizenship. Based on group discussions with 'mobile Europeans', this thesis aims to confront those promises with the lived experiences of EU citizens. The thesis complements normative and legal accounts of EU citizenship with a sociological approach that analyses how Europeans' ways of talking about mobility relate to their expectations of the social, economic, and political possibilities in the countries they move between.

Of particular interest is how mobile Europeans develop personal agency and construct a sense of political belonging when moving between contexts. The empirical part of the thesis engages with these concerns through an analysis of group discussions held with Europeans who live and work in another EU member state. Under investigation is the nature of the 'emancipation' and enhanced sense of agency offered by free movement rights; how that agency is related to mobile Europeans' political expectations; and, finally, what mobile Europeans' future plans reveal about their ability to sustain an integrated political identity while living across borders.

The thesis finds that EU citizenship is at an impasse. While free movement has indeed become intrinsic to Europeans' broader horizon of self-realisation, 'mobility' is often discussed not only in terms of aspiration, but of constraint and individual adaptation. Likewise, the promise of emancipation unbounded by nationality is undercut when Europeans find their social, political and economic attachments fragmented across contexts. Realising EU citizenship's more ambitious transformative promise will require confronting this fragmentation by more radically fostering relations of democratic equality between EU citizens who share a social space.

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Part one: Concepts and Approach

Chapter 1

Introduction

'EU citizenship is at the heart of [the] European project'.

[...]

'The European Commission is committed to ensuring that EU citizenship rights translate into concrete added-value for European citizens.'

These two excerpts appear in the opening to a European Commission factsheet accompanying the publication of a 'Flash Eurobarometer' on European Union Citizenship (Jourová, 2016, p. 1). The contrast in tone between the sentimental and aspirational rhetoric of the first line of the report and, just a few sentences later, its distillation into the functionalist and economistic idiom of rights as a means to 'concrete added-value', neatly encapsulates a number of tensions that run through debates about EU citizenship. These tensions might be reframed as questions prompted by the excerpts themselves: what is valuable about European citizenship *for European citizens*? Is that value 'concrete', or is it manifest in less tangible ways? Should the essence of EU citizenship be understood as a set of instrumental rights, or does it have intrinsic value and a broader transformative potential for political subjectivity? This thesis explores these questions, on the basis of data generated in a series of group discussions with 'mobile Europeans' about their experiences of cross-border movement. This chapter will introduce the theoretical and conceptual points of departure that inform the project's perspective and empirical approach.

Some other results from the 2015 Flash Eurobarometer stand out. While 91% of Europeans surveyed were aware that they were Union citizens, only about half of respondents said they 'know what it means' (Jourová, 2016, p. 2). And, finally, '[a]

majority of Europeans in all 28 Member States[1] have a positive view on free movement'. Beyond consistently strong support for the mobility rights it confers,[2] then, it seems that much about European citizenship is indeterminate in the eyes of Europeans. EU institutional rhetoric, meanwhile, remains stuck between, on the one hand, promises of a new transnational conceptual grounding for citizenship and, on the other, resurgent appeals to market-based conceptions of citizen value. As the excerpts above suggest, and as I lay out further in Chapter 2, these unresolved tensions in the institutional ideal of EU citizenship do not offer a stable narrative against which to assess EU citizens' own accounts.

Debates in legal and political theory, on the other hand, offer more solid grounds for normative evaluations of EU citizenship. Scholarship has both highlighted the 'emancipatory potential' in EU free movement rights (de Witte, 2019b; Joppke, 2019, p. 870) as well as warned against the possible pathologies arising from ideals of free movement that emphasise the kind of instrumentality expressed in the Commission factsheet. Among these latter anxieties are the concern that the self-centred conceptions of emancipation that Union citizenship offers, enshrined in individual rights with a weak political dimension (Bellamy, 2008, 2012), may lead to the experience of social and political alienation (Somek, 2016) and atomisation (Neuvonen, 2019a). Others have pointed out that European institutions' tendency to focus on its instrumental value and de-emphasise the political (Damay & Mercenier, 2016) and relational aspects of EU citizenship fails to realise the more profound transformative potential in Union citizenship: to promote a transnational political subjectivity based in recognition of difference and 'otherness', in contrast to nationality-based models premised on unity (Neuvonen, 2019b).

Many of these normative debates have focused on the integrity of the polity and analyse the ways in which EU citizenship rights may undermine democratic resources at the national level (Bellamy, 2012, p. 908; Menéndez, 2014). Within this broader concern with the democratic consequences of EU citizenship, a subset might be said

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[1] Following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom in 2020, there are now 27 Member States.
[2] This has been repeatedly confirmed in subsequent surveys. The 2018 Eurobarometer affirmed that free movement was supported by 82% of respondents (European Commission, 2018), and an independent poll commissioned by the Oxford-based 'Europe's Stories' project found that 74% of respondents agreed that the EU 'would not be worth having' without freedom of movement (Garton Ash, Macfarlane, & Snow, 2021). See also (Recchi, 2015, pp. 1–2)

to be interested in the democratic integrity of EU citizens themselves as they move across borders. These latter concerns are often couched in terms of subjective phenomena. Some scholars point to the potential for novel paths to 'self-realisation' unbounded by national context. In this view, the possibility of freely moving across borders gives EU citizens novel opportunities to reflect on their (political, economic, social) circumstances and imagine possible futures in another member state that might provide a better 'fit'. Free movement rights, in other words, stimulate a reflexive process in which EU citizens can discern and pursue their 'authentic' aspirations without these being circumscribed by their nationality (de Witte, 2019b, p. 259).

Marco Dani and Päivi Johanna Neuvonen, meanwhile, both focus on the way in which EU citizenship law shapes political subjectivity. The EU creates novel processes of political 'subjectification' by regulating who gets to move, and on what terms. The degree to which mobility rights are 'subservient' to economic logics like employment activity and self-sufficiency means that participation in the transnational social space is shot through with potentially depoliticising and stratifying tendencies (Dani, 2016, p. 88; Neuvonen, 2016, 2019b). Along similar lines, those who criticise EU law's tendency to value individual over collective freedom likewise point to the subjective dimensions of political life. Alexander Somek, again, invoking a Marxian conception of alienation, stresses that this is based in the 'experience' and 'emotional recognition' of a loss of agency under conditions where people's private autonomy cannot find collective expression (Somek, 2016, pp. 35; 52–33). Elsewhere, both Neuvonen and Somek draw on Hannah Arendt to explore the conditions for developing a 'political way of seeing' (Neuvonen, 2020, p. 880)—i.e. taking the standpoint of heterogenous others—between people in societies whose composition is increasingly 'marked by difference and plurality' (Somek, 2014b, p. 146) rather than sameness. This process of 'enlarged thinking' is made possible by acts of 'imagination' (Benhabib, 2002, pp. 170–171; Neuvonen, 2020, p. 878). Here again the theoretical interest points towards an empirical concern with the terms in which people frame their associative ties with those with whom they share a polity.

Methodologically, however, legal and political theory are unable to pursue concerns with how EU citizens make sense of their political and social world to their ultimate

referent: the perspective of EU citizens themselves.[3] Getting empirical insight into processes of how people form and pursue their personal goals; reflect on the value of the associational ties they form in different social/political contexts; experience subjective transformation, and the relationship of these to the conditions of everyday life, tends to be more directly the concern of sociological studies of migration—including intra-EU mobility (e.g. Bygnes, 2017; Carling & Collins, 2018; Guma & Jones, 2019; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2015; Ranta & Nancheva, 2019).

This thesis is an attempt to unpack these normative promises and concerns—that EU free movement may offer a new horizon of emancipation and self-determination, but may be *also* be a path to individualism,[4] instrumentality, and alienation—by taking an empirical approach that can respond to theorists' implicit interest in lived experience and political self-understanding.[5] The empirical portion of the thesis, based in narrative and focus-group methodologies, relies on a series of group discussions held with mobile Europeans. The analysis puts this material in conversation with sociological conceptions of citizenship to direct an examination of how EU citizens' experiences of border-crossing bear upon important political aspects of citizenship. In the rest of this chapter, I will expand on the theoretical concerns I have so far only briefly introduced, justify the concept of citizenship I employ, introduce the research questions, and lay out the three-part conceptual focus that helps to address them. In the final section, I will outline how the argument proceeds.

Work, love and politics: A citizenship based in 'social freedom'

Both legally and practically, EU citizenship is primarily based in the concrete social experience of cross-border mobility. EU free movement rights are activated when EU citizens exercise their treaty rights to move between member states (Citizenship

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[3] This is due, in part, to legal analyses being largely restricted to the issues brought by plaintiffs before courts, meaning their sociological scope is relatively narrow (Menéndez, 2014, p. 908).
[4] It has been observed that trend towards individualism in citizenship is a secular trend in which rights are increasingly separated from national membership and duties are de-emphasized (Joppke, 2010; Soysal, 1994). The emphasis here is somewhat different: how individualism is manifest in people's lives—in how they describe their political relationships and the extent to which they discursively 'privatize' problems that might otherwise be framed as matters of common concern.
[5] This is often the 'dialogue' that the sociology of citizenship is trying to stimulate: confronting insights from political theories of citizenship with 'an analysis of empirical conditions' from studies of cross-border movement (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008, p. 155). See also (Everson, 2014, p. 983).

Directive, 2004; "TFEU," 2012, art. 20). More concretely, the experiences which often define EU citizenship—moving across borders to pursue an educational opportunity abroad, to look for work or take up a job offer, to maintain a romantic relationship, or simply to take a chance in a new context—are not those which readily invoke traditional citizenship conceptions described in terms of exclusive membership (Joppke, 2017) and formal political participation (Bosniak, 2017).

Given EU citizenship's basis in cross-border mobility, and the nature of the concerns I introduced in the previous section, it is clear that approaching EU citizenship through the lived experiences of mobile Europeans requires a conception of citizenship that can capture a broader set of practices than highly-visible markers of citizen-state interaction like voting behaviour, participation in activist movements, or other explicit 'acts of citizenship' aimed at claiming rights or recognition (Andrijasevic, 2013; R. Wagner, 2013). In this section, therefore, I follow theories of citizenship and democracy that attempt to bring 'the social' to the fore, while retaining a focus on how 'the social' is constitutive of 'the political'. Given that EU citizenship decouples the links between society and politics which are understood in state-based models of citizenship to be circumscribed by nationality (Benhabib, 2004; Soysal, 1994), I suggest that this is a particularly useful lens for embarking on a sociological study of EU citizenship. One of the central difficulties posed by EU citizenship is how to reconfigure these links in ways which can preserve the political resources of member state polities and the political impetus of individuals as they move between contexts.

Sociologically-oriented conceptions of citizenship seek to identify those features which '*constitute* rather than *merely define* the citizen' (Bosniak, 2000, p. 486; Turner, 1994, p. 159, emphasis added). This perspective illuminates aspects of citizenship which are not captured by a juridical or political emphasis on formal status and rights. De-emphasising institutional aspects of citizenship may at first glance seem to put sociological definitions of citizenship at risk of indeterminacy (Colliot-Thélène, 2016). However, keeping an interest in the person *qua citizen* keeps the sociological view from collapsing into a description of the social world. The interest remains fixed on *political* life: the sociology of citizenship is interested in 'ordinary' people as subjects of systems of institutional power and as members of the associative relationships they participate in with those amongst whom they live. In those studies

which have approached these questions through discourse, scholars follow these interests by studying how people draw connections between these institutional and social forces and the circumstances of their own lives (see, e.g. Eliasoph, 1998, pp. 9–12; Perrin, 2006, pp. 40–42; White, 2011).

The sociological view also has implications for how one appraises of the substance and quality of citizenship. Since the tendency is to place a greater emphasis on the 'horizontal' (social-political) relationships rather than the 'vertical' (institutional-political) structures that sustain it (Colliot-Thélène, 2016, p. 129), more attention is given to the 'raw materials' of democratic life, to be found in people's tendency to frame political problems (and their solutions) in individualised or collective terms (p. 131). This normative-evaluative dimension—whether problems are discussed as issues of common concern, whether rectifying them should be a matter of private adaptation or public action—is fundamental to evaluating the democratic health of societies in general.[6] EU citizenship gives this dimension a new salience, as we have already suggested, since the EU further destabilises precisely the collective bonds seen as underpinning civic life—already seen to be in secular decline (Joppke, 2010)—with rights oriented towards enhancing individual autonomy (Bellamy, 2012).

Focusing on the vertical connections—how political power is organised *institutionally* and how citizens interact with those institutions—misses how citizenship is manifest in lived experiences of membership and in the ways in which people make sense of their political world. Our concept of citizenship, then, ought to also be attentive to 'primary forms of socialisation' that inculcate particular democratic 'dispositions, practices and expectations that individuals have developed […] while becoming actors in political life' (p. 128).

Ultimately, though, such a view does not rigidly oppose an institutional view with one that privileges citizens' 'subjective perceptions'. Rather, the two are seen to be mutually implicated. Bryan Turner's definition of citizenship includes 'a bundle of practices which are social, legal, political and cultural' which become 'institutionalized as normative social arrangements' (1994, p. 159). In short, in addition to denoting a legal status defining a relationship to political institutions, a

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[6] As Eliasoph (1998, p. 11) points out, de Tocqueville's observations of political life in the early-19th century United States found these publicly-oriented values to be thriving in American associational life.

sociological concept of citizenship also encompasses other social dimensions in which lives play out: at work, through affective relationships with friends and family, as well as the connections people draw between these lived experiences and the political systems under which they live (Colliot-Thélène, 2016, p. 130). Sofia Näsström's recent formulation of democracy as a 'political lifeform' makes similar claims about the relationship between institutions and the subjectivities they support. For Näsström, societies can be judged as embodying a specifically democratic 'spirit' to the extent that they cultivate cooperative dispositions, expectations, and commitments between citizens and institutions and between citizens and each other (2021, pp. 19–20, 127, 155, 179).[7] The goal of sociological views of citizenship is to recognise the constitutive relationship between institutional values, citizens' lived experience, and people's own interpretation of the connections between the two. As I will go on to elaborate, these elements are central to my empirical examination of EU citizens' experiences of mobility.

From individual to social freedom

The concept of citizenship I have been outlining so far draws on perspectives which are often framed as reactions against liberal theories of citizenship that stress the centrality of individual agency at the expense of highlighting the relational and 'essentially collective' nature of social and political formations (Kutz, 2002, p. 472; Schuck, 2002). The extent to which individual/private agency is emphasised over more civic/publicly-oriented concepts of action forms an important evaluative axis around which theories of democratic citizenship are oriented. This is in some respects a rehearsal of a much older communitarian critique of liberalism (Hirschman, 1994, p. 204 ff.). As I have already indicated above, and will elaborate below, this tension is nevertheless especially relevant to EU citizenship, since it is seen to destabilize the taken-for-granted social and political bonds which underpin democratic citizenship.

To access an approach which tries to reckon with this apparent incompatibility, we can turn to the social philosophy of Axel Honneth, and his recent attempts to lay out

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[7] And when the spirit of democracy is 'corrupted', non-democratic dispositions like individualization, 'responsibilization', and competition displace democratic ones like sharing and recognition of interdependence for realizing common goals (Näsström, 2021, p. 158ff.). We will revisit this theme in Chapter 4.

'the social foundations of democratic life' (2014).[8] Some features of Honneth's method are germane to the present study, along the lines we have been developing.[9] First of all, Honneth's reconstruction of Hegel's conditions for social freedom rests on the idea of 'being "with oneself in the other"' (2014, p. 44): it is achieved only in circumstances where social relationships can develop based on mutual recognition, are able to express themselves publicly in 'the external world of social settings and institutions', and in which people recognise that others' 'desires and aims' are complementary and essential to fulfilling their own (pp. 44–45). Honneth is not interested in drawing a hard line between individual liberty (and its potentially isolating effects) with a public-oriented civic expression of the self. Rather, he is concerned with identifying the conditions for the development of individual freedom and self-realization as *necessary*, but essentially incomplete, steps towards 'social freedom', which is realised only through the *relational* and *public* nature of democratic society.

Honneth's schema therefore allows us to grasp the way in which EU citizenship can be enabling of certain kinds of freedom while constraining of others. This allows us to cut through positions which might seek to contrast a 'thin'—liberal, rights-based, post-national—conception of EU citizenship and 'thick' conceptions defined by strong shared socio-cultural bonds associated with national membership. Honneth supplies us with somewhat more dynamic criteria for evaluating the way in which individual freedom develops into social freedom, and hence a framework to evaluate those conditions under which the full expression of social freedom is not realised.

Secondly, Honneth's model engages with contemporary social conditions in three spheres in which these relationships of mutual recognition must develop: the market economy, personal relationships, and democratic politics. This sociological triad— work, love and politics (Kutz, 2002, p. 472)[10]—is also central to the discussions that make up the empirical part of this thesis. The analysis will show that these three areas of life are deeply bound up with how people understand themselves to be a part of

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[8] Floris de Witte has put Honneth's model in productive conversation with legal theories of EU citizenship. See particularly (de Witte, 2016, 2019b).

[9] Both Colliot-Thélène and Honneth develop their models from readings of Hegel (and Durkheim), which explains complementarities in emphasis.

[10] In one form or another, these three entities appear as fundamental elements in many models of democratic life. As Simone Chambers points out, the shared source is likely to be found in Hegel's concept of ethical life, where they appear as family, civil society, and the state (2016, p. 508).

their host countries and the societies they inhabit on a daily basis. This grounded conception of democratic life, based in the emotional and pragmatic concerns of everyday life, accepts that the structuring force of legal regimes and institutions (like EU citizenship) and social life are intimately connected.[11] By staying attentive to how mobile EU citizens talk about their lives, one can discern the specific tensions that arise through cross-border living, how they may impede or support the development of relations of mutual recognition in these social spheres of life, and ultimately how the dynamics of those developments may support or hinder a public expression of the self.

The shared features of the theories outlined above offer up some important criteria for the analysis undertaken in this thesis. Firstly, the sociological conception of citizenship places an attention on citizen *dispositions* rather than more visible and quantifiable indicators like political behaviour (e.g. voting rates)[12] or non-electoral transnational political engagement and activism.[13] For our purposes, an interest in such 'dispositions' is largely analogous with what Andrew Perrin has termed the 'democratic imagination' (Perrin, 2006). It may be parsed as the ways in which people discursively interpret their political world, manifest in the references they invoke spontaneously, the connections they take for granted when describing social, economic and political problems, expectations they form about whether political action is worthwhile, and the ways in which they implicate themselves in matters of common concern. Admittedly, 'dispositions' are much harder to aggregate and measure at scale or even categorise. But these theories' focus on 'dispositions' and the way in which citizenship regimes shape political subjectivity suggests we should approach the question of European citizenship with a stronger emphasis on the perspective of the European citizen.

Adopting this point of view, as this thesis does, is an adjustment of perspective with respect to broader debates about European citizenship which focus on institutional reform and the political legitimacy of the European Union (e.g. Føllesdal & Hix,

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[11] In this view, as Kramer (2017, p. 177), quoting Clifford Geertz, points out, law is a kind of social imagination which influences how people understand how they can organise "lives they can practicably lead".

[12] Part of Ettore Recchi's assessment of the 'sterility' of EU citizenship, for example, is based on the participation rates of mobile Europeans in national elections and European Parliament elections (2015, p. 105ff.).

[13] See, e.g. Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller (2003).

2006). By contrast to a primary concern with the project of EU integration and the consequences of EU citizenship for national conceptions of citizenship, I am primarily concerned with the citizen perspective. Specifically, by treating EU citizenship as a specific configuration of cross-border living, defined by a legal regime and imbued with normative value, I am interested in how mobility bears upon EU citizens' ability to see themselves in relations of democratic interaction with those with whom they live, even as their life plays out in the multiple contexts of the European Union. This concern goes far beyond the Commission's concerns about whether mobile Europeans 'identify' with the EU or are aware of their EU citizenship rights, say, to vote in the European Parliament elections and can effectively exercise them.

The perspective taken in this study thus allows a shift in focus from a conception of citizenship as a legal-political status defined by rights to one which can be interrogated through its substantive qualities: the kinds of agency it supports, how it reconfigures belonging, and how it accommodates a liberal commitment to enabling the pursuit of personal projects without lapsing into being a depoliticised 'freedom from politics' (Honneth, 2014, p. 79; Näsström, 2021, p. 112). Approached from the perspective of mobile EU citizens, these qualities might be formulated into the following interests: how do EU citizens use free movement to pursue their personal projects? Do they see 'politics' (in the institutional sense) as enabling in their lives? In what terms do they describe their belonging to collective entities they participate in?

Following this sociological conception of citizenship leads inevitably into an interest into what might be called the 'lived experience' of mobile EU citizens, and such, it maintains a grounded focus on the social dimensions of everyday life: economic relations, family and affective ties, and political life. In the following sections, I will differentiate and justify this approach from attempts to grasp the nature of European citizenship on the basis of identity and rights-claims.

Moving away from identity

To the extent that sociological studies have taken seriously the outlook of EU citizens themselves, they have often relied on the concept of identity (e.g. Bruter, 2005). Though potentially helpful in approaching certain relational aspects of citizenship like

belonging and membership, centralising 'identity' runs the risk of collapsing the multidimensionality of citizenship into questions of socio-cultural self-identification and of essentializing the meaning people give to their associational life (Kohli, 2000, p. 117). The fixation on identity in EU citizenship studies, additionally, has suffered from a number of conceptual and methodological limitations which hamper its ability to capture other aspects of citizenship centred around realising individual and collective agency on terms other than those implied in communitarian models.

The question of a 'European identity' has been closely linked with debates about European citizenship since before it was inaugurated in the Maastricht Treaty,[14] and hinges around the question of whether a collective identity is a necessary underpinning for a political or social community (Kohli, 2000, p. 118). Affirmative answers usually rest on an invocation of the nation-state as an analogy (Kostakopoulou, 2007, pp. 625–626), since state-based concepts of citizenship are often understood to rest on a combination of rights, participation, and a shared sense of *belonging*.[15] In this view, identity is indispensable to a well-developed *demos*, providing a common sense of belonging necessary for bonds of mutuality and 'democratic interaction' (Barber, 2002, p. 253). It follows that a common European identity is necessary to give substance to European citizenship and to underpin emergent transnational solidarity and common political action. Jürgen Habermas's view that such an identity might be constructed at the supranational (European) level through an identification with a shared political and constitutional norms—rather than more exclusionary features like national cultures or shared ethnicity—is one of the more prominent proposals to apply this idea to the EU (Habermas, 1992, 2001).

Arguments of this type form an important crux in the debates around the 'no-demos thesis', which posits that, given the absence of a European demos, pursuing further consolidation of the EU's supranational institutions should also be rejected (Bellamy, 2013). Since the conditions to sustain supranational democracy are not met and are unlikely to be met anytime soon, the nation-state should remain the primary locus of

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[14] See, for example, the Commission's *Proposal for a Council Directive on voting rights for Community nationals in local elections in their Member State of residence* (1988, p. 7), in which an active promotion of a European identity was seen as necessary for consolidating the 'People's Europe' agenda that would 'gradually reinforce the idea of European citizenship' (p. 22). See Bo Stråth (Stråth, 2002) for a historical reconstruction of the concept and the role it has played in the integration project.
[15] See, for example, (Bellamy, 2008) and (Dani, 2016). Bruter (2005, p. 2) also underlines the importance of shared identity to sustain political legitimacy in modern democratic states.

political life. Attempts to transpose the thick connections—including strong identities—which support the demos at the member state level to the Union level would both almost certainly fail *and* risk undermining these resources at the national level.[16] While authors in this camp support further democratic development of the European Union, they see the nation-state as the proper home of the demos.[17] Union policies—and jurisprudence—should aim at keeping these democratic communities intact while moving substantive European issues as close to the peoples[18] of the Union as possible (Bellamy, 2008).

Others have criticised the quest for a collective European identity by pointing to the methodological and conceptual reductivism that characterises much of the social data on EU citizenship. Adrian Favell, for example, sees the 'research industry' that has developed around measuring European identity as largely reflecting the European Commission's own preoccupation with its legitimacy and with the public perception that European integration is principally a market-making project (2010, p. 191). The Eurobarometer data relied upon in much of the 'EU identity' research might be questioned from the point of view that it is social data produced by the same institution that it is meant to evaluate, reflecting its own priorities in research design and reporting.[19]

For our purposes, it is perhaps more important to note that, by supplying data on topics like 'European identity', Eurobarometer data has played an outsized role in defining the term's parameters, including by conceptualising it in terms of semi-exclusive territorial categories (Kohli, 2000, pp. 122–125)—and the way in which, for example, respondents are invited to focus on the EU as a reference point around which to orient their responses. This comes at the cost of downplaying other ways of interrogating the bonds necessary for political life in common (White, 2011). As White (pp. 37–38)

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[16] This is an element of what Neuvonen refers to as 'the democratic critique of EU law', which looks at the ways in which transnational rights can be seen to threaten 'political and/or social citizenship within the EU', including at the level of already-established democracies in the member states (2020, pp. 870–871).

[17] See a good summary of this position in (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 287), which the author nevertheless argues against.

[18] Those who stress the commitment to maintaining as much of the sovereignty and distinct democratic resources of each member-state demos, even as they seek to 'govern together but not as one' have articulated this plurality model under the banner of 'demoi-cracy'. See (Nicolaïdis, 2013) for an analytical and normative defense of the concept.

[19] Favell's tongue-in-cheek characterization of the Eurobarometer imagines the questionnaire asking whether Europeans would 'buy an EU constitution with their cornflakes in the morning' (2010, p. 191).

points out, such a large quantitative data-gathering effort requires that that a complex and nuanced concept (European identity)—onto which respondents will inevitably bring their own evaluative criteria—be reduced to a 'stable' and recognizable object that respondents are prepared to comment on (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012, p. 94).

Putting aside the concerns regarding the reductionism and positivist assumptions necessary in collecting large-scale survey data, there are also long-running arguments against a preoccupation with identity on conceptual and normative grounds. These arguments point out that the search for European identity is based on a flawed, and normatively undesirable, analogy between the EU and the nation state (Colliot-Thélène, 2016, p. 128). One resulting concern is that hitching Union citizenship to a common European identity runs the risk of reproducing the nationalist and exclusionary character of national citizenship that EU citizenship aims to overcome (Barber, 2002, p. 256; de Witte, 2019b, p. 266; Joppke, 2019, p. 870). One of the promises of regional integration projects like the EU is that they can 'disentangle' socio-political membership from national identity, allowing new models of belonging on the basis of recognition of difference (Neuvonen, 2019c, p. 231).

Relatedly, scholars who look at what conditions might sustain political relationships between those not sharing a common nationality point out that emphasising identity assumes that the commonalities required to sustain a democratic community are, and can only be, those which underpinned communitarian concepts of nation-state citizenship, based in pre-political characteristics like socio-cultural sameness (Delanty, 2002, p. 159; Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 626; Menéndez, 2014, p. 913; White, 2011, p. 35). The conceptual error here, it is claimed, is in seeing shared identity as a *pre-condition* for, rather than a *product* of, political processes that seek to redefine membership and the conditions of participation (Neuvonen, 2019c, p. 231). This claim has antecedents in, for example, Bernard Crick's view that consensus and commonality are not preconditions for shared political practice. Rather, it is the 'activity (the civilising activity) of politics itself' which creates political community amongst 'diverse groups', not 'something mysteriously prior to or above politics'

acting as 'an intangible spiritual adhesive' (Crick, 1962, pp. 9–10; Hirschman, 1994).[20]

The transformation of identity that European integration promises in this perspective is not a shift from national identity to European identity, but one in which European citizenship invites an internal transformation of political subjectivity that incorporates 'the other' as a political equal, not on the basis of shared nationality but in the recognition of being in an interdependent associative relationship (see also de Schutter & Ypi, 2015). Such an idea is not as indiscriminate as 'global citizenship' or a cosmopolitan orientation (since it is bounded by the construct of EU citizenship), but neither does it need to rely on appeals to shared characteristics like ethnicity or shared culture and traditions, or markers of pre-established consensus.[21] And, inasmuch as incorporating 'the other' into processes of political praxis becomes understood as central to being a European citizen, it may have catalytic effects for a less-exclusionary conception of political belonging in general, and hence a more profound transformation in the concept of citizenship (see also Kostakopoulou, 2007).

These are compelling arguments for conceiving of European citizenship as a dynamic transformative force that does not simply apply the communitarian premises of national belonging to the Union. Nevertheless, it seems EU institutions remain primarily concerned with promoting a concept of EU citizenship which aims to 'enhance feelings of belonging to the EU' and which are geared to 'strengthen support for the EU' (Damay & Mercenier, 2016, p. 1140). Scholars following in the tradition of Karl Deutsch's transactionalist theory see the need to 'foster a common European identity' (Kuhn, 2015, p. 1) to the extent that it is necessary to buttress support for the European Union and for further integration. The transactionalist view posits that, as transnational (social, economic) activity increases, so too will identification with and political support for the EU (Kuhn, 2015, p. 5).

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[20] Crick here is not discussing commonality in terms of identity; his notion of diversity is in reference to the plurality of conflicting interests in a given society and the ways in which these conflicts are constitutive of political community when played out through political practice.
[21] Gerard Delanty has tried to stress the reflexive relationship between citizenship and community in what he has called 'cosmopolitan community', also based in a recognition of plurality and difference (Delanty, 2002, p. 172).

Transactionalists are therefore perturbed by data that suggests that, notwithstanding increasing transnational interactions across borders in Europe, public support for European integration and identification with Europe seems to have stalled. Recent studies suggest that this is because the kinds of cross-border interactions which yield positive associations to the EU are 'socially stratified', being limited to the most mobile and usually to the well-educated, young, and professional classes (Fligstein, 2008; Kuhn, 2015, p. 6). Damay and Mercenier argue that the transactionalist view nevertheless remains at the basis of the Commission's efforts to promote a common European identity. But this comes at the cost of an approach in which cross-border mobility *per se* would be less central and programmes aimed at promoting an EU citizenship based in, for example, 'an active and political citizenship' (2016, p. 1139) are pursued instead.

EU citizenship: disembedding (and re-embedding?)[22]

This multidisciplinary exhaustion with 'EU identity navel-gazing' (Weiler, 2022) reflects both an empirical reappraisal[23] as well as a broader normative realignment. From the legal perspective, authors argue that EU law—in this case citizenship law— is primarily aimed at promoting *individual* empowerment, 'catering to the individual's aspirations' (de Witte, 2019b, p. 266) rather than constituting a 'free-standing own identity' at the European level (Joppke, 2019, p. 870). At any rate, its purpose—for now—is definitely not to attempt to transform nationals into Europeans. Rather, as Loïc Azoulai puts it, 'EU law strives to convert European individuals into members of social spheres external to the political system of the country of origin, with the possibility to circulate among these spheres, establishing links between them, occasionally pitting one entity against another' (Azoulai, 2016, p. 204). Despite first appearances, Azoulai stresses that EU law is not individualistic—since it facilitates a *re-embedding* into the collective entities he identifies (market, family, and

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[22] These terms have a descriptive similarity to what Giddens sets out (1990) as a process of '"lifting out" of social relations from local contexts of interaction' (p. 21) followed by a pinning down to other 'local conditions of time and place' (p. 79). But as I will show, the argument from the perspective of EU law argues that EU citizenship structures dis- and re-embedding processes in specific ways.

[23] See, for example, Anastasia Penot's account of how, following the introduction of Union citizenship, the doctrinal focus gradually shifted from interest in 'political participation in a supranational polity' to 'membership in a transnational community' (Penot, 2012).

society)[24]—but neither is it holistic inasmuch as it does not re-propose a single unit encompassing all social and political life:

> the whole point of EU law is not to connect European individuals to the Union as a unifying whole in which they would feel part of the same inclusive community. There is no genuine social and political integration transposed to the Union level by EU law. Clearly, the conditions for the creation of a shift in allegiance from Member States to the Union and the creation of mutual reciprocity among Europeans are not currently met. Individuals do not get from EU law a sense of belonging to an overarching community of life and destiny. What they get is an opportunity to integrate into and circulate among territories as well as various social and institutional spheres prevalent in the Member States (p. 204).

Azoulai's blunt reorientation underlines the point that the search for European identity was misguided. As in 'demoi-cratic' models of the EU,[25] there is an emphasis on the integrity and virtues of the already-existing social, economic, and political structures of the member states as the primary reference points for politics and belonging. EU citizenship's offer is not to transpose these to the supranational level, but to allow mobile Europeans to choose which ones they would like to participate in, free from the determinism of national belonging.

Parsing similar arguments in terms of 'emancipation', de Witte likewise claims that free movement rights offer the means for escaping 'the oppression that comes from the way in which [national] society is organized and its norms legitimated' (2019b, p. 266). Emancipation for de Witte reflects the assessment that the Procrustean nation state cannot allow its citizens opportunities to realise the innumerable possible expressions of 'the self' of its citizens.[26] Here, again, though, EU citizenship does *not* aim to relocate 'the individual into a wider, pre-existing or imagined European

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[24] Azoulai's three examples of the 'collective entities' that EU law allows re-integration into recalls our triad of work, love, and politics.
[25] See above, Footnote 18.
[26] This claim, expressed in similar terms by others including Joppke (2019) and Kochenov (2019b), often seems to overstate the force of 'ethnos' and national identity as strongly determinative in what are usually considered relatively plural, multicultural, liberal societies. Nevertheless, the point stands: it is clear how access to a much wider set of 'flavours' of society could be considered emancipatory.

community', but rather gives 'the European subject' chances to pursue her aspirations in any of the member state contexts that align more closely with her 'specific aspirations' (ibid.).

However, if free movement 'emancipates' Europeans from the national community, but does not re-articulate 'the self' *qua* European' (ibid.), what then is the fate of the dis-embedded European? The difficulty arises when taking into account the lack of 'holism' that Azoulai points to—that is, the way in which opportunities to realise the self are ultimately dependent on stabilising and consolidating the various aspects of social life (Azoulai, 2016, p. 215). This is what de Witte and Azoulai claim EU law provides for: it 'serves to reinstitutionalize the subject in her host state' (de Witte, 2019b, p. 267).[27] While at first blush, downplaying the link with the Union seems to rob EU citizenship of any political content, Azoulai and de Witte have in mind something more demanding than the pre-Maastricht idea of the 'market citizen' (Everson, 1995; Kostakopoulou, 2005, p. 238; 2007). EU citizenship *qua* market citizenship is conceived as being comprised mainly of economic rights and other negative liberal rights which allow these economic entitlements to be exercised freely, but does not provide a 'bond between the individual and the political institution' (Barber, 2002, p. 244). For Azoulai and de Witte, what EU law 'strives' for is re-establishing such bonds (both political and social) in novel ways (Azoulai, 2016, p. 204).

According to the model of European citizenship described by Azoulai and de Witte, then, there are two moves enabling the 'freedom' that free movement rights offer. The first is a release from the bonds (broadly conceived) of nationality as determinative in one's 'life and destiny' (Azoulai, 2016, p. 204). This comes through rights to free movement and non-discrimination ("TFEU," 2012, art. 18). The second move requires EU citizens to find meaningful forms of embeddedness and self-expression in their new contexts (Azoulai, 2016, p. 216). The promise of EU citizenship is fulfilled only to the extent to which Europeans manage to 'integrate' into new social spheres and

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[27] Of course both authors show how EU citizenship rights allow for novel constellations of entangled social connections *across* contexts, linking multiple sites, which Azoulai demonstrates with a focus on possibilities for 'circulating', the idea of 'multi-anchorage' (2016, p. 214), and opportunities for establishing an 'ensemble of social relations' (p. 206). However, he is also attentive to the potentially destabilizing effects and social pathologies that may accompany cross-border living and the essentially self-centric model of these 'ensembles' that EU law facilitates (p. 216).

become 'reinstitutionalized' in their host context(s). Ultimately, the extent to which EU citizenship might be considered truly 'emancipatory', rather than just a 'retreat into freedom' (de Witte, 2019b, p. 266),[28] rests on this second condition.

Upon reflection, it becomes apparent that the conditions for 'liberating the individual from the suffocating grip of nation-states' (Joppke, 2019, p. 870), appear easier to secure than the imperative to allow them to find ways to express their 'public selves' in a new context. This is because the first can be accomplished through the granting of rights—through law—whereas the conditions for finding footholds in new contexts are based additionally in processes of socialisation which will depend on personal circumstances, social position, the institutional and societal characteristics of the host state, and, crucially (since much rests on the subjective/dispositional dimension of citizenship), the meanings that people attach to these circumstances.

If these scholars have made a convincing case for shifting our focus away from an overarching European identity as a defining essence of EU citizenship, the question then arises what the object of research ought to be. The upshot, finally, of a concept of European citizenship that de-emphasises a common European identity and which instead directs our attention to the different social 'spheres' across member state contexts in which people live out their lives, is that closer attention must be paid to the lived experiences of mobile Europeans in a way that can pick up on these 'situated' features of social life.

Mobile Europeans as 'accidental cosmopolitans'

Continuing along these lines—in which EU citizenship is seen mainly as a force of disaggregation of place, of membership, of situatedness in a circumscribed and 'dense net of political, social, and economic relations' (Dani, 2016, p. 62)—raises a specific set of concerns about the fate of the mobile European. Alexander Somek has drawn these out under the heading of what he has called the 'no-polis thesis' (Somek, 2014b,

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[28] de Witte takes this formulation from Axel Honneth (2014). Honneth's model of social freedom will aid the analysis in Chapter 4 and beyond.

p. 151). His central concern is that the EU does not constitute a space of democratic interaction (polis) in the political imagination of EU citizens.

The worry is that the alternative model of association, once unbounded from the politically-bounded relations characteristic of national citizenship, is (once again) not a Europe-wide democracy, but rather a market model of interaction centred around facilitation of individual opportunities and frictionless regulation of cross-border life 'in the civilised manner countenanced by *doux commerce*' (Hirschman, 1982, p. 1464 ff.; Somek, 2014b, p. 147). The contrast, in other words, is not between a political association on the domestic level and a supranational political association on the EU level, but rather between a mode of life organized politically and one organized in terms of the market. Jon Elster's distinction between 'the market' and 'the forum', and the types of behaviour appropriate to each, sum up the difference nicely. When citizens begin to act under the precepts of social choice theory (i.e. as a consumer), they consider their choices only in terms of how they themselves are individually affected. By contrast, acting politically requires expressing one's preferences in a way that takes into account how they affect others (Elster, 2003, p. 329).

To draw out the implications, Somek argues that the kind of self-determination supported by bounded politics is based in a self-conception of mutual concern and interdependence. Political self-determination is possible only through a mutual 'yielding' of wills between those who see themselves as 'living together' in this state of normative obligation (Somek, 2012, pp. 374–375). By contrast, market interactions are both contingent and competitive: 'the question of *where* one lives and *with whom* becomes secondary' (Somek, 2012, p. 372). Where collective agency through politics seems discredited, one instead must 'brace oneself for various competitive races' (ibid.).

By contrast to market exchanges, Somek's no-polis thesis focuses on how *political* relationships rely on the groundedness of human lives over time and in space. Drawing on Arendtian concepts that stress the historically spatially-bounded nature of 'the political' (Everson, 2014, p. 965; Somek, 2014b, pp. 146, 151–152), Somek warns about the effects of what he calls an '*accidental* cosmopolitanism' (Somek, 2012). Rather than being the outcome of a deliberate 'decision to see oneself as a world citizen', as in theories of political cosmopolitanism, becoming accidentally

cosmopolitanism is 'product of circumstances' and results in a life which is delinked 'from the place at which one lives among others' (p. 371). While Somek's critique does not develop as a theory of citizenship specifically under conditions of transnational mobility, the diagnosis of contemporary political conditions which encourage accidental cosmopolitanism is useful for our later analysis of how mobile EU citizens talk about their lives and how the conditions they describe relate to their views on politics.

Somek's account is ultimately sympathetic with the fate of accidental cosmopolitans: accidental cosmopolitanism is primarily a symptom of broader social forces and conditions ('circumstance') rather than something that is actively chosen or pursued by individuals (hence the emphasis on 'accidental'). It arises as an attempt to cope with experiences of life which are increasingly complex and competitive and which people may understandably come to see as being out of reach of politics (or, worse, facilitated by a degraded politics). Accidental cosmopolitanism is thus a disposition engendered by disappointment and alienation, and represents an attempt to regain agency in depoliticised circumstances. Its side-effect, though, is seeing oneself outside of the associative bonds which characterise political communities. Instead, 'life finds its lonely home in the pursuit of individual ambition' (Somek, 2012, p. 371). Nevertheless, Somek retains the possibility that people may reckon with their state of alienation and therefore find 'reason to recover the political dimension of their existence' (Somek, 2014b, p. 145).

The 'accidental cosmopolitanism' framing—including the hopeful if tenuous potential it allows to reactivate a more political self-conception—is a useful lens for grasping the often-messy narratives of my respondents. It invites a fine-tuned attention to how EU citizens talk about the conditions that enable their self-determination and to how mobility plays into how they talk about their own agency. 'Accidental cosmopolitanism' in this sense encourages a sociological tendency, inviting us to pay attention to how the 'circumstances' of life which seem proximately determinative of decisions to, e.g. move across borders, follow a particular career path, etc., may have more political content than is apparent or made explicit. As we will see in the following section, empirical studies of EU citizenship that wish to highlight its political aspects often focus on ways in which EU citizenship is used to actively claim-

rights or navigate conflicts with state-enforced policies. The more subtle observation of the accidental cosmopolitan view is that, when it becomes a means for navigating life's circumstances, EU mobility may have a depoliticising tendency built in. Indeed, to the extent that people frame their circumstances with a tacit sense of pragmatic acceptance of 'the way things are', such developments are more insidious than outright political conflict, since they become axiomatic. The idea of accidental cosmopolitanism allows us to grasp the implicit political content, and especially the implications of a citizenship regime (EU citizenship) which has at times promoted cross-border mobility as a response to challenges arising from 'restructuring' social and economic conditions (CEDEFOP, 2006).

The place of the political

As I have tried to suggest, there are many ways in which 'the political' is inextricably, if often implicitly, bound up in apparently non-political aspects of daily life. This observation is central to discursive approaches to studying citizenship through the ways in which people interpret their political world through 'everyday talk' (Perrin, 2006, p. 42 ff.). Ordinary discourse may be 'political' without explicitly invoking references to institutional aspects of power or controversies over public policy rehearsed in the media. Nevertheless, when discussing 'citizenship', we also expect the concept to 'embody a relationship between the individual and the State' (Barber, 2002, p. 244). In the case of mobile EU citizens, that relationship is radically reconfigured by free movement rights: mobile citizens' political life takes on a different topography of rights and membership across the contexts in which they live. A number of empirical studies have engaged with the ways in which EU citizenship and free movement rights give EU citizens novel resources for confronting political problems.

On the one hand, a number of such studies have explored intra-EU mobility as a reaction to political dissatisfaction, contributing to a literature that challenges common explanations for immigration based in economic necessity (Bygnes, 2017; Bygnes &

Flipo, 2017; Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2014).[29] Susanne Bygnes (2017) has invoked Durkheim's concept of *anomie* as an instructive one for understanding why some Europeans have moved across borders in Europe, capturing a 'state of hopelessness and lack of belief in politics, government and the future' that she observed in her respondents' attitudes towards their home polities (2017, p. 262). Bygnes focuses on respondents who were not facing the prospect of unemployment or a general lack of economic resources at home to highlight ambivalent citizenship narratives that elicited responses not based solely in economic justifications. Rather, her respondents pointed to issues of political trust and cultural decline, lamenting the corruption of politicians, and a 'lack of communal spirit' (p. 268).

In the case of Bygnes (2017) and Bygnes and Flipo's (2017) EU movers, then, EU citizenship appears to facilitate 'exit' of the kind that Albert Hirschman (1970) and Stefano Bartolini (2005) point to. In this reading, EU citizenship reorganises political boundaries, reducing loyalty to the home state and its troublesome politics, and brings down the costs of exit as an available reaction to the state's poor 'organizational performance' (S. Bartolini, 2005, p. 4). In Hirschman's well-known exit/voice dichotomy, this kind of exit—associated with a market response to economic dissatisfaction—is in opposition to voice—forms of public expression of dissent and continued personal involvement in political life. The implication of Hirschman's paradigm when applied to EU free-movement rights is an individualisation of political life in which opportunities for opting-out of common goods and the possibility of choosing to move to another polity becomes less costly (Hughes, 2005). But Hirschman's later work, as well as a number of empirical studies show that 'opting-out' of one polity by crossing borders can be in some cases a means for public expression (R. Wagner, 2013) and/or be accompanied by strong transnational activism and engagement with the home polity (Bygnes & Flipo, 2017), confounding easy assumptions about the depoliticizing effects of cross-border mobility and EU citizenship.

However, beyond such cases, the danger of depoliticization remains a valid concern, not least because of the incomplete political rights that EU citizens have in their host

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[29] In a similar vein, though without a specific focus on mobility, scholars have noted declining political trust in economically-challenged contexts as being a consequence of perceptions of politicians' poor responsiveness to citizen demands, rather than declining economic conditions *per se* (Torcal, 2014).

state and the evidence that suggests that transnational political involvement is socially stratified and differs along the lines of country of origin (Bygnes & Flipo, 2017; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Hughes, 2005; Woolfson, 2010).[30] The combination of possible political dissatisfaction with the home state and formal and informal barriers to political integration with the host state form a central concern of this thesis. In such a scenario, relations with the home polity are attenuated by disappointment, and the relationship with the host polity is formally limited (with implications for political socialisation and feelings of democratic belonging that we will explore in later chapters), leaving mobile Europeans weakly attached to *both*. And following the arguments we explored earlier, neither do they find any credible opportunity for political identification at the EU level. This leaves the outlook for mobile Europeans' political lives looking fairly tenuous, potentially feeding tendencies towards depoliticization and individualisation.

Such a drift towards depoliticization would be hard to discern, since it would manifest as a retreat from, rather than engagement with, forums for social and political expression. The nature of such diffuse political problems may find no public expression, not be focused around a prominent political issue or public debate, and not involve rights-claims that require institutional interaction. In this sense, approaching them empirically requires a different strategy than other studies which demonstrate how European citizenship is used strategically by groups involved in direct confrontation with institutions. Aradau, Huysmans and Squire (2010), and the various contributions in Isin and Saward (2013), give us insights into how rights can be claimed through European citizenship by those who are structurally marginalised— sex workers, Roma, third-country nationals, and LGBT groups in certain countries. But the focus on excluded and subaltern groups offers less of a view into how mobility transforms political membership for citizens who are full members of their political communities.

Rikke Wagner's study of Danish-international couples fighting Denmark's restrictive family unification laws (2013), on the other hand, focuses on how EU citizenship

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[30] Bygnes and Flipo's interviewed Romanian migrants in Spain and Spanish migrants in Norway, and found that Romanian emigration was much more likely to be of the 'silent exit' kind whereas Spanish leavers may have had experience in or exposure to the *Indignados* movement—offering an anchor for continued engagement (2017). Hughes (2005) and Woolfson (2010) also explore the failures of voice and the propensity to exercise 'exit' options in some post-communist EU member state contexts.

rights offer novel opportunities for rights claims even for full citizens in conflict with their home state. Wagner shows how these citizens use exit, entry and re-entry as strategies of civic action and, in various ways, challenge the national laws that prevent them from realising their life choices—in this case activating EU citizenship rights to marry a third-country (non-EU) national and live in Denmark. By analysing the narratives of couples exercising these 'transnational citizenship practices', Wagner makes a convincing case that mobility can be used as a mode of democratic engagement, politicisation and civic activation—defying the superficial binary which opposes the 'thick' national community as the only site where politics can be properly realised to a 'thin' rights-based postnational membership model. Wagner's case offers an important and nuanced demonstration of how 'voting with your feet' through EU citizenship's free movement rights can be seen as a political act in the pursuit of specific rights claims, reconfiguring membership and political subjectivity in the process.[31]

This study takes a similar interest in how EU citizenship is manifest in people's lived experience and how it reconfigures social and political membership. However, these other studies, by focusing on those who activate their EU citizenship in response to specific grievances or restrictions offer less insight into the types of multifarious conflicts and considerations that may not have a clear public focal point. What about those who exit their polity but whose intentions are less well-defined; those who feel compelled by their personal, social, economic circumstances rather than by a lack of rights or the imposition of national policies? How does free movement change mobile citizens' political self-conception in cases where polity-exit is not an overt expression of civic practice?

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[31] Rutvica Andrijasevic advocates a conception of citizenship as a '*process* through which subjects, by claiming rights, and regardless of their legal status, constitute themselves as citizens' (2013, p. 50). This study approaches citizenship from the opposite direction—as a status which constitutes citizens in particular ways, regardless of whether they are actively and explicitly claiming rights. Each approach offers productive insights into citizenship from the perspective of different groups who make use of it in distinct ways.

Self-realisation, self-determination, and the nature of belonging

The theoretical debates rehearsed in this chapter have been unified, I have argued, by an interest in how EU free movement rights bear upon the construction of the political self. For the purposes of this project, I will suggest that this interest in political subjectivity can be usefully separated into three component groupings which bear upon our sociological conception of EU citizenship and which will be central to the empirical chapters: (1) aspiration/self-realisation; (2) belonging; (3) sources of agency. These themes are, of course, deeply interrelated and bear upon one another, but making these preliminary distinctions is analytically useful since they emphasise three different aspects of the relationship of the individual to the polities they inhabit.

Questions of *aspiration* and *realising the self*, or to put it in other terms, processes of 'becoming' (Collins, 2018) are mainly attentive to how people construct their distinctiveness vis-à-vis others, how they discern what they value and what goals are therefore worth pursuing. This focus responds to those theories which see EU citizenship as an emancipatory force in individual's lives, and which try to account for the barriers that prevent personal emancipation from translating into civic expression and public-oriented forms of social freedom. The empirical focus will be on how mobile Europeans narrate their transformative experiences—often centred around migration—and how they reflect on the conditions which allow for the pursuit of these personal aims. *Belonging*, rather than being approached through a blunt focus on identity, refers to how people describe their individual relationship to various collectivities and groups in society (Yuval-Davis, 2006). I will be attentive to the ways in which mobile Europeans 'see themselves' in relation to others in society and especially the extent to which these associations are couched in terms that might be described as 'instrumental' (Joppke, 2019). Finally, *sources of agency* are explored through how respondents evaluate the role of politics in the formal sense in shaping the circumstances of their life, alongside other social-structural forces, and the ways they implicate cross-border mobility into those evaluations. In general, citizen talk about agency may invest more or less credibility in various kinds of collective action—e.g. grassroots organisation or formal political participation—with some accounts emphasising, by contrast, the importance of individual action and/or adaptation (Gamson, 1992, pp. 7, 61ff.; Perrin, 2006, p. 144). The question here is

how mobility becomes implicated in repertoires of citizen agency and the extent to which these may be seen as potentially depoliticising.

Structure of the thesis

This chapter attempted to lay out the theoretical and empirical touchstones which motivate the thesis. It identified the normative promises and potential pitfalls of EU citizenship, which have pointed both to the potential to transform political subjectivity and offer a new horizon for emancipation, but also to the possibility for free-movement to reinforce broader trends towards depoliticization. The chapter also showed that contemporary theories of EU citizenship have in many cases retreated from a concept which sought to find the potential in supranational belonging or political identification, and instead direct our attention to the 'social spheres', scattered across borders, as the sites in which individual 'self-realization' may play out—personally, professionally, and politically. Finally, I laid out how these theoretical interests inform the three main conceptual and empirical themes around which the empirical material is organised.

In Chapter 2, I trace the evolution of the idea of the 'mobile citizen' throughout the project of European integration. Rather than an attempt at a full historical reconstruction, the chapter draws from the literature on 'personhood' to uncover the main 'ideals' that come to be associated with mobile Europeans and how ideas of the 'good' and 'bad' European have changed over time. This chapter aims to establish a set of 'ideal'—if not always normatively desirable—conceptions of EU citizenship, which can be confronted with respondents' accounts in the empirical chapters. Additionally, through the discussion of 'personhood' and its focus on subjectivity, it further sets the scene for the methodological approach explained in Chapter 3, which aims at discerning elements of how people 'see themselves' in society.

Chapter 3 justifies the analytical strategy taken to explore both the promises and critical concerns raised by the theoretical literature. As we have seen, the free movement rights embedded in European citizenship have a potentially emancipatory effect by changing the horizon of individual agency and, therefore, of self-realization. However, scholars have suggested pathologies that could result from these changes,

including political alienation and individualistic dispositions toward society. Ultimately, these analyses and critiques are making claims about how institutions and legal regimes shape and re-shape subjectivities. The project therefore adopts an empirical approach that can capture respondents' reconstructions of their personal experiences, which allows them to draw connections between these experiences and the broader socio-political structural forces they saw as bearing upon them. The data collection is therefore based in focus group methodologies that aim to generate sociable discourse within peer groups, and incorporates elements of narrative methodologies. Discussions were structured to be centred on personal stories of cross-border mobility and move into a broader discussion of substantive issues of politics and society, and an analytical strategy based in interpretative methods guides the conceptual development based on the material generated.

Chapters 4 through 6 present the empirical material, organised around the three thematic couplets: (a) emancipation/individualization; (b) instrumentality/relational belonging; and (c) agency/alienation. Chapter 4 investigates the promise of emancipation by engaging with the justificatory narratives that mobile Europeans employ when describing their mobility projects. Returning to Honneth's theory of social freedom, I argue that my respondents' stories partially confirm theoretical claims about the emancipatory potential of EU citizenship. However, a closer look at the ways in which cross-border mobility fragments the different aspects of my respondents' lives, combined with the difficulties they encounter in their day-to-day social and economic relations, suggest that this promise is only partially fulfilled. Moreover, mobile Europeans sometimes appealed to notions of personal responsibility and other privatised conceptions of self-realisation when facing these difficulties, suggesting a depoliticised rather than civic orientation to confronting the problems they see themselves facing.

Chapter 5 looks at the terms in which respondents describe the relational aspects of their lives. It examines the extent to which mobile Europeans describe their attachments to their host society in instrumental terms, and shows how non-instrumental attachments are the basis for a political relationship to form between people sharing a political community over time. The chapter argues that free movement rights can encourage mobile Europeans to consider themselves 'always

potentially on the move' and may thereby discourage the formation of the kinds of attachments that undergird associative political ties. This disposition in some ways sits well with views that see European citizenship as 'instrumental', since mobile Europeans use their free movement rights strategically to suit their needs. However, given the fact that mobility is often undertaken in the face of constraints, this account challenges the idea that instrumentalism is individually empowering.

Chapter 6 takes up these themes further but switches focus to the way in which mobile Europeans talked about the possibilities achievable through politics. The chapter looks at how mobile Europeans' discuss their voting habits, evaluate political developments in their home and host states, and reveal what they think is realistic to expect from politicians and political parties. The goal was to discover whether mobile EU citizens consider collective action through political participation to be a credible source of agency in their own lives, and how personal narratives of border-crossing intersected with their views on politics. Ultimately, the chapter finds that, amidst often emphatic disavowals of politics, centred around cynical interpretations of the motives of the political classes and a deep inertia in society and politics that militate against positive change, respondents' accounts also contained the kernel of something more optimistic. Speakers were able to make cogent critiques of political developments, showing a continued engagement in matters of public life. These critiques often expressed a sense of injustice, suggesting an *alienation* from politics rather than an anti-political disposition. Within this mix, mobility appears in a few different forms. For some, mobility offers a means to shape their circumstances that is unlikely to come from a politics that is inattentive to their needs or antagonistic to their desires. This tendency to 'move away from politics', however, is complicated by many participants' continued primary interest in the politics of their home country—for some, even after many years away. This introduces dislocations which are troubling for citizens' democratic lives: political engagement (through commitment to voting; through critique of political parties and government policies) is mostly reserved for the country in which my respondents no longer live, while political rights are incomplete in the place where their daily lives unfold.

Chapter 7 concludes by bringing these threads together to critically reconsider both the promises and pitfalls of EU citizenship that were identified in the theoretical

debates. In both cases, my respondents' accounts add important caveats. Responding to more optimistic accounts which equate EU citizenship's free movement rights with a new horizon of freedom and self-determination, my respondents' stories highlighted the trade-offs and limitations of cross-border life. While in certain respects enabling, cross-border mobility also threatens to fragment EU citizens' lives in ways which introduce new kinds of constraints. In response to those more critical accounts which see EU citizenship as promoting an 'unencumbered', depoliticised and individualistic view of the self, I find that mobile EU citizens remain surprisingly engaged in matters of common concern, though without adequate means to express their engagement. The chapter goes on to discuss proposals that aim to re-politicise mobile EU citizens' lives and foster elements of a transnational political subjectivity.

Chapter 2

Searching for the 'ideal' mobile citizen

This chapter focuses on the way in which the idea of the 'mobile European' has evolved over time in legal, academic and institutional discourse. In policy-making rhetoric and academic analysis, the right to free movement, and its eventual conflation[32] with EU citizenship as fundamentally a 'citizenship of mobiles' (Shaw, 2019, p. 5), has become constitutive of many of the promises of European integration. As the idea of European mobility developed, cross-border movement has been associated with everything from 'hopeful prospects' for Europe's unemployed (Spaak, 1956) to more contemporary offers of 'empowerment' for EU citizens (European Commission, 2020; Kochenov, 2019a; Somek, 2013). Free movement rights are also understood to unlock new normative potential for the concept of citizenship: they transform the boundaries of political membership and social belonging transnationally (Benhabib, 2004; Neuvonen, 2019c), thereby challenging models based in nationality.

At the heart of these evolving promises is the figure of the mobile European,[33] who appears as the embodiment of the ideals invested in EU citizenship and cross-border mobility. This chapter follows the literature on 'personhood'—which explores the link between the institutional discursive construction of the person and the subjectivities that are fostered in society (Azoulai, Barbou des Places, & Pataut, 2016; Everson,

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[32] As Damay and Mercenier point out (2016, pp. 1139–1140), the 'superimposition' of free movement rights as the essence of EU citizenship, however, comes at the cost of, e.g., focusing on the further development of political rights and participation. See also (Dani, 2016, p. 69).

[33] What I will usually refer to as the 'mobile European' appears under a few interchangeable labels, including 'European mover' (Kramer, 2017) or 'EU mover' (e.g. Recchi, 2015). Other labels applied to mobile Europeans aim to stress a normative or analytical aspect of European citizenship. The 'market citizen' (Everson, 1995; Shuibhne, 2010), for example, derives their transnational rights through their economic activity, and is therefore counterposed to ideas of a more social or political conception of EU citizenship (O'Brien, 2013). Recent developments in EU law have bred contemporary labels like the 'liminal European' (de Witte, 2021), whose status as a rights bearer is increasingly conditional and precarious.

2012; Kramer, 2017; O'Brien, 2013)—in an attempt to clarify the values invested in the contemporary 'mobile European'.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it sets up the 'ideals' of EU citizenship, which can be confronted with respondents' accounts in the empirical chapters. Secondly, through the discussion of 'personhood' and its focus on subjectivity, it further lays the ground for the methodological approach explained in the following chapter, which aims at discerning elements of how people 'see themselves' in society.

The history of the development of free movement rights is well known[34] and will not be fully reconstructed here. The emphasis instead will be on turning points in the conception of the mobile European's value to the project of European integration—in other words, how the mobile European has been 'subjectified'. The broad strokes of this development are presented as follows. Free movement rights initially constituted the mobile European in functionalist terms, whose value was described with reference to the broader goals of the Common Market (Joppke, 2019, p. 870; Kramer, 2017, p. 188). A shifting discourse, especially since the 1970s and in part spurred by the flagging legitimacy of the integration project, began reconstituting European citizens as endowed with a moral significance separate of their economic status as workers or producers, and worthy of a fuller set of political and social rights (Schrag Sternberg, 2013). The culmination of these discursive efforts was the establishment of Union citizenship in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 (Wiener, 1997). Though initially met with scepticism—as a 'cynical exercise in public relations' (Weiler, 1998, p. 10)—in the post-Maastricht period, EU citizenship's new normative content was developed through a series of CJEU rulings which seemed incrementally to divorce citizenship rights from economic activity (Kostakopoulou, 2005). This period of 'decommodification' (Sankari & Frerichs, 2016) of the mobile European as the bearer of a new, morally and politically innovative citizenship status increasingly divorced from economic activity, spurred hopes of continued normative development that would consolidate Union citizenship as a free-standing 'fundamental status' of equality, solidarity and justice (Wollenschläger, 2011).

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[34] See, for example, (Maas, 2005, 2007, 2014; O'Leary, 1996; Recchi, 2015, Ch. 1; Wiener, 1997).

Recent developments, especially since the CJEU's 2014 ruling in *Dano*, however, have seen a retrenchment, increasingly transforming the vision of the 'good' EU citizen into one that is heavily influenced by neoliberal precepts, including an emphasis on individual responsibility, evaluated both by the ability and demonstrated willingness to foster their productive capacities (de Witte, 2021, p. 2; Kochenov, 2017, p. 55; Kramer, 2017, p. 176; O'Brien, 2013).[35] As some have argued, this transformation is not simply a return to the previous model of 'market citizenship' that post-Maastricht developments seemed to move away from, but an internal transformation in the 'anthropological foundation constituting the economic subject' at the heart of free movement (Kramer, 2017, p. 173).

The premise of this chapter's exploration is that the values associated with 'mobility' as a constituent—indeed, fundamental[36]—right of European citizens have evolved in response to contingencies in the history of European integration and to broader socio-political transformations, such as prevailing conceptions of economic liberalism. These different visions over time offer different propositions of how Europeans ought to 'see themselves' in relation to the social, political and economic forces that they encounter as they move across borders.

'Good' and 'bad' Europeans: personhood, subjectivities, and citizenship in EU law and institutional discourse

One way to trace the vision of the person that lies at the heart of EU free movement rights is by looking at recent work that engages with how EU citizens' 'personhood' is constructed by the rights granted in EU law, and how the institutions of government shape subjectivity (Dani, 2016; Kramer, 2017, p. 173).

The concept of 'personhood' in EU law is deployed to capture the ways in which 'the person'—in this case, 'the European subject'—is constructed through developments

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[35] Or, in Kochenov's memorable turn of phrase: 'undermining rights through attention to CVs' (2017, p. 53). Responsibilization and trends towards economic 'activation' as features of EU free movement rights and a stratification of EU personhood were already evident before *Dano*, as Charlotte O'Brien has demonstrated (O'Brien, 2013).

[36] Article 45 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that 'Every citizen of the Union has the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States' (*Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012/C 326/02)*, 2012).

in EU citizenship law. In a descriptive sense, the orthodox legal conception of the person is taken to be an individual endowed with a collection of rights and responsibilities (Kurki, 2019, p. 39). But normative-evaluative perspectives focus on the idea that underlying these rights and responsibilities is a deeper moral and sociological foundation which privileges and endorses specific qualities, aspirations, capacities, social roles and relationships. As Marco Dani points out, the assumptions underlying this foundation reflect the 'institutional and ideological specificities' of the projects which define them at different points in their development (2016, p. 55). More than that, these projects 'recognise in subjects different capacities, interests and aspirations' and consequently 'exert on them […] different defining pressures' (ibid.).

These criteria, since they are ultimately selective, link rights to status by defining who is excluded or included in the category they underwrite. As a consequence, scholars have sketched specific visions of the European subject, highlighting the qualities that underlie the rights granted to them. Examples include the 'market citizen' (Everson, 1995; Shuibhne, 2010), or, more recently, the 'liminal European' (de Witte, 2021) on the basis of how EU law justifies the rights and protections available to mobile EU citizens—in these cases mostly on the basis of their economic activity and the changing nature of work. These definitions and redefinitions of social categories ultimately constitute acts of 'subjectification', in which mobile Europeans are reshaped according to the values upheld at different stages of the European integration project (Everson, 2012, pp. 158–159).

What results is a hypothesis about the relationship of the formal conception of the person to its social reality—the 'forms of life' it engenders and supports (Azoulai, forthcoming 2023; Azoulai et al., 2016; de Witte, 2021; Kramer, 2017; O'Brien, 2013). The claim is not only that law creates an abstracted legal subject for its own purposes, but that these institutionally-articulated renderings shape and condition human action in society. Chalmers has articulated this dynamic by pointing out that the social force of law is at its most potent when it appeals to human desire, reason, and the need for social recognition. Hence, law presents a 'vision of social conformity ('this is what people do')', combined with a normative demand ('what they ought to do'), and rewards those who act accordingly (2016, pp. 92–93). In other words, 'it sets

out a vision of how we should live by presenting an image of what is good and right'
(ibid.).

As we will see throughout this chapter, concern arises when the criteria for determining the eligibility for rights of mobile Europeans—for example, the definition of *worker* or indeed of *work* (O'Brien, 2016); or what constitutes 'real links' between mobile Europeans and their 'host' state when determining eligibility for social assistance (O'Brien, 2008)—favour people with certain profiles and exclude or marginalize others. Judicial decisions can destabilise the definition of categories crucial to the enjoyment of EU citizenship, including what counts as a 'worker', a 'citizen', an 'economically active person', and so on (Strumia & Hughes, 2017, p. 737).

These disparities of recognition come to define the 'good' European from the 'bad', on the basis of their personal disposition, the nature of their economic activity, or other characteristics that might be seen as morally arbitrary, unjust, or normatively undesirable. Again, the argument arising from this critical interest in personhood and subjectivity is that these definitions affirm underlying anthropological models (Kramer, 2017). To the extent that they are understood to 'reveal[] our true social nature', whether these models underwrite our 'virtues' in terms of competition, agility and adaptability, or focus instead on elements of cooperation, they shape a social reality that endorses human relationships primarily structured through the market or, by contrast, which could be structured through decommodified models like political and civic relationships (Somek, 2014a, p. 167).[37]

Viewed from this perspective, the project of European integration is therefore also a project of internal redefinition of 'the European' more broadly, and, in our case, of the mobile European. This re-construction of the citizen-subject has particular relevance for EU free movement rights since they aim at redefining the basic elements that have

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[37] As Kramer points out, the fundamental anthropological archetype supporting classical economic liberalism, *homo economicus*, is itself derived from the idea of the *market* as the 'natural' space of human interaction (Kramer, 2017, p. 174). I mention this again only to reinforce the point that the ways in which social relations are regulated are, despite appeals to this kind of essentialism, not natural, but expressions of predominant governmental logics, as Kramer convincingly shows in the case of EU free movement. This makes them no less consequential, as the way in which these logics are implicated in the social structuring conditions established through law forces people to respond to the social/economic/political imperatives they establish.

traditionally stabilised people's self-understanding in society: nationality, citizenship, rights, solidarity, and belonging.[38] In short, EU citizenship challenges the assumptions underpinning the citizen-subject of national constitutional law, characterised as the '*homme situé*, the individual bound to the complex and dense net of political, social and economic relations typical of the industrial society' (Dani, 2016, p. 62). As we will see in more depth in Chapter 4, one of the appeals of European citizenship and mobility is precisely that it offers emancipation from this 'situatedness'.

In sum, the development of EU citizenship is underwritten by a governmental project of redefinition of the European citizen-subject. This can create disjunctures between concrete, lived realities and the ideals pronounced in legal and policy discourse. Legal developments and institutional rhetoric may be seen to encourage behaviour, or may inculcate certain dispositions, while discouraging others, and this in turn shapes subjectivity, including political subjectivity.

The link posited between institutional structures, like law, governmental policy, and institutional rhetoric, on the one hand, and the action-oriented self-understanding of people in society, should, however, not be understood as strictly determinative.[39] Indeed, as Dani points out, the 'alignment between government and governed ensues from a more circular dynamic based on both the *recognition* of individuals' nature and its *shaping* by government operation' (2016, p. 56, emphasis in original). But people are 'targets of regulatory strategies exerting defining pressure on [them]' (ibid.). Needless to say, many factors influence self-understanding which fall outside of this schema. But the hypothesis is particularly compelling in the case of EU citizenship because it defines a sui generis realm of cross-border movement governed by a specific and identifiable set of rights and conditions that apply once outside of one's

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[38] Michelle Everson refers to this 'decoupling [of] the enjoyment of citizenship rights from nationality' as no less than a sweeping aside of 'nation and history' (2012, p. 150). Everson recognizes the liberating nature of EU citizenship as against the exclusionary impulses of national citizenship, while cautioning against visions of citizenship which only aim at denaturing 'traditional notions of belonging' (Everson, 2014).

[39] For a further discussion on how EU law, especially since *Van Gen den Loos*, sets out 'the imaginary for a postnational community' and lays the groundwork for 'broader associative ties and collective identities', see Chalmers & Barroso (2014). The authors point out that, even if law *per se* has little *direct* power over individual subjectivity (p. 111), it can structure and 'nurture' those 'spheres of activity' that enable collective life ('the workplace, the market place, nature, the school, the financial system, the economy, etc.') (p. 115). Neuvonen (2019b, p. 7) makes a similar point, taking the perspective that law is 'constitutive of the conditions for transnational subjectification when it regulates EU citizens' access to transnational social relations or transforms the perception of difference between EU citizens.

country of citizenship, and because its transformative power aims at detaching people from the other historical social-structural force—namely, their nationality (Chalmers & Barroso, 2014, p. 108). Certainly, at the level at which our analysis proceeds, where we are interested in how people see themselves in relation to others and to the state, the idea that the institutional articulation of EU citizenship retains a power to shape the subjectivity of those it enables to live unbounded by the circumstances of their nationality remains compelling.

From 'burden' to 'resource': the mobile European in early integration

All this will offer more hopeful prospects to the unemployed, who, from being a burden on certain countries, will become one of Europe's major resources.

(Spaak, 1956, p. 12)

In 1956, the Spaak Report promised 'more hopeful prospects' to the unemployed of 1950s' Europe, who, freed from the status of being 'a burden on certain countries', could look forward to becoming 'one of Europe's major resources' (Spaak, 1956, p. 12). The document, which substantively fed into the Treaty of Rome, laid out a plan for creating the Common Market which included provision for the free movement of factors of production.[40] 'One such factor of production' were migrant workers, and the Spaak committee argued that the goals of the European Economic Community would depend upon the 'undistorted competition of which freedom of movement for workers formed an integral part' (Editors, 2014, p. 729; Maas, 2005, p. 1019). Previously, workers in the coal and steel industries had been granted the right to free movement, a condition imposed by the Italian delegation during negotiations for the 1951 Treaty of Paris. The Spaak committee's proposal to expand free movement rights to workers in general, eventually included in the Treaty of Rome (1957), began a

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[40] For a sweeping retrospective of how free movement rights for workers have fared since, see (Editors, 2014).

process of negotiation and implementation which would eventually form the foundation of what would become EU citizenship (Maas, 2007).

The vision of the European mover that emerges from the early years of European integration, then, is one that inaugurates the figure of the 'market citizen', which at its core is a 'reduced functionalist concept of the individual'[41] who holds rights to the extent that they help to 'realise the Common Market' and 'facilitate European integration' (Kramer, 2017, pp. 172, 180; Maas, 2005, p. 1020). Sankari and Frerichs refer to this early period in defining the European mover as the initial phase of 'commodification' of the European individual (2016, p. 810). The particular characteristics of labour subscribed to in this phase in the development of free movement rights conformed to conceptions in classical economics—and Marxist analysis—that it be treated as a commodity, and early free movement rights saw workers as passive objects—factors of production—to be allocated (or exchanged) as functional to the common market (Kramer, 2017, p. 175; Sankari & Frerichs, 2016, p. 810). So, while the predominating economic and governmental logic of the time did not offer particular cause for controversy, some contemporaneous critiques nevertheless arose. Maas points out that challenges had already been present in national parliamentary debates attending the approval of the Treaty of Paris: French and Belgian Communist politicians were particularly vocal in denouncing plans to turn workers into 'nothing more than simple merchandise' (2005, p. 1014). These objections remained marginal, and labour mobility provisions were ratified in the ECSC Treaty.

In practice, implementation of cross-border labour movement was limited. It applied only to workers in certain industries, encountered obstruction and delays by some national governments, granted only limited social security rights for workers in the receiving country, and was subject to a number of restrictions by individual Member States (Maas, 2005, pp. 1016–1017). The recommendations in the Spaak Report aimed to overcome the ad hoc nature of labour mobility rights between the Treaty signatories and achieve the 'free circulation of the factors of production', including 'manpower', aimed at the efficient and allocation of resources in the common market (Spaak, 1956,

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[41] This formulation comes ultimately from Habermas (1998), but is translated into English here by Kadelbach (2003, p. 6) and cited in (Kramer, 2017, p. 172).

pp. 10–12). Maas locates the debates coming out of the 1956 Messina Conference and culminating in Spaak's recommendations as containing 'the genesis of the "market citizen" who bears rights as an economic rather than political actor' (2005, p. 1020). As we will see in the following section, this conception of the European subject as constituted primarily by their economic value becomes a persistent source of concern by the Commission and a counterpoint with which to emphasise social, political and 'human' dimensions of the integration project.

Distilling the essence of the EU mover from the debates of the 1950s and 1960s, during which general rights to free movement (for workers) are incorporated into the founding of the EEC, several core features can be stressed. Firstly, recalling the functional language of the Spaak Report, European movers are conceived as a 'resource' for the larger project of creating a common market.[42] As such, the European mover at this stage is an 'object' rather than a subject, passively acted upon by larger forces, with a weak concept of agency and a personhood based in early models of *homo economicus* (Kramer, 2017, p. 175).

A People's Europe

[…] complete assimilation with nationals as regards political rights is desirable in the long term from the point of view of a European Union […]

(CEC, 1975b)

The Commission, in presenting a proposal for a directive on generalized right of residence, for nationals of Member States in the territory of another Member State, hoped to take this to its logical conclusion so that these freedoms are no longer viewed in economic terms but are generally available to all citizens. There is no doubt that Community legislation has had the effect of breaking the link between national territory and the legal implications of nationality. The gradual achievement of a People's Europe will consolidate the trend.

(Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 7/86)

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[42] That this market also aimed at increasing prosperity and raising living standards in Europe (Spaak, 1956, p. 8), remained a 'key theme in pro-Community discourses throughout the 1950s and 1960s' as a legitimation narrative (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 18).

Beginning in the 1970s, and continuing through the 1980s and into the 1990s, a shifting institutional discourse attempted to reconstruct the relationship between Community institutions and European citizens under the banner of a 'People's Europe' (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 78ff.; Wiener, 1997). As the two examples of Commission discourse above show, the new vision of the Community citizen that emerges in this period relied on justifications which transcended those based on reference to their functional role in market integration, instead invoking normative rationales relating to democratic legitimacy as worthy ends in themselves (Schrag Sternberg, 2013; Wollenschläger, 2011). This shift was not born only of benevolence, but also of the imperatives of a flagging legitimacy and 'Euro-pessimism' throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s (Wiener, 1997, p. 538): the institutions' self-preservation relied on convincing European citizens that the integration project was working for them. Notwithstanding these instrumental considerations, the repositioning of the citizen closer to the 'centre of attention in official discourse' and publicly linking the European project's legitimacy to Community citizens' wants and needs led to an accrual of official discourse that cast them increasingly as the 'authors of Community action' (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 100; Wiener, 1997, pp. 539–540).

As we have already noted, one of the main legitimating narratives of European integration in the 1950s and 1960s relied on its ability to secure rising living standards. The economic crisis of the early 1970s, then, constituted a legitimacy crisis for the Community (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, pp. 70–72). The Paris Summit of December 1974 aimed to tackle both the economic and legitimacy crisis and called on then Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans to provide new guiding principles for a future Union. The Tindemans Report, published in December 1975, contained proposals and conceptualisations which would feed into the European Institutions' 'People's Europe' agenda, based on a redefined relationship between the Community and its citizens, and which set up new normative foundations for that relationship.

Cross-border mobility features in the Tindemans' report as part of this agenda for a shift in perspective towards the viewpoint of the European citizen: 'The day that Europeans can move about within the Union, can communicate among themselves […] without national frontiers adding to the problems of distance, European Union will become for them a discernible reality' (CEC, 1975a, pp. 27–28). Tindemans

claimed that his proposals helped to give Europe 'its social and human dimension', which he identified as conforming to the 'deep-seated motivations behind the construction of Europe' (p. 28). Finally, he makes reference to a political problem, suggesting that his proposals can help to restore 'that element of protection and control of our society which is progressively slipping from the grasp of State authority due to the nature of the problems and the internationalization of social life' (p. 28).

This shift in appeals away from economic rationales for the future of the Union's development, and instead an invocation of social, political, and 'human' dimensions come to feature more prominently in what Schrag Sternberg calls a 'fledgling counter-discourse' that began to emphasise 'political, rather than economic participation' (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 97). Reports like these become the ideational resources by which the European institutions begin to redefine the idea of the European—and specifically of the mobile European. In a 1979 Commission proposal regarding the rights of residence for Europeans in other Member States, the Commission begins invoking such language explicitly and drawing connections between decommodification, political participation, mobility, and citizenship. The report's explanatory memorandum firstly invokes the upcoming 1979 European Parliament elections as 'an important step in the progressive development of the European Community *from a market community to a community of citizens*' (CEC, 1979, p. 1, emphasis added). The report then immediately links this to a 'right of residence for nationals of Member States, extending through the territory of the Community and granted *irrespective of the pursuit of economic activity*' as a means to 'strengthen the feeling of all citizens of belonging to the Community and thus their interest in participating […] through their directly elected representatives' (CEC, 1979, p. 2, emphasis added). Signalling the intertextual development of these justificatory narratives, the report then directly appropriates Tindemans' phrase to underline how these rights would make the Union a 'discernible reality' (CEC, 1979).

By the end of the 1970s, the Commission sought to realise the 'Community's objective of freedom of movement of persons'—pursued as we saw in the previous period in functionalist terms of market integration—with a new logic, by *de*-linking it with economic activity. This was the point of the 1979 proposal and several others which would follow (CEC, 1980), and required careful compromise with Member States'

fears (via the Council) that mobility would lead to benefit tourism and other concerns stemming from significant 'population migrations' (1980, p. 3). The problem was still unresolved by the time the Commission published the 1985 White Paper on Completing the Internal Market, which once again emphasised the need to not restrict 'measures to ensure the free movement of individuals […] to the workforce only' (CEC, 1985a). However, despite invoking the 'aspirations of the people of Europe', the Commission dropped non-economic arguments and reverted to functionalist justifications for the removal of barriers to free movement in pursuit of realising the internal market (p. 55). This despite the fact that the Adonnino Report (CEC, 1985b), which influenced the Commission White Paper, made space to further develop the 'rights-based discourse' (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 98) that upheld the desirability of increasing 'the citizen's involvement in and understanding of the political process in the Community institutions' (CEC, 1985b, p. 19).

Despite these vacillations, the Commission took up the question of voting rights more explicitly in the following year, again invoking the 'People's Europe' banner, and affirming that free movement should 'no longer be viewed in economic terms' but should be 'generally available to all citizens' (CEC, 1986). The report takes pains to highlight that 'citizenship is […] disassociated from the national limits on rights attached to a given nationality' in the professional and economic spheres, but that this disassociation 'does not extend to political rights' (CEC, 1986, p. 8). The report goes as far as recognising its self-understanding as a specifically *democratic* community:

> individuals can only take advantage of the freedom of establishment and residence introduced by the Community by forfeiting their political rights. That may seem surprising in a Community which sees itself as a Community of citizens whose basic common characteristic is that they are nationals of democratic Member States. (CEC, 1986, p. 8)

The Commission makes it clear that its motivation in pursuing stronger political rights for mobile Europeans is not an obligation stemming from the Treaties (unlike in the case of social and economic rights, which are expressly provided for), but is rather based in their own interpretation of 'the spirit rather than the letter of the Treaties' (p. 8). By recognising that a lack of political rights could be considered an 'obstacle to freedom of movement of persons' (p. 8), the

Commission effectively recognised politics as a core component of social life and affirmed its commitment to the democratic standing of Europeans, even outside of the national polity where they held citizenship.

The European citizen that emerges from these discourses is therefore gradually constituted as a '*political* being' deserving of a full slate of rights, not only those grounded in their role as 'market citizens'. Normatively, this signalled a shift that free movement rights should be underpinned by a motivation, and invoke an intrinsic value, beyond what might be expected of a well-regulated free trade area. Especially in the case of mobile Europeans, such 'special rights' discourse recognised that movers ought to be able to 'take part in the political life of the place where he lives' (Wiener, 1997, p. 546).[43] This period therefore marks a series of important discursive and policy shifts that would find expression in the establishment of Union citizenship in the Treaty of Maastricht, as we will discuss in the next section.

Maastricht to *Dano*

Union citizenship—and with it a new vision of the European subject—achieved constitutional status with its inclusion in the Maastricht Treaty. The move was disparaged by some contemporary observers as 'cynical'—a largely empty gesture aimed at shoring up the EU's flagging 'brand', and lacking sufficient substantive content to justify the invocation of a concept so central to democracy as citizenship without adding any new serious political dimension (Weiler, 1998, pp. 13–15). However, Weiler's early critiques of EU citizenship also admit the possibility for the concept to expand beyond its initial bounds: 'the story of European integration is […] replete with ideas and policies which, at inception, seemed trivial and empty, but which later attained a life of their own' (Weiler, 1997, p. 496). With the benefit of a decade of hindsight, others (e.g. Kostakopoulou, 2005) were able to argue precisely this: the innovation in establishing Union citizenship *qua citizenship* was to provide a conceptual resource that would animate the substantive emergence of a new subject

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[43] The text quoted in Wiener (1997) comes from the Spanish Delegation's proposal for European Citizenship submitted to the Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union. The preamble underlines the intention for European citizenship to be 'the foundation of [the future Union's] democratic legitimacy' (*The Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union: Institutional Reforms, New Policies and International Identity of the European Community*, 1992, pp. 325–327).

of the integration project: the Union citizen. The power of ideas, in other words, began to reshape the material and personal scope of EU citizenship rights and, in the process, began to transform their less-tangible, but crucial, subjective expressions like belonging, solidarity, and recognition (Barber, 2002, p. 242).[44] Out of this process emerges an idea of the mobile European who—by virtue of their status as a European citizen—could look forward to social, economic, and political inclusion increasingly on similar terms with nationals of the host state.[45] As we will see, this optimistic view was still incipient, but it set up a normative expectation by which EU citizenship continues to be judged.

This section offers an overview of the substantive and conceptual 'life' that EU citizenship attained in the years following Maastricht, and the idea of the European subject that emerges. The introduction of EU citizenship into the treaties was the culmination of efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to recognise Europeans as not only 'culturally and socially embedded human beings', but also as '*political* beings' (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 95, emphasis in original), and placing them at the 'heart' of the integration project (CEC, 2013, p. 2). The European subject was thus redefined: no longer merely the objects of the European project, EU citizens should be subjects and co-authors of European integration (Neuvonen, 2019b, p. 10; Schrag Sternberg, 2013, pp. 96–98). The discursive and conceptual development in this period therefore not only established a constitutional 'foothold' for the expansion of citizenship rights, but also a new normative baseline against which to judge the 'promise' that Union citizenship projected (Kostakopoulou, 2005). As such, EU citizenship became a central element of the 'normative turn' in European studies (Bellamy & Castiglione, 2000; Friese & Wagner, 2002; Weiler, 1995).

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[44] Barber is here drawing on Joseph Carens' schema of citizenship as having a legal, psychological, and political dimension (Carens, 2000).
[45] Advocate General Jacobs' famous affirmation that Community nationals in other Member States were 'entitled to say "civis europeus sum" and to invoke that status in order to oppose any fundamental violation of his fundamental rights' is a hallmark of this optimistic period in the development of EU citizenship.

One of the central tensions in this period in normative debates is the extent to which EU citizenship achieved independence from its 'market citizenship' origins—that is, how far the granting of EU citizenship rights comes to be divorced from criteria like economic activity and begins to resemble an 'intrinsic' status adhering 'inherently and equally' to all Europeans (Maas, 2014; Wollenschläger, 2011). At stake in this period is whether the European subject would emerge 'decommodified' (Sankari & Frerichs, 2016)—as a figure whose value would no longer be—or, at any rate, increasingly not be—linked to their economic activity, and therefore whose basis for belonging in other member state contexts would be primarily based on their shared *civic* rather than economic status.[46] Given that another major ambition of the Maastricht Treaty was the completion of the Single Market, it is perhaps not surprising that EU citizenship struggled to make a clean break from the 'functional market citizen' origins to the 'autonomous Union citizen' ambitions (Wollenschläger, 2011, p. 34). While an expansive period of ECJ rulings offered grounds for optimism that EU citizenship was on a trajectory for a transformational redefinition of the European as 'Union citizen' rather than 'worker',[47] as we will see in a later section, more recent developments suggest this ambivalence remains.

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[46] In his 2008 opinion in *Petersen*, AG Colomer wrote, 'Slowly but surely, Community protection has been extended to individuals who did not traditionally fall within the scope of the Treaties, such as students, those claiming benefits and nationals of third countries who are related to a citizen of the Union. To express it more clearly, the Court has transformed the paradigm of *homo economicus* into that of *homo civitatis*.' ("Petersen," 2008).

[47] This chapter does not aim at a full legal reconstruction of these developments, as it has been done more than adequately elsewhere (See, for example Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 635ff.). Briefly, the Court's '"classic" expansionist' phase' (Strumia & Hughes, 2017) included judgements in the *Martínez Sala* case ("Martínez Sala," 1998), which 'call[ed] into question the link between the existence of citizen status and economic activity or self-sufficiency' by interpreting lawful residence as grounds for non-discrimination (Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 635); the *Grzelczyk* ruling continued this reasoning by including a resident student into a social subsistence scheme previously reserved only for Belgian nationals, a reasoning carried into later rulings like *Bidar* ("Bidar," 2005); and in *Trojani* ("Trojani," 2004), again, the court found that access to social assistance should be granted to a legally resident, non-economically-active EU citizen. The court *did* reaffirm the conditions attached to these rulings, including that EU citizens should not become an 'unreasonable burden' on their host states, and maintained the need to demonstrate a 'genuine link' to the host state in order to access social assistance (Kramer, 2017, pp. 183–184; Sankari & Frerichs, 2016, p. 816). The point is, however, that the Court in this period sought to interpret these conditions as widely as possible such that most circumstances would satisfy claimants' inclusion. In terms of decommodification, the period seems to mark an attempt to adopt, as far as possible, reasoning that appealed to a non-economic logic in expanding access to host state social solidarity systems, often with explicit referral by judges to the status of Citizenship of the Union as a rationale for this departure (Kostakopoulou, 2008, p. 289; Maas, 2014, p. 808).

Kostakopoulou's constructivist reading (2005) of the Court's activity following Maastricht seems to validate Weiler's earlier intuition regarding the life of ideas in the development of the European project. New 'normative templates' (p. 250) arise out of institutions' discursive appeals to concepts like 'citizenship', which can then be invoked, adopted, and socialised institutionally in future policymaking decisions or legal interpretations.[48] In the case of EU citizenship, this process unfolded in a period of 'transformative institutional change' in which ECJ rulings expanded rights for mobile Europeans *and* 'disentangled' the basis of these rights from a dependence on economic activity (Kostakopoulou, 2005, p. 251). The most often cited manifestation of this transformation in the post-Maastricht period comes in the ECJ's 2001 ruling in *Grzelczyk*, in which the court declared Union citizenship as 'destined to be the fundamental status of nationals of the Member States' ("Grzelczyk," 2001). The judgement reads as both a statement of intention for a future programme of expansive citizenship rights rulings,[49] while 'fundamental status' also introduces a universalist yardstick against which normative theorists have been measuring citizenship case law since.[50]

The ideational shifts in this period come to redefine the mobile European as—at least ideally—the 'subject' of European integration. This redefinition took place, legally and politically, in the establishment and expansion of citizenship rights through a phased approach by the ECJ (Kostakopoulou, 2005, p. 245ff.). Conceptually and discursively, however, this transformation proceeded at the level of ideas and norms, as institutions redefined what should constitute the future basis of the relationship between Europeans as they encounter each other *as* European citizens, namely by signalling that it should be based on their shared status and that that status was not (or

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[48] Wiener (1997, p. 537) makes a similar point, stressing that the *acquis communautaire* provides 'informal resources'—including ideational and discursive resources found in resolutions and proposals—that can be tapped 'once the opportunity is right', and thereby 'invisibly structure Community politics'. While these accounts are right to trace the accumulation of ideational resources and demonstrate their contribution to establishing and expanding EU citizenship rights, the reference to political opportunities also suggests the possibility of their retrenchment when the ideas no longer serve predominating institutional or political pressures (Sankari & Frerichs, 2016, pp. 808, 812). As the discussion below will show, this seems in part to be the case with recent developments.

[49] And indeed, the phrase has been serially invoked by the Court since.

[50] See, for example, (Neuvonen, 2016) and (Dougan, Shuibhne, & Spaventa, 2012) who cite the phrase in their opening pages.

not entirely) dependent on their instrumental value to the national or European economy.

Commission rhetoric around the time of the Maastricht Treaty underlines this intent. In its first report on Citizenship of the Union (CEC, 1993), published only a month after the Treaty took legal effect, the Commission laid out 'the *concept* of Citizenship of the Union' (p. 1, emphasis added), signalling that EU citizenship was intended to be a normative as well as a legal shift in Europeans' relationship to the Union. The significance of EU citizenship, the report goes on to explain, was not in expanding the rights available to mobile Europeans.[51] As we saw above, rights for mobile Europeans developed over decades through political negotiations and discursive innovation that already recognised 'Community subjects as bearers, not only of economic and social rights, but also political, civil, and human rights (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 97). Rather, by giving largely *existing* rights constitutional status (Shaw, 2007a, p. 2550), the Commission claimed that 'the status of these rights has now been fundamentally altered' (CEC, 1993, p. 2). The Commission was keen to emphasise the momentousness of these changes as part of the European Community's shift away from a concern 'solely with economic matters' (p. 2). Also fundamentally different was the relationship that it constituted between the emerging polity's subjects and the new European Union itself: '[f]or the first time, the Treaty has created a direct **political** link between the citizens of the Member States and the European Union such as never existed with the Community' (p. 2, emphasis in original). This link is established most obviously in the introduction of new voting rights for local and European Parliament elections, but is maintained more fundamentally in the gradual reconception of the *basis* for Europeans' rights: no longer only a factor of economic activity, they should be based on 'a new concept, that of citizenship of the Union, under which nationals of Member States are to enjoy freedom of movement whether or not they belong to any of the categories expressly referred to in the Treaty' (p. 3). The right to reside in a host state is also put on a 'new conceptual basis', 'on par with other rights central to Community law and is thus in general to be construed broadly'.

This basic tension between market-based 'commodified' conceptions of mobile citizenship, and those which instead emphasise its civic potential, continues to animate

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[51] Though some important political rights were added. See Article 20 TFEU.

discussions on the 'essence' of European citizenship. On the one hand, many contemporary observers saw EU citizenship as a 'mirror image of pre-Maastricht market citizenship' (Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 625), which still saw EU citizens' primary—functionalist—value to the project of European integration in terms of advancing market integration. Joseph Weiler's 'hypothesis' that EU citizenship amounted to a 'cynical exercise in public relations' reflected such scepticism (Weiler, 1998, p. 13), as well as a desire to not sully the concept of citizenship. In opposition to such readings are those which saw in EU citizenship the partial or inchoate realisation of a substantial citizenship that is potentially generative of, for example, a transnational political subjectivity and a new horizon for political agency (Kostakopoulou, 2007; Neuvonen, 2019b; O'Leary, 1996).

In short, this period inaugurated a new, if aspirational, vision of the European citizen which promised to gradually re-orient the status of 'EU citizenship' around the social and political elements of membership, while weakening its dependence on commodified notions of value. The invocation of the mantle of 'citizenship' offered ideational resources along these lines to the judges and legislators shaping EU citizenship in its early years, and spawned an outpouring of academic commentary which aimed at further conceptual elaboration of EU citizenship's potential (Kochenov, 2013, pp. 98–99).

The New European: EU Citizenship after *Dano*

As recently as 2013, scholars could feel confident in claiming that the ECJ's judicial activism had 'symbolically institutionalised the discourses […] that recast "market citizens", that is, the objects rather than authors of Community action, as rights-bearing political beings with 'political awareness' (Schrag Sternberg, 2013, p. 100).[52] This trend seemed to be consolidating a view of European personhood which, in that sense, was (with significant caveats) increasingly politicised, decommodified and with a normative trajectory aimed at equality (Neuvonen, 2016). More recently, however, observers have referred to 'the *Dano* turn', referring to a 2014 ruling[53] which initiated

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[52] See again (Kochenov, 2013) on the evolution of the academic debate up to this point.
[53] ("Elisabeta Dano and Florin Dano v Jobcenter Leipzig," 2014)

a new phase in CJEU jurisprudence marked by an increased emphasis on 'conditions and limits' especially on economically non-active EU citizens and a rise in 'attention to CVs' as a means to judge whether mobile Europeans are sufficiently entrepreneurial to warrant rights protections (Kochenov, 2017, pp. 52–53; Kramer, 2017, p. 172; 176; Sankari & Frerichs, 2016, p. 817; Spaventa, 2015, 2017).

The vision of the European mover arising out of the last several years of ECJ rulings therefore departs from the optimism of the expansionist phase which followed Maastricht. That prior period seemed to promise a 'new fundamental freedom beyond market integration' (Wollenschläger, 2011, p. 3), in which mobile EU citizens could increasingly see their value no longer linked to their status as market actors, moving closer to a vision of the EU as a *political* community rather than a common market. This apparently emerging ethos seemed to offer an EU citizenship in which both nationality and the market continued to lose their power as defining forces in people's lives.

De Witte differentiates this prior period as the Court's 'agnostic' phase: in defining the categories that give rise to EU citizenship rights—definitions of work; of real or genuine 'links' to the host state; of what constitutes economic activity or 'financial burden'—the Court took little interest in the details of those areas of life; it was satisfied 'as long as [the] minimum criteria were met' (2021, pp. 9–11; Strumia & Hughes, 2017). In earlier cases, for example, the Court's test of integration into society as a criterion for granting certain entitlements 'was demonstrated through "mere presence" for a "certain time"' (Kramer, 2017, p. 184). Its approach more recently has been to compile a granular account of EU citizens' lives, applying a number of factors to its assessment, including 'nationality, prior education, family ties, employment, language skills', and a worryingly vague possibility of including 'other social and economic factors', as Kramer points out (p. 184). This is what Kochenov refers to when he writes of EU citizenship becoming a 'citizenship of personal circumstances' in which the court aims at 'undermining rights through attention to CVs' (Kochenov, 2017, pp. 52–53), and what Barbou des Places has described as the court compiling 'short stories' that assess people's characteristics, motives, and conduct (Barbou des Places, 2016; Kramer, 2017, p. 184). Its prior 'agnosticism', in other words, was expressed in the Court taking the broadest possible view on the criteria that would

allow mobile citizens to make use of their rights. Inasmuch as these rights were still linked to economic activity, definitions of 'work' and therefore 'worker', for example, were interpreted 'generously' (Spaventa, 2015, p. 457).

Dion Kramer argues that this shift towards attention to personal circumstances mirrors a deeper shift in the personhood models underpinning free movement rights. The neoliberal 'homo economicus' is no longer a passive cog being acted upon by larger structural forces as was characteristic of the early phase of European mobility rights, but 'an *active* economic subject possessing a "human capital" (Kramer, 2017, p. 175). The 'good European', in this model, demonstrates their virtue by showing willingness to make investments in their individual capabilities, which makes responsibility for any failures 'purely individual' (p. 176). Mobility, in this paradigm, is also reconceived: 'the identity of the "migrant worker" transformed from a passive subject who responds to economic mechanisms external to him/herself into an active economic subject who possesses a human capital and whose decision to move is to be regarded as an individual *choice* in terms of investment' (p. 175, emphasis in original). Kramer argues that these shifts, by reconceptualising market forces from a larger structural force into the individualised concept of 'human capital'—and personalising responsibility for the risks and rewards of their own choices, encourage a transformation in personhood centred around 'mobile, entrepreneurial and "self-sufficient" subjectivities.

The shift in EU law, in other words, reflects more profound shifts in concepts which underpin present economic orthodoxy, and in turn EU law enforces, or at any rate can be said to contribute to, processes of subjectification which reflect those orthodoxies onto (mobile) EU citizens. They contribute to a concept of EU citizenship which is increasingly commodified, stratified, and depoliticised (de Witte, 2021, p. 19). As we have already mentioned, the 'self-entrepreneurial' emphasis of recent trends in EU law also marks a new 'responsibilization', in which mobile Europeans' individual agency is directed towards demonstrating 'integration' in the terms relied on by the court (de Witte, 2021, p. 20). Such a model also acts as a barrier to the integrative structures that—recalling Azoulai's 'social spheres' concept from the previous chapter—are necessary for mobile Europeans to 're-embed' themselves and find opportunities to develop a public expression of self in a new context. This

contemporary mobile European is not premised on integration, but on adaptation and contingency: 'the market orientation of EU law has led to the emergence of an active figure: the transnational healthy and/or working man, able to adapt to changing economic conditions. He is a man living in the present, who is master of his destiny' (Barbou des Places, 2016, p. 191). The model of the new European relies on an idea of the person as 'an atomistic actor, as unburdened by attachments to collectivities (whether the family, the community, or the nation)' (de Witte, 2021, p. 21).

Conclusions

In this chapter I have looked at how the ideal of the 'EU mover' has been constructed over time. In keeping with the sociological conception of citizenship laid out in the previous chapter, I adopted a perspective based in the idea that 'personhood' and subjectivities are (in part, at least) constructed through institutional discourse and practice. Consequently, attention to the values that are invested—by the ECJ, by the Commission, etc—in the figure of the 'mobile European' become paramount, since they endorse conceptual models of the individual in society, encourage certain dispositions and inhibit others. In short, these institutional visions underwrite what it is to be a 'good' versus a 'bad' European in ways that are understood to contribute to how Europeans 'see themselves' in society, and the bases on which their value to society rest.

Engaging with legal analysis and the political history of free movement rights, the chapter recounts a non-linear story in which the mobile European is caught between commodification and decommodification. As against the mainly market-making logic of early integration, which saw European movers as largely passive 'factors of production', discursive development in the 1970s and 80s argued for a fuller concept of the European citizen that should be the bearer of a fuller set of social and political rights. Introducing the 'telos' of citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty amounted to an invocation of the citizenship concept as a promise as yet unfulfilled—of EU citizenship as a fundamental and shared status of political and legal equality linked to citizens on the basis of their civic status and not on instrumental considerations like economic activity. As such, Union citizenship established a new normative baseline

which was broadly affirmed through a series of rulings by the European Court of Justice that gradually expanded rights to more categories of EU movers. More recent developments, however, mirroring developments in national welfare systems that aim at 'activating' workers and investing in their human capital, have led to a redefinition of the mobile European in line with the precepts of neoliberalism: individual responsibility, self-sufficiency, and competition.

The purpose of this chapter was, firstly, to expand on the concept of political subjectivity and how it appears in debates about EU citizenship. Secondly, laying out the conceptual concerns—and propositions about how they affect mobile Europeans' self-understanding—raised in these debates makes them amenable to constructive confrontation with the empirical accounts that form the second part of the thesis. The next chapter lays out a methodological approach that is capable of picking up on these elements in the discourse of mobile Europeans themselves.

Chapter 3

Talking politics with mobile EU citizens

As I have established in the previous two chapters, a subset of concerns raised in normative and legal theories of EU citizenship is interested in the political subjectivity and reflexive life of EU citizens. This chapter develops an approach for interrogating these concerns empirically using focus group methodologies and an interpretative analysis of the material generated in a series of group discussions with mobile EU citizens. The goal of the empirical research was to generate 'everyday accounts' of EU citizenship with which to confront the pitfalls and promises of EU citizenship identified in the theoretical literature. This chapter therefore aims to show how methodologies based in sociable discourse can convincingly approach themes like aspiration, belonging, and sources of agency, which are central to these theoretical debates.

Given the thesis's focus on *mobility* as both the core right of EU citizenship and its primary social practice, the chapter begins by briefly pointing out the shared concerns between empirical research in migration studies and theories of EU citizenship. It goes on to introduce the study participants and the choices informing the recruitment effort. I will then discuss how the peer group discussion format, when incorporating elements of narrative methodologies, is ideal for generating insights into broad socio-structural themes that are nonetheless grounded in the everyday experiences of 'ordinary' people. The chapter concludes by explaining the approach taken to analysing the material gathered through their contributions.

Accessing the 'democratic imagination' of EU citizens

Given that border crossing is the central practice of EU citizenship, it is not surprising that both migration studies and theories of EU citizenship have some interests in common. To the extent that both engage with people's 'lived experience', both share an interest in how cross-border movement transforms subjectivity and shapes processes of will-formation. Migration scholarship, especially that which relies on narrative

methodologies, places its emphasis on how migration, as a significant biographical 'life transition', reconfigures social connections and leads people to reflect on the relationship between social structures and the 'circumstances of their own lives, needs and desires' (Hörschelmann, 2011). As we established in the previous chapter, EU citizenship acts as an institutional structure within which these reconfigurations take place—and which actively promotes them (Shaw, 2007a, p. 2562). EU law gives individuals enforceable rights to cross borders, access national solidarity structures, and participate in the labour market on similar terms to those of nationals. It aims at unsettling the centrality of nationality in defining people's life trajectories. This self-conscious project of integration achieved through the facilitation of cross-border mobility imbues migration decisions with normative, political and social significance beyond individual biographies. The embeddedness of intra-EU migration within this broader normative project is what makes it ripe for investigations that probe the relationship between personal mobility narratives and the structuring narratives of EU citizenship.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, my empirical strategy sought to generate discussion on themes central to the theoretical debates I identified: emancipation and constraint, agency and self-determination, and how people define their attachment to the different contexts in which they live. The normative concerns relating to each of these themes are the potentially depoliticising tendencies of EU citizenship's focus on individual rights and the de-stabilization of democratic bonds that accompanies cross-border mobility. The analysis of respondents' views, then, focused on how they discursively position mobility in relation to their own goals, to their appraisals of politics and society, and to their social and political attachments in different member state contexts. In a broad sense, then, the approach outlined below follows the premises of interpretative research by trying to discover what 'a thing'—in this case EU citizenship—is by seeking out the context-specific meanings that people imbue it with (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012).

The challenge for the empirical research undertaken here was in designing an approach that can convincingly locate abstract themes like emancipation, agency, and belonging in 'everyday' social discourse. Direct questioning on these topics would constitute a bewildering substitution of casual discourse for the idiom of the social researcher (Mills, 1959, p. 11). In everyday speech, themes like these are more often expressed

implicitly or obliquely rather than directly, through taken-for-granted assumptions, often through personal examples or perhaps through reference to current affairs and media discourse (Schaffer, 2013, p. 186). Conditions that constrain or enable agency, for example, may more readily be conveyed through the invocation of a specific instance when a desire was frustrated, or in an offhand expression of futility, rather than as part of a thorough and systematic social-structural critique. Approaching these themes, then, required a method which could be organised around both personal narratives and a substantive discussion focused around salient topics, and which would give the researcher opportunities to probe personal or casual references to themes related to politics, the economy, national culture, and other social-structural forces. The study therefore adopted a data-gathering strategy which integrated elements of narrative methodologies in a focus group setting.

Participant profiles and selection strategy

This study is based on group discussions with 30 mobile EU citizens from 12 different member states, organised into eight focus groups carried out between 2017 and 2022.[54] My respondents were waiters, receptionists, chefs, bankers, NGO workers, software developers, language teachers, and office workers. Some managed to set up jobs before they moved; others had to start their careers over when they arrived. Some had family or friends in the host member state; many did not and had to find their footing in a new context. Their stories defied broad narratives that might want to see cross-border migration as a function of macro developments in the economy or politics, or as a matter of rational choice calculations. Of course, some of my respondents moved for better job prospects or because their careers had been upended by the Eurozone crisis. But many of my respondents moved for other reasons: love, music, or a chance encounter during a short trip abroad. In the following section, I will describe the main characteristics of my respondents and the rationale of the recruitment strategy.

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[54] See Appendix 1 for a consolidated list of participants and a further discussion of the practicalities of the recruitment process.

Description and selection

Nearly all of my discussion participants were aged somewhere between their early-30s and mid-40s, with only a few outliers in their 50s. The age cohort was targeted in order to capture a period of life where important life choices like employment or career development, and perhaps other considerations like family life are becoming paramount (Herrero-Arias, Hollekim, & Haukanes, 2020), and where people are negotiating the 'realities' of the options available to them, rather than, for example, the *potential* in their post-educational prospects (as might be more characteristic of a cohort of students or recent graduates). As Bygnes and Bivand Erdal (2017)—in another study of intra-EU migration focused mainly on respondents in their 30s and 40s—define this group, '*adults*', are 'a group of migrants that is probably more likely to have aspirations for a grounded life than younger migrants' (p. 103, emphasis in the original). Such 'adults' may be looking to consolidate their emotional and economic commitments into a stable —and, ideally, geographically consolidated—configuration (ibid.).[55]

In terms of educational and occupational background, I pursued a strategy of diversification to capture a range of trajectories, experiences, and expectations that people may carry according to their relative levels of capital—material and social. Many, but not all respondents had university degrees. At least two respondents had a master's degree, but this was not typical of my participant cohort.

The choice to pursue Europeans working in a range of service sector jobs was an attempt to find some analytical leverage, while not focusing on national or regional differences. The intuition driving the choice of this cohort is one which hopes to capture, rather, a range of social experiences including those which one might expect to track along the axis of 'highly-skilled' versus 'low-skilled' Europeans. It should be noted, though, that perhaps especially in the case of mobile Europeans who do not have to satisfy onerous visa requirements, these categories, and how far they determines people's available choices is often not clear cut (Bygnes, 2017, p. 263). A straightforward distinction would rely on whether a respondent has obtained a university-level qualification (ibid.),

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[55] The way in which people spatially and temporally negotiate their changing life circumstances and priorities at different 'stages' in their life is a theme common to population geography and some strands of migration scholarship (Bailey, 2009). While life course transitions are not a primary interest for this study, some shared concerns can be identified inasmuch as they bear upon the social experience of my participants—in particular, the notion of a wider field of expectations settling into a more settled and reflective orientation.

though in my own respondents, such hard lines are often somewhat blurred in practice. Nominally 'highly-skilled' Europeans may find themselves 'de-skilled', working for a number of years in a 'low-skilled' industry like food service. A period working in restaurants might be part of a trajectory that sees them eventually finding a professional role as they continue their training or find their footing in a new context. Nevertheless, the distinction retains some determinative effect, since those without university degrees or experience in a white-collar sector tend not to have obvious prospects when starting out in their host country beyond the lower-end of service sector jobs, whereas their peers working in financial services or NGOs can often secure a job prior to moving.

The main conceptual distinction between highly-skilled and more low-skilled cohorts is higher-skilled Europeans' 'perceived and actual abilities to control their current and future prospects in the labour market [...] clearly anchored in the relatively large amount of resources available to them' (Bygnes, 2017, p. 260). Translating this observation into a more theoretical idiom germane to our discussion, the distinction rests on the perceived *agency* that one or the other group feels with respect to the social, economic, and political space that they are navigating both in their home countries and in the wider European context when choosing prospective paths of mobility. This, in turn, may have some reflection in how mobile Europeans discursively situate themselves relative to the structural conditions in the countries that they move between. Those who are able to 'self-insure' against the exigencies of political and economic ups-and-downs may, for example, be less invested in collective action approaches to securing their own prospects. As we will see, however, the conversations reveal a mixed picture which does not conform neatly to these intuitions.

In terms of nationality, the sample includes respondents from 12 different member states living in the UK, Spain, and Italy.[56] Again, the composition of the overall respondent group aimed to be heterogeneous in terms of national origin: rather than focusing on mobile Europeans from a specific region or set of countries in Europe, the aim is to explore what might be said to be held in common by mobile EU citizens

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[56] Two clarifications are required here: group discussions held in London took place while the UK was still a member state of the European Union. Additionally, one participant in a group discussion held online was residing in Belgium.

grouped as such.[57] Individual groups, however, tended to be composed of participants from the same country or region, as this tended to mirror respondents' social groups.

One final criteria with particular analytical importance is the respondents' length of residence in their host state. The themes restated at the beginning of the chapter that are concerned with 'becoming' in various ways—the formation of attachments; seeing oneself as a part of the associative schemas which underlie political community; having enough perspective to reflect on what is enabling and constraining about cross-border mobility—all have implied temporal dimensions. These time elements also arise in debates about, for example, whether EU citizens should have the right to vote in national elections in their host countries. Even for advocates, it is almost never suggested that this right should be immediate; it is usually understood to be appropriate, if at all, only for *long term* residents (Bauböck, 2014; de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 245). From our point of view, the temporal element appropriately takes into account processes of subject-formation, which occurs through processes of unsettling and reconfiguration of social relations and the meanings attached to them (Neuvonen, 2019b, p. 11). More prosaically, people need time to 'settle in' to the new context, get a sense of how they 'fit in', and develop a familiarity with the elements of the society and state with which they have to interact in such a way that the new context becomes 'legible'. Given the nature of the recruitment process, in rare occasions, participants were relatively recent arrivals. In these cases, their accounts were not relied on to support analytical claims dependent on this premise. But the vast majority of participants had been resident in their host country for at least three to more than 15 years. Where the length of residence was a concern in the analysis, caveats will be noted.

Legal definitions of long-term residence in the EU usually mark this out at five years. By that standard, nearly all of my respondents were long-term residents. This is also an important threshold in terms of EU citizenship rights. After five years continuous residence, EU citizens obtain the status of 'permanent resident', which comes formally with full access to work, education, and social security (but not additional political rights) in the host society. In this sense, they are considered legally 'integrated' in as

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[57] A study organized along more comparative lines might have wanted to, e.g. contrast the perspectives of cohorts of respondents from formerly Communist countries; Southern European countries; 'old' versus 'new' member states; etc., on the basis of assumptions about different political socialization and experiences with social and economic conditions in different contexts.

full a sense as current Directive- and Treaty rights allow (Citizenship Directive, 2004).[58] Following the premises of an interpretative approach, which privileges subjects' own meaning-making, formal markers of integration cannot be taken as definitive indications of the substantive criteria that people may appeal to in conversation, as will be evident in the following chapters.

A first set of group discussions were organised in London while the UK was still a member of the European Union. A second set of groups included respondents living in Spain, Italy, and, in one case, Belgium, and were held either online—due to Covid restrictions—or in person in Italy. Appendix 1 discusses these exigencies further.

Criteria guiding recruitment

There is an inherent difficulty in recruiting from a pool of respondents who do not position themselves as having views to represent publicly. I avoided recruiting participants through civic, social, or cultural associations in their host countries, nor did I approach advocacy groups representing the views of EU citizens abroad, for reasons expanded on below. This influenced the recruitment effort in two ways. Firstly, since respondents were not predisposed to seek an audience for their views, more work was required to persuade them to participate. Secondly, potential respondents could not be sought through centralised organisational structures. Ultimately, recruitment depended largely on intermediaries with social contacts in the relevant social groups.[59] Tapping into these already-established relations of trust made group organisation considerably smoother, as well as eventually opening up the geographical scope of the recruitment pool to other countries in ways that would have been much harder with face-to-face 'cold-calling' approaches to recruitment. Given that recruitment ultimately relied on a contact person, the group composition could not in every instance be tightly controlled. Where these differences are judged to be analytically consequential, they are noted explicitly in the text, and, in general, speakers' profiles accompany their contributions.

The aims guiding the composition of each discussion group followed William Gamson's criteria for constructing 'peer groups' in which 'sociable discourse' could be encouraged. Peer group discussions differ from the broader category of 'focus group'

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[58] Note again that political rights remain restricted to local and European elections and exclude participation in regional and national contests.
[59] See Appendix 1 for a further discussion.

in several important ways: groups tend to be smaller, be composed of people who are already acquainted, may be held in more informal settings, and aim to downplay the role of the moderator so as to avoid a 'group interview' dynamic developing (Gamson, 1992, p. 193).

My groups could in all important respects be considered to conform to these standards. In nearly every group, all respondents were well-acquainted and were often current or former co-workers. To the extent that participants in some groups were not acquainted with each other, all knew that they had a shared experience of cross-border mobility to draw upon. Since participants were, with very few exceptions, in a similar age range and often had experience living in the same country/ies, there seemed to be an easy assumption of a broadly similar set of experiential references to draw on, even where countries of origin differed. Any surprising details in people's personal narratives were met with interest rather than bafflement, reinforcing the conversational and interactive dynamics. Respondents tended to treat each other's experiences as broadly relatable—either invoking them as comparable to their own, or signalling their interest by pointing out surprising differences. Even when participants were close friends or in a relationship, this did not translate into conformity of views: disagreement and challenges were present even within couples.

Narrative research in a group setting

This project's thematic interest in citizenship is reflected in the format of the data-gathering effort. As Andrew Perrin notes of his own discussion groups, 'the fundamental unit of citizenship is […] the group': political consciousness itself is developed and practiced through social interaction, in an exchange of ideas, while being situated in people's particular narratives and experiences (Gamson, 1992, p. 111; Perrin, 2006, p. 19). Accordingly, while the format of the discussions adopted was based in focus group methodologies, it also incorporated the use of personal narratives in ways conducive to (1) generating a sociable discursive style amongst participants, and (2) linking the discussion of biographical elements to a broader evaluation of political and social phenomena. In this section, I will describe the approach taken and show how this hybrid format is well suited to the theoretical interests of the study.

Structure of the discussions

Each group consisted of three or four participants and usually lasted around ninety minutes, with some continuing on for two hours or more. The discussions were typically held in public places, like cafés and bars, and were often held in the evening after a day's work. The duration of the conversations was influenced both by the trajectory of the discussion, the schedules of the participants,[60] and, only exceptionally, by external factors like the closing time of the venue. The latter was never a strong limitation, and most conversations were able to run a natural course.

As Gamson reminds us, '[m]ost people do not spontaneously sit down with their friends and acquaintances and have a serious discussion for more than an hour on different issues in the news' (1992, p. 17). Designing group discussions which aim at generating what he calls 'sociable public discourse', then, requires that attention is given to include elements that aim at 'cueing norms of sociability' (p. 20).[61] These elements might include setting and the availability of food and drink.[62] In the present study, the sequence of the discussion was also organised with these considerations in mind, by incorporating the narrative portion at the beginning.

The discussions began with a brief introduction in which participants were encouraged to share the story of how they came to live and work in their current member state of residence. The use of a narrative portion at the beginning of the discussion served two purposes. The first was establishing a tone of interaction: an early exchange of personal stories helps to establish elements of informality and intimacy more conducive to 'sociable discourse' than would an immediate entry into a thematic discussion relating to politics and society. The narrative portion of the group discussion could be easily disguised as an invitation for participants to introduce themselves, as might be expected in any organised group discussion where at least one participant is a newcomer. In the

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[60] Participants were nearly unanimously engaged and generous with their contributions. Only exceptionally did a participant withdraw due to personal time constraints, which disrupted the group dynamic.

[61] Gamson is ultimately less concerned with the 'red herring of naturalness' (1992, p. 19ff.), recognizing that speakers are aware that their discourse in these scenarios is directed at an audience beyond the peer group. The goal should not be simulating a 'natural' scenario, but to recognize the particular norms of interaction characteristic of this mode of speech.

[62] This is not an atypical consideration in qualitative research (Lareau, 2021, p. 150). In Gamson's study, group discussions were held in the living room of one of the group participants, and refreshments were provided. White's (2011) discussions with taxi drivers were held in bars and cafés near the taxi ranks. All in-person group discussions I conducted for this discussion were also helped along by the presence of food and drink.

first instance, then, beginning with the narrative portion of the discussion acted as a way to ease-in to the discussion and to generate a sociable rapport between the group members. It reduced the 'unnaturalness' of the discussion about politics by prefacing it with an exchange of personal mobility narratives, which engaged the curiosity of participants in each other's stories.

Beyond its utility for establishing a relaxed tone and complicity between group participants, the narrative portion of the discussions has an underlying purpose based in the epistemological assumptions of narrative research. One of the premises of narrative methodologies is that 'individual life stories are [...] embedded in social relationships and structures [...] they provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and collective forces and institutions beyond the individual' (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008, p. 3). Participants' stories inevitably included references that pointed to the more abstract themes of politics and social belonging that occupied the latter part of the group discussion. In this sense, the approach adopted allowed participants to decide on the themes which were particularly salient to them by including them in their biographical account. Those themes could then be revisited and probed further in a more abstracted form in the latter part of the discussion. In that sense, the approach was similar to what Bygnes describes as an 'active interview' (2017, p. 264), in which the moderator plays 'an active part in mirroring the interviewees' reflections' and further probing the references that speakers highlighted as important.

'Good stories'[63] and 'the necessity of justification'[64]

Analytically, the use of narrative methodologies bears particularly on our thematic interest in *emancipation*, since life stories are often tied up with notions of self-realisation and aspiration (Carling & Collins, 2018; Honneth, 2014, pp. 38–40). It is worth clarifying the main theoretical points of departure that underlay the analysis of speakers' personal stories.

The discussions drawn on in Chapter 4 draw primarily from the narrative portion of the discussion, in which discussants shared their stories of moving to another member state. Respondents were free to choose how to present their stories—which details to include,

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[63] See (Herrero-Arias et al., 2020, p. 3).
[64] Reference drawn from Boltanski and Thévenot's *On Justification*. See further (Honneth, 2010).

what considerations to highlight, and where to draw connections between motive and action. The interpretative approach taken to the analysis of these stories relies, on the one hand, on not taking them at face value—that is, considering them to be *selective* reconstructions directed at a particular audience—and, on the other, treating respondents as 'competent critics' (Presskorn-Thygesen, 2015, p. 731) and experts of their own experience (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012, p. 74), capable of evaluating the conflicts that they face when taking decisions and justifying their actions according to norms they appeal to when coordinating their plans (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Herrero-Arias et al., 2020, p. 3; Honneth, 2010, p. 377; Schaffer, 2013, p. 192). These two premises bear upon each other: it is by treating the narratives as selective that we can discern what criteria mobile citizens rely on when evaluating their situations and actions (P. Wagner, 1999, pp. 343, 346).

In proceeding this way, our analysis borrows insights from narrative analysis[65] and from the sociology of critique.[66] What these two approaches share is: (1) a conviction that people, especially 'ordinary' actors, have the capacity to account for their own actions (as opposed to, for example, assuming they suffer from false consciousness); and (2) the insight that this accounting involves acts of 'justification'— offering reasons that correspond to norms that are considered 'legitimate' in a given social context. In both approaches, people/storytellers are assumed to have 'interpretational freedom' when making sense of their action plans, while also allowing that the repertoire of justifications that they draw upon will be influenced by less individualised factors like 'cultural patterns' or 'formative contexts' (Herrero-Arias et al., 2020; Honneth, 2010, pp. 376–377).

Studies of migration often try to grapple with the reasons why people decide to cross borders. Critical migration scholars push against the tendency to distil what spurs people to move into 'push and pull factors' and against reliance on models based on ideas of (economic) rational choice to explain why people migrate (Carling & Collins, 2018). These scholars attempt to appraise people's motives in more nuanced terms, taking into account emotional and imaginative factors. In the present study, motives,

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[65] The premise that 'the connection between social reality and language [is] mutually dependent', as Meinhof (2004, p. 219), points out, is a shared feature in several related fields, including 'linguistics, cultural studies, and critical social psychology'. The idea will be expanded upon below in the discussion of interpretative approaches to analysing discourse.
[66] See Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) for a useful primer.

reasons offered by participants, and 'drivers' of migration are not the primary object of study—I do not attempt to explain *why* groups of EU citizens move around. Rather, taking a cue from what Mills called a 'vocabulary of motive', I am interested in the 'justifications for present, future, or past programs or acts' (Mills, 1940, p. 907) that suggest how people relate their actions or plans to normative frames appropriate to their social situation. Participants' stated reasons are of interest to contextualise the discussions, but the discursive significance of the reasons they offer—that is, how they operate as interpretive clues for what participants value and what they have come to expect of political and social actors— is of more importance for this study (Bygnes & Flipo, 2017, p. 204).

What makes a 'good story' in a group setting therefore depends on the audience to which a story is directed and what speakers assume to be appropriate or legitimate to that audience (Goffman, 1959). In micro-sociological approaches, the criteria for legitimacy tends to be located more narrowly at the level of interpersonal interaction and which hold in certain contexts—for example, in the workplace (see McGovern, 2020, p. 138; Perrin, 2006, p. 130; 186). Approaches in the sociology of critique, on the other hand, aim to look at how people justify their actions in terms of desirable conceptions of the social order as a whole (P. Wagner, 1999, p. 347). For our purposes, this difference does not put the two approaches in opposition: both offer a means for uncovering the broader 'norms [which] are actually in force in contemporary societies' (Presskorn-Thygesen, 2015, p. 730) as speakers appeal to them and employ them as justifications for their actions.

Given the analytical approach adopted here, we are interested in these justifications, firstly, because they offer a view into the quotidian value of European citizenship for those who make use of it, grounding our conception of EU citizenship in social experience rather than what it is presumed to signify abstractly (i.e. in normative, political-theoretical, or legal-philosophical accounts). Secondly, it also gives us a view on how mobile citizens incorporate their mobility as part of re-defining themselves: giving a retrospective account of an individual life is implicated in processes of self-construction and identity formation (Herrero-Arias et al., 2020, p. 3; Kohler Riessman, 2008; Meinhof, 2004, p. 219; Polkinghorne, 1988). Since narrative structures demand 'plausibility, coherence and legitimacy', storytellers are encouraged to 'explain to themselves'—and to their audience—'who they are' by offering 'coherent

redescriptions of the world' (Herrero-Arias et al., 2020) in which their actions appear legitimate and justifiable (see also Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999, p. 360).

As I have mentioned, the use of narrative and biographical approaches is of particular relevance to migration studies. Especially where a personal narrative encompasses moments of disruption, 'perturbation', or crisis, achieving narrative coherence can involve challenging previously routine assumptions and reconsidering previously-held 'patterns of interpreting the world' (Honneth, 2010, p. 377; Hörschelmann, 2011, p. 381; Meinhof, 2004, p. 219; Riessman, 2008 cited in Wagner, 2013). This offers speakers an opportunity to 'disclose and defend latent conceptions of order' (Honneth, loc. cit.), and, in doing so explicitly, to redefine the understandings by which they coordinate their actions. As the accounts in the following chapters will show, moving across borders, even though facilitated by free movement rights, often involves such moments disruption, perturbation, and crisis.

The role of interaction

As I have just laid out, there are good conceptual grounds for incorporating narrative methods into group-based methodologies. A focus group methodology taking the form of small group discussions aims to prioritise the interaction between participants rather than that between the researcher and the participants. This has a dual purpose relevant to data-gathering. On the one hand, it reduces the role of the researcher to a moderator providing basic structure, motivation and direction to the discussion (Gamson, 1992, p. 193; Herman, 2016a, p. 95). Following from this, it yields a specific type of discourse amongst participants which brings out shared understandings and common—or conflicting—'repertoires' of interpretation of the topics discussed (Swidler, 1986; White, 2010, p. 1017), and gives more space for participants to decide the relative importance of the themes under discussion. In the data-analysis phase, this gives the researcher the chance to analyse not only the views and opinions of individual participants, but also to analyse how participants construct meaning together and to compare these patterns across different groups.[67]

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[67] See also Eliasoph for a discussion of how a group context allows participants to 'collectively create a sense of their group's place in relation to the institutions around it' by drawing on shared points of reference (1998, p. 265). Eliasoph study focuses on the U.S. context and takes an ethnographic approach, but the notion of group dynamics allowing for the emergence of shared meanings is a premise that underlies most group-based methodologies. See, for example, (Gamson, 1992; White, 2011).

The relative importance given to the role of interaction in the *analysis* of data generated in a focus group is determined by the goals of the research (Morgan, 2010). For the purposes of *generating* data, one of the main practical virtues of focus group methodologies is that they are able to produce 'a concentrated set of interactions in a very short span of time' (Morgan, 1997). Whether or not these interactions form an important part of the subsequent data analysis is determined by whether the "how" of generating the data bears on the "what" that is being said (Morgan, 2010, p. 718). The approach taken here, which aimed at stimulating something resembling sociable discourse, attempted to activate the potential for group interaction to reveal implicit or shared meanings between participants, to highlight where those meanings deviated, to enable participants to interrogate each other's assumptions, and to allow participants to prioritise thematic elements that are of particular salience to them. Generating *interaction* in this way has an epistemological rationale based in the premise of interpretative methodologies, which holds that people create and negotiate meaning together.

The interaction dynamics which occurred spontaneously during the group discussions were often extremely productive in scrutinising social or political problems and concepts in further depth. When reporting data, it may not always be necessary or relevant to reproduce an entire sequence of interaction—one must also respond to the imperative of efficiency in illustrating a point, often by choosing a particularly succinct quotation from one participant (Morgan, 2010, p. 719). Nevertheless, to illustrate how group interaction can generate shared exploration of central thematic points, I will reproduce two brief exchanges which illustrate the fertile nature of peer group discussions.

The first exchange is between Elena, Christos and Dimitris. All three work in financial services in London—Elena and Dimitris in banking, Christos in software development. Elena and Dimitris are Greek, and Christos is from Cyprus, but spent several years in Athens as a student. At the beginning of the exchange, Elena has been elaborating the idea that the stasis of Greek society can be attributed to the collective psychological character of the people.

Elena: […] There are people who try. There is this, but I think that as a whole overall thing we have this inferiority complex. And that's why no one really bothers.

Christos:	I'm not sure I would attribute it to an inferiority complex. It's just lack of ambition. That's all I see in Greece.
Elena:	But if it is lack of ambition, then why—because this is something that I all the time think—why Greek people that are here progress in their careers. […] Even if they start from a restaurant—I have friends who start as waiters, they progress, they have ambitions…at work at least all Greek people I know or have known, they have been promoted…I see ambition.
Dimitris:	Because they are in a different environment.
Christos:	They are adjusted to the system. It's not the Greeks that progress. It's the overall mentality here that put them in the mindset of doing things.

Without elaborating further on the substance of the discussion, one can see productive interactive dynamics taking place between the three participants. Elena proposes an explanation to the group for a social phenomenon, which Christos counters with an alternative explanation. Elena pushes back, challenging Christos's suggestion with some evidence which seems to contradict it. Finally, Dimitris and Christos converge on a synthetic explanation that brings in another variable, positing a conditioning effect of the social environment on individual character traits. The interactive dynamics of cross-interrogation ultimately generates both a hypothesis about how society influences behaviour, and a comparison between two social contexts, both of which were ripe for further probing and subsequent analysis.

The second exchange is between four catering workers employed at a university in central London: Marta, Catherine, Alexandra and Paula. Marta and Alexandra are originally from Poland, Paula is from Lithuania, and Catherine is Irish. The exchange follows from a longer discussion in which they reflected on how their lives in the UK were mainly centred around work. Catherine concluded the discussion by saying, 'So when I go home [i.e. to Ireland], it's all about family, while, here it's really all to do with work. It's just work.' Paula replies, 'Work, yeah.', and Marta confirms 'Work, yeah'.

The interaction that follows allows the participants to highlight the atypicality of one respondent's account:

Marta:	So it's difficult to make a friends with the English, really.

Catherine:	No, I haven't.
Aleksandra:	I have English friends.
Marta:	Oh, you see, you're the only one.
Catherine:	I haven't really…
Aleksandra:	I have, I have.
Catherine:	…just family friends.
Marta:	[to Aleksandra] Ya, but you know, like good friends, or just, you know, kind colleagues…?
Aleksandra:	No, no, no. Good friends…yes, I have.
Marta:	…so, that's, you know, different…
Catherine:	Did you work with them? Is that how you met them?
Aleksandra:	Uh, no, I met them through the other friends. [Catherine: Okay] We go out sometimes, and then we keep in touch.
Marta:	Oh, so that's different…

In this exchange, the surprise and scepticism aired by the other participants puts Aleksandra in a position to explain her peculiarity to the other members of the group. Exchanges like this serve to highlight differences in perspective and social experience within peer groups whose experiences might otherwise be expected to be broadly similar, and to give speakers a chance to tease out the reasons for the peculiarity. Here the interaction dynamic allowed for the group to identify something counterintuitive, which offered an opportunity to reflect on what specific circumstances might bear upon otherwise taken-for-granted understandings held by participants.

These two brief exchanges illustrate the particular strengths of focus group methodologies that Gamson[68] draws our attention to. Firstly, when discussing issues together, 'people search for a common basis of discourse'; secondly, and relatedly, conversational dynamics allow participants to 'bring their everyday knowledge', 'commonsense conceptions', and 'taken-for-granted assumptions' to bear upon the issues under discussion; and, finally, where attempts to find common ground are not forthcoming, 'challenges and alternative ways of framing an issue' force participants 'to become more consciously aware of their perspective' (1992, pp. 191–192). These productive interactive dynamics in revealing implicit and inchoate meaning amongst

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[68] Building on Morgan's work (1997).

participants also contributed to the strategy underlying the cohort composition, as I will expand upon in the following section.

'Talking politics' with 'ordinary' people

The 'key troubles' in people's lives are often multifarious and escape easy attribution (Mills, 1959, p. 11). As C. Wright Mills noted, '[i]nstead of troubles—defined in terms of values and threats—there is often the misery of vague uneasiness; instead of explicit issues, there is often the beat feeling that all is somehow not right.' (ibid.). Given that the tensions that people must negotiate in their lives are often complex and do not stem from a monolithic overbearing force, the moments of discursive exploration in a group setting are ideal for attempts to fit a constellation of factors into coherent narratives, generating spontaneous insight into how people understand what motivates them to action, what forces seem to structure their lives, and what conditions they see their future plans relying on.

Following from this intuition, the study aimed at capturing implicit, inchoate, and common-sense understandings of politics and other social-structural forces amongst 'ordinary' mobile Europeans. Here I suggest a contrast with a strategy that would have pursued respondents who have self-consciously asserted their EU citizenship rights to confront specific obstacles or to make rights-claims. The relevant difference, I suggest, is that the latter group may have acquired an expertise in rehearsing their arguments for presentation, in readily invoking a schema of the political world, and in adopting speaking styles aimed at persuasive reasoning. Conversations developed in the course of sociable discourse are perhaps more chaotic, but offer more opportunities in the analysis to reveal the implicit assumptions underlying participants' accounts of EU citizenship 'in practice' (Damay & Mercenier, 2016, p. 1145) and through 'everyday talk' (Perrin, 2006, p. 41). This interest is also the premise of other 'ordinary language' and phenomenological research, which explores how people imbue words with meaning and the standards of judgement beyond their academic or dictionary definitions (Schaffer, 2013, p. 185; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012, p. 23). Group discussions with unpractised actors are, for similar reasons, more likely to stimulate a process of discovery and self-discovery, as routine or taken-for-granted assumptions—as opposed

to those already tested publicly—are justified to the other group members and to the researcher.

What makes people 'ordinary'

This study therefore deliberately avoided recruiting participants with an explicit activist or advocacy identity, or who otherwise self-selected by a distinct social experience—beyond, of course, moving within the EU. On the one hand, the goal was to capture a range of personal stories which reflect the diverse blend of considerations people make when embarking upon a mobility project (Carling & Collins, 2018), rather than selecting on the basis of a pre-defined specific experience of lifestyle migration, a shared circumstance of necessity, grievance, marginalization, or subalternity. The first sense in which respondents are therefore considered 'ordinary' is that they were not neatly grouped together under the label of another narrow social or political sub-grouping (e.g. retirees, Erasmus students,[69] activists, members of a civic organization, etc.).

The 'ordinariness' expressed in the heterogeneity of my sample aimed to partially correct for a tendency in sociological studies of EU mobility to feature highly-skilled and white-collar workers as 'prototypical' Europeans (L. Bartolini, Gropas, & Triandafyllidou, 2017; Bygnes, 2017; Favell, 2008; Fligstein, 2008). An argument could be made that this tendency to focus on the lives of businesspeople and entrepreneurs is in part justified by their prominence in labour statistics (European Commission, 2021). However, hospitality work, for example—along with other roles in manufacturing and construction—also regularly count among the top employment sectors for EU movers (ibid., p. 10). In that sense, those working in these areas have as much claim to the mantle of 'ideal' EU citizens as their white-collar counterparts.

The rationale for the present study, however, is not primarily grounded in the relative size of the mobile workforce, but in trying to capture a diversity of social experiences. Restaurant work, for example, tends to be poorly paid, is often less secure, may be characterised by irregular working hours, and in general tends to be characterised by relative precarity compared to jobs in 'professional' sectors like banking. As I explain

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[69] See (Wilson, 2011) and (Kuhn, 2012) for views on the limitations of seeing educational exchange cohorts as embodying ideals of EU mobility.

in greater depth in Chapter 4, from the citizenship perspective that I have laid out, it is worth incorporating the perspectives of those whose working life may not afford them the same experience of linearity, resources to self-insure, and sense of agency than those who move with higher qualifications or more 'marketable' skill-sets. Again, recalling the sociological orientation of our concept of citizenship, focusing only on the perspectives of a well-resourced group of respondents would miss out on significant factors in all three of our specific thematic explorations: aspiration, agency, and belonging.

If it was important to my approach that my respondents were 'ordinary' in the ways that I have indicated, there is also a sense in which they are 'ideal' in the terms that were explored in the previous chapter. They could be seen, as Adrian Favell has broadly described his 'Eurostars', to embody 'the very image of the European Commission's highest ideals of free movement, having exercised their European right to move internationally and build a life and career in another member state' (2010, p. 189). In this sense, it is in the fact that my group of respondents, taken as a whole, move for no shared *particular* reason, which makes them ideal in the terms of the predominant social vision of European integration, which aims at promoting EU citizenship and free movement as part of the 'core of the European project' (European Commission, 2020, p. 45).

Ordinariness in this case should not, however, be confused with typicality. Qualitative studies of this size usually do not peg their value to claims of representativeness either in the composition of the sample population nor in the perspectives gathered in the data. Their value, rather, rests on the potential for qualitative work to 'improv[e] our conceptual models' by examining instances of social and political phenomena in greater depth and nuance (Lareau, 2021, p. 2). In our case, the goal was to treat the social experiences[70] and perspectives (on politics and society) of mobile Europeans as specific illustrations of the 'forms of life' that EU citizenship engenders or supports, thus drawing out the links between the '*meaning* of events in the everyday lives of individuals' and the collective 'social structural forces' that they are subject to (Lareau, 2021, p. 1). The perspectives gathered do not by any means exhaust the variety of

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[70] Understood to have both material and emotive content—e.g. 'how people understand their social positions, barriers they believe that they have faced, worries they have about their children or their jobs or their health, or accomplishments that have generated pride' (Lareau, 2021, p. 14).

experiences of mobile Europeans, much of which will be shaped by specific reasons for moving, the context of the host society they find themselves in, their personal and family circumstances, and so on. Nevertheless, the accounts included in this study contribute to a broader set of sociological studies of EU citizenship which aim to interrogate the critical diagnoses found in the theoretical literature with the viewpoints of EU citizens themselves.

Projection and retrospection as modes of evaluation

Migration, since it represents a biographical 'rupture', is an experience that tends to be invested with expectations about the future in one or another social setting. In this sense, thinking and talking about migration is an immanently evaluative and comparative activity in ways that are productive to exploring substantive themes in politics and society.

In the case of border-crossing, these expectations get mapped onto a larger socio-spatial geography of possibilities. EU citizenship invites Europeans to see the member states as different contexts of action in which they can imagine their lives playing out. Migration, in this sense, is a *spatial* and *temporal* process. As Koikkalanien and Kyle point out, while 'time confines us all to be living physically in the present, our minds are constantly ranging over the social landscape of time', a process which involves 'prospection' of possible futures and counterfactual thinking about decisions taken or not taken (2015, p. 764). Prospection involves acts of imagination which allow people to generate 'alternative realities' (p. 764) tied to choices about whether to move across borders. One distinction of the EU free movement regime is precisely that it allows, if not promotes, this kind of outward projection by removing most of the barriers that would characterise a traditional migration project, and by embedding it in the legal and normative regime of European citizenship. This, it has been argued, is the 'reflexive virtue' of free movement: it 'allows for many different realisations and understandings of the self that may have been unavailable but for free movement. Freedom of movement, in other words, liberates not only the body but also the mind from the normative structures of the state' (de Witte, 2019a).

Recent work in critical migration studies has moved away from a reliance on models of migration that rely on the idea of 'rational choosers seeking a better life', or those which see people buffeted about by 'constrained economic and political circumstances' (Carling & Collins, 2018; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2015, p. 761). Rather, migration projects involve 'a multitude of interrelated factors and causes rooted in the everyday life' (p. 763). For our purposes, then, relying on ideas like 'the good life' to discern what drives people to move across borders should not be reducible to the idea of a 'better life' in the sense of a marginal gain after weighing rational preferences. Rather, the good life refers to having access to the conditions which allow the pursuit of those elements which they invest with personal or social value. These elements may be particularly accessible when engaging in acts of imaginative projection in which one is 'negotiating one's future social worlds and, hence, future emotional states' (p. 760).

This kind of projection inevitably invites comparison between two or more scenarios, and this direct comparison, in which at least one scenario is imagined, allows respondents to highlight elements which are appealing or unsatisfactory. In other words, projection is inherently evaluative, since it forces participants to highlight the salient aspects of their life that might be meaningfully different in different contexts. There can be a kind of revelatory process in this kind of discursive exploration, as respondents describe these differences and the tensions they suggest.

Notwithstanding the project's interest in topics implying 'change' or transformation—topics like 'becoming', and self-realization—the approach taken in the project does not aim to track *changes* in mobile Europeans' self-understanding as they move across borders. Being able to trace a process of *changing* political subjectivity would require either a much longer-term longitudinal study following a group of Europeans before and throughout their mobility project, or, perhaps, a comparison group of non-movers. Indeed, a criticism that could be raised against the present study is that it engages in what Kyle and Koikkalainen have called an 'analytical and methodological "mobility bias"' (p. 760). This criticism refers to studies that 'sample on the dependent variable'—

in this case, by studying people who have actually moved, rather than 'the vast majority of the planet that does not move' (ibid.).[71]

In terms of our approach, these challenges are not fatal. First of all, we are interested in finding out whether the claims which are made about what mobility promises—both from scholars distilling the normative and subjective consequences of free movement, and from 'official' narratives about what a mobile life offers—are in evidence in the stories that respondents tell. In this sense, it is necessary to engage with already-mobile Europeans (Damay & Mercenier, 2016, p. 189; Favell, 2010). Nevertheless, prospective thinking remains accessible even to those who have already moved: they may be considering further moves (as we explore especially in Chapter 5); they may reflect upon past prospective thinking and how it has been confronted by the realities of mobility; and they may also imagine scenarios in which they did not migrate in the first place. The combination of this kind of retrospective, counterfactual, and prospective thinking can all potentially offer insights into what mobile Europeans see as the promise of a mobile life and gives us a basis to evaluate the potentials and pitfalls of EU citizenship from a normative perspective and in confrontation with the EU's narratives, without entirely departing from the virtues of the approach that Kyle and Koikkalainen identify.

For the purposes of the research design, questions which provoked projection and retrospection were included purposely to invite these kinds of evaluations. Questions which prompted respondents to consider how their life might have been different if they had not moved, or those which explored whether they might think of moving again, provoked comparisons, and the differences highlighted by respondents could then be probed substantively. Along the lines developed earlier in the chapter, these comparisons, especially since they involved acts of imagination, are treated in the analysis as ways to access the justificatory schemas and rationales that speakers appeal to when discussing the role that free movement has played in their lives.

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[71] Furthermore, *prospective* thinking is typically understood as preceding a migration project. Indeed, Koikkalainen and Kyle are promoting a research agenda on migration which studies the cognitive processes that *precede* actual migration, and hence which would involve talking to people who have not yet moved.

Interpretative analysis

Both the data-gathering effort and subsequent analysis of the generated material follow the logic of interpretive research. The guiding emphasis in the analysis is on discerning the collective 'meaning-making' efforts of the speakers in each group. The goal of sense-making applies also to the interpretive researcher, whose task is to marshal the textual evidence generated from the discussions to present a coherent portrait of how speakers appraise the world and position themselves in it (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012, p. 109). It therefore involves mapping patterns within the discourse of respondents. In discerning patterns, we are interested, on one level, with identifying shared assumptions within and across groups (White, 2011, p. 42; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012, p. 108). For instance, do respondents regularly position politicians as antagonistic, describing them as cynical and self-interested? Do others in the group challenge these evaluations, or accept them without comment?

One of the goals, then, is to be attentive to the prevalence of certain assumptions in speakers' discourse, both as 'common sense' elements of their discursive repertoire and as instances of what speakers want to highlight as important. But while these discernible patterns are important to directing the analysis around speakers' views and priorities, the aim is not only to detect conformity or frequency of views. Inter-textual comparison also allows the ambiguities and contradictions within these patterns to become apparent: the ways in which speakers negotiate the meanings with each other and the way that interpretations differ between groups (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012, pp. 108–109). The way in which the researcher presents this complexity and diversity of views allows for explanatory connections to emanate from the text, giving resources for conceptual development and refinement when confronted with the theoretical perspectives drawn from political and legal theories of EU citizenship.

Apart from the crucial conceptual task of putting abstract ideals of citizenship in closer conversation with the views of citizens themselves, interpretive approaches also respond to the more direct sociological impetus to understand how people confront the problems in their lives. One of the more compelling propositions underlying interpretative approaches to discourse is that the way in which people construct 'strategies of action' depends on the 'repertoire' of resources that they draw on to interpret their social environment. (Swidler, 1986). In cultural sociology, people's

interpretations and evaluations are considered to be consequential for social actors themselves, since the ways individuals make sense of their life chances 'enable and constrain action, together with other types of determinants, be they spatial, social structural, or temporal' (Daniel, Arzoglou, & Lamont, 2011, p. 292). The idea that 'ideas and discourse structure and give meaning to the ways in which individuals decide to take action', and thereby reveal '"immanent" or "emergent" forms of causality' also motivates the analytical effort (Herman, 2016a, p. 63). For the purposes of this project, discovering how mobile Europeans make sense of their decision to move can potentially give us insight into these kind of immanent bases for action and feelings of constraint or potential, which in turn can yield insights into the nature of the agency that mobility enables, and whether these can be considered civic resources from the perspective of democratic citizenship (Perrin, 2006, p. 8).

This epistemological basis is consequential for research design in the ways accounted for above. The data-gathering effort has to be developed carefully to elicit the relevant discussion, but in a way that is sufficiently oblique to the central object of interest to not override respondents' own priorities.[72] Privileging the meaning-making of research subjects requires not explicitly signalling the object of research from the outset—in this case EU citizenship—and not foregrounding the researcher's priorities in such a way as to unduly distort or direct respondents' responses. Such an approach has been successfully applied in studies that aim at conceptual development by using empirical data to inform political theory (see, for example Herman, 2016a; R. Wagner, 2013, pp. 91, 287–288; White, 2010, 2011). The deeper premise of such an approach is that for non-specialist respondents, complex concepts like identity, political attachment, or even something as seemingly straightforward as citizenship, are primarily messy lived experiences rather than well-formed and coherent ideals (R. Wagner, 2013, p. 15). Taking this premise seriously requires an analytical strategy that is able to capture political concepts as expressed tacitly, rather than explicitly, in conversation (Eliasoph,

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[72] This is a particular concern for studies relating to some aspect of the European Union (White, 2011, p. x). The EU-centrism typical of many studies in part reflects the priorities of the European Commission, which regularly carries out research on topics like European identity (see Chapter 1 for a further discussion) (Favell, 2010, p. 191). The present study follows White's intuition in not explicitly foregrounding the central object of interest—in this case European citizenship—and rather beginning the investigation from an exploration of the elements that give it its sociological and political potency, as laid out at the beginning of the chapter. This is achieved, as I discuss, in basing the discussion in personal mobility narratives, and also in delaying any explicit probing of the topic of EU citizneship *per se* to see how and when it is 'invoked naturally' by participants (White, 2011, p. 45).

1998, p. 10; White, 2010, p. 1018). This is particularly important when analysing the 'everyday talk' of 'ordinary people', rather than those who are used to expressing political issues publicly, like activists, political party members, or policymakers (Gamson, 1992).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the empirical and analytical strategy adopted for approaching elements of the political subjectivities of mobile Europeans, based around three broad conceptual themes: self-realisation, belonging, and agency.

As has been argued in the previous chapters, the free movement rights embedded in European citizenship have potentially liberating effects which change the nature of citizenship and therefore the relationship between the citizen and the polity. Moreover, it has been suggested that this changed relationship has a potentially emancipatory effect by changing the horizon of individual agency and, therefore, of self-realization. We have also established the critical concerns that some scholars have suggested could result from these changes, including political alienation and individualistic dispositions toward society. Ultimately, these analyses and critiques are making claims about how institutions, legal regimes, and citizenship practices shape and re-shape subjectivities.

The project therefore required an approach which was able to capture respondents' reconstructions of their personal experiences of border-crossing and which allowed respondents to draw out the relationships between these experiences and the broader socio-political structural forces they saw as bearing upon them. There are clear affinities between migration scholarship and theories of EU citizenship, both of which focus on subject-formation and centre on the importance of access to different socio-spatial contexts in processes of 'becoming'.

The empirical approach is therefore based in focus group methodologies that aim to generate sociable discourse within peer groups, and incorporate elements of narrative methodologies. Discussions were structured to be centred on personal stories of cross-border mobility and move into a broader discussion of substantive issues of politics and society. Following on from these priorities, then, this study relies on qualitative data gathered through a series of group discussions with mobile Europeans living and working in their host societies.

Part two: EU citizens' stories

Chapter 4

EU citizenship as 'emancipation': stories of aspiration and struggle

Aleksandra: My story is completely different. I finished school. I had a job. But my love life went wrong, and I decided to disappear it. I bought the ticket, one way, like that! The decision, I made it in two days. I came here with the ticket, one way ticket. I knew I'm not gonna go back. So, this is how I am. Thirteen years now. [Paula: And counting, yeah…] Yeah. In fact, in July, it's gonna be thirteen years. So, I could stay there—I had a job, which I was happy, but something else went wrong and I decided, that's it, it's time to go. And, I kind of like it I would say.

Moderator: Kind of? [*general laughter*]

Aleksandra: Ya, well, it's up and down, you know.

Moderator: Of course.

Paula: Like everywhere.

Aleksandra: Exactly, but it's good. I would say it's okay.

Paula: And there's still something that kept us here. We thought it's going to be three months or six months or whatever time and we still stayed here, so.

Aleksandra's story about her decision to move is not typical of those offered in this chapter. In fact, 'typical' stories turn out to be elusive: while some respondents plot their move as a deliberate part of a longer-term project of further education or career development, respondents in several groups pointed out how their mobility was spontaneous, even surprising. For some, a planned short trip to visit friends or family

abroad turned into a long stay, leading eventually to getting a job and settling down.[73] In another case, a job offer during a holiday led to a impromptu decision to accept and relocate.[74] For Aleksandra, the decision to move was taken hastily in the wake of a failed relationship, and she had no solid plans upon arrival in her new context.[75] Though Aleksandra's decision to move was particularly abrupt, she was not the only one to leave her plans to chance: several respondents recounted how they had moved to get away from conditions at home and arrived in a new country with no immediate job prospects and little local knowledge, social network, or language skills.

The stories explored in this chapter express what some scholars have characterised as the *emancipatory* character of EU citizenship: it offers Europeans expanded opportunities for 'self-realization' by separating people's life chances from their nationality (de Witte, 2019b, p. 264). Stories like these, of those who take their chances in another member state, attest most clearly the extent to which free movement has broadened Europeans' imagination of their possible life trajectories beyond the social, cultural, and political, and legal configurations offered by their own member state. The appeal of EU citizenship, in normative and—as these stories suggest—in empirical terms, lies in this decoupling.

Focusing on these narratives, in which one thing leads to another, highlights how the central right of European citizenship—free movement—has become a tacit part of Europeans' life plans. The ease with which people move, and, in many cases, the lack of a well-defined plan, demonstrates how strikingly different EU mobility is to 'traditional' migration projects. Where the latter demand formal applications and planning, requiring visas, perhaps sponsorship by an employer, and overcoming other, often onerous bureaucratic hurdles,[76] EU mobility can be undertaken almost

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[73] As in the case of a Lithuanian national living in London for 12 years and working in catering.

[74] As in the case of a UK national living in Barcelona and working as a manager in the financial services industry.

[75] Aleksandra is from Poland and working in catering in the UK.

[76] Such hurdles were attested to in an online group discussion by Raia, who came to Italy from Bulgaria, and Anastasia, a Romanian citizen also living in Italy who is originally from Moldova. These two respondents are the exceptions which prove the rule: before becoming European citizens, both had experience with member state immigration systems. They recounted numerous time-consuming and costly attempts to meet bureaucratic requirements, and in Olesea's case several failed attempts owing to the absence of a specific 'invitation' required to obtain a visa. Apart from these objective difficulties in navigating sometimes opaque bureaucracies, both stressed the subjective difference in being able to come and go without conditions once they became European citizens. By contrast, respondents who were born in EU member states did not highlight such hurdles to movement.

casually,[77] in ways more redolent of moving internally in one's home country (Santacreu, Baldoni, & Carmen Albert, 2009). One can 'give it a go' in another country without meeting specific state-defined requirements for income, education, or employment.

However, leaving things to chance has its perils: respondents' mobility narratives often highlight significant periods of struggle, uncertainty, economic precarity, and in some cases exploitation, which at first reading make the emancipatory appeal of EU citizenship seem dubious.

This chapter proceeds from this contrast. In recounting their stories, mobile Europeans balance narratives of opportunity and constraint in conversation, reconstructing their experiences in a new context in ways which legitimise their struggles and justify their mobility projects. By scrutinising the values to which mobile Europeans appeal when sustaining these justificatory narratives, we can better understand the attractiveness of free movement, even when it leads to periods of difficulty or persistent tensions that arise from living across national contexts.

In the final section, the chapter situates these stories in terms of the 'emancipatory' promise of EU citizenship. Drawing on scholarship that has applied Axel Honneth's theory of social freedom to EU law, the chapter takes a view on how, in light of respondents' accounts, EU citizenship can be considered 'emancipatory' and considers the ways in which longer-term tensions arising from a mobile life constrain its emancipatory potential.

Problems, projects and progress

In this section, we will begin to take a closer look at the respondents' stories of moving and living across borders. As we have already laid out, the emphasis here will be on those experiences which were described as difficult in some way, in an attempt to delve deeper into what sustains the mobility project even in the face of struggle. Recalling Paula's intervention at the beginning of the chapter when discussing the ups

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[77] As in the case of an Estonian national who came to the UK with the rest of his heavy metal band and has been at his current job in London for more than seven years.

and downs of life in her adopted context: 'And there's still something that kept us here. We thought it's going to be three months or six months or whatever time and we still stayed here […]'. From these stories and the justifications that speakers offer, we can begin to discern what this '*something*' is and trace resonances between how Europeans present their narratives of mobility and the kinds of 'emancipation' that freedom of movement seems to offer, which will be explored in greater depth in a later section of the chapter.

Aspiration, projects, and self-realisation

The stories highlighted in this section place particular emphasis on how mobility was the means by which respondents could pursue personal projects which for one reason or another seemed out of reach in the context that they left. Recent work in migration studies, building on the insights of critical migration scholars, has tried to emphasise the role of emotional and subjective concepts like 'aspiration' and 'desire' when discussing what drives people to move across borders (Carling & Collins, 2018). This view tries to shift the focus away from explanations that rely on assumptions of economic rationality, and instead see migrants as engaging in processes of projection and social imagination in pursuing their vision of life in another context (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2015). A group discussion held in Stratford in East London attests to the centrality of these 'drivers of migration' (Carling & Collins, 2018). The group was made up of four friends who had met through their work in the restaurant sector: Alessandro, Julia, Matteo and Martina. In recounting their narratives of the early days in a new context, they also reflect on how, despite repeated frustrations or sustained uncertainty, mobility offered the means to independence, purpose, and agency in ways they saw as unattainable in their home context.

Julia, Matteo, and Martina met at the restaurant where they all worked over the course of a few years after coming to the UK. Julia, from Spain, had moved in her early thirties and had been in the UK for five years at the time of the discussion. She had previously trained and worked as an architect in Spain for ten years until the building industry collapsed following the financial crisis in 2008.

Julia's hope in coming to the UK was to find work in the architecture sector while learning English, and to be able to return to Spain to get a better job. After a few

months taking English language classes, she started working weekends in the restaurant where she would eventually meet Matteo and Martina. During this time she took on a series of short-term, unpaid internships in architecture firms and a part-time position at a small interior design business. For a year, she worked three jobs, seven days a week, though only the restaurant work paid. At the end of the month, Julia did not have enough money, as she put it, 'left over for a beer', or at other times, enough to take the train home. After this long period of precarity, an opportunity came up through the interior designer she was working with, and, when we spoke, she had been working with a small construction business for three years, with a decent salary and regular office hours. In summing up her story, Julia says:

Julia: 'One day we will come back to our countries… we will see. […] At the moment, I'm very good here. I am doing my career. I am growing my career.'

Matteo, also in his mid-30s, came to London from Italy seven years before our discussion, without, he says, being able to say more than 'good morning' in English. Matteo had rejected working for his father, a carpenter, and had moved to Rimini in Northern Italy from his hometown in the south of the country. In Rimini he worked at a greengrocer's, and, despite being offered a stable job, turned it down, describing the town, though a popular seaside holiday destination, as too depressing. After arriving in London, Matteo was 'without money, and just a place to sleep, thanks God—but even that was provisory', and was unable to find work for the first two months. He eventually found a job that he described as 'really bad' in a place which shut down soon after he began working there. He eventually found steady work for eight months in a restaurant, bringing dirty dishes from the dining room down to the kitchen and clean dishes back up, for eight to ten hours a night, 'every night'—a job, he stresses, that he 'would never suggest to anyone'. Despite not getting paid consistently, the earnings from this job allowed Matteo to get by, and to pursue an English language course in his spare time. He continued working at the restaurant for three years, during which time he met Martina and Julia, and eventually worked his way up as a waiter, then as the head waiter, though the pay remained inconsistent. Frustrated with the conditions, Matteo finally left the restaurant and took on a series of other jobs in hospitality: first at a hotel, then as an assistant manager in another restaurant, where, again, he was paid for one role while having to take on several others. When we spoke,

Matteo was still working in food service, though now at a cafeteria with regular working hours, and is pursuing several technical certifications with a view to move into IT work. Of his experiences since coming to the UK, Matteo says:

> Matteo: I just realised that I'm not that useless. In Italy, instead, where I used to live, I was thinking that I was, you know, useless. The city is, it's a really small city. There are not many opportunities—I used to see people, you know, my age, always in front of a bar. I didn't want that, at least not for me, so I wanted to change, something, something new, see things, not be, you know, relegated there to do the same exactly things that they do—other people. So, for this I came to London.

Martina's experience with mobility has been steadier. She had wanted to live abroad since high school, and, after finishing a university degree in modern languages, came to the UK to improve her English. Apart from the language, Martina explains that London was also an obvious choice because it was 'close to home'—just a two-hour flight away. Martina worked as a waitress for three years before returning to university to do a Master's degree in translation. When we spoke, she was employed as a subtitling project coordinator for film and television.

The final participant of the Stratford group, Alessandro, was, at the time of the discussion, employed as a chef in a restaurant in central London, and had worked consecutive twelve-hour shifts over the three days prior to our conversation. Alessandro left Italy at the age of 25 and arrived in London without English language skills or experience in restaurant work. He describes his early months in London as 'a very bad period' of his life, since he was alone, working as a kitchen porter and being paid below the minimum wage. Despite the conditions, Alessandro explained that the experience gave him insight into how to advance in the restaurant sector. He returned to Italy for a few months to gain some additional training and experience, then came back to London where he found an opportunity at the restaurant where he has been working since. Alessandro sums up his mobility project like this:

> Alessandro: So, in these three years, I work hard on myself. I work more, more, more, and more to improve, improve, improve, improve. […] So, what I'd say is – I ran away from my country because there was no opportunity for

young people. I arrived here in London to have this opportunity. I try to get my future better. I'm building a life.

Apart from Martina, who frames her decision to move in more aspirational terms, the others in this group offered reasons for moving presented in terms of constraint. Matteo and Alessandro articulate mobility as a necessity in response to a lack of opportunity at home, and for Julia these constraints had already pushed her into unemployment in Spain. For these three, London is described as an imagined site of possibility (for 'opportunity', for 'a change'), despite none of them having concrete opportunities or many resources for navigating a new context.[78] Despite uncertain beginnings, their new context retains this sense of potentiality (for 'growing my career', for 'building a life') throughout long periods of difficulty even after some time has passed.

Political economists would not find much surprising in these stories: Matteo, Alessandro and Julia's actions are explicable in terms of labour market dysfunction and political disappointment. Seeing themselves at the mercy of governments and economies that do not deliver, and with few opportunities to influence them, they instead choose to exercise their right of exit (e.g. Moses, 2017).[79] Such explanations of migrants' motives are of course plausible. However, we are less interested in probing the *causal* explanations speakers present.[80] We instead shift the focus to the frames of evaluation that they employ when retelling their mobility stories, to understand how they present the value of having been able to move across borders. Notably, speakers spend less time developing a critique of their home context than in stressing what moving has afforded them. In the case of the Stratford group, speakers emphasise values of *independence*, *progress*, and *self-worth*, values that, as we will

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[78] Though we are exploring retrospective narratives in this case, the evident projection that Julia, Alessandro, Marta and Martina seem to have engaged in when deciding on their destination fits nicely with Saara Koikkalainen and David Kyle's (2015, pp. 759–760) notion of 'cognitive migration', which they posit as a 'phase of decision-making in which the experimental, narrative imagination is actively engaged in negotiating one's future social worlds and, hence, future emotional states.'

[79] Susan Bygnes (2017) finds similar accounts amongst highly-skilled migrants who moved from Spain to Norway after the 2008 financial crisis, and who put less stress on their economic prospects than what Bygnes characterizes as 'anomie' relating to declining political and social conditions in Spain.

[80] Triandafyllidou & Gropas (2014), in a study on high-skilled Greek and Italian emigrants, looks more closely at the direct motivations offered by respondents, though here too they find that respondents often frame their decisions in terms of a more holistic 'vision of life' rather than focusing narrowly on economic factors (p. 1615).

explore in our discussion of emancipation, are constitutive of notions of 'self-realization'. For this group, EU citizenship has been the means to pursue these values, and the justification both for leaving in the first place and in enduring periods of difficulty, is offered in these terms.

Especially for Matteo and Alessandro, *not* moving is associated with dependence, closure and fatalism ('being relegated'), contrasted with the openness, possibility, and agency offered by mobility. For them, mobility is presented as the means to 'make something for me', and 'to build a life', to borrow Alessandro's words. Alessandro incorporates his mobility story into a story about *progress* ('improve, improve, improve, improve'), which he contrasts with a story of dependence (on his family) and stasis at home. Likewise, Matteo narrates how his self-worth is realised through his experiences abroad: 'I just realised that I'm not that useless'.

Respondents' emphasis on intrinsic values like progress, change, and independence rather than on pragmatic or material considerations, suggests that free movement offers the means by which Europeans can develop aspects of their self which were stifled in their home context. Matteo's delimits a set of imagined possibilities which offer little possibility for self-realization in his home context, framing the opportunities available to him there as 'being relegated to do the same […] things that […] other people [do]'. While he does not have a well-defined set of aspirations, he knows that there is a further horizon which might offer 'something new'. Precisely the absence of a *specific* positive vision of alternatives (i.e. knowing what he was getting in to) highlights the importance of the critical distance that access to mobility provides: the possibility to move enabled by EU citizenship meant that Matteo's conception of potential alternatives, however vague, transcended his home context.

The same goes for the rest of this group of friends, to varying degrees. The fact that, as their early missteps and difficulties in their new context demonstrate, so much of the sense of possibility in the new context was *projection*[81] rather than something arising out of concrete prospects, a sense of familiarity with the language and culture of the new context, or existing social networks, shows how strongly EU citizenship

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[81] See again (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2015), n. 7.

has succeeded in broadening imagined horizons and allowing Europeans to take a critical distance from their citizenship context to consider other possibilities.

As we will discuss in the final section of this chapter, there are clear resonances with these stories and accounts which argue that EU citizenship offers Europeans the potential to develop 'reflexive freedom'. Reflexive freedom, in Axel Honneth's work, refers to the conditions by which individuals can get a critical distance from existing conditions and reflect on their autonomous desires (Honneth, 2014, p. 30). While this is most explicit in Matteo's account, this 'reflexive virtue' (de Witte, 2019a) of EU citizenship is also implicitly present for Alessandro and Julia.

Flexibility and resilience

In the preceding accounts, I highlighted the ways in which respondents framed their mobility projects in terms of self-realization. These stories emphasised forward-looking, aspirational justifications imagined in future possibilities. Within these relatively optimistic accounts, however, respondents also appealed to the necessity for adaptation and resilience in the face of sustained difficulty—or even illegality in their work conditions—as important justificatory narratives. While the importance of carrying-on in the face of difficulty and adapting to new circumstances was also brought up by respondents working in 'high-skilled' sectors of the job market, we will first take a closer look at the stories of the food-service workers, whose experiences were more likely to be subject to conditions of relative precarity and coercion.

The focus on my 'low-skilled' cohort[82] is deliberate. Firstly, their stories offer a counterpoint to the studies of EU movers that focus mainly on white-collar workers and other professionals. A good deal has been written about so-called 'Eurostars' (Favell, 2008) and other 'highly resourceful migrants' (L. Bartolini et al., 2017; Bygnes, 2017, p. 270) who form a class of 'well-educated and mobile people' to whom the benefits of free movement accrue (Somek, 2013, p. 261). But focusing only on

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[82] This requires several caveats: people working in hospitality or food-service are not a homogeneous group in terms of educational attainment or training in other 'skills'. Some have university degrees, some do not. Some had training or experience in a particular field, and found themselves 'de-skilled' in their new context. See Chapter 3 for a further discussion.

those who move with relatively high amounts of social capital may miss out on the appeal—and the particular difficulties—that mobility holds for those whose paths through life may be less linear or secure. While some of the respondents included in this study—particularly those working in investment banking—may approximate a characterisation of the 'highly versatile and often well-paid' 'kinetic elite' (Presskorn-Thygesen, 2015), respondents like those in the Stratford group who spent periods working in sometimes volatile, often illegally underpaid, conditions in restaurants and other hospitality roles, do not.

Focusing on low- or de-skilled movers should also be one of the particular advantages of studying EU mobility. Immigration rules in general tend to favour the educational, professional, and financial attainment that is the currency of highly-skilled migrants, giving them more options for international mobility in general. Those whose CVs show less of what immigration systems value tend to have far fewer options to choose where to live and work internationally. EU free movement rights, though not without conditions,[83] normalise this possibility to a much wider group. In terms of expanding the aspirational opportunities of people for whom they were previously out of reach, then, one would expect that the potential value and appeal of EU citizenship should be *particularly* apparent when talking to respondents navigating more precarious paths through life.

However, while EU free movement rights may open up this possibility legally, sociological barriers remain to the equal enjoyment of free movement rights.[84] One major caveat is that the poorest members of society are also the least likely to move (S. Bartolini, 2005, p. 11; Ypi, 2016, p. 163), and those who are low-skilled and unemployed are often stuck in 'local unemployment traps' (L. Bartolini et al., 2017, p. 657) rather than pursuing mobility.[85] And EU citizens who may not be the poorest, but who nevertheless move as 'low-skilled' or 'de-skilled' workers more often find

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[83] See Directive 2004/38/EC, Chapter III. Effectively, EU citizens can move without conditions for up to three months, after which they must be economically active, either as a worker, as self-employed, or with sufficient resources to not require social assistance. The practical upshot of these conditions, however, varies between member states, depending on whether member states actively implement other conditions, such as the requirement for EU citizens to register their presence with 'the relevant authorities' (Article 8).

[84] Explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

[85] Damay and Mercenier's conversations with 'static' respondents 'at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum' from several Brussels neighbourhoods reflect this reality: participants were aware of their right to free movement, but did not 'enjoy it in practice' (2016, p. 1150).

themselves, along with other migrants, in jobs offering lower pay, more job insecurity, and with less-stable conditions than the host-society nationals (O'Brien, 2016, p. 938). The particular characteristics of these kinds of jobs—'part time, atypical and fixed-term' and the increasing reliance on, for example, zero hours contracts—have meant that low-skilled jobs are increasingly vulnerable to falling outside the definitions of 'work' that mobile citizens' EU rights depend on. These developments, due largely to a recent spate of restrictive rulings by the CJEU, means that these EU citizens' rights, especially rights to social assistance in host member states, are increasingly not protected by EU law (O'Brien, 2016, p. 954; Spaventa, 2015).

For our respondents, question of access to welfare rights did not feature prominently.[86] Rather, as we have already seen in the Stratford group, respondents scraped by with what they could get rather than seek social assistance through host state bureaucracies. Their narratives do attest, however, to the conditions that mobile Europeans working in the lower end of the services sector might encounter in the job market, often including periods of significant hardship and uncertainty, and, in some cases, periods of exploitation.

Despite these endemic conditions, respondents find ways to justify their mobility project, in the following case invoking values of *resilience* and *adaptation*. As we will see, however, these justifications are not entirely redemptive: in reflecting on the difficulties involved several respondents express that the decision to move often remains a conflicted one, even years after it was taken.

Aleksandra, with whom we started the chapter, recounted how she left a job in Poland for the UK after a failed relationship, buying a one-way ticket and making the decision to move within two days. Like the discussants in the Stratford group, Aleksandra was taking her chances in a new context. As with Matteo, Julia and Alessandro, Aleksandra arrived in the UK with no familiarity with English ('Yeah, yeah, that was such a stressful time, and the language, of course, I couldn't speak when I came') and no immediate job prospects, leading to difficulties early on. Reflecting on these

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[86] In the context of discussing high childcare costs, one respondent mentioned having access to Child Benefit ('just the basic one'), a small weekly per-child supplement for families with an income below a defined threshold.

difficulties, Aleksandra says, 'Well, if I would know what I can expect to be here, I would never come. It wasn't easy.'

Aleksandra's group met near Holborn, in central London. The group included three of her co-workers who worked in catering at a nearby university—Marta, also from Poland, Paula, from Lithuania, and Catherine, from Ireland. As the group were telling their stories of moving, the discussion moved on to the possibility of returning home.[87] Aleksandra decided to answer the question by reflecting on whether, with the benefit of hindsight, she would have come in the first place. Here Aleksandra recounts her early experiences after arriving at one of her first jobs, in a café in the city centre:

Aleksandra:	So, that was so much stress. I'm not sure I would make the same decision again to come here. Maybe different town or even city in Poland, but I'm not sure if I would come here. Now, it's easy. We've got good jobs.
Marta:	We've settled now, so.
Aleksandra:	Yeah. But, I had a tough time as well…
Marta:	Yeah, everyone. It's like…
Aleksandra:	…working twelve or fourteen hours a day for less than two pounds. That was my first job in coffee shop. Every thirteen days—
Paula:	That's quite an experience.
Aleksandra:	Yes! In Islington, Upper Street, my dear. You—I was working thirteen days, Sunday off, and then thirteen days again. Less than two pounds per hour. And it was, believe me, such a busy place, because all offices around. So basically you had to fly, lunch time there was no time for nothing. It wasn't easy.
Author:	And during those times, why didn't you decide to leave?
Marta:	Go back?
Aleksandra:	Because what kind of person I am? I will never show to my family I can't make it; I made wrong decision. [Paula: Yeah] I will never show them that. I'm like, 'No I can manage, I will change.' And from that place, I found a job in [a] pub. And that was the progress to go up.

Aleksandra's conflicted relationship to her decision to move is mentioned twice, and is contrasted in this excerpt *not* with choosing another member state, but with staying

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[87] This theme is explored more fully in Chapter 6.

in Poland and trying out a different city. Paula and Marta seem surprised by the details of Aleksandra's story, but they seem to recognise her ambivalence towards mobility, which they confirm through their interjections and probing. Aleksandra's ambivalence is well-founded: this excerpt immediately follows a story in which Aleksandra and her best friend find themselves between housing contracts, with no friends willing to host them, and facing the prospect of temporary homelessness. According to Aleksandra, a regular customer at the café noticed that she was not as 'bubbly' as usual and asked her what was wrong.

> Aleksandra: I said, 'Well, four hours' time, I'm going to sleep under the bridge.' He said, 'What?' I said, 'Well, I have no place to sleep, to stay.'

The customer offered Aleksandra and her friend a place to stay, but she underlines that this was a risk:

> Aleksandra: Did I know him? Okay, every day coffee, that's all. [Paula: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] You don't know who is the person.

The accommodation turned out to be a house in which 'fourteen boys' were also staying. Luckily for Aleksandra and her friend, the experience went smoothly and they stayed until their next housing contract began, but she recognises the precarity of the situation:

> A: But, what could we do? I was just beginning, we didn't have the money for a hotel or anything. You know. Yeah, yeah, that was such a stressful time […]

Aleksandra's early experiences as a mobile European saw her confronting a number of coercive dynamics: informality and illegality at work, and the gamble of accepting help from strangers. When probed, both by the author and her colleagues in the group, about why she carried on under these circumstances, Aleksandra justifies her perseverance in terms of resilience ('I can manage'), adaptation ('I will change'), and progress, as well as a determination not to admit defeat to her family.

In light of these difficulties, where does the appeal of mobility lie for Aleksandra, and how might this appeal help us to understand the 'emancipatory' character of EU citizenship? Katherine Botterill has suggested that stories like Aleksandra's are

intelligible in terms of larger social shifts towards 'individualization', with particular reference to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's analysis (2002) of the structural pressures of 'Second Modernity' and its effects on individual subjectivity (Botterill, 2014, p. 235).[88] In this reading, both territorial boundaries—including nation states—and traditional and collective categories like class, are losing their relevance in the face of new economies characterised by 'insecurity, flexibility, and deregulation'. Outside of the collective and group structures which help individuals navigate and make sense of these pressures, they are forced to patch together 'do-it-yourself biographies' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) in response to changing market conditions.[89]

Such developments, then, can be seen to offer a peculiar kind of agency. In Alexandra's case, though responding to a situation in which personal agency seems almost completely absent in the face of structural conditions—at her job, for example, or in matters of housing—Aleksandra reasserts her agency when telling her story by invoking the value of individual adaptation to her circumstances. For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, such an embrace of 'self-responsibility'—'taking responsibility for personal misfortunes and unanticipated events'—is associated with 'an image of society in which individuals are not passive reflections of circumstances but active shapers of their own lives' (2002, p. 46). In this sense, we should consider that Aleksandra's story expresses a genuine sense of agency, albeit one which stresses self-reliance and adaptation, or 'individual guts and stamina' (Bauman, 2000b, p. 29), in the face of hostile structural conditions, rather than one that appeals to the possibility of challenging circumstances through political or class-based collective action.[90]

Being such an 'active shaper' of one's life suggests the appeal of living 'a life of one's own', accessed in my respondents' accounts through EU mobility. 'Collective' categories like the home society, or the family, are associated for some respondents with dependence, stasis and frustrated ambitions. Being 'emancipated' from these

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[88] Botterill is here analysing Polish migration to the UK and how the individualization thesis must nevertheless take into account the persistent influence of the family throughout migrants' lifecourse.

[89] The European Commission's own promotional material pushes mobility as a response to volatile economic conditions. The Commission's publicity for its 2006 European Year of Workers' Mobility admits, 'Working in new countries and/or sectors provides workers with new skills and experience, benefiting both them and their employers. Reskilling is also crucial in a globalised and restructuring economic environment' (CEDEFOP, 2006).

[90] Chapter 5 will more directly probe respondents' views on the possibilities available through politics.

collective categories[91], sometimes framed in terms of '*dependence* on received social bonds and hierarchies' (Kramer, 2017, p. 186, emphasis added), seems to offer a way forward on one's own terms, even when that means being subject to other kinds of coercion.[92]

Aleksandra was not the only one to recount stories like this. Restaurant work is evidently prone to the kind of informality and diffuse illegality that Aleksandra, as well as Matteo and Alessandro from the Stratford group, described. Alessandro recounts a period in which he was paid below the minimum wage:

> Alessandro: I knew it—more or less, I was working over here—the job place: how was the minimum wage. I was underpaid, than the minimum. But I still was going there to work because it was something coming in for me to still keep[…] my life here in the city, to get the point of what I want to do […], what I don't want to do […], what I need to do […], for my future.

Alessandro offers justifications similar to those invoked by Aleksandra: 'Life is not easy; you have to fight. […] The most important thing is my project, my goal, have a life one day, so I don't care.' Elements of what Alessandro explains here—specifically the freedom to *discern* what his projects and goals are without undue influence or external constraints—are important to the conception of emancipation-as-self-realisation that will be expanded upon in the final section of this chapter. To round off this section, however, we will focus on how Alessandro's call to 'fight', is one in which the struggle is entirely personalised; it is equated with continuing to work through whatever conditions are encountered in order to reach one's goal.

The question raised by stories like these is how to take seriously the emancipatory and agentic elements expressed while also trying to account for elements which might be problematic from the perspective of democracy and social freedom. To orient these stories, their emphasis on individual responsibility, and how they bear upon our broader concern with forms of emancipation and agency that might be considered

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[91] See also (L. Bartolini et al., 2017)

[92] That mobile Europeans may have to navigate life as 'self-entrepreneurs' who must rely on their agility and adaptability is, moreover, not only a symptom of the broad social and structural shifts outlined above. Developments in EU law, as we saw in more detail in Chapter 2, can also be seen to enforce upon mobile citizens an imperative to prove their value through the 'strategic deployment of [their] human capital' to activate and maintain their EU rights (Kramer, 2017).

democratic, it is useful to again invoke Näsström's defence of the spirit of the democratic life form. For Näsström, the appeal of democracy is that it does away with old authorities and social hierarchies, but the flip-side of this increase in freedom is the 'abyss of responsibility' and uncertainty that it opens up (p. 10). A specifically democratic, and in this sense genuinely emancipatory, response to the abyss is in democracy's 'institutionalized capacity for sharing and dividing [uncertainty] equally' (p. 167). Nässtrom contrasts this defining spirit of democracy with 'the privatization of freedom and responsibility', which she attributes to the 'choice revolution' associated with neoliberal social policies (Näsström, p. 183). The resulting privatisation of responsibility is 'democratically averse' because it 'displaces onto citizens an uncertainty that ought to be publicly shared and divided between equals' (p. 167) and displaces a spirit of collective support with one of competition.

Our free-moving EU citizens offer stories which run parallel to this theoretical narrative. Free from the heteronomy of life within a bounded national context, mobile Europeans can pursue projects that might have seemed unapproachable otherwise. However, the justifications they offer for accessing this freedom suggest that they have internalised the conditions of the 'abyss of responsibility', which limits their emancipatory force by personalising and individualising the risks and benefits (Näsström, 2021, p. 169). As Somek (2014a, p. 164), drawing on Hegel, would have it, this is the form of freedom available in the 'private polity' in which 'the exercise of volition morphs into a flexible adaptation to shifting conditions. People may enjoy freedom only in alienated form.'

Fragmentation and 'grounded lives'

Elena: Many times I have this internal argument where is— what is quality of life? So what keeps me here on one front is quality of life. What I miss from home is also another type of quality of life. […] (Elena, Piccadilly group)

So far we have looked at how respondents talked about their early experiences in a new context. While some of the experiences described clearly involve struggle, negotiation of precarity, and uncertainly for sustained periods of time, it is perhaps not surprising to find stories like these characterising the early days of having moved,

especially amongst those who move to a new context with fewer 'marketable' skills and a lack of familiarity with the local language. We will now take a closer look at the tensions of a mobile life that persist well beyond arrival, even years into living in the host society. Difficulties related to living across contexts become more prominent as life settles in the new surroundings. Whereas our analysis in the previous section focused on the redemptive value of respondents' mobility experiences, in the following accounts, respondents begin to illustrate the limits of the freedom offered by mobility.

Respondents in conversation spontaneously outlined distinctions between different elements which make up the totality of their life and explained how different elements are situated in different contexts. These elements included references to family life, health care, working life, and politics/political life. Most commonly, family life— which includes relationships with parents, but in some cases also included the prospect of children—and long-time friendships, tend to be located by respondents in the context that they left. Several respondents stressed that the primary appeal of the context to which they have moved is, or becomes, based around career progression, employment stability, or simply the possibility of earning enough money to support their lives. Other elements seem to remain accessible only in the home context. In short, respondents' accounts suggest that all elements which make up a life are not equally portable.

A short exchange between Marta, Paula and Catherine, all of whom are long-term migrants to the UK, illustrate the divisions succinctly:

Catherine:	[…] so when I go home it's all about family, while, here it's really all to do with work. It's just work.
Paula:	Work, yeah.
Marta:	Work, yeah.

Susanne Bygnes and Marta Bivand Erdal find similar tensions in their study of Polish and Spanish EU migrants living in Norway. Their respondents are often hoping to find a 'grounded life' in their new context, which includes the possibility of firm 'emotional and economic attachments and responsibilities' in one place (Bygnes & Bivand Erdal, 2017, p. 105). But such a grounded life often remains elusive: several

of their respondents engage in long-term transnational commuting in an attempt to square this circle, 'dividing their time between work in Norway and time with family and friends in Poland' (p. 109). One of the novelties of EU citizenship is that it enables these kinds of hybrid configurations in ways that are not accessible to non-EU migrants. But the stretching of the lifeworld in this way implies a precarious balance which never fully satisfies the desire for a 'grounded life' (p. 110). The quest for normalization and stability, Bygnes and Erdal suggest, shows the limits to the appeal of EU free movement as 'liquid migration'—a 'free moving lifestyle' with open options. Our respondents' accounts likewise show that situating these aspects of life into a single context remains a challenge, even after more than a decade away, as in Marta's case:

Marta:	Probably would be more difficult to kind of like you know join the ends with the money you can earn in Poland, but I would have a family on the other side closer, and friends.
	[…] So, that's, that's different. And, at the end of the day, we like it here, but still, you know, our roots are there because our parents are there [Catherine: Yeah] and our best friends are there, so. So probably this side would be better, but you know, but from the economical side, like you know, here it's easier, basically it's easier to find a job, easier to earn money, easier to save money…

And, despite having been in the UK for seventeen years, Marta continues to entertain the possibility of going back, in this case considered in terms of where she would like her children to grow up.

M:	[…] But you know with us, it's easy still because in Poland, the children start school when they are seven, so we've got still two years to decide because Maja will be seven in two years' time, so then she will start school from the beginning, she can, you know, start learning Polish properly you know, from the beginning.

Other respondents, even those employed in highly-skilled sectors, articulated this fragmentation in terms of quality of life. Elena, a Greek respondent and investment

banker, explained that her home context and the context in which she lives and works each offer 'quality of life', but of two different, apparently incommensurate kinds.

> Elena: Many times I have this internal argument where is—what is quality of life? So what keeps me here on one front is quality of life. What I miss from home is also another type of quality of life. […] Well, here I have a—at least until Brexit[93]—I believe that I have, em, a path … like if I work hard, I will be rewarded. I started, as I told you, from nothing, literally. No job, no house, no savings, just my laptop and luggage. And, in few years, I had a hou—, I lived with, from five people in Zone 3, but became seven. Now I live in Zone 1 with my fiancée in a two-bedroom flat. So, I can see that here, I can—there is a progression, there is a progress. At least I was very sure of it until Brexit, okay. In Greece, this is not the case, okay? I don't feel that there is a progress in terms of career. Of course, there are other qualities, like, uh, less hectic. My family, my very close friends, yeah.

While Marta's account emphasised that moving to a new context made it easier to make ends meet, to 'find a job' and 'save money', Elena stresses the 'progress' available to her in what she frames as a meritocratic context in the UK. For both of them, however, these rewards come at the expense of a 'grounded life' in which they manage to consolidate both emotional and economic attachments. Ultimately, these tensions are left unresolved—respondents do not definitively justify their decision to have moved, and several entertain a persistent desire to go back. Unlike Bygnes and Erdal's transnational commuters, these respondents' attempts to constrain the dissonance of life as a mobile citizen manifests in keeping this possibility alive.

> Marta: This really, it's just, so I would love to go back, but I know that my husband would never do it […]

For the most part, the hope to return is sincere but is not seen as realistic. In this case, the hope is that external forces will provide the spur for leaving. We will pick up this theme in the next chapter, which further explores the implications of the persistent

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[93] Brexit, and its implications for my respondents, will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

dissonance of being always 'potentially on the move' (Somek, 2014b, p. 147) and its consequences for forming and maintaining political bonds with others.

After looking at the terms by which mobile Europeans justified their mobility projects even in the face of periods of uncertainty and struggle in the early days of having moved, this section introduced how mobile Europeans articulated some of the persistent tensions that characterised life even years after having settled in a new context. Restated in the terms of emancipation and reflexive freedom that we have so far only briefly introduced, EU citizenship allows for a projection of the self beyond of the confines of the national. But, as my respondents' stories showed, this projection carries with it the danger of fragmenting aspects of the self across multiple contexts in ways that are not easily reconciled. As we will see first in the discussion below, and in the subsequent chapters, these two characteristics which populate respondents' accounts—precarity and exploitation in social/economic relations, and fragmentation of the lifeworld—challenge the possibility of 'emancipation' in a full sense by limiting the way in which mobile Europeans can construct an integrated and coherent 'public' self in the way that Honneth's concept of social freedom requires.

Mobility and 'emancipation'

The appeal of EU citizenship's free movement rights is sometimes articulated in terms of 'emancipation'. In his broader discussion of 'liquid modernity', Zygmunt Bauman refers to emancipation in terms of being 'set free from some kind of fetters that obstruct or thwart the movements', enabling one 'to start *feeling* free to move or act' (Bauman, 2000b, p. 16, emphasis in original). The definition picks up on both 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of emancipation: it is a concept that tries to relate material constraints to the internal transformations that arise from loosening them. In the context of EU free movement rights, these 'fetters' are typically conceptualised as the nation-state itself;[94] and emancipation typically refers to decoupling not only

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[94] The term shows up even in official discourse. See, for example, AG Maduro's opinion in *Rottmann*: 'That is the miracle of Union citizenship: it strengthens the ties between us and our states […] and, at the same time, it emancipates us from them […].' ("Rottmann," 2010).

individual life chances (in terms of opportunity) from the nation-state, but decoupling conceptions of the self from nationality.[95]

The force of free movement's emancipatory potential, therefore, relies on a characterisation of the nation-state as a boundary which defines a particular way of organising the economy and politics, but also one which stabilises social, cultural, and dominant ideological/normative configurations, all of which enforce a range of possible expressions of the self (de Witte, 2019b, p. 265; Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 645).[96] While the non-moving citizen-subject remains trapped in her national configuration, the EU citizen, endowed with free movement rights, is free to leave these conditions in search of another set that suits better (Davies, 2021; de Witte, 2016, pp. 21–22; 2019a). Mobility rights, in other words, are seen as offering people a way to escape their national 'container societies of destiny' (Kochenov, 2019b, p. 39) that inhibit human flourishing by limiting the possibility of 'self-realisation' under a predefined range of possible life choices.

Instances of this conception of the nation-state as a barrier—not only in material terms but also as a barrier to one's own aspirations—were to be found in several respondents' accounts. During one discussion between Francesca, from Rome; Julian, from Germany; and Martín, from Spain, speakers drew a distinction between what was characterised as set of prevailing social norms and the speakers' own worldviews.

> Francesca: […] it is really a kind of approach of what is possible and what is not, and the perception of what Italian reality or Roman reality is compared to what is abroad.

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[95] As we will see throughout this section, this is the claim often made in legal theory (de Witte, 2016, 2019b). There is, of course, a descriptive sense in which this is axiomatic: EU citizenship grants enforceable rights allowing participation in social life on equal terms to nationals. Article 20 TFEU establishes Union citizenship and provides for a 'right to move and reside freely' in other member states, and Article 18 prohibits discrimination 'on grounds of nationality' within the scope of EU law. We are focusing here on instances where this claim to emancipation goes further to encompass development of will formation and of subjective self-conception. This broader notion provides a link with sociological studies of mobility, which often stress how migration projects are implicated in processes of 'self-making' (L. Bartolini et al., 2017; Carling & Collins, 2018). We will explore these dimensions below in terms of Honneth's theory of social freedom (2014).

[96] Again, this is reflected in sociological studies. In Favell's 2008 study of 'Eurostars', based on interviews with free-moving Europeans, this characterisation of the nation-state is prominent: 'The old nation-state-society no longer appears so inevitable as one's ultimate identity, or the framework in which to live out your life.' (p. 12) And, later, Favell refers to the critical distance that free movement rights provide: 'And you are free to benefit from this distance it gives to be self-critical, and to play around with ascriptive national identities that hitherto might have felt fixed and stamped for life.' (p. 25).

So, for them everything is *the worst*; everything is *rotten*; and everything is *not fixable*. Um, and they consider themselves in the worst country in the world. […] And, I don't know, things have a different perspective once you've been abroad for a while or once you've met people that are totally different. And it also relates to the diversity in society and probably in Germany and Spain it's very different from Italy; I would expect Germany to be much open than—to be much more open than Italy in many different aspects

Julian: Um, I'm not so sure about that…to be honest.

Francesca: No? Interesting.
                […]

Julian: […] so, um, ya, the friends I still have in Germany are very open minded, I would say, and are actually rather international in their outlook. Some have worked abroad and have just returned and are thinking of going abroad again, and these kinds of things, so in that sense my friends in Germany are quite international even though they're German nationals. Um in terms of, ya, my family is obviously also still there. Um, they are *okay* as well.

                [*Laugher*]

                Um, ya, it's more the general public I think I have a problem with.

Here Julian and Francesca contrast their own self-image and value orientation with a characterization of the national character against which they are reacting. Julian contrasts 'the general public' with himself and his more internationally-minded friends and family. Francesca sees the constraint of Italian society as encapsulated by an 'approach of what is possible and what is not', which sits uneasily with her own sense of volition.

Emancipation as 'self-realization'

Recalling Bauman's emphasis on 'feeling', above, emancipation through the kind of mobility—or the prospect of mobility—that EU citizenship promises has been

associated with subjective aspects of will-formation and becoming: feelings of aspiration, pursuing the realisation of the 'authentic' self and discerning one's own conception of 'the good life'. What is more, the emancipatory force of EU citizenship is understood to kick in even before any borders are crossed. As we explored above, even prior to moving, Europeans are free to *project* their possible life choices across the EU. This multiplication of imaginable paths to self-realisation, as de Witte has suggested, is the 'reflexive virtue' of free movement (de Witte, 2016, p. 23; 2019a, p. 94; 2019b, pp. 265–266). Likewise, Sandra Seubert points out that while free movement's instrumental value remains intact, for example, as a 'precondition for making use of other rights' or for 'access to material resources', its 'foremost' appeal is the *intrinsic* value of EU citizenship, which is expressed in how the reflexive opportunities it creates constitute a novel understanding of 'what self-determination means' (2020, p. 50). Expressed in Bauman's terms, free movement rights establish a parity between 'imagination and the ability to act': 'one feels free in so far as the imagination is not greater than one's actual desires, while neither of the two reaches beyond the ability to act' (Bauman, 2000b, p. 17).[97]

Free movement and social freedom

This initial optimistic equivalence drawn between free movement rights and emancipation of individual biographies, identities, and imaginations from the confines of nationality, however, must be tempered by a closer look at the kinds of scenarios our respondents offered above. How can we square notions of emancipation with the kinds of difficulties mobile Europeans experience in the workplace, in maintaining their emotional ties, and with narratives of individual responsibility for success and failure?

Recent attempts by Floris de Witte to equate EU citizenship rights with emancipation have developed in productive conversation with Axel Honneth's theory of social freedom (de Witte, 2016, 2019b; Honneth, 2014). Honneth is concerned with outlining a model of individual freedom which seeks to fulfil the liberal ideal of self-realisation free from external influence in a way which however avoids lapsing into alienation or

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[97] By contrast, emancipation as a political goal in Europe, especially during the twentieth century is usually associated with the progressive decommodification of various aspects social life (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 40ff.; Seubert, 2020, p. 51). We will deal with the political aspect of emancipation more explicitly in Chapter 6.

other social pathologies.[98] Honneth's model ultimately requires the private 'I' to find public expression through cooperative institutions to be fully realised (Honneth, 2014, p. 79).

Honneth's schema rests on three types of freedom—*negative*, *reflexive*, and, finally, *social* freedom—through which individual freedom can be realised. Negative freedom is granted through law and manifest in rights which protect the individual from external obstacles in pursuing one's desires, but, on its own, offers no means by which to evaluate those desires. Reflexive freedom, enabled by negative freedom, is the condition which results from being granted (temporarily) a 'critical distance' from imposed obligations, which offers an opportunity to develop the 'autonomous' self. The role of the first two types of freedom is to 'form an invisible protective barrier behind which individuals can retreat' while examining 'their own life aims without interference' (Honneth, 2014, pp. 79–80). The focus on developing one's "own will", free of external influence or heteronomy is a tenet of the liberal tradition of self-realization (Mahmood, 2001, p. 207). However, negative and reflexive freedom, on their own, can only offer a private freedom.

While these first two categories of freedom are necessary, stopping short of the cooperative conditions outlined in his conception of *social* freedom risks a retreat from the forms of personal, economic, and political relationships and their public means of expression that sustain a democratic society (Honneth, 2014, p. 65). De Witte has reformulated Honneth's concept of individual autonomy in terms of emancipation and undertakes to interpret free movement rights in Honneth's terms (de Witte, 2016, 2019b).

This reading of EU law as a means of partially fulfilling Honneth's criteria is convincing: the removal of barriers to move freely, delivered by EU law, fulfil the minimal criteria for negative freedom. The expansion of choice that free movement offers also seems to deliver on the promise of reflexive freedom—that is, an expanded space of autonomy, no longer limited by nationality, in which people can reflect on their own aims and pursue them autonomously. As de Witte puts it, 'EU free

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[98] Saba Mahmood reminds us that the self-focused liberal ideal of emancipation is not the only one. Her account of agency and emancipation amongst pious Egyptian women in the Islamic revival movement tries to challenge the liberal model of freedom that privileges being directed by one's '"true will" rather than [by] custom, tradition, or direct coercion' (2001, p. 207).

movement law strengthens the importance of the private element of uncovering one's aspirations by amplifying the possibility of its *actual* realisation' (de Witte, 2016, p. 23).[99] For de Witte, the critical distance needed for individuals to uncover their 'aspirations and dreams authentically' (de Witte, 2016, p. 27) is achieved by the possibility of disembedding—'get[ting] away' from the state (Laitinen, 2015, p. 328).[100]

Our analysis attempts to shift the focus away from EU law to a grounded exploration of the features of social life that mobile Europeans encounter when navigating their host society/ies, as well as to the tensions arising from living across different contexts for long periods of time, some of which may stand in the way of realising the promise of emancipation through mobility. As we have already noted, there are convincing resonances between respondents' narratives and arguments that suggest that free movement makes room for reflexive freedom. This is evident in respondents' projection of possibility beyond their home context—even in those cases where that projection was based on little concrete knowledge of their destination. Reflexive freedom is also in evidence in respondents' justification of their decisions—despite setbacks or hardships—in terms of pursuit of their projects and personal goals, and not purely in terms of livelihood.

Nevertheless, it is clear from respondents' narratives that mobile Europeans may encounter deformations—or, in Honneth's terms, 'misdevelopments'—which seem to stand in the way of their emancipation understood in the terms of Honneth's conception of social freedom. For Honneth, negative and reflexive freedom provide the means to realise a kind of inward freedom, but this freedom does not yet 'extend outward' (2014, p. 43). To realise this outward expression—social freedom—one must have the opportunity to engage cooperatively in interpersonal and institutional surroundings (Laitinen, 2015, p. 327). In Honneth's schema, social freedom is only

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[99] This *partial* achievement of emancipation, in our discussion, achieved in free movement rights, is also neatly encapsulated in Bauman's distinction between the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* emancipation in 'liquid modernity'. The formal freedom (granted to individuals) to live increasingly free from pre-determining structures is accompanied by a disavowal (by public authorities) to create the conditions which would allow for the 'genuine potency of self-assertion' (2000b, p. 49).

[100] Nevertheless, de Witte's account is aware of EU law's potential to subvert these same goals, either by undermining emancipatory institutions at the national level, or directly through new forms of domination.

fully realised through (a) personal relations (i.e. family and friendships), economic relations (i.e. work), and civic activity/political life.

As we have seen, respondents highlighted tensions in maintaining their personal relationships across contexts. While nearly all respondents were in committed relationships, many were married, and some had children, they often located significant elements of their affective life—close friends and other family members— in the context that they left and as being in some way out of reach in the place where they live and work. Honneth's account is unable to respond well to the strains attested to by our respondents of this kind of fragmentation. He elides a longer discussion about relationships at a distance by referring to the increasing appearance of 'multi-locational cross-generational families' (Honneth, 2014, p. 162) whose ties are more easily maintained by the 'technical means of transportation, telephone and the internet' (p. 163). While these technologies clearly do support maintained connections, especially in the EU context where low-cost airlines and relatively short distances (recall Martina's comment that London was 'close to home [Madrid]'), they cannot fully account for other roles the family might regularly play, including help with childcare, or simply time spent in-person with family members or friends.

Respondents' descriptions of their working life were also characterised by worrying features. Several respondents related being subjected to precarious, coercive or illegal conditions for sustained periods. Arguably, these conditions are broader features of the (neoliberal) economic systems that our respondents find themselves in, rather than being experiences that they are subject to specifically because of their mobility, or which could be easily addressed through EU law.[101] We have, however, noted above that 'low-skilled' migrants of all kinds—including mobile Europeans—are more likely to find themselves in such conditions, not least because they may lack familiarity with a new context and lack fluency in the local language. Accounts from our respondents suggest that EU citizenship 'on the ground', while often offering expanded opportunities, can often be fraught with pressures arising from unequal labour relations, reflected in our respondents' invocation of strategies to individualise

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[101] Though, here, again O'Brien (2016) suggests that EU law could take into account the changing nature of work in order to ensure a more inclusive and equal application of social welfare rights for mobile EU citizens working in low-skilled jobs.

their struggles in terms of flexibility, resilience, individual adaptation, and a personalisation of adversity.

Honneth's schema is a useful evaluative model for understanding the ways in which both the *possibility* and *reality* of cross-border mobility may be considered to offer a new horizon of individual self-realization, and, potentially, a broader form of emancipation. My respondents were eager to describe how free movement gave them both the opportunity and the impetus to discern their own defining characteristics, aspirations, and motivations, and to differentiate them from those which they characterised as typical of the social contexts they were in or had left behind. Things that had appeared impossible in one context seemed within reach in another. In this sense, their accounts support the idea that EU free movement rights do meaningfully offer both the legal conditions, and the reflexive space, for individuals to pursue their private goals. What is less clear from the discussions presented in this chapter is how the imperatives of social freedom, which require social and institutional embeddedness in public life, are compatible with mobile lives often characterised by precarity and/or fragmentation. We will continue to explore these latter aspects in the following chapters.

Conclusions

'Emancipation' from the nation-state can be parsed in positive or negative terms. On the one hand, free movement can be conceived as opening new horizons: 'a mechanism for letting people choose where to live' based on preferences or feelings of ideological proximity with one or another context (Davies, 2021, p. 50), or where they can pursue new paths to self-realization unbound from nationality. On the other hand, pursuing mobility can be seen as a last resort, the means by which Europeans can 'exit' the polities that are failing to be responsive to their needs or to maintain the conditions that would keep them from leaving their social context at home (Moses, 2017).[102] In most cases, it is likely that what drives people to move will have both

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[102] Two prominent examples of such a framing among campaigners include DiEM25's *European New Deal*, which makes reference to 'involuntary economic migration within the European Union' and asks 'With no jobs or prospects at home, with a vast and growing income differential between European

pragmatic and aspirational appeal. Many of the respondents who discussed their mobility above expressed a mix of both of these readings: there was an appeal to trying something new and of greater possibilities beyond the national border that were coherent with—and often deeply interwoven with—an expectation of better circumstances for pursuing a livelihood.

The discussions we have explored in this chapter do suggest that free movement rights offer mobile citizens meaningful opportunities to 'get away' (Laitinen, 2015) from the circumstances defined by their nationality by enforcing negative freedom and fostering reflexive freedom, but whether this emancipatory potential finds expression as social freedom remains in doubt. The next two chapters engage this possibility further. Chapter 5 examines how mobile Europeans talk about the possibility of 'moving on' and how this might shed light on the attachments they form in the polities they inhabit and to others with whom they share a context. Chapter 6 takes a more explicit look at institutional life. It examines how respondents discuss those public forums which encourage political and social communication—politics, politicians, and national culture—and explores whether the personal agency enabled by mobility is at odds with the political agency that might be fostered through public life.

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countries, what else can they do?' (DiEM25, 2017); and the Spanish 'JuventudeSINFuturo' campaign's 'No nos vamos, nos echan [It's not that we're leaving, they're kicking us out]', which presents the choice for Spanish youth as one of unemployment and job insecurity or 'employed exile' (see also Bygnes & Flipo, 2017, p. 203; "No nos vamos, nos echan," 2013). Seubert (2020, p. 49) is circumspect on this point, recognizing that '[m]obility can turn into an element of commodification when people have to move in order to make a living'.

Chapter 5

Moving on: the problem of being a 'permanent guest'

Elena: Look, for me personally, my philosophy is, the only way that I can survive personally, like, I always believe: I'm not a tree. Okay—I can move. And I prefer to move onwards, to move further, to move forwards. Yes there are things, emotionally, but—they tie me with people, okay, but I don't think that the environment per se, who is governing the environment can affect how I feel. Okay. If I don't like it, I can move.

In the previous chapter, we saw how free movement rights can offer Europeans a chance to overcome the limitations of national belonging and pursue opportunities across borders, but also that this freedom is often interwoven with a sense of fragmentation and individualisation, and scepticism towards the possibility for civic expression through politics. The perspective of Chapter 4 began at the level of personal narratives and justifications for action, and Chapter 6 will zoom out to focus on whether mobile Europeans see institutional forms of politics as credible paths towards agency. This chapter is situated between the two, and focuses on exploring the *relational* dimension of mobile Europeans' lives.

Seeing politics as inherently relational places an 'emphasis on the individual relationships' that sustain the democratic community (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 243). To investigate this relational aspect, the chapter looks at the way mobile Europeans talk about 'moving on'—i.e., the prospect of future mobility—which I use to evaluate the nature and resilience of the *attachments* that mobile Europeans create and maintain while moving across borders. The idea of 'attachments' here will be construed broadly: they encompass personal affective attachments as well as

expressions of belonging (or detachment) towards the host society in general (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This range reflects what respondents emphasised when discussing the possibility of departure and future mobility. The excerpt above, from Elena, points directly at how reflections on personal attachments, and broader markers of social and political belonging, are prompted by considerations about moving on. The analysis will then focus on what these expressions of attachment, or their conspicuous absence, suggest for mobile Europeans' development of a sense of belonging in the places they live and work, and for the possibility of that sense of belonging to translate into a *politicised* relationship.

Relational versus instrumental views of the political relationship

As I have already suggested, the sense in which I am employing the concept 'relational' refers to people seeing themselves in a political association in which their individual aims are negotiated and realised with others, and a recognition of 'the "Other" as part of [one's] own emancipation' (Neuvonen, 2019a). A contrasting way to conceptualise political relationships, which draws on ideas typically associated with liberal theory, would be instead to emphasise their 'instrumental' aspects. The main difference here is that liberal theories rely on a model of individual, rather than relational, agency. The central figure is 'an individual agent acting alone in the pursuit of his or her own goals', and there is an attendant concern from political and legal theory on determining the limits to state coercion on individual lives (Kutz, 2002, p. 472). In the context of EU citizenship, the attenuation of communal bonds is sometimes discussed in terms of 'instrumental citizenship' (Joppke, 2019). The idea of instrumentality offers an intuitive way of grasping the weakening of attachments between citizens and national contexts, traditionally construed as tightly coupled with national identity and territorially-bounded rights and duties.

This contrast gives us some criteria to evaluate the ways in which EU citizens talk about their 'belonging' in different contexts: do transnational Europeans see their interactions with and within their host society as means to their own ends, furthering a reading of EU mobility as privileging an atomised and unencumbered sense of self (Neuvonen, 2019a), or do we also find evidence of mobile Europeans seeing themselves linked in interdependent or cooperative structures with others?

Proponents of the instrumentalization of citizenship rights—in this case enabled by EU free movement—see the virtue of desacralizing and 'lightening' the links between states and citizens: it attenuates the communal functions of belonging defined by national citizenship, partially redresses the power asymmetry between states and citizens, (Joppke, 2010, 2019) and gives rise to the legally-empowered (mobile) individual (Kochenov, 2014, p. 485). Privileging the individual right to act as a 'citizen strategist' vis-à-vis states (Bauböck, 2019a; Joppke, 2019, p. 875), however, also redefines how people see themselves *within* the societies they inhabit. As Joppke points out, the instrumentalization of citizenship is also at least partially a depoliticization of citizenship. This chapter will suggest that, in the case of EU citizenship, this kind of 'strategic' thinking may hinder the development of non-instrumental relationships with the societies in which mobile Europeans spend considerable portions of their lives. For some of my respondents, such strategic thinking remains a part of their ongoing considerations for many years. Keeping alive the idea of 'moving on' to yet another country, however, appears in the conversations not as an empowering strategy, but as one of the primary ways mobile Europeans deal with uncertainty or difficulty in their lives.

This mode of living—indefinitely 'keeping options open' (Engbersen, 2018, p. 71)—I argue, can encourage a way of seeing oneself as a 'permanent guest' in the society in which one lives and works (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015), even after many years. I suggest that holding such a perspective may, in turn, work against the development of what might be called a 'political way of seeing' (Neuvonen, 2020, p. 880)—i.e. one in which people evaluate their own actions and desires in association with the will of others with whom they share a space. The 'empowerment' offered by instrumental citizenship is, in that sense, undermined when mobility becomes a way of outmanoeuvring constraints that might otherwise be faced head-on with others through collective action.

Ultimately, the discussions that I will present below suggest that there are indeed reasons to be preoccupied that EU citizenship may encourage people to see themselves as 'always potentially on the move', which in turn may privilege instrumental attitudes towards others in the host member state. If, on the one hand, free movement rights seem to promote this kind of instrumentality, my discussions also suggested that

instrumental attitudes may be a reflection of the contexts that mobile Europeans find themselves in. Where people see themselves as treated instrumentally, either in their working life, or politically, as in the UK following the Brexit referendum, instrumentality may appear as a rational response to larger structural circumstances. In an attempt to address these concerns, the final section of the chapter explores proposals to reinforce a relational conception of political belonging in plural societies whose composition is fluid. These proposals attempt to reconcile the polity's need for non-instrumental political bonds whilst not falling back into conceptions of political community that rely on national-communitarian ideals or other pre-political characteristics as criteria for belonging.

Instrumentality as a two-way street

Joppke has suggested that EU citizenship is 'instrumental citizenship writ large' (2019, p. 870). It neglects meaningful political rights for mobile Europeans (i.e. voting rights in national elections) and has abandoned the ambition of fostering a European identity (p. 870). EU citizenship therefore has, in Joppke's view, an intrinsically 'instrumental' character inasmuch as it is substantively a set of individual rights 'that allow individuals to choose the community they want to join, if any' (ibid.). Kochenov endorses this trend in terms of the 'liberal de-dutification' of citizenship, with EU citizenship again appearing as the avant-garde of this trend: 'The EU allows for voting with one's feet: those who dislike local citizenship duties are always free to go elsewhere' (Kochenov, 2014, p. 497). For Joppke and Kochenov, instrumentalism stands in contrast to the more 'atavistic' (Kochenov, 2014, p. 496) features of citizenship: national identity and 'thick attachments' (ibid.). On that basis, one might expect mobile Europeans to be characteristically instrumental towards the societies they move between.

However, while free movement rights may be seen to encourage such an intrinsic element of instrumentality, my discussions with mobile Europeans suggested that instrumental orientations are also filtered by social conditions encountered in everyday life as they seek to build family lives, careers, and pursue other goals. In short, where people see their presence as principally instrumental to society, for

example as part of the workforce—one Polish catering worker in the UK said she was not worried that she would be 'kicked out' after Brexit because 'they need us'—their attitudes towards society may reflect this back.

As we will see in the discussions below, for EU citizens in the UK after the Brexit referendum, this dynamic was evident as people re-evaluated the terms on which they 'belonged' in the places they lived. In these UK-based groups, the topic of Brexit came up often without explicit prompting. This is unsurprising given the proximity of these discussions to the Brexit referendum, the unresolved status of EU citizens after the UK's exit from the EU, and the related political debates that were ongoing at the time of the discussions. With Brexit acting as an organic entry-point, then, this section looks at how mobile Europeans talked about the possibility of 'moving on' from the UK.

'I can take my business elsewhere': EU citizenship as a 'business relationship'

In a discussion held in a bar in central London, Christos, Dimitris, and Elena discussed how the Brexit referendum result had affected their sense of belonging in the UK. We begin with an intervention from Christos, who works in software development for the financial services industry, and whose free movement had already taken him from Cyprus to Greece, and on to the Netherlands and, for now, the UK. In summing up his feelings on the referendum result, he offered one of the least circumspect views of his post-Brexit prospects:

> Christos: For me, worst case scenario is, this country goes into full disarray, there's apocalyptic scenes and whatnot: supermarkets are empty, whatever. I don't care. There's nothing holding me here. If shit hits the fan, I can bail out. There's a European continent with 27 other countries ready to accept me. So I'm pretty sure I'll find something to do there.

Christos's initial apocalyptic scenario leads him to outline a broader model of how he relates to the UK, which he generalises to any place he might take up residence. What is initially striking about this passage is the near total disavowal of attachments ('there's nothing holding me here'). Life in the UK for Christos seems wholly

contingent: it is where he ended up, for now, but nothing specific to the context is limiting his prospects for moving on.

While several other respondents, in this and other groups, ultimately came to similar conclusions, none shared Christos's evident lack of ambivalence. Sitting beside Christos was Dimitris, who had recently decided to leave his job in the UK and return to Greece. The decision was not a consequence of the Brexit vote, but Dimitris does reflect on the way in which the referendum result affected his feeling of belonging.

> Dimitris: When the referendum said that Brexit will happen, something broke inside of me in the relationship with the UK. From that moment, I think, um, my relationship with Britain is not the same because I felt unwanted here for some reason that I have still, still haven't understood, fully understood. I don't think that the people [that voted] understood what they did and what it actually means, and also I'm very, very surprised by the way that the British government and all the political parties have reacted until now. I mean, I didn't expect that. I thought that in terms of political IQ, it was higher. They should put citizen needs higher than their political needs […]

Elena, from across the table, describes a similar sense of disappointment and disillusionment.

> Elena: I lost a lot of faith at that moment, especially the day of Brexit and the weeks that followed. But now, I take it more personally, in terms of: okay, if [__] happens, I'm who I am, I'm stronger, I'm … I can, I can move on— I'm not a tree. It's the same, okay, whatever.

Like Christos, Elena abstracts this reaction into a broader restatement of her attachments, and the role that mobility plays as she negotiates them:

> Elena: Look, for me personally, my philosophy is, the only way that I can survive personally like I always believe, I'm not a tree—okay—I can move. And I prefer to move onwards, to move further, to move forwards. Yes, there are things, emotionally, but—they tie me with people, okay, but I don't think that the environment per se, who is governing the environment can affect how I feel.

Okay. If I don't like it, I can move. I did it once—actually, I did it more than once: when from Crete I moved to Athens, and from Athens to Guildford and from Guildford to here. I did it once, I can do it again. If I need to or if I don't like it.

When the conversation came back around to Christos, he went further in describing the nature of his relationship with the state:

Christos: I will not disappoint. I will be cynical again. So, um. Dimitris mentioned that something broke inside him and the relationship with him, whatever, changed. Um, the way I see it, my relationship with the country I live in is kind of like a business relationship; there is no emotional relationship here, right? It's not – obviously, we're lucky enough to live in Europe and not the US, so we still have the sense of the social state, uh, so obviously, the state does try to protect, to an extent, the citizens of that state. But not being emotional, aside from all this, it's still a kind of business relationship: I pay my taxes, I pay my national insurance, so I'm expecting the state to take care of me if I break my leg or whatever. So ya, nothing broke inside me, it's just that this business relationship might change at some point. Fine. If I don't like it, I can take my business elsewhere.

The stoicism that Elena and Christos express in the face of Brexit-related uncertainties resolves for each of them into the idea that they can move their lives somewhere else. But while Christos attempts to distinguish his position in 'cynical' terms, ultimately invoking the exchange model of a business relationship to downplay the sentimental aspects of his links to the UK, Elena's account suggests that her resignation has come at a cost. Her reference to affective attachments—'things, emotionally' that 'tie me with people'—which is quickly bracketed, as well as her initial remark about having 'lost a lot of faith' in the days following the referendum, suggest that, like Dimitris, Elena's sense of attachment and belonging has undergone a change. What initially appears as an avowal of instrumentality towards her host society—which can be abandoned as easily as it was adopted—ultimately seems to be a reflection, at least in part, of the unwelcome realisation that her life in the UK was more contingent and

disposable than she had thought.[103] The repetition of the tree metaphor ('I am not a tree')[104] to contrast her mobility against a sense of being embedded, situated, or stuck in any one place is expressed as a philosophy of 'survival' rather than one of aspiration, freedom or empowerment.

Christos, on the other hand, is less equivocal. He seems to embrace a transactional conception of citizen-state relations and goes to some lengths to defend his sense of being unencumbered in the place that he lives and works. Christos here appears to fit the description of what Adrian Favell has referred to as a typical 'barbarian', those who disavow 'the binds or obligations of *any* nation-state' in favour of international free movement (Favell, 2010, p. 202, borrowing the term from Angell, 2001). To take a more generous interpretation, one might instead see Christos's self-styled cynicism to be an instance of what Gamson has called a 'cynical chic' conversational style. In other studies of 'ordinary' people's social discourse when discussing political issues, the function of the overt cynicism is self-defensive; it is meant to convey that one has not been duped by the 'absurdity and corruption of political life' (Gamson, 1992, p. 21). Gamson qualifies that people 'are frequently less cynical privately than their public stance would indicate (p. 82).

Nevertheless, the model Christos describes and seems to espouse here is that of the citizen in the vein of Somek and Wilkinson's concept of a *stakeholder*,[105] which accords with an instrumental concept of citizenship. As in Christos's 'I pay my taxes, I pay my national insurance, so I'm expecting the state to take care of me', a stakeholder view of the polity values it in terms of 'receiving a return on one's 'taxpayer's money' (Somek & Wilkinson, 2020, p. 976). Christos's invocation of the business relationship serves to reduce the relational model to bare exchange—taxes

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[103] Botterill and Hancock (2019, p. 4) find similar expressions of 'affective reactions' resolving into 'pragmatic and tactical […] planning for the future' in post-Brexit interviews with Polish respondents living in Scotland. See also (Guma & Jones, 2019; Lulle, Moroşanu, & King, 2018)

[104] The tree metaphor is a rich one, with potential connotations of rootedness and rootlessness and related discussions of cosmopolitanism. I have restricted myself to a more limited interpretation in which the tree is invoked primarily to signify a fixed, immovable object, on the basis of contextual elements Elena presented throughout the discussion.

[105] Note that Bauböck develops a fuller concept of the stakeholder which, in addition to the instrumental features of membership, includes 'intrinsic' features like 'self-respect and equality of respect by others' (2014, p. 825).

for basic welfare—and strips the relationship between the people comprising a polity of its sentimental (Harpaz & Mateos, 2019, p. 850), political, and relational content.[106]

For Christos, this seems to be a feature essential to EU citizenship: 'There's a European continent with 27 other countries ready to accept me'. By contrast, an expression of a relational model of citizenship would acknowledge his place in a network of social and economic interdependence with others who are not simply interchangeable. Notably, Christos circumscribes the horizon of mobility to Europe, citing the social state; there is at least the implicit recognition that European models of social welfare are to be valued, if only for providing a basic social safety net. However, Christos's account evokes little of the relationship between citizens and states beyond the state as an effective service-provider as one carries out a 'private plan of life' (Somek, 2014b, p. 146; Somek & Wilkinson, 2020, p. 976). His own place within such a schema, likewise, is not articulated in terms of an embeddedness within a system of mutual dependence: there is no recognition that his own goals depend also on those amongst who he lives, and vice versa (Somek, 2014a, p. 171). The idiom in which this relationship described is that of a competitive market, not a polity.

The ability to freely 'take one's business elsewhere' appears therefore as a peculiarity of European citizenship and free movement rights. Emigration is legally almost always an option for citizens of any state. But, as others have noted, in the context of traditional immigration, 'exit is a costly option and one that few would be prepared to contemplate' (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 236). As the passages from Christos and Elena demonstrate, however, EU free movement makes exit relatively cheap: with enough confidence that you can find a job, little else stands in your way. Elena's reflection on her previous mobility underscores this point: she makes no distinction between moving between areas *within* a single national context and moving between cities *across* countries in Europe. Such equivalences between 'host and home communities' underscore the point that EU citizenship provides 'an integration context quite similar to that of internal migrants' (Ranta & Nancheva, 2019, p. 1), but also one that more closely resembles the 'instrumental' model.

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[106] In this regard, Christos's position seems to confirm Dimitry Kochenov's (2014) endorsement of EU citizenship as a citizenship 'without duties'. Taxes hardly count as a citizenship duty, since they are levied on all residents, whether citizens or not.

As we have seen, some critics of the exclusionary and constraining aspects of national citizenship see developments which allow individuals to become 'citizenship strategists' as a step towards the empowerment of people vis-à-vis states (Joppke, 2019; Kochenov, 2019b). In this reading, instrumentalism is to be welcomed. A citizenship model which enshrines the individual's status as a 'legal, not a political being' (Joppke, 2019, p. 860) and maximizes individual freedom is not only all to the good, but increasingly 'inevitable' (Joppke, 2010) as migration across borders comes to characterise global trends. But a closer reading of the exchange above offers a much less sanguine picture. What these exchanges reveal and what Brexit forces our respondents to reflect upon is the ways in which their lives are contingent and constrained in mobility. Rather than being empowered, mobile Europeans find themselves negotiating with exogenous forces, and mobility, or the prospect of mobility, is the means by which these constraints can be outmanoeuvred.

Elena's personal philosophy, evoked in terms of 'survival', underlines this point. Rather than disavowing attachments, she privatises them and separates them from 'public' attachments like 'the environment per se' or the government of the day. Ultimately, she concludes that further mobility remains a very real prospect if she 'needs to' or 'doesn't like it'—scenarios of either necessity or preference. Both Elena and Dimitris highlight their disappointment and loss of faith in both the societal and political elements of the polity. Elena is quick to express that she is willing to take it on the chin, though this seems to entail an effort to distance herself from the initial disappointment and foster a notion that her only reliable means of carrying out her plans is through self-reliance.

Also notable is that for all three of these participants, further mobility as a prospect— or, in Dimitris's case, an actual plan—appears as the endpoint to these accounts. Reflections on what forces might be acting to keep these respondents in the place where they have been living and working are hardly present or are minimised in the accounts. Elena's account in particular of the things that 'tie' her to a place suggests that while there is a 'thickly constituted [self]' in private, her public self is 'wholly unencumbered' (Sandel, 1998, p. 182).[107] Private attachments are more portable, and

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[107] Sandel identifies this as a danger of liberalism's tendency to see the individual self as the primary vehicle for agency, rather than politics.

while it is surely the case that non-mobile citizens may have similar senses of disappointment and lack of faith in their own polities to deliver on their conception of 'the good', it is a particularity of mobile Europeans that leaving—or maintaining the prospect of leaving—becomes a common, if often reluctant, feature in how EU citizens negotiate these disappointments.

Reasons to stay and to move: friends, family and affective attachments

Such narratives have resonance beyond our Piccadilly group. In a discussion with a group of catering workers from Poland, Lithuania and Ireland, similar themes arise. Marta, who is from Poland, is in her late-thirties, has a husband, also Polish, and two children who have been raised so far in the UK. She came to the UK a few years before Poland joined the EU, but since the 2004 accession is resident as an EU citizen. In the group, Marta has been in the UK the longest—seventeen years—though Aleksandra, also from Poland, and Paula, from Lithuania, have been in the UK for about ten years each.[108] Catherine, from Ireland, is the newest arrival, but is also a long-term resident, at seven years.

Unlike the respondents in our previous group, all respondents in this group are married, and even those who met their partners in the UK married within the same nationality. Marta, despite the fact that she has lived in the UK for nearly two decades and has two young children, has nevertheless actively been considering possible future moves.

Marta:	I don't know—my husband has got 100 ideas, so one of the ideas was like 'Let's move to Scotland!' Now he's like, 'Let's move to Ireland!' [laughter]
Catherine:	You have to go to visit, ya, they have to go to visit, I'd say. It's very nice.
Marta:	So, I don't know, he definitely doesn't want to go back to Poland. I think from the side of the family, I would like to, but I know that would be very difficult for us for us to like find a job…

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[108] At the time of the discussion.

Paula: Especially the children. It's like, okay, let's forget the job, the children, school, the language, [Marta, Catherine: yeah] that's like …

Marta: But you know with us, it's easy still because in Poland, the children start school when they are seven, so we've got still two years to decide because Bianca will be seven in two years' time, so then she will start school from the beginning, she can, you know, start learning Polish properly you know, from the beginning. But I don't think so, not with this situation, now. And, there is another thing which worries me, like, what's happened when we are now in the Brexit time, so we are going out of the European Union, so I'm sure that England won't kick us out, because they need us, but, but will we be willing to stay because what we looked at you know just after the Brexit, the vote, how the hatred towards the immigrants escalated towards Polish people, so what is going to happen when we actually leave the European Union? The feelings will be the same? Again escalated? So much hatred will come out? Will we want to stay here or we wish to be out of this country? Those are the questions. So I'm more and more about, you know, not the–the government decide to get rid of us, but how the people will treat us. So, this worries me more. So, that's why we kind of looking around now. Don't make any major decisions, but just looking around, like probing you know. [Paula: yeah] Where maybe if we need to move, where to go, so.

Marta's narrative about possible future mobility centres around three narratives regarding security, hostilities towards Polish residents following the Brexit vote, and the growing illiberal conditions in Poland. In earlier parts of the conversation, Marta refers to issues of terrorism and security as possible reasons to leave London, and about more visible discrimination towards Polish people in the UK as possible reasons to consider leaving the country. While Poland clearly remains an appealing idea as a place to raise her children, she cites the right-wing government elected in 2015, as well as poor employment prospects—and high administrative burdens for small businesses—as reasons not to go back. She and her husband are therefore 'looking around' and 'probing' to see where else their future might lie.

As we can see, the prospect of future mobility here appears, again, as a negotiation of unresolvable constraints rather than as the means by which to pursue a positive vision of future life plans. For our purposes, it is perhaps less important whether these plans actually come to fruition, nor, indeed, the specific reasons that are given for possible future moves. More important is how respondents position mobility in relation to the problems they highlight. Do they present reasons for future mobility as negative (reactive) and constraining, or positive and enabling? In other words, what is revealed in mobile Europeans' narratives is the way in which mobility, in practice or as a prospect, functions amongst other potential possibilities in dealing with life's contingencies.

Approaching the material in this way privileges the way in which respondents make sense of their conditions and their options, on the basis that they 'interpret and evaluate their environment and actions through distinct filters' (Daniel et al., 2011, p. 291; see also Herman, 2016b; Lamont & Swidler, 2014). These interpretations matter inasmuch as the ways individuals make sense of their life chances 'enable and constrain action, together with other types of determinants, be they spatial, social structural, or temporal' (Daniel et al., 2011, p. 292). From that perspective, it is worth highlighting that these accounts are, for the most part, missing (1) counternarratives which would argue *against* further moves—i.e. attachments, things that 'tie' respondents to a place or a situation; (2) alternatives to mobility that might be considered as other options in a repertoire for confronting conditions that they wish to change. The latter might include various forms of collective action, or by taking up national citizenship, for which most respondents would be eligible. These absences are all the more notable considering how long some respondents, like Marta, had been living in their host societies. Narratives in which respondents express 'belonging' in social groupings which might ground their actions and stabilise them within specific contexts are remarkably sparse.

As Yuval-Davis (2006) points out, belonging is a multidimensional concept which may refer to attachments relating to one's social position, ethical and political values, as well as emotional attachments. Affective attachments were, however, likewise in surprisingly short supply in the conversations we have looked at so far. Marta, for instance, has had a hard time making friends amongst the locals, an experience shared

by everyone in the group, except, notably, Aleksandra, whose early experiences working in a pub put her in regular contact with locals and especially with the owners of the pub. But, as the other members of the group emphasise, Aleksandra is very much the exception:

Marta:	[…] So, all the friends, we never really managed to make like friends here, like English are kind of, I don't know. We've got the neighbours, we meet sometimes, but I can't see the friendship really there, like they are kind of specific, you know kind of cold people, so…
Paula:	Uh huh.
Marta:	So it's difficult to make a friends with the English, really.
Catherine:	No, I haven't.
Aleksandra:	I have English friends.
Marta:	Oh, you see, you're the only one.

Aleksandra is also an outlier both in that she does not harbour any plans for leaving the UK, and that she has maintained strong friendships in the UK. In part, she explains, this is due to the role an English couple played in helping her find a place to live, a job, and improving her English-language skills in the early days of finding her feet in her new context. They helped her to find work in a 'proper English pub and there was lots of English people were going there all the time, so that's how we met. And we still keep in touch. Ya.'.

Finding a foothold in interpersonal relationships appears as an important element in whether my respondents could feel that they 'belong' in their host societies. In Aleksandra's case, it seems to be one of the things which distinguishes her from the rest of the group; she is also the only one who does not express any ambivalence about staying in the UK. In another group, Lou, who has been living in Spain for twelve years, recounted an encounter he had during an earlier period in his life when he was studying in the UK. Lou had greeted a classmate in an elevator on their way to class, but the classmate had lowered his eyes and did not return his greeting.

Lou:	And that kind of barrier—then of course it could be just an isolated incident—but it became much, much stronger than what I noticed at the time. Okay, this is nice, I like it, but I can't live there.

He contrasts this with the familiarity he encountered in Spain.

> Lou:
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> But, there are many similar things, like lifestyle, like, also like the social approach that I really like. These are perhaps the things that I missed in that experience in England, for sure.

Rita, who lives in Brussels and is another of the participants in Lou's group, describes encountering similar difficulties.

> Rita:
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> Perhaps I can continue…So everything that is missing here [in Belgium] is that which Raia has mentioned that there is in Italy. But everyone who is in Brussels complains about the weather as well as for the, yeah, for the lack of a bit of, of warmth—the warmth of sociality. Because it's true that you find your community; the Italian community here. However, it's true, if you want to make friends with the locals it's a bit harder. I notice it even having a Flemish boyfriend that the culture is different. A bit like the person that Lou met in the lift, if I'm not wrong, but I also find myself in such situations. And so there are certainly 'cons' and positive things, indeed, like I said. There are a bunch of services that function but also work, different work opportunities. Perhaps also a bit more of, yeah, of a sense of respect for the public good; yeah, I see a bit more of that.

Raia, a Bulgarian citizen living in Italy, underscores the point by contrast. Having encountered some bureaucratic difficulties in her early days in Italy, she contrasts these with 'the human warmth that you get when you arrive in Italy and the relationships you can foster.'

> Raia:
>
> And that then they can, yeah, you can really have your relational network [proprio una tua rete proprio relazionale] that is so important as to become almost family. So, I have, for example, friendships that I created that are, how to put it, friendships that are as important to me as my family, yeah.

Again, with reference to Yuval-Davis, these accounts show that belonging at the level of personal networks and interpersonal attachments in the new context can act to facilitate a non-instrumental 'embededness' that may ultimately be the basis for more integrated political relationships to form.

Going back or moving on

We have already seen that there are dilemmas involved in considerations of returning 'home'. As we saw in Marta's story, even within families there may be disagreement about whether to go back or to search out new contexts. The dilemmas of returning home, as expressed by Marta, Paula, and, in a different way, by Aleksandra, are also often resolved by the idea of future mobility. For respondents, the idea of returning 'home',[109] in contrast to moving to yet another country, often manifest as very distinct choices. Spatial metaphors sometimes become aspirational metaphors, where 'moving on' signifies, as in Elena's account, moving 'further' and moving 'forward'. Moving back, likewise, may be seen in terms of regression or failure.

In a discussion with a group of London-based Greeks working in financial services (Borough 1), in a café near the city's financial district, a discussion about the difference between the two developed and was pursued naturally between the group members themselves, without specific prompting along these lines from the author. The distinction arose in response to a question about the possibility of returning to Greece.

Katerina.	I could consider that. I'm not thinking of it. I cou–I think—I could consider it.
Author.	It's a palatable idea. You guys?
Konstantinos.	Uh, yeah.
Anna.	Potentially.
Konstantinos.	But the decision is going to be difficult. More difficult than the decision I made to come here in the first place.
Anna	Ya, because…

[109] Though several respondents note that their 'host' country feels more like 'home' to them than their country of nationality, this does not translate consistently into them talking about their host country in all respects as 'theirs'. Talk about elections and other political matters is often separated out along national lines. This is present in the above conversations to some extent, though see Chapter 6 for a more thorough exploration.

Katerina	That's a good point. That's a great way to describe it.
Manos	To the extent that I can control it, no.
Konstantinos.	[As Manos.] Categorically, no! [Laughter]
Manos.	Yeah, no.
Konstantinos.	[as Manos.] If I don't have to…
Manos.	I don't, um, eliminate the scenario of leaving England, but not necessarily going home. These are two different questions.
Author.	Ya, ya, sure sure sure.
Anna.	Yeah, I was about to ask you the same. Do you think that if you were leaving the UK now, would you go to another country? [K. If I did?] Ya, or would you go back to Greece?
Katerina.	If it was easy to find a job, I would happily try Paris or [Anna: Ya, you would?] some other European capital. [Anna: Because for me, I can't…] Just for a change, I would love that.
Anna.	For me, I really don't know. I really don't know. That's the thing. On the other hand, sometimes I think that personally, I mean, I was living in Greece, moved to Scotland, moved to England, completely different countries. I know they are in the UK but really you know the cultural differences are huge. It was a big, it was a big stepping-stone. Apart from the language, they don't have many similarities. And now I'm thinking, ya, if I've done it twice, I could do it a third time. Why not? The first time is the hard one. On the other hand, you feel like, I moved when I was 23 and when you're 23 everything is easier, right? In my mindset at least.

Again, most respondents, despite their long stays, frame the discussion of their future in terms of possible further mobility, suggesting an enduring sense of impermanence in the society and polity in which they have passed significant portions of their adult life. Even those, like Manos and Katerina, who had explained (in an earlier part of the group discussion) how the UK had come to feel like 'home', saw possibilities elsewhere. The absence, in these narratives, of dilemmas about leaving which are specific to their host country suggests that a mobility habitus may be self-reinforcing (Engbersen, 2018) and discourage the development of 'constitutive attachments' (Sandel, 1998, p. 179ff.) specific to particular places or particular communities in

which mobile Europeans live. As we will explore below, this relative lack of attachments arguably has consequences for mobile Europeans' tendency to conceive of responses to changing life conditions beyond 'moving on'.

Moreover, the reluctance to return home suggests that mobility may reinforce a destabilised sense of belonging to the home polity as well. Optimistic accounts of EU citizenship stress that the disembeddedness enabled by free movement rights is answered by the possibility of becoming embedded in another context. As our accounts above suggest, where this embeddedness is not found, mobile Europeans find themselves facing ambiguity and lingering instability.

Belonging and dislocation: legal, political, and 'sentimental' aspects

'Belonging' is a concept that describes the link between individuals and the social collectivities they identify with (Ranta & Nancheva, 2019, p. 1; Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 203). It is understood as a dynamic process of '*self-identification*' that, by integrating individuals into groups, 'structures and shapes political mobilisation and contestation' (ibid., emphasis in original). Highlighting the aspects of *dynamism* and *self-identification* emphasises that belonging is both contingent—connections and *dis*connections can take place (Botterill & Hancock, 2019, p. 3)—and that it relies on volition (choosing). In other words, belonging, at least the kinds of belonging that might begin to constitute feelings of political association between people, is not inevitable; it can be fostered or discouraged.[110]

This is particularly the case for migrants and other non-nationals who are not 'naturally' bounded by political communities defined through national citizenship. EU citizenship clearly aims to challenge such state-centric conceptions of who ought to be counted as part of 'the people' that makes up a political community (Piętka-Nykaza & McGhee, 2016). This is part of the appeal and innovation of 'instrumental' citizenship—it shifts this compositional power towards the people *choosing* to belong

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[110] Approaches in cultural sociology describe similar dynamics in terms of boundaries: *symbolic* boundaries 'exist at the intersubjective level whereas [*social* boundaries] manifest themselves as groupings of individuals'. As Lamont and Molnár point out, 'symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries' (2002, p. 169), again gesturing towards the volitional aspects of belonging.

(Kochenov, 2014, p. 497).[111] But whether mobile Europeans go beyond this to activate the relational potential in EU citizenship by opting into the kinds of associations that constitute *political* belonging also depends on signals from others in society and from politicians—including whether they have formal rights to political participation, as we explore further in the next chapter.

These cues from others in society can both activate and rupture feelings of belonging (Bosniak, 2000, p. 479). To illustrate this relationship, we can look at some complementary studies of EU citizens in the UK. Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee's study of Polish residents in Scotland, who—along with other resident EU citizens—were eligible to vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, found that being included led respondents to reflect on the *bases of their belonging* and the criteria by which they ought to be allowed to participate. It stimulated reflexive and evaluative reconsiderations of their place in the society and polity. Many cited their long-term residence, participation in the economy (through work and paying taxes) and society (e.g. having children at school), and intention to remain in Scotland into the future as reasons which validated their inclusion in the vote (2016, p. 119ff.).

The arguments made by Pietka-Nykaza and McGhee's interviewees fulfil normative criteria that are often cited to defend political inclusion for non-citizens (see, for example, Kostakopoulou, 2019).[112] But it is worth noting that these were *post-hoc* reflections, structured by the fact of having *already* been included as eligible voters. They demonstrate that being invited to participate can set up a reinforcing dynamic of recognition (of EU citizens as legitimate members and democratic equals of the national polity)[113]; belonging (reflection on one's place in society and opting-in to the political community)[114]; and participation *as a member of 'the people'*.

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[111] Carlos Santiago Nino, in different terms, has also argued for the democratic benefits of being able to choose one's polity in his proposal of smaller political units based on a deliberative model of democracy (Nino, 1996, p. 152).

[112] Voting rights for resident non-citizens have a long pedigree. For a critical appraisal of two of the principles that are often appealed to—the 'all-affected interests' and 'all subjected to political coercion' principles—as well as a defense of limited resident non-citizen voting rights, see (Bauböck, 2014). For a more expansive proposal for democratic inclusion, see (Song, 2009)

[113] One of Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee's respondents described their inclusion in the vote as 'a token of trust on the part of the government' (Piętka-Nykaza & McGhee, 2016, p. 123).

[114] Another respondent suggested that 'the referendum forced [him] to seek information and ask questions' (Piętka-Nykaza & McGhee, 2016, p. 123).

This reinforces Neuvonen's point that the relationship between belonging and membership is not unidirectional: 'the order between attachment and membership can also be reversed, in which case identification and attachment between citizens are viewed as products of, rather than preconditions for, socio-political membership and participation' (2019c, p. 231). It also demonstrates the appeal of shared political practice defended by Bernard Crick that we cited in Chapter 1: that shared political practice is the crucial element for the composition of 'the people' (Crick, 1962, pp. 9–10). Neuvonen's work is often motivated by what she sees as the transformative potential in EU citizenship to challenge the distinction between insiders and (non-national) 'outsiders'. At its most ambitious, EU citizenship offers a framework for EU citizens to encounter the 'other' in themselves, and vice-versa, without having a destabilising effect on national polities (2020, p. 881). Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee's study, as well as others in a similar vein (e.g. Botterill & Hancock, 2019, p. 6) seem to support this ambition. They show that public statements of acceptance by the government and generally welcoming sentiments from the 'native' population reinforced EU citizens' sense of belonging in their host context, even in the face of disruptive events like the Brexit referendum.[115]

Reflecting on attachments—instrumental or relational?

However, neither long-term residence nor formal invitations to participate on their own are guarantees that non-nationals will develop attachments they feel are constitutive of political relationships (Piętka-Nykaza & McGhee, 2016, p. 122). Less sanguine respondents in the Scottish referendum study, including long-term residents, pointed to the *basis* of their attachments to their host society—for example, by framing their belonging primarily in *economic* (hence instrumental) terms—or their temporality, the possibility of eventually moving away from Scotland, as reasons that they felt they should *not* be allowed to participate. In sum, the dynamics of belonging depend on a complex interaction of social and political factors: feelings of belonging which encourage or impede seeing oneself in an interdependent political relationship with others depend on the terms by which one interprets and ascribes meaning to one's attachment to the host society, in addition to how these attachments may be fostered

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[115] By contrast, not surprisingly, experiences of hostility, or feelings of uncertainty can disrupt senses of belonging (Guma & Jones, 2019; Lulle et al., 2018; Ranta & Nancheva, 2019).

publicly and through everyday interactions. We will pick up these themes again and explore their implications in the final section of the chapter.

As these studies, as well as my respondents' reactions to Brexit show, one way to interrogate the strength and nature of attachments is to confront them with the prospect of being under stress. A break or disjuncture which disrupts previously taken-for-granted conditions throws into sharper relief what it was that enabled those conditions, showing up vulnerabilities or strengths that may have remained obscured if untested.

The UK-based groups, the topic of Brexit appears primarily as an entry-point for people to consider their place in society, and it offers a distillation of the tension I have tried to illustrate between *instrumental* attachments and *relational* attachments. Recalling this statement, from Marta in the Holborn group, succinctly illustrates the point: 'I'm sure that England won't kick us out, because they need us'. It suggests that she is relatively unconcerned with the outcome of the vote, at least from a practical perspective, but also reveals that she understands the basis for her value in society is instrumental. She will be fine because the UK needs hospitality workers. Similar statements appeared in other groups. Elena from the Piccadilly group seems to think Brexit will probably not be a problem: 'Only if, I don't know, if I'm not allowed to work here legally, now with Brexit, then this will affect me. Otherwise, if my everyday life is not affected, I, I, I don't really mind.'

In one notable exchange in the Holborn group, Paula, from Lithuania, expresses her expectations about Brexit in terms of hope, rather than worries of being forced to leave. She seems to think that Brexit could act as a resolution to her conflicted relationship with living in the UK:

Paula:	I kind of expect of the whole of this Brexit thing, like they're gonna tell me, 'Okay, you have to go'…
Marta:	And you're like 'finally, sorted for me!' Ya.
Paula:	Thank you! Bye! Ya, so I don't have to …
Marta:	Make decisions.
Catherine:	Make decisions.
Paula:	Make this decision. It's like I'm afraid to do the decision, to make the decision, but it would be kind of a big push. Like that's it, you go. Okay, bye bye, I'm going.
Moderator:	Right.

Paula: Kind of, I do actually. I really do wanna go.

There is an evident recognition and complicity between the participants in this exchange, evincing shared reflection on the difficulties of deciding to abandon life as a mobile European and return home. Respondents in this case finish each other's sentences and reinforce sentiments through repetition, suggesting that the deep ambivalence expressed in Paula's declaration that 'I really do wanna go' is felt throughout the group.

In the absence of material and legal worries, what was left as the basis for these considerations were the non-tangible elements of what connected respondents to the polity they lived in. It follows that, if our respondents saw themselves in purely instrumental terms, Brexit represents no particular disruption. None of my respondents expressed serious concern that Brexit would endanger their *right* to stay in the UK, but it did give them the chance to evaluate their place in society.[116] If, as we stated earlier, instrumental citizenship is characterised by the various trends of 'de-sacralizing' and 'disenchantment' of the citizen-polity relationship, with an emphasis on individual rights (Joppke, 2019; R. Wagner, 2013, p. 104), Brexit, by leaving those rights intact, returns our focus to the 'sentimental' aspects of that relationship.

In this sense, the discussions we have explored suggest that Europeans experienced Brexit as a rupture in their sense of belonging rather than something that threatened their practical circumstances or legal permission to continue to live in the UK. This underlines the mutually constructive relationship of political-legal statuses and conceptions of the basis for one's belonging. As Katerina succinctly put it: 'We're Greeks, but primarily Europeans. But here after the Brexit, we will be immigrants.' Katerina's statement sensitizes us to the way in which legal-political statuses are meaningful in structuring a sense of belonging. It is, in other words, the reaction to this change in status which offered an opportunity for reflection on the attachments,

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[116] Even before the UK government's settlement scheme for Europeans living in the UK had taken shape, respondents expressed confidence in their right to remain. Theresa May's Government published a policy paper in June 2017 entitled 'Safeguarding the position of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU' which provided the basic outlines for the 'settled status' eventually offered to Europeans already living in the UK. The respondent's quote excerpted here, given by a Polish food-service worker, is from April 2017.

or lack of attachments, that accrued in their life as mobile Europeans in their host country. Europeans living elsewhere may happily not expect to face a similar confrontation, and therefore not have such a strong point of reference in discussion of potential future mobility, but this does not otherwise suggest that their accounts would differ significantly.[117]

Moreover, discussions about Brexit do not seem to weigh heavily on respondents' considerations for 'moving on'. Future mobility often appeared at some distance from discussions around Brexit, or, in other cases, Brexit appears as only one in a number of considerations that respondents are weighing in making future plans. In Marta's account, for example, Brexit is prominent, but other factors—her children's education, concerns about safety—appear alongside Brexit as compelling reasons to consider a move. The discussion about future mobility amongst the Greek financial services workers appears at some distance from an earlier exchange about Brexit, which does not seem to feature in their considerations at all. In that group, several members of the group even express sympathy with Brexit supporters, both because they knew them personally and because they sympathised with arguments for voting to leave. In another group, one respondent stated simply, 'When I will be tired of the city, I'm going to fly away. At the moment I am happy.' (Alessandro, Stratford group). Brexit, in short, should be considered a 'convenient' entry point into the topic of future mobility and to the way in which mobility, as a prospect, functions for Europeans considering the contingencies of their life abroad, but it does not seem to heavily determine respondents' accounts.

Throughout this chapter so far, I have attempted to show how my respondents characterised their sense of 'belonging' to their host societies. For some, this sense of belonging was grounded in personal relationships; others placed emphasis on more interchangeable elements, like their role in the labour market, and on the interchangeability of contexts. This spectrum draws our attention back to the contrast between *relational* and *instrumental* views of citizenship. The final section explores this contrast in further depth.

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[117] As I have suggested above, however, they may indeed differ on the basis of other important factors, like whether they feel that they are valued primarily for their contributions to the labour market, which might differ between member state contexts.

Instrumentalism, attachments, and the political relationship

Relational views of democracy emphasise that people who share a place should see themselves in an interdependent political association with others. From this perspective, why should we be concerned with the kinds of instrumentalism that seem to be characteristic of some of my respondents, and how does EU citizenship enforce or support instrumentalism? This section will discuss these contrasting ways of 'seeing oneself' in society.

In terms of our initial framing, we can position Christos's account as expressing an extreme form of instrumental citizenship, understood as the use of citizenship for strategic purposes (Bauböck, 2019a; Harpaz & Mateos, 2019). As we have seen in Chapter 4, citizens can use these rights to pursue their own plans and projects across borders, in the face of states' implicitly and explicitly coercive tendencies. But, understood in terms of the *relational* content of citizenship, that is, the role that relationships between people have in constituting and sustaining the attachments which buttress a democratic community (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 243), exercising one's citizenship rights instrumentally clearly appears as a threat.

However, not all respondents expressed such a strong sense of being unencumbered as Christos. The participants whose views were recounted in this chapter were all long-term residents, having been in their host country for between three and 17 years, with most having stayed somewhere between five and ten years at the time the discussions took place. All were in stable employment, or, in one case, had recently left their job to pursue a different plan of action. While it is notable that many respondents expressed the desire to eventually move away from their host society, the variety of ways in which they frame these prospective future mobility plans—what they are spurred by, what constraints and hard choices they are likely to entail—give us a more nuanced account of the ways in which EU citizenship is used 'instrumentally' in the life of mobile Europeans.

Instrumental citizens, or 'citizen strategists', may be more likely to see themselves as stakeholders, whose interest in the polity extends 'inasmuch as it provides them a service' (Somek & Wilkinson, 2020, p. 976). Where the polity-as-service-provider is

seen to be failing, 'moving on' becomes a reasonable response to changing circumstances, encouraging a sense of being 'always potentially on the move' (Somek, 2014b, p. 147). This emphasis on individual interests and their satisfaction is consistent with instrumental citizenship's championing of individualism, especially legal individualism (Joppke, 2019). Its proponents see trends towards instrumental citizenship as finally attenuating the coercive power of states in favour of the individual. But this position overstates the tension between the two: it both exaggerates the danger in the state's integrative function, and undervalues the role of communal bonds in maintaining the polity as a site of possible emancipation (Bellamy, 2012, 2015). As Christopher Kutz (2002, p. 472) points out, this is a persistent tension in citizenship, but one which is not irreconcilable:

> The self of self-government is a "we," not an "I." What we need and lack is a way of incorporating into liberal theory a conception of social and political agency that recognizes the pervasiveness of collective agency but does not lapse into Romantic (or fascist) organicism.

The state, in other words, can encourage political obligations without resorting to atavism. The state can be a site for various kinds of belonging without these needing to be based in similarities relating to nationality, ethnicity, or cultural sameness. This is of course a crucial point for theorists looking to reconcile theories of democratic life with the realities of increasing migration flows and increasingly porous polities.

If we are not going to rely on ideals of a homogeneous nation state as the way to constitute political collectivities, we need to have in mind a conception of democracy which does not rely on pre-political characteristics like culture or ethnicity to underpin the unity required for a political relationship to be sustained. If there is a transformative potential in EU citizenship, it is as an experiment in superseding a political subjectivity based on such presumptions of shared pre-political characteristics (Neuvonen, 2020, p. 871; White, 2011, p. 33). Nevertheless, if we are interested in a political relationship to be sustained between strangers, as borders become more fluid, a basis for such political bonds has to be sought in a conception of democracy which looks for the political potential in plurality. The additional challenge of a citizenship based in movement is to sustain this potential as people move across borders, sometimes several times throughout their lives.

In short, the challenge is to encourage a 'political way of seeing' in conditions of plurality (and, to some extent, transience), rather than homogeneity and stasis (Neuvonen, 2020, p. 880). Having reasons to adopt the will of others as one's own (Somek, 2014b, p. 145) and to transcend personal interest—or at least dissolve it into that of a broader collectivity—is a challenge, given EU citizenship's tendency towards instrumentality.[118] In what follows, I will explore this challenge further and explore some proposals which attempt to reconcile these tensions.

Mobile citizens as 'permanent guests'

Firstly, as we have seen, many respondents, even those who considered their host society to be 'home', were either actively considering or were happy to entertain the idea of leaving at some point in the future. Maintaining this sense of being 'always potentially on the move' (Somek, 2014b, p. 147) should sensitise us to the extent to which EU citizenship may encourage Europeans to think of themselves as 'permanent guests' (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 237) in their host societies. Arguably, such a state of being is likely to be more pronounced in mobile Europeans than it would be in those who have to undertake more onerous and costly traditional immigration routes. EU citizenship frees mobile Europeans from the 'structuring expectations' involved in processes of 'formal application and approval, as well as proving deservingness and fitness to the host community' (Ranta & Nancheva, 2019, p. 1). As Jo Shaw has pointed out, the 'impulse of the EU treaties is positively to encourage EU citizens to exercise their free movement rights', which however do not show a similar commitment to fostering relations of full equality and political inclusion for those who do move, suggesting that EU citizenship to some extent has a built-in tendency to leave people unable to completely re-embed themselves in their host society (Shaw, 2007a, pp. 2562–2563). The fluidity—highlighted by those who study EU mobility in

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[118] As Kochenov would have it, 'EU member states have been transformed from units of destiny into units of choice and are obliged by law to respect all those willing to leave forever and move to a different member state' (Kochenov, 2019b, p. 40). However, the difference is not always cut-and-dry. Studies have shown how mobile Europeans have used EU citizenship rights 'instrumentally' in order to try to *maintain* a political relationship with a particular polity in the face of its restrictive or exclusionary practices. Rikke Wagner's (2013, pp. especially, e.g. 101) work demonstrates this in the case of Danish family reunification policies which have effectively exiled couples who would otherwise like to live in Denmark. The important point here is that (at least some of) Wagner's informants are using EU citizenship instrumentally as a reluctant response to alienating state policy and with a positive civic purpose.

terms of 'liquid migration'—of intra-EU movement is, in this sense, a peculiar quality of EU free movement rights.[119]

From the perspective of the polity, it can be argued that the sustained presence of 'permanent guests' sidesteps the obligations that ought to be shared between people sharing the same space over time (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015). In this view, if states imposed full membership of a polity (i.e. citizenship) and its associated rights and burdens onto long-term residents, the justice and democratic criteria which sustain the polity would be fulfilled. Even if one admits that the duties and burdens associated with citizenship are in an 'inevitable' secular decline, 'lightening' the subjective value of citizenship even for full-citizens (Joppke, 2010), one can still defend such a scheme in terms of the political obligations owed between people who affect one another's lives by sharing the same public goods (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 242).[120] Most of our respondents had spent at least half a decade in their host countries, with several having spent ten years or more—most of their adult lives. They have jobs, take public transport, pay rent, and make use of public funds like child maintenance assistance. In short, they affect and are affected by political decisions and arrangements that define the polity. These are the kinds of 'social facts' that Kochenov points to when advocating voting rights in national elections for EU citizens: EU citizens 'belong *de facto*, and in many respects also *de jure*, to the people of a member state (Kochenov, 2019b, p. 41). Even by a less substantive and more formal standard, the fact that EU citizens are permitted to vote in and stand as a candidate in municipal and European elections,[121] but not in national elections, is seen as eliding EU citizens' integration into the polity by denying them an equal stake in the most consequential political decision-making processes (Joppke, 2019, p. 870; Kostakopoulou, 2019, p. 61).

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[119] Again, this is meant to highlight the intentional and relative lack of *legal* and *bureaucratic* hurdles enabled by EU free movement rights, rather than suggesting that (as we saw in Chapter 4) uprooting one's life is ever an easy decision or one taken without hardship or consideration. The caveat is that administrative conditions vary, sometimes widely, between member states, with some requiring, for example formal registration after three months (as is allowed by the Free Movement Directive). (Mis-)interpretation of the Directive's content sometimes leads to onerous hurdles for Europeans taking up residence in a host country. This is even more pronounced when family reunification or other additional rights, like social assistance, are claimed. See further (*Obstacles to the right of free movement and residence for EU citizens and their families: Comparative Analysis*, 2016; Spaventa, 2015).

[120] This argument extends beyond simply contributing to the maintenance of public goods through monetary contributions levied, for example, by taxes or other public insurance schemes, for which all residents regardless of citizenship are typically liable. Ypi and de Schutter place particular emphasis on practices of public justification and negotiation as essential to the maintenance of these goods.

[121] As laid out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012).

Relational politics and the 'political way of seeing'

But while one can make the argument that it is good *for the polity* to bring long-term residents onto equal political footing with other citizens, one can also advocate for such a position from the perspective of the individual EU mover. Such a position would want to guard against the disempowering effects of atomisation and alienation that result from seeing oneself as unencumbered by the mutual associations and attachments that comprise social life (Sandel, 1998, p. 178). Päivi Neuvonen draws on Hannah Arendt to argue that democratic co-existence relies on the development a 'political way of seeing' (Neuvonen, 2020, p. 880) between, in this case, non-national EU citizens and the nationals of their host states. Ypi and de Schutter's proposal for 'mandatory citizenship' for long-term residents explored above highlights how requiring people to share the formal status of citizenship with others places them in 'an associative scheme that requires them to think and act together to advance a political system designed to support their life in common' (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 239; see also Kostakopoulou, 2019, p. 62). Such a scheme encourages seeing oneself in a political relationship with others with whom you are sharing a place over time. 'Sharing a place with others' is, in this reading, not only an empirical arrangement indicating presence in the company of others, but a political disposition which shapes the subjective relation between those sharing that place simultaneously, if not necessarily permanently. It is the necessary condition for the development of *political judgement* and a sense of volition in exercising it (Somek, 2014b, p. 146).

By contrast, our conversations with mobile Europeans suggest that seeing oneself as a 'permanent guest' inhibits the development of a political way of seeing as much as the formal lack of political rights fails to offer it any expression. The kind of agency that free movement offers is well-suited to this limbo-state. Mobility, even if only as a prospect rather than a concrete plan of action, becomes the medium through which life conditions can be mediated, confronted, and changed.

In short, we can see that mobility may inhibit the development of 'constitutive attachments', which in turn limits mobile Europeans' sense of agency (Sandel, 1998, p. 180). Being 'unencumbered' seems to offer endless opportunity to pursue one's preferences—a view which resonates in endorsements of instrumental citizenship. But such a lack of attachments can 'lapse into arbitrariness' and leave no possibility for

agency to be realised in projects stemming from ties with others (ibid.). Constitutive attachments, in other words, are not the obstacle to agency they first appear to be, but the condition for it.

Our respondents' accounts therefore challenge the idea of European citizenship as 'instrumental citizenship writ large' (Joppke, 2019, p. 870). It would be hard to characterise the positions of our respondents as purely instrumental in the sense of 'shopping around' for the best place to carry out their life plans (R. Wagner, 2015, pp. 46–47). As we saw in Chapter 4, mobile Europeans also express a desire to live more 'grounded' and less 'liquid' lives, in contrast to the weightlessness sometimes associated with a mobile lifestyle (Bygnes & Bivand Erdal, 2017). What should be highlighted, rather, is that EU citizenship, and mobility in particular, becomes, for those who make use of it, a prominent tool for negotiating their life circumstances, and characterising this negotiation as 'instrumental' fails to capture the nuance of the considerations 'ordinary' people make when considering future mobility. Our accounts here suggest that mobility acts as a way of navigating constraints, which is the flip-side of optimising conditions.

The dangers of alienating the self from politics have been explored in competing models of liberalism, and some of these dangers seems to be characteristic of European mobility as we have developed it above. Separating the self from politics 'overlooks the danger that when politics goes badly, not only disappointments but also dislocations are likely to result' (Sandel, 1998, p. 183). This danger takes on a wholly different character in the context of easy mobility. Both disappointment and dislocations within a bounded society and polity are consequential for that polity, for its government, and for its members, but the consequences are circumscribed. When exit is cheap, those dislocations become dislocations in a literal sense: the spur for leaving. The mindset of always being 'potentially on the move' is a novel political disposition in that it aims to sidestep, rather than confront, such disappointments. As politics—and indeed society—disappoints, self-realisation and agency become both privatised and portable, though the narratives explored above suggest that there are limits to both.

Conclusions

This chapter looked at how mobile Europeans expressed their attachments to their host society. The chapter argued that 'constitutive attachments' are the basis for a political relationship to form between people sharing a political community over time. This relationship is important from the perspective of the polity, but also from the perspective of the individual, who without seeing themselves in this kind of relationship with others, is limited in their ability to imagine possibilities of addressing the various constraints and contingencies that life presents, without resorting to individual manoeuvres. For mobile citizens, these manoeuvres are often expressed in the prospect of future mobility, suggesting that mobility functions as a prominent tool in mobile Europeans' repertoire for navigating the constraints of life. However, both as a prospect and a practice, mobility per se is a depoliticised approach to addressing life's problems, which alienates people from the possibility of addressing these constraints in cooperation with others. The chapter argues that free movement rights can encourage mobile Europeans to consider themselves 'always potentially on the move' and may thereby discourage the formation of constitutive attachments. This disposition in some ways sits well with views that see European citizenship as 'instrumental', since mobile Europeans use their free movement rights strategically to suit their needs. However, given the fact that the prospect of future mobility often arises in the face of constraints, this account challenges the idea that instrumentalism is individually empowering.

The group discussions presented in this chapter explored how people described the nature of their attachments to their host society. Following from this, respondents reflected on the possibility of further mobility – of moving to yet another EU member state or returning to their country of nationality. In the case of respondents living in the UK, this discourse may not have appeared as readily had the respondents not been confronted with the uncertainty arising from the Brexit. Most respondents were not concerned about the direct implications for their status in the UK—i.e. whether they would retain their rights to reside in the UK on similar terms as they did *qua* European citizens, or whether they would be subject to increased xenophobic sentiment. For many the main effect seemed to be that it allowed them to interrogate their sense of belonging to UK politics and society, offering an opportunity to reflect upon what that relationship consisted of.

As we have already noted in previous chapters, it is generally agreed that European citizenship, by opening up the means by which Europeans can live across different polities, frees, or 'disembeds', individuals from imposed or inherited collective bonds, including bonds of political membership. What is less clear are the terms on which new bonds may be formed—in short, whether the voluntary associations taken up by mobile Europeans are instrumental and individualized or whether they have the potential to form new collectives on the basis of mutual obligation. If European citizenship aims to offer more than individualization and alienation from social and political collectives, then the way in which mobile Europeans articulate the degree and nature of their attachment to their host societies becomes a central question. Having examined this question more directly in this chapter in terms of interpersonal attachments and the ways in which people frame their own sense of 'belonging', we will now turn to a more direct investigation of whether mobile Europeans see 'politics', in its more institutional manifestations, as a credible means to address the problems they identified as important.

Chapter 6

Mobility and the politics of 'realistic expectations'

Alessandro: That's why I say that [it] doesn't exist anymore Left and Right side. No, doesn't exist. Before it was Left fight for the people, Right fight for the rich. Now, everyone fights for themselves.

In the previous chapters, we saw how the 'emancipatory' promise of mobility is—in part—fulfilled for EU citizens moving across borders by opening up expanded possibilities for individual self-realization. However, a fuller conception of this promise goes beyond offering new opportunities for private action; it should also include the possibility for mobile Europeans to express themselves in the public sphere, for example through collective action and political participation.[122] This may also be an answer to the tendencies towards instrumentalization that we identified in the previous chapter. In the language of Chapter 1, we should be attentive not only to the opportunities that EU citizenship creates for 'disembedding', but also for 'reembedding' in the host state's institutions, where the public self can find expression (de Witte, 2019b, p. 267).

This chapter therefore shifts focus further from biographical narratives to the way in which mobile Europeans talked about the possibilities achievable through politics,

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[122] See a further explication of this 'promise' in Chapter 2. Mobile Europeans have formal rights to political participation: Article 10 of the TEU emphasizes the right of every citizen to 'participate in the democratic life of the Union' ("Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union," 2012); political rights in the host member state are laid out in Article 20 of the TFEU. The presence of formal rights to participation, however, still leaves open the question of whether EU citizens find those rights meaningful, and in what ways.

broadly understood. The conversations presented in this chapter offer respondents' perspectives on a number of topics: the importance—or irrelevance—of voting; appraisals of political parties; evaluations of current political developments and policies; and broader critiques of the political class and the politico-cultural 'character' of the societies they move in and out of.

The excerpt above, taken from an exchange between Julia and Alessandro, succinctly captures the good degree of pessimism that was aired by many of my participants on all of these topics. In itself, this observation is neither remarkable nor surprising. A general scepticism towards various aspects of collective action and political life is by no means the exclusive domain of *mobile* Europeans: political 'disenchantment', a decline in trust for political institutions and actors, in the EU context and more widely, is a long-running trend and an ongoing preoccupation for political scientists and political theorists (Dalton, 2004; Hay, 2007; Norris, 2011; Recchi, 2015, p. 169). And, as other studies have shown (e.g. Recchi, 2015, p. 105 ff.), there may not be much which distinguishes the views, nor, indeed, the voting behaviour, of mobile EU citizens from their 'static' counterparts who have not crossed borders. Rather than focusing *only* on participants' views on politics in general, then, this chapter therefore also looks at how respondents discursively relate their views on politics to their mobility. In other words, the chapter is interested in how mobile Europeans express their own sense of agency through politics as compared to the kinds of agency offered by mobility, and with what consequences for the prospect of their political subjectification in the polities they live in.[123]

If the general sweep of the discussions was at times pessimistic and cynical, participants' discourses also contained the seeds of a less discouraging conclusion. As we will see, even where critiques of politics seemed trenchant and present-day governments were condemned as apparently irredeemable, participants' accounts were often accompanied by a surprising engagement with—and strong opinions on—current political and social developments. The explicit disavowal of politics in many of these discussions, I will suggest, is therefore not to be understood as an embrace of anti-politics; rather, it can be read as a symptom of political *alienation*. The desire—

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[123] The theme is expanded further in the next chapter through the lens of relational concepts of politics and the meaning of 'belonging' in plural societies.

even if inchoate—for a politics that works, can be found in many of these accounts. This can be seen in respondents' readiness to articulate what might be called a *moral dimension*—that is, an expressed element of injustice—in discussions of politics, as well as their evident competence to discuss political issues in substance. Both suggest that the possibility of collective action is still, in principle, appealing and achievable.[124]

If this possibility is still within reach, there are nevertheless elements inherent to EU mobility which remain significant barriers to realising such a prospect. Firstly, expanding on a theme identified in the previous chapter, different domains of social life (economic participation/work, family, politics) are scattered across borders, and mobile Europeans' political engagement often remains fixed in their home context, even when most of their day-to-day social embeddedness—taking public transport, having children at school, working, paying taxes—plays out in the host country. This obvious disjuncture has been at the centre of debates about mobile EU citizens' voting rights. I will explore arguments that suggest that one of the barriers to EU citizens' political subjectification may be the lack of voting rights in the host country, which would invite them to see themselves as part of the polity in which they live. Secondly, I will suggest that the combination of sceptical attitudes towards politics—which some respondents relate to their mobility—and the absence of meaningful political rights in the host context, makes the kind of depoliticised self-determination that is offered by mobility an appealing alternative to that available through politics.

Everyday life and the politics of 'realistic expectations'

Before taking a closer look at what respondents had to say, it is worth expanding briefly on the relationship between the problems that 'ordinary' people[125] confront in their everyday life and their expectations in the political realm. In keeping with the

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[124] The presence of an injustice frame, amongst other components, has been stressed as one of the 'raw materials' necessary for collective action by other sociological studies (Eliasoph, 1998, p. 15; Gamson, 1992, p. 7; 175; Price, 1994, p. 148; White, 2011, pp. 224, 238) and approaches that engage with the frames used by 'ordinary' actors and working people when discussing politics (Boltanski, Honneth, & Celikates, 2014, p. 575).

[125] Again, the label 'ordinary' is meant to distinguish my respondents from those who might have an activist identity or who are otherwise involved in a specific political or social cause. See Chapter 3 for a further discussion.

approach sketched in the previous chapter, respondents' accounts have analytical purchase here because they are treated as *pragmatic negotiations of everyday life*. In politics, as in other everyday matters, 'people are realists and have realistic expectations' (Boltanski et al., 2014, p. 573). What they think they can expect from politicians or other institutional actors—which of these they see as being 'on their side' and those they frame antagonistically—expresses an implicit understanding about the public or collective resources they can rely on when navigating their life circumstances.

These expectations are reinforced by the patterned activity of everyday life. In his study of working people's views on politics in the US, William Gamson points out that 'most of us […] spend most of our time and energy sustaining our daily lives' (1992, p. 59). This rarely provides people a chance to 'engage in [an] activity that challenges or tries to change some aspect of this pattern', leading to a sense that the forces structuring their lives are beyond reach (ibid.).[126] This impression is tied up in whether people feel that political participation is a worthwhile pursuit. When people believe that they are at the mercy of the 'institutions that set the conditions of their daily lives', they see themselves as 'objects of historical forces alien to themselves' (p. 60) rather than the authors of their own fate. By contrast, when they feel they have meaningful opportunities to engage in activity that can alter the circumstances of daily life, a sense of agency and volition—a desire to participate in public life—is encouraged (Eliasoph, 1998, p. 13).

These feelings of relative alienation or engagement are structured discursively; the reification of 'realistic' expectations can lead to feelings of diminished individual and collective agency (Somek, 2014a, p. 164).[127] In my groups, the topic of taxation can be taken as an illustrative example. It appeared spontaneously as a point of discussion in several respondents' accounts as a quasi-metonymic stand-in for the relationship between the state and its citizens. As Marta from the Stratford group explained, 'in Poland, it's so complicated, it's just, you know, it's designed to make you make mistakes, so you have to pay for it. It's like you know, you're from the beginning

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[126] As Somek points out, this was described by Marx as a state of self-alienation: being 'governed by circumstances that are experienced as a foreign force' (2014a, p. 164).

[127] That is, a view of the 'social world […] which one believes to have no real alternative' (Somek, 2014a, p. 164).

guilty. It's not like here: you have to prove that you are guilty. There you are guilty; you have to prove that you are not guilty.' This kind of attribution of cynicism (coupled, in other respondents' accounts, with the state's 'disorganization') acts discursively to establish elements of an antagonism between the state (as extractive, cynical, imposing) and its citizens (as passive victims). These kinds of characterisations are also often extended to politicians and the political class in general and serve to describe a distance between governing institutions and 'ordinary people' in a way that is depoliticising and discourages further engagement.

This chapter's shift in perspective to matters of politics, then, has the analytical aim of interrogating mobile Europeans' views on the broader structures and institutions that determine the conditions of their lives. Ultimately at question here will be conceptions of agency: what sociocultural and political forces do mobile Europeans present as inevitable and therefore as discouraging a sense of agency in their own lives? Which, by contrast, do they see as contingent, giving them a means to alter their conditions (Gamson, 1992, p. 7; Hay, 2007, p. 67)? Expressed differently, do mobile Europeans tend to conceptualise their own sources of agency as accessible only through individual initiative—i.e. as means of escaping or individual adaptation? Or do they see the promise of social action—i.e. actions realized in cooperation with others (Gamson, 1992, p. 59; Somek, 2016)? Within these discourses, how do respondents frame the kind of agency that mobility, through free movement rights, seems to offer?

As Alessandro's opening salvo, quoted at the start of the chapter, suggests, whether one sees social and political institutions as antagonistic, pointless, or cooperative may underpin what one understands to be realistic paths to pursuing one's goals or confronting the obstacles that one encounters in everyday life. As I explore later in the chapter, the story is further complicated by the fact that resident EU citizens have incomplete voting rights in their host polity, and that they demonstrate a tendency to maintain their home countries as their main political point of reference. This was evident for many of my respondents, even those who were integrated in, and had spent many years in, their new context.

Voting with your feet… and at the ballot box

This section begins by looking at how respondents talked about participation at its most visible and often most consequential: through voting. The questions of self-determination and volition through politics that we have laid out above—that is, whether people feel it is possible to 'control their destinies' through political participation and, indeed, whether they *want* to do so (Ramsay, 2013, p. 426), suggest a closer look at my respondents' attitudes towards voting.

> Dimitris: I know that many people in Greece believed that something would change in 2015 when the left party was elected, and we had the referendum and so on, so there was a belief that this will change. But it didn't and I think this is obvious because the change will not come from a magical political party or magical power, but it will come from us. So, we vote them, so we have the power to do that.

Dimitris was one of a group of financial services workers who met in central London one evening after work (Piccadilly Group). This intervention from Dimitris came after an emphatic discussion with the other members of the group—Elena and Christos—about the stasis and pathologies of Greek society. Themes of change and stasis became central to conversations about voting in several groups. These two thematic poles gave respondents a framework on which to peg a number of arguments relating to the conditions which enable or hinder societal change. Conversations around voting therefore never remained sharply focused on participation, but acted as an entry-point into a number of broader critiques. A central concern for many respondents was the inertia of their home societies and political systems. Respondents, sometimes at length, debated the sources of this inertia and attributed it in varying degrees to politicians, political parties, or, more profoundly, the national 'character' or innate psychological dispositions of their co-nationals. The way in which these elements are arranged discursively—most basically, whether the possibility for change is placed within the realm of politics or outside of it in more diffuse social phenomena—have consequences for what respondents view as credible possibilities for intervention.

Dimitris's intervention above picks up on several of these arguments, and expresses a counterintuitive blend of optimism towards the possibility of change and agency through voting ('it will come from us'; 'we vote them, so we have the power to do

that'), with a commitment that the change will not, however, come from 'a magical political party'. As the discussion progressed between the other members of the group, the argument became clearer: the 'left party',[128] had not promised real change, but rather a return to a *status quo ante*—a 'normal' state of affairs that had been disrupted by the Eurozone crisis. The implications for the role of politics in bringing about change here are ambiguous: change is possible, but real change must have an impetus outside of politics, in society.[129]

However, rather than an endorsement of the political potential of 'the people' that might characterise a more activist discourse, the people here are also implicated as a barrier to progress. Returning to the Piccadilly group, Elena elaborates on the problem raised by Dimitris more explicitly: 'I don't think that there's going to be any improvement in Greece. I think we have a mentality problem. Many psychological issues, many inferiority complexes. As a culture, that's my personal view, okay.' The critique of the Greek 'mentality' arose independently in another group: 'As Greeks, we should be, more than everybody else ashamed of ourselves for loads of things that happen in our country and the mentality that we've been brought up with in general.' (Konstantinos, Borough 1 Group). Locating the problem with the nature of the people, given its generalised and at times essentialised characterisation, however, invites no obvious means for redress. The other depoliticising themes implicit in the extract from Dimitris—political parties being described as 'magical' or otherwise consigned to the realm of providence; the idea that politicians and political parties do not differ in meaningful ways; and the ascription of social inertia to an essential cultural character—recured in many of the conversations and are further explored throughout the chapter.

Another group, carried out with a group of co-workers at a Barcelona-based financial-services firm, included Tommaso, who had moved from central Italy and settled in Barcelona with his partner. Again, the possibility of change came up when the group's views on voting were probed. Asked why voting back home was important, Tommaso replied:

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[128] The party in question is Syriza, which had come to power in the wake of the Eurozone crisis.
[129] Hay effectively lays out the self-fulfilling dynamics of placing too much emphasis on the demand-side of politics to explain decreasing levels of political engagement (2007, p. 24ff.).

Tommaso: Because I believe in the possibility of changing something, anything, in Italy. And at this moment, the Italian politics is—I don't like it and I hope to, to change something. But—and I believe very much in the voting. So…I think that it's important, and if I have to travel to vote in Italy, I, uh, just do it.

Tommaso seems more hopeful that meaningful change can come through political participation. But as with Dimitris, there are elements of a broader critique in Tommaso's discourse, which places the locus of change within the cultural or psychological character of the people:

Tommaso: I think before we have to change the mindset of the people, because in this moment—if the people doesn't change the mindset it's difficult to change it from the politics.

Not everyone—[…]—I'm not a person who says that Italians are all stupid. Many Italians are intelligent, they are hard workers, but, I don't know why, but when I was 10 years, 15 years [old] Italy was a good place for living, now after 20, 30 years of bad politics, it's different.

As we saw in Dimitris's account, one can see here a slipping between explanations that attribute blockages to politics and those that rely on appeals to cultural or psychological elements. In both cases, politics and culture seem to be mutually implicated in the (non-) possibility of change, leaving some ambiguity about the prospects of change through political participation. As Tommaso seems to implicitly recognize, the two can be seen as interrelated: politics—in the way that it shapes civic life—has a pedagogic function as well (Donner, 2007, p. 260).[130] Political citizenship, or, to again borrow from Perrin, the 'democratic imagination' can be fostered or discouraged by public figures, setting up feedback loops of civic expectation.

While Tommaso does not make the connection explicit, this interrelationship is developed further in another discussion group made up of German language teachers

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[130] See further Wendy Donner's contribution for a view on how social and political institutions are educative in this sense in J.S. Mill's philosophy.

living and working in Italy. In an assessment which echoes and expands on Tommaso's critique of Italian civic decline, Anna, who has lived in Italy for more than two decades, suggests that the way in which politics has been conflated with and reshaped by mass media has a role to play (see Perrin, 2006, pp. 76–77), citing former Prime Minister and media mogul Silvio Berlusconi's influence: 'So, it's very populist, very superficial, very what *they* wa—, what 'the citizen' wants to hear, very much aimed at stupefying the people.' This appeared as part of a longer exchange of views within the group that also explored how other institutions, like schools—through structured discursive practice—and the news media—through non-sensationalist and non-personalized reporting—help to develop a capacity for productive civic discourse.

Despite the multifarious challenge of what they see as civic decline and societal inertia, both Tommaso and Dimitris invoke political participation through *voting* as the best hope for some kind of genuine change. While both are ambivalent about the prospect that 'something, anything' could shift in the right direction under the prevailing circumstances—neither points to anything specific on the horizon—the importance of voting is nevertheless affirmed.

An exchange in the Holborn group, on the other hand, was much more attuned to the concrete and near-term dynamism of political contestation. Here a question about voting develops into an exchange between Aleksandra and Marta, both from Poland, about the results of the previous election.

Moderator:	Do you vote back at home as well?
Aleksandra:	Yeah.
Catherine:	Ummm. [confirmatory]
Moderator:	Regularly? Always?
Aleksandra:	When I'm there, yeah. Last time I was there, but it didn't help.
Marta:	Last election we skipped. Maybe that wasn't a good idea, because we've got who we've got in power now. [*laughter*]
Aleksandra:	But I voted. It didn't help, Marta.
Marta:	You see, I know.
Aleksandra:	I was so pleased I was there. I said 'Oh, I'm going!' Then, when I saw the results, I said, 'Pointless.' I was disappointed. Yeah.

Marta:	No worries, it's getting better. They're coming back to power.
Moderator:	Who is?
Marta:	Platforma. The liberals. I think so, looks like they are gaining again, so, in a—, at least you know they don't say the [truth]—but looks like they are, they are—they've got more people behind them now, again, slowly. So it looks like the people started to see what is happening, you know, this new government, and whatever they do finally started to click, you know. But, we will see.

Here Marta and Aleksandra affirm the possibilities of social and political change through voting. They describe genuine alternatives represented by different parties, Marta endows 'the people' with a competence to discern between and evaluate these alternatives, and they admit to the possibility of contestation and alternative future possibilities. Aleksandra underlines her excitement to participate and her disappointment with the result. Her disavowal of voting as 'pointless' seems more performatively cynical, related to this disappointing result, rather than to a commitment that voting does not matter, and Marta follows up with a hopeful vision of the future. In contrast to Dimitris and Tommaso, whose discourse around voting relies on its latent potential but is ultimately expressed as indeterminate and experienced with a dose of alienation, Marta and Aleksandra see manifest possibilities in taking part.

The view from outside

Adrien Favell observed of his 'Eurostars' that, even for those who had lived for a number of years in a new country, their political engagement—to the extent that it was present—tended to be firmly rooted with their home polity (2010). This seemed to be axiomatically the case for most—though not all—of my respondents, who were much more likely in conversation to invoke political developments in their home member state. But a closer look my respondents offers a more complex and nuanced picture. Some respondents offered reasoned arguments about the importance of voting in the place that one actually lives. A subset of respondents, on the other hand, defended the importance of voting back home but self-consciously differentiated themselves from

'static' citizens back home, explaining how a mobile life gave them a broader political perspective that could be understood as a resource for their home country.

Tommaso's companions in the Barcelona group offered fertile ground for airing these differences. The other respondents in the group included Ed, from the UK,[131] who recounted that he was no longer allowed to vote in UK elections, since he had lived in Spain for more than 15 years.[132] Surprisingly, Ed agreed with the logic of his disenfranchisement: 'I don't feel like I should vote in the UK because I've been non-resident there for so long. I don't feel like I should vote here because I'm not Spanish.'[133] The other participants in the group were Francisco, a relatively recent arrival from Portugal, and Maja, originally from Poland, who had lived and studied in Vienna before coming to Barcelona. For Maja, expat citizens constitute an important potential source of progressive views, in contrast to the more conservative tendencies of static voters back home.

> Maja: In my opinion, it [voting back home] is very important, because I think that people—I'll say in general, Polish people who live abroad perhaps—have a view of things from outside: more open, more modern, more, with more evolution […]. And I think that thanks to this view, very much more open than the people who live in Poland, they are very important.

Maja's is a view of society and membership which is not fully encapsulated by national borders. This expresses the blurring of political boundaries that immigration in general and EU citizenship in particular can be seen as ushering in. For Maja, not only does the political community encompass 'Polish people who live abroad', but their specific contribution to Poland's political life is seen to have a distinctive value. Those who live abroad are not framed as a thing apart, but as a constituency with a novel contribution to make. Recalling our brief discussion of Hirschman's exit/voice dichotomy in Chapter 1, we can read in Maja's view another instance in which leaving

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[131] The UK was still a member state of the EU at the time of the group discussion.
[132] Until recently, UK citizens who lived abroad for more than 15 years were ineligible to vote. The Elections Act 2022 contains provisions for removing the limit (Johnston & Uberoi, 2022).
[133] We will pick up the topic of political rights in the home and the host states, and their role in political socialization, later in the chapter.

the polity is not framed as a withdrawal of voice; on the contrary, it generates new ideational resources.

The theme is explored in greater depth by Lou in a discussion group carried out online with participants living in Italy, Belgium, and Spain.

Lou: The theme of voting, for example, as Anastasia and Raia also said, becomes—when you're away, when you live away for a long time, it is a responsibility that you come to recognise. When I arrived 12 years ago the first Italian election in which I could vote, my, my document, uh, my ballot that was sent to me was lost…it happens. So I wasn't, I wasn't able to vote on that occasion—okay, whatever. There's a moment where you say, who cares; it's too bad but it's not that important. Over the years, however, this thing comes out: I—in any case—even if I'm not there, I haven't left behind the responsibility of what happens. There's my family, there are my friends, there are things that, at the level of society, depend also on those who don't live there anymore but in any case have contact: I go there, I go back there, I will go back there. Go back to live, I don't know, I can neither exclude nor confirm it. […]

But the contact becomes more pronounced when you see certain ugly things compared to when you live within Italy (also the nice things, don't forget). You see them, but there you don't really have—you don't understand their dimensions well. That is, you see, you know, but you don't know how big or how little the thing might be.

From outside, on the other hand, you can, since you have that distance that you can put—not only physical but also emotional, in a certain sense. So the nasty things unfortunately when I return to Italy I see them with much more precision because you can compare a few systems. This already happens when you travel often. Living [away] makes you realize many things that you didn't consider before.

[…]

So you see many more things in a much more detached way, in a certain sense, but not for this less strongly. As the ladies said before.

Both Maja and Lou—though in different groups—are referring to the idea that mobility has given them a critical distance from their home polities. For Maja, the emphasis seems to be focused on how what she calls 'a view of things from outside' helps to develop a perspective that can counter prevalent ideological or normative consensus in the country. Rather than simply invoking differences between herself and her static co-nationals as a source of alienation and remoteness, Maja sees this as constituting a responsibility to vote so as to contribute these new views into political life. Lou's emphasis, again, positioning himself 'from outside' and invoking the 'distance' that can be put between oneself and the political system, is that mobile life offers a special comparative insight into the nature and 'dimensions' of social and political problems back home. Over time, this develops into 'a responsibility that you come to recognise', and which is expressed through voting.

However, the critical distance that Lou and Maja describe, and which they use to mobilise a discourse about responsibility and participation, can framed a depoliticising narrative as well. For example, Francesca, an Italian living in London who works as a programme and communications manager at an international development think tank, highlights that she has become 'progressively detached from what the, the Italian society […] is and is becoming. The political landscape is not helping and the feeling that I get every time I go back is worse and worse each time'. Here, Francesca invokes similar elements as Maja and Lou but mobilises them to come to a different conclusion. The perception of difference and divergence of views between herself and her fellow citizens back home has become a source of alienation and contribute to her 'literally not recognizing myself as part of that community any longer.' Where Lou mobilises his 'detachment' to buttress his political relationship with Italy, Francesca uses it to distance herself further.

Exploring sites and modalities of attachment and how these relate to political belonging is more centrally the topic of Chapter 5. However, especially when groups included a respondent who has lived in their host country for more than a decade,

perhaps owns property and is raising a family,[134] questions of citizenship acquisition become an obvious jumping off point for questions relating to voting. In the Milan group, I asked Anna, who had lived in Italy for more than two decades, whether she had sought Italian citizenship.

> Anna: No. This is for a very simple reason. When I arrived here, then, after a certain amount of work, they gave you a contract, and you could choose if you wanted a German or an Italian contract. And for me it was convenient to take the German contract. So, for that, I had to have citizenship, so it was always an advantage to keep German citizenship.

I decided to challenge the internal logic of this response[135], since in the intervening years German citizenship law has allowed for EU citizens to hold more than one nationality.[136]

> Anna: Yes, but, anyway, for me it's not an advantage. That is, I can't do anything with it…

The line of questioning about Anna's citizenship was in part designed to stimulate a discussion of voting rights. As evinced in the recording, I was about to probe Anna's assertion that citizenship in the place that she had lived for decades would not offer her 'anything' when Charlotte intervened instead.

> Charlotte: Perhaps the advantage is that you can, you could vote? Or can you vote?
>
> Anna: Vote? No, I can't vote, I've never voted. I've voted in Germany. The embarrassment of the lack of choice is the same.
> [*Laughter*]
>
> Charlotte: It's true. I, seeing as I can ask for citizenship after 4 years of residence, I would like to do it next year. To have the possibility to, anyway to give my vote because

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[134] This was true of one or more respondents in the Holborn group, the Milan group, and the online group with respondents based in Italy, Spain, and Brussels. Most respondents in other groups had lived in their host countries long enough to acquire citizenship

[135] Frederic Charles Schaffer outlines six types of questions that he uses in 'ordinary language interviews' in order to get respondents to expand on what they are saying. Internal logic questions point out a contradiction or challenge the respondent's premise to prompt the speaker to 'reflect more deeply about what he or she is saying' (2013, p. 187).

[136] German nationality law has become increasingly tolerant of dual nationality in subsequent reforms since 2000, especially for citizens of other EU member states (Farahat & Hailbronner, 2020).

	I live here, in that time I'd also like to say, "No, don't take this guy as the president, I want someone else." I want to give my opinion. I want to have that possibility.
Anna:	Yes, yes, it's right, too.
Mila:	Very true, yeah.
Charlotte:	For now, I can only vote for the mayor. But that's not much. Also in the region where I live, I can't even choose what to do, what to decide. It's a bit of a shame.
	[…]
Mila:	I also think that it's better to vote where you live. For me, for now, it's still a bit open because I did my residence around a year ago—so, all the address, the card, just did it.[137] And since I don't know if in the next years I want to stay here or stay one or two years in Germany, I won't do it, but in the long term I want to live in a place where I can give my vote and decide and create…a bit…the environment.

In this case, Anna's colleague Charlotte spontaneously takes up the topic of voting, which had not yet been raised explicitly in the discussion, evincing a salience of voting rights. In response to the instrumental reasons Anna offered for not having pursued citizenship, which amounted to not wanting to complicate her employment contract or pension arrangements, Charlotte and Mila point to a desire to help shape the political environment in the place that they live.

'Everyone does exactly the same': democratic disappointment and agency through mobility

Elections act as focal points for public diagnoses of societal problems and for contests between competing visions of the future. For these reasons, recent elections in respondents' home countries offered obvious chances to probe respondents on their broader appraisals of political developments. Unlike with Aleksandra and Marta's cautiously optimistic tone earlier in the chapter, however, sometimes disappointment at a recent outcome translates into more emphatic disavowal. The following excerpt

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[137] Mila has been resident in Italy for three years. Here she is referring to only having recently formalized her residence through various bureaucratic procedures.

comes from the Stratford group. While most group discussions were held in public places—mostly cafés or restaurants that were easy to reach for participants, in this case, Alessandro had organised the meeting at his home. When I arrived, Alessandro and Matteo had been watching a news programme covering a recent general election in Italy. Early in the discussion, I asked about the news programme they had been watching in order to prompt a discussion about politics. The ambiguous result and uncertainty over the formation of a new government offered an opportunity for the following appraisal.

Alessandro: To be honest, to be honest, I don't give a [—]! To be honest, I don't give a [—] about that one. Because, uh, you know, it's like I was saying before to you, the technical government: if they are going to do a technical government, why are we still going over there to have an election day? Doesn't make any sense. Doesn't make any sense, you know. So, sometimes [I] think it's much better if [there were a] dictator or again go back to have a king or a queen [Julia: No! No! *Laughter*]

Alessandro's anti-political conclusions invite further examination, not only because they are so emphatic—he is not expressing apathy, but a kind of moral outrage—but also because they show signs of a deeper engagement. In the next two sections we will take a closer look at both of these aspects. In this section we will look at how respondents' broader critiques of politics serve to discourage political engagement and explore how disappointment in politics might be implicated in justifications for mobility. The subsequent section will then probe elements of respondents' discourse which support more optimistic conclusions, particularly those where respondents, even amidst general scepticism, show engagement in contemporary political developments.

It has been widely observed that western democracies are suffering from 'disenchantment' or 'disaffection' with formal politics. The hallmarks of this disenchantment may be seen in a general loss of faith in elected representatives, decreasing trust in institutions and identification with political parties, declining voter turnout, and prevalent social narratives suggesting a general cynicism towards

politicians and politics in general (Hay, 2007; Koch, 2016). Democratic 'crisis talk', as Hanspeter Kriesi points out, 'is nothing new for Western democracies', and preoccupation with the democratic state's ability to deliver on its promises has been a recurring theme since at least the 1960s and 1970s (Dalton, 2004, p. 21; Kriesi, 2018, p. 59). Nevertheless, this anxiety persists amongst social scientists and political theorists. Citizens' narratives of how politicians and the state are implicated in their lives determine what kind of action they might take to change their conditions. Repeated disappointment or a sense that 'it doesn't matter who is in power' (Hay, 2007, pp. 55–56) may lead to a general withdrawal from political participation and for a search for alternatives which—credibly or not—seem to offer a path to agency. The persistence of such sentiments could likewise be implicated in a loss of faith in collective action in general and the privatisation of life-plans as the 'public' sphere of politics fails to deliver (Bauman, 2000a).

This broad context of cynicism arose in several group discussions. In an exchange between Anna, Konstantinos, Katerina and Manos, a group of Greek financial services workers who met in central London after work one evening (Borough 1 Group), Katerina reveals that she has never voted, which gave Konstantinos an opportunity to relay a vivid analogy about political life:

Katerina:	I've never voted. Never in my life.
Konstantinos:	[*Sarcastically*] You don't know what you're missing. [*Laughter*]. I mean I wish you get to do that. It's brilliant. It's fantastic.
Moderator:	Go on.
Konstantinos:	No, that's all I have. [*Laughter*]
Anna:	He's being sarcastic. Ironic, ya.
Moderator:	Specifically voting in Greece, you mean?
Konstantinos:	It's—no, I think, I think it's—. Like a few years ago somebody told me that politics—in general in Europe, including the UK—it's like a very beautiful house. Picture a very beautiful mansion with grass and a swimming pool. So you're standing outside and you're thinking, 'That's a nice place, let's look inside and see what's going on'. So you see like 300 scumbags, like smoking weed, breaking the windows…
Anna:	[*Laughter*] Yeah, this is Greek MPs. [*Laughter*]

Konstantinos:	…What's going on in there? I'm not gonna go in there. It's a nice house, but I want nothing to do with this place. I'm going away.
Katerina:	That's a good analogy. I like that.

In the context of the EU, debates about the 'democratic deficit' tend to be formulated around deficiencies of EU-level institutions, which fail to be sufficiently responsive to citizen action, lack transparency, and are not politicised enough to encourage civic engagement from the citizenry (Føllesdal & Hix, 2006, p. 222; White, 2011). My focus here has been on politics at the national level—either in the home or the host polity—and the way trends towards disenchantment play out among EU movers. The two are linked, not only by trends common to both, like declining trust in political institutions at the national and EU level (Colliot-Thélène, 2016; Recchi, 2015, p. 106), but also because, as Føllesdal and Hix have pointed out, national parliaments are constrained by EU institutions (2006, p. 535), leaving them open to criticisms of being unresponsive. In short, EU citizens may feel they have nowhere to turn. Sandra Seubert (2019, p. 289) emphasises the relationship between the two levels: 'The crisis of European democracy and the crisis of European citizenship go hand in hand. Detached from political space the European citizenry is left without clear addressees for dealing with social and political conflicts.'[138]

Given the general miasma surrounding politics, it was not particularly surprising that my respondents' often had cynical evaluations of politics and politicians. When discussing politics in their home and host contexts, respondents offered a range of critiques to explain political or social inertia and to describe the appeal of or dissatisfaction with different contexts. These critiques do not necessarily have a uniform target and are often located at different levels of politics and society. More focused critiques took aim at the government of the day. In these cases, respondents may discuss recent political developments when evaluating whether one or another national context is suitable. At this level of critique, there is at least the recognition

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[138] Jo Shaw also draws a link between the broader trend of disenchantment and turnout in EU elections: 'the low levels of participation on the part of EU nationals cannot be divorced from the general political context of declining turnouts and general apathy towards political parties' (2007b, p. 153).

that political and social conditions are in principle contingent and amenable to change and intervention through political participation.

More sweeping critiques which condemn politicians and politics in the broadest terms carry with them a different set of implications, which intersect with mobility narratives in interesting ways: if, as Hay suggests, politics becomes a 'dirty word' and politicians across the political spectrum and across national contexts are the are seen to share similar characteristics—self-interest, corruption, inefficacy (2007, p. 153)—and the state is viewed as meddling, then mobility as a transnational pursuit of individual projects, with little attachment to the politics of any particular context, appears as a tenable and coherent position. We will see this reasoning more explicitly applied in respondents' accounts later in the chapter.

This broad condemnation of politics could be found in several groups. In the excerpt below, Elena, from Greece, implicated parties and politicians across the political spectrum:

Elena: Because in Greece, we had so many different parties with different political views, but when it comes to practice, everyone does exactly the same. No one is doing what he is pitching. So, in an ideal, philosophical discussion, I would tell you many things of how governments should act and how politics should be, and we can discuss about, I don't know, definitions of left or right, but, I try, I will be a bit more cynical and will agree more with Christos: I think that many times politics are a bit like religion. To create some 'how-tos': how to behave, how to think, how to act.

The corollary of this view of politics as antagonistic, if not extractive, is that the best place to be is the place where one is least encumbered by politics and administrative burdens. Respondents from several UK-based groups cited the relative lack of friction in the UK labour market and in dealings with the state, such as making tax filings. To the extent that these kinds of narratives are persistent amongst some mobile Europeans, they suggest that mobility offers a chance to 'move away' from politics, which is framed more often as an encumbrance rather than a credible means of self-determination.

A group of recent studies of intra-European migration carried out in the wake of the post-2008 economic recession have explored a similar link between mobility and political dissatisfaction, attempting to pull the focus away from economic factors typically emphasised in migration scholarship, like increased unemployment (Bygnes, 2017; Bygnes & Flipo, 2017). While these authors recognise that economic and political concerns are mutually implicated, their empirical work, which draws on narrative accounts from mobile Europeans and social survey data, suggest that, even in economically challenging contexts, Europeans' highlight their *political* disaffection.

Susanne Bygnes, for example, draws on Durkheim's concept of *anomie* to capture a prevalent 'state of hopelessness and lack of belief in politics, government and the future' amongst her respondents (2017, p. 262). The study focused on highly-skilled Spaniards who moved to Norway following the economic crisis but who were facing neither the prospect of unemployment nor a general lack of economic resources. These accounts challenge standard schemas in migration theory based around push- and pull-factors, highlighting instead a deeper sense of dissatisfaction that leads some Europeans to look for a new life in another country. The reasons Bygnes's respondents often cited for moving were not (at least not purely) framed in terms of economic necessity or opportunity; rather, her respondents pointed to issues of political trust and cultural decline, lamenting the corruption of politicians, and, a 'lack of communal spirit' (p. 268).

It is worth noting a distinction between the discourses that are prominent among my respondents from different countries. Expressions of cynicism, lack of trust, and waning investment in politicians to be anything other than self-serving and corrupt, were more prominently a feature of the discourse of my Greek, Italian, and to a lesser extent, Spanish respondents. By way of contrast, Anna, a German transplant living in Milan, made the following observation:

| Anna: | While here, sometimes I think that Italians are more of the idea, 'anyway' — as I said before, no? — 'anyway, there, in government, they're all criminals, more or less, and so' — I'm not saying it, but I hear it said really a lot by Italians — 'so, one can't do anything. They should do something, but they think only about themselves, and |

> so we, down here, we'll manage somehow'. So there's
> little trust that the government can do something for
> you. And in Germany there is still this thing [trust].

In this sense, the way mobile Europeans construct their relationship to 'politics', either in the broadest sense or with reference to the government of the day, should be seen to affect how they understand their own options for navigating difficult circumstances. Respondents' accounts point our attention to how the political and the social are integrated[139] in a way which suggests looking beyond economic motivations or indeed the kinds of explicit political opinions elicited in survey data to 'more ordinary areas of life' where expectations and disappointments might be expressed (Näsström in Bellamy et al., 2019, p. 21).

In another critique of politics, Elena took aim at her host society's government. Respondents in the UK singled out the result of the Brexit referendum as a particular point of contention, leading to a re-evaluation of their ideas of UK politics, and a move from a critique of government to a condemnation of politics in general.

> Elena: Here the government is also immature. The same way as in
>   Greece. After all, that's why I'm saying that after all, I don't
>   know if I will be so much into politics. The same way as in the
>   religion. I will start to be, you know, I think I am, more and
>   more, I become, more humanitarian, maybe a bit more cynical,
>   maybe a bit more selfish, maybe rely more on each other and
>   the environment that I build around me, rather than waiting for
>   this invisible hand that is called government or is called
>   whatever to come and save me, to protect me…

The providential character of Elena's two analogies: 'religion' and 'the invisible hand' recalls Dimitris's description earlier in the chapter of political parties as 'magical'. Such relegations of politics to the realm of the supernatural, or, in referencing Adam Smith, as an intangible force directing action,[140] are telling here inasmuch as they discursively position not only the present government but politics in general as alien and abstract forces that act upon people and which are therefore beyond the reach of citizens. Such metaphors recall Colin Hay's distinction between politics and fate. In

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[139] See Näsström's contribution in (Bellamy et al., 2019) for a fuller explication of how political forms and social life interact.
[140] Though of course in Smith's writings the invisible hand appears as a force in economic, rather than political relationships.

Hay's diagnosis of trends towards depoliticization, where agency is downplayed, as when Elena justifies her retreat from politics, one is left only with 'fatalism and resignation' (Hay, 2007, p. 67). Issues are removed from the realm of 'deliberation and contingency, where action and change are possible', and assigned instead to the 'arena of fate and necessity' (Beveridge, 2017, p. 597; Hay, 2007, p. 67).

This section has looked at attempts by respondents to distance themselves from or embrace aspects of the societies in which they move in and out of. In doing so, the analysis attempts to discern where they locate the means by which their agency is credibly realized and supported.

These passages are not meant to suggest any direct causal relationship between evaluations of politics and mobility, nor was the goal to try and reduce the multidimensionality of the drivers of the migration decisions into attitudes about politics. Rather, the part of the story that I am attempting to tell here is that, depoliticization—understood in the ways that we have explored above, as disappointment with or disavowal of with politics as a means to pursue one's goals— and mobility can be seen as mutually reinforcing. Where politics is not seen as a credible medium through which to realize agency, viewed alongside a discourse wherein mobility *does* offer access to agency, to the possibility of shaping one's conditions, one sees how mobility and depoliticization may be mutually implicated. This would confirm theoretical concerns that mobile citizens (or others potentially on the move) might indeed be willing to accept a well-regulated transnational space which eliminates barriers to the smooth execution of individual aspirations and ambitions, but in which collective determination of social goals, decided in common with others, recedes as a priority (Somek, 2014b).

While this anti-political discourse often dominated the discussions, we have already identified some instances where respondents' accounts contained the seeds of a counter discourse. Even cynical respondents often offered evaluations of and strong opinions about contemporary political developments. The next section will explore these more optimistic discursive strands, and I will suggest that critique and cynicism may express political *alienation* rather than political disavowal.

Engagement amidst despair

In this section, we turn to those exchanges in which respondents made more specific evaluative claims about politics. In nearly all of the group discussions, a reference to contemporary political developments—whether a recent or upcoming election or referendum, a disparaging comment aimed at the present government, or a more oblique reference to public policy—came up organically in the course of conversation. Taking an 'active interview' approach (Bygnes, 2017, p. 264), these references were then probed further, often stimulating an exchange between two or more participants.

In the first exchange, we join back up with Aleksandra, Marta, Paula and Catherine, from the Holborn group. We pick up the conversation where Marta is evaluating her life in the UK and considering what life would be like had she stayed in Poland. Aleksandra, also from Poland, joins in when the conversation turns to the government of the day.

Marta:	[…] Poland is still kind of, when you look out there [Aleksandra: down] …at the politics, and what is happening in Poland, it's like I'm not sure I want to come back. To the government there.
Aleksandra:	Exactly.
Paula:	Yeah.
Marta:	They are unpredictable and I don't like it.
Moderator:	Can you tell me more about that?
Marta:	Ha, ha! About our right-wing?
Aleksandra:	Women's, no rights.
Catherine:	Really?
Aleksandra:	No, no. That's what they're trying to do. We're not allowed to speak, we're not allowed to say anything. Well, it's not, it's not confirmed yet, but that's what they trying to do. Yes.
Marta:	I guess so. Uh, this is, you know these people now they're a bit crazy. They used to be in power, I don't know, five or seven years ago.
Aleksandra:	Uh huh.
Marta:	Yeah, so I—we remember this. I think the people who voted now for the right wing, they don't remember what they were doing before and whatever is happening now is the same what happened you know seven years ago, just escalated more, so

you know they don't have—you know they feel free to do whatever they want and you know they don't even hide each other.

In this exchange Marta and Aleksandra are discussing Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party, the ruling right-wing populist party who had come to power in 2015. The party's position on what Aleksandra's refers to as 'women's rights' pitches what it calls 'gender ideology'—i.e. liberal positions on gender equality and gender justice—against its conservative 'cultural values rooted in Catholicism' and the traditional family (Gwiazda, 2021, p. 587). The discussion happened not long after the party had supported an anti-abortion bill that had been fiercely opposed in public protests.

For Marta and Aleksandra, the political and social climate in Poland looms large. Both are discouraged by recent political developments, but the discussion is far from detached—on the contrary, it invokes political history beyond present day developments. Nor, as one might expect, does it express a sense that political developments back home are inconsequential since they have been left behind. For Marta especially, politics in Poland are a live issue and one that continues to influence what she and her family feel are possible options for future moves, even though she has not lived in Poland for more than 15 years.

In the Milan group, Charlotte, from a city near Hamburg, also expresses how political developments influence considerations of where to go. However, in Charlotte's account, what also becomes evident is that such 'undesirable' outcomes cannot be outrun:

Charlotte: Yes, it was also, the last time, again that I voted in person there, after I did Erasmus, when I found out what they voted, I was scared, I said, 'Why?'. Why did the right-wingers get all the votes? Why? Why did you do it? I said, oh well, I'd better get out of here. Then I arrived here, and everything went a bit too much to the right. It's not good.

Repelled by a shift to the Right in Germany, Charlotte is happy to try her luck in Italy. Before long, however, she finds the political tides turning again. Ultimately, Charlotte realizes that the only credible solution is through claiming more political rights,

expressed, as we saw above in her exchange with Anna, by her decision to apply for citizenship, in order 'to have the possibility to, anyway, to give my vote because I live here. […] I want to give my opinion. I want to have that possibility.'

Politicians, the political class, and political ideologies

Over the course of a discussion, conversations about contemporary political developments often lead on to broader critiques of politics. In contrast to critiques of government which recognise—at least implicitly—the contingency of political developments and the possibility of meaningful change, this level of critique takes aim at the political class in general. However, these discourses also often included clear instances of engagement in current political developments or were rooted in appeals to political history and political philosophy, relativising the claims of a general political 'disaffection' that we explored in the previous section. In the following exchange, we rejoin Alessandro, Julia, Martina and Matteo. This exchange immediately follows Alessandro's earlier intervention, when he condemned the recent election results, and recalls Anna's observations that Italians have lost 'trust that the government can do something for you', leaving people to 'manage somehow'.

Alessandro:	Me, I'm not an anarchic person. I'm coming from a family where, um, we are more on the left side. So, try to fight for people who is not in a good situation, more socialism let's say. My, one of my heroes, when I was sixteen years old was Che Guevara, Fidel Castro. But what I'm seeing in this world now [is] that it doesn't exist anymore Right and Left. Everything is over there to make business, to make them self-interest. So, I was watching just to know what's going on around the world, but the rest, I have to think of my life. If it's not me who's gonna think of my life, no one else is gonna think of my business. So, I think of my business, you do your business, don't touch my business. That's it.
	[…]
Julia:	What Alessandro said before about it's not anymore Left or Right, they are just looking at their own interest, I really think like that. It's not anymore Left or Right, at least in Spain, you listen [to] the Left, you listen [to] the Right, and you say [exasperated laughter] […] Because, come on, they don't know

sometimes, you listen to them talk and you say 'you don't know either who is Marx'. How are you going to know the ideas, the philosophy, of what is social life or what is Right or what is Left?

[…]

I think the problem are the [politicians], the politics. They don't really know either. They are the ones who are ignorant.

Aless.: You have to think for yourself. They're not going to think for you. Doesn't exist [any] more. Before there was someone who was going there who was trying to fight for the right of the worker or people who [were] not in a good situation. Now, they're trying to do it like in maybe Russia, in the Emirates states or stuff like that. It must be a gap between the rich and very poor. It doesn't anymore to exist the middle class. And this one they want to do it all around the world. What I think it is this one: because all of them is thinking just for them, for the money they are to earn, for their own interest, for all their corruption they have, but in the end, I didn't see any changes. When they talk about Jobs Act or stuff like that, you know what I think? It's bullshit. […] What you are doing is legalizing illegal jobs, the 'black jobs'.[141] […]

That's why I say that doesn't exist anymore Left and Right side. No, doesn't exist. Before it was Left fight for the people, Right fight for the rich. Now, everyone fights for themselves.

Alessandro's initial unqualified disavowal of an interest or belief in politics expressed at the beginning of this conversation, and his bleak conclusion, are nevertheless offset by the narrative he and Paula develop throughout, which expresses regret at the loss of coherent political ideologies and political projects that recognised social divisions and gave them some political form. Though presented as a *fait accompli*, leaving little hope for retrieval, the lamentation of the *loss* of the left/right political divide, together with a sense that politicians from whichever party no longer offer meaningful alternatives, suggests a profound *alienation* from a degraded politics, rather than a disavowal of politics as such.

This is underlined by his more focused engagement with political developments that came up spontaneously in the discussion. Notably, towards the end of the exchange,

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[141] 'Lavoro nero' or 'Lavoro in nero' is a colloquial term for unreported employment: work engaged under irregular, informal, or illegal conditions.

Alessandro discusses the 'Jobs Act', a major Italian labour market reform passed in 2015, which, amongst other things, expanded the use of temporary and apprenticeship contracts and was strongly opposed by trade union leaders (ANSA, 2015; Pinelli, Torre, Pace, Cassio, & Arpaia, 2017). Alessandro's evaluation that the legislation effectively formalises illegal labour practices,[142] is hard to square with his avowed lack of interest in the political fate of the country for working people.

Alessandro's blend of pessimism and engagement makes firm conclusions difficult. Clearly, in the face of the critiques he lays out, the cards are stacked against politics reappearing as a credible medium for agency in his life. In the face of the loss of meaningful political projects, Alessandro suggests that the only possibilities lie outside of politics, in individual action and in personalizing risk, success, and failure. This direct consequential link he draws between politicians' self-interest and the self-interested approach to living one's life as the only rational response was, as we have seen, present in several respondents' discourses. Alessandro's synthesises a view of what he can realistically expect from politicians ('no one else is gonna think of my business'), with what he must confront individually: in the absence of structured political conflicts which give form to social conflict, struggles become generalized and personalised ('Before there was someone who was […] trying to fight for the right of the worker or people who [were] not in a good situation. […] Now, everyone fights for themselves'). This suggests a link between how politics is discursively structured—and whether or not it is seen to function—and the way in which people conceive of their available options for navigating life's exigencies: where collective action is foreclosed or pointless, the response has to be individual adaptation. For mobile Europeans, the repertoire of individual action includes free movement, which displaces politics further from everyday life.

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[142] Or, in the evaluation of the European Commission, 'bringing Italian labour market institutions more closely into line with international benchmarks and with the principles of flexicurity' (Pinelli et al., 2017). Amongst other changes, the Jobs Act introduced a new type of contract which did not provide protections against illegitimate dismissals. It also finally repealed Article 18 of the worker's statute, in place since 1970 (after successive weakening since the late 1990s), removing the right to reinstatement for illegitimate layoffs. Zoppoli notes that the law's emphasis has been on increasing the flexibility aspect of flexicurity rather than that of social security (2015). The law's provisions remain controversial and still show up in party manifestos (see, e..g https://dait.interno.gov.it/documenti/trasparenza/POLITICHE_20220925/Documenti/83/(83_progr_2_)-programma_elettorale_a.pdf)

Alienation and agency

The above portraits suggest that mobile Europeans' political lives are precarious. The agency that mobility offers seems a credible, if individualised, alternative to the frustrated agency that collective action and political participation might otherwise promise. Under widespread conditions of democratic disappointment and structural democratic deficits, mobile citizens may find that little is lost in shedding the yoke of politics. However, respondents' accounts suggest a more subtle reading: far from indifference, many remained engaged in political developments and concerned with the fate of their home and, to a lesser extent, host polities. Their condition might be better described as *alienation*—'an experience of individual disempowerment and also of disillusionment' (Somek, 2016, p. 37). Mobility may be one answer to this experience. But seeing as our concern is with the conditions which support mobile Europeans' *political* agency, this section explores the ways in which EU citizenship may structural structurally reinforce depoliticising aspects of cross-border life and discusses how they might be redressed.

The *right* for mobile EU citizens to participate in elections at the municipal and European level in their host state are established as a Treaty right.[143] However, these partial political rights were derided as 'trivial', even by contemporary observers (Weiler, 1998). EU citizens' ultimate 'political subjectification' in the host state through electoral participation remains 'non-existent for general elections' (de Witte, 2021, p. 24), leaving them 'deprived of any *meaningful* political capacity' (Dani, 2016, p. 76, emphasis added).[144]

This leaves mobile Europeans with awkward divisions in their political life. The rights they enjoy in the place that they live also seem the least consequential.[145] Sociological studies have found EU movers' to be characteristically unmotivated to participate in

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[143] (Article 20, "TFEU," 2012)

[144] Joppke makes a similar observation, noting that EU citizenship 'notoriously sleights citizenship's political dimension' (2019, p. 870).

[145] Jo Shaw identifies another 'deficit' here: 'It is ironic that while the European Union exists in part to encourage mobility between the Member States, it gives rise at the same time to a structural "citizenship deficit," in that those persons who do exercise mobility rights are excluded from full democratic membership of the state of residence unless they take on the national citizenship of the host state.' (Shaw, 2007a, p. 2553)

local elections, which was often the case with my respondents. Ed, a UK citizen living in Barcelona for more than a decade, offers a typical expression of this attitude: 'I mean, I know I can vote in, kind of, local elections, but … probably I should.' Adrian Favell found similar levels of (dis-)engagement. His interviewees, while typically well-informed and firmly integrated into their city contexts, were uninterested in voting in local elections, saving their political commitment for their home country (Favell, 2010, p. 200ff.). Recchi, likewise, finds little that is remarkable about mobile Europeans' voting behaviour in elections for the European Parliament compared to their counterparts back home (Recchi, 2015, p. 105ff.).

Whether long-term resident EU citizens ought to have voting rights in *national* elections in their host member state remains strongly debated.[146] Arguments grounded in the 'all-affected' principle, or those which claim that EU citizens have already been substantively invited in to the polity as 'contributor[s], collaborator[s], and burden-sharer[s]' (through free movement rights), maintain that democratic principles demand national voting rights for long-term residents (Kostakopoulou, 2019). Nevertheless, finally breaking the link between national citizenship and voting rights in national elections remains, for now, an unrealistic prospect.[147]

In terms of our initial framing of 'disembedding' and 're-embedding' that we have been developing, and again with reference again to Honneth's conditions of social freedom, however, the topic demands a further look. Political participation is not only a question of a right to individual voice in the direction of government policy; it acts as an invitation to see oneself as an interdependent political subject whose interests are intertwined with those of others in the polity (Dani, 2016, pp. 65–66). Honneth stresses that political rights are the medium through which one encounters others' wills in a democratic society (Honneth, 2014, p. 79): 'After all, political rights necessarily

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[146] For a spirited exchange, see the contributions in (Bauböck, 2019b, pp. 21–90)

[147] It was not, for example, included in a list of measures for 'promoting and enhancing citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU' (European Commission, 2020, p. 48). However, the European Commission continues to canvass opinion on the matter. A Flash Eurobarometer from 2020 registered that 63% of Europeans 'consider that it is justified for EU citizens living in an EU country that is not their country of origin to acquire the right to vote in national elections and referenda in their country of residence' (European Commission, 2020, pp. 13–15). General support for the idea seems to be persistent: Jo Shaw cited, already in 2007, a Special Eurobarometer which asked respondents to rank proposals for strengthening EU citizenship. Allowing EU citizens to vote in all elections in their host member state came in third place among the available options (European Commission, 2006, p. 45; Shaw, 2007b, p. 4).

involve an activity that can only be carried out in cooperation, or at least in exchange, with all other fellow legal subjects.' Again, Honneth is concerned that people do not remain in 'isolation' after having developed a private self in societies that promote negative and reflexive freedoms. The 'third category of rights', he explains, 'must be viewed as an invitation to engage in civil activity and thus in the formation of a common will' (ibid.).

Elections are the most visible instances of democratic mediation, where the priorities of the polity are negotiated in public, and where voters have a chance to participate in contesting the issues that affect their lives (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 323). Elections are not merely formal exercises in aggregating competing priorities—they also serve as routine constitutive moments for political communities (Kutz, 2002, p. 486; Shaw, 2007b, p. 58), and provide the formal link between individual well-being and collective goals (Barber, 2002, p. 258). In this sense, 'the ability to play a part in deliberations about collective action' is both individually and communally constitutive. Rights to participate inculcate a subjective sense of political equality with other members of the community on the basis of mutual recognition, and stimulates a reflexive mechanism by which individuals 'try to make [their] goals the goals of the group' (ibid.).

From a perspective of political obligation, which would want to see mobile Europeans socialised into a political relationship with the 'native' citizens with whom they share a social space, the desirability of allowing EU citizens a vote is clear. It removes an element of competition and replaces it with a cooperation nurtured through public deliberation (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, esp. p. 243). But it is not necessary to appeal to democratic principles to expect voting rights to be a salient topic of conversation amongst our respondents: more grounded appeals to 'bread and butter politics' may suffice (Koch, 2016). Given the experiences of some of the respondents, as we saw in Chapter 4, one might expect that having a formal say in *national* political decisions would be a live topic. While the issues decided in local elections may have some limited salience for mobile citizens' lives, the most consequential decisions—those which decide the allocation of national budgets to localities in the first place, minimum wage legislation, and labour policy and social welfare provision, for example—are largely determined at the national level (O'Keeffe, 1994, p. 95, cited in Hardy, 1996).

From this perspective, then, it appears not only surprising, but problematic, that few respondents suggested that they were troubled by their exclusion from national elections in the country in which they lived and worked. For the most part, their disenfranchisement was taken as a social fact, even by very long-term residents. This is, nevertheless, again consistent with other studies of mobile EU citizens, who typically do not problematise their political rootedness in their country of citizenship, even after decades abroad (Favell, 2010, pp. 201, 208). My respondents accounts reinforced this finding: the home country was still seen as the 'natural' place to vote, and most discussions of politics, when they have specific referents, gravitated towards the home-polity.

For EU citizens, the incongruence between the sites of political belonging (where one has citizenship and voting rights) and sites of day-to-day social embeddedness risks a double alienation from politics. In the first instance, free movement provides easy exit options which allow one to 'move away from politics' when it fails to deliver or seems irredeemable. Meanwhile, the conditions which determine the patterns and conditions of daily life—that define the nature of the labour relations that one engages in, decide levels of funding for public services and other collective goods, and so on—remain largely out of reach, reinforcing the feeling of being subject to political decisions taken by others. Both make politics as a credible means to agency appear dubious, creating a self-reinforcing push towards disengagement. But, aside from frustrating opportunities to have one's interests represented or aims realised, it also leaves the individual bereft of opportunities to develop a public expression of the self that is only accessible through the 'shared praxis' of democratic interaction (Honneth, 2014, p. 80).

Conclusions

This chapter looked at mobile Europeans' views on politics through the way they discussed their voting habits, evaluated political developments in their home and host states, and revealed what they thought was credible to expect from politicians and political parties. The goal was to discern (a) whether mobile EU citizens consider collective action through political participation to be a credible source of agency in

their own lives, and (b) how narratives of border-crossing intersected with their views on politics.

The chapter suggests a mixed picture. Amidst often emphatic disavowals of politics, centred around cynical interpretations of the motives of the political classes and a deep inertia in society and politics that militate against positive change, respondents' accounts also contained the kernel of something more optimistic. Speakers were able to make cogent critiques of political developments, showing a continued engagement in matters of public life. These critiques often expressed a sense of injustice, suggesting an *alienation* from politics rather than an anti-political disposition. Within this mix, mobility appears in a few different forms. For some, mobility offers a means to shape their circumstances that is unlikely to come from a politics that is inattentive to their needs or antagonistic to their desires. This tendency to 'move away from politics', however, is complicated by many participants' continued interest in politics in their home country—for some, even after many years away. The dislocations implied—that political engagement (through commitment to voting, through critique)—is mostly reserved for the country in which my respondents no longer live, while political rights are incomplete in the host country. To address the latter, we then rehearsed the case for political rights for EU citizens residing in another member state, on the basis that people should have the opportunity (and perhaps the obligation) to embed themselves in the institutional life of the polity that they live in.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

After the careful look at the stories and perspectives of this group of mobile Europeans, in this final concluding chapter, we zoom back out to reflect on what they tell us about the lived experience of EU citizenship today. Following on from the three empirical chapters and their discussions, this chapter will first summarize the empirical findings, then lay out the study's contributions to the debates presented in Chapter 1. Given the critical diagnoses explicated in the empirical chapters, which partially confirmed some of the concerns in the theoretical literature, the discussion then moves on to considering what insights can be offered by the more hopeful undercurrents present in the conversations. In short, this chapter re-engages the question of what the promises and pitfalls of mobility are from the perspective of political personhood, and then moves on consider the kinds of conditions which might foster a less alienated political subjectivity for mobile Europeans, and, more ambitiously, which could promote elements of a transnational political subjectivity. In closing, the chapter will explore the limitations of the study's insights by laying out avenues for future research suggested by the study's findings.

Cross-border mobility and political subjectivity

The theoretical points of departure for the thesis are found in those debates concerned with the question of what kind/s of political subjectivity EU citizenship is understood to foster. A good deal of attention has been paid to the potential for EU citizenship, by destabilising the social bonds on which democratic community is built, to lead to atomisation, alienation, and depoliticization of social life. In its place, mobile Europeans find the path to self-realisation and agency, not through the realisation of shared goals and a sense of co-creation of the common good, but in contingent, instrumental, and transactional relationships in the places they move between. Even

those accounts which are more optimistic, which stress the emancipatory potential of free movement rights, cannot fully answer these concerns. On the other hand, it is precisely the potential within reconfiguring the bonds underpinning democratic community which lead even its most thoughtful critics to defend the promise of EU citizenship. Here the hope is that political bonds can escape their national boundaries, not as a triumph of supranational EU institutions, but as a normative goal: the internal transformation of political subjectivity which sees the potential in the recognition of difference and plurality as the basis of future democratic communities, in a world where crossing borders is increasingly a feature.

Given its concern with the 'lived experience' of EU citizenship, this study took a different tack from rights-focused accounts and from empirical studies of activist cohorts or those who move in response to specific conditions or restrictions. Instead, I engaged with mobile EU citizens whose movements reflect a certain diversity of experience and, often, a vagueness in what spurred their decision to move across borders. This was intentional, since more idealistic readings of EU citizenship suggest that mobility should be widely accessible and might be undertaken for any number of reasons from bare economic pragmatism to a more reflexive pursuit of self-actualization, and because a focus on activist mobile Europeans may have overemphasised EU citizenship's contestatory or civic potential and underestimated some of its potentially depoliticizing tendencies.

On the basis of the stories and views of 30 mobile Europeans from 12 different member states and living in several cities across Europe, I explored how EU citizens' talk about mobility intersected with their appraisals of politics, society, and their own personal aspirations. For some respondents, critical views towards their home societies and cynicism towards politics and politicians did, at least at first blush, support the view of the mobile EU citizen as an individualistic and anti-political agent for whom cross-border mobility offers the best realisation of personal aspiration in an otherwise disappointing and competitive world. Others highlighted the tensions that a 'disembedded', cross-border life had introduced, including the fragmentation of their social lives, with family, friends and affective relationships; political rights and civic engagement; and their working life/career, being scattered across two or more member state contexts.

If analysis of the empirical material did yield evidence, in this sense, of alienation, fragmentation, and instrumentalism, with their attendant depoliticising effects, a closer look at the material also showed the potential for overcoming these pathologies. Conversations also revealed evidence of mobile Europeans' engagement, actual or inchoate desire for participation, and a strained relationship—as opposed to, say, pragmatic resignation—with their democratic disappointments and inability to unify the different parts of their cross-border lives.

The analysis makes a contribution to concerns arising in political and legal-theoretical accounts of cross-border mobility and EU citizenship. The critical legal literature, which is dealt with in Chapters 1 and 2, suggests that the institutional ideal of European citizenship has gone astray, as EU institutions shape an EU citizenship which is less and less a status based on political equality and shared civic value and increasingly one based in the evaluation of personal circumstances. This contingent— as opposed to more universal or fundamental—recognition of status, increasingly a feature of EU citizenship law, defines EU citizens in atomistic and contingent terms, in ways that are likely to foster alienation and instrumentalism vis-à-vis the societies they live in.

Political theory, meanwhile, continues to engage possibilities to counter such tendencies. In the context of increased cross-border migration, political theorists have made a number of proposals that try to account for the changing composition of the polity by identifying the elements necessary for promoting democratic interaction between those who share 'the burdens of social life in common' (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 239). The approach taken in this study hoped to shed light on these concerns empirically through discussions that explored the ways in which mobile citizens related their mobility to their views about politics and society in their home and host member states.

The study ultimately confirmed that many of the normative concerns identified in the critical literature were valid—that there were features of the kind of mobile life encouraged by EU free movement rights that are depoliticising and individualising. However, important and more hopeful caveats to these concerns also became evident, in the ways that I identified above. The study suggests that the potential exists for alienated mobile Europeans to re-encounter their political selves. Later in the chapter,

I will discuss some of the possibilities that might foster this, in light of the empirical insights gained from my respondents. Some of these possibilities can be found in various forms in extant debates in the political-theoretical and legal-theoretical literature, and will be evaluated in light of the empirical material I have set out. They include expansion of political rights, especially the granting of voting rights in national elections for long-term residents, increasing political obligations for mobile Europeans, and a turn away from court's increasingly exclusionary rulings defining the 'good mobile citizen' on the basis of their (increasingly precarious) position within the labour market or on the basis of other increasingly narrow views of what sorts of personal characteristics define a deserving EU citizen. First, we will take a closer look at how the study addressed some of the debates raised in the first chapter.

Are mobile EU citizens 'accidental cosmopolitans'?

Somek's characterisation of 'accidental cosmopolitanism' (Somek, 2012, 2014b) neatly encapsulated many of the normative critiques that the thesis has been investigating. Somek's critique, which resonates with other contemporary critiques in political theory (see, e.g. Bellamy, 2012) emphasises the pathologies arising from an over-emphasis on individual agency and the ways in which free movement rights can be seen as antithetical to the development of collective agency based in social bonds grounded in interaction with specific others in a place, over time. As in Bellamy's articulation of these concerns, there are different conceptions of self-determination at play in these developments: the worry is that EU citizenship, based in free movement, encourages people to see the path to the realisation of their personal goals outside a conception of political citizenship which encourages a recognition and incorporation of the wills of others when pursuing one's own. The relational concept underpinning these contingent, individualised interactions is based in what Somek elsewhere calls 'the private polity' (Somek, 2014a), underpinned by market-based models of liberty (Bellamy, 2012).

To some extent, the empirical investigation bore these concerns out. Some respondents distanced themselves from any strong commitment to collective bonds either in their home or their host state. In these cases, justifications were often centred around strong

critiques of the character of the national society or in the distrust of politicians to act in the interest of citizens. They framed their paths to self-realisation in terms of their individual agency and the (free movement) rights which enabled them to freely pursue it in whatever context seemed the best fit. However, as I have tried to demonstrate, instances in which the 'accidental cosmopolitan' label could be unequivocally applied to my respondents were actually far fewer than initially seemed to be the case. More commonly, respondents expressed—either explicitly or implicitly—a sense of loss of meaningful political community and ambivalence towards the individualised circumstances of their own lives. While respondents' framing of what appeared as *credible* paths to agency were often presented in depoliticised terms, this was not accompanied by a full endorsement of their unencumbered individual agency. Their 'accidental cosmopolitanism', in this sense, remained conflicted and expressed not an 'embrace of civic interpassivity' (Somek, 2014b, p. 150), but a reluctant alienation from the communal structures of politics and society.

Are mobile EU citizens 'emancipated'?

The thesis was also interested in the extent to which EU citizenship was 'emancipatory' in the ways suggested in some of the theoretical literature. Emancipation in debates about EU citizenship tends to be focused on people's ability to realise their personal aspirations. The nation state is posited as the principal barrier to emancipation through its tendency to enforce monolithic and intractable cultural norms and values, limited economic opportunities, fixed political configurations, and so on. Acting against such limitations, by endowing Europeans with individual rights enforceable against member states, EU citizenship and free movement rights offer emancipation from the nation state in the broadest sense.

A reading of my respondents' views suggests that this view of emancipation needs to be disaggregated. Many respondents were not looking for emancipation from their national context or their nationality *per se*, but rather struggling to reconcile the different aspects of their selves (including their national selves) to achieve a practical mode of life and coherent identity across borders. Several expressed a desire to return home, but had difficulty reconciling the contradictions that this would create with the

lives they had established in their host member state. Many pointed to a specific area of their life that had been the main impetus for their mobility, rather than implicating an overbearing nation state *sensu lato*. The ambivalence of EU citizenship's form of emancipation, I would like to suggest, lies in the fact that the disaggregation of the social world through mobility creates its own constraining counter currents.

Again, recalling Honneth's model of social freedom can offer some useful direction. In this reading, the sites of social freedom (or 'emancipation') are not to be found at the aggregate level of society but rather in specific kinds of social relations, which might be affective, economic, social, and political. For my respondents, the best chance of 'emancipation' in one or another of these social spheres was often to be found in two or more member states. Emancipation, then, may be seen to go hand-in-hand with fragmentation of the lifeworld, which may in fact hinder prospects for the re-embeddedness that is necessary for re-establishing the political self in a new context. Moreover, a concept of emancipation achieved through *exit* elides the possibility of achieving emancipation *within* a national context at the level of these social spheres. The solidarity structures fostered through collective action in the workplace, for example, have often been sites of 'emancipation' in the more common usage of the term, where it refers to the decommodification of social life (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 40ff.). Attenuating the power of markets over individual lives, especially for working people, has been usually understood as an achievement of politics and collective action (Crouch, 1999, p. 381; Somek, 2013, p. 281). This points to another aspect of emancipation which is not well captured by the focus on self-actualization: the opportunity to reassert freedom collectively (Somek, 2014a, p. 171).

This suggests that the framing of EU free movement rights as emancipatory vis-à-vis the nation state is not sufficiently nuanced to capture the ways in which EU citizenship is both liberating and constraining, as well as potentially depoliticising. Of course, there may be national configurations of social, economic, and political relationships that are particularly oppressive from the point of view of an individual attempting to pursue a specific life project and their notion of 'the good life'. But the idea that states are offering totalising notions of the good life from which one must escape does not describe the realities of life in most liberal, pluralistic member states today, where possibilities exist to express oneself in a variety of ways (Bellamy, 2019, p. 110). Of

course, there is clearly a credible proposition here that member states have distinct and discernible differences in many social spheres—how they organise the economy, what kinds of cultural contests are happening in society and who is winning them, how politics is organised, and how well it is seen to function. One may find one or another of these contexts more attractive. My respondents' accounts suggest that attention needs to be paid to the tensions and trade-offs that come with living across borders, and the specific configurations of 'emancipation' and constraint that comes with cross-border living.

Moreover, the claim that emancipation from the nation state is achieved through mobility is further called into question by my respondents' continued interest in their home polities. Many respondents highlighted the value of the perspectives they gained from having lived in other member states, which they considered would also be resources for their own member states and a justification for continued political engagement with their home polity. The 'reflexive freedom' that mobility offers, in other words, which allows for an projection of the self beyond the nation state, in some cases is redirected back to foster a renewed engagement with the home polity. This suggests that nationality and state membership is not as oppressive as is sometimes depicted when framing discussions of the emancipatory potential of EU citizenship. Rather, the nation remains an important constitutive force, source of coherence, site of (albeit partial) emancipation, and persistent site of emotional, solidaristic, and political investment.

Re-politicising the lives of mobile citizens

Especially in Chapters 5 and 6, I uncovered some of the contradictions in mobile EU citizens' political lives. Some respondents found themselves for more than a decade in their host state, working, paying taxes, taking public transportation, some with children at school, and yet with no formal say in the national policies that affect these aspects of their lives. Nevertheless, respondents were often committed and engaged with political and social questions. Most respondents' inclination, however, was to draw on examples from their home country when appraising and offering critiques of politics, politicians, and trends in society. The dislocation between where mobile

citizens carry out their daily lives and where they have political rights and the inclination to participate has long been at the centre of debates about whether EU citizens should have voting rights in their member state of residence. I have already suggested in Chapter 6 that this dislocation may contribute to the depoliticization of mobile Europeans' lives.

As we saw in Chapter 6, there are scholars and activists who advance interest-based arguments for including resident EU citizens in national political contests. I have tried to make a similar argument on the basis of the virtues of democratic interaction as generative of political community. Throughout the thesis I have cited several theorists who make the case for political rights in these terms. Once again, Honneth's (2014) theory of social freedom stresses the importance of shared civic praxis, and I have also highlighted Neuvonen's (2019c) arguments about how regional integration projects may inaugurate new possibilities for moving beyond our current nation-based conceptions of membership by including non-citizens in political processes with 'native' citizens. Nicholas Barber, likewise, lays out the normative premise that '[i]Individuals who are members of a state have a right to be treated as citizens of that state; they have a right to be shown the same level of political respect as others within their community' (Barber, 2002, p. 258). De Schutter and Ypi (2015) invert that responsibility by suggesting that long-term resident migrants have an *obligation* to share in the burdens of citizenship. Here again, they share in Neuvonen's premise that that inclusion can precede integration. Those who see membership in the polity as dependent on a high degree of integration may have things backwards: 'If anything, it is plausible to suppose that full political inclusion in the polity might increase cohesion rather than the other way round' (p. 249). These arguments share in Bernard Crick's insight that it is the shared practice of politics which creates a political community; political community is not prior to democratic interaction.

What these views share is a commitment that shared political praxis is necessary both for the full realisation of the public expression of the self, and because it appropriately incorporates all of those who are already participating in maintaining the common good into an overtly politicised relationship. It arranges people, in other words, into 'an associative scheme that requires them to think and act together' (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015, p. 239). Furthermore, I have highlighted, on the basis of existing studies,

evidence of the reflexive process that can be stimulated by being *invited* to become part of 'the people'. Non-citizen residents who have been enfranchised alongside 'native' citizens when voting in national political decisions have found that the recognition of their political equality offered a chance to reflect upon the basis of their belonging within the polity.

Without the possibility of meaningful political participation, people are left to define their contributions to society in other terms, and often in instrumental terms of exchange and value-for-money considerations. Political inputs can of course also be conceptualised instrumentally, as in models of politics derived from social choice theory, but they also hold a much more profound possibility of signalling that one's value in society does not only rest on one's market value—labour, taxes—but on one's equal status as a member of a collective sustaining the common good. Again, with Barber, we might suggest that 'not being treated as a citizen' has the negative effect of making the resident non-citizen 'feel that her place in the community rests on sufferance; she is tolerated by, rather than included within, society' (2002, p. 258).

Following from this, giving mobile EU citizens the vote would also help to resolve the conflict that was expressed by my respondents in which personal agency through mobility seems to compete with political agency through collective participation. The question then becomes by what mechanism political rights for mobile EU citizens might be expanded.

Though I have framed this concern in somewhat different terms, the debate over voting rights in national elections for resident EU citizens is not a new one. Much of the normative motivation of this thesis can be boiled down to the following formulation by Jo Shaw: 'if the impulse of the EU treaties is positively to encourage EU citizens to exercise their free movement rights, then how are they to be protected against the negative consequences of moving' (Shaw, 2007a, p. 2562)? In this case, Shaw is concerned that the EU's 'free movement space' does not become 'a space of negative democratic impetus' (ibid.). Non-national EU citizens do not have access to the '"gold standard" of political rights' in their host member state—the right to vote in national elections (Shaw, 2007a, p. 2569). Mobile EU citizens, in other words, continue to suffer from a 'citizenship deficit', despite the Commission's recognition in past years that national voting rights would constitute 'important civic rights' and are the

condition for EU citizens' integration into their host states (p. 2559). There are, however, as Shaw lays out, a host of political, legal, and constitutional barriers to expanding voting rights: not only would an expansion of the franchise necessitate a treaty change that would require approval from all member states, but enfranchising non-citizen residents may simply violate the national constitutions of some member states.

In addition to these practical and legal barriers, Bauböck (2014) has argued[148] that any proposals in favour of expanding the franchise must respond to the imperatives of boundary stability and take into account the nature of the polity. In the first instance, this militates against simply expanding the franchise to resident EU citizens, since such an automatic granting of voting rights to non-national residents would override his more stringent criteria for democratic inclusion. One way to satisfy these criteria, however, would be through naturalization in the member state.

If the link between national citizenship and the right to vote in national elections were to be maintained, then actively promoting resident EU citizens' political inclusion would require giving resident EU citizens—at least those who were long-term residents—some form of privileged access to national citizenship structures. Of course, it is already possible for resident EU citizens to apply for citizenship in their host member state, but there is a problem with this purely voluntaristic model. As Joppke (2010, p. 15) has observed, leaving the pursuit of political membership through national citizenship in the hands of individuals risks the process falling into the '"neoliberal" emphasis on "responsibilizing" the individual […] holding her responsible for her own successful, officially certified integration without which citizenship would be denied to her, thus unburdening resource-starved states from integrative tasks they no longer can or will fulfill.' This, indeed, resembles the current status quo, in which resident EU citizens have to navigate their host state's naturalisation laws in order to gain access to the vote. As was the case with my respondents, very few mobile Europeans are interested in taking the (often onerous) extra steps necessary to obtain citizenship in a country where their rights in most other respects are already guaranteed. However, this leaves them with a notably weak

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[148] Bauböck's argument is explicitly outside of the context of EU citizenship, but the normative criteria he applies are nevertheless instructive.

political link to the polity in which they live. It also does not take into account the theoretical positions above which argue for inclusion as a means to foster political attachments amongst previously excluded others.

One possibility for addressing this impasse, short of expanding political rights for EU citizens, which is at present an unrealistic prospect for the reasons mentioned above, would be then a facilitated path to citizenship for resident EU citizens with an actively invitational element. Unlike mandatory citizenship proposals, which would *require* that long term residents apply for citizenship (de Schutter & Ypi, 2015), or ascriptive citizenship proposals, which grant it as a matter of course, the invitation model still responds to Bauböck's 'double consent' criterion that the immigrant (in this case the EU citizen) 'needs to express her desire to become a citizen', and the state needs to formally accept (Bauböck, 2014, p. 830). However, this volitional moment could nevertheless be actively encouraged through already existing structures of EU mobility rights, through which, for example, the status of permanent residence is already established for long-term residents (Citizenship Directive, 2004).

This proposal avoids the indeterminacy of an automatic expansion of rights, the obligatory quality of mandatory citizenship for long-term residents, and the purely voluntaristic and potentially 'neoliberal' model that leaves the choice entirely in the hands—and circumstances—of individuals. While this proposal would loosen up the criteria for membership in the national demos and somewhat expand the democratic boundaries of EU member states, this expansion would be limited by the legal structures of EU citizenship and could be imbued with explicit ideational content linking EU citizenship to a new form of transnational political subjectivity nevertheless grounded in the member state polities. Democratic equality within the host state would serve to re-politicise mobile Europeans' life in their host societies without breaking the link between national citizenship and democratic membership. And the facilitated access to member state naturalisation processes could be explicitly linked to EU citizenship rights and to one's status as an EU citizen signalling that EU citizenship has rediscovered its neglected political dimension.

The concern of this thesis has been the prospect for EU citizens to live a 'political' life, even when living across borders. I have sought to develop an account of EU citizenship as a 'lived experience', rather than as a juridico-political status, that can respond to the normative concerns raised in political and legal-philosophical theories of EU citizenship. My respondents' narratives show that there are, as some theorists had feared, structural features of transnational life and of EU citizenship that may encourage a depoliticised view of the self. As I have tried to argue, these alienating tendencies need to be countered by offering mobile citizens meaningful ways to become politically re-embedded in the societies they move between if the transformative potential of EU citizenship is to be realised.

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Appendix 1: Methodological Discussion

Table 1: Discussion Participants

Discussion Participants						
		Name[149]	Gender	Age	Education/ Occupation	Country of nationality	Country of residence
Group 1 (Holborn)	London, United Kingdom	Marta	F	Late-30s	Catering staff	Poland	United Kingdom
		Paula	F	Early/mid 30s	Catering staff	Lithuania	United Kingdom
		Alexandra	F	Mid-30s	Catering staff	Poland	United Kingdom
		Catherine	F	Mid-50s	Catering staff	Ireland	United Kingdom
Group 2 (Stratford)	London, United Kingdom	Alessandro	M	Early-30s	Kitchen staff, restaurant	Italy	United Kingdom
		Julia	F		Formerly restaurant staff; trained in architecture and	Spain	United Kingdom
		Martina	F		Formerly restaurant staff; subtitling project coordinator	Spain	United Kingdom
		Matteo	M		Catering staff, training to earn IT certifications	Italy	United Kingdom

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[149] Names have been pseudonymized.

Group 3 (Piccadilly)	London, United Kingdom	Dimitris	M	Financial services (banking)	Greece	United Kingdom
		Elena	F	Financial services (banking)	Greece	United Kingdom
		Christos	M	Financial services (software)	Cyprus	United Kingdom
Group 4 (Borough 1)	London, United Kingdom	Katerina	F	Financial services	Greece	United Kingdom
		Konstantinos	M	Financial services	Greece	United Kingdom
		Anna	F	Financial services	Greece	United Kingdom
		Manos	M	Financial services	Greece	United Kingdom
Group 5 (Borough 2)	London, United Kingdom	Julian	M	Financial services (banking)	Germany	United Kingdom
		Martín	M	Financial services (risk economist)	Spain	United Kingdom
		Francesca	F	NGO (international development)	Italy	United Kingdom
Group 6 (Online 1)	Online (Barcelona)	Ed	M	Financial services	United Kingdom	Spain
		Tommaso	M	Financial services (insurance consultant)	Italy	Spain
		Francisco	M	Financial services	Portugal	Spain
		Maja	F	Financial services (legal/counsel)	Poland	Spain

		Anastasia	F	Professional services/ administration	Romania	Italy
Group 7 (Online 2)	Online (Spain, Brussels, Milan)	Raia	F	Professional services/ administration	Bulgaria	Italy
		Rita	F	NGO employee	Italy	Belgium
		Lou	M	Language teacher	Italy	Spain
Group 8 (Milan)	Milan, Italy	Charlotte	F	Language teacher	Germany	Italy
		Lina	F	Language teacher	Germany	Italy
		Anna	F	Language teacher	Germany	Italy

Recruiting participants

There are a number of practical obstacles to overcome when arranging focus groups. After deciding who the participants will be, the next problem to be confronted is how to find those participants and convince them to participate (Morgan & Bottorff, 2010). Many of my respondents worked in cafés or restaurants, or were self-employed on a number of small contracts. There are particular challenges in recruiting workers on an hourly wage or who work irregular shifts, since, in comparison to office workers, fewer assumptions can be made about how their schedules align. Often, even once a group of participants was in principle assembled, and all had agreed to participate, coordinating schedules delayed the discussion itself for weeks. Several potential groups fell apart because of these logistical difficulties. Especially since my respondents were not members of civic organizations or otherwise spokespersons for a particular set of issues, all participants needed to be convinced to sacrifice an hour or two of their free time to a discussion with a stranger about an unfamiliar topic. Finally, a time and place must be sought which is convenient for everyone, which often involved meeting in the evenings or weekends.

In the first instance, then, obstacles like this recommend pragmatism and flexibility on the part of the researcher. The first set of group discussions was carried out with mobile EU citizens based in London. Especially in the initial stages of operationalising the research design, beginning in London was in part motivated by proximity and ease of access, given London's large and varied concentration of EU citizens.[150] Moreover, London enjoyed a status—before Brexit at any rate—as one of the more dynamic and attractive 'Eurocities' for mobile Europeans (Favell, 2008). Given that I aimed to include participants working in many sectors, including hospitality and the financial service industry, London offered plenty of opportunities for an initial approach. The first steps taken in recruitment of participants involved spending time in local cafés where I had already established some familiarity, and eventually attempting to solicit participation from one or another employee with whom I had established a rapport, and who would be willing to recruit co-workers on my behalf. This approach was extremely time-intensive and, ultimately, not particularly productive. In one case, a café worker was eager to participate, but was unable to persuade any of his co-workers to join. While this initial approach did generate a few early exploratory discussions, which were useful in honing the themes of the subsequent focus groups, the recruitment strategy had to be abandoned.

Ultimately, recruitment relied on making initial contact through a known social contact who was willing to recruit one or more participants on my behalf and vouch for the basic rationale of the research being proposed. In these cases, my initial social contact was not included in the groups, and, while the participants often knew each other, they did not know me. Further recruitment relied on snowball sampling from existing participants as well as additional recruitment through social contacts.

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[150] The UK's Office for National Statistics estimated London's resident population to be around one million EU nationals in 2018 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Favell makes important observations about the difficulty of making accurate claims about the size of resident EU citizen populations: given that free movement removes formalities like visas for entry, and, in many member states, does not carry a requirement to register, official estimates are likely to undercount actual population size. Especially in the UK, which has relatively low bureaucratic requirements, registering one's presence can often be deferred until some practical hurdle is reached, like needing to update an identity document (Favell, 2008, p. 44).

Online qualitative research

Personal circumstances and, more dramatically, restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic meant multiple interruptions dogged the fieldwork and necessitated changes in the recruitment process and in the discussion medium. While Covid restrictions were implemented, especially lockdowns and social distancing rules, neither recruitment nor group discussions could proceed in-person. Two of the discussions were therefore carried out using videoconferencing software. The advantages and disadvantages of online qualitative research are well known. Online research reduces some of the logistical challenges—it is easier to coordinate schedules, and travel considerations are eliminated (Lareau, 2021, p. 27). In addition, during Covid, people were more often at home and there was less competition for their time. In my case, this had the additional notable advantage of increasing the geographical scope of the groups, allowing participants living in Spain and Belgium to participate alongside others in Italy within a single group. This led to a conversation between participants that would have been practically impossible to arrange in person, in which two people had moved to Italy and the other two were Italians who had moved away from Italy.

On the other hand, online qualitative research makes sustaining a sociable discursive dynamic more challenging, as others have noted (see, for example, Lareau, 2021, pp. 25–27). In principle, the discussion structure described in Chapter 3 was adhered to; discussions began with a narrative portion before moving into a substantive thematic discussion. The etiquette of online discussions, however, impacted the interactive dynamics and patterns of speech within the group. While speakers still referenced each other's contributions when framing their own interventions, and still explicitly took cues from each other on which topics to expand upon, certain discursive practices were discouraged by the medium itself. Communication over online platforms is often characterised by minute delays in transmitting speech from one user to the others, and noise-cancelling features discourage multiple speakers from speaking over one another. Speakers learn to take account of these features of the technology, discouraging interruptions and other extemporaneous speech acts which are typical of sociable discussions in person, especially in public places that cue norms of casual discourse.

Comparing a typical transcript from an in-person group and an online group bear out these observations. In-person discussion transcripts are characterised by relatively short blocks of text with reactions, questions, and interruptions peppered throughout. Often there is a principal speaker at any given time developing an argument or recounting a story, but the flow of their conversation is often accompanied by various forms of encouragement, brief asides, scepticism, recognition, laughter, or humorous interventions from other group members. Online discussions appear to be more 'polite', characterised by much longer blocks of uninterrupted speech. In the transcript, texts representing each speaker's contribution in some cases ran easily to two single-spaced pages, as speakers took turns discussing particular topics, aware that interruptions would cause confusion over the electronic medium.

While the impact of the online format on speech dynamics would have been fatal for a project approaching respondents' interaction through a more formalised linguistic method like conversation analysis, which relies on paying close and systematic attention to interactive phenomena at the level of single words, clauses, and other discrete units of language to allow for a careful plotting of language-based social interaction, it is much less problematic for the approach taken here (Sidnell, 2016). The interpretative analysis of the data does rely on interactive dynamics, but not necessarily at the sub-sentence level, and not in a way which requires plotting the formal character of the interaction. The interpretative methods used here are interested in the way that participants make and negotiate meaning with each other, and small language cues, like confirmatory grunts, or single-word expressions of agreement are useful in signalling to the researcher shared understandings of topics under discussion. While some of these typical speech cues were less often to be found in online discussions, participants compensated by referencing points raised by other speakers, and by explicitly using their peers' interventions as points of departure.

While the delays and interruptions to the fieldwork meant that the group discussions were held over a much longer time period than initially planned, the structure of the discussions was not based on any shared 'time-sensitive' elements—for example, asking all groups to react to the same set of issues which had been present in national or local media narratives, as has been done in other studies based in 'political talk' (see, e.g. Gamson, 1992; Perrin, 2006). Indeed, such prompting elements were

explicitly avoided, since the diversity of the respondents (in terms of national origin, place of residence, length of residence) meant that I could not rely on presumptions of a shared frames of reference in media exposure or knowledge of political developments. Rather, I relied on the group members themselves to offer reference points that could act as a spur to further discussion within the group.

To the extent that a time-sensitive element existed during the fieldwork, it was in the UK's status as an EU member-state, and this influenced the discussions in the ways that were discussed in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, all group discussions held in the UK took place long before the UK's withdrawal from the EU on 31 January 2020, while the UK was still an EU member state, and in which free-movement rights and EU citizenship rights were still active.

Language and transcription

In Chapter 3, I expanded at length on the precepts which guided the structure of the group discussions and the conceptual approach informing my analysis of the language generated. Especially considering my emphasis on informal, 'everyday' talk, it was important that respondents be able to express themselves in a language in which they could fluently express themselves and invoke vernacular and idiomatic phrases when making their interventions. The discussion groups in the UK were all held in English. For most participants, English was a second language, but in no cases did speakers have difficulty in making themselves understood. Grammatical errors have been preserved in the transcript, but during the discussions these were not a barrier either to the speaker (in terms of expression) or the interviewer (in terms of comprehension).

Two group discussions were carried out in Italian: Group 7, an online discussion held with two Italian citizens living, respectively in Spain and Belgium, along with a Bulgarian citizen and a Romanian citizen living in Italy, and Group 8, held in person in Milan with a group of German citizens living in Italy. In both cases, some extra preparation work was required on the part of the interviewer in order to clearly and succinctly introduce the discussion, but otherwise I was able to conduct the discussion, transcribe and translate the recordings without difficulty. If any ambiguity arose in transcription or when translating a phrase from Italian to English, I consulted a native speaker to ensure that the participant's intended meaning was preserved.

One online discussion (Group 6) with participants living in Barcelona, was conducted in English. All participants were able to participate in English except Maja, originally from Poland, who answered questions in Spanish. The other group participants could step in as necessary to interpret between English and Spanish, but, again, Maja's responses were transcribed faithfully, and any ambiguities in translation were checked with a native speaker.

All discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. As is evident in the excerpts that I have reproduced throughout the text, I preserved the natural speech patterns and artifacts (hesitation, interruptions, laughs, etc.), in order to recreate the conversational rhythms with as much fidelity as possible. Given interpretative methods' emphasis on shared 'meaning-making', it is especially appropriate to preserve extemporaneous moments of negotiation, either between speakers or as a speaker searches for the right words to express their views.