

# Lingering Borders in the European Union: Migrant Workers in Spain and the Netherlands

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The fall of the Berlin Wall...more or less completely changed the nature of the EU, giving rise to identity problems that still remain unresolved—and indeed were reflected by the refusal of the proposed EU constitution by the people of France and the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup>

Anthony Giddens, 2007

## I. Introduction

*W*ith the two European Union (EU) Enlargements of 2004 and 2007, an understanding of the antiquated and modern challenges, fears, and contradictions surrounding the inclusion of accession countries, as well as the respective rights of the “old” member states, has become essential to any contemporary analysis of current EU dynamics. This work incorporates my two semesters abroad in Barcelona, Spain, and Maastricht, the Netherlands, with the intended approach of further clarifying the Program’s mission: “intensive interrogation and observation of globalization in comparative perspective.” Before embarking on my study abroad, I was profoundly marked by an incident that solidified my resolution to study Eastern and Central Europe. In an effort to skip the bureaucratic visa process, I attempted to use my Romanian passport instead of my American passport to enter Europe. After inquiring at five different Spanish embassies as to whether my Romanian passport, after EU accession, would eliminate the need for a visa, I left the country still not knowing if my passport was yet functional in the realm of the European Union. Upon entering Spain, a border patrol officer enthusiastically informed me that the EU required no entry papers (besides a passport) for its citizens studying abroad; my Romanian passport had ceased to be just a sentimental souvenir. This incident was one of many that attested to the lack of general knowledge surrounding the new EU members and it contributed to my decision to study the interactions between the old and new member states. Fur-

thermore, both Spain and the Netherlands have generally been viewed as “different.” While Franco’s authoritarian regime emphasized the popular slogan, “*España es diferente*,” it is currently employed as a tactic to garner tourists. In contrast, the political and cultural dynamics of the Netherlands have traditionally been perceived as anomalous in their liberalism, compelling many to label the country as “different.”

This case study further problematizes and deepens previous studies by addressing the post-Enlargement period of the EU, a period that has yet to feel the effects of the post-modern academic discourse and rhetoric of grandiose proportions. While the 2004 and 2007 accession periods acquired massive media attention and produced a considerable number of studies, the post-Enlargement period has failed to generate any such attention. In addition to observing the idiosyncrasies of the European Union, this study centers upon the situation of migrant labor within the modern context of globalization and the present implications this global force presupposes for transitory migrant fluctuations of labor. More specifically, I intend to address two diverse populations, the Romanians and the Poles, and the significant changes that materialized in the social spheres of the receiving countries, Spain and the Netherlands, respectively, given that these spaces were previously associated with the predominant national fears of mass migration, job loss, and various levels of cultural animosity toward migrants.

Section II of this study provides a general overview of the implications of the 2004 and 2007 EU Enlargements, focusing primarily on labor transition periods. The third section explicates the situation of the two migrant groups by addressing general migration, highlighting cases of temporary labor migration, and assessing the post-Enlargement situation regarding fears of mass migration, job loss, and cultural threats. Section IV touches upon the forces of globalization within this context.

In approaching the study of globalization in comparative perspective, three final points must be addressed. First, contradictions form an essential component of this study, just as the multiplicity of forces and contradictions is part of globalization. The dynamics of globalization predicate and insist upon the simultaneous integration and fragmentation of people, identities, and concepts. Through globalization’s partner concept, “glocalization,” the local becomes ever transformed into the global, while the global suddenly mirrors the local.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, a definition of globalization, however compressed and oversimplified, proves indispensable to a general understanding of any EU discussion.

Anthony Giddens succinctly sums up this process as the “intensification of worldwide social relations both local and distant.”<sup>3</sup> Former Chief Economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, offers a more economically based definition of the phenomenon: “closer economic integration of the countries of the world through the increased flow of goods and services and capital, or even labor.”<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, although this study does not focus upon the local, regional, national, or transnational attitudes of immigrants or nationals (due to the difficulties in compiling and comparatively interpreting these diverse opinions), the research was somewhat hindered by the scarcity of available information sources, such as opinion polls. However, I have attempted to overcome these challenges through the realization of several personal interviews and numerous informal discussions in Spain, the Netherlands, and Romania. These “snapshots” provide invaluable and intimate insights, as they highlight the profound challenges and contradictions that migrant workers encounter.

### **A. European Union**

Originally constructed in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community, primarily as an economic agreement negotiated between the two countries of France and Germany, the European Union and its six founding members have since extended membership to 27 states. Apparent in the institution’s common market, trade policy, and freedom of movement of people and goods, the members demonstrate consistent unity and communication about the Union’s goals.<sup>5</sup> Despite this connectedness, however, there exist several key platforms on which the member states are unable to compromise. Given the unwillingness to reassign “decision-making authority in general and migration-related issues in particular to the supranational level,”<sup>6</sup> many of the nation-states feel a pressure that impedes them from fully cooperating with their fellow members. The contentious issue of migration, one that has received much scrutiny over the last few years, has proven particularly controversial for the EU as the “issue of mobile, ‘uncontrollable’ people...currently causes a great deal of intense, sometimes phobic, political and public debate in the member states.”<sup>7</sup> In particular, the EU features a basic inconsistency between diminishing internal borders while strengthening external borders. The result has come to be known as “fortress Europe,” or the lesser invoked “gated community”

(which, in contrast to the former, still permits the passage of marginally desired migrants).<sup>8</sup>

Migration has taken priority as a poignant issue for the new member states involved in the latest Enlargements because their internal borders face the issue of labor transition agreements that obstruct the free movement of labor, but which decidedly allow the almost contradictory free movement of people. With the consequent opening of specific work sectors of the labor market, older member states sacrificed a fundamental EU citizenship right (the freedom of labor) with the purpose of safeguarding national labor markets and welfare mechanisms.<sup>9</sup> This decision led to numerous problematic discussions and repercussions regarding permanent and temporary migrant workers, particularly those from Poland and Romania. Prior to the 2004 European Union Enlargement, Polish migrants made headlines as fears of mass migrations and social dumping inundating the labor market resonated throughout Western Europe. Most notably, these fears became personified by the Polish plumber in France, the emblematic figure of cheap labor originating from Central Europe. Following the subsequent 2007 Enlargement, the public anxiety originally focused on Poland was transferred to Romania, a country predicted to have mass migration due to the substantial differences between its lower GDP per capita and those of older member states, as well as its established migrant routes to countries like Spain and Italy.<sup>10</sup>

## II. Enlargement

To better contextualize the modern-day challenges of migrant workers, an understanding of the Enlargement process is essential. The accession negotiations for both Poland and Romania started soon after the fall of communism in 1989 as a way of embracing the West as portrayed by the European Union. After an arduous process of complying with thousands of pages of the *acquis communautaire*, these countries were finally allowed to “return to Europe.” Interestingly enough, Poland and Romania had never ceased to take ownership of their imagined status as Europeans; however, it was only after accession that the older member states were willing to award these countries official status in the European community. The 2004 Enlargement was memorable not only as the largest in the Union’s history but also for its inclusion of countries outside of Western Europe. Poland, along with nine other countries, successfully completed the Copenhagen criteria and gained

access to funds and incentives that would further promote security and economic stability in the country. Romania joined in 2007, along with Bulgaria, in a smaller but equally remarkable enlargement due in part to the discrepancy between the economies of the new member states and the old member states' more modern economic reasoning.<sup>11</sup>

### **A. Labor Transition Periods**

Of the many benefits the EU strives to offer its member states, the pan-European labor market is perhaps the most significant. According to Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome, the "freedom of movement of workers shall entail the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the member states as regards employment."<sup>12</sup> Although Poland and Romania took pride in their status as official member states, their inclusion did not entail the freedom of movement enjoyed by other member states. Despite the fact that Western Europe is facing aging societies and worker shortages, most governments and their media chose to focus on the fear of mass migration and cheap labor inundating their labor markets. As a result, almost all of the member states decided to implement three-year labor transition periods<sup>13</sup> for the 2004 Enlargement.

Poland finished its transition period in 2007, having accessed the majority of the EU labor markets. However, some member states, including the Netherlands, opted to extend the three-year transition periods to 2009 in order to ensure that their labor markets would not be overwhelmed by a massive influx of migrants.<sup>14</sup> These limitations did not apply to the desirable highly-skilled labor in sectors facing major shortages. Instead, they predominantly restricted the movement of low-skilled labor (the only exception pertained to seasonal agricultural labor).

Romania will tentatively complete its three-year transition period in 2009, along with Bulgaria. Similar to the previous accession, the transition period may be extended for two more years, according to each individual member state.<sup>15</sup> Presently members are reviewing their policies toward Romania and Bulgaria. Countries such as Spain are planning to terminate the transition period in 2009, without further extensions. In addition, some members have already signed and implemented bilateral labor agreements,<sup>16</sup> however other member states have shown themselves willing to further extend their labor transition periods in hopes of avoiding an increase in migrants.<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, in denying

workers access to the labor market, “domestic political considerations on the EU side overrode the principles of the single market; that is, high politics overturned policy paradigms that were well established within the Union.”<sup>18</sup> This was possible because:

[F]ear of mass migration stretches beyond fear of job loss and social benefit misuse. Being assumed to pursue ‘evil’ agendas of collective action (*stealing away ‘our’ jobs, shopping the welfare system*), immigrants are accused of threatening the moral proper order. They challenge the invisible lines wrapped around that order, which, with some sense of imagination, may be called society’s moral boundaries.<sup>19</sup>

The asymmetrical power relations between the old and new member states placed the latter in a position of subordination that allowed the former to take such action; however, the old member states attempted to alleviate these decisions by “making additional concessions in other negotiating chapters.”<sup>20</sup> In an attempt to rationalize their decisions, their fears of mass migration had been “thinly veiled by justifications of consistent policymaking or diplomatic fairness.”<sup>21</sup> One such justification was the use of migration forecasts through which governments sought to create order out of a complicated, chaotic situation. In her article, “Problematizing the ‘Orderly’ Aesthetic Assumptions of Forecasts of East-West Migration in the European Union,” Roos Pijpers describes the members’ desire for aesthetic socio-spatial order. She describes the “latent desire to order and structure social space”<sup>22</sup> being satisfied by these migration forecasts since they offer “visible, almost tangible proofs that immigration restricting measures are necessary to secure this order.”<sup>23</sup> However, it is noteworthy that:

The forecaster and the policy maker or politician each attaches different values and meanings to numbers. Whereas the former may experience aesthetic quality when successfully carrying out a demanding methodological challenge, the latter has the difficult task of communicating artificial certainty to influential claims-making actors in parliament and society.<sup>24</sup>

During the last two Enlargements, governments used these migration forecasts as justification for their actions. This knowledge contrasts with the fact that despite the large populations of Eastern and Central European migrants within countries such as the Netherlands, the numbers forecasted were not alarming.<sup>25</sup> During the first Enlarge-

ment, research has determined that, “the size and impact of migration flows does vary from Member state to Member State and [was] not necessarily determined by the degree of restrictions imposed.”<sup>26</sup> States like Germany and Austria saw an increase in immigration while others, such as the United Kingdom, received the forecasted number of immigrants. Yet these were not directly correlated with the degree of openness exhibited by the member state towards migrant workers. The implementation of labor transition periods for these countries was proof that both Bulgaria and Romania were “less favorably perceived.”<sup>27</sup> This was in part due to the greater inequality between the two countries’ GDPs and those of the old member states, in addition to “publicly held beliefs about Bulgaria and Romania’s inclinations toward organized crime and corruption.”<sup>28</sup> Not only the governments of member states, but also the media, focused on the paranoia and enforcement of stereotypical views of Eastern Europe, implying that geographical proximity does not ensure knowledge of a neighboring region.<sup>29</sup>

### III. Case Studies

#### A. The Polish in the Netherlands

Traditionally labeled as the most socially and culturally open country in Europe, the Netherlands has witnessed several waves of immigration in the last century. The influx started with the Moluccans, inhabitants of the Indonesian islands, who had fought alongside the Dutch in the KNIL, the Royal Dutch East Indies Army.<sup>30</sup> The Moluccans relocated to the Netherlands starting in the 1940s as part of a temporary program during which they were not supposed to work or be integrated into Dutch society. However, most of them remained after the temporary program was dismantled.<sup>31</sup> During the decades of the 1960s and the '70s, migrant workers were sought from both Turkey and Morocco. This group was also seen as temporary; they were expected to return home when their labor services were no longer required.<sup>32</sup> Again, most chose to remain and family unification later followed. The last great wave involved migrants from Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, carriers of Dutch passports.<sup>33</sup>

Internally, the Dutch nationals were divided and utilized the traditional *Polder* system. This arrangement ensured that liberals, conservatives, Catholics, and Protestants were enclosed within their own system,

with their leaders benefiting from interactions as they attempted to negotiate with other branches.<sup>34</sup> The lack of interactions between groups of ordinary citizens can also be seen within current immigrant societies.<sup>35</sup> While larger cities like Amsterdam and The Hague boast a high percentage of immigrants, one is immediately struck by the vastly homogenous populations of most Dutch cities. It is predominantly in the outskirts that one encounters people from diverse backgrounds. This, in turn, had led to rare interactions between immigrants and nationals, and lower levels of integration into Dutch society.

Despite its continued liberal stance on soft drugs, prostitution, and gay marriage, the Netherlands has witnessed a change in its liberal attitude toward immigration in recent years, as it is proving difficult to define a Dutch national identity. In 2007, for example, Princess Maxima, wife of the Dutch Crown Prince, controversially declared that, "a typical Dutch person doesn't exist."<sup>36</sup> Director Theo Van Gogh's shocking murder in 2004 served as a catalyst in shifting the country's ideological stance towards all immigrants. Even second- and third-generation immigrants started being considered outsiders, threatening "the identity of the Dutch nation, Dutch history and culture as a part of the history of Western civilization."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the citizens of the Netherlands slowly started supporting more radical politicians like the late Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders, politicians that manipulated the presence of new immigrants, comprised mainly of Moroccans, in order to pursue their own political agendas.

Actions (such as Rita Verdonk's enforcement of a stricter visa system) that aim at integration and assimilation have meant alienation and an "othering" directed especially at non-European migrant groups. The new visa system has introduced a 350 Euro Integration Test, which must be taken before coming to the Netherlands. It is rendered difficult because it oftentimes proves problematic to obtain Dutch language training abroad.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the test has been:

justified in the parliamentary discussions with reference to the idea that young Dutchmen of Moroccan and Turkish origin should look for a spouse in the Netherlands rather than for spouses in their country of origin because this would continue problems with integration, as the minister has formulated it.<sup>39</sup>

Although most of the rhetoric surrounds issues regarding non-Europeans, European migrants have also been targeted because they

are seen as outsiders who may potentially pose a threat to Dutch liberalism. One of these migrant groups is the Polish. The Eastern European population in the Netherlands is estimated to be around 100,000, the majority (80%) being Polish.<sup>40</sup> Although the Polish comprise a small minority in the Netherlands, they are nevertheless the primary foreign group associated with fears of job loss. This anxiety is best described as a result of the “(ir)rationality and political opportunism [that] meet in perception of this particular flow of labor migration as a cause for contemporary moral panic.”<sup>41</sup> An important characteristic of the Poles is the inner distinction between German Poles and Polish Poles. The former group is from the Prussian region of Silesia. Many have been utilizing their German passport to do migrant work in the Netherlands for several months at a time since the establishment of the European Community.<sup>42</sup>

### *1. Asparagus Harvest*

The Dutch consider white asparagus a delicacy and every year in May and June they eagerly await this prized harvest. Signs and pictures of white asparagus abound in restaurants and grocery stores, particularly in the regions of Limburg and Brabant.<sup>43</sup> Traditionally, the German Poles have been the primary harvesters, known for their willingness to work long hours and accept cheaper pay.<sup>44</sup> With the advent of Enlargement, Polish Poles also provided a substantial minority of migrant workers, although this group had participated in the harvest for some years, at times using illegal migration methods.<sup>45</sup> In the wake of Enlargement, the situation could be described as “between fear and need.”<sup>46</sup> While it was feared initially that the migrants would take away jobs from nationals, it gave way to the realization that the Dutch were unwilling to take these jobs. Considering that the three percent of Dutch nationals that are currently unemployed in the Netherlands<sup>47</sup> would not have taken part in the agricultural sector anyway, the Poles do not seem to be acquiring any desired jobs.<sup>48</sup>

There have not been a myriad of efforts on the part of the governments of the Netherlands and Poland for collaboration regarding the migrant workers. Labor unions provide the most outreach in the Netherlands. Several of them have visited Poland on numerous occasions in hopes of actualizing dialogue among migrant workers. One of the most substantial aspects of these visits has been the crackdown on illegal work agencies,<sup>49</sup> as this has been one of the main problems

affecting migrant workers. In fact, illegal work agencies in Poland outnumber legal ones.<sup>50</sup> These agencies sign up people with farmers in the Netherlands, at times not producing any results (yet acquiring the fees), and at other times failing to clearly explain the rules and regulations. The migrant workers come to the Netherlands, sign papers in a language they do not understand, and may be forced to work in miserable conditions, leading some to refer to the harvest as “hell on earth.”<sup>51</sup> The visits of labor unions to Poland uncovered many frauds, leading to more legal transactions and better working conditions.<sup>52</sup>

Within the asparagus harvest, two new issues have emerged, starting with the rising market value of agricultural employees. As the Polish migrant situation became increasingly legalized through more ample inspections and larger cumulative fines,<sup>53</sup> Dutch farmers began to apprehend the value of their employees, work conditions started to improve, and the Poles became a respected part of the harvest. The second change points to the growing overseas competition of agricultural prices that has yielded lower profits, rendering future harvests uncertain. In her study, *Mutual Dependency of the Farmers and Polish Asparagus Migrants*, Roos Pijpers problematizes the future of the asparagus harvest since these jobs are not seen as permanent by the Polish migrant workers, but rather as the bottom rung on the ladder to future employment.<sup>54</sup>

In his “Poland is Europe” speech, Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende clearly states the importance and permanence that the Poles have been acquiring in Dutch society by saying, “we need the Poles.”<sup>55</sup> As some migrants have decided to move back to Poland following improved conditions and new jobs, the Dutch are starting to outwardly voice concerns that their Polish migrant labor is declining. Piet Hein Donner, the Social Affairs Minister, concedes the housing concerns but argues that, “we would have much more of a problem on the labour market if the Poles weren’t here.”<sup>56</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the statement made by the Dutch Minister of Finance in declaring “himself to be ‘against cheap Poles’” during Enlargement talks.<sup>57</sup> Poles are starting to be prized for their skills in Dutch society as they “have the reputation of working very hard and delivering quality workmanship.”<sup>58</sup>

Although the cultural threats posed by the Polish were never as significant as the economic threats, they are noteworthy because some migrant workers are staying for up to ten years, while others are permanently settling in the Netherlands.<sup>59</sup> The “othering” aspect present between the Polish migrant workers and the Dutch is the result of

actions invoked by both groups. On one hand, the Dutch view the Poles as foreigners while on the other hand, the Polish themselves sometimes disassociate from Dutch society. Consistent with many immigrant societies, the Polish create a safe haven by maintaining close relationships with fellow immigrants in cities and towns with substantial Polish populations. This is especially true as migrant workers “rarely engage in no-work-related social interactions with receiving country residents.”<sup>60</sup> In some cases, they do not have time to learn the language or interact with Dutch society after a 12-hour workday.<sup>61</sup> If they are only in the Netherlands for the asparagus season, those few months do not evoke a sense of urgency in learning Dutch or acquiring visibility in Dutch society. However, things are starting to change as more permanent migrant workers are settling. One welcoming aspect of longer-term and permanent Polish migrants is visible in churches throughout the countryside. Catholic churches experiencing prolonged membership decline are now seeing increased numbers of churchgoers as the Polish are using the existing religious framework for support. Some churches are even hiring Polish clergy.<sup>62</sup>

A new trend that has gone largely unnoticed is the movement of Polish migrant workers to the Netherlands from other member states, predominantly Germany and England.<sup>63</sup> At present, Germany is experiencing a shortage of asparagus workers as a greater number of them elect to work in the Netherlands. This is due to the Netherlands’ offer of higher wages at the cost of only a slight change in geographical proximity. Conversely, England offers a higher salary than the Netherlands but, due to the higher standard of living and greater distance, some Poles are choosing the Netherlands.<sup>64</sup> Whatever country they arrive from, the Polish have usually been treated as strangers.

## **B. Romanians in Spain**

The streets of major Spanish cities, such as Barcelona, abound with North Africans selling faux designer bags, Pakistani immigrants keeping their shops open on Sunday and during the “sacred” siesta, and Asian women in broken Spanish offering 5€ massages on the beach. This same bustle can also be seen in smaller cities in Spain; one does not need to go to the outskirts to see ethnic and racial diversity, one can see it in the faces of its visitors and citizens and hear it in the languages they speak. It is in these circumstances that Romanians are establishing themselves as Spain’s largest minority. These images are in stark

contrast to Spain during its dictatorial era. Starting in 1943, Francisco Franco subjected Spain to imposed marginalization, turning the country into Europe's southern periphery for the next 36 years. Plagued by significant unemployment and inflation rates, Spain seemed an improbable candidate for EU candidacy in the 1980s; however, it swiftly situated itself from "pariah to partner of the EU."<sup>65</sup>

Internally, Spain cultivated multiple identities as its internal structure permitted autonomous regions—especially those of Catalonia, the Basque lands, and Galicia—which later proclaimed themselves as nations within a nation. Although the country was isolated from the rest of Europe and lacked a sizeable migrant population, it was not homogenous. Its regions were required to interact to a greater level than in the Dutch polder system.

Under the Aznar government (1996–2004), Spain enacted one of the EU's toughest immigration laws, *la Ley de Extranjeria*, culminating in "one of the lowest percentages of foreigners among the EU member states" as late as 2004.<sup>66</sup> Then a change in government and the economy altered Spain's status from a country that exported migrant workers to one that imported them.<sup>67</sup> Although it has been argued that economic prosperity is not correlated with the perception of immigrants,<sup>68</sup> Spain's prosperity as a result of its immigrants cannot be denied. Taking minimum-wage positions and unwanted agricultural jobs, immigrants are now seen as indispensable. By 2007, three million of the country's population was comprised of foreigners, accounting for 11% of the 44 million people living in Spain.

The new government partially responsible for this change was the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, the PSOE. Upon gaining leadership of the government, its main candidate, Jose Luis Zapatero, became Prime Minister and is currently serving his second term. Zapatero has made several bold moves by withdrawing Spanish troops from Iraq, legalizing gay marriage, negotiating with the Basque Separatist movement (ETA), and commitments regarding reform and immigration. He granted legal status to more than one million migrants who could prove that they were currently employed in Spain.<sup>69</sup> As a result, leaders of other member states chastised him for his lenient immigration policies that would in turn affect their own states. The main opposition party, the Popular Party, is led by Mariano Rajoy and is "very keen to push for stricter immigration laws" in opposition not only to the PSOE but also to civil society, and particularly the Church (which is not what it used to be since most Spaniards now consider themselves Atheist

Catholic, but the Church continues to play a part in their daily lives).<sup>70</sup> Prior to accession, Spain feared the Enlargement as it would “shift the EU’s economic center of gravity, and [bring] in new members whose interests are mostly different from those of the Mediterranean countries in general and Spain in particular.”<sup>71</sup> However, Spain had and continues to maintain a strong economy that stands to benefit from migrants in general. Currently exhibiting the “best-performing major economy [in Europe], with growth averaging 3.1 percent over the past five years,” the country has created half of the new jobs in the European Union since 2002. In addition, it has reduced its unemployment from 20% in the 1990s to the current 8.6%.<sup>72</sup> A poll by Harris Interactive shows that 42% of Spaniards consider immigration as beneficial to their country, as opposed to 19% of citizens in Britain and France.<sup>73</sup> This is favorable since by 2020, Spain “will need four million more immigrants to meet the labor demands of its growing economy.”<sup>74</sup>

Romanians are considered Spain’s best prospect for these four million immigrants. With the fall of communism in Romania, general migration to Western Europe amplified. By 2000, the number of Romanians living in Spain was augmented at incredible rates as established migration networks further facilitated migration.<sup>75</sup> As of April 2008, Romanians came to comprise Spain’s largest minority,<sup>76</sup> outnumbering both the Ecuadorian and Moroccan populations. In the region of Castellon, 200,000 Romanians make up 64% of the population of the city of La Plana, the capital.<sup>77</sup> The implications and consequences of being the largest minority in Spain cannot be disregarded, involving everything from more businesses catering specifically to Romanians to available translation services. The governments of the two countries, along with interest groups, have created spaces for interaction, such as cultural events, concerts, organizations, and even a radio station<sup>78</sup> in regions with large Romanian populations.

### *1. Strawberry Harvest*

Famous for its annual strawberry harvest, the region of Huelva in southern Spain attracts numerous Romanian migrant workers. Romania boasts the highest number of migrant harvest contracts; of the 40,298 foreign workers that are solicited by employers, 22,575 are Romanian.<sup>79</sup> Jose Manuel Romero, president of the most prosperous strawberry association in the province, Freshuelva, argues that, “you have to take into account that the Romanian worker is very well

known and appreciated in Huelva. We have worked with them in several campaigns and the results have always been very satisfactory.”<sup>80</sup> Romanians, especially women, are sought after for their willingness to do the job for as little as 4.70€ per hour, including room and board, for periods of up to eight months.<sup>81</sup> During recruitment campaigns in Romania, long lines are ubiquitous as the candidates vie for the limited spots. Year after year, an increasing number of Romanian workers outnumber other eligible immigrant groups. As a result, Moroccan immigrants, who previously occupied the positions, are ushered out in favor of workers contracted from Poland and Romania.<sup>82</sup> While these decisions, rooted in racial and economic determinants, are justified by the fact that most Moroccans are illegal immigrants, some argue that Moroccans are victims of new labor exclusion, being denied access because of their darker skin.

Consequently, although the strawberry harvest provides temporary migrant work, many Romanian workers decide to stay in Spain, leading to the creation of large populations of Romanians in agricultural towns. These communities are sizeable enough that at times they are able to influence political parties, which not only acknowledge their presence but also make specific promises to them.<sup>83</sup> Romanians who settle permanently in Spain are distinguishing themselves by their ability to rapidly learn Spanish, along with their marked Latin character, which has proven essential in forming part of their constructed Spanish society.<sup>84</sup> Once there:

The level of integration is very high; the first thing [Romanian immigrants] do is learn Spanish in order to be able to work. The Romanians relate themselves with the orthodox churches, later they form groups of friends in terms of their region or work activities. They integrate themselves easily because the language is similar, the culture also, and the Latin character influences.<sup>85</sup>

Although there are many Romanian societies, and migrant workers often decide to live together, they are still able to integrate linguistically. The ability to read a newspaper, participate in election debates, and watch Spanish television enable migrant workers, especially permanent migrant workers, to participate in their local and national communities. However, Romanians are also experiencing a multitude of problems. Following the 2007 Enlargement, Romanians are no longer considered “*sin papeles*” (without documents). However, bureaucratic

processes make it harder to gather the proper documents and legitimize the situation of some Romanian migrants. Romanians still need legal Romanian papers, which pose problems to groups such as the Roma, who have previously entered the country without passports. At the same time, the migrant networks and associations that exist within Spain have made it increasingly easy to work in the country.<sup>86</sup>

Spain is currently plagued by a housing crisis and, in turn, this dilemma has acutely afflicted Romanian migrants. During September and October of 2007, large populations of migrant workers, mostly Romanians and Roma, were forced to leave their homes in the shantytowns they had created on the outskirts of larger cities.<sup>87</sup> The most prominent cases were seen in Madrid, where bulldozers were shown tearing down people's homes. Some migrants refused to leave their houses. The government would not provide for the construction of new homes and, as a result, the people were left to start rebuilding their shantytowns, sometimes from the same foundations. Most of these people were migrant workers who could not afford proper housing. These actions indicate that, as a whole, Spain seems more interested in the labor time contributions of its immigrants than in the institutionalization of the migration process and meeting their basic needs.

In a recent Gallup Poll, it was shown that, on average, the perception of Romania and Romanians by Spanish citizens was more positive for those who have had direct contact with Romanians than for those whose perception the Spanish media had mediated.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the media has been relentless in highlighting sensational stories that involve immigrants, resulting in Spaniards considering immigration their number one concern.<sup>89</sup> These very infrequent negative acts gain attention and are often dragged out for days. This mostly serves to exacerbate tensions and prejudices between the two groups. However, since "normally any form of xenophobic behavior is condemned in Spanish society,"<sup>90</sup> the hostilities usually do not lead to physical confrontations on a large scale.

#### **IV. Findings**

Following the 2004 EU accession, the Netherlands and Spain diverged on their respective policies regarding immigrant populations. Whereas the politicians of the former utilized an amorphous characterization of national identity to alienate immigrants, the government of the latter chose to legalize more than one million illegal immigrants and

embrace diversity. Although these overarching generalizations do not portray the complexities of the issue, they do point to overall trends.

Spain seems to lack the institutionalization of the migration process, being less involved in meeting the basic needs of its immigrants. On the streets of Barcelona or Madrid, one sees vagrants sleeping on dirty newspapers and mattresses, begging for food at restaurants, and playing musical instruments on the metros for extra change. When discussing immigration in Spain, the sheer size of the recently arrived migrant population must be taken into consideration; Romanians alone account for 800,000 people. Although the government encourages immigration, it is unable to provide for most of its immigrants due to their vast numbers and the entangled bureaucratic processes that inhibit extensive civic engagement. To the advantage of immigrants, Spain as a whole can claim no unified identity, due to the various regions and autonomous states that comprise the country. Spanish identity can be described as fluid because many of its citizens either claim a dual or a single identity outside the Spanish one, e.g., Catalans or Basques. This facilitates the inclusion of immigrants within the Spanish culture. While cases of xenophobia exist, Spain seems to be preoccupied with Muslims in that they constitute a large portion of illegal immigration, rather than any threats that Islam might pose to Spanish society. There are other minorities in the country that seem to get more attention, for example, the Ecuadorians and Romanians.

On the other hand, the Netherlands is a country invested in the institutionalization of immigration. Neither poverty nor immigrants are easily on view. Most of the immigrants live in large cities, lacking integration into Dutch society at large. In the case of the Poles, their considerably smaller numbers impede them from accessing the services provided to larger minority groups. At present, the Netherlands is attempting to define its national identity, an identity that does not seem to be as permeable as that of Spain. Anti-immigrant sentiments have gained popularity, stirred by several politicians. This in turn gives way to preoccupations with Muslims, the country's largest minority, since Islam has shown itself unwilling to fit within the existing framework.

Both nationalities, the Polish and the Romanians, have showcased an ability to blend into their respective societies, escaping under the radar of most anti-immigrant rhetoric. However, the Post-Enlargement period is still plagued by negative media portrayals, cases of xenophobia, and persistent notions of the "other." At the same time, the period

has also witnessed more positive interactions between migrants and citizens as the interaction dynamic between them has become more prolific. While the Pre-Enlargement time period witnessed mostly abstract fears of mass migration, arising in the media and government<sup>91</sup> and, to a lesser degree, citizens, Post-Enlargement discourse has been characterized by more concrete worries about migrant housing, schooling, and family reunification. The migrant workers occupy a space that demands visibility, especially in towns with a considerable minority. In general, this provides a greater visibility of migrants in society and a lessening of overall stereotypes.

Due to the lack of mass migrations, declining unemployment rates, and other nationalities (North Africans/Turks/ Moroccans) being perceived as a “far worse” cultural threat, the changes in the social spheres of the receiving countries seem to have been for the better, signaling the improved acceptance of these two groups of migrant workers. Unfortunately, these results cannot be generalized to other migrant groups. One of the reasons the Romanian and Polish migrant groups have become more accepted is due in part to stronger negative perceptions of other migrant groups, specifically Muslims and illegal immigrants.

In the future, lack of economic growth and unavailability of jobs may pose a new threat to the relationship between Spain and the Netherlands and their immigrants. At the same time, in perhaps as little as ten years, the improvement of the economies and the rising salaries in Poland and Romania might encourage reverse migration and the stabilization of the migrants in the EU.<sup>92</sup> Since EU membership is practically irrevocable, the newer member states have the power to change the EU and they will eventually cease to be seen as the “other,” but rather as integral members. Similarly, migrant workers are becoming permanent members of the Dutch and Spanish societies, and are accepted by member states for the jobs they fulfill and services they provide, such as working for low wages and doing work that nationals are unwilling to perform. Further studies should focus on the effects of these migrations in sending countries.<sup>93</sup>

## **A. Revisiting Globalization**

This study of transnational phenomena points to several salient globalization themes. Prominent is the diminishment of national borders in a supranational entity. Although the state continues to be the most “piv-

otal union of global power structure,"<sup>94</sup> able to override the fundamental laws of the EU, the Center for European Policy Studies reports that, "'the market' instead of 'politics' is becoming the prime directive when shaping Europe's migration policy today."<sup>95</sup> This seeming precedence of the economic market over national politics is noteworthy for future development in the EU and other rising transnational organizations.

Secondly, the issue of mobility shows that due to certain factors (blurring of borders, cheaper transportation, etc.), "one's own life is no longer tied to a particular place; it is not a staid, settled life. It is a life 'on the road' ... a nomadic life."<sup>96</sup> Thus, temporary, repetitive migration is not only possible, but very likely. As other countries are engaging in EU membership discussions, this mobility will only continue to grow.

Thirdly, the concept of fortress/gated-community Europe shows an acceptance of an enlarged Europe over non-Western immigration. While it is bridging the gaps between European countries, the outer borders of the EU are being reinforced against the new "other" of Europe, Islam.<sup>97</sup> This further reinforces a core versus periphery world system by the unwillingness to accept other gifted but undervalued citizens. Europe needs to address the changes taking place within its borders. Ulrich Beck's case of Germany and globalization can be extended to most of Europe:

Globalization shakes to its foundations the self-image of a homogenous, self-contained national space calling itself the Federal Republic. It is true that for many years Germany has also been a global location where the world's cultures and contradictions disport themselves. But till now this reality has been obscured in the self-image of a largely homogenous nation.<sup>98</sup>

These statements refer not only to a country that has 2.3 million Turkish immigrants but one that the UN describes as having the third-highest number of international migrants worldwide, ten million immigrants. Whereas the Polish or Romanians pose an economic challenge, future Enlargements, such as Turkey, risk being perceived as "new threats...posing another or a greater challenge to boundaries of morality and identity."<sup>99</sup> The professed homogenous religious identity that Europe and the EU pride themselves on stands to change. Yet only by not feeling threatened can the complex and nebulous concept of "Europe" continue to thrive. Ultimately, only by self-critiquing its strengths and limitations, along with those of the other side, will

Europe be able to show empathy and exhibit much-needed universalism in an uncertain age of globalization. ●

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### **Notes**

1. Giddens 2007.
2. Samatar 2008.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Article 3.
6. Pijpers, p. 42.
7. Ibid., p. 5.
8. Pijpers.
9. Ibid., p. 12.
10. Bleahu 2003.
11. ECAS 2008.
12. Agiomirgianakis 2006.
13. Drew 2007.
14. Alho 2002 and Bonciu 2006.

15. Drew 2007 and ECAS 2008.
16. One such example is the Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and Romania on the Regulation and Organisation of Labour Force: Migratory Flows between Both States. Drew 2007.
17. Austria and Germany have dealt with the largest amount of migrants, in part due to their geographic proximity to Eastern and Central Europe.
18. Grabbe 2006.
19. Pijpers, p. 93.
20. Grabbe 2006.
21. Drew 2007.
22. Roos Pijpers, "Problematizing the 'Orderly' Aesthetic Assumptions of Forecasts of East-West Migration in the European Union," p. 20.
23. Ibid., p. 3.
24. Ibid., p. 118.
25. Ibid., p. 116.
26. Drew 2007.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Zaremba 2008.
30. Allen and Loubert 2005.
31. Allen, Nauta, 2008.
32. Ibid.
33. Immigration in Benelux 1998; and Nauta 2008.
34. Nauta 2008.
35. For more information, see the communities of Moluccans and other "New Dutch" immigrants.
36. Gottlieb 2007.
37. Bart Jan Spruyt, *International Herald Tribune*.
38. The test has been condemned by Human Rights Watch because it discriminates in the name of integration. Text available online at <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/05/15/nether18796.htm>.
39. Bransten 2006.
40. Huizinga 2007.
41. Pijpers, p. 91.
42. Zaremba 2008.
43. Immigration in Benelux 1998.
44. Immigration in Benelux 1998, Zaremba 2008.
45. Huizinga 2007.
46. Pijpers 2007.
47. This unemployment rate is well below the EU standard of 8%.
48. Pijpers 2007.

49. Huizinga 2007.
50. Ibid.
51. Zaremba 2008.
52. Huizinga 2007 and Pijpers 2008.
53. Ibid.
54. Pijpers 2005.
55. Balkenede 2008.
56. "Donner fears decrease in East European workers" (2008).
57. Pijpers, p. 97.
58. Balkenede 2008.
59. Zaremba 2008.
60. Pijpers, p. 12.
61. Zaremba 2008.
62. Ibid.
63. Brzostek 2007.
64. Ibid.
65. Ross 2002.
66. Magone 2004, p. 47.
67. Matlack 2007.
68. Pijpers 2008.
69. Matlack 2007.
70. Magone 2004.
71. Ross 2002, p. 137.
72. Matlack 2008.
73. Matlack 2007.
74. Wood 2008.
75. Bleahu 2003.
76. On June 20, 2008, the newspaper *El Pais* unofficially announced that there were 728,967 Romanians in Spain, comprising 14% of the immigrant population. Since joining the EU last year, a 38.8% increase has been noted. Two years ago, Romanians were the third largest minority, behind Moroccans and Ecuadorians. Available online at [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/poblacion/Espana/supera/46/millones/elpepusoc/20080620elpepusoc\\_1/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/poblacion/Espana/supera/46/millones/elpepusoc/20080620elpepusoc_1/Tes).
77. Bell 2004.
78. Some of these actions have even taken place as reintegration techniques for returning to their home countries; *El Pais*. Available online at [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/madrid/Miles/inmigrantes/planean/regresar/paises/crisis/elpepiespmad/20080615elpmad\\_2/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/madrid/Miles/inmigrantes/planean/regresar/paises/crisis/elpepiespmad/20080615elpmad_2/Tes).
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Horjan 2008.

82. Bell 2004.
83. Feliu 2008.
84. Wood 2006.
85. *El Pais*.
86. Bleahu 2003.
87. A multitude of newspapers chronicled the events. Available online at [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/andalucia/Policia/Local/Sevilla/desmantela/200/asentamientos/meses/elpepiespand/20080610elpand\\_3/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/andalucia/Policia/Local/Sevilla/desmantela/200/asentamientos/meses/elpepiespand/20080610elpand_3/Tes).
88. Romanian government website; and Wood 2008.
89. Feliu 2007.
90. Magone 2004, p. 48.
91. There was noticeable migration growth in countries, such as the case of Romanians in Spain; however, it is doubtful if this constitutes mass migration.
92. Piracha et al.
93. Poland is currently experiencing massive labor shortages and is attempting to attract workers back home. Romania has to import Chinese workers due to its labor shortages, and confronts many social issues, such as an increasing suicide rate of children whose parents are working abroad.
94. Samatar 2008.
95. Pijpers 2008.
96. Beck 2000, p. 74.
97. Samatar 2008.
98. Beck 2000, p. 14.
99. Pijpers, p. 101.

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