A UK Discourse Analysis of Belonging in Romanian Identity and Immigratory Accounts

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Appendix ix: receiving society voice data (a): Question Time (debates) (x13)

Table vii: displays the Question Time extract details

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David [I want to on (1) I want t- I want to go on to another que]stion. Just before I d-, if you want
to – I have to announce this now because we’ve got a gap after this programme (.) so if
you want to be on the ‘Question Time’ audience, the next two programmes are going to be-
one is on the 8th of January in Watford, the other is (.) in Lincoln on whatever seven days
after that is, the 15th, and the details are on the screen there. Just to mention it. Let’s go to a
question fro[m (.) Lynne O’Donahue, please. Lynne O’Donahue.

Lynne I:s Britain rea::lly overcrowded?

David A ver:y simple que[tion is Britain real:ly overcrowded? An- in the light of a report
toda:y saying it absol::ute wasn’t and needed lots more immigration, which came from
the Office For Budget Responsibilit:y. um (.) Nigel Farage.

Nigel It’s interesting The chap that produced that report today was the same chap who in 2008
said that the upcoming recession would be minute. So he hasn’t got a very good track
record. Look, if you fly into Gatwick, you’ll see lots of green spaces. That is certain:y (.)
true. Ho:we:ver, if you have a country in which the population goes up as a direct result of
immigration, what you find is not a shortage of green fields (.) if that’s where you wanted
to build houses (.) you find a shortage of primary school places. You find a shortage of GP
surgeries. We have fewer GPs per head than any other country in Euro:pe today. You find
( .) conge:stion, whether it’s on the roads or the Lo::ndon Underground or wherever you
go:. What you fi::↑nd is that actually, you’re constantly playing catch-up and really, the
general quality of life for the ma:ss of population has gone down. So I think those
comments today were wholly (.) irresponsible and what we’ve seen- I mean, it’s quite
interesting to think that, you know, in 1990 the population of this country was 55 million.
It is now between 62 and 63 million. That is a ma:ssive, ma:ssive increase, and I think
ordinary folk ( .) going about their lives ( .) are feeling it. an- you know ( .) having a proper
immigration policy, controlling the numbers, doing what nearly 200 countries in the world
do- namely, controlling the numbers that come and the type of people that come ( .) is the
answer=

David =All right. ( .) [Russell Brand]

((audience applause [ ] )))

Russell I sometimes feel worried about you, Nigel Farage. The reason I feel worried is because I
know a lot of people are frightened in our country. I know a lot of people are feeling afraid
and frustra:ed, and there is a sense that there is a corrupt group in our country ( .) using our
resources, taking away our jobs, taking away our housin’, not paying taxes, exploitin’ us,
and there is. There is an economic elite that this man’s party is fu:n:ded by↑, that this man
is the back- comes from a background working in the City farted, Nigel is pointing at immigrants and the disabled and holding his no↓se. Immigrants are not
causing the economic problems and suffering [we’re experiencein’ (5) u:m] as much as any
of us, I enjoy seeing Nigel in a boozer with a pint and a fag, [laughing off his latest]
scandals ( .) about breastfeeding or wh[atever. I enjoy it], but this m::an is not a cartoon
character. He ain’t Del Boy. He ain’t Arthur Daley. He is a pound shop Enoch Powell, and
we’ve got to watch him.=
Nigel: [No, they banned that now] =((audience applause)) [laughter]

Nigel: [yea↑h] u- well Russell that’s all well and go:od, and you’ve got your point of vie:w; the question was, “Is Britain overcro↑w:ded”, an- an- do you think I’m wro:↑ng? I me=

Russell =YES (..) [Nigel. Can I not be more clear ma:te, I THINK you’re WRong]. I come from the kind of communiti-

Nigel: [do y:ou not th:ink do y:ou n:ot th:ink do y:ou n:ot th:ink] Well (.,) this is called ‘Question Time’, this programme, right?=

Russell =Well, tonight it could have anot[her name]

Nigel: [And wh]at happens is, members of the audience ask questions and we’re expected to answer them. You haven’t answered this lady’s question (.,) do you think Britain’s overcrowded and there is a strain on public resources and people’s quagliy of life, because of an [irresponsible]

Russell: [We need mo]re money for public resources=

Nigel: =Well, where’s it going to come from=

Russell =Our country’s not overcrowded. It’s going to come (.,) oh, I’m so glad you asked, mate.

((laughter))

Russell: er si:nce the financial crash, banker bonuses have exceeded £80bn. George Osborne, your Chancellor, campaig:ned to stop caps being placed on banker bonuses. At the same time, there were (.,) austerity cuts against the poorest among us. The disabled, people that we need to be looking after. We need to close tax loopholes which are exploited by big corporations. There’s money. I’ve got money now. I’ve seen rich people. There’s plen:ty of money out there. It’s just not being di:stributed.

David: Yes.
And I don’t like people preaching that er- (. ) I am any part responsible for anything. I’ve never heard him criticise the disabled=

I never have.

Okay? Never, okay? And (1) you are a campaigner, yeah? I’m going to go back to the last question=

=I’m a comedian, mate=

=Please let me finish. Stand. Stand (. ) for Parliament. If you’re going to campaign, then stand. Okay? You have the media profile for it. Do it.

My problem would be, mate, I’d stand for Parliament but I’d be scared that I’d become one of them. I w- I know what side of the arg-

[=No, no. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. You’ve fought addiction] and you’ve beaten it, okay? (1) You can’t preach that. That is- that is rubbish.

Mate, I=

=You cannot preach that.

[I’m not preaching] What I’m saying is=

[But you are. ] =You’ve attacked him, okay, okay, and you’ve attacked him, and you’ve attacked everybody that stands for his party.

=I do. [I do]

[The]ly = [’m sorry]

[We’re trying]

[I’m not attacking people that]

[They are people on the street]
Q2 (inaudible)) RICH AND RACIST, and=

Q1 =Are they? Are they? [R::bish]

Q2 (inaudible) [what they']re trying to do [with a lack of resources, and it's right what he says, and that's what he does.

Q1 [rubbish] Sorry, but at the end of the day it's the general public that are standing for him

Q2 [He's a racist scumbag] trying to blame (. ) IMMIgrants for the cuts backs because (. ) of his RICH (. ) banker (. ) friends

[(((audience applause))]

David [all- all right. All right.]

[(((audience shouting))]

Nigel Russell, you've got some voters here, mate. [You ought to stand. I mean, these are your voters. They're lovely people]

David [all right]

Q2 [I LIVE in] South Thanet and I'm coming for you! Farage don't you [bloody worry]

[(((audience boo))]

David [Just hear from a voice up here. You, sir. On the gangway=

[(((inaudible))]

=behave yourself [over there]

Q3 [The point] I want to make to Russell is that you claim to sort of stand up for the working classes, but you got to understand that it's the working classes that have been hit the hardest by immigration- mass immigration. You know wage compression (. ) the cha- change in the communities over a short period of time has led to er you know tensions within the communities. So you've got to appreciate that actually, you know, it's all right sayin- er you know criticising UKIP and Nigel Farage but actually it's the people at the bottom of society that have been hit the [hardest by immigration =]
Russell: Honestly, I come from the same communities you come from. I've been very lucky and I've had a few breaks and I've got a few quid now, and I'm telling you that immigration has always been happenin'. What happened in 2008 was very unique [if I thought]

Q3: The scale, it's the scale though=

Russell: My friend, I swear to you, if I thought—listen, try this for two years turn your focus to corruption in the City. Turn your focus to apathetic politicians. Turn yourself to the corruption that's going on there and if in two years' time your life hasn't got better, campaigning against the people that have wealth and power, not those that have very little, if it's still the same, I'll come with you and campaign. But I'm telling you, I know where the power is, I know where the money is, [I know what we've got to do]

David: Alright

Camilla: I'm not quite clear, Russell, what the relationship is between the City and immigration. I mean, the City of London actually now has some of the most talented people from all over the world and we should be really proud of that. It's a fantastic, meritocratic success story for this country

[[(audience applause)]]

Russell: [No, I don't] agree

Camilla: Can I finish? It seems to me to the gentleman’s point here, we’re at the end now of, what, 16 years of this experiment in mass immigration that was launched by the Labour government, that the British people were never consulted on, and it was an experiment, and we’re in the middle of it, and it has brought a lot of people here. Whether or not we’re actually overcrowded, to your question I think a lot of people feel that we are, and I don’t think anybody in this country wants to shut the door. I really don’t. I think there are very few people that you can call racist in this country. I think we are a deeply tolerant country. I think we are deeply welcoming to people, and a lot of people have come here and they’ve done brilliantly and they have integrated. But what I do feel is that people want a sense of control. They want controlled immigration, and that is what-if we have controlled immigration, it doesn’t mean we’d shut the door, it doesn’t mean we’d actually let fewer people in, but we would be a country more at ease with ourselves and I think that’s what we need to get to=

David: [Alright]
The question was about overcrowding. Mary Craye. I’ll come to you in a moment.

Well, just 10% of the landmass of Britain is actually built on and what we have at the moment is a housing crisis because there’s been a collapse in house building in this country. (.) erm we have an infrastructure crisis. It isn’t because there are too many immigrants on the M4, and I think your comments, Nigel, were deeply irresponsible=

Do you know what percentage of the South-East is built [on], as opposed to the United Kingdom as a whole, and is that a pertinent question? Yes.

[No] I don’t know what the percentage is.

No? Okay=

But the point is that this government came in, they cut investment in roads, they cut investment in housing, and people talk about primary schools (.) um we have a crisis in primary school places because we have an ideologically-driven government that has pursued a free schools programme, opening schools in areas where there is no need (.) and leaving places like my city in Wakefield with a trebling in the number of children that are now taught in classes of over 30.

We may come to education later, so I don’t want you to-

The point I’m trying to make is that at difficult times (.) we need investment in those public services. When we talk about the NHS, we talk about schools, we talk about crowd-overflowing and housing (.) immigration is sometimes used as a proxy. Now, we’ve said we got some things wrong on immigration. We want to control immigration=

And we want to control the effects of immigration, but as the daughter of somebody who came here to work from Ireland in the 1960s and who paid his way and contributed to this economy, I think that some of the tone of what you say (.) Nigel, about immigrants and blaming them for all sorts of random problems, is not the way our country wants to go. When we bring people in from outside, companies (.) bringing people in from outside the EU should be training a young person in our country to take up those jobs. We want to get rid of the agencies that only recruit from Eastern Europe and bring people in to undercut wages. We want to put an end to that wage exploitation. For people who think there’s no point in voting that’s the difference between Labour and the Conservatives at the next election

((audience applause))

[Mary, the whole point of this] an- and I’m pleased that you are now apologising because when the doors opened to eight former communist countries, your government said it would lead to an increase of 13,000 people a year coming into Britain and it was hundreds of thousands a year=
Mary =We’ve said we got things wrong on immigration. Those immigrants came and worked and paid their taxes.

Nigel [But here is the point. Here is the point how on Earth can you have school provision? Housing provision? How can you plan for the future if you have an open door to nearly half a billion people? [That is why we need control]

Mary [35% of the people in our National Health Service. 35% of the people in the National Health Service are from overseas. What would happen to the National Health Service?]

Nigel [Yes] But they could have work permits. The point is are we overcrowded? Do we have too few resources? The job of government is to plan for the future. You cannot plan if you have open door immigration=

Nigel [that is the point]

Q4 I think we need to cap immigration. We’ve got Canterbury Prison um now that is full of um immigrants from outside the UK and it’s full. We should vet er people coming into this country. It’s not about cu- stopping people coming into the country it’s about vetting them. We need to know that they have a skill set for the country. There’s jobs for them to come in. We shouldn’t have to support them when they come over. They should be able to contribute to the country, not segregate themselves. I I fully support people coming over to work, to integrate into this country. We have one of the most open doors but we need to vet people coming into this country. We don’t want people with criminal histories. We don’t want rapists, we don’t want murderers, we don’t want them=

Q2 =Oh, SHUT UP.

Q4 You are lady, you are the rudest woman that I’ve ever, [ever met. SIT DOWN AND BE QUIET. IT IS NOTHING- TO DO WITH RACISM AT ALL]. You need to back off and mind what you say.

Q3 It is nothing at all to do with racism at all. It’s not even about numbers. It’s vetting people. We need to make sure that people coming to this country, they have a skill set for this country=

David =All right. When you say it’s not about numbers, then in reply to the question, “Is Britain really overcrowded”, is your answer yes or no?
Q4 ah (.) where I live, yes. [Yes]

David [All] right. Penny Morgan.

Penny Well, the scene that we keep coming back to is control, and I think that’s what is worrying people most. They don’t (.) Although we’ve er (.) been able to control and reduce migration that’s coming fr- from outside the EU, from within the EU, it is more (.) challenging. I think we’ve got to do a number of things to improve that. We have to have better border controls, I completely understand the point that you raise. We have to remove any uh (.) negative financial incentives that might be bringing people here, so that you contribute to the system before you can have social housing or you can access particular benefits, those kind of things=

Q4 ((inaudible)) =that’s only being raised now because somebody else has got the backbone to actually say something about that. I don’t agree, I’m sorry (.) Nigel, I don’t agree with everything he says but I do agree with the fact that he’s brought up something that (.) a lot of people feel very, very strongly about. It’s not necessarily numbers. It’s a whole band of things=

David =All right. Well, you’ve=

Q4 =Sorry=

David =No, it’s all right. You’ve had your say. Penny Morgan.

Penny The final point I would make is, this is a hugely important issue and it’s a very sensitive issue. Clearly there are feelings high in the studio audience tonight, and we’ve got to ensure that the debate we’re having is a sensible, it’s a grown-up one. We know that immigration is a good thing for the country; that most immigrants are net contributors to the UK economy. They are helping this economy get back on its feet again, but what the public want is control. I understand how let down people feel, historically, about that, and we’ve got to get to grips with it and we’ve got to demonstrate to people the changes that are being made and the effect that’s having on the numbers=

Mary =But Penny, you also have to make sure that the Home Office is properly resourced so that we give people’s background checks before they are granted citizenship like the case we [had this evening]

([(applause))]       

Penny We’ve done a huge [amount to]

Mary [We’ve got] 170,000 asylum seekers that are just left in limbo, and 50,000 of them have just disappeared=

Penny =Well, in part, Mary=

294
Mary: You don’t have the systems and you’re not counting people in and counting them out of the country. That’s a big problem.

Nigel: Wow. Labour, tough on immigration. That’s something, isn’t it? Never thought I’d see that.

David: All right. The person up there, I think you’ve spoken already. The person there, four in.

Y:es, with two hands up. That’s one way of doing it.

Q5: I agree that immigration is an issue and people are concerned about it- I agree with Mary that they’re concerned about it because there are so many other issues, about housing, the NHS, the whole area of public expenditure, and that brings you back to what Russell was saying. We spend so much time talking about immigration, it’s a side issue when you think about what happened in 2008. We have been robbed. The amount of taxation that is not being paid by the very rich, is an absolute scandal. Why aren’t we talking about that?

David: All right.

((audience applause))

David: At which point I’m going to go onto another question, which is relevant to this perhaps, which is relevant to this perhaps ((continues))
been doing great damage to our economy. One obvious example I’m the Shadow Business Secretary, higher education sits in my brief; they’ve lumped legitimate students, international students coming here, into their migration cap and given the image that in terms of higher education we’re closed for business, which is bad for our economy. Making promises you can’t deliver is not sensible and it undermines trust in politics, but I just want to say something generally about this debate around immigration, because I think everybody wants a fair and firm immigration policy. I want one where we control who comes in and out, we count who comes in and out, we ensure that if you’re going to take out of our benefit system, you contribute in first, we don’t have undercutting in our labour market. But I think we also have to acknowledge that immigration and when people seek to frame, for example, Eastern European immigrants as a source of all our problems, frankly I think that is a complete and utter con. I think we should have no truck with that kind of rhetoric, which we see in part coming from UKIP and some people in parts of the Conservative Party, that seeks to set up different parts of our communities against each other. That is not in keeping with British values.

[((Applause))]

David =So, are you happy with an increase, a level of just over a quarter of a million net migrants into this country, or would you like it lower, or would you be happy to see it higher, because you say people are being refused entry who should be allowed?

Chuka I think ultimately, if you look at, for example, our NHS, our NHS wouldn’t be able to be run without what immigrants bring to it, so immigrants actually help our economy. To the extent that we’ve got immigrants coming into our economy to do jobs that our people here don’t have the skills to do, of course we’ve got to provide people with the skills and training we need more people taking up engineering, for example – to be able to do those roles.

David But I’m just asking about the figures that came out today. Are they, in your view, too hi↑gh, too lo↓w, or about ri↑ght?

Chuka At the end of the day, the reason we’ve got people coming in is because our economy needs it. Ultimately, we need to make sure people have got the skills and qualifications to do the roles that people are coming in to do, but I look at what immigrants have brought. Look I’m the son of an immigrant. I look at what immigration has brought and how it has enriched our country culturally, in terms of our economy, and I think it’s brought a lot to our country, but I think the tone of the debate around immigration is becoming very ugly, actually, in our country and I don’t think it’s in keeping with our values of tolerance, respect, fair play. It’s not really what we’re about and we’ve got to change it.

David Mo, who asked this question, what do you think of Chuka’s answer?

Q1 Yes, I agree with Chuka, because the whole rhetoric around immigration is quite negative at the moment and I do really believe that politicians shouldn’t go for sensationalism you know when they make promises about certain issues that are very important to the people. Yes, he did overpromise and he’s now unable to deliver.

David Michael?

Michael These are big numbers and the Home Secretary said earlier this week that we were unlikely to be able to meet this target. I think that’s very clear after today. I think it’s important to
appreciate that there are different routes into Britain, and Chuka is right (.) there are a great
many people who come to this country who have a great deal to contribute, people who are
professionals who help to improve our National Health Service, people who come here
who want to study and who want to learn, who want to contribute and who ensure that
there's a cross-fertilisation, intellectual growth in our country. What's difficult, I think, to
take, for many people, is the rate and the pace of immigration, because it brings particular
pressures. It brings pressures on housing; it also brings pressures on schools, access to
GP's, and hospitals as well. If we're going to get the benefits of migration, then we need to
make sure that people feel that the numbers are controlled. There's a particular problem
here, because while we've been able to reduce the numbers of people coming from outside
the EU, making sure that talented people who want to contribute can come, we haven't
been able to control the numbers of people coming from within the EU. And Chuka said
that people are coming here because our economy needs them; actually, many people from
the EU are coming here because there are no jobs in their countries but jobs are being
created here. In Britain we've created more jobs in the last four years than in the whole of
the rest of the European Union put together, and the reason that people are coming here is
because of our economic success. I think it's a good thing that our economy is growing,
but I think if we're going to ensure that that growth is shared fairly and there is not an
unfair pressure on public services in some areas, then we need to control migration. In
particular, we need to change the rules with the European Union that at the moment
have meant that too many people have come here and who haven't been contributing in the
way that we would want=

=((Audience applause))

498
499 Chuka What you didn't mention, what Michael didn't mention, was the almost two million Brits
who are actually living in the EU and working in the EU. The reason that we've got
problems with our housing, problems with our NHS is not because of immigration- it's
because we haven't built enough houses over the last few decades. Frankly, we may or may not talk about the NHS later, but the NHS is under severe
pressure because of a huge top-down reorganisation that was carried out on it=

505
506 David Michael, why do you think that David Cameron gave his promise that they would reduce
immigration to the levels of the 1990s, meaning tens of thousands a year instead of the
hundreds of thousands, and then added, "If we don't deliver our side of the bargain, vote us
out in five years' time"? The five years is nearly up.

510
511 Michael Nearly up, it is. I think the reason why David set out that target is because the level of
migration had dramatically increased in the first decade of this century. We've had in
Britain tremendously good community relations. We still do, but those good community
relations depend upon people feeling that we can control our borders. Those countries
which have succeeded in being multi-ethnic, multi-racial success stories, like Australia or
Canada, are countries where, yes, large numbers of people come in, but there's a sense
that those countries have control of their borders. It's the fact that, because of the nature
of our membership of the European Union, we don't have control of our borders that
people question the capacity of our government to be able to manage migration in a way
that means that we benefit from it, and at the same time that we maintain the good relations
that make our society so rich in so many ways=

522
523 David =You, sir.

524
525 Q2 I 100% agree with Michael with all of this. Of course, I'm in business, and of course the
country needs labour forces coming in. One of the successes with Germany was as a
result of the Curtain coming down (.) but it's a matter of control. We can't flood this
country with millions of people. That 280,000 that we’ve just come out with, I read in the
day that doesn’t consider the babies that have been born as a result of this as well –
four out of five babies they said by- I’m not against that, but the housing can’t cope (.)
nothing can cope. We’ve got to say, “Hold fire a minute. We’re not against foreign people,
we don’t want to chuck people out (.) let’s hold fire until we sort this mess out.”
Otherwise, everything is going to start collapsing (.) schools and everything.

David Jo Brand.

Jo Yeah well er first of all, I think that David Cameron is frightened because he’s leaking
support from the Tories to UKIP and he wants to be seen to be doing something about this
nefarious area of immigration. As far as I’m aware, immigrants actually put more into the
economy than they take out. I don’t know whether that’s right or wrong, but that’s what
I’ve read. But if you speak to some people, you just wouldn’t believe that was the case;
you would believe that they’re coming here, they’re sucking the country dry, they’re
sending it all back home to relatives and some of them are committing cri[mes]. I think it’s
really down to immigration being concentrated in certain areas where people are
uncomfortable about it, and it’s also down to certain areas of the press encouraging
scaremongering about what’s going on. I’m also interested in how you decide what is a
suitable level of immigration. Ask everyone in this room (.) they’re all going to say
something different, aren’t they, because people have different attitudes about
immigrants? People know different things about them; people don’t know how many
people come into the country and work for the NHS. I think a lot of them come in (.) they
work in rural areas like Herefordshire, where they’re paid a pittance, which local workers
wouldn’t accept. They’re housed really badly, in appalling conditions which no-one in this
country would put up with. I think you need to look at that side of the way that they’re
being treated as well.

David Is it whipped up by the press, Amanda Plate[ll]? 

Amanda It is. (.) The press has been vilified for a long time for talking about imm- issues like
immigration, and actually it’s been concerning millions of people in this country for a very
long time. What makes my heart sink- and I haven’t heard Norman speak yet, but when
we hear the politicians we’ve had both Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband, and the
representatives of your party, Chuka, and David Cameron saying that We can- “We’re
going to bring in- We’re going to remove tax credits, we’re going to do this- we’re going
to make it less attractive for people to come into this country” (.) under the current
legislation they cannot do an’ty of that. You cannot treat someone living in Britain any
differently from how you can treat them anywhere elsewhere in the world, unless you negotiate,
and there is no evidence whatsoever that these negotiations are going to work. I would just
like to say I’m an immigrant; I came here 30 years ago, but I never expected that this
country would provide me with a meal ticket. I’ve worked really, really hard. It is a
fantastic country which I love and I’m so proud to be part of, but I didn’t come here [I use
expecting to be paid for things. the NHS. Apart from that, even when I’ve been
unemployed, I haven’t used it – fortunately because I didn’t have kids so I didn’t need to.
If only more people just came here and thought, “It’s about us giving to this fantastic
country, rather than us coming here and expecting for our”=

Chuka =Amanda, I think that’s what most people who’ve come here- My father, my late father,
was exactly the same as you- he didn’t come here expecting to be given a meal ticket.
What you were saying about controls, at the moment, in terms of people coming here from
Eu[rope, you have to have been here for three months before you can claim benefits, so
there is a degree of of- of control around the way [the benefits]

David [Which you] want to make two years, don’t
Two years and now David Cameron is mentioning four years=

That’s in terms of=

but you can’t change that=

But you can, you can in terms of out-of-work benefits. In-work benefits are different=

Al[right], leave it for the moment. The woman at the back there in the very back row and I’ll come to you. Yes.

[just]

Yes, I totally agree with your points because you can’t go around penalising all immigrants, because they’re coming to change their lives. Some, like you said, they work hard to get where they are today, like yourself.

They work incredibly hard and contribute a huge amount.

Yes, exactly.

Okay Do you want to come in, the woman here?

um(.) I just wanted to pick up on what he said earlier about the whole idea that we don’t have the skills ourselves. Perhaps we don’t have the skills ourselves because the younger people like myself, don’t have the opportunity to get those skills throughout doing qualifications because of this 16-hour rule that you’ve got. You can only do 16 hours while you’re on benefits.

We want to change that, by the way. It’s ridiculous.

Yes, and we know that it’s terrible.

You’re absolutely right=

=It is terrible because the decisions that you make when you’re 15/16 are not the decisions that you’re going to want to make when you’re 19 or 20.

That’s right.
Q4 I do actually— I know it’s really sad to say (.) I do regret the decisions that I made when I
was at school. In fact, I’d prefer to do veterinary nursing, but when I came out of school I
thought, “The safest option that fits my grades would be to do hairdressing.” We don’t
have those skills in the British people that live here already, because we’re not giving them
a better opportunity.

David Norman Baker=

Norman =That’s one of the reasons why we’d be very keen to promote apprenticeships in
government and have got 1.8 million more apprenticeships than we had in 2010, which is
one of the ways of dealing with that very real problem. Coming back to Mo’s question,
which I think was ‘no ifs, no buts’, I think the Prime Minister was rather upwise to make a
commitment to something which he couldn’t deliver. He couldn’t deliver it because there
are no controls at the moment legally on EU migration. It’s like making a commitment to
the number of days it’s going to rain next year; you simply can’t make it work. What’s
happened is the system has been skewed. Because EU migration has been off the agenda,
as it were, there’s been an attempt to screw down non-EU migration, which has actually
damaged our higher education system and damaged our business interests in some way.
That’s not been good for this country, so we need to look at it in a different way. I want to
make one point about our own people who’ve left the UK and gone elsewhere, however (.)
because there is a balance. Yes, we’ve had net migration this month and there’s been an
overall trend, but it’s worth remembering there are about 1.5 million UK residents who are
elsewhere in the European Union benefiting from what they have to offer (.) including,
for example, a lot of our pensioners in Spain who are benefiting from the Spanish health
service. It’s not a one-way street.

David You, sir, in the front row.

Q5 Yeah, I just wrote to the Prime Minister about this very subject. I’m unemployed at the
moment. I live local, Romford. I went for a job and the foreman came down (.) he said,
“Excuse me, I don’t understand English,” so I don’t tend to agree with your colleague there
on the side. There are people with skills. I have them skills. When the Prime Minister
wrote back to me, he was basically saying that I was racist. If you go to someone where
they can’t understand English, and (.) you just can’t get along with them. I feel that they’re
just giving people jobs from Europe, they’re totally ignoring the people locally, and I
pointed out that you can (.) regarding colour or religion, local people here could do that
job (.)

Chuka =So let me say something. I don’t think it is racist at all to talk about immigration. Some
people say that we don’t talk about it enough. I think we talk a lot about immigration, but
I think in terms of (.) the businesses that I speak to, in particular people with the technical
and vocational skills- and we were talking about apprenticeships (.) that is something that
the business community says is lacking and so we’ve absolutely got to make sure that there
are more people with those skills. In terms of language, absolutely I think if you’re coming
to our country, it’s important that we help people integrate. That’s one of the reasons why
we’ve said, “We shouldn’t be spending money translating documents for people; we
should spend money, if we’re going to do something like that, in helping them learn the
language,” absolutely=

David =You didn’t get the job, or you walked away from it?

Q5 No, I didn’t get the job. I reported it to the local council. I’ve got the letter here from the
Prime Minister if you wish to read it. Actually, one of the guys from Europe, I had to take
him home because he was lost around Victoria. So I wrote to the Prime Minister,
explaining, “When I was right on your doorstep, this is going on.”
The man behind you there and then I’ll come to you, yes.

I just want to take issue with Mr Baker’s point and some of the general points from the panel about being in Europe means that we all have to do the same things. We don’t. I was one of those 1.5 million that last year took a year out, moved to Cyprus. You can’t claim unemployment benefit there unless you pay in: your employer has to take money out of your wages. You pay in actively to the months that you’re not working. There’s a different charge for healthcare there are different taxes. There are different prices in restaurants for the tourists as there are for the locals. There is really only one choice, which is, because of the five pillars of the EU, you either stay in the EU and accept it, good or ill, or come out of it.

Oka’y, and the woman up there.

Chucka, bringing up on the point that you made about integration, I think that’s one of the issues that we find most frustrating. From a local point of view, lots of people have moved in, particularly from the East End of London, from a Bangladeshi or a Pakistani background and they don’t integrate with us locally. We don’t have any commonality with these people that we are not able to talk to people because they don’t want to talk or integrate with us. That’s the big frustration for us and I think it’s a key part of us all getting on and being an inclusive society. We’re not able to do that because we can’t make friends, we can’t become-

But don’t you think=

=No, let Michael answer this one

I just don’t think that we have the community spirit that we used to have in this local area.

Michael? I think Chuka made a very valuable point earlier I think it’s very important that we encourage people to speak English, that we don’t waste public money translating documents into a Tower of Babel list of languages, that we concentrate on making sure that people, whatever background they come from, integrate. That means also having respect for British values as well – tolerance, fair play, a belief in the rule of law. Societies that are made up of people from lots of different backgrounds benefit from diversity, different ideas and different cultures, but they also only benefit from that diversity if there’s an agreement on the core democratic values that hold the United Kingdom together.

I’m going to move on er because we’ve had 20 minutes. You don’t want to answer his point, because I think he made the point, you made the point [as well].

[ I was] going to pick up on the language point, actually=

=Yes, but I think we’ll move on because we’ve done 20 minutes on that um er:
 Tonight, we’re in Birmingham, and welcome to Question Time. (10) Welcome to you watching or listening at home, to our audience here, and of course to our panel. Tonight, the Conservative former Chancellor, Ken Clarke. Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, Andy Burnham. UKIP’s first Member of Parliament, Douglas Carswell, and he may see his Parliamentary part double in size tonight, when the by-election results are announced. The columnist for the Independent, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. And the political director of the Taxpayer’s Alliance, Dia Chavravati.

((Applause and music: 8))

And just to remind you, you can join in the controversies by text or Twitter. Our hashtag, #BBCQT, follow us at BBC Question Time. Text comments to 83981, and push the red button to see what others are saying. Our first question (.) tonight comes from Stephen Parks, please.

Q1 Both Labour and Conservatives have recently released policies intended to limit EU migration. Does this mean that UKIP have been right all along?

Have UKIP been right all along, because both Labour and Conservatives have released policies to limit EU immigration? Andy (.) Burnham.

uh no, it certainly doesn’t mean UKIP have been right all along. I think what I could say, to begin, is that the main parties have been slow: to pick up the level of concern that there (.) has been out there about levels of immigration, there’s no doubt about that. And belatedly, I think, now, you’re seeing a better debate about immigration. We have put measures out this week (.) saying that uh and I’ve said this for some time I believe in the free movement of labour, but I don’t believe in the free movement of benefits, I never have. I’ve never tried to justify that in my constituency. And the policy that Rachel Reeves has launched this week says that there should be (.) repatriation of European (.) uh citizens. Now, he wasn’t Nigel Farage said he was tired. You’re not (.) you don’t just, tired, we all get tired, you don’t just say, “Oh, well, I’m now in favour of repatriating Europe- European Union citizens.” I mean, I joined the party thinking that was an acceptable thing to say. I think, you know, UKIP now are going way beyond the line. They’re ratcheting up the rhetoric, this is becoming BNP-style or rhetoric, and I don’t know about ((Audience applause applause: 6)) TO BE honest, I think they’ve had a bit of a free run, you know, the man in the pub and all of this. It’s time to tak- take them on, this is not acceptable. I think those comments will make people across Birmingham, the country, feel very uneasy, who have family members who come from different parts of Europe and the world. I think it is time to cal- to call this out. You know, if we had a UKIP-style immigration policy, our National Health Service just simply would not be able to function, and those are the kind of questions they’ve got [to an]swer. I don’t- I DON’T I don’t know about Reckless, but it’s downright bloody DANGerous to start talking in these terms.

[all right ]
Audience applause

Douglas: UKIP absolutely, absolutely does not argue that there should be repatriation. Absolutely not. The whole point of being able to control our borders (.) is to allow us to build social cohesion. UKIP wants social cohesion, not division. And the reason why we want to control our borders is to allow us to have social cohesion, which uncontrolled immigration has has has tested an- and stressed. Now, Mark Reckless, who I’ve known for 20 years, I know his values. He does not believe in repatriation, he absolutely doesn’t.

Andy: [Why did he say it?]

Douglas: It was a clumsy reply, at the end of a long day, in a long campaign (1) i- and he was talking about transitional arrangements with reference to EU negotiation. He was absolutely not talking about residency rights, absolutely not. And if you’ve come to this country legitimately, UKIP recognises you have as much right (.) to belong here as anyone else, and that is absolutely core to UKIP’s beliefs. We want a country that is united, but we recognise in order to build that social cohesion, we need the Australian type system, a points-based system, where we have democratic control over our immigration policy. It’s not extreme to argue for what they have in Australia, it’s common sense. What’s daft, I think, is to have a system of immigration where there’s no control. Where 400 million people have a legal right to come here. That, I think, is daft. That has to change.

And it’s good that the mainstream parties, having used smear and jeer against UKIP, are now waking up (.) to the fact that we need to control our borders. We need to do it in a sensible way, we need to do it in a- in a in a liberal way. I would personally argue that there are huge benefits to this country for immigration [and I fought a] by-election arguing, arguing with people (.) that we do need immigration, and that there is not a GP surgery or a hospital or a supermarket in my constituency which couldn’t work without migration. But we need controlled migration, and I think UKIP has woken Westminster up to the need for this debate.

Yasmin: [Oh, thank you]

David: Yasmin Alibhai-Brown.

Yasmin: It’s very (.) I mean, I’m very fond of Douglas [but I’m extr]emely disappointed that he’s taken himself into this cul-de-sac with some pretty dubious values. But where I cannot accept Andy’s point either, in the way you have touched on something. We did not need both the other main parties fa:lling down before UKIP. [We needed them, we need you, Andy, your party, to really] (1) as Martin Luther King said, “the politics of morality”. I a democracy, we now have no choice, because everybody’s anti-immigrant except for the Green Party, and a bit of the Lib Dems, we don’t trust Lib Dems=

Douglas: [Thank you]

Andy: =Yasmin, I just=
Yasmin = [That’s not fair ]

David = [Hold on a second]

Yasmin = It’s not fair that you followed UKIP. (.) You know, Nigel Farage is the dynamo of politics. He’s an illusionist. But you don’t have to follow him. Even if he got 50 seats, you should have stuck to good values and policies. [You didn’t.]

[(((audience applause))]

David = [Ken] (. ) then I’ll come to you. Ken Clarke.

Ken = Well, uh what we need is a healthy debate, a sensible debate about t- er (. ) immigration. There isn’t anybody who doesn’t think you have to control immigration. You want people to come here legally. We want people to come here uh (. ) to make an honest contribution uh to our society, and we’re going to have them when we need them. And what we (. ) have to do is keep improving things, and make sure that if it’s being abused and it’s largely because it’s so difficult to enforce that it was been weak, it was very weak. a few years ago Theresa May is not a soft touch. There’s been a considerable fal in migration into this got country. She’s rid of dozens and dozens of bogus language schools. And uh we’ve stopped just handing out National Insurance numbers to anybody who walks in

Yasmin = [Exactly]

David = And was UKIP right all along, which was the [question]

Ken = [No, no ] UKIP is wrong. UKIP is wrong, in that it’s latched on to the subject of immigration. Let me just explain why, Douglas. I’m not going to start (. ) calling you names or anything=

Douglas = [I just] =Thank you=

Ken = =But I do think UKIP’s responsible for the rather increasingly silly tone of the debate that we’re having. [And UKIP is wrong] to latch on to immigration as part of its anti-Europe campaign. Apparently, suddenly what’s wrong is, it’s all being run from Brussels which is nonsense and also suggest (. ) that the reason we have troubles without Health Service, the reason we have troubles with pay being low: w, the reason we have trouble getting better economic growth, the reason we have housing problems (. ) it’s all foreigners. It’s all Brussels. Fra::nkly, that is nonsense, and I agree with Yasmin, the two mainstream parties who aspire to be the government of this country at a very difficult time should begin by saying that it’s all rubbish. I say it’s Gordon Brown, for some of it. I say we’re not building enough houses. And the population’s getting very older, and making health demands. It is not the fault of Romanians, it is not the fault of people coming from anywhere in the Commonwealth and a sensible discussion on immigration is how do we get things down. The benefit thing (. ) as it ha::ppens, the European immigrants are less likely to claim benefit than practically a::ny group of the population, because they come here they com::e th- th- they here to do jobs,
which unfortunately we still have skills we can’t fill without people coming from East Europe. They come to do jobs that other people or (.) can’t do. And we are able to stop giving them benefits.

[((audience applause))]

(( Audience applause ))

884  David Are you in favour of Labour’s proposal for two years before benefits?

885  Ken    That’s far too long.

888  David Why is it far too long?

890  Ken    Well, it isn’t what’s done to our people abroad. Is it doable? In a modern country, people go both ways. There are almost two million Brits living on the Continent. Ten percent of those living in Berlin claim unemployment benefit. We’ve suggested three months as a waiting time. We’ve always had the habitual residence test. European rules allow you to stop people coming here (.) just or benefits, you don’t need to negotiate anything and one of the things Theresa’s been doing is actually tightening up what was a system which has collapsed into inefficiency

898  David [Okay, all right.]

900  Ken    And what was done by Labour, which was plainly two days before a by-election]

902  Andy  [I am] surprised you [say]

905  Ken    [And they decided to try to out-bid UKIP]

908  Andy  [Ken, I am surprised you say two years is far too is far too long. Just let me make this point, David. I am surprised you say that, because people would say, if people are going to come here to work and contribute, that is fine. But they don’t accept that people can come and then take out. If there’s no job, and no work, they then (.) should go back to their own country] I think it’s where common sense opinion sits in this debate, and that’s where we should, where [he main parties be speaking (.) that

915  Ken    [But they’re] contributing.

917  David [We’ve got a number of] Wait, okay. We’ve got a number of people wanting to speak. I want to bring in Dia, and then we’ll go to members of the audience. Dia.

921  Dia    Right, thank you. I have been sitting here listening to- you know all you so much more
learned people talking about this, and I’m just thinking, you know, there was a time not so long ago when UKIP was doing well, and the main, big parties just said, “Oh, that’s just a protest vote, we’re not going to do anything about it,” apparently was the option. So people protested a little bit more, and the big parties said, “That’s just a protest vote.” And now, people protested a little bit more, and then UKIP lost. UKIP won, sorry, the European elections, the local elections. Douglas now their MP, they’re probably going to have another MP by the end of tonight. I don’t know. So if the big main parties, the main big parties, think that UKIP was having a dangerous debate, is it not a little bit their responsibility? Why didn’t they open up that debate at that point? You know, what was stopping them from opening up that debate? What bothers me some times about the debate around immigration is that we focus, and politicians do this, and I think it’s very irresponsible of them to do that they try and exploit the fear of the other. That is dangerous, that doesn’t help anybody but the BNP, right? No Let’s get that out of the way, completely. And we’ve seen that in some of the Conservative literature, well, for the by-election as well. I did not like that language. And we see that in all sorts of parties, really, to be absolutely fair. But if you thought the language was wrong? Why didn’t you step in then? As an immigrant myself, I don’t need, I don’t feel the need to be protected from any debate. Let’s have that debate. Yes, I’m confident enough in my ability to stand up for myself. Let’s have a sensible debate, let’s talk about it.

[([[audience applause))]]

David Okay. You, sir, on the right there.

Q2 Yeah. Er if Labour and Conservatives are going to follow this policy, or want to follow this policy of limiting immigration how are they going to do that whilst they’re still part of the EU?=

Douglas Absolutely=

Q2 =And also, why have we not already taken on what Ken said, and stopped benefits and people who are coming for um benefit tourism, like Germany have already done. Germany have just been taken to court, and have won their court case. They’re already doing it, they were brave enough to do it.

David Douglas Carswell.

Douglas You’re absolutely right. The two mainstream parties, who for a generation have governed this country I should say two and a half mainstream parties have failed to control immigration. And they now expect us to believe that we can control who comes here and remain within the EU, and that’s simply not true. What they’re trying to do is divert this into a debate to suggest that somehow UKIP is anti-immigrant. I actually look at Switzerland, which is outside the European Union, where one in five workers are non-Swiss, with admiration. I would love to have all the benefits of labour mobility, with democratic control. And on Swiss National Day, a country that’s made up of lots of different heritages and traditions feels really united. I want that for this country. But we can’t have that if we remain in the European Union.

Dia I really think where the debate should be is when we have any sort of shortage of skills in this country, we need to see how we can best fill that shortage. Now, say for example there’s a shortage of, I don’t know, heart surgeons in the NHS. It doesn’t matter one bit to
me whether that shortage is being filled by, say, an Indian doctor, or a Bulgarian doctor. It shouldn’t matter. That’s how I think we should tackle this debate.

But what about the right for workers to move to the UK, because of membership of the EU? Or are you against membership of the EU?

Well, as it stands, membership of the EU means that the national government doesn’t have control of its borders.

I think that’s an important right, because it benefited British citizens in the past. My dad worked abroad in the ‘80s and ‘90s because he couldn’t find work here, and may other British people did. I have to say to you, sir, I think you’re kind of portraying it as though it’s a one-way street, as though people only come and take away. There’s lots of British people working abroad round Europe.

[But] don’t pretend we can control it if we stay in.

[and that] is a benefit for them. So I think it’s a bigger picture than [Douglas and yourself] are putting over.

[B- but Andy, don’t, don’t pretend we can control immigration if we stay in the EU.

How many of those are claiming benefits abroad?

Neither Andy nor I wish to stop the free movement of labour. It’s good for our economy, if plenty of young Brits take advantage of it on the Continent. And we’ve got international companies, we’ve got a global economy. We’ve got a modern economy, every Western economy has this kind of reform.

But Douglas Carswell [says]

[You] cannot [control]

[Douglas] Carswell says you can’t control immigration.

[You can’t control it if you stay in the EU. [No, you can’t].

[Of course you c-]

How?
Well, you can control it by stopping people coming here having benefit, by having an habitual residence test. But it is not understandable that there’s a two-way flow, Brits going to the Continent, [people coming here]

[No, but you didn’t say, you said you can control it, and you’ve attacked Labour you’ve attacked Labour for saying they want a two-year moratorium before benefits=

Well, UKIP has no idea how to control it. [They go on]

But we do have, we do, [we want to leave the European Union, and have an Australian-type System. We’re being frank and honest, Ken

You read about it, you just read out a carefully-scripted policy, which you and Nigel wrote this afternoon all because Mark Reckless got you in a mess] UKIP has no more [Idea about whether it’s sending people back, or how it’s going to deport people]]

[[[audience applause)]

[[[You can say that as much as you like, but we cannot control immigration while we]] remain in the EU]

Your colleague said sorry, Douglas, much as I like you.

He did not (.) he talked about transitional arrangements. He spoke very clumsily. He does not believe in repatriating people from Europe. [Absolutely not.]

[And you admire Australia. Australia,
who has put asylum seekers on boats, and is treating human beings worse than dogs. You admire Australia? It shows your true colours."

(((audience applause))

[All right, hang on ]

David

Ken

We can’t be like Australia, we haven’t got the islands to put them on. We had that before=

Yasmin

=SCOTland!

David

All right, [now hold on Wait, I want]

Ken

[It’s the abuse of immigration which we [are] doing, if we have a sensible debate=]

David

[Ken]. [I did say the point of] this programme is the audience gets a chance, as well. You, sir=

(((audience laughter))]

Ken

=I was replying to the chap there.

David

Yes, yes. Please.

Q3

Er one thing, and I think we’re missing the point here, it’s a global village that we live in at the moment (.) And we’re talking it’s a very dangerous time. So we need to look at history, and how we looked at previous recessions. Straight away, it’s always immigrants are blamed for it. Right? (1) If we come out of Europe, there’d be more job losses, which would create more friction. We’re too busy focusing on these issues, where it’s abou- listen, to solve the problem (.) it’s the benefits side of it, and that’s the way you need to do it. And it needs to be, the EU could be part of that solution, by making universal (.) to quote the Tories (.) universal credit across the who↑le of the European Community, to have the same level playing field of benefits. Then you’d have less migration all over the place. People would stay where they wanted to be.

(((audience applause))]

David

The woman there, with spectacles.

Q4

er::m I’m sick and tired of watching this programme every week, and being told we need to have a debate about immigration. We’ve been having one, we’re having one now.

Yasmin

Exactly.
It seems like all we talk about is immigration. And UKIP are to blame, and their self-perpetuating cycle, because they’re feeding more fear, which means Labour are now to blame, as well. It’s ridiculous. All we seem to talk about is immigration. What about welfare state being dismantled? What about the NHS? Immigrants are not the problem, the NHS wouldn’t run without them. And I’m sorry, should we be electing to Parliament a man who becomes racist when he’s tired?

((Audience applause))

You, sir.

Er as a Conservative, I think that David Cameron has tried to legislate into Parliament the idea of having a referendum. And secondly, I think Labour’s created that animosity, because the New Labour apparatchik Andrew Neather actually admitted that mass immigration from 2004 onwards was an attempt to rub the right’s nose in diversity, and render their arguments useless and out of date.

Okay. And you, sir, here on the right.

I think that the two main parties are running scared from UKIP because of the advances they’ve made. And the only reason they’re interested in changing the policies is because they want the UKIP voters back.

And is that sane or foolish of them, to want them back?

I think it’s foolish, because I used to be a Conservative voter, and now I’m a UKIP voter, and that won’t ever change.

((Audience applause))

So you won’t be tempted back?

No.

Can I say something that’s never been said? For the first time in my life, I’m rooting for the Tories. [I REALLY AM, because UKIP scares me that much.

[(Audience applause)]

All right. Anthony Fenton, quick question from you, and then we’ll move on to another topic.

If UKIP win today’s by-election, are we likely to see more defections to the party?
311

1154  David  You can answer this one, Douglas, of course, can’t you.

1155  Douglas  We will see mass defections, yes. But I’m not talking about amongst the establishment in Westminster, frankly I don’t really care what MPs do any more. I’m talking about the mass switching of votes in six months’ time.

1159  David  So you don’t=

1161  Douglas  =We’ve had the same two and a half parties running this party, and the country is governed in the interests of vested interests. We need political reform. The lady earlier asked, can we talk about something other than immigration? In Clacton, we fought a by-election on a programme of far-reaching political reform. We can be governed by better than what we have in Westminster at the moment. I think we’re seeing more and more people from both left and right coming together who want real change. And I think next May, in the general election, we can see mass defections to UKIP.

1169  [((Some audience applause))]

1172  David  [Anthony Fen]ton, I think you meant MPs defecting, did you?

1174  Q7  I meant MPs.

1175  David  You meant MPs. Ken Clare, you can see any Tory MPs=

1178  Ken  =I don’t think so. And frankly, I was not surprised by Douglas and Mark, once UKIP or the UKIP wave started, when we all got on to immigration, and this strange body called Migration Watch supported them, and saying a million Bulgarians were going to hit these shores on the 1st of January. I think Keith Vaz found one. But from then on we’ve had this hysterical debate. But Mark was not opposed by UKIP at the last general election. Douglas was not opposed by UKIP at the last general election. Neither of them are expressing opinions which are very different to the opinions they’ve been expressing for the last four years in Parliament. Now I don’t think there’s anybody else in Parliament quite like that.

1187  Douglas  We’ll see.

1190  Ken  And I don’t know, I don’t know, but I don’t think that matters as much, as what (.) going back to the last question (.) getting the deba:te ri[ght. We h]ave all kinds of [other things to do. The two major] parties h]ave got to loo]k like serious parties of government. And stop handing over to a populist party [going on about immigration]

1195  David  [All right.]

1197  Andy  [Have we got time for this one?]

1200  David  [Go on then]
[The question is, are there] going to be defections=

I think there might be. Because what I’ve noticed in the last few days, is Ken’s been speaking about Europe, so was Sir John Major. And they were talking a lot of sense, if I’m honest. And what strikes me is, they are isolated, now, in the modern Tory party, and I see the Tory party in Parliament as going dancing to UKIP’s tune, to be honest. I also, you know, they’re talking about giving the NHS over to insurance companies, that women returning from maternity leave aren’t worth as much. There’s a ratcheting-up here of the right wing rhetoric, and lots of modern Tories are attracted to it. I think they will see defections, further defections, because the Parliamentary Conservative Party is heading in that [direction, and it’s a very dangerous thing.

I actually wonder whether we’re going to see defection, to make things a little bit more interesting, from the Labour Party as well. Because we’ve seen that, you know, UKIP’s taking quite a few votes from the Labour Party now as well, in the north they’re doing rather well, they’re a proper threat. So what do you think, Andy? Do you think some of your colleagues might be tempted, given what Yvette Cooper is now saying, it’s a little bit UKIP-y now=

I think when people see Farage saying, on [video], “I want to give the NHS budget to insurance companies,” no (!) [not one single Labour person] i:n:: th[is country would put their name to that]

How does the panel see the UK in fifty years time with immigration the way it’s comin.

Two hundred and fifty thousands are coming in, it IS changin’ our society.

Two hundred and fifty thousand a year are coming in, it IS changin’ our society.

We’ll stick with politics and stick with one of the key issues that were mentioned a minute ago. Paul Everest please, Paul Everest.

How does the panel see the UK in fifty years time with immigration the way it’s comin.

Two hundred and fifty thousand a year are coming in, it IS changin’ our society.

how does the UK look in fifty years time if the number stay at current level. Mel- Phillips.

well if it does stays around the current level erm it’s going to look er very different. But I think it’s looking very different no?w. I mean I think that erm, there was er a polic’y under the previous Labour administration to change the makeup of the country, e::rm to
become a multicultural society, I think that was an ideological perspective that was put into practice (.) for two reasons. First of all because it was better to be multicultural that you would kind of er break down bigotry and prejudice and secondly (.) er because it was thought it was economically er it made economic sense. Now I personally think both those er judgements e::r were unwi:se. Because noone ever asked the British people if they wanted their national identity to be changed. Now you can’t get something more fundamental than national identity. What worries me about immigration is this. And I speak as the granddaughter and a great granddaughter of immigrants who came to Britain on the turn of the twentieth Century. Erm so I know better than er anybody really, whe- or most people- many people that immigrants bring a great deal to a country, and should be welcomed. But it should be in proportion, it has to be a:r sensibly managed. Because if you have the right number of immigrants coming in from cultures that are very different, you can assimilate and accommodate them (.) perfectly reasonably and they add a great deal to our society. But if you take in too many too quickly, erm from too many cultures which are very different, er not apart from anything else if they don’t have English as a first language, you can very quickly overwhelm the public services erm which can’t cope, the health services, erm doctors, erm the schools. Er:m schools can’t cope with all the languages being spoken and so on and so forth. And you also make it very difficult for er the host society to assimilate them, to become British. Which I think is terribly important. Erm=

David =okay

Melanie because if you have too many coming in, then you lose sense of we all share in a national project=

David =and you apply this to erm immigration from within the European Union, as much as from outside.

Melanie well it’s simply a question of numbers. Erm it’s simply a question of numbers of too many people. We are a very overcrowded island. And our public services quite obviously er some in particularly er some areas ar ur ur- are particularly in difficulty and others er in less difficulty. erm but it’s quite clear to me if you take in too many too quick, as we have done too quickly, you simply overwhelm public services where’ver they come from.

David you sir

Q2 Can I touch on a point Charles said? Charles, you said about politics offering hope to the people.

Charles Mm.

Q2 None of you three parties offer me any hope, and you haven’t for years. [UKIP represent my views now], and why does David Cameron keep kidding us that he’s going to do a deal with the EU on immigration? Merkel’s come out and said it. They’ve all come out and said it. We’re not stupid. We’re not stupid. It’s a new time that- whether you believe in UKIP or not, I’m so glad, and I thank God, that UKIP have stirred all you parties up, because they hadn’t have, I don’t know what you- you wouldn’t be looking us in the face and thinking there’s a problem. You’re just in your cosy little words=

((audience applause))

((audience applause))

313
Charles

[I ur=

David

[≡don’t know I want] Douglas Alexander. Melanie started by saying it was a Labour
deliberate policy to increase immigration, and you’ve just heard what the gentleman there
has said. What’s your view?

Douglas

I don’t dis-agree, frankly, with Melanie’s characterisation, but we’ve been very explicit
and open in saying that mistakes were made. We did underestimate the number of people
who would come in after Eastern Europe joined the European Union, and Ed Miliband
has been very explicit about that. To take the longer view of the question, I’ll be honest
with you I think immigration has, over the centuries, brought immense benefits to our
country. Nobel Prize winners, Olympic medallists, founders of some of our greatest
companies, and it will continue to be important to our country in the 21st century.

David

On the scale that the [scale that the questioner mentioned]. On the scale the questioner
mentioned, which was 250,000 net immigrants.

Douglas

[let me finish ((inaudible ))) Well, frankly, I don’t think that
you can predict now, over the next 50 years, what net flows of migration are going to be;,
but as I was coming o\n to sa\y, because immigration has been important, and whatever
any politician says, will continue to be important, it has to be fair, and that means it needs
to be managed properly. I think part of the reason there is such discontent and anxiety is
because people don’t feel that the right steps are being taken, or frankly, were taken under
the last government. We’ve got a situation today where there’s 175,000 people here in
Britain here illegally. That’s not fair, and that’s not right, and it’s understandable that
people are concerned about immigration when that’s happened. There are more pressures
on public services in some parts of the country than in other parts of the country. That’s an
issue that needs to be looked at. The issue of integration, that Melanie mentioned, I think
is fundamental. If you’re a public servant, working in Britain, facing the public, you should
be able to speak English. In that sense, I think the right way forward, to recognise the
reality of the 21st century, is to have proper controls to have managed migration, and those
are the kind of steps I think our government needs to take.

David

Okay. And within the EU, you accept that nothing can be done?

Douglas

No, I don’t accept that at all. That’s part of=

David

=Do you think you can cut the numbers down from the EU?

Douglas

Well, let’s look at some of the steps that you can take. You can make it necessary for
people to make a contribution to the benefits system here in Britain before they take from
the benefits system in Britain. You can stop employment agencies, as I heard in Rochester
this week, hiring people from elsewhere in the European Union for wages significantly
below that being paid to British workers. There are practical steps that other European
countries incidentally, including Germany (.) will support. The tragedy at the moment is
that the Prime Minister is not making that case.

David

Somebody shouted out, a woman’s voice, I heard. Yes, come on then. Wait a second.
Okay=

Q3

≡That isn’t cutting the numbers though, is it?

Douglas

Well, there are factors that bring people to Britain, and if you say, for example, with the
benefits system, “We’re not going to make sure that you are able to claim work-
related benefits shortly after coming to the United Kingdom,” that would have an effect.

Q3

[Yes, but the fact is, as long as we remain within the EU] David Cameron has proven it
this week. As long as we remain in the EU, we have no say over the amount of people who
can come.
Brandon: All right. The man behind you, with spectacles, in the third row. You, sir. Third row from the back, yes.

Q4: Given that it’s emerged this week that EU immigrants have put in £5 billion more than they have taken out of the UK economy, does this not show=

=,(audience applause [ ])

Q4: [Does this not show] that the UKIP bluster (.) about anti-immigration is nothing more than scaremongering.

((audience applause))

Matt: I agree with what you say, but I think some factors are more than economical. I think there are genuine tensions caused by some immigrant communities by failing to integrate, these are real, and I’m coming from a position where I completely agree with you. There are issues about people not learning the language; there are issues of trust, where we feel like people aren’t entering into the British way of life, but the biggest problem I have isn’t that we allowed immigrants to come in, because I support it. It’s that we absolutely failed to defend it. To allow such a big change to happen to our society, and to have a government at the time in Tony Blair, that I’m a big supporter of fail to make the case, because the reason why UKIP are thriving now one of the reasons is we have been buried under a deluge in this country of anti-EU propaganda, anti-immigrant propaganda. The reality is, you asked where we’ll be in 50 years’ time, the original question. I think the only way we’re going to get the deficit down is continue to have the sort of immigration that we’ve had for the last ten years.

((audience applause))

David: Okay. Brandon Lewis.

Brandon: Well, I do think, actually, we have to be very balanced about this. I actually think there is a huge advantage from the immigration- the migration we have in this country, but as politicians, we have to represent the people who elect us. We have to remember that, and there is a concern out there. That’s why I do think it’s important that we have the changes we’ve had with welfare, to make it less attractive for people to come here if they’re not contributing, but most of the people who come to this country come here to work. One of the things is our success we’ve created almost two million jobs over the last four years. That’s more than pretty much the rest of Europe put together. Three quarters of those have gone to British nationals, I have to say, as well I think it’s important to remember that. But in terms of the gentleman’s point earlier on, in terms of what can David Cameron deliver. Well, I would say judge somebody by what they have done, what they have shown they can do. David Cameron is the Prime Minister who used the veto, he’s the Prime Minister who got us out of the bailout, and got the budget cut in Europe. I think he will get the renegotiation we want to see, and when you talk about Angela Merkel, actually, if you look at the entire quote, what Angela Merkel said, as Douglas said, she also did recognise there are issues with the problems that they have got in Germany, and one of the key things with migration is it’s migration of labour. People who come here to contribute to our society, learn English and integrate, are a real asset to us. I think we’ve got to be really up-front about that=

David: What did she mean when she said, “We have the basic principle of free movement. We won’t meddle with that.” Angela Merkel. What did that mean, if it didn’t mean you can’t meddle with it?

Brandon: Well, I think you’ve also got to look at the rest of the sentence, where she talks about, “And we have got problems.” She also talks- and actually, the free movement within Europe is about free movement of labour. I think when you look at it in that context, where people coming here to contribute- and let’s remember, there are people from Britain, in my constituency, in the energy industry, taking their skills and expertise overseas, as well.
I think it’s really important

[Sorry are you saying it’s the free movement of labour, not the free movement of people, that is enshrined in the EU? Is that what you’re saying?

Yes. I think it’s the free movement of labour that we have to remember. It’s about people coming here to contribute to our economy and be part of our communities.

Well, what about all the people who go and live in Spain in retirement? They’re not movement of labour, and that’s under the EU.

Well, no, and that’s the point I’m making this is not a one-way thing. We have got roughly two million British nationals who are living overseas as well. This is not a one-way street

were saying that only people who came here to work would be allowed in under the EU regulations.

No. What I’m saying is people who come here and contribute to our society can benefit from our society, so if we look at the welfare system, the changes we’re making means that people cannot come here to go on the benefits system, and I think it’s quite right, if people move from Britain overseas, they shouldn’t in those countries, either.

Charles Kennedy.

[How ironic was that? And that’s] a little fact of history that there’s quite a few folk, very vocal in British politics, that would rather not talk about, or people didn’t remember. That’s point one. Point two I do not agree with Melanie’s er[.] idea, viewpoint, that somehow a multicultural society, which is what we’ve become - and I welcome that fact. I happen to think we’re a much richer, more diverse, better society, precisely because we are multicultural. And I feel that as a Scot living within the UK (.) I feel that as a Highlander living within Scotland. I know about all these various levels of identity, and I think that it’s an immense benefit to us as peoples living within the United Kingdom. It’s not a political project. It’s the natural outcome of people coming from other countries and contributing to our[.]s, and the point the gentleman made is absolutely correct this most recent report simply confirmed what has been the case for decades; that there is a net financial benefit to our country by having people coming. The gentleman who supports UKIP, who said they offer the best hope, and is shouting “Rubbish.” I’m afraid, sir, your hopes are going to be sorely dashed by UKIP [I have made that prediction]

heh, the irony in all of this is, of course, the biggest champion of the single market, and she did a great deal to advance it, was one Mrs Margaret Thatcher, when she was Prime Minister. [How ironic was that? And that that’s] a little fact of history that there’s quite a few folk, very vocal in British politics, that would rather not talk about, or people didn’t remember. That’s point one. Point two I do not agree with Melanie’s er[.] idea, viewpoint, that somehow a multicultural society, which is what we’ve become - and I welcome that fact. I happen to think we’re a much richer, more diverse, better society, precisely because we are multicultural. And I feel that as a Scot living within the UK (.) I feel that as a Highlander living within Scotland. I know about all these various levels of identity, and I think that it’s an immense benefit to us as peoples living within the United Kingdom. It’s not a political project. It’s the natural outcome of people coming from other countries and contributing to our[.]s, and the point the gentleman made is absolutely correct this most recent report simply confirmed what has been the case for decades; that there is a net financial benefit to our country by having people coming. The gentleman who supports UKIP, who said they offer the best hope, and is shouting “Rubbish.” I’m afraid, sir, your hopes are going to be sorely dashed by UKIP [I have made that prediction]

Have your go. Why- why- w- why is Mr Kennedy talking rubbish?

Well, I didn’t shout that, but he actually is.

Oh, I see. Oh, but he actually is? I see.

[Well, that’s two]

There were two reports out (.) er: one that said there was a net er: benefit to Britain, but there was another one that went back five years longer, and it said there was a net take; a net loss, so they’re using the figures that they want, like they normally do. Typical politicians use the reports they want, and not take into account (.) But I’d also like to say [that UKIP are not against immigration.] We believe we need immigration (Laughter). We cannot run this country without immigration. We accept that, and the UKIP policy is that
we would have controlled immigration on a points-based system. That would bring people in that we need, the skills that we need. We don’t need people here to fill shelves or to do normal jobs. [We need people the doctors and nurses, engineers, etc., and that is what UKIP policy is, and it’s not portrayed because he’s—]

Brandon: [That’s what you’ve got.] [We’ve got the toughest system in the world].

David: All right. Okay. You’ve had your say, sir. Who was it shouting out there? Go on, then. We’ll just hear from you.

Q6 The only way UKIP can change anything is if they get MPs. How many MPs are you going to get at the next election? 5, 10, maybe? [You’re not going to get a] majority to be able to change anything. I’ve spoken to the amount of MEPs that UKIP have just elected that are already trying to stand for Parliament next year? It’s about 30% to 35%, and why are they doing that? Because they can’t do anything in the European Parliament. They want to come here. They want to become MPs in Parliament to change things. You’re not going to get enough MPs to be able to change anything.

Q2 [Another one in two weeks]

Q7 Hello. This is a question to Melanie=

David: No, just make a statement, if you would, because Melanie has had [her fair say]

Q7 [right okay] Well, basically, I think it’s dangerous to start talking about different cultures. I think that inferred biological difference, and it’s a very dangerous line to walk. Um and yes, I think that’s something that UKIP have done to proliferate their ideas, and I don’t think it’s beneficial in the discussion about immigration.

((some audience applause))

David: Okay, and you, sir, in the gangway. No, the man in the second row.

Q8 Erm I fully agree that diversity within society does add value, and I think rather than stigmatising people coming into the country, really, truly assess what value they do have to
our society. What value are they going to bring, and how can we fully assess that, so that
British society can fully benefit from people moving into the country? Also, I think what
we need to consider, as well, is how we fully address immigrants coming into the country
illegally (.) how we can fully address that side of it, as well. Ethnic diversity is really
important, but we’ve got to fully assess its value to our society.

David Okay. I think- thank you very much. I think we’ll move onto another question. Thank you
very much. ((continues))

Question Time (16th October 2014) Newbury

David Tonight, we’re in Newbury in Berkshire, and welcome to ‘Question Time’. (music: 8) As
always, a big welcome to you at home, to our audience, and to our panel. The Conservative
Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt (.) Labour’s Shadow Leader of the House of Commons,
Angela Eagle (.) the former leader of the Liberal Democrats, Min Campbell (.) the political
commentator Isabel Oakshot, currently co-authoring a biography of David Cameron (.) and
the parish priest and broadcaster, Giles Fraser.

(Music and applause: 10)

David Thank you very much. Now, remember you can join in from home by text or Twitter. Our
hashtag, #BBCQT; follow us @bquestiiontime, and if you want to text us, 8391 use
the red button and I hope your television doesn’t explode, and you can see what others are
saying. Let’s take the first question which comes from Graham Oliver, please. Graham

Graham Can David Cameron put an emergency brake on immigration?

David David Cameron was talking about immigration today. Can he put an emergency brake on
it? Angela Eagle.

Angela Well, there were some big headlines about emergency brakes today, and I think it’s no
coincidence that they emerge just as the Rochester and Strood by-election is getting
underway, and we’ve got a Prime Minister that’s running scared of UKIP. So I looked at
the story in great detail to see what the actual proposals were, and there are actually
weren’t any (.) there was just a load of wishful thinking about what he wanted to do. So I
think we’ll have to wait and see: whether it’s (.) more hot air and headlines with no content
or whether there’ll actually be some approach that might wo:rk. I think this government’s
got for[m when it comes to making big promises about immigration and not delivering. I
mean, he promised – before the election he said, “No ifs, no buts. We will reduce net
migration”. Net migration figures are exactly the same now as they were at the beginning
of this Parliament=

David =Do you think he should reduce net migration?=  

Angela =Well, I think there are some things that you ca[n actually do that I’d like to see the
government make progress on instead of just make empty headlines. The first is that they
should be in favour of fair but not free European Union immigration, and you can start to
achieve that by re-negotiating directives on whose (.) can get hold of benefits like Child
Benefit a- and uh (.) Child Tax Credit. They shouldn’t be available to people whose
children aren’t living in this country, and you could try and re-negotiate that without any
kind of treaty change. You could look at exploitation in the labour market. You could ban
employment agencies, as Labour says, from employing just foreign workers. You could
ensure that the minimum wage was much better enforced than it is, and zero-hours
contracts weren’t er (.) used to exploit workers. There’s a whole load of things that you
could actually do. You could change the rules in the UK on deportation of foreign
criminals no↑w. You don’t need EU agreement to do that. So there’s a lot they could be
doing that they aren’t actually doing.

David All right, that’s a long list. Jeremy, do you want to add to that list or would it be sufficient
just to achieve what Angela Eagle has described?

Jeremy Well, to answer what the question was if anyone can put a break on immigration it’s David
Cameron, and I think we have to be clear and say that er we welcome the fact that we
have people from all over the world in this country my own wife is Chinese and I think
that we gain a lot as a society from the contribution made by people from all over the
world. But er what we had=

David =Why is David Cameron the only person who can put a brake on it?

Jeremy Because he’s got a track record of delivering when it comes to Europe. I think if you look
At (.) I don’t agree with what Angela said=

Angela =The net migration figures [haven’t been delivered]

Jeremy [When she says the government’s done nothing, Theresa May has actually reduced migration levels from outside the EU back down to the levels that we
had in the 1990s. What’s been more difficult, because we’ve had a situation where the
European economy has been growing much more slowly than our economy, so we’ve been
a magnet for people from inside the EU, and under the current rules of the EU we can’t do
anything about that. Now, what David Cameron has said very clearly is that he wants to
talk about that, and he’s also said that if he’s not successful in the short-term, if he
remains Prime Minister, he will renegotiate our membership of the EU and put that to a
vote of the British people. Now, I think that gives him a very good chance of getting a
better deal when it comes to free movement of people, because we do want the benefits of
people who are able and talented who can contribute to the British economy, but we don’t
want this uncontrolled immigration and we did have that before (.) and I think (.) the
British people think enough is enough.

David But there are those who say this won’t be possible, and I see the Prime Minister said that
he um (.) I quote him, he wanted, “One last go at negotiating a better deal”. Is the
implication of that that if it doesn’t work he will urge the British people to vote out of
Europe? Because ‘one last go’ normally means if you fail, you then do something else.

Jeremy Well, I interpreted those comments to be what he was going to try and do ahead of a re-
negotiation. I think the real moment where we would talk turkey about this is when there’s
a prospect of a referendum, which only the Conservative Party are committed to, in 2017.
Then he says, “Well, look, one of the things that matters to the British people – we want an
open, tolerant society with social cohesion”, and that means we can’t have the four million
immigrants that we had in the Labour years, totally uncontrolled immigration. We have to
have our migration on a controlled, sensible basis, and he’s the person who managed to
veto European treaty before. He’s got a track record of- he got us out of the Euro bailout
mechanism. I’m absolutely certain he could deliver [for us].

[You say] you interpret it- he hasn’t told you what he meant by ‘one last go’?

Well, you know I (.) I saw what he said and he’s expressed the same sentiments in private [as he e]xpressed in public. This is a very, [very important t]hing that he wants to negotiate for Britain [from the EU]

[all right] [But do you have]

[yes all right I] must move around the panel, but do you have any impression yourself that he might recommend ‘get out’ in th- in t- in the vote? In the referendum on Europe? That there are circumstances where he’d say, “Get out”?

Well, if you are having a negotiation, you reserve your options if you don’t get what you want in a negotiation.

Okay. Giles Fraser

I wish politicians would just stop the sort of pandering to a bargain basement prejudice about immigrants and start saying=

=((Audience applause))

I really do, and I wish people would start saying some (.) just much more positive things about the contribution that people from other countries make to our society, and that they enrich it, they actually make it richer. They make it more colourful and more vibrant, and, you know, I get what Jeremy says but there isn’t an inner Jeremy Clarkson there in what you’re saying, and I’m worried about it=

=What about Angela Eagle=

=I’m worried about well, I’m worried about it in all politicians=

=What about her, as well?

=I’m worried about it in all politicians at the moment (.) cos it’s so easy just to sort of follow UKIP into this sort of (.) this idea that we scapegoat those people who come from another country when actually the big picture is one of austerity and that’s not the fault of people who come here looking for a better life and contribute to our society.

[okay. The man up there] The man up in the second row from the back, with spectacles. You, sir.
I- I couldn’t agree more with Giles. There’s still 1.8 million British citizens who live in other countries in the EU. We never hear about that, and I’m sick and tired of both the Conservative Party and now the Labour Party, I’m very disappointed to see scapegoating all of the country’s ills on other people who come from other parts of the EU to work. There are legitimate concerns that people in our communities have that, as politicians who are elected, we have a duty to represent. That is not scapegoating people.

Angela didn’t scapegoat anybody from any er community at all, but I think you have to realise that there are some pressures and issues caused by some of the problems in our labour market, which is why I was talking about ensuring that we can enforce the minimum wage, that we’re going to for example make it illegal to exploit those who are at work. There are legitimate concerns that people in our communities have that, as politicians who are elected, we have a duty to represent. That is not scapegoating people.

David Campbell?

David Do you think Cameron has a chance of changing the rules in the EU?

Ming No. No I mean, “Emergency brake”?! What’s that supposed to mean? You do something, it stops immediately? No! a chance. Why? Because you make progress in Europe not by holding a pistol to the heads of the other members but by ensuring that you build coalitions; that you get agreement. Of course there are countries, for example like Holland, which have a concern about immigration, and I think that what is necessary is for us to stop trying to say, “This is a zero sum game”. If you say, for example, “No more immigration”, one of the things that er Jeremy would have to deal with is the fact that the figures suggest that there was something like 40,000 doctors in this country who came from abroad. When was the last time you went into a hotel and you didn’t hear what you might call a ‘foreign voice’? When was the last time when you were in a care home, for example, that the people who were there were from abroad? Now, Angela makes some very good points about the whole question of minimum wage but frankly, I want to see a living wage. I don’t want to see a [minimum wage]. [Okay] Just one last point, if I may, and it’s this if there’s a problem about pressure upon housing, there’s a way of dealing with that. There’s a large-scale public investment in the social housing which is absolutely essential in this country, and for which governments of all parties and none have failed to provide sufficient – by way of investment. If they did that then the kind of pressure on housing, which people regard as being significant and persuasive of their attitude, that could be removed too. Along with the whole question of the rate at which people from outside are willing to work.
The discussion revolves around immigration and how to control it without harming bilateral relations. Q2 questions the possibility of reducing immigration from the EU, suggesting a points-based system similar to Australia. Graham Oliver emphasizes the European Union's commitment to free movement of labour and capital throughout member states, making it impossible to implement such a system. The speaker's aim is to promote the influx of the labour force coming into the country by some form of points-based system, as they do in Australia. David Cameron's suggestion is analyzed, with the speaker arguing that it is improbable due to the foundational principle of the EU. The audience engages with the discussion, and a point made by Jeremy is disputed by Isabel. The debate continues with Jeremy highlighting the progress made on reducing migration and suggesting that further steps need to be taken. Isabel counters with the idea that the European Union's principle of freedom of movement prevents drastic measures to control immigration.
countries would [walk away], and I think also, if you look at what people like Germany are saying as well, they too recognise there’s a real problem with, for example, benefit tourism, and there is a real willingness to talk about those issues. The point is David Cameron is the only major party leader, the only potential Prime Minister, who actually wants to even try to do this. If=

Ming [inaudible]

David =You use this fact, hang on a second you used what you said was a fact, that the Tories had reduced net migration into this country. How do you account for last year’s figures being up by 68,000 – or nearly 40%?

Isabel Exactly.

David You didn’t mentioned that.

Jeremy Well, if you look at the overall balance of net migration

David [So it’s gone down and then it’s gone wrong, now, is what you’re saying?]

Jeremy Well, the issue we’ve been talking about is European migration. outside the EU, it’s gone right back down to the 1990s levels. Now we need to do something about what’s happening from inside the EU.

Ming But we- we’ve exhausted a huge amount of goodwill in Europe. I mean, the assumption seems to be, we can go on saying, “Do this otherwise we’ll go. Do this otherwise we’ll go”, and of course- in due course countries like Germany and France and Holland and other countries will simply say, “Okay, if that’s your position then go. Don’t stay. Don’t stand in the way of [the founding principles of the Union]”

Isabel [Many voters think that’s a good thing] Many [voters would say that’s a good thing]

David [People might want that, yes]

Ming Well, they’d better understand what the consequences [are ]

David [inaudible]

Giles [We benefit] it from this, as well. I had a taxi ride the other day. [This taxi driver]

Ming [Just before three] million jobs. Three million jobs=
This taxi driver said to me, a London cabbie, said, “There’s too much people (.) foreigners coming to this country. Too much immigration. I’m moving to Spain”.

([audience laughter, then applause])

I want to go on] because we’ve had quarter of an hour and I have to watch the clock, but you, sir, first (.) come to you?

I think what annoys the public about immigration the most is the case of the Latvian gentleman that came here, who had done eight years for murder previously, then he came here and committed another murder.

The lady in spectacles there, in the middle. Yes, you, ma’am.

I would just like to say I actually moved to Spain some years ago, and why don’t we adopt the policy that they seem to have, where you have to have a job and a home to go to, and if you can’t pay your way you have to come home?

You were kicked out, were you?

Sorry?

Were you kicked out of Spain?

([Audience laughter])

No:, we chose to come back. Huh huh

Oh, you chose to come back. But you had to have a job to stay there?

We needed to have a job before we could get full residencia, yes.

Ming, you’re the great expert on Europe. Is that true?

I believe so. [so]

[So] why don’t we do the same here?

Well, because governments have chosen not to do it. I do think the point made about the criminal who apparently had ( . ) or the person, I mean, he’s dead or a body has been found, so no-one’s quite sure as to what the precise circumstances of his death were ( . ) but the point is this that that was actually a feature of inefficiency more than anything else,
because the information was available at a time when he was charged and convicted of another offence, and that wasn’t put before a court at that time.

David: Woman here in the front row.

[All right, let’s] not go down that. The

Q5: Erm, you said that they’re all coming in and stealing our jobs. I’ve just graduated from university and I’m looking for a job, and I can tell you that there are thousands of jobs out there; people just aren’t looking for the right ones or willing to go below (.) what would be in their expectations. There are jobs out there (.) they’re not coming in and taking them all.

David: You’re speaking about this area of Britain? Around here, or.

Q5: In Britain in general. I mean, there are thousands of jobs out there.

David: All right, and the man up there in spectacles, in the second-third row from the back. Yes.

No, not you, but the man next to you. Yes.

Q6: The- I think what the- er (.) emergency brake that might be being referred to is the Lisbon Treaty, which I believe has a clause in it that says that the free movement of Europeans can be suspended on the grounds of er( .) human health. So, possibly, this emergency brake might come more emergency than we think.

David: Okay, and the lady here, then we must move on.

Q7: I can’t believe (.) listening to this debate here (.) we come from North Oxfordshire, and we cannot believe the amount of building that’s taking place and ruining our countryside. Our village is virtually going to double. Some of the villages around us already have. It’s destroying village life.

David: [And you blame immigration for this?]

Q7: Ye:s, because it’s got a waterfall effect. People move into the inner city areas, immigrants, then the people from the inner cities move to the suburbs. The people from the suburbs move out into the countryside. What do they do? They still, a lot of them, work in London and the cities, so what happens to village life? They don’t use the village shops. They don’t use the village libraries. They just use us as a dormitory. It is tot- it’s got to be gradual. It’s got to be so many, and the services have got to be there for it. It’s absolutely ridiculous to just keep pushing more people in.

David: Do you recognise this picture?

Jeremy: Well, that’s why I think you have to have sensible, balanced, controlled immigration, and I don’t think actually anyone on this panel is saying that we don’t want to have a society which has a very positive role for foreigners, but it needs to be in a controlled, sustainable way, and that’s why David Cameron is absolutely clear he wants to go back to Europe and make sure that we do: have those controls.
Just before we leave it what about the point that the lady there made, about not being able to stay in Spain because – no, not you. You had to have a job, you said.

Yes, we had to have a job and somewhere to live before we could get full residencia.

Yes, well, that is the way the law works, but=

=In Spain, but not here=

=In Spain, but not here=

=Yes, but what happens in this country is that people do find a job because we’ve got a very successful economy and so the net migration figures go up and that’s what David Cameron is saying needs to chance.

The treaty applies to us as well. We can say, “If you haven’t got a job within three months, we can ask people to leave” and it is strictly our own government which allows them to take benefits. Our government can stop them taking benefits.

All right. Let=

=Germany has stopped the quotas. They have rationalised it.

Ming , last brief point to you on that.

Well, I really want to pick up the residencia point because maybe that is citizenship, and of course you don’t have to have British citizenship if you want to come here and work because that, after all, is a founding principle of the European Union, but it’s quite right to say there’re things that we could do. Much better to do these things and see if they work before we try and hold a pistol to the head of the European Union.

Okay. Let’s crack on. Adrian-

Question Time (8th May 2014): Southampton

tonight we’re in Southamptom and welcome to Question Time (6) good evening to you at home and welcome to our studio audience here who are going to be putting questions to our panel who of course do not know the questions until they hear them (.) from your lips:. Two weeks to go until the local and European elections do we have five politicians (.) on our panel tonight. The conservative party chairman Grant Shapps (.) labour’s shadow business secretary Chuka Umunna, the liberal democrat party’s former leader in the House of Lords Shirley Williams, the leader of UKIP Nigel Farage and the green party MP and former leader of their party, Caroline Wilkis ((applause 8 seconds)) thank you and we begin with a question from Robert Easling please, Robert Easling
Robert does the UK need to come out of the EU (.) to stop the flow of immigrants th- living in this
country.

Chuka look erm (.) I am the son of an immigrant, uh I believe immigration has brought
tremendous benefits to our country, erm in the wake of the war immigrants helped rebuild
our country, a lot of our public serves would not be able to operate were it for immigrants
working in them and if you look at the cultural diversity and richness of our nation that
immigration is bought (.) allot. I think in terms of people's concerns, all that they ask is
that (.) er we have properly controlled borders that we don't have people coming in and er
undercutting ur British workers, er and they are not exploited themselves. Erm but I
certainly don't think leaving the EU would be good for our economy. Erm the EU is our
nearest and biggest market and actually the key that unlocks the door to a lot these
emerging markets=

David =that overrides your concern- your party might have remembering that they apologised for
wh[at t]hey did on immigration, on the flow of immigrants into this country.

Chuka [yes] well I don't think we got it everthing right on immigration, but look. We've gone
through a difficult period as a co[untry. And economically has been very difficult for us
inde[ed coming out of the two thousand eight nine crash. And we've got some big
challenges ahead. Er: automation, the use of computers (.) is changing the nature of jobs.
And we're facing challenges from India, China and the [merging econ]omies. And I don't
think that pulling out the EU is necessary going to solve that problem. I also don't think
doing one of those classic things that sometimes do when you're going through adversity
(.) blaming 'the other' for the problems that we face (.) is a way of actually going to
[ensure that] we succeed i[n t]he future

David [but is net mi-] but we've seen
[er: I uh uh] [uh] but you've seen the latest net migration figures. Which are
pretty much the size of the city of Southampton (.) last year. are those numbers, for you (.)
acceptable? Right?

Chuka well I think we'd like to see immigration come down, but let's not forget by the way, we
have around two million Brits living in the EU. Er: I think we have slightly more than that
( .) living here. But do I think that coming out of the EU is going to solve the issue we
haves that we have ( .) competing against the emerging economies? No I don't. I think to do that,
we're gunna have to innovate, invest in our science base, and we've got to ensure that our
people that got the skills they need ( .) to succeed in the world. I don't think pulling out of
the EU is going to solve that those big problems that we have as a country.

Nigel ((Audience applause))

...and my argument ( .) that I wouldn't dispute, that controlled immigration can be a big net
benefit to Britain, economically, and culturally, and everything else. But we have no
control, and we've no idea, just how many people are coming, five hundred thousand are
coming, eight hundred thousand are coming, there is nothing we can do. And what I would
advocate is that one of the big benefits of not being in the European Union, is that we get
back control of our borders, so that we can decide who comes to Britain. Not discriminating against people from India (.) and New Zealand, which we currently do, because we have an open door to Romania and Bulgaria. Let’s have our own immigration policy, and let’s not just control the quantity of people coming into this country, but the quality as well.

[((Audience applause))]

Chuka [lets not forget (2) lets not forget, lets not forget] (0.5) we’ve heard this from Nigel before. There’s going to be a catastrophe in the euro zone in the coming months (.) and according to his posters, there’s going to be twenty six million people are going to want to come here. And remember (.) REMEMBER what we heard from you from you on Bulgaria and Romania. You said we were going to have this huge wave coming over here. That hasn’t happened=

[will be able to come here]

Nigel [have you seen] the migration figures?=

David =Nigel you made your point. Nigel. Nigel

Nigel w’tell

David five people on this panel

Nigel sorry. fair enough, but the figures are the figures David you know

David [Shirley Williams]

Shirley well I’m the third person on this panel. (0.5) Look, let’s be quite honest. This country is tremendously dependent on some of the immigrants who come here. (0.2) Go into any NHS hospital, go and have an operation, look to see who the health assistants are, look to see who the doctors are, many of them will not be from this country. Some of them will be from other countries, some will be from other commonwealth countries. And frankly the NHS of which I am extremely proud, would break down without them. They have been indispensable to it. Go into your hotels and your pubs and your cafes. Now, I’m not in favour of the very low wages we pay people in catering, I think it should be at least the minimum wage. But frankly they are doing the jobs that we cannot get English people to do, because the pay is too poor. So what the=

David =are you not worried at all by the numbers of people who come. Over two hundred thousand?

Shirley n-no it’s not the case about the numbers, it’s whether in fact it’s the people who come here are fitting into jobs that we need done. Our unemployment has not shored up frankly as others said it would. (.) we have relatively low unemployment (.) for countries of our area, like the united states. So it isn’t there are a lot of spectres around here and they’re not worth looking at very carefully, because a lot of them are just exactly that, they’re spectres. Let me say one other thing. What many people don’t realise, is that if we didn’t have, for example, a steady flow of substantial numbers of international students (.) including Southampton University of which I’m on dock, we would have to close one course after the other. There aren’t enough people doing technical, mathematical and economic courses to keep them open for Brits, unless we had overseas students. Overseas students now pay (.) a very substantial part of all the costs of our universities. Much more a much higher cost than would be met by tuition fees. We would see tuition fees go up even further .hh if we didn’t invite overseas students. An[d FINally] a last point. One more point.]

David [thank you] all right you there yes you sir
I think the policies are wrong (.) to start with, why should we able to just turn up in this country, expect everything (.) they can get over here. hh so why (.) why not have jobs open to them, yeah so they can come here, bit like Australia, or America where you get the green card or whatever- so you have to apply for what you get when you come here. hh don’t have an issue with the people coming over here, er with the hospitals and everything, we have a minimum wage as well so:=

Shirley it’s not one sided. I had an extremely ill close relative (0.5) he was an NHS patient, was a Brit, he’d served- worked in the British army, he came extremely ill only last year with a serious heart condition, he was looked after absolutely brilliantly (.) in France, and later in Italy, and he never paid a penny, because there the common NHS card which is shared by the whole of the European Union, which means that everyone of us who travels to Europe will get what we’d never get in the United States or China. We get (.) full health

[ safety=

David = all right

Shirley so we really must sort out some of these lies]

David it’s all right Nigel let me come back to the question, Grant Chapps. Then I’ll come to you two. yes

[[(audience applause))

Grant does the UK need to pull out of Europe to control immigration was the question, and the answer is, we want you to have a say in this. I believe that immigration has benefited this country, I believe that it’s important to be able to travel around a free market that includes people being able to (.) move around. I’m surprised what Nigel had to say, who’d be his secretary without his German wife, for example if there was no free movement. The question really is, what kind of free movement, and how far should it go. hh when new countries joined the EU like what we just saw with Romania and (.) Bulgaria, we’ve been arguing when countries come in and have a very different level- standard of living, there should be a potential for a longer transition period, that’s exactly the sort of thing that we want to renegotiate with the EU, and we want to put that to a referendum (.) so not us; not politicians, not Labour and the Lib Dems who I would argue who don’t want to do anything but take us further into Europe, or Nigel who can’t deliver or the Conservatives who are the people that can deliver on Europe and we can do that by giving you an in-out referendum.

David is that giving people a say Nigel (.) in [your terms?]

Nigel [why don’t you tell them the truth? Why don’t you tell them the truth that your part-]

David [you you we] what he said was [we want you to have your say]

Y- ye But the question was (.) do we have to be a part of the EU to control immigration an- Grant says ‘I haven’t got an opinion, it’s up to you in a referendum. B- but we’ve heard all that before, David Cameron was promising one at the last European elections th- didn’t deliver. Come on, let’s be honest (.) you along with Labour the Lib Dems the Greens, hh the political establishment in Britain (.) have all voted=

Chuka =you are the political establishment you’ve [been an MP for fifteen years]
Nigel what they haven’t tamed me yet!

[([audience applause))]

Chuka [you are the establishment! for god’s sake. YOU ARE THE

ESTABLISHMENT ]

[([Audience applause continues))]

Nigel [an-an Grant and Grant (.) no party. No party! has been keener on the free movement of peoples in the European Union (.) than the Conservatives (.) so much so, that your leader even wants Tur*key to join the European Union, with fr[ee movement] to be ext[ended to]

Anothe[r eighty mill]ion people]

David [all right. Ni-] [all right]

Caroline well I’m going to say something that’s quite unusual because I agree with Nigel on one point (.) one point only which i:s that I do think that people should have a say about the EU, and I don’t think (.) kicking it in this long [grass as the Conservatives are doing is the right thing to do. I think (1) I think people]=

[([audience applause))]

David what would your say be?=

Grant =did you vote for it?

Caroline yes I ,hhh h[uh did]

Grant [more th]an these g[uys did]

Caroline [consist]ency the\re (.) so I=

David =and so an in-out referendum.

Caroline I do think we should have an in-out referendum a:nd if we were to have such a referendum, The Green party would be voting to sta[y i:n. Be]cause (.) when I was thinking this subject might possibly come up (.) tonight .hh I was making a little note on the train of the things that the EU have done for us. When people say what has the EU ever done for us, I’ve got a (.) few things here. Uh it’s not very much really (.) providing fifty seven percent of our trade, clean beaches and rivers, cleaner air, lead-free petrol restrictions on landfill dumping recycling culture (.) h cheaper mobile phone charges improved consumer protection food labelling h ban on hormones and other harmful food additives better product safety, freedom to travel, live and work across E[u]rope]

Nigel [of course]

David [how much more is there?=

Caroline =I’ve HA:rdly started but t[he point is] p[ulling part of] (.) p[ulling out the EU would be a disa ster (.) a:nd it is a false choice] BUT. Let me say one thing though=

David [equality for women]
Shirley: [equality for women]

David: [yes]

Nigel: [((audience applause))]

David: =oh dead oh dear

Caroline: the thin- the thing that makes me most cross of all though (. ) is when (. ) Nigel Farage tries to pretend he’s a man of the people that he’s anti establishment..h if you look at the policies of UKIP, they are anything but, UKIP is the party that is claiming lots of (. ) er money from (. ) rich bankers who are (. ) b[ank rolling]

Nigel: [is that relevant to] this question Caroline? [th- this is an immigration question Caroline, you know I- I’m just fascinated] by how this all fits really

Caroline: because part of the establishment - NO I was talking to you about] well I’ll tell you how this fits in Nigel if you’ll just be quiet[et for a second].

Nigel: [very interesting] very interesting=

Caroline: you can’t- you’ve just said your anti-establishment (. ) you are AT THE CENTre [of the establishment] yes well you (. ) said you were against the establishment] you said you were counter to the as[essment]

Nigel: say I was anti-establishment. I said you were part of the establishment] [I didn’t

Chuka: [you are t]he establish[ment]

Nigel: [we:ll] (. ) you know (inau[ible])

David: been tamed was what he said (. ) ‘I’ve not been tamed’

Caroline: but do you know Nigel will say you know he’ll say: what nobody else dares to say (. ) but I tell you what I dare to say is: and that is that we’ve got a chronic (. ) housing shortage, we have an NHS under strain, we have a culture of low pay, but the fault of that lies with the government, not with migrants=

David: =all right (. ) [i’m going to bring in- there are many people with their hands up] I’ll come to the woman in the second row from the back (. ) there, yes:

Shirley: er ab[solutely with you er]n] of cour- I agree with you but I’d add one another thing which we tend to forget .h (. ) the countries that have come into the European Union in the last
few years (.) like Bulgaria, Romania earlier on Poland hh are countries that have become Democracies (0.2) and we should be very proud of that fact that the concept of democracy and the rule of law (.) has spread throughout the whole of Europe (.) including eastern Europe, and (.) er central Europe (.) in a way that our grandparents would never believed possible=

[((audience applause))]

David =but did it need to involve fre[e movemen]ent of people? Wh[y did it- why?]  

Shirley [yes it did] [absolutely ess]entially because the whole idea was the equality of citizens in the EU and above all Earnest Bevan said years ago ‘I want to live in a continent where you don’t have to show a passport to go from one place to another. It’s the ideal of the liberty of individuals to move wherever they want [to live]

David [former] Labour foreign secretary. You sir there at (.) back in the brown shirt. Yes Will anybody admit that immigration from Europe has g’ten out of hand?

Nigel yes I [will. (1) of course]

(((audience applause)))

David you know Nigel Farage will wh- who do you want to admit it? (1) Chuka? Any of them?

Nigel any of them apart from Nigel. Nobody seems to be noone’s even taking it on-

David Grant Chap=

Grant =fir[st of all]

[there’s] too many. Specially in Southampton

Grant first of all there’s a whole other side to er what movement actually means. It means that millions of Brits have gone and settled in places like Spa↑in and France, and elsewhere to re↑ire (.) so we have to be looking at this in the round. So the idea that you ban it one way of course they’d just ban it the other way so there are advantages to Brits. But I do agree that you have co↑ntrol] these things. That’s why this government for example has introduced measures where you cannot go to the front of the housing queue if haven’t lived in the area or had an attachment (.) can’t use the health service as if it’s the international health service. That was wrong and we put an end to that. And that’s quite right as well. And it’s interesting to see that because we have taken series of different steps that the predicted mass movement of people from Ro- Romania and Bulgria does not appear to have taken place=

[hoo?]

David =because of the measures you took?

Grant yes I think [all of these things]

David [not because they] just didn’t particularly want to come?

Grant nope. Well I think all of these things. One of the things that we did very early on was extended from the minimum amount of time that Labour had put in for transitions (.) we added another two years on to the legal maximum for transition between the time between Romanian and Bulgarians came into the EU and were able to come he↑re. And that allowed more time to [move round]
David  
[so Chuka] is the coalition getting it right where Labour got it wrong?

Chuka  
well the things they have been doing recently are things we have been calling for like  
strengthening the habitual residency test but may I just say something about this David. I  
think its really important that we have a calm and rational debate about immigration. I  
think sometimes the tone of the debate in our country has become quite ugly. So when  
people like Nigel say things like when I’m on a train or bus I feel what was it ‘awkward’ if  
I hear people speaking another language other than English I think that’s kind of up:ly. So  
let’s have a calm and ratio[nal debate] I do actually

Nigel  
[do you?] so do you not think that people coming to this country  
(.) in reasonable controlled numbers, learning English, and integrating, and becoming part  
of us is not important? I think it’s very very imp[ortant inde:ed (2) very important. Ve:ry  
important]  

(([audience applause  
])

Chuka  
you have completely misinterpreted what I have said there. I have not argued against  
integration. what I’ve argued against is letting this debate descend into something that is  
quite na:sty and quite ugly. There are a lot of buses and trains if you got on, in my  
constituency in London in Stretton, where you would hear other people talking different  
languages other than English. And you say that makes you feel awkward. What you say,  
makes me feel awkward Nigel.

Nigel  
[well (. I’m sorry Chuka]. We need (. surely surely the essence of this question (. the  
 essence of this question, is about should we pull out of the EU, so that we can control  
immigration, my argument is, that unless we can control the numbers that come in to  
Britain, we will not get integration, we will get increasing separation within our  
communities. And that (. is someth[ing I believe nobody wants]  

(([audience applause  
])

David  
uh ok hold on a second. You sir  

I just (. wanna say we’re talking about the EU, and we’re saying about coming in or out of  
it for immigration, there’s hundreds more reasons to be doing it, so for and against. But  
I’m sort of, q uite proud to say that I’m only quite a young chap and getting into politics  
and quite enjoying it, as well. And I feel that the only way I can g:o (. is that these  
decisions to go into the EU were made before I had (. a choice and a stance to say, and I  
think the referendum gives people that are getting interested in politics that are abit  
younger a chance to really do that. And I don’t think it’s really a bad thing to really do that  
go back and relook at the balance, and say all our heads are bete- you know fifty heads are  
better than one. Which is (. a better way forward than one party choosing. Labour have  
good points (. UKIP might have good points. But Conservative party are the only people  
putting forward (. for everyone a chance, t- a chance=

Grant  
and well done for Caroline for voting for the bill, when it was in front of us. That would  
have given us the say. And shame on Labour and the Lib Dems for not allowing this  
parliament to give people the in-out referendum in Euro†pe.

Shirley  
well I don’t heh heh huh expect Grant to r:emember my whole history why the hell should  
he? I was actually a member of the cabinet (. the Labour cabinet that resigned on the  
grounds that we weren’t going to have a referendum, so I’m not really the right one to pick  
on.

(0.5) ([audience laughter])
Shirley: let me be very precise though=

=([audience [applause]])

Shirley: [let me be:] er=

David: =you MAY only be the [only one] that er got the [opportunity]

Shirley: [i e- er a] [all right David] let me however I want
to address (.) the gentleman concerned, We’re getting distracted, I think, in the whole EU
discussion. By issues that I can only describe, like for example, issues like tossing to and
Front party political views on m- immigration things of that kind. I read yesterday in the
newspaper, the American newspapers, the devastating effects of climate change. The only
people that can seriously do anything about climate change are not individual countries
that the UK, Germany or France, it’s the whole lot [together] and some chance, some
Chance of doing something about that as they had to have some chance of doing something
About organised crime. .h and I’m not in the business of making sort of party political
Points except one which I must make. Er two in fact. Th- er Nigel I absolutely respect I
think he is a highly intelligent man, he’s also great fun to have a drink with.

Chuka: [exactly]

Nigel: c::: well thank you [ho ho ha huh ha ha]

Shirley: but let me put=

David: =after the programme

Shirley: let me put one serious question to him. His people in the European Parliament voted
Against a directive from the EU to limit and stop human trafficking, human trafficking (.)
of Children and people who are dragged into this country as semi-slaves. Now I think
Nigel has got to get a grip of his party cos he’s got some very funny characters=

Nigel: well hang on Shirley=

Shirley: well no I’m sorry I’m not being rude because I gave you a precise example of where y-
which [really bothers me]

Nigel: [inaudible ] you have pushed (. as a liberal democrat party, very strongly, in
Brussels and Strasbourg, the idea of (. justice and home affairs, becoming (. issues moved
from the jurisdiction of the British parliament, to the European institutions. And you can
talk about people trafficking and the rest of it, your party th- sponsored the European
Arrest Warrant=

Shirley: =it did=

Nigel: with a guy from North London, without any prima facie evidence being presented to a
British court, being taken, DUmped (. for a year, in a hellhole in Greece, without facing
charge. Since Magna Carta, in this country, we’ve had Habeas Corpus, the presumption of
innocence before guilt, and I’m afraid that [they are the] things that you- and you call
yourself a liberal party and you’ve thrown them awa[y.

Shirley: [inaudible ] and then there is the great train
[robbery, who was rescued for years in Spain]

David: all right let’s leave that alone. Caroline Lucas, then I’m going to bring in two or three er
members of the “audience”

Caroline well I only want to er go back to the young man on the er front row there who was saying that he was enjoying getting involved in politics and wanted the opportunity to vote on the membership of the European Union. And I was simply going to say that erm that the kind of issues now are the ones that need to be properly trashed out with people that haven’t had the opportunity to have their say on it at the moment. And I think that the points that Shirley raises about the role that the EU can play, for example in combating climate change or championing human rights its absolutely vital=

David =all right=

Caroline and we need to have that debate this will enable us to engage with the EU because right now I feel that a lot of people you went out on the streets of Southampton and said ‘what’s the EU for’ people don’t know anymore it’s lost its way it’s lost its vision we need to reinspect what the EU could be for. It needs a lot of reform, it needs to be far more democratic and accountable it needs to be far more transparent] there are lots of very easy ways

Nigel [ho:w? How]

Caroline [[you won’t if you leave]

David let’s [hear]

Caroline [you] won’t if you leave, that’s for sure

David [(inaudible)]=

Nigel =how can you reform something, that’s based on treaties

David [er N]igel, the audience has come here, not just to listen to you, [but to also listen]

Nigel [No well I’ll sit down and be quiet, s- “all right”]

David [and debate with you] and the other members of the panel so let’s um have go “you there”

Audience-member from a practical perspective, if net immigration is the size of the city of Southampton (.)

where are they all going to live? Rents are spiralling out of control, where are my children gunna find a house to live?

((inaudible reactions))

David Ch- Chuka A- Umunna do you want to answer that?

Chuka at the end of the day, the reason that we have housing problems right now is because we have the lowest rate of new builds since the 1920s. And again to go back to the point made earlier, we can blame all of our problems on the EU if we want, but really we’ve got to sort them out here, that’s the responsibility of government. Can I just, actually say something else David. Because we’re talking about whether we’re in or we’re out. Of course if we come out of the EU, we are still likely gunna have to comply with all their rules, and regulations to sell our goods in there. At least if you’re on the field playing the match batting for Britain, you can actually [get a good deal] but w- what you would do you would actually [walk off the field]
Nigel [((inaudible)) ] [and los- and losing]
[well Chuka the a]rgument. But [the argument ]

David [all right ]

Nigel [the argument ] David the argument that we can bat for Britain hh has been given lie to under freedom of
information requests in fifty five occasions since 1996 partly under a Labour government.
Partly under a coalition, hh on fifty five occasions at the council of ministers (. ) the British
government have said (. ) ‘we are gunna fight hard’, against this directive, hh and we have
lost (. ) on all (. ) fifty [five (. ) occasions look lets] stop bang[ing o]ur h[eads] a[gainst a brick
wall th[at sur]ely, we’r[e not winning, we’r[e not] succeeding, and [we ought to be]
governing our own country, and making our own laws. (1) su[relly that makes m]ore sense

Gr- Grant Chaps]

Chuka [absolutely ]

Grant [surely we’re ] SUREly what we’re=

Chuka I’m no- (. ) saying absolute nonsense. And I’l[l tell you what, if you [look f]or e[xample at]

Nigel (hypocritical?)

David [no no ] [Grant Chaps]

Grant surely what we’re witnessing here are two extremes. (0.2) one party, the Labour party, will
not give you an in-out referendum on Europe. The other party, UKIP, who say they want
one, but admit at the same tim[e they cann]ot deliver one. That’s why the Conservative
in-out referendum is the only feasible solution to this. People of (. ) o:ur generation with the
exception of Shirley never been given a say. Let’s renegotiate it. An[d put it to the British
people=

Nigel [hypocrisy]

=and vote to stay in

Grant you can vote how you like [Nigel]

Nigel [well y]our leader David Cameron wants to stay i†n.

David can I just ask one question? Why is it always ‘renegotiate’ and then have a referendum.
Why not just (. ) have a referendum?

Nigel fob off the electorate, that’s what it’s all about=
Grant = no because if you had a referendum without actually having agreed on what th- e r subject was, in other words=

David the subject being ‘should you be in or out of Europe?’

Grant there’s a better option isn’t there. The better option is, rather than just say these two extreme positions that’s just fine, as Chuka will tell you, or disa:strous, as Nigel will tell you, actually you can do things like [renegotiate] [the position when ne]w countries join the EU

Chuka [((like your))] [(like your)]

Nigel [it’s a con, oh really]

David how can you avoid the trick (.) that Harold Wilso[n paid] when he renegotiated just a [little bit and then and then say (. ) ‘go for it’?

Nigel [exactly]

Grant this simple reason] fo- for this simple reason. Number one=

David = I remember because I voted [oh yes you] voted in that too

Shirley [(inaudible)]

Grant for this simple reason. For the two of you will re:mind us we won’t fall for it again.

Secondly, because it will be up to everyone else to make the decision, has enough of renegotiation taken place, have we retu:ned powers to this country, have we come to a position which people are comfortable with, and then give people an in-out referendum. And only [the Conservati]yes, will deliver that.

Chuka [this is fantasy]

Grant it’s not fantasy=

Chuka = it is fantasy

David all right then all- we’ll hear about fantasy in a minute. Yes no, let’s just listen to our audience.

Grant, I think yourself and Caroline and Chuka and our colleagues in the political elite – what you mi:ss, about UKIP, is that the motivation for what you do politically is as important as what you do. So the fact that you’ve offered a referendum, is great but you’ll never claim the credit for it, because you were forced into a position where you had to. Cameron reneged on his cast ir[on promise] LET ME finish, Grant let me finish and then you can come back. And then now, you say ‘we’ll put it to you’. And people saying we don’t want you know as an electorate, it’s a funny kind of relationship with you but we want to be led (.) just as much as we want you to listen. And UKIP have put their finger on an issue that concerns a lot of people and they’ve [LED]. What you’ve all done, in the mainstream media, and the metropolitan elite, is you’ve res:ponded to things happening, because you don’t understand what life is like out- for people out there in Britain. You [don’t understand it.]

Grant [no no NO] [okay]

(([audience applause]))
Caroline [I think ]

David Caroline Lucas wants to respond to you then of course, Grant Chaps

Caroline I think that the gentleman has absolutely put his finger on something incredibly important. Because (.) people: e look at- going to vote UKIP are very rude and say they’re racists or they’re bigots or whatever I don’t think that’s the case I think they’re very angry. I think very many of you are very angry. And that’s because it feels to you, I’m sure, as it does to many, that the political elite just simply doesn’t understand your lives, when you look in [on them, it feels as if (1) it feels absolutely out of touch. And the danger of that though (.) which are in so many areas dubious (.) it’s almost as if it doesn’t matter about the policies because you’re anger is so great and I understand that but I also think it’s incredibly dangerous because when you look at UKIPs policies=

[([audience applause )])]

Nigel =well we want our [country back]

Caroline [it’s about priv]atising. Well it’s about [privatising the NHS]

Nigel [we want our cou]ntry back.

We WAnt our DEMocracy What is wrong with that?

Caroline we- I’m talking about your other policies. [N- privatising the NHS]

Nigel [all we want, all we want]

Caroline [it’s about] let me just finish Nigel

Nigel [no no no] we’ve never said that Caroline=

Caroline =well what about your manifesto ((lifts paper)) I’ve brought your manifestos=

David =now wait, w- we’re not going into UKIPs [manifesto hold on we’re dealing with the question that er he asked. yes do you want to come back=

Nigel [we wanna govern our own country]

((clip ends))

**Question Time (6th March 2014): Barking**

David time is against us and then move on to another question this is a question we had I think more questions about apart from Ukraine (.) er than anything else this evening it- this one is one is from Pam Dumbleton please Pam Dumbleton

Pam Isn’t it time the government listened to the people about effect that immigration is having in changing our communities?

(2.5)

((some audience applause))

David jus- just in what way do you think the government isn’t listening

338
Pam the government haven’t got a clue. David Cameron has never been to Barking, if he came he’d be- they’d be warned in advance and everythings would be brushed up (. ) the government need to come and walk through our tow:n and jus see how we now live. Go back twelve years it was totally different. Now we have the complete minority there, and it’s like er the the most terrible place on earth to live at the moment

((audience grumbles; some isolated clapping; ‘awkward’ shuffling))

David Amanda Prittel

Amanda I did a little research about Barking before I came here (.) erm and evidently you’ve had a 30 percent drop in the indigienouS population and a two hundred percent increase in immig[ration] and (.) look (.) I think I’m the only one on the panel who is an immigrant. I came from Australia twenty eight years ago with a backpack, I love this country I’m really glad to be able to live here but I never came here expecting that I would be able to get a house, use (.) you know send child benefit back home, use the welfare system I always thought it a privilege to be here. And I do not se- understand when we have the kind of social tensions we have here with schools with which are is overflowing now you’ve got more children of school age in this area are proportion population than anywhere else in the country cos you have lots of people coming in many of whom to work really hard and want to contribute BUt the government is not taking account at the pressure it puts and I just think that=

David =and what does i- how should it do it

Amanda well I think it’s a huge problem. What David Cameron has suggeste=

Lee =what about the indigenous people here. The people who have been here all their lives all their families have been here (0.3) I’m-

Amanda David Cameron did suggest that we had a ban so if someone was coming in they had to work for three months and pay tax before they were able to] look I]

Lee [look the papers toda]y said one in seven

Lee I would say ten years (. ) make it a bigger barrier make people contribute before=

David =all right make your point sir make it once again

Lee one in seven new businesses are set up for immigrants, yeah (.)
Pam: ((quiet)) to employ immigrants, yeah

Lee: they’re all being given money ever- everythin’s being thrown at the immigrants

Audience: oh rubbish ((grumbles, dispersed talking, shouting: 3 seconds))

David: no da-

Lee: can I finish then? Listen I’ve applied for a hundred jobs on the railway. One _HUND_red jobs. I don’t even get an interview anymore in the old days at least you’d get a rejection letter I don’t even get that one hundred jobs. But these immigrants (. ) they get all their tickets paid for all their jobs (. ) look I am ho[meless] I have nowhere to live. I have to go down today and listen to an immigrant tell me WELL that’s the TRuth (. ) that’s the truth I went down t]o John Smith House today and am immigrant tells me that I cannot live here I cannot get anywhere to live.

Audience: [inaudible]

David: David Renoavitch=

Lee: =((inaudible)) we are the minority and we get nothin

David: [okay]

David R: so you’re blaming=

Lee: I’m not blaming immigrants at all

David R: you’re blaming the wrong people

Lee: I’m not=

David R: you’re blaming er you a-

Lee: I’m just stating the facts, CASE

David R: [can I just] no no you’re stating your perception (. ) of the [facts of the case]

Lee: and for many people like me
David: yes okay you’ve made your point I[et him answer]

David R: [I know I know] just cos you perceive something doesn’t make it true he al=

Lee: it’s true for me

((audience applauses: 4 seconds))

David R: there isn’t anything that you=

Lee: =cos we’re being targete[d as BNP we’re not] all racist I w[ork with] immigrants I[‘ll work with anyone but w]hat about the indigenous people here as well

David: [no please hang on sir] [be fair] [be fair be fair be fair let him] I think we’ve heard your point the idea is that the panel should be able to answer

Lee: okay thank you

David R: No one so far accused anybody of being racist but the but the things that you’ve said were exactly what was said about my grandparents when they came over to the Jewish East End in the early 1900s exactly the same things they sai↑d precisely the same things ‘we can’t walk through our streets because they’re not ours anym()ore’ why is a street not yours because some of the faces in it are black? Why can’t you b[e in the streets

(audience applause: 3 seconds]

David: all right then answer this=

Lee: =(inaudible)) on the streets

David R: no no no hold on. Actuall- [actually most- most immigrants]

David: [he didn- he didn’t actually sa]y

Amanda: actually he didn’t say anything about black people

David: he didn’t mention black people

Lee: ridiculous
((audience chat/shout while Lee stands up and puts coat on and continues))

Amanda do you really think that? ((looks at Lee))

David ((inaudible)) has it?

Lee well I need to go find somewhere to live

David alright

Lee yeah ((audience applause)) I will (. ) tonight ((looking at audience member behind))

David okay. You sir at the very back there (. ) thank you very much

((Lee walks out of the room))

can I say I- I work around the corner in a school that is a fantastically er: assimilated and cohesive community. I do not recognize the Barking that we’re hearing from the front row. I’m a bit wor[ried]

I’m a bit well (. ) not disgusted but a bit concer:ned that the BBC tonight selected that question from the lady at the front there just to build up this sort of er (. ) debate er

hang on (. ) you may not have heard me say there were more questions on immigration in Barking th- well wait a minute (. ) be fair, more questions on immigration in Barking than any other subject apart of Ukraine=

=I appreciate that=

so so don’t start attacking the programme (. ) for having selected this question it was the audience’s que[stion]

[what] I’d really love the panel to comment on though, is the:

supposed suppression today by the er Tories of a report that drew er (. ) that said there was no link between im[migr]ation and unemployment [and I’d like you to comment]

David [right] Michael Heseltine to answer

er: the conservative-led government has just published the report (. )so I don’t know what you’re using the word suppression abo[ut, but what the- what] the what [the report says is that there is ’nt anything like the link between immigration and employment (. ) as people perceived. That’s what the report says. although there was an earlier report which indicated
there was. And er- er why I disagree with you because I think it’s the job of the BBC to allow questions of this sort to be asked because undoubtedly this whole issue about immigration is really and the rate at which we can attract foreign people from overseas is absolutely fundamental to the political debate in this country. And if you actually look at the UK isolationist party, they call themselves UKIP, the appeal of UKIP is actually about immigration. And the resentments that we heard here, that’s the UK question and I think that the most impressive thing that’s happened here tonight, in Barking is the overwhelming reaction of the audience in resentment in this parody of what Barking is all about.

[The BBC website] today [said it had been suppressed]

[[(audience applause)]

David you sir, up there (0.5) yes you in the black shirt

I think you’re deluding yourself if you think there aren’t these tensions (.) especially in this area. But I think maybe you’re blaming the wrong people. If you’re blaming each other sitting here in this audience (.) if you’re gunna let people come without any infrastructure any planning (.) to settle them in then there’s gunna be tensions. [And it’s not] just gunna be whit versus black, or black versus Chinese, it’s gunna be everybody

[that’s the problem]

[[(audience applause))]

Rachel Reeves? Yo- you’re applauding him. Do you agree?

David I do agree with him. David said that ‘just because the gentleman at the front perceived something doesn’t make it real’ and he shouted back and said ‘but it’s real for me’ (.) and he walked out of this room and people clapped and you shouldn’t have clapped because for him, he is homeless and he might be wrong in blaming some people in this room for that but that’s how he feels and that’s what he’s facing today. And what can’t just say ‘you’re wrong’ and let him walk out, because he has to listen what other people have to say, and you have to hear what he has to say (.) as well. But I do agree with this gentleman (1) here, cos if we are gunna let people into this country, we’ve got to make sure there is a level playing field have gotta make sure that are enough school places, we’ve gotta make sure there are enough homes for people (.) to live in and we’ve got to make sure as well th’t there are jobs for people. We need to make sure as well that the labour market isn’t rigged against people, so you know the situation where jobs are advertised overseas but not (.) in this coun[try for example]

[and you believe] this is happening?

Rachel it is happening, it does hap[pen]

[so] you believe that immigration is being wrongly handled?
I do think that there very real problems we need to deal with for example jobs should be advertised in this country, the minimum wage should be properly enforced, health and safety should be enforced. Private landlords who let out their houses to you know tenants in er two three bedroom homes that should not be allowed. And we’ve got to understand the legitimate concerns of people who have lived here their families who have lived here all their lives, we also have to understand that people come to this country because they want to work hard like David’s family did, like you’re families of other people in this room did, and we’ve gotta make it work for everybody, for all of us because we live in this community together, we can’t roll back the clock, to make it work we can only do that by working together.

This is the most arrant hypocrisy I have ever listened to. This is the supporter of the Labour government that had over two hundred thousand people coming here into this country as immigrants and you actually did absolutely nothing about it.

And there are two hundred thousand coming today Michael.

First of all Michael there are two hundred thousand people coming to this country today; the numbers are showing=

=under the rules you created

e: no under the rules- you’ve been in government for four years you’re government have been in power for four years of [two hundred thousand]and people coming here

What would you do? In government
Michael = so it’s your party’s fault?

Rachel what i’m saying is we need rules to enforce these things. We need to ensure the infrastructure is there, and we need to make sure jobs are not just advertised overseas. And you know no one has been named and shamed for not paying the national minimum wage, we need to ensure those rules (.) that gang masters can’t exploit those rules, there are practical things we could do, but blaming each other, people blaming each other for the problems of this country, that’s not the way

David you sir in the front there, then I’ll come to you sir yes

[okay] all right

One of the problems is, in the past when immigrants came here, it was in small numbers, as they gradually assimilated into the new community. And the new community accepted Them. Here in Barking it’s been like an absolute invasion, you know you’re talking about what’s happening in er, sort of er, the Crimea earlier, you know the threat of invasion there, here in Barking we seem to be living through it. I love the new foreign people I get on with them, but I just don’t know this Borough. I feel a stranger in my own country

Well then maybe you are a stranger to this country

David Alexander [(1) Alexander] Nekrassov

[([inaudible shouting)])

Alexander well you know from a point of view of someone Russian living here I tell you why you have that debate (.) and why you’re so heated about it is because it’s been suppressed for so long and the only reason you have it now is because the elections are coming. UKIP is sort of- er (.) making a fuss about it. And suddenly all the parties started to talk but (.) there was no reasonable debate until about four years [ago]

Michael [we] had Enoch Powell in the 1960s saying all the same sort of things (0.5) it’s not a new debate

David R no it’s not. We had this debate back in 2010 with Gordon Brown and Gillian Dun- we’ve had nothing but the immigration debate for the last- well it seems to me the last ten years and let me just say=

David = wait are you saying it should be closed down?

David R no no (.) I’m very much in favour of the debate, but I’m also in favour of saying that I’m actually pleased (.) that Labour let all those immigrants come to Britain (.) [people that are an immense-] they save a terribly good thing about this place as a country. And they contribute an enormous amount to this country (.) and if there are problems of (1) yeah, And if there are problems of- if there are problems of transition and services and so on yes we should solve those problems. But those kids we’re talking about in those overflowing schools will be paying your kid’s [pensions]
2995 David [all right. Simon Hughes is] Simon Hughes I’ll come back— you asked the question I’ll come back to you after we’ve heard from Simon Hughes [then come back to you as we’re pretty much now we’re nearly at the end]

2996 [(audience applause)]

2997 Simon [ba-listen. I represent the Old Kent Road at Elephant and Castle] and very proud to do so. What you raise is a real issue. Yeah? I accept I accept (.) I accept that for people born here (.) particularly for people whose families come from London for generations (0.5) they have seen very large increase in people quotes ‘not like them’ I accept that completely. Yeah? I do think like Michael, that the last government had two significant failures, for which they need to be held to account. One, they made an error in allowing transition period which we could of Had when Poland and countries joined the EU, not to be applied. We were the only country that allowed that so of course they came here. And we were very lo-

2999 Michael [yeah]

3000 David R [do you regret all the] at Simon?

3001 Simon [yes that was a mistake]

3002 David [hang on David] let Simon [make his point]

3003 David R [do you regret] all those Poles?

3004 Simon no of course I don’t but it was a mistake becos the volume of people who came over in that period in my judgement I said it at the time I thought would er cause a tension which it did. Yeah? The other thing is that under Labour, the policing of our borders was Hopeless. HOPEless (.) The UK BA we had no system of checking anybody out (0.5) and we had a pretty lousy system for controlling our borders now=

3007 David =and what do you say to the lady here who asked the original question

3008 Simon no I=

3010 David =before we come to the end of the programme

3011 Simon no I was responding to her question.

3012 David yes
Simon but isn’t=

Pam but haven’t the EU made all of this worse=

Simon =no listen=

Pam =they made us keep our b[orders o]pen, yes they have. [We need to have no we ne]ed to police our own borders [we need t]o make our ow[n decisions]. We [don’t] need [the E]U to run our country.

Simon [no no] [let me ask you a question] [er listen] [that’s what] [right] [okay] you can take that view. I disagree with you. I tell you why=

Pam =I kn[ow you d]o.

Simon [I tell you] why no I tell you w↑thy. We:: in the UK have retained our rights to have passport control (. ) unlike other EU countries. And I support that. Yeah? But this government, both parties in the government (. ) are very clear that they are addressing this issue (. ) we can’t change the rules on the European Union because it’s a free trade free movement id↑ea. And there are two and a half million pe[ople], who are British, living in other p[arts of the European Union, because they chose to go there. Right? It’s not a one way street. And together we are better than being on our own.]

David [right]

Pam [((audience applause))]

David [all right. SIMON I’m going to have to- I’m going to have to stop you. I’m afraid we’ve come to the end of our hour. Sorry to those of you [(.) well c- what can I do really, we’ll have another hour]

Pam [((audience applause continues))]

David [((audience chatter and laughter))]

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**Question Time (9th January 2014): Lewisham**

now that the er (. ) tidal wave of er Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants h’s er failed to materialise (0.3) er:: will the racist er rhetoric now (. ) s- subside and will Romanians and Bulgarians be once more feel welcome in this countr↑y?

David the wave [of Romanians and Bulgarians]

Audience [applause ]

David your- your Romanian yourself? Aren’t you sir? You are (. ) yes, right. Er well will the
Paul

How did I know you were coming to me first? ERM. well, look. We’ve said all along (. ) we don’t know how many Romanians and Bulgarians (. ) will come here. We just don’t know.

Susie

[there’s] two!

((Audience laughter))

Paul

look (. ) when was new year? Look look. Migration Watch UK for example, say that fifty thousand will come, per year, for the next five years. That’s two hundred and fifty thousand- the Institute for Democracy are saying three hundred and eighty five thousand over the next five years, which is a city (. ) not dissimilar to Bristol. (. ) what WE’RE saying in UKIP (. ) is quite simple: it makes no sense economically (. ) to have a whole open border to the whole of Europe (. ) cos we have to because we’re members of the European Union freedom of movement of peoples is enshrined in the treaties (. ) it makes no sense whatsoever to have an open door (. ) when you have (. ) two point four million people unemployed and a million young people unemployed (. ) who can’t get a job. It makes no sense whatsoever to saturate the employment market any further, and on top of that, you know freedom of movement of people (. ) might work (0.4) when you’ve got economies of similar er of similar size and also (. ) where the wages are similar (. ) so ourselves, France, the Scandinavian countries, where it doesn’t work, is, take for example Bulgaria and Romania (0.2) where the average wage is three hundred and fifty Euro a month, the minimum wage is one hundred and fifty Euro a month (. ) look the traffic will only be (. ) one way and quite frankly, we don’t think we can cope, and what we would like to see is a points-based system in this country, that if you’ve got the skills that this country needs, yes please come here and work, but it makes no economic sense to have an open door while we have a million young people unemployed.

David

you want to come back on that?

Nicolai

yes there have been any number of erm of surveys done (. ) er which have proved that actually immigration is of a positive economic benefit to this [nation]

Paul

well actually there’s been a number of surveys a number of studies that have proved (. ) actually it doesn’t (1) er: erm an I know Nigel Farage made the point the other day and I concur (. ) you know if it means that we’re a little less- poorer, I would like to see us control our borders (. ) COS if we carry on the way we’re going, the population of this country will be eighty eight million by 2060 and quite frankly, I think we’ve pretty full already.

David

Susie Boniface

Susie

you’re full of something=

Paul

huh huh jolly funny

Susie

the question whether the racist rhetoric will end is plainly N:O, it’s gunna carry on=

Paul

=what’s racist about that?

Susie

I’m gunna tell you if you’ll let me finish. I’m descended from migrants twice over (. ) Danish and Irish. Er both of whom have been treated reasonably good and bad in this country. Both of whom were hard working, one worked in the army, the other worked as a
Housemaid, you know, twenty hours a day for very little money. both of whom came and had their families here and produced part of Britain. You [want to send me back] feel free cut me in the middle. I didn’t say that, or if you’re talking about you know we’ve got migration issues in this country we’ve always had open doors, people can come and go, that’s what’s made Britain great over the years. That’s what we are. Most of us migrants in this country at the moment forty thousand or so came from China. Now (.) what was the prime minister’s response to the terrible problem of Chinese migration? He’s decided to relax the visa rules for the Chinese, it’s all right if they come. He doesn’t want the Romanians here, doesn’t want the Bulgarians, doesn’t want people who are a bit dusky or a little bit dark, people that don’t bring enough money in, but he’s happy for people who he can make a buck out of or go on a trade mission to his father in law. [the way we talk about migration in this country (3)] frankly I have found the way we have discussed the migration issue utterly appalling, completely disgusting, obnoxious, offensive, and very un-British and I would like it to just try and change and grow up [and be sensible.]

Paul [no, no absolutely not]

((audience applause ]))

((audienceapplause))

Paul can I just=  

David no no hold on a second paul I’ll come back. Nadine Dorris.

Nadine well of course to get the populist cheer Susie didn’t mention the fact that David Cameron has no authority whatsoever about our borders or who can come from wherever in the European Union. We actually can’t set immigration targets on who comes to us from (. ) within the European Union. We have no idea how many people are going to come, but we do know how many millions of people have the right to come if they want to. Now most- a large part of Britain this week has seen- over the last few weeks has seen since Christmas Flooding, one of the problems with flooding is that we’re building on our flood planes, And so we have less and less area to drain water from. Well you might think ‘well that’s not particularly an issue we can deal with that’. Well you might think that as long as you’re not living in an areas that have been flooded. h now the only way we can control immigration into this country is to leave the European Union, the only way that is gunna happen is if we have a referendum, and the only way you’re gunna get that, is making sure you get a Conservative government. Because it has committed ( . ) to a referendum in 2017, to give British people a choice whether we’re in or we’re out. So if you don’t want to have open-ended er target of people who can come to this country you will have an opportunity to go and vote and say no. Because David Cameron has no legal powers to stop anybody from within the European Union, from coming here and settling if they want to, that’s what our entry of the European Unions means=  

David =and are you against the tidal wave of Romanians and Bulgarians that was expected according to the questioner?  

Nadine er there has been no tidal wave, but ( . ) there might be tomorrow, there might be next year. We don’t know. That is the problem. We could have a tidal wave from Yug- anywhere. This is the problem. And I really object to these objectives and these targets ‘we’re gunna have a cap on immigration’. We can’t put caps on immigration. Because we have open borders. Legally we are unable to do that. There is only one solution. And that’s to vote Conservative, have your say in a referendum in 2017, and go to the polls and decide for yourself whether you want to be in the European Union or out of it. And then you can come here and you can argue the case about whether we have open borders.

David [all right]

David okay sir
Erm yeah I take real issue with that. If you’re Spanish for example where unemployment amongst under twenty-fives is at seventy percent, you might come to London for a job. If you can’t find a job quickly, you’re probably gunna go back to Spain. It costs I dunno I pay six hundred pounds a month just in rent hills t- to live in London. I think the million people unemployed in the UK which is continually rolled out, those of people in the North of England in areas where industry has collapsed, in areas where there’s no jobs for those people, there’s long term unemployment er you know it’s an endemic [problem] and that.

Nadine greatest respect, we’ve got around seven hundred and fifty thousand illegal immigrants in the country, and we don’t even know where they are, we have inward net migration of about two hundred thousand. You know this scenario you’re painting of people coming here deciding they can’t find a job and going (.) just doesn’t exist. People do come and they do stay. And this is one of the most important points as well. The people they present the biggest threat to, those people that come from Spain, and Romania and other countries haven’t got skills, who come to here to take the jobs of what (.) we would call blue collar who workers. So it’s people er in constituencies like Harlow and others who who actually feel the treat of not having protection of their borders because their jobs are in competition.

How do they just take the jobs? [It’s someone’s ch]oice to employ somebody. [They don’t just come] here and pitch up and say ‘oh I’m gunna ha[ve your job’. They apply for jobs in the same way as everyone else] they apply for jobs just like everyone else and in a market economy if I employ X who comes from Spain over (.) you know= [with the]

[if you’re someone] [coming from

Romania]

[(audience applause

])

Nadine =because in a black market economy people taking less money and less than the minimum wage [to work]

[well black mart economy is a completely separate issue=]

David =ok[ay hold it]. [Norman Baker. No no I will come back- Norman Baker] what do you say to him (.) and her, and [to him]

(((laughter)))

Nadine [it does exist]

[well then do something about black market economy]

Norman well then let me say to you- look I remember canvassing at the Eastley by-election er last year and if- what you conclude from the UKIP campaign in Eastley was that the entire population of Romania and Bulgaria coming to this country all go to Eastley constituency perhaps that’s why I’ve not seen any they’re all in Eastley (.) at the moment erm the reality is that we have got to be very careful about the language on this. And overhyping what is a sensitive issue. It does not help er a sensible discussion about what is an issue that does concern many people. but there lack of er logic applied to this er Vince Cable was telling me that one of his constituents er that he was canvassing said ‘oh I’m fed up with all these people coming to this country, I’m going to go live in Spain’ and there’s a sense of irony that she was exercising the same rights as people were exercising to come he[re. And we’ve got Brits (.) all over the European Union working (.) everywhere, working, studying, exercising their treaty of rights. And [if we start]

Nadine [do you wa]nt a referendum Norman?

Norman start limiting other people’s rights, then they’ll start limiting (.) our rights as we’ll. Of
course we want people to come here to live and work for treaty of righ- we don’t want people to just get treatment on the health service, but the way this has been approached by some elements of the media has not been helpful it’s been destructive. We need to be more careful about the language we use.

David you sir

Is anyone aware that Romanians and Bulgarians have been cut from finance over November by (.) David Willis? They have been cut nobody has been warned of this, the funds have been withdrawn from their own accounts, and they have been given short notice by the colleges t- to abandon the programmes

David are you one of these?

No I am er one of the representatives for their plea

David right as a gov- you want to press them?

I am addressing it to er the=

David =what do you say to er this?

Norman well I er understand the point you are making.

(1)

(2)

Susie doesn’t know.

David you’re not- okay. Chuka

Chuka look, Nicolai who asked the question I I’m the son of an immigrant, and I think that immigration has been a good thing for our country, go back to the 1940s/50s when people arrived on the empire windrush who helped rebuild this country after the war, I mean what would our NHS do, without the immigrants in this country nevermind you we got [a few nobel peace prizes erm a few nobel prizes from er (. ) our immigrants]. But I think Nicolai, all our people want is a system that is properly controlled and managed. We need- more work needs to be done on that. They want immigration to work for us economically and also people come over here to integrate. I don’t think that’s unreasonable. But what I have found is that I don’t actually think er you- I’ve heard some of the comments made I don’t think is an issue of racism actually, with a lot of people (. ) in my constituency, during the 2010 election, ironically the people who tended to raise the immigration issues were my African and Asian constituents actually. And what it was really about that immigration is a proxy for people’s concerns about the economy. Now where I’ve got a big issue with people like Nadine (. ) and Paul are saying is that the problem with our economy is too low wage, and too low skill. And if you look at all the western economies we rank fifth in terms of er the percentage of our labour force is made up of those jobs. Now if you shut down the borders and we leave the European Union, it is not going to solve this problem with jobs going to blue collar [workers that N]adine was talking about. What we need to do
is transform our economy, so we want to grow and create more jobs that pay more money, then that will solve the problem, not coming out of Europe)

((audience applause))

David [are you- are] [you’ve been on this ground] [all right] [will you answer]

Nadine [you didn’t do it in thirteen years]

((audience applause ))

Paul Chuka (.) you guys allowed (.) in thirteen years more people to come to this country than in a thousand years previous. You’ll have four million come on

David [and you’ll] be been apologising for it ever since

Paul and apologising for it. Totally miscalculated and what you’ve done (.) in working class towns and cities up and down the country, is people have come on site, onto building sites, people have been undercut, and British workers have been driven off and now you find they’re either unemployed (.) or driving taxis [in many cases]

David [(okay we’ve heard]) we’ve heard Jack Straw, and er David Blunkett apologising saying this was a mistake (1) well you can include

Peter Mandleson if you [like]. Ern (.) and you don’t apologise for it=

Chuka [yes]

Chuka =no

David there’s been no mistake?

Chuka no I- I certainly wouldn’t say that. I think that in terms of the transitional controls in respect of the countries that joined the European Union in 2004 we made a mistake in not applying them but what I would say to Paul (.) is that look the way you help people is ensuring you have- properly enforce the minimum wage, you get living wages, and you grow our economy. I see absolutely no suggestions whatsoever coming from your party to help the communities you’re talking about;

Paul [hang on] Chuka you don’t do it by saturating the job market even further but that’s what’s happening

Chuka but what we need to do (.) is transform the job market, you’ve got nothing to add to that direction at all.

David hold on (.) what does Labour say to the seventy seven percent of people in this county (.) you’ll have seen the statistic according to British social attitudes, who want to see immigration cut. What is Labour’s answer to that.

Chuka well I think on low skill immigration we believe there was too much of it from the European Union, and I think there is one important thing about the European Union, the founders had in mind the free movement of workers, not free movement of jobseekers. And undoubtedly we do have to work with our European partners to do that and actually, I
er worked with a number of them this week, they’re very open to that, constructively
engage with them, rather than saying ‘hey. Do what we want otherwise we’re gunna walk
off”

David sorry what is free movement of workers [not jobseekers]? So you can’t go and look for a
job, you can=

(((Paul laughs)))

Chuka no no the point is you can come over=

David =this is a radical reform of EU treaty coming along

Chuka no no it’s not. The difference is what people intended when they built the European Union
in the first instance is that people who had a job or the skills to get a job would move
around the European Union. The problem- is that we’ve had (!) at the moment, is that you
had (!) during our time in office which is where we did make a mistake, you had high-
skilled people coming from other countries to do low-skilled jobs here. That’s where we’ve
said there was too [much immigration]

Paul [also the difference] was Chuka when it was set up, it was set up by
countries with pretty similar economies, once you let the whole of Eastern Europe in, you
ended up [with coun]tries with divergent economies and with countries that were far
poorer. So it’s only [one way]

David [alright then]

[okay well] I can’t deconstruct the argu(.ment. I did er promise this lady on the
left whose been trying to get in before we move onto another question.

Er Nadine er sorry I’ve forgotten your surname and the liberal gentleman, I don’t know
your name I’ve forgotten it=

David =it doesn’t matter [about their names]

[It doesn’t matter]

((audience laughter))

Conservative, Liberal Democrat=

I am being serious at the moment. What I object to (!) strongly is this coalition government
(!) which both of you belong to. USING th- the smokescreen (!) of immigration to hide (!)
what you’re doing. Privatising the NHS, killing [the welfare service] (1) and this, you’re a
woman, you should care. WOMen, are going to be left holding the baby, when you bring
us to pre-1948. h cos now y- you ca:n’t get legal ai’d anymor’e, who suffers? Women.
They’re in a terrible marriage, they can’t get out of it. The husband’s got the money. Or the
partner. Somehow you are trying, so well to make immigration the big issue, while you
quietly, as I say private the health service, as you know, the welfare service, you kil’ll,
bringing in the gagging law, and Lewisham, as you know (!) we went to court, with Mr
Hunt, we (!) won both times=

(((audience applause)))

David =all rit[ght]

[just] a sec=

David you’re losing a bigger audience here cos people don’t know exactly about what happened
in Lewisham
No=

David =BUT hang on, but you’ve brought us to a point that leads us onto the last question

[yes] ((continues))

Question Time (28th November 2013) Falkirk

David (...) Which perhaps will touch on what you were saying, madam, over there. Chris Mulholland has a question.

Q1 How will the Scottish Government accommodate the latest influx of European migrants in January given the lack of jobs and housing?

David Given the lack of jobs and housing here in Scotland, how will you – and the SNP says it wants to encourage immigration – how will that work, Alistair Carmichael?

Alistair I think that we should be prepared to welcome people to come here from other parts of the world, especially from the European Union, if there are jobs and if they are coming here to make a contribution. I take your point that you know we still have over 7% of our own people unemployed, so we should be looking at everything that we can do to get them into work, but the truth of the matter is that, whatever happens, we have an ageing population in Scotland the future. This is going to be especially true if Scotland were to be an independent country. We will need more people of a working age to pay the pensions of people who are retired, [because at] the moment the way things are going, Scotland is going to be in an even more challenged position than the rest of the United Kingdom in that regard.

David [whe-wu-] What do you make of what the Prime Minister announced in Westminster about all these changes on benefits, which you originally said, “It would put us on the wrong side of the European Union and I don’t want to find myself in that territory” Have you changed your view now?

Alistair No no () what I said when I was asked about when I said that was if you made these changes solely in relation to people coming from the new accession countries Romania and Bulgaria these changes that are being announced today, which are pretty straightforward they’re pretty sensible managerial issues if you come from another EU country, you are not going to be able to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance for the first three months of being here that will put us in the same position as Germany, the Netherlands, and other places. I think that’s perfectly sensible.

David Is that alright for Scotland, though?

Alistair =I have absolutely no difficulty with that=

David =Is it alright for Scotland, because the SNP says, “Scotland needs immigration,” whereas the implication is that England doesn’t.
What Scotland would need would be people to come and work here, and settle here, and to contribute here. We know that, but I don’t see that that’s necessarily going to relate to the people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance in the first three months.

We know that, but I don’t see that that’s necessarily going to relate to people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance in the first three months.

There may not be too much difference here between Alistair and I on this issue. I think the first point to make is we are a nation of immigrants. We’re also a nation of emigrants. There are Scots living and descendants of Scots living literally in every corner of the globe. I think the starting principle here should be that we should give people coming to live in Scotland the same welcome as we would expect and want for Scots going to live in other parts of the world. But there are big issues here that I think make for important discussions. I represent the part of Glasgow that has the biggest concentration of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Govanhill in Glasgow and there are challenges there. It’s not challenges associated with where people come from, incidentally, it’s challenges associated with the very significant and rapid rise in population in an area that was already very densely populated. We need to make sure the investment, and the services, and the work done to integrate and make sure that people are welcomed properly and that these things are catered for. We need to do that, but the bigger issue, I think, is about Scotland’s future need for skilled jobs here, to have targeted immigration, because we do: have a big challenge of growing our working-age population. Having an ageing population doesn’t make us unique and it’s actually a good thing that our population is ageing, but we need to make sure that our working population is growing to support that ageing population. Some of the policies of the UK Government – taking away the right of young people that we educate to stay here after they graduate to work, by taking away the post-study visa, is just the wrong thing to do. If we had control over immigration, we could put in place policies which are sensible for our economy. That, I think, is one of the big benefits.

Can I want to go back to the question, if I may, Chris. Chris Mulholland, you clearly had concerns. Can you just explain what your concerns are a bit, because both these speakers have said, as far as they’re concerned, “Everything is fine”?

I have absolutely no problem with people coming here with something to offer, but it seems to be too easy to come into Scotland and the UK and just get preferential treatment over people who already live here. I think that’s wrong. er I’ve been in a situation where I’ve worked every week since I left school 23 years. I couldn’t get a mortgage I went to a local council office and they more or less say to me, “You’re the wrong nationality to get anywhere on the housing list,” forced me into an astronomical private let, which I can barely afford. I can’t save up a deposit or nothing like that.

You’re the wrong nationality in what sense?

That the immigrants are placed further up the housing list than people who already live here, people that are working here. I think that’s wrong.

Thank you. Do you think that’s the Scottish Parliament’s doing or Westminster’s doing
and would be affected by independence for Scotland?

Q1 I think it’s both.

David Both. [Anna]bel Bowlding.

Q1 [aye]

David The woman in green there

Q2 M- my question to the panel is instead of enco:uraging migrants from whate\^{e}r country they- member come from I know that we have to under the EU rules, have to let them come in, but instead of acti\ively encou\{r\}aging them to come in and bring their skills with them, why don’t we concentrate on [up-skilling], [and training, and] inve\{t\}ing in our own young people?

Panellists [Absolutely] [absolutely yeah ]

Margaret =absolutely yeah an- the lady in green, if I may call you that. I think that’s a ve\{r\}y important point and I do think sometimes the apparent failure to take action sometimes does cause that kind of conflict and tension around the debate in immigration. I think it’s really important the particular agencies who take over migrant labour are not allowed to continue to exploit that and perhaps undercut wages. That’s certainly part of Labour’s approach to tackling immigration and something we do: need to tackle in order to go for\{w\}ard. On your general question, I think most people would accept that immigration in principle is a good thing – I’m the daughter of immigrants myself – but it needs to be managed and it needs to be fair and effective. We should be clear about the rules that are applied to everyone and the rules should apply fairly. I have to say, I would be very concerned at any housing person saying, “I’m sorry, you can’t get a house on the basis of your nationality”=

David =Do you think it happens as he says?

Margaret I’m sure the man is not a liar, so I’m presuming that that’s the evidence, I think that should be addressed and I’m sure I would have agreement from my col\{l\}leagues that that should be
addressed, because people should get housing on the basis of their need (.) they shouldn’t get it on the basis of their nationality. We do have an issue about migration in Scotland and it does have implications for independence, I’m afraid, and we will need to think that through about borders and suchlike and the rules applying to that. We do need to think about that.

Q3

Thank you. Talking of the borders, I’ve come up from near Gretna Green today, travelling up this afternoon listening to the Richard Bacon Show. They had er several politicians and people talking on there about this very subject and one of the things was David Cameron. (.) the Labour politician was saying they hate this policy he’s bringing in for 1st January; it’s a little too late. However, if the SNP do get their referendum and they start pushing how much Scotland is going to be wonderful, we’re going to become the land of milk and honey (.) we’re going to have even more people coming. Their point was we will then sort David Cameron’s immigration problem out, because they won’t want to say in England, they’ll want to come to Scotland.

Q3

Are you in favour of that or against that?

Patrick Harvie?

Well I do think talking about the first-line defence is a wee bit overkill ((laughter)). It kind of pretend[s] that foreign equals bad and that immigrant equals threat, and there are some real myths that need to be challenged here. Immigration contributes more to the economy across the whole of the UK than erm people receive in welfare payments. Recent immigrants are less likely than the settled population either to claim benefits or to live in social housing. Where there are problems around the supply of social housing (.) and there are (.) we should be investing in building more social housing Where there are problems around public services, we should be investing more in public services, and where there are economic problems that lead to a lack of skills or employment, [that’s what] we should be investing in. The UK Government, they’re cutting these things right now.

[[(( audience applause ))]]

persuading him- he’s shaking his head as you speak.

I beg your pardon?

You’re not persuading him, because he’s shaking his head as you speak.
We don’t have the infrastructure to have thousands and hundreds of thousands of people that may come in. We’re talking (.) Th- these houses just aren’t going to get made. There are not the brown-belt sites to build these houses (.) there are not the schools in place, there are not the hospitals, there’s no the fire service, there’s no the police service in place.

[There is certainly capacity] to be investing in social housing in Scotland, for domestic need as well as for migration need. That’s something we should be doing regardless of the numbers coming in and out. Actually, if you look at the numbers coming in and out (.) and Nicola talked about Scots as emigrants as well, it’s mostly the same countries that people are coming in and out of the UK to and from, so let’s get this into a little bit of perspective and recognise that migration is as much an opportunity and we shouldn’t talk about it in terms of threat.

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Eddi: [It’s not fair]

David: The woman up there at the back on the left. I want to hear from you.

Q4: Surely, if there’s currently a question about our membership in Europe, if we were an independent country, if we didn’t become a member of the European Union, there wouldn’t be this issue over immigration, because the issue at the moment is migrants coming from the rest of Europe.

David: So you would like to see an independent Scotland stay outside the European Union, would you?

Q4: Not necessarily, but at the moment there does seem to be a question about whether we would become automatically European Union members, given the comments from the Spanish Prime Minister this week.

David: What’s your view about that? Do you think it’s (1) likely that it won’t be automatic?

Q4: I think it’s a little bit like the currency debate, where it’s something that people are putting barriers up at the moment, but if we got a ‘yes’ vote in the referendum, it would become something that wasn’t such an issue.

David: Margaret , is it really possible that Scotland would not be allowed into the EU, in your view, as an independent country?

Margaret: I think it’s not automatic. I would hope that Scotland could join the EU and hopefully we would be welcomed into it, but the critical issue is the conditions that are attached to that. In terms of the rebate, in terms of open borders, in terms of the euro, other member states, on whom we would need their unanimous agreement, would put conditions on that. It’s the conditions that are attached to that that would materially affect life in Scotland going forward and content with all those issues.

David: [Do you think fro-] Do you think it might be different from the position now [of the UK]?

Margaret: [It could be] very different. We might not get the rebate, we might have to apply to the EU-euro and the open borders arrangement that we’ve currently got. The opt-out on open borders might not apply, so it’s actually very significant and there are no guarantees. The white paper from the SNP has not given us any guarantees or answers on this=

David: [alright] Nicola Sturgeon?

[=((audience applause))]
To listen to Margaret Curren, you really have to wonder how 150 countries have managed to become independent since the end of the Second World War.

[That’s not the point]

On the European issue

[(((audience applause)))]

They clearly didn’t want to join the EU.

Some of the members of the European Union are fairly recently independent countries, but on that issue, if we vote yes in September next year, we don’t become independent the day after; there’s an 18-month transition period, we’re still part of the UK – and by definition Europe. We negotiate the transition of our membership within that time. We’re not asking for any special terms; we’re asking for the terms we’ve got right now to continue. I think the bottom line is this is anybody seriously suggesting that Scotland, with everything we bring to the European table, wouldn’t be warmly welcomed as a continuing member? That is simply not credible.

[Secretary of State for Scotland, this is an endorsement of Scotland’s strength]

This comes to the crux of it, actually, because Nicola says, “We’re not asking for special terms.” We have got special terms. If we walk away from the United Kingdom, we walk away from these special terms.

We’re not walking anywhere; we’re staying where we are.

That is the fact that’s what we heard last night from the Spanish Prime Minister. He told us, “Yes, of course you can apply, but you will have to apply as a new entrant,” and we wouldn’t be able to get the same opportunities.

[I thought the one thing that everybody on both sides. I thought the one thing]

[We wouldn’t be able to get the same opportunities that we currently have. We got a pretty clear signal of that from the Spanish Prime Minister himself last night, because it’s not in his interest, looking to the Catalans and the Basques, to make it look easy for an independent Scotland to join the EU]

[Alistair]

[all right cut to the chase]
Patrick: Alistair, yes. I know he wants to send a signal to the Catalans and he doesn’t really support the idea that the Catalonians should be able to decide their own fate in a referendum, [but I thought the one thing]

Alistair: it is one of the things] that you have to get agreement from.

Patrick: on both sides on yes or no I thought the one thing we all agreed about in this referendum was that it’s the decision of the Scottish people, not the decision of the Spanish Prime Minister=

[Yes, (audience applause)].

David: [Very briefly, Alistair, briefly, what would not be available to Scotland that is available as a member of the United Kingdom?

Alistair: You have to wonder if Croatia, for example, as the most recent entrant=

David: =Hang on (. ) let’s talk about the United Kingdom=

Alistair: =No, Croatia has been told that she cannot have the same favourable terms that we have got, but she has joined any way, so why would Croatia agree to us joining with special terms that weren’t open to her?

David: =What are these special terms?

Alistair: The rebate on our budget contributions.

Nicola: [But this is continuity of effect, it’s what we’ve got just now].

Margaret: [That’s the issue]

Alistair: The commitment to join the euro, the ability to travel within the Schengen group

Patrick: [We wouldn’t be allowed to join the euro, even if we tried]

Nicola: Exactly, we wouldn’t even fulfil the requirements.

Patrick: [Absolutely.]

Alistair: But you still have to make the commitment.

Patrick: [No, you don’t]
Nicola: [The only risk to Scotland’s membership of Europe is the in/out referendum being promised by David Cameron. That’s the only risk to our membership.]

Q5: Perhaps the rest of the EU might be willing to accept a swap of an independent Scotland for Spain or Greece

(Question Time (17th October 2013): Basingstoke)

Phillip: can the UK cope with any more immigration after Christmas?

David: can the UK cope with any more immigration after Christmas? Diane James. UKIP has strong views on immigration and-

Diane: We do indeed and er (.) thank you for your question. I don’t believe we can, it’s a simple as that. we’ve got no idea (.) and I’m sure everyone will agree exactly how many people will come from the two countries in question where the (.) er err where the current restrictions are there coming into the UK

David: Alright let’s move on, because we’ve got many other questions ((continues))

Diane: with the wit

David: Within the EU of which we are all members until=
Diane = well

David until UKIP gets its Way

Diane I wouldn’t be messing about with this discussion about repatriation of powers it would just be a straightforward no they cannot come in, and the way to achieve that is out of the EU. It’s as simple as that.

((audience applause: 8 seconds))

David Mark Harper

Mark I think it was just getting some facts at home it’s worth reminding people that er of the immigration into the country only half a day is from outside the EU and only about a third of the immigration to Britain is from the EU. And even when Labour was in power by its own admission let er. European immigration get out of control. It was still the case twice as much immigration was from outside the EU so the idea that this is all about the EU and there is nothing we can do which is UKIP’s contention in this instance ((Diane smiles and shakes her head persistently)) is nonsense. The government’s reduced net migration by a third since we=

Diane = oh rubbish

Mark [com]e to power

Diane Oh Mark you know [that] is rubbish

Mark [still]

Mark No that is absolutely true.

Diane It’s not because you can’t count them in

Mark [noo-] [Diane]

Diane because you can’t count them in

Mark it is true

Diane and you can’t count them out

Mark these are robust figures that the independent Office for National Statistics put
together it’s down by a third but we’ve got more skilled workers coming to Britain
we’ve got more students coming to Britain in the most important thing is unlike when
Labour was in power the growth in employment we’ve seen in Britain so the one
point is a million more people in employment the bulk of that benefit has now gone to
British people which is not the case when Labour were in powe-

David  Alright well what about after- after Christmas which was the question

Mark  well (.) we’ve been quite straightforwa-

David  =which is a European ques[tion]

Mark  [well] yes

David  Bulga[ria a]nd Roma[nia]

Mark  [it is] [we’v]e been quite straightforward. WE don’t have any any
secret forecast we’ve been quite honest (.) there are eight other European countries
who have transitional controls who’ll be er removing ([waves hand]) them at the end
of the year so it’s not like 2004: where we were the only country that let people er
come to Britain when the East European A8 countries joine- eight other European
countries h clearly some people will come here and we’ll have to see what happens,
but they can go to eight other European countries w- we haven’t made a forecast there
are no secret forecasts=

David  =you haven’t made a forecast?

Mark  no

David  why haven’t you made a forecast?

Mark  our experts have advised us that TRYing to make a forecast when you’ve got [eight]
other countries

David  [what?]  

David  well isn’t there another country you can go and speak t=

Mark  =well wel-

David  the people yo[u su]rvey (.) you surv[ey pu]blic opinion in this country every five
minutes of the day (.) both parties you alter your policies to suit every single
tiny change. And you’re saying you can’t to Bulgaria and ask anyone what their plans
are?
Mark: well all the survey work that’s been done...

David: your leader ((looks at Diane)) went to Romania ask whether...

((Diane and someone else laughs))

Mark: and most of the people that Nigel Farage said they didn’t want to come to Britain at all ‘thanks very much’

Bonnie: s’all right for the Chinese to come Mar’?

Mark: if they’re coming here to study and if they’re coming here to invest and come to visit and spend money in our shops then absolutely it [is]

Bonnie: [they’re comin to visit’t?]

Mark: absolutely (. ) we’ve got erm (. ) we’ve got over two hundred thousand Chinese people come to visit Britain and they spend money in our shops they [invest money in our businesses]

David: [alright well we’re about ] immigration

Mark: I mean=

David: =not Chinese visit[ors]

Mark: [no] no

David: so: Bon[nie] »I know« Bonnie Grear

Mark: [it’s]

Bonnie: no I hh=

David: =then I’l come t-

Bonnie: I’m not a politician and a gunna sit here throwo a whole lot of uhhh figures around at you I’m just sick and ti(h)red of this conversa’tion I’m sick and tired every year every government talking about immigration hh we (. ) what we don’ t want to happen

Bonnie: [we-] [all t-]

Mark: well all the survey work that’s been done=

David: your leader ((looks at Diane)) went to Romania ask whether-

((Diane and someone else laughs))

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Bonnie: I’m not a politician and a gunna sit here throwo a whole lot of uhhh figures around at you I’m just sick and ti(h)red of this conversa’tion I’m sick and tired every year every government talking about immigration hh we (. ) what we don’ t want to happen

Bonnie: [we-] [all t-]
((some isolated applause)) and I think that what this government (.) has done I do think this government has i:s allowed a vigorous necessary discussion in a thriving democracy (.) to descend into xenophobia it is beneath the British people to do that. it i- it is beneath this democracy

Audience

[((loud applause))]

Bonnie let’s have a sane reasonable discussion we are not going to have on January 1st their Bulgarians and Romanians coming over with their covered wagons and their horses and their children and thieves and the robber that’s not going to happen we have to be very car- we have to be very careful in talking about this (.) and make sure that we don’t appear to be to be a replica of the National Front in France it’s very very important so (.) so don’t go to xenophobia, calm now, let’s talk about this reasonab[ly] ]

Audience

[((isolated applause))]

[((loud applause))]

David you sir ((points))

Alan yes (0.5) I’m a district councillor in the neighbouring er: borough which is a er Hart District Council and er one of our biggest issues is the development. Development of all the houses that have to put in. (.) we just had our local plan er (.) thrown away by the government because they’re saying w- we factored in a zero net migration number (.) er erm and they’ve said absolutely not that’s not the case um ‘you have to develop more houses’. We’re talking about thirty five hundred houses (.) in Hart District Council over the next 15 years now the government practically wants us to double that. Where are we gunna put seven thousand new houses (.) in Hart district council how we- how are we gunna have the bandwidth in our schools and hospitals and so on so forth to acc(h)omodate all those people?

Audience ((moderate applause: 3 seconds))

David Justin hunt (.) he said. Can you pick up his exact point

Justin I I don’t know wha the: the government’s p- proposing for yo↑u as a: an elected councillor in in terms of how you’re gunna m- manage the migration. My concern is (.) what this government is not doing is learning the lessons of our time er: in government when (.) labour party er was in government and we didn’t have the correct numbers er for the number of er EU nationals er coming in (.) to work. The figures we were given er by civil servants were wi::ldly (.) off. We didn’t drill down into the data (.) er effectively and as a result our public policy w[as a-]

Bonnie [why] not?

Justin not in the r[ight place]
Bonnie [why not?]

Justin we we believed the official figures we were given erm and they pro- proved wildly ofhh I’m hoping on hoping Mark Harper is is drilling into this er sort of fracking viga:: of some of these statistics (.). [but look]

David [but should] but look (.). hang on. What good will it do if he finds out ((points at Alan)) tha- that the gentleman from Hart is correct and he’s got to build seven thousand houses instead of three and a half thousand homes

Justin of because you’ve got to plan: er: because let us let us not underestimate the importance free movement of labour across the European u’nion your children will want to work in France or Spain. You might want to retire in France or Spain. You might have business connections er in Italy. The free movement of labor is an important part of the European Union and WE have er (.). GROWN in prosperity as a result [of it. let’s not] so we’ve got to manage the transitions well but let’s not lose sight of the importance of where we are in the European Union

David [all right]

[yes thank you]

David Peter Egmond

Peter I- I agree with (.). Mr Hunt that (.). free movement of labour is a- a wonderful thing. But the problem of the European Union is that it’s going foward (.). too fast much like it when it went much too fast towards the (.). Euro. Which is causing utter destruction i-in Southern Europe. It’s moving too fast with this freedom of movement of labour. Let me just give you one fact (.). which is actually central to this whole argument. And that is that the average wage i: in Bulgaria and Romania is le: approximately ha:If the minimum wage (.). in Britain. And so this is why last time when Labour got it wrong we had Polish professors comin- coming along to be cleaners in Britain. A:nd it does have an effect I’m afraid and like that councillor up there described it absolutely beautifully. The effect on public se:rvices, scho:ols, housing, all of these things. I reckon tha- Europe itself needs to admit that its made a frightful (.). nonsense. (.). it’s going to be the same problem (0.5) in Germany and France, and I think it’s time to look again “you have time” and say to Bulgaria and Romania that it’s not a good idea at the moment, to er: go ahead with this. A:nd sh- for the sake of Bulgaria and Romania who doesn’t want to lose their best people (.). let’s just put it on hold for a few years.

David okay. You sit at the back there

The tory elite in this area have got it completely wrong. In my town, we’re close to waiting twenty one days for a doctor’s appointment. In my county they’re about to pull down four care homes. Those care homes are the family silver. They love, they look after they manage our elderly well. We’re going to pull them down to privatisation. We are so out of touch in this area it’s unbelievably
Completely lost control of what is happening on a local level. The cuts have gone far too far. It’s time to rebuild the fabric of our society, rather than the tory way of destroying it.

Bonnie: absolutely

((applause))

and sir ho: how is that related to immigration from Bulgaria and Romania?

Quite simple. We cannot take any more. Our county cannot absorb any more. We are full.

We are going to close to business pretty soon

((applause))

Mark Harper

well there’s two things. First of all what I said before is that we recognise some of the pressures on public service, housing the gentleman from Hartley district council made on immigration. Which is why we’ve reduced it by a third. We’re gonna continue to reduce it from the uncontrolled levels that we had under Labour.

which immigration?

net immigration to the country. As I said most immigration is from outside the European Union=

=they’re the people you send vans around saying ‘go home if you’re illegal’

((audience laughter))

well if you’re illegal yes, I don’t see any problem with saying to people who have no right to be in the United Kingdom that they [shouldn’t be there anymore]
Bonnie: [so you put around a white van?] a stupid white van?

Mark: picking up that gentleman’s point at the back here about [o- about]

David: the point the ‘Here illegally’ go home or risk arrest (. ) you still support that? You’d like to see more of that=

Mark: =well it was a pilot ( . ) we’re assessing the results at the moment. If the pilot shows we were successful in persuading people to return home ( . ) no no I’m not going to give a running commentary, we’re going to publish the results when we’ve done the evaluation, if its successful then we’ll look at rolling it out, if its not (. ) successful then we won’t. I don’t want to spend fifteen thousand pounds, of taxpayers’ money removing every single individual. I want to (. ) people that have no right to be here should leave the country. And that’s what we want to do. The immigration bill which we published which we’ll be debating next month is about making it or welcoming people who contribute and deterring those that don’t. And that’s an important point to get right]

Justin: [ha ha ha ha how many?]

Bonnie: [how many Mark?]

David: holding those views] holding those views you’re not alarmed about the open door policy on Romania and Bulgaria?

Mark: well we haven’t got an open door=

David: you have got an open] door uh who’s not allowed in

Mark: the access to benefits, we tightened up the access (. ) to services and access for example to social housing. So (. ) local councils for example c’n prioritise housing to local people who live here

David: [so you’re] making undesirable for people to come here “is what you’re saying”

Mark: if people are coming here to work and contribute and pay taxes, and make a contribution, I have no problem with that. But we wanna make sure people don’t abuse free
movement. Christian was right, free movement is okay, abuse of free movement isn’t, we’ve been working hard with partners to make sure it isn’t

David [okay Bonnie Grear]

Bonnie [this is] this is one of the reasons why we don’t trust politicians anymore. [I- I- you know and I’m not saying it to get applause] or anything. We’ve been sitting here listening to Mark and Patricia (. .) you know really nice guys, you know basically Labour didn’t get the numbers right I mean what are they hired for if they didn’t get the numbers right h and now, Mark is saying something about doing a pilot with the white vans, [you know] THIS ISN’T, THIS IS NOT what we expect. We expect our politicians to get it right, to prepare us for whatever is going to happen, not to start some sort of dog whistle xenophobic rant about people coming in and out of the country because it doesn’t e- er at the end of the day we pay for it no matter what the deal

[((audience applause))]

[((laughter))]

[((applause))]

Diane but Bonnie it’s not a xenophobic rant

Bonnie it is

Diane it’s not

Bonnie not from you, not from you. But it descends into that level

Diane part [of my problem is]

Davis [why are you accusing these two men of xenophobic rants but not Diane James?]

Bonnie I didn’t say they were xenophobic sorry. I didn’t say they were making a xenophobic rant. They di= ((audience member begins talking)) I’m sorry?

((inaudible))

David xenophobia, you said

Bonnie no I, I- (. .) pardon?

Bonnie’s right. She’s not accusing (. .) those men of being xenophobic, she’s saying there is an air of xenophobia. And she’s right. She’s not pointing the finger

David okay
Bonnie: thank you

David: let me to (.) to this man at the front here

The discussion’s got nothing to do with xenophobia. It’s about jobs, services. And we (.) still having large amounts of youth unemployment in this country. How is more immigration (.) what effect is that gunna have on that?

David: the man in the chequered shirt

I agree that there is a really nasty xenophobic wing with this argument. For example the go home vans are just (.) horrible. But (.) we have a housing crisis. Like it was on the news last night. Uthousands of people are living in bed and breakfasts with their families. like th:ousands of people are gunna come to this country, where they gunna stay? There’s nowhere for them to stay. It’s easy to say its xenophobic, which (.) a horrible amount of it i↑s, but (.) behind there is a logistical argument.

Bonnie: I don’t disagree with that. Please (.) don’t call it xenophobic

David: you there

I really feel for our young people (.) and e[rn yeah]

[(audience applause)]

David: Diane. A brief point

Diane: yes well despite what Mark would like to convince us he (.) er the coalition are not controlling immigration h and if and I’m a fellow borough councillor so I empathise and sympathy with you (.) completely, the comme↑nt has been made that even with the current housing targets we would have to build one new home every seven minutes and if we don’t control immigration, when we get to the end of the next fifteen year programme the coalition has introduced, we’re going to have to embark on another huge round of house building. h now, we’ve gotta call it, we’ve gotta start saying enough is enough at some stage, and bring control back into this country as to where the infrastructure goes and where the housing goes, where it’s allocated, and that is not happening with Mark and his team in government at the moment. The (.) I don’t know if you’ve seen the same (.) er issues in the papers that have come out, allocating the housing out as it is (.) you couldn’t drive a coach and horses through it, it’s an absolute nonsense.

David: okay I’m going to take one more point. Because the man in the centre (.) in the rhird row down, has had his hand up since this discussion began.

Er Peter has highlighted the concerns (.) with immigration from the new year. He’s highlighted them quite correctly. Whereas Bonnie has talked about the wagon train (.) scenario. I think it’s going to be worse than the wagon train scenario. And I have a major concern (.) about the social structure in this country, and what it’s going to do to our
English society. Having seen it already happen throughout Europe, in Austria, in Switzerland, with people coming here from the two countries mentioned, and causing major issues there, and I think it’s going to be ten times worse over here.

David all right, thank you very much for that (.) comment

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**Question Time (7th March 2013) Dover**

David The wonderful sound of a ferry just leaving the harbour as we start. Our first question from Danny Rose, please.

Danny Is it time we defied Europe (.) and closed our borders and say, “We’re full!”

David Ti::me we closed our borders with Europe, and tell people we’re full. This is a week when everybody’s been piling in. Duncan Smith on the Tories, Ed Miliband apologising for Labour’s policy on immigration. Ken Clarke.

Ken Well, we are trying to cut down the total number of immigration, but not from inside Europe. We er (.) took over a situation where about two million people have been added to the population during the term of the previous government, but they’re largely coming from around the world. And we’ve already got down with the influx quite considerably, but we’ve got further to go, really, really not by excluding; we don’t want to exclude tourists, we don’t want to exclude foreigners, we don’t want to exclude students, certainly not skilled people, but having sensible rules and then applying them properly, to a level we can afford. As far as Europe is concerned, what we need to do in Europe is actually press on with getting the full advantages economic advantages, as well as the political advantages, out of the single market. And really, the British are pressing, in the current drive for reform, to open it up further, to extend it further, to really make ourselves a big (.) block in world affairs. We have the biggest market in the world; let’s make it effective, extend it to more things, and you can’t have a single market without having the free movement of people. There are vast numbers of=

David =You can’t say we’re full (.) in other words.

Ken Well, there are vast numbers of British people working in Europe, so if we suddenly said to our partners, “Oh, actually, we’re not letting any foreigners come here, but otherwise, we’re your close business and trading partners, of course, and we expect to have a lot of investment and trade” (.) I think they’d think we’d slightly taken leave of our senses, to put it mildly. Th- t- there are rules. People can come here to work. Skilled people are desirable here. The Poles who came here came here and did work. They claimed far less by way of benefit than the equivalent British people would have done, and they’re very, very well [regulated]

David [So you ha]ve no hesitation about saying, “Steady as we go. It’s fine.” There’s nothing that=
As long as you appoint the rules. You can’t just come and get benefit. You can’t just turn up because you want health service treatment. You do have to be looking for work. Frankly, it’s partly because our administration has, over the years, been pretty pathetic at enforcing those rules. We have perfectly good and sensible rules. You can tighten them up a bit. Other countries will want to.

But for heaven’s sake, in this time of crisis and it is a crisis we’re in, politically and economically, really, in the world for the British to suddenly start saying, “There are selected foreigners who we’re not going to allow to come here,” or, “We wish to trade more and more with friendly countries, but for heaven’s sake, no, no, no, we’re closing our borders to your people,” I think, we really will er take a difficult situation very much worse.

does UKIP in terms of we have got to make that enough is enough. We’ve got to close the door on the open uncontrolled immigration policy that the EU has in place. Now, Ken’s made a whole series of points. I cannot see, and I’m sure no EU country is suddenly going to say just because we introduce a policy, and it would mean leaving the EU to be able to achieve that that they’re suddenly going to throw out all of the pensioners that settled, that bring a very, very good income into their countries the vast number of very highly skilled and professional people that work in France and Germany. What we are concerned about, and I’m particularly concerned about and I can draw on numerous anecdotes from last week’s result, and the campaigning that led up to that is when you undermine at the lowest level, as in young people wanting their first job, and wanting to then work through and aspire and achieve ambition, when you undermine that, then we’ve got a problem, and that’s what the EU policy is allowing to happen at the moment.

So is your view that you couldn’t get anywhere without leaving the EU? You can’t do any of these things until you leave the EU. Is that your point?

Yes, it is, very much so.

Okay. You sir, there.

Yes, I understand that the policy that is being proposed is that there will be a necessity for someone to have one year’s residency in the UK, if they were another European national, which would then entitle them to NHS services, benefits, and so on. I wonder if the panel would like to comment on the possibility where you have a large number of people who have been working in other European countries maybe for two or three years, maybe for four or more, who are British nationalists returning to this country because the countries they’re working in are not actually very successful at this particular time, Portugal, Spain and so on. When they come back, are they going to be asked to qualify for benefits?
David: [Oh, right, I see. I take you)r point; whether they still [count as citizens] Okay, and the
woman here, in the second row.

Q1: [Absolutely, yeah]

Q2: um (. ) I just wanted to come back on Ken’s point about allowing skilled workers
into the country and obviously, there is a place for that, but isn’t it time that we
erm (. )skilled up our own young people?

David: Ste[ven Twigg.]

[((Audience] applause])=

Steven =Let me start with that (. ) because that’s such an important p[oint such] an
important point and we’ve failed consistently under governments of both main
parties to get enough of our young people to have the high quality skills they need,
high quality apprenticeships. That’s got to be a top priority, and if we get that
right, then we won’t need as many highly skilled people from other parts of the
world.

David: But will you be able to stop them coming in, is the question?

Steven: Well, what we have to do is have a proper policy on that, and that’s why it’s vital
we have this debate. To answer Danny’s actual question, I don’t think we need to
close the borders (. ) I do:. think we need policies that are clearer and firmer than
we’ve had. That’s why Yvette Cooper, my colleague, has spoken today about
acknowledging mistakes that Labour made when we were in government. We did
get some of this wrong, including on European migration, where other countries
delayed bringing in the full rights for people to move to those countries. We, in
2004, didn’t do that. We underestimated the number of people who would come.
We got that wrong. We put our hands up and acknowledge it. What we now need
is a set of policies for the fu::ture that don’t close the door, but introduce fairness
into the system. One of the ways we get fairness is to have better vocational
education (. ) ano↑ther is to respond to Diane’s point about people being unundercut
in terms of jobs, employers that aren’t paying the minimum wage, employers that
are including accommodation costs in the minimum wage. That should not be
happening, and that is why we’re having people going out and recruiting from
other parts of the world, and cutting out local workers here. There are real things
we need to address, and we can do it without closing our borders entirely, which I
think is neither realistic nor desirable.

The woman in the second row from the back, there.

To come to the lady’s point at the front, um two things (. ) firstly, I’m a secondary
school teacher, and I teach a lot of European immigrant children. And I wanna say
that actually, the majority of them are really, really hardworking students. They
come over, and u- (.) within a year or two, most of them are fluent in English. The
second thing I wanted to say was (.) that we are actually training our young people
with B-Techs and stuff like that, and unfortunately, the current education policy,
with this like (.) having to do e-ba:chs and that and humanities and whatever else,
and actually devaluing b-techs means that actually, we’re not trai↑ning a
proportion (.) a large proportion of our students proper↑ly, so we’re not act[ually
helping ourselves=]

David =Okay. What’s your view on closing the shutters and saying, “We’re full”, the
question asked? What’s your view of that?

Q3 Well, actually (.) I like the ability that I could actually move to Europe if I wanted
to, and work=

David =You like that=

Q3 =I think what we have to do is actually, if we’re going to have people moving
here, and we accept that people are moving here, we have to put th- (.) things in
Place (.) to ensure they can be functioning people within our society, and let them
actually be part of our society.

David Okay, and you over here, on the left.

Q4 I think the main concern on immigration (.) is that people come over here and
they work for three months, a company will get them in. They’re only contracted
to that three months. Once they’ve finished the three month contract, they’re
then out (.) there (.) and they claim benefits and that, and that company will then
bring in another group of people (.) to work. And then the people from the
previous three months, what are they doing in England? They’re just claiming
benefits. They don’t go anywhere else, and they keep getting pa=

David =And you think there are too many people in that category, yes?

Q4 Definitely (.) definitely=

David =And the man in the tie on, there, and then, Melanie, I’ll come to you.

Q5 In Dover we’ve got a lot of (.) um youth unemployment anyway; under 25s just
walking round the street, doing nothing. We’ve already got plenty of east
Europeans who are doing the same. Do we need any more coming in from
Bulgaria and Romania next year? We need t- (.) the youths that we’ve got in this
country already need to learn some skills, even if they’re low-skilled, and get some
low skilled jobs. We haven’t got enough low skilled jobs for more east Europeans
to come in.
David and Melanie Phillips.

Melanie Well, in answer to the question, we can’t close the border, because we belong to a club, one of whose foundational rules is open borders. And you know if you don’t like the rules of the club, you have to get out of the club. And I personally think that I’m very glad that at last, we’re having this discussion, because for a long time, immigration was a taboo subject. But the proposals that the government is making or suggesting now, in a kind of panic, to refer to that and that they are dealing with this problem such as new rules of residency, to qualify for health service or benefits, I don’t think that’s going to work. Either the EU itself is going to say, “This is against our rules” or our own courts are going to say, because of human rights, “We can’t discriminate against people from abroad.” I think we should come out of Europe. I’ve always thought that. I didn’t ever think we should go in. I’ve been absolutely consistent in this view, because I always thought this was a political project above all, and whatever the economic benefits and I don’t think Britain has got many economic benefits from Europe, the essence of a nation is that we should be able to govern ourselves in accordance with our own needs, one of which is to determine our own population number and our own population’s needs. We may want to bring in people from abroad. People from abroad often add greatly to the value of the nation, but it should be for us, as a sovereign nation, to decide what we need, how many people we need to come in, what kind of people. This is a proper debate for us to have. At the moment, we belong to a club which says, “Oh, no, you can’t have that debate, because you now belong to a club where there are open borders, and where these rules are no longer yours to make.” And I think this is an anti-democratic position. I think the European Union is an anti-democratic project, and I believe that Britain should reassess its democratic rights and come out.

((audience applause))

Bob Well, I want to distinguish between the European Union and Europe. My union’s policy is quite clear to come out of the European Union, and we never want to be in it, but we want to be involved in Europe working with other groups of workers who we believe as our friends. You see, my view, personally, is that your nationality is pure an accident of birth. Where you were born is your nationality. And it wasn’t too long ago, 45, 50 years ago, that London Transport was going out to the West Indies, because there was a shortage of labour for people working on London Underground and London Transport. So it’s not an issue about what your nationality is. The issue, at the end of the day, is that the European Union, and not Europe, is anti-democratic, and the reason why they’re opening the borders to allow in Bulgarians, Romanians, Polish, is irrelevant. There are people in the audience tonight who are probably Irish. There’s people in here whose family are Polish. The reason why they’re opening the borders for is because the people that are coming to this country are economic migrants who are coming to this country looking for work, but by virtue of the fact that they’re coming to this country, they’re lowering the rates and conditions for those people that are working here. And we should be absolutely clear that a person who wants to come to this country - why are we saying to the likes of Chelsea and Arsenal, “Your footballers can’t come and play for you, because they’re immigrants?” They come here because they’ve got a work permit, and the simple way round is to say, “If you want to come to this country, you have a work permit.” You couldn’t go to Australia without a work permit, you couldn’t go to Cuba without a work permit, so why should people come to Britain without a work permit? The issue is this, at the end of the day it’s about time that we didn’t
wait for Cameron to be elected to get a referendum; we should have a referendum now to decide if we want to be part of the European Union or not, and my view is that we should come out.

((audience applause))

David I didn’t realise we were three to two in favour of pulling out. Ken Clarke, you [better hav-] can you reply on the key point that Bob made about people come here to keep wages low, and therefore undermine the (...) working conditions of people who are already here?

Ken [yeah sure] Where there are negotiated conditions on the railways, and where we have a minimum wage, well, that sh- should be stooped (.).needs to be perfectly within our power. Europeans don’t stop us enforcing contracts and the minimum wage on anybody here, what(.)ever nationality. What you can’t do is discriminate. When I go to Europe (...) as a tourist or doing my present job, I take a little health card, and I get offered hea†th treatment, in whatever country I’m in, on the same basis as the lo†cals. That is how it wo†ks. If you go and wo:rk in Europe, if you’re a British person, you do acquire (...) if you do stay however long you stay, a few years or whatever, you start acquiring rights to ben†fits. It goes in both wa†ys. You can’t turn to some country and say you’re going to stop it, without expect:ing them to say, “Well, we’re going to sto†p you†r people coming here.” And (...) I congratulate the two ladies. Th- they took us on to training, apprenticeship, moti†ving our young people. That is the way, together with all the other things we’re doing capital investment and so o†n to give the jobs and to stimulate our economy. At a time of crisis, it’s too easy for parties like UKIP to say, “No, we can solve youth unemployment, but you’ve got to stop all these Bulgarians coming er here.” If you start voting for that kind of protest movement, you take your eye off the ball. I’d love to argue the merits of what we’re doing. We do have a private sector that’s created a million more jobs (...) since we came to power, and we’ve got to have more of that. We used to have thousands of Bulgarians here (...) picking vegetables and fruit they come (...) each year, because you can’t get British people [to do it]

Bob [And also] Ken, what have you done about the manufacturing industry in this country? You’ve shut down coal, you’ve shut down steel, you’ve shut down fishery, and there’s not one kid that could leave school now with a proper apprenticeship, because the disaster of your policies over the last 30 years=

=((audience applause [ ]))

David [The man th-] there in blue, waving, not drowning.

Q6 Yes, just to answer the question that the gentleman said at the back, the question was, “Is the country full?” Now, on our current trajec:ory, there are going to be 75 million of us on this little island. There’s a real debate, and frankly, the immigration issue is just for populist cheap shots from UKIP. The real issue is that there are far too many people in this country now. You live down here in the southeast, all the roads are full, all the trains are full (...) we’recrow:ded. It’s the issue here (...) the big issue here is that there are too many people on this little island=
Ken: There are too many people coming. [I quite agree. That’s] what we’re tackling.
The [worst problem is we’ve got=]

David: [No, wait a moment.]
[there are three more people]

Q6: =We need three more cities=

David: =Too many people (. ) the birth rate is wrong, you mean?

Q6: Well, I’m saying that the debate here should not lapse into this, frankly, populist
cheap shot (. ) politics that you get from UKIP. We need three more cities the size
of Birmingham by [2050]. Now, that is a massive issue.

David: [right] Alright. [And the w]oman on the right here=

Ken: [That is true]

Q7: I think everybody keeps mentioning the word ‘workers’ and Ken said, I think,
that if we work in another European country: and we establish rights after a certain
time, I wonder how those benefits compare to the benefits that people get here,
which, within three months or so=

David: =Okay, and you (. ) the man sitting on the front, here.

Q8: My worry, when we talk about an in/out referendum, is whether or not the people
will [get the information that they need to make the right choice. The in/out
referendum in Scotland is the same facts being twisted by both parties, and that’s
the worry that I have, that w- w- we’ll have enough to make the right choice.

David: [okay] [right] [okay]

Steven: And there is a certain irony that when the Scots announced their referendum,
David Cameron said, “There’s n- too much time being taken. Why don’t you get
on with it?” He’s now saying, “We’ll have a referendum, but in four years’ time.”

David: Well, we may come to a bit more UKIP-ery later on. I think we’ll move on.

Steven: huh UKIPery.

David: Just to say that, as you know, if you want to join in the debate tonight, there are
two ways of doing it. You can either go on Twitter, or you can text us. Our hashtag
for Twitter is BBCQT. We’ve got a panellist tonight, the tax expert and
campaigner, Richard Murphy, who’s on BBC Extra Guest, or you can text
Comments 83981, and the red button will tell you what other people are saying.
**Question Time (17th January 2013) Lincoln**

4614 Q1 Can public services cope with yet another influx of migrants when we open our doors to Bulgaria and Romania this time next year?

4616 David This part of England has very large - has had very large influx of immigrants, to work in agriculture primarily. Can the public services cope with yet another influx when Bulgaria and Romania are entitled to come here next year? Nigel Farage.

4620 Nigel Not really, no::, and nor should they have to. I think it is completely irresponsible, wrong, in fact damn stupid to be opening up our doors next January to 29 million people from Romania and Bulgaria. Just bear in mind (.) that nearly 50% of the Bulgarian population are living on or below the poverty line. This is a real poverty line. People are actually struggling to eat. To give you some idea of how poor it is, the average monthly salary in Bulgaria is £200 a month. A pensioner gets £100 a month. It is a country I'm afraid in a terrible state. The judiciary is not independent. The mafia basically runs the economy. If I was a Bulgarian I'd be packing my bags now wanting to come to Britain. I feel sorry for the people in Bulgaria, but frankly, as the recent census figures showed - I've been going around saying that 3 million had come in, in the last 10 years. I was wrong. Officially, the figure was 4 million. If you add the illegals, possibly 5 million (.) and at a time when we have youth unemployment in Britain already running at 21%. We do not need more oversupply [in the unskilled labour market]

4634 David [What should be done? The question is whether public services can cope. You can't do anything to prevent these people coming, can you?

4637 Nigel [Frankly, what should be done] Frankly, David, that is why we need a referendum very quickly on our membership of the European Union, because we cannot control immigration policy into this country and be a member of the EU. I wish everybody in Bulgaria and Romania well, but it's a national health service. It's not there, frankly, for the rest of the world.

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4648 David Grant Chaps.

4650 Grant Well, one thing that we have done in this case is to extend the controls so that people couldn't come here right at the beginning and the moment that the countries joined. That was different to what happened when many of the previous there was a group of eight countries who joined and there was a very big movement of people. That means that this particular releasing people able to come here now comes at the same time as they can go to places like Belgium and France and Germany and many other countries, so it means that they won't just necessarily come to this country on their own. We've got to think this through. One of the things that I did when I was Housing Minister was to introduce controls for local authorities to be able to say, "People actually need to have some local residency before they can jump to the top of the housing queues", one example of how you
can protect some of the public services, and that’s now in place, and there are others. I do have to say to people that take the kind of view that we shouldn’t have any kind of movement of people at all, that’s fine. We’ll probably have a couple of million people who we’ll have to call back from Spain, who are Brits, who’ve gone and lived in the south of Spain. 

Nigel =No, no, this is not the point at all]

Grant =because actually the free movement of people of course works in both directions.

((Audience applause))

Nigel Grant=

David =Hang on.

Nigel =this is not the point at all. How many are going to come?

David [No, alright.]

David No, you’ve made your point.

Nigel [How many are going to come?

David No, wait a moment. There are other people on the panel and I’d like to hear from them. I’ll come back to you. Don’t worry.

Nigel I want to know, David, how many people are going to come? How many?

David [That was precisely the question I was going to put. Eric Pickles says that he doesn’t believe the figures he’s got yet. Does the government have any idea how many people might come?

Grant I think one of the problems that this government is very aware of is that the official predictions made before Poland and all those other countries joined turned out to be wrong by a power of 10. Now, the difference this time is, as I said, there’s a lot more countries who are opening up at the same time, so there are a lot more choices. People actually may well go to countries where there are historic connections, which may be places like Germany and Belgium and others. Um so e=

David =This is what you hope, is it? This is what you hope=

Grant =Well, we- look, this, by the way, was a negotiation that took place before we were in government. We are in a position where even if you went for what Nigel Farage says
he wants, which is to change this, we cannot change it by this October, so we are where we are=

=Joanna Benton’s question was can the public services cope?

Well, look, my concern when I was in charge of one part of that, social housing, for example, was concern that we couldn’t cope, which is why I changed the rules there to enforce some kind of - or ability for local authorities to say, “If you’ve been in the area for long enough, that you’ve worked in the area and you’ve contributed to the area, then that’s one thing, but if you’ve just arrived here then you’re not going to be on the top of the list for social housing”. And I think that was a positive change.

David

Well, when we opened up our borders in ‘04 it’s absolutely true we had about half a million Poles who came to Britain, and they came here to work and only 0.06% actually took benefits. I think it was a great credit and it was a great thing for Britain that they came here and we’ve benefited enormously from that. Ah- a, when it comes to Now when it comes to Bulgaria and Romania, as Grant says, they’ve got many other countries to go to as well as us. The European Union gives you the right to come here to work, study or to marry. It doesn’t give you the right to come here and take benefits.

[=((Audience applause ))]

It does=

No, no, it doesn’t. After three months, the government does give them benefits. Now, I think the government [can look at that No, no, no, no, no, it doesn’t. After three months, the government have to wait for any direction from Brussels. We can actually do something about that ourselves=

[It does] [audience grumble]

=Hang on, you said it didn’t give you the right coming here to get benefits and then you say after three months you do have that right.

Yes, you have the right=

=It’s not long to wait, is it?

No, no, it’s not, which is why I think the government should look at that, and that’s something that Britain can do: I think that’s absolutely right, because we saw with the Poles when they came here, they came here to work. It’s true what Nigel says that obviously Bulgaria/Romania are a lot poorer. I don’t think people should be able to get benefits after three months, and that’s something the government can look at now=
Nigel = Roland, if you come into Britain you can get benefits on day one if you say you’re self-employed and seeking work. On day one you can claim benefits=

David = Man up there, three in, in the blue shirt with the red tie.

Q2 = Yes. um (.) when these people come from these European countries, are there any checks done on their record, their criminal records maybe?

David = Caroline , do you want to answer that particular point?

Caroline = Well, I think if somebody comes to work here and they’re working in an environment where there has to be checks, they should be made. There are issues here about how difficult it is to check those records out and there is a discussion, I understand, in Europe about some information, about sharing information on people’s criminal records so we can deal with that. In terms of Joanne’s question about public services, I think we should be mindful of pressures put on our public services because it is true that when Poland and other countries came in (.) or the numbers that we were advised were likely to come in were an underestimation. They were. There was er concerns in communities about pressures on hospital services, on schools, on housing and other factors as well. It is right, your question, that we should be mindful of this. It is different this time because of course, as Grant said, all the other EU member states are opening up at the same time. I think actually part of the answer is to look at some of these transitional arrangements. We supported that we should go to the max (.) in this situation and we would support discussions with the government about whether there should be given the state of our economy and other countries in the European Union, whether or not we should look for some more flexibility about some of the=

David = What, even now?=

Caroline = For the future in terms of=

David = Even by next year?=

Nigel = Do you mean when Turkey joins? Is that what you’re saying?]

Caroline = [Well, I will] explain what I’m saying if you give me a chance, Nigel. If there was a way that we could look at next year, ye:es, I think we should. Also, I think in terms of future expansions of European Union, I think it is worth a discussion about whether other tightening up of transitional arrangements should happen. I would say this, I think over one and a half million people from this country work and live in other parts of the European Union, so it works both ways in terms of flexibility of labour. The other side of it is true as well, is that a huge number of businesses depend on our trade with the European Union. Let’s reform the European Union, but if we think that Nigel’s answer is just to walk away from it, that won’t solve any of these issues and will leave us isolated and losing [out] on the benefits we get from our membership.

David = [okay] Okay. We may come to that bigger argument later. The man there (.) you sir, yes, in the grey jacket.
Q3: It may not be a very popular view to take amid all this mania. But I personally believe that when people go out in their German cars to an Italian restaurant or a Chinese takeaway or a Turkish kebab house, drive home, turn on their Chinese televisions and sit down on Swedish settees and start complaining about immigration and what a bad effect it’s had on our country, shouldn’t they start thinking that actually these people have come here, they’ve had a good benefit and they’ve created a more diverse society that has created a better Britain rather than a worse one?=

Q4: I’m sorry, I really disagree. I have a business in Boston. I have family that live in Boston.

Q4: Yes, yes. And erm (.) We’ve got land at Boston and we’ve had major issues with workers - they’ve nowhere to go - camping on our land. We can’t move them off because the police aren’t interested. Boston is at breaking point. All the locals can’t cope anymore. The services, doctors’ surgeries, hospitals - I have a family member that’s a midwife at Boston Pilgrim Hospital. The facilities are at breaking point because of these people coming into the country, and (1) nothing is being done. There are hardly any locals there anymore because they’re all moving away. You go down to Boston high street and it’s just like you’re in a foreign country. It’s got (.) to stop. ((Audience applause))

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Q4: Are you talking mainly about people from Poland?
Well, they’re from Lithuania. They’re all sorts. We’ve had to have signs made in five different languages to say, ‘Private land. Please no camping’. They’re all from Poland/Lithuania. Now, I’m half-Polish, because my grandparents were Polish and came over during the War and fought in the (.) World War Two. We are talking now of a different generation of immigrants, where they’re disrespectful and they’re not bothered anymore.

David Mary, you were talking about Boston. Do you want, just briefly, to reply to that?

Mary What I got out of the report was it was really the fact that there are huge numbers of myths about the numbers of people who’ve entered Boston and also their drain on public services. There was a rather charming coda to this report which said actually the maternity unit at the Pilgrim Hospital had probably been kept open because of the increase in population of Boston rather than being closed=

=(Audience applause))

Nigel The chief police officer of Cambridgeshire, your home county, three years ago, she said that in fact what was happening was that an intolerable strain was being put on policing hospitals and schools in Cambridgeshire. (Applause) That’s the common thing that people [are finding]

=((audience applause))

Okay. Do you want to briefly comment on this because you’ve been silent obviously. Just [very quickly, if you would. You talked] about housing. What about these other issues?

[Just briefly, please.]

Grant [Well actually, what I was going to say] Well, actually I had the leaders of er (.) Boston Council come to see me when I was local government minister. There certainly are a lot of strains there. They’re very concerned that the census information doesn’t represent it. Actually, Boston is an unusual case in that regard. They’re right at the extreme end of the stresses on services, which are I believe very real in Boston. I think overall, I think it’s important to recognise with the [two countries coming in, in October, that they are able to go to 23 other countries at the same time]. That’s very different from when that original Polish, for example, immigration occurred, where 74,000 people turned up in a time where only about 7,000 people.

Q4 [they don’t]

It does raise the question- she’s shaking her head about whether somewhere like Boston, if it is as you describe, would be attractive to anybody else to move there.

It is because you’ve got the farming land there and you’ve got the farming where they employ them to pull out the cabbages and things like that. It’s encouraging them to come to Boston. [There is no]where for them to go, so they’re just laying on park benches, drinking. We’ve got a major issue (.) with er alcohol, drinking them in the day round the streets. Boston have actually done where they ban areas, but it’s not wor::king.
4902 David [And there u-] Sorry, I don’t want to stick on this, but just one point to you.
4903 Why won’t indigenous Bostonians do this work, young people in Boston who are out of
4904 work? Why won’t they do the work?
4905
4906
4907 =((audience applause))
4908 Q4 I don’t know why (.) whether it’s because it’s cheaper to employ
4909
4910 Nigel =I do. Yes=
4911
4912 Mary =It’s exploitative labour.
4913
4914 David What are you saying, it’s exploited labour?
4915
4916 Nigel For the big bosses, this is a green country where in many cases they can get these people to
4917 work all the hours God sends for (.) (laughs) more often than not, way below the minimum
4918 wage. For the big bosses, it’s been tremendous. And David, before 2004, the cabbages and
4919 the cauliflowers were not rotting in the fields of Lincolnshire, they were still getting
4920 picked. The idea that without this mass influx the whole place would fall to pieces is just
4921 nonsense.
4922
4923
4924 (Applause)
4925
4926 David Okay. We must go on now.

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**Question Time (13th December 2012) Bristol**

4927 Q1 With almost three million more foreign residents since 2001, is Britain no longer British?
4928
4929 David Three million more foreign residents, and um (.) 13% of people in Britain now born
4930 outside the UK is Britain no longer British? Karan Bilimoria.
4931
4932 Karan I came to this country as a 19-year-old from India to study, and this has been a most
4933 amazing country, that has given me the opportunity not only to study, but to start off my
4934 business (.) to build a life over here. What I’ve seen is a transformation of this country,
4935 over the last three decades, from a country with a glass ceiling, where if you were a
4936 foreigner, you couldn’t get to the top (.) you were told you will not be allowed to get to the
4937 top to a country where I believe, now, is a true meritocracy; where there is opportunity
4938 for all, regardless of race, religion, or background. I have seen this unfold in front of my
4939 eyes. I think it’s the most amazing country, and I think immigration, good immigration, has
4940 been fantastic for this country, and a lot of the immigrants that have come here have done
4941 it with nothing. This year, we’re celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Ugandan Asians,
4942 who were thrown out by a brutal dictator, Idi Amin, 40 years ago. Look at what that
4943 community has achieved over here.
4944
4945 David But the question is is Britain no longer British? How would you answer that?
Then, you talk about the fact that in London, now, less than 50% of Londoners are originally of ethnic origin from here. That is wonderful, and I think it’s the most cosmopolitan city in the world. If you ask me my identity, I’m really proud to be Indian (.) I’m really proud to be a Zoroastrian parson (.) I’m really proud to be Asian, and most of all, I’m really, really proud to be British [and what this country’s done]

[(audience applause)]

All right. Well, Peter, you were touching on this before, but what’s your view?

Well, immigration on this scale is unprecedented in the history of this country. There has been nothing like it, and the problem with immigration on this scale is that, of course, immigrants can come here and become British if they’re given the chance to do so (.) if the society which welcomes them (.) says “You’re very welcome here, but what we want you to do is integrate and become part of our country.” Far from doing that, It has been the policy of our governments for many years to encourage multiculturalism, and the creation of solitides, in which people have nothing to do with each other, and live apart.

There has been that, and there has also been the fact that the sheer scale of this means that there are now, I think, millions of homes (.) I’m sure factcheck.com, whoever they are, will tell us how many millions quickly (.) where there are no adults who speak English.

You cannot be a society unless everybody in that society shares certain things in common. One of them is language; one of them is law. One of them, you might say, would be a sense of humour all kinds of things come together to make people what they are. We are considerably less British, and that’s the idea, because when New Labour launched this mass immigration policy, which they did as a deliberate act of policy – this is the account of a New Labour apparatchik, Andrew Neather, who actually said that the policy included a driving political purpose (.) that mass immigration was the way that the government was going to make the UK truly multicultural, and the purpose the main purpose was to rub the right’s nose in diversity and render their arguments out of date. That has been achieved.

That was a driving political purpose to change this country irreversibly, and out of all recognition. It has been achieved, and that lot did it, and now they’re going for the next [election proposed as the friends of those who are worried by it, but they aren’t. They’re fat, bourgeois bohemians who enjoy all the parts of mass immigration the cheap nannies and the cheap restaurants, which they so love. They don’t care about anybody else or what happens to the rest of society.]

[(some audience applause)]

[Easy, Peter, easy, Listen, the reason I might be fat is because I went to 80 (.) street parties during the Jubilee in my community. I ate hundreds of pieces of cake. My local community is exactly the sort of place that Peter is talking about, that he seems a little bit frightened of. I’d love you to come down and meet Walthamstow. You’d get a very warm welcome there, because we welcome people in Walthamstow. It’s what Walthamstow originally meant in the Domesday Book.]

[(audience applause)]

That’s so kind of you=

=We had (.) well, Peter. This is the thing, you see. Britishness for me is [about a series of values]

Peter

my own country quite freely, thanks, without being invited

Stella

No, no. I’m offering to welcome you to a place to come and see the kinds of things that we’re talking about this evening, because we have a very diverse community in Walthamstow. Don’t get me wrong; we have challenges that we have to face, but we also
have a strength that comes from that diversity, because the same people who are organizing all those fantastic street parties were also out there cheering on people like Mo Farah, who they saw as a classic example of what Britishness stands for and that’s a thing.

David: [What do you mean?]

What does it stand for, for you? Because that was the question is Britain no longer British?

Stella: What does ‘British’ mean to you?

David: [Yes, but you’re taking one example. What does being British [mean to you]?]

Stella: [Well, because] he embodies he embodies that sense of fair play, of hard work, of tolerance, and commitment to each other, and that’s what we saw during the Olympics. That’s what we deal with every single day in Walthamstow, because people who come from many different backgrounds share a shared concern, and Peter, you would love them, because they all get angry as soon as you talk about having a controlled parking zone, so there are plenty of things that people can find to find in common, wherever [they’re from]

Peter: [I couldn’t] care less about parking.

David: All right. The person who asked the question, at the back there. Yes.

Q1: I don’t think you define Britishness, because it means different things to different people. I think immigration is a fantastic thing it enriches the fabric of this society

((Audience applause))

David: Justine Green

Justine: I think we have had huge, uncontrolled mass immigration over the last decade, and I think the census really showed just how big it’s been. Pretty much a city the size of Birmingham in terms of the extra population that came in. Nevertheless, I think you know, you look at the Olympics. I’m a London MP. The volunteers were from the whole London. They were fantastic. That is London today, and actually, this is Britain today, and I think the key to success is making the best of the people that we’ve got, and making most of the fact that, yes; we are a diverse nation. We are diverse communities. Mine certainly is, and I think we’ve got to make that our asset in the future. I think that we can have a big debate about whether Labour’s policy on immigration was good or bad. I happen to think it was bad. I think it was bad to just allow uncontrolled numbers of people to come into the country without having a strategy for how public services would cope with them; how housing would cope with them, but the bottom line is we are Britain today, and I think we’ve got to make the best of that. I think, as the gentleman says, it means different things to different people, but I think there are some core values there of fair play, of creativity, of a fantastic sense of humour, of competitiveness, of being entrepreneurs. I think we’ve been at our best when we’ve been not just strong at home, but when we’ve been out the helping to shape the world around us, too. I think that’s what we need to continue doing [as a country]

Karan: Sorry why, then, does your government have this immigration cap? To have a crude instrument like a cap (.) when you just implement that, you’re deterring the good immigration the people who are coming into this country that have enriched this country, as the gentleman there said, with an immigration cap. You’re turning people away. Look at the [way that 00725] students – with the UK Border Agency. The UK Border Agency (.) if I challenged them, they wouldn’t even be able to tell you how many illegal immigrants are in this country rounded up to 100,000, and yet London Metropolitan University, in one swoop, they tell the 2,500 foreign students that are there, “Go and find another place within
60 days.” [Is that a fair way of dealing with people?]

[There’s actually (.) well, I can maybe um] let me=

Justine

=Just the message that sends out, to the rest of the world, is, “Britain doesn’t want foreign students, and if you come to this country, you don’t know if you’re going to finish your studies or not.” [Is that right?]

Justine

[Do you know what? That’s absolutely not the case. There is no limit on the numbers of students that can come to the UK, if they have English, if they’ve got the funds for their course, and if they’re signed up to a proper degree. Really, that is simply not [reflecting the reality]

Karan

[Then why do you include student numbers in immigration numbers? Why do you include student numbers?=

Justine

=We have to have [I think it’s common sense to have some sort kind of a cap on migration] [I think most people in Britain would recognise] the practicalities of having none.

David

[yeah yeah. right let’s leave that argument for a moment. Let me bring] [in the man sitting in the- yeah right. Let me bring in the man who has been sitting patiently with his hand in the air there.

Q2

Thank you ever so much. Isn’t the problem not necessarily the people we have coming into this country, who want to be British, but more so the people that are already born in this country who decide that, actually, they’re not British, but they’re just English? I’m very fortunate because I have a grandmother who is Scottish, and a great-grandmother who is Welsh, and I was born here in Bristol, so I consider myself to be fundamentally British, except for the Irish, but we’re working on that perhaps soon ((Laughter)). But the problem is that we have people now who fundamentally just say that they’re English [and we have]

David

[Who are these people you’re thinking of?

Q2

Well, I have many friends who just say, “Oh, I’m English,” and you see in Scotland you want Alex Salmond- Alex Hammon-? having an independent Scotland, so I think it’s not necessarily=

David

=You’d like people to feel British (.) [not English, not Welsh? ]

Q2

[I think Britishness is an] important thing, because –

Q3

I believe that the people in Britain is what makes Britain, Britain. You’ve got all these diverse communities; well, there’s loads of them round Britain, and all coming together to be British is what makes Britain, Britain. If you think about it, for example, my granddad is Hungarian, and back in the day, I’m not sure how many years ago;, but he ran his own hot-dog stand in Bristol, and he is part British. He’s like kind of putting British history in a set of views coming from=

David

=That’s, that’s well made. Will Self almost three million more foreign residents since 2001. The question is is Britain no longer British?

Will

Well, people have said Britain has many different meanings to different people. I think, really, up to the Suez Crisis in 1952; [the co]re (.) s[orry], ’56?="

Peter

[’56] =I remember it
David ['56]

Will Of course you do you probably were in the front line. Thank you for the on-the-sport fact-checking, [Peter. I think, more or less], up until that point, most people’s conception of what being British involved was basically going overseas and subjugating black and brown people and taking their stuff (.) and the fruits of their labours. That was a core part of British identity (.) was the British Empire. Now, various members of the political class have tried to revive that idea quite recently without much success, so if we’re talking about what an integral conception of Britishness is, it’s actually quite antithetical to the idea of a multicultural nation. It’s in favour of a multicultural empire, which is quite a different thing. Addressing the young man there, who is concerned about our relationship with Scotland, and Wales, and Ireland, who were often employed as the shock troops of the British Empire to go in and appropriate this stuff (.) so, if your idea of Britain is the British Empire, then this is no longer that, quite clearly. That’s my answer to that question=

Peter [I thought you were older than me]

David =And the scale of immigration revealed by the census, [over the last 10 years]

Will [Well, I think it’s a bit] like wearily enough, I think it’s a bit like the issue of gay marriage, in that the people who line up on the opposition to immigration of the argument are usually racists.

Peter See, here he goes, [here he goes]

Will [No, they are] They normally have an] antipathy to people particularly with black and brown skins. [That’s normally the case]

[(audience applause)]

Peter [No, the bigoted the bigo]ted=

Will =No, no. You’ve had your [rant], Peter=

Peter =The bigoted defamation of an opposite opinion, rather than a willingness to listen to it. Or [pay attention to it]

Will [Yes, and they’ll soon be invading Hitchen land.

Peter Liberal Liberal (.) Liberal bigotry is the worst of all, because it thinks it’s so enlightened.

David The man up there=

Peter You’re telling an untruth while making it=

Will =it can probably be fact checked=

Peter =it’s nothing to do with [racial bigotry]

David [We’ve been round this ground, we’ve been round this ground I feel. Yes, you, sir [with spectacles, th]en we’ll move on].

Q4 [I think it’s easy to complain about the level of immigration, but I’d agree with the gentleman in the front row, that I think it’s part of our island culture, and I wonder if we’d ever have built the motorway network without the help of the Irish, or won the Battle of Britain without the help of the Polish airmen.

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**Appendix x: Romanian mover voice data (interviews) (x10)**

*Table viii: summarises interview details*

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Transcript 1: Luminita

1  Henry:  okay (3) [((laughter)) ]

2  ((noise outside))

3  Luminita:  right on time=

4  Henry:  =right (.) so I’d just like to start by (. ) if you can (. ) telling me a bit about
5  yourself (. ) so your a:ge (. ) where you come fr[om] (. ) er what you do.

6  Luminita:  [yea] well I’m thirty one (. )I am
7  Romanian (. ) I come from Iasi which is one of the biggest city in Romania
8  (. ) it is quite a cultural (. ) er (1) city (. ) in that it has the first university (. )
9  the first (. ) the first this the first that (. ) so yeah

10  Henry:  oka:↑y

11  Luminita:  so it’s er (. ) an import:ant city in Roma:nian terms so yeah. (1) ER:m (. ) I
12  lived there f- until I left for Liverpool (. ) my parents have lived in Germany
13  though some time (. ) used to spend my er (. ) summers there

14  Henry:  okay so you were living with ano:ther relative in Romania the↓n?

15  Luminita:  er I was living with- well they haven’t left when we were very young (. ) so
16  we were still (. ) er- I mean when they moved to Germany (. ) er we were big
17  enough to (. ) take care of ourselves. [so we] did not have to live with other
18  relatives in that sense.

19  Henry:  [mhm] ri↑ght (. ) so it was just you and your
20  siblings for a [while] then

21  Luminita:  [ye:ah]

22  Henry:  yeah

23  Luminita:  I have a sister (. ) an older sister and a younger brother (. ) yeah

24  Henry:  and the do- I can remember you saying before you had (. ) dogs before

25  Luminita:  YE:a:h (. ) we had erm (. ) a giant schnauzer

26  Henry:  mmm

27  Luminita:  he was a cat actually (. ) looked like a ve[ry big dog (. ) [((laughter))
28  it] was a cat trapped in a very big dog’s body

29  Henry:  [((laughter)) ]

30  Luminita:  yeah

31  Henry:  so: erm (. ) would you describe yourself as religious [erm]

32  Luminita:  [no:] not at all

33  Henry:  were yo:u (. ) christened or anything as a baby
Luminita: I was erm yes erm as a catholic I [mean] my mother erm in Romania over ninety percent of the population I think or ninety five are orthodox orthodox. erm my father came from er a catholic family and they got married er my mother sort of=

Henry: [mhm] =mm

Luminita: erm but they were never religious as such and um although we did go to church as children you know the first communion and all [that] but after that no now I consider myself an atheist 1.5 so no I've never been (into religion)

Henry: [mm] =okay [mm] o::kay (.) ER:m what do you at

Luminita: erm I'm a (postgraduate student) at the moment ((details removed)) In my first year (.) still=

Henry: =and you were at Liverpool before that?

Luminita: YE:ah (.) so urr a- I've studied psychology initially in Romania (.) that's how I started my (.) undergraduate (.) and I was er a bit disappointed with psychology er department (.) er then they did not have enough access to (.) modules that explained more (.) the physical side of things. so (.) I decided to study biology as well (.) so I studied psychology and biology separate(,)ly (.) but at the same time for two years. (.) and erm (.) after that I looked for a master's that had to do with er:rn (.) that sort of combined them. So I found this master's at the university of Liverpool (.) that was in evolutionary psychology but in the biological sciences department which was (.) like (.) great (.) it was really good. and erm (.) after I graduated I waited a year and then went to Liverpool to do that. I mean I was very focused I knew from my second year of psychology that was where I'm going uh=

Henry: [mhm] =you knew that was where you wanted to be?

Luminita: yeah. and I feel like sort of the same now ((details removed)) I feel like I already know where I'm going ((details removed)) but let's all hope it's going well yeah

Henry: so you've felt then (.) since moving to the UK (.) you've had an idea of where you want to go as times gone on it's b- become more clear to you?

Luminita: ER:M not necessarily erm (.) the (.) when it comes to the science that I'm doing now (.) I'm not necessarily in the direction that I would have thought about two years ago (.) because now it's ((details removed)) sort of more (.) because I had the opportunity to work last summer ((details removed)) that I got more int[o it] (.) I was always interested but didn't have much experience. So after that I was like 'okay I can do this' (.) that's how I (came)
Henry: [mm] so: when you first came (.) did you have to deal with visa's (.) or work permits and that sort of thing

Luminita: no. no

Henry: you just came as a student ss: was it all taken care of?

Luminita: as Romanian (.) that was in 2010. when I started my master's at Liverpool < it was the first time I came > to the UK (.) s-=

Henry: =mm

Luminita: so (.) we didn't need a visa to come. Bu::t you did need a work permit if you wanted to work (.) and I was back then with my husband (.) I was married [((laughter))) we both moved to Liverpool for mine (.) and we had to deal with the fact that he needed a work permit. so yeah=

Henry: [right] =so there was a bit of juggling (.) to be had

Luminita: er it wasn't much (.) because it was quite straightforward. You just had to make this application (.) where you ju- a medical certificate (1) my er a letter from the university confirming that I was doing a master's then (1)=

Henry: =it was sorted

Luminita: yeah it wasn't very trouble[some] but it was a long wait though. I mean the waiting times were a bit=

Henry: [yeah]

Luminita: =was that with the home office? (.) that dealt with that

Henry: it might have been something different then

Luminita: I don't remember exactly who it was I think it was the home office. But (.) the actual procedure was simple (.) the waiting times were (.) yeah

Henry: so it was a happy day then when y- you got it through and it was all cleared and=

Luminita: =y[eah]

Henry: [do] you remember it at all?

Luminita: er:mm (.) na it wasn't (.) it wasn't like a surprise or anything (1) I thought like finally: yeah: (.) I think it was a very erm (.) I don't think I can remember much about it because it was a very busy time like (.) in my life and there many other things going on so that was not really my main focus.

Henry: so really when you look back at that time (.) that sort of thing was buried under more salient things=

Luminita: ye:ah (.) yeah
Henry: (. okay (. so (. you mentioned UK for the f- first time in 20[10 (. fo)r your master's (. erm .t could you describe the process that led to your decision to come here. so was it looking at courses (. were you looking at the UK specifically (. or=

Luminita: [yeah] I don't think I wanted to come to the UK specifically (. I mean it was me and my friend as I said I think we were in Lithuania when w- we when I made the decision of coming to Liverpool. and that was like two or three and that was like two or three years before I actually came. two years (. three e:rm because I was looking at the evolutionary master's first of all (.)

Henry: mm

Luminita: and it had to be a good university. and university of Liverpool has a high reputation (. academically. and it was a very good department (. like the people were working there (. it's just factors that lead to my decision. er (. one of them was (name) (. who is now a head of ((details removed)) at ((details removed)) now and other people there and the other people who have worked there I mean like made some really er (. big contributions to the area and they had this behavioural ecology approach to it - not evolutionary psychology an american one where it's a bir l'more (. let's say scientific so to [speak] so that was definitely want- because it's a good department (. but also because of the language. I mean I wouldn't have went to a country where I can't really (.understand they're teaching me in. (. so I also speak Italian but that wasn't really an option because I didn't consider Italy to be (. doing well enough academically. and erm (. (1) yeah I s'pose I could have like my friend and she went to Frankfurt then (. and they were teaching master's in (. English but erm (. I dunno (. I would have considered a different country if they would have teach- taught in English (. and also (. if the department the university was high enough (. sort of=

Henry: [mmm]

Luminita: [it was (. yeah]

=yeah (. yeah (. yeah like if I'm going to move I might as well move to somewhere I have something to learn.

Henry: mm. that's really interesting. erm so when you appli:ed for the master's deg[ree] (. I presume it was like i- like the normal application you put in. [they] assess if its conditional and erm=

Luminita: [yeah] [yeah]

=yeah that's how it was. I had to send (. my er undergraduate decrees (. and where they see all your erm marks before that and references and er language certificate.
Henry: so was that rather than the letter from the home office was that particular thing you got from the uni to say accept you onto the course memorable for you=

Luminita: [yeah I was happy] but at that point I'd figured out I'd been before that. I do tend to some predictions about outcomes and things yeah. but I still like not sure one hundred percent because I could still I mean I had this double specialisation which was quite exotic and references so=

Henry: [mm] =so you had reason to be confident?

Luminita: yah yah.

Henry: so what were your thoughts then when you got the offer? did you start sort of er planning=

Luminita: =yah I started planning before that I'm very presumptuous like this because I think they gave me the answer sometime in erm April or May I don't really remember. but I sort had to figure out where I'm going to live at point cos in between my other studies and before I went to Liverpool I was working(,) that was like so on had to all that I started planning before all that (.) ye:ah it was er=

Henry: [mmhm] [((laughter))]

Luminita: [mmmm] =and what were your thoughts then about a- erm obviously you were going to Liverpool but did you have more general thoughts about the UK about what the UK would be like=

Luminita: =yah I had like I didn't visit it strangely enough but I had visited many other countries before that just never been to the UK so that was like the day I came I just [moved here]

Henry: [mmmm] [((laughter))]

Luminita: [((laughter)) straight away=]

Henry: =straight away yeah. YE:Ah I had an idea I think I'm not sure how accurate it is if I look back now. It's not that inaccurate it's just that erm=

Henry: =what sort of things were you thinking like I dunno whether did your friends would any of your friends and family say anything about what the food was like or what the people were like or

Luminita: we'll the food is shit [((laughter)) I just have that on record so I did expect that so I was aware about this thing I was aware also about er Nor:th South sort of different er cultural er [vibes] and er:m (. I did try to learn for myself about Liverpool a bit more you know
(the city) (. ) if I'm going to live there I MEAN (. ) if there's still things that
surprised me but er (. ) my expectations were very different than what I
found but (. ) there were things that surprised me er when I came.

Henry: \[\text{[\text{(laughter)}]}\] [yeah] can you think of
any examples?

Luminita: I thINK er: the people in Liverpool specifically I still (. ) have to warm up -
(warm) into Sheffield. could be very er: (. ) laid back (. ) I li[ked that.] then
then I didn't [like it so much]

Henry: \[\text{[((laughter)) }}\] when you want to get things done?

Luminita: well at- even at the university they were very laid back. I suppose back in
Romania it's erm (. ) it's much more official even the talks you have with
your lecturers or whatever. there's a very specific thing I remember. The
fa::ct that I would speak with my supervisor or whatever just using their (. )
first name (. that is: (. ) we don't do that you know just use the titles (. ) it
was a bit uncomfortable you know 'oh oka::y (. ) that's weird (. ) this person
is seventy and er very er high up'=

Henry: =sort of like 'hi Bob' rather than 'hi professor'?=

Luminita: yeah [exac]tly (. ) so

Henry: [yeah]

Henry: \(2\) (2)

Henry: so (. ) upon arriving (. ) (. ) can you remember anything particular when you
got off the plane? For example looking for accommodation (. ) can you
remember any of that?

Luminita: I had the accommodation already sorted by the time [I c↓ome] (. ) for
convenience I chose to (. ) a friend from the universi↑ty (. ) self-contained
(. ) it was a flat (. ) a small one (. ) but I didn't want to:: (. ) it was a university
accommodation but I didn't share with other students. I mean I was with my
husband as well (and we would really [want the space?])

Henry: \[\text{[yea:h ]}\] [did it just have] the bathroom that was
separate (. ) the rest of it was just o[ne big room]

Luminita: [no a bath]room (. ) ki[tchen (. ) the
whole thing, all separate yeah (1) a::rr so we were [already]: er (.) sorted
that before (. ) we cam[e (. ) so] but I do remember specifically when we
came when out of Liverpool (. ) erm (. ) because it was er (. ) I think it was
Friday evening for something like this (. ) and it was quite late around nine
(. ) and erm (1) we were i↑n town and er town c[entre↑] a:nd just looking
around. and it didn't look very pretty. tha- er if I am to be honest the first er
(. ) shock I came into here I thought it looked rather dirty (. ) and er (. ) I
dunno. er that was my impression (what it looked like) I dunno. The
buildings were a bit sad (. ) thu- mm er streets dirty (. ) and so on (. ) er BUT
Then again I've stayed in before I came in for three months in Germany in
a very nice tow-n (. ) you know like a small[er town] everything is: sparkly
clean, and er (. ) 'yeah okay this is a bit weird'. (. ) it didn't look very
[pretty] (1) that was definitely a shock. and (. ) then (. ) that were there
weren't that many people in town and there these women er (. ) dolled up
you know with dresses and big hair and thinking (. ) oh it was Saturday
evening cos I was hinking 'hmm they must be do-- they must do the
weddings here on Saturday's as well [cos there must be many weddings
around] why are people so er dressed up? You know? So women (. ) yeah I
specifically remember I just went and slept (. ) I didn't really like the
university accommodation I thought it was err rather um I dunno (. ) das:ted?
(1) I mean er it wasn't cheap compared to th- what you could rent in the
t[own] so I thought er that's a bit er (. ) below expectations. But then I find
that generally you're re:nting in this country it's a bit below Expectations
and that like er: but er the next day I just went to the city cent:e (. ) there
was- there is this street in Liverpool called B- er B Bo- Bond street (. ) Bond
str- Bond ((inaudible)) er Bond street and I dunno it just felt so er all in
the city un (. ) I just loved (. ) them. On that walk you know towards city
centre I don't know there was something about (. ) seemed genuine (. ) sort
of. So yeah (. ) I liked it there. The day before I [hated it] and the fact that it
looked a bit quirky (. ) you know I liked that too.

Henry: [yeah ]
    [mmmm]

    [mmmmm]

    [mmmmm]

    [mm]

    [((laughter))]

    [mm]

    [yeah ha]

awr (1) erm (2) so what about when you went to the university for the first
time did you find – wa- was it things li:ke the names calling your superiors
by their first names was it tho:se sorts of things what stick out at you when
you first arrived at the uni and (. ) started your course?

Luminita: hm:: there was an introductory event anyway old master's students anyway
and got to meet each other there were only three of us in evolutionary
psychology. But er (. ) (1) or four mayb- but there were only total like thirty
or so master's students in that Department (. ) for that year (. ) and er m no
it was quite relaxed (. ) it was all right (. ) I didn't fee=

Henry: Did you find that Liverpoo- Liverpudlian even vibe of calm and laid back
that was=

Luminita: Well at the university the weren't that many Liverpudlians you know (. ) the
average scouzer I suppose (. ) yeah. But er:m (. ) they were actually one of
my supervisors was from- like born in and bred there (. ) and um (. ) ye:ah
they were (. ) relaxed (. ) it was a good atmosphere- relaxed but ther[e was] but still very serious about work (. ) not er (. ) just not (. ) I don’t know (. ) pompous. Just the right level (. ) yeah. So it was er people that don’t really know what they’re talking about so they relaxed enough about talking about i↑t (. ) (. ) I find it with me er (. ) if I’m a bit insecure you tend to overdo it you know (. ) like I need t[o pr:ove (. ) er w]hat I’m doing. They didn’t feel the need to prove themselves much in that sense I like that (. ) y- (. )

Henry: [yeah]

[(laughter)) ]

So in that sense then sort of- you’re describing your impressions of the city:

and um (. ) and sort of what things you kne:w (. )about t- the UK before you ca:me (. ) have y- are you fi:nding (. ) did you find when you first came I don’t know: (. ) erm (. ) instances where you can tell you’re in a different place to where you grew up?

Luminita: Oh yeah definitely=

Henry: =whether it be English or British or whatever

Luminita: actually one of my best friends I think is er one of the smartest people I know (. ) er (. ) a month or something after I arrived th↑ere (. ) er I specifically really remember s((.))aying I thought (. ) this Brits (. )uh (. ) they’re not even Britis((laughter)) enough

((both laugh))

Luminita: so we were saying ‘they don’t even know how to be British’ (. ) so that was fu:ny you know (. ) us er sort of erm having this idea of what ‘Britishness’ is supposed to be (. ) and you know it’s not (. ) so yeah

Henry: what w- would you understand it to be?

Luminita: I don’t know (. ) just I suppose (1) maybe the laid backness (. ) you know. I- I prefer two types of context (. ) social context. One where its very laid back (. ) or where everyone’s very official (. ) I don’t (. ) deal well with in-between. When everybody’s [sort of] (. ) stuck up. Yeah (. ) I expected the environment I was going in to be more erm (1) formal. (. ) and they weren’t that formal (. ) and I think in that sense I was a bit dis[a]ppoin((.))te[d (. ) you know] I was expecting everyone to be formal. (. ) yeah. (. ) I suppose that was what I meant when I was talking to my friend=

Henry: [mmhm]

[(laughter)) ]

=that they weren’t being formal enough?

Luminita: yeah and they’re not being British enough and he replied with something like ‘well you show those Brits what it means to be British’. ((laughter))=

Henry: =and you feel that you do that we↑ll (. ) in a way?

Luminita: erm (. ) no (. ) no no. (0.3) I don’t think so.
is it something that you would think about aspiring towards (.) being here (.) that you would feel like (.) ‘I sh- should appear British’ (.) or is it something that you would rather =

Luminita: [no:] =no you see that’s a bit weird I thought about it (.) I don’t think I ever had erm (.) oh (1) I don’t know it’s difficult to say (0.3) I don’t think it’s something I aspire to (.) especially after living in Liverpool ((laughter)) (.) (.) but erm (.) no I don’t think it was something I aspired towards. (.) I mean I didn’t think I needed to be more British or whatever. (1) but maybe I had this expectation that British people would be more like me. (.) rather than me be more British. I was like ‘hmm they’re not necessarily so’ yeah. (1) ye:ah. No I didn’t think I felt this need to be more

Henry: [((laughter))] 

[mhmm] You felt then that since you’ve arrived (.) you’ve simply been yourself [and that’s] worked for you

Luminita: [I think so] I think so (.) yes. Even being a bit er (.) maybe too much er (.) oblivious that I am not here (.) you know? I dunno. But maybe the fact that I did travel before (.) I did spend my summers with my parents in different countries (.) making me feel comfortable about different places (.) it wasn’t such a cultural shock you know.

Henry: I suppose then also you- you’ve it seems that it’s come across that you’ve not had any experiences where someone has (.) pointed you out (0.3) as being different (.) because you feel so laid back=

Luminita: [no no] =maybe I wasn’t aware of it you know if it happened (.) because I was speaking with my boyfriend at some point about this (.) and maybe there it’s something but maybe I’m just completely oblivious with it (.) but I think that works for me. Because I never really actually think (.) I- I mean (.) I often thought about that because I have a cousin who lives in London and she lives there with her husband and with her two children (.) and erm we’re not very close but we did speak at some point and she always referred to English people as like ‘they’ (.) you know. And I found that very weird I what do you mean by ‘they’? you know like there’s ‘they’ and there’s ‘us’ or something. See you’re (.) already excluding yourself in that sense. And I- I always disliked the fact that when people go and live in other countries (.) when they go (.) towards the environment that they come from I mean why do they make the move anyway? You [know].

Henry: [mhmm]

Luminita: and I feel like maybe there’s thing where people live in communities in which you know (.) like for instance in London my cousin she has (.) more Romanian friends or whatever and she tends to spend more time (.) not that there’s anything wrong [with it] (.) it’s just that I didn’t have this sort of (.) option in Liverpool anyway so I (.) and also I think it’s something that my mother always used to point out (.) you know (.) the fact that you should
just integrate in where you’re going (.) not necessarily making an effort (.)
but stop being so aware that you’re not from there. If you’re there (.) you
might as well be [from] there so yeah.

Henry: [mhmm]

[hm] so I suppose it’s a bit like (.) erm (.) whether it’s something
that’s er (.) become apparent as you’ve lived here (.) but this notion of how:
er English people go to Benidorm (.) in [Spain] and basically turned
Benidorm (.) [INTO] another English city

Luminita: [yeah]

[yeah] I have talked to my boyfriend about this (.) ‘you’re just going to
England anyway’

Henry: I think that’s a trait that (.) English people are perpetuated in quite a few
places you know Ibeza (.) the Canary- you know everywhere.

Luminita: you see I didn’t feel like a stranger I- er it just felt (.) it felt homely it didn’t
feel like (.) I ne- er (.) I don’t know what it was. Er maybe the fact also that
I was quite confident with my- er not quite confident (.) but I was happy
with my level of er English so then I could er communicate with people
without feeling like er you know=

Henry: =feeling conscious of [not being understood

Luminita: [yeah] And erm (.) well (.) that if you don’t count my
experience with the proper scouzers you know cos then I was very
conscious I’m not from there! (.) then err: (.) yeah. But (.) I dunno. I never
felt like you know er (.) I mean obviously I was aware that I’m foreign (.)
but I never felt like I was being (.) I don’t know (.) the odd one out or
something (.) no. But I think I was the only foreigner in that thirty (.) er
peopl- group. (1) masters students. I think they were all British yeah (.)

Henry: okay erm (.) yeah. S- so in in light what you were saying about your mum
saying about integration (.) is integration that you think (.) is something
y- you value when it comes to moving around?

Luminita: e:: (.) I’m not sure about valuing (.) but I think (.) well I don’t know what
you mean about valuing but I do value it (.) in that I find it necess[ary] (.) if
(.) yeah I find it is necessary. So yeah not only for the person (.) the
individual (.) but also for society. I::n that (.) I do tend to criticise UK for
that. Cos I feel like e:: the con- continental Europe or at least the bigger
countries in Europe like Germany or France or whatever but my experience
of Germany anyway is that they focus more on the integration whereas here
there is more focus er (.) not the integration er (.) I think there is a good
word for it (.) er a policy in England and it’s not integration it’s erm (2)
LI:ke sort of erm (.) multiculturalism that’s what it is. Yeah. Which is a
good thing (.) but not if it excludes integration so yeah.

Henry: [hm] So (.) whe-

what would say your understanding of integration to mean in term- when
you say it (.) what do you mean by that?
Luminita: I don’t mean that the individual (. ) arrived in the country (. ) should completely er you know (. ) dissolve himself er (. ) or completely dissolve themselves in that culture. Just (. ) not being aware of who they are or where they come from that’s not it. But I do feel for them to be functional (. ) they should at least understand the culture and actually work within that cultural framework. That’s er (. ) to be able to function in the cultural framework that you live in (. ) I think (. ) that would be er my definition of integration. Cos you don’t even have to like it (. ) but are you able to function in [that] (. ) so yeah.

Henry: [mm] so how do you feel then if you- I mean I don’t know if you read newspapers or watch the [news] (. ) or whatever. How do you feel then when the sort of implicit accusations that people that move here don’t integrate (. ) do you feel quite (. ) does that incense you (. ) yourself because of how act. Do you feel like it misrepresents you?

Luminita: [yeah] Well I’ve always felt misrepresented (. ) but that is probably another thing in my stay((.))ing here (. ) back at home I felt misrepresented in many ways (. ) so it wasn’t such a (. ) New problem for me you know. Like for instance most of the population of Romania is religious you know I never felt like I be[long in] that sense. So no (. ) I think to so↑me extent I think that is true. If I look around as a foreigner coming into this country (. ) I feel that (. ) there are many communities (. ) living separately. I don’t feel like they’re living together. I feel they like they’re living separately. And even if you go around here I was looking you see at the tables (. ) the Asians with the Asians (. ) the blacks with the blacks (. ) the whites with the whites. I mean (. ) you could say that- take an optimistic point of view or er (. ) political correct or a [BRitish point] of view (. ) lo:ok at the cultural diversity of this room. But then if you look at it this point of view it’s a bit sa↑d. You know

Henry: [yeah] (((laughter))) because they’re not interacting?

Luminita: they are intera:cting (. ) but if you look there are these sorts of gr[oups] (1) so I feel in that it is failing (. ) yo[u know] (. ) the multiculturalism part. Whereas as I said in continental Europe more like ‘let’s sit together (. ) let’s make a more mixed group’.

Henry: [mm] [m yeah] so would you say that (. ) the way the British do it is more like half-baked? course they’ve got all the diversity (. ) but they’re not actually doing anything with that diversity.

Luminita: sort of. (. ) yeah (. ) ye↑ah that’s pretty much the same thing yeah.

Henry: (1.5) so (1) with that in mind then (. ) I mean it comes across anyway with what you’ve said before that you’ve moved around quite a lot.
Luminita: hmm.

Henry: would you say that migration is something essential in your life has it been essential would you say it is essential part to allow you to be what you want it to be?

Luminita: I think so yes. Because I’m a bit restless you know? I don’t know. It is feels important that I can go wherever I want whenever I [want]. Even if I don’t want to go the idea that I can go it’s extremely important yeah. That sort of freedom of movement and er moving around. So yeah it is.

Henry: so it must have been quite a proud thing for you growing up I don’t know if you’ve had that feeling for a long time growing up when Romania and Bulgaria were accepted into the UK - I mean EU [cos it meant you] could move around didn’t it.

Luminita: cos I could move around before that. Cos the policy is such that you don’t have to be a European Union state to be able to go around. You were able to just live for as long as you wanted in those countries [there were still ways before that]. It was that you couldn’t work and you couldn’t stay indefinitely or something of the sort. You were supposed to go back to Romania and enter the country back. But I don’t think that was a problem though. The first time I went to Germany and you had to go the visa: to get visa from the embassy: in Bucharest so it was quite troublesome. But erm it was possible I never thought this was going to (1) I don’t know impede me? From anything? Cos there was a way around it

Henry: was it just that you couldn’t work? I suppose that that it has enabled is that you don’t have to wait anymore at least. You can just get up and go almost.

Luminita: I don’t know I was very young when we were already able to move around Europe. Not to live there but to travel. I never felt like I couldn’t you see. Maybe in that sense it didn’t=

Henry: =it didn’t feel like you’d gained any thing it was simply rubb[stam]ping

Luminita: [yeah] [yeah]

Henry: would you describe yourself as European if someone asked you?

Luminita: definitely yeah

Henry: and what does being European mean to you?

Luminita: E:RR hmm ha hu [(laughter)] yea:h=

Henry: [it’s a difficult question I know]

=feel free to explore it if you need ti:me
Luminita: s- cos I often think I would never live anywhere else but Europe. I mean it’s good for travelling. For instance I went into United States and I didn’t like it. I just didn’t like it (.) I spent like three months there it’s enough to make an impression [I sup]pose. I felt (.) I do↑n’t kno↑w what it means to be European. What I like about Europe (.) I can tell you I don’t know if it’s [the same as wh:a it m]eans to be European (.) I like that there is erm (1) a degree of freedom and civil rights that you can enjoy. And they are (.) pioneers in that (.) as well. Erm that you cannot really see in other parts of the world (.) and at the same time they are keeping it re↑al (.) compared to the Americans (.) if that makes any se:nse. (.) so (.) yeah I dunno there’s also to me it’s the old continent (.) they always think that my biggest nightmare would be to live in a place like Brazi:l (.) or maybe Australia (.) life would be better but Brazil definitely would be my biggest nightmare because they (.) well first of all I don’t like them if they’re very warm all the time. (.) I don’t like them if they’re very crowded (.) and I don’t like that there’s always like erm (.) this erm (1.5) buzz about them. Like people are a bit hungry (.) if that makes an[y sense]. Fo- for whatever. in those places it’s new (.) compared to Europe (.) [you kn]ow= Henry: [mm] [no no go ahead yeah] [mhmm] [yeah] =so I suppose it’s= Luminita: =people go (.) to get something (.) if they move there (.) you know (.) whereas here (.) they might just be here. You know= Henry: =it’s like developing economies (.) [type thing] and all things going on (.) projects and Olympics like in Brazil going on. It feels too [busy for you]. Luminita: [yes exactly] [yeah I dunno] yeah like people want too much (.) sort of= Henry: =yeah Luminita: when people move (.) but hungry I don’t mean hungry li:ke physically (.) erm (.) be that for affirmation (.) or success or money or whatever. It’s just a bit (.) crowded. I just like things erm a bit more (.) settled. Henry: do you not feel like the UK is crowded? Luminita: it is (.) it is. I look at it and it is crowded. Henry: yeah. A lot of surveys show (.) suggest that (.) for the amount of land we have= Luminita: =well that’s a fact. Henry: it’s interesting you say about crowding then (.) do you mean crowding and moving fast (.) rather than at least here we’re crowded but moving like slugs
Luminita: it is crowded (.) but then again this might be one of things that- because my plans are to move back to continental Europe after ((omitted)) [so] in that sense (.) it’s not necessarily that I like it here because it’s crowded (.) that’s one of the factors that could (1) make me think about moving.

Henry: [mm] so you like it in spite of being cro[wded] but (.) when the opportunity arises (.) you’ll.

Luminita: [yeah] I like it for many things er (.) but not for that. Mm hmm.

Henry: do you feel (.) like what we said about Europe (.) do you think (.) migration should be a right (.) or something that should be a privilege than can be taken away from people?

Luminita: it’s difficult to answer that question. Cos ern (.) I don’t know you have to take-two stances. One then is the individual’s. I am always concerned that I would always des- maybe that’s why I don’t mind being er the odd one out (.) or like because I’m Romanian (.) or because I’m not from here (.) or whatever. Because I always thought as an individual (.) I’m important enough for that not to matter (.) so I was always very confident in my individuality (.) (.) but so at an individual level (.) that everyone should have this right. (1) because yeah (.) it shouldn’t matter. (.) but then again when it comes to groups or masses of people (.) then it’s a different story. [You know it] doesn’t work like that

Henry: [hmmm mm] so you would be sympathetic then to (.) with what’s happened recently in the UK with the latest Immigration Bill (.) which limits to some extent what people can access when they first move here.

Luminita: mm

Henry: Because it’s from that group point of view. Do you sympathise that that’s something that needs to be done? Or is that something=

Luminita: =I mean I do understand the practicalities of it. And the practicalities of er (1) stopping immigration (.) well (.) not stopping it (.) but reducing it. Yeah (.) I mean not necessar- I don’t think that this would solve any problem (.) I mean for me the problem is much more (.) bigger than that. Things like ‘you don’t get this benefits’ or whatever. The big problem which is a big problem for me in fact is more just demographi:cs (.) we just can’t fight them. The way it grows (.) you just can’t keep this er under control. Whether it’s the UK or any other part of the world it’s er (.) going to be extremely crowded and er (.) extremely sad in a few years. S:o=

Henry: do you feel that erm (.) despite what you were saying about the [pract]icalities (.) do you feel like (.) when politicians o- or people talk about you know the need to control or whatever do you feel that also (.) opens the possibility for prejudice?

Luminita: [yeah] yeah.

Henry: Un- and pointing people out? Do you=

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Luminita: =I mean it happened with the Romanians you know. I- I er pffh I’m sick of it in that sense. I mean sometimes it annoys me sometimes it amuses me. But I’m talking about Romanians particularly. You know with the portrayal of them (.) and so on. Because erm from my country (.) I still feel like very much Romanian. You know I come from a Romanian family with Romanian roots (.) I speak the language very well I know my history (.) and so on (.) the history of the continent. And I feel like it- that makes me more of a Romanian than other people who are portrayed here as Romanians. Because (.) and that bothers me it does yeah (.) because (2) I understand the practicaliti:es of this too (.) heh. If people need both the ((inaudible)) feed the people who aren’t really bothered with er understanding er history of a country or whatever. It just er=

Henry: =who do you feel er mixed up when you’re saying about portrayals?

Luminita: the gypsies. The gypsies

Henry: [hhh] and you feel there’s a (.) distinction to be ma↓de. A ver- that’s a fair distinction?

Luminita: it is (.) there is. Ethnically (.) it’s a different group (.) culturally (.) it’s a different group (.) historically it’s a different group (.) I mean (.) there is that difference. It does bother me (.) cos there is a bit of ignorance there (.) but also I don’t (.) if you’re going to speak about something (2) I mean at least do it correctly. I mean I- I was actually looking at this. Every article that I read (.) and every news that I er it appears (.) and every documentary. Even the one’s that are trying to be er really well made (.) every time they speak about Romanians (.) they either start with showing gypsies (1) or [they sp]end ninety percent of their time speaking about gypsies and that bothers me. Because that’s not Romanian (.) (.) as such. I mean (.) they are Romanian citizens (.) and some of them are truly Romanians (.) but that’s not all there is to it. I feel like yeah (.) the representativity of it is completely wrong. It’s as if (.) it’s as if (.) it doesn’t even have to be a group (.) cos I understand it looks like ‘oh okay you’re ‘unhappy about this because of a group you don’t consider to be good enough’. You know it happens to be the case that with the culture (.) the culture I come from is better in some ways. But (.) Let’s say scouzers for instance. If that’s a:ll they would show about Britain (.) you know (.) don’t you `think (.) that would annoy you at some point? you know it’s not only scouzers bu- it can be Londoners (.) it can be Parliament (.) that’s all that [Britain is] you know (.) wouldn’t it bother you at some point? I mean really is that all is there=  

Henry: [mhmmm]

Luminita: =I mean in the UK it’s a really er contentious issue at the moment thu- a lot of people especially in Northern a- Western England that London dominates everything (.) so already there’s a sense of it here=

Henry: =mmm but also the cri↑minals (.) I er understand cos it makes the news you know (.) but if you have some beggars or some people who are sleeping rough in London then they also like er defecate in the parks or whatever that makes the news but that’s always going to be shown as Romanians all
the time you know every time you say Romanians they show one of those images and er (.) and er (.) yeah I think that’s erm bothering me (.) because- at least if they show:ed er: a person (.) it doesn’t have to be the best perso- it can be al:so a Gypsy person- I don’t mind that (.) bu::t a normal one why does it have to be one that defecates in c::ity centre [you kn]ow (.) I mean can’t you speak about something else? It does bo↑ther me (.) may:be for British people to understand bit better is if let’s say u:m w- what is the word that is portrayed in this country↓

Henry:  
[mmm] well ‘Brits Abroad’ is quite a erm thing=

Luminita:  
=uh yeah fat drunk w[ome]n on the streets (.) or whatever pu- throwing u::p or whatever (.) or te↑rrori↑sts er (.) born here like British terrorists you know (.) what i::f you would go to a country (.) an- and every time you (.) watched news and they say something ab- they would only show those people. You know (.) I mean how is that person more British than you are?

(5)

Henry:  
[yeah] yeah (2) it’s ver=

Luminita:  
=It is um- (.) at this point I am well aware that I cannot change this (.) I just think that this e:r (.) social historical context I can’t chang:e it (.) ye:ah it still bothers me sometimes

Henry:  
Do you feel (.) that um the Roma community living in the UK inadvertently then (.) u:h at least if they’re the scapegoat (.) that they’re promoted as this sort of exclusionary type- you know we were talking about the policies you know ‘so and so can’t get this or that’ do you feel that this is the numb of the issue of why people are so cautious of migrants coming here (.) cos they only see the bad side?=  

Luminita:  
=well they only notice th[e ba↑]d side you know (.) if I’m walking past by you in the street (.) you: don’t care where I’m from if I’m walking past by you and I’m trying to: get your wallet (.) y:ou will reme↑mber where I’m from. so yeah (.) I think there are many immigrants that come from di↑fferent countries that are unnoticed because they are di↑stant en[ough] (.) yeah

Henry:  
[mmm ]

[mmm] s- (.) something that’s often said now: er:m in regards to erm (.) we can get to erm the fact that it’s often referred to as ‘Romania and Bulgaria’ in a sec[ond tha]t’s something I want to ask you about(,) but how do you feel erm (.) about the rationale that- used (.) restrict movement from Romania because of the average wa:ge? Have you heard that mentioned?

Luminita:  
[ye:ah] =ye↑ah yeah yeah I have heard that (.) I mean it makes sen:se that the average wage is really sma::↑ll so people would come and work [he↑re] and (.) that it makes sense (.) to me (.) like if you ar- at the same time it depends- I dunno (.) I thi:nk most of the people (.) well I should know this quite well. most of the Romanians that (1) emigrate or they just go to a different country to work and just come back or whate↑ver (.) you either have the hi↑ghly educated ones: (.) that are going for really
well paid jobs that they going t- get anywa:y (.) even th- regardless of
whatever you know (.) political- politics about visas and so o↑n (.) or:: the
really lower ones (.) w- like in terms of th- th- um- (.) environment they
come from money and so on (.) li:ke the lower working class. You know
because they’re desperate they have to go somewhere (.) the thing is um (.)
most of that gro:up (.) has alre↑ady left you know for Spa:in and Ita:ly
many years ago. I mean and even those who wanted to come to Britain
have alre:ady co↑me. So its not like someone was waiting to come=

Henry: [mmm] =so the horse has already bolted?

Luminita: this is something man people don’t realise (.) people
could come before that. (.) the proce:dure was a bit more difficult you know (.) but it was still
possible. (1) yeah.

Henry: I don’t know if you remember in January(,) wh[en th]ere was talk that the
restrictions were li↑fted and the news people (.) were at the air:port did you
see it?

Luminita: [yes] it was funny.

Henry: yeah there a guy in particular who=

Luminita: the one with conjunctivas?

Henry: they interviewed him (.) and he was their- the first Romanian to arrive.
There were others [who came but they] said they were all returning back.

Luminita: [already working here] now many people don’t know this. But I
don’t bla↑me them. You can’t really keep track of all these things. But it
was fed into them that thats when they’re going to come. Like they said 30
million people from Romania and Bulgaria. There aren’t 30 million people
living there but that was what was expected. My gra:ndmo↑ther is going to
come is she? I can imagine. I mean some people are doing well in
Roma↑nia (.) they don’t need to come here.

Henry: Is there something about Romania and Bulgaria being put together that=

Luminita: =I thi::nk thats one of the issues because when people are already fed up so
um (.) time was it wasn’t very likely. But on the other han- I mean I did
look into the numbers. If you’re looking at the number of Romanian
immigrants coming to the UK (.) alongside other European countries with
the exception of say Po:land (.) you have coming from all these other
countries and they’re really hu↑ge numbers compared with the numbers of
Romanians and Bulgarians. Even if they a:ll come in time. Its all so- if you
look at other numbers from other countries its easier to say that you’re
racist or um er- prejudiced against their religion because its their cu↑lture.
Whereas with the Romanians leaving aside the gypsy er (.) thi:ng. You
know its like its easier to pick up on them because we’re Muslim’ or ‘black’ you know. People just
wanted to vent and they put it on this little guy on New Ye:ars Eve

Henry: so its like they found a scapego:at in a way.
Luminita: yeah I feel its very much so. Because it doesn’t make (.) se:nse you know.
Number wise it just doesn’t make sense. There must be bigger problems here you know=

Henry: =does some of it maybe come from that people don’t know the numbers.
They think it will be bi:gger than it could be=

Luminita: =ah yes there is that. There is a lot of ignorance there as well. You know
like ‘where is Romania’ kind of stuff. Then again you can’t just force this kind of thing on people.Whats the GDP nu[mer for]

Henry: ((( [laughter ])) you said earlier it upsets you when you are misrepresented. How does the Bulgarian aspect affect you I mean not as a bad thin- but as being lumped into=

Luminita: =it’s quite funny really. Because they are all very different. This thing with the Euro- East European you know ‘all the same’ stuff. But they are quite different. I don’t know much about them because of the language divide.
We have different alphabets different hi:stories different cultural influences.
I don’t feel I am in the same group as the Bulgarians any more than I am with the Ukra:nians or Hungar:ians or Ger:mans or whatever. If anything I feel closer to Germany than Bulgaria as there are a lot of Germans still i:n
[Romania]

Henry: [It sounds] a bit odd for you really then=

Luminita: =it is really. Um (.) yeah.

Henry: So is it the same for the East European label for you?

Luminita: I mean historically it ma↑kes sense (.) there are a lot of commonalities.
With the communism and so on. The group makes more sense than Romanians and Bulgarians for sure. There are a lot of similarities economically now but we are still very different culturally. Between the Ukrainians and Bulgarians with Romanians or example. There are still huge differences culturally.

Henry: I don’t know- you might feel we have covered most of this stuff now=

Luminita: =no- no go ahead I like inconvenient questions.

Henry: There’s a view that immigration leads to the majority group becoming more marginal. Like they’re being taken o↓ver. How do you relate to that- do you feel it legitimately depicts=

Luminita: =how do you mean.

Henry: Like the argument goes that- the politicians often say it as British people feel their communities are changing=

Luminita: =well yeah that change is a fact.

Henry: do you feel that its a legitimate feeling or more bound up with something else=
Luminita: =I’m not an expect (. ) I mean I watch documen:ntaties and stuff. Loads of
groups have changed a lot over time without a doubt. I understand the
anxieties of people. Being a Romanian you know the situation changes
quickly. Um (. ) I can symp†thise with them as well. But at the same time I
have to um haha (. ) the big picture you know. You can’t fight it. I feel the
same with Europe. I go with this um (4) I don’t li:ke it. Like how a British
person. Its the same with Europe really. What I mean is that I feel that little
place that little Romanian ci:ty (. ) its losing its charm. Its going to
disappear. Because I like it how it is. Asnd the fact I realise its going to
change. It bo↑thers me. I do like it so I can understand why it bothers them
because its comfortabl for the†m.

Henry: so y- you’re worried places will lose their national identity over ti↑me?

Luminita: look at history you will al:ways find different groups and dialects. In the
fut- I mean who knows the future it may well happen but it does make sense
that people would gather into groups. Local administrations and so on.
Look at Belgium. Flemish and French people there divided down the line
having to speak both languages. The EU has not affected that. Not
necessarily the politics but certainly the diversity side for sure.

Henry: what does citizenship mean to you? In light of earlier when you said the
visa restrictions were lifted.

Luminita: I don’t have any um (. ) emo:ational attachment to it. You know you are born
somewhere and that is your citizenship you know. Its very random in that
sense. As it applies to the individual (. ) the individual applies to society too
I suppose.

Henry: from earlier you sound happy to integrate into society while retaining your
Romanian identi‡ty?

Luminita: I guess I can feel I can adequately fu:nction in different societies relatively
well. I mean I wouldn’t say I have become more British. But um (. ) I
se::ldom (1) um define myself in such terms. I mean I still feel Romanian
(. ) I’ (. )m definitely Romanian you know but I don’t feel I need to integrate
to function in the society as though there is something that makes me stand
out you know.

Henry: I was just thinking from the point of view of being both a national and a
member of the EU (. ) you have like- the treaties say you have two la:yers of
citizenship=

Luminita: I don’t mi↑nd that. I feel European in that sense.

Henry: is it something you feel you are happy to identify with moving around (. ) as
its something everyone can share?

Luminita: I don’t think I’ve ever really thought about that. Like it does not really
bothe†r me. (1.5) a:s long (. ) as long as it allows me to do what I want in
moving around. I’d rather be a Romanian citizen rather than say Moldavian
(.) which was um part of Romania. which way round was it (.). Moldova-
Moldov- ah yeah. Moldovia was divided at some point for some reason and
now its a different country.

Henry: when did that happen.

Luminita: um after the war (.). the soviet union um (.). it was part of that. But the point
here is that its just a street away from me (.). so to speak. On the border as it
were. But the different is huge (.). I don’t think i’d be bothered being a
Moldovian citizen but when it comes to moving around like applying for
visas and what not it’d be massive. Whereas now I don’t (.). you know.

Henry: you sound very knowledgable about the history of Romania. you seem to
have an interest?

Luminita: ((laughter)) I don’t think I have an interest as such in history.

Henry: Really? It comes across that way=

Luminita: I guess like geography stuff just sticks doesn’t it. Not a major interest
though.

Henry: but surely certain things like Romania’s history will have been changing in
schools and such when you were growing up?:

Luminita: It was. Maybe that makes me more aware I suppose. what was before
communism and so on. Getting a clear idea of how things changed.

Henry: I don’t want to put words in your mouth but (.). it does sound=

Luminita: no not at all. I appreciate that.

Henry: what haven’t I asked you ((rustles paper))

Luminita: yeah I feel I am romanian. I don’t mind as I do often think about what I
like about Romania (.). who I like.

Henry: do you miss it?

Luminita: hmmm (.). It depends as I miss my family. But then my brother lives here
(.). no not for the moment.

Henry: do you miss the food=

Luminita: I definitely miss the food. Its like missing childhood though. Even I was
there I would probably miss things. I do miss some things you know. The
comfortable fe- hearing your native language you know it comforts you. Its
probably an evolutionary thing you know ‘I feel safe’ you know how things
are you know ((laughs)).
Henry: to turn it on its head it kind of sounds kind of similar to the point um UKIP made about groups speaking Romanian. That somehow that makes others uncomfortable=

Luminita: to be fair he seemed to be talking about you know pickpockets which I myself would feel uncomfortable around.

Henry: do you think maybe that this gives a reason for people to justify their prejudice?

Luminita: no::: its just that comfy feeling you know of hearing your mother speak. That’s all. Although I’m not saying he meant it that way ((laughs)) I was not saying he had some kind of problem with his own language.

Henry: with that said if I can ask you a last question (. ) how do you feel that UKIP might gain some seats at the next election.

Luminita: I don’t think its possible (. ) he can’t locally but if its the European parliament that’s a different story (. ) I mean we have these parties everywhere.

Henry: is this economic or=

Luminita: no I think there are al:ways people like this who are unhappy with things. Maybe I am naive I am not sure but i do not feel its like a bi: g threat. No Nazis or anything

Henry: so it wouldn’t bother you if they won in the local area

Luminita: I wouldn’t care that much (. ) at least that I cannot say I have thought about it that much you know.

Henry: it sounds like you’ve overall had quite a positive exp:erience [here.]

Luminita: [yeah] my main experience has been watching tho:se documentaries and such. They don’t really help it (. ) but I can also relate with Romania you now ‘you’re from the north or south or whatever’. Its always the wea:ker individuals who will hang onto this identity you know. So if someone comes in and imposer:s themselves onto me like ‘I’m British you’re Romanian’ I already feel they are weaker than me. As I wouldn’t like the person to begin with. Maybe I’m ignorant but that is not a problem I face now. Maybe I might start looking at it ‘ohhh so you’re from Roma::nia (. ) that’s why’ you know.

Henry: but if that works for you and helps you settle in

Luminita: I don’t feel welcome or unwelcome (. ) just me I guess (laughter)

Henry: thats very British (. ) just get on with it (laughter) I think if its okay we’ll leave it there. You’ve answered over and above what I was gonna ask so thank you so much for coming to tal- I’ll turn this off((transcript ends))
Transcript 2: Alexandru

856 Henry: Let’s get that one going. That one’s going (.). I will leave it. Okay (.). so after all the delays (2) e::rm so if I can- if I can just start er by you telling me a bit about youse↑lf. So for example (.). you mentioned earlier that you worked. So what job do you do?

860 Alexandru: Yes (.). I am an Android Developer.

861 Henry: Android Developer?

862 Alexandru: Yes (.). for a company called ((name removed)) which is in Sheff[ie↑ld]. I work part-time (.). and so (.). bala:nce it with studie:s.

864 Henry: [okay] What does that job entail then?

866 Alexandru: um (.). basically I do applications for mobile pho:nes which are running on Android.

868 Henry: It is quite technical then (.). is it?=

869 Alexandru: =Yes (.). it is all technical=

870 Henry: =Yeah so you like all that technology (.). stuff?

871 Alexandru: Yes (.). well it is basically what I am studying (.). so=

872 Henry: =Ri[ght]

873 Alexandru: [ess]entially work experience

874 Henry: Right (.). what is the degree you are studying then?

875 Alexandru: uh (.). software engineering.

876 Henry: Software engineering. Right. And what year are you in?

877 Alexandru: Fourth year.

878 Henry: Fourth year (.). is it a four year degree then?

879 Alexandru: It is an Undergraduate Masters (.). so this is the Masters year.

880 Henry: Oh I see (.). Undergraduate and then one year Masters (.). oh okay then=

881 Alexandru: =It is like one thing (.). it is not separated.

882 Henry: Yes (.). it is all sandwiched and you are doing the work experience alongside it?

884 Alexandru: Yes.

885 Henry: Right (.). oh okay then. um (.). Obviously you’re Romanian. Did you come erm just for this course (.). from four years ago then now to the UK?

887 Alexandru: Yes (.). I only came here to study.
Henry: mmm. So what um(.) sorry(.) what motivated you to come to study in the UK then initially?

Alexandru: Romania is quite good when it comes to mathematic courses but not so much when it comes to computer science courses because in Romania (1) uh when you study computer science you study maths and physics and chemistry and(.) loads of other stuff. Basically I wanted to study just on computer science and focus as much as possible on that. So: initially I looked for a degree in Canada but that was way over my budget=

Henry: [right] [right] =what(.) in terms of the tuition?

Alexandru: Tuition fees(.) the accommodation and everything(.) it was way: too much. Then I looked for other countries where I would study in English and I came across the degree Sheffield is doing(.) and I thought that suited me(.) what I wanted to do in the future.

Henry: Was i- so(.) was it mainly the course that attracted you then? That it was

Alexandru: Yeah(.) mainly the course(.) because at Sheffield you don’t do any hardware(.) ar- you just do programming. So that is what I wanted to do. And also the city was really nice and that campus.

Henry: So you came for an open day then?

Alexandru: Nah(.) I just emailed the department and asked for(.) a student email and they gave me two emails and I spoke with those students. And they told me about the city(.) they sent me pictures about the union(.) [that] helped towards my decision.

Henry: [yeah] yes and that helped you inform your decision. Yeah so I suppose also speaking English that was on your criteria as well that you went to.

Alexandru: Yes(.) top of the list actually=

Henry: Top of the list. Were there no erm (. ) Romanian speaking countries that were a possibility?

Alexandru: Well Romania- Romanian is only spoken in Romania=

Henry: =Only spoken in Romania(.) oh okay. So it wasn’t an option to perhaps go to Spain or Italy?

Alexandru: No I uh=

Henry: =I understand it is a Romance language isn’t it?]

Alexandru: [Yes(.) it’s] a romance language but I don’t speak Spanish or Italian so=

Henry: =Oh okay then(.) so it wasn’t an option?

Alexandru: Yes. And when I decided it would have been too late to start studying Italian or Spanish.
Henry: mmm (. ) so did you learn English (. ) growing up then in Romania?

Alexandru: Yes (. ) at school.

Henry: yeah. So I suppose you knew much more to begin with about it=

Alexandru: =Yes (. ) I did 10 years of English before coming here.

Henry: 10 years?=

Alexandru: =Yes

Henry: So you felt quite happy with the idea of living away and not (. ) being able to I suppose rely on (. ) your mother tongue?

Alexandru: [yeah] Ye::ah (. ) I wasn’t too bothered about that.

Henry: Ye::ah

Alexandru: [took] it as a challenge.

Henry: As a challenge (. ) yeah (. ) And how do you feel you are getting on with that challenge then? Do you feel like=

Alexandru: =Well now it is a lot better (. ) when I got [here] I was like (. ) quite shocked because of the accent=

Henry: =the accent?

Alexandru: ye::ah I was sort of expecting people to speak as you would hear it on TV=

Henry: =Is that the posh Londoner type accent?

Alexandru: Yes (. ) exactl[y. And] then I came here and then (. ) I didn’t understand anything (. ) er: I did understand som- when I came to lectures and lecturers because they speak quite clear En[glish] but on a daily ba::l- daily basis stuff like going to the sho::p or ba:nks (. ) stuff like that.

Henry: [oh okay] [yeah] [mmm] Do you find people speak a lot faster or=

Alexandru: =It isn’t that they speak faster (. ) it is just the accent (. ) the way they pronounce words it is a lot of different than what I imagined.

Henry: Yes. Can you think of any words like in Sheffield (. ) you know like (. ) Because there is a thing about bread and cobs and baps (. ) I don’t know if you have ever heard about that? But even among English speakers what you are referring to can be (. ) Have you had an instance where you think (. ) “I don’t know what you mean (. ) what are you talking about?”=

Alexandru: =I know that. In my first year I used to live in Opal (. ) have you heard of it?

Henry: No.
Alexandru: It is a centre accommodation which is private but it has a partnership with the university. So they had a reception and all of our parcels would go there and when I was speaking a lot the security guys were very funny and trying to be funny with me but I didn’t understand what they were saying. I would be like just nodding away=

Henry: =Yes (. ) just nodding along [with them]

Alexandru: [Now give] me my parcel.

Henry: ((laughter)) Yes (. ) just let me go ((laughter)) That happens to me quite a lot (. ) I can relate to that. uh (. ) so (. ) My next question about the process of leading up to your decision (. ) it was really about what courses are out there and what factors really fit with that? I suppose you have already answered that really haven’t you. (. ) Can you tell me about any thoughts or feelings you had about coming to the UK? Did you have any expectations? You said erm (. ) about what the accent would be like=

Alexandru: Yeah (. ) I was expecting the accent to be a lot (. ) like it is in the South (. ) like in London. Any other expectations? (. ) I heard that people were really nice and kind and friendly and I was expecting that and my expectations were met. U:m (. ) That is about it I guess=

Henry: =Yeah (. ) so I suppose you’ve got (. ) you’ve you’ve er:m (. ) you day about the um student accommodation you were in in the first year (. ) that was with other students studying computer soft[ware]. So that was probably like a big mix of people wasn’t it?=  

Alexandru: [ye:ah] =Yes (. ) it was a big mix of people from different countries (. ) different courses=

Henry: =yeah. So how did you find that then- was that quite a nice thing to move into for you then?

Alexandru: u:r (. ) it was alright in the first few wee↑ks (. ) after a while it became annoying ur (. ) because two of my flatmates were r[eeally messy] and we had mouldy stuff everywhere in the kitchen. And I couldn’t get them to clean up and it became a bit annoying but along with the other flatmates we managed to keep it under control=

Henry: [oh go↑d yeah] =Yes (. ) I suppose it is better when you have got other people on your side [haven’t you?]

Alexandru: [Yeah (. ) we were six in the flat so three of us were=

Henry: =Three tidy (. ) three not. And what about your second and third year? Did you move in with those people?

Alexandru: No (. ) I made some friends at uni- some Romanian friends an:d I moved in: a different private accommodation (. ) a hall with tho↓se people=

Henry: =oh oka↑y then. What made you choose to move in with other Roma↑nian friends then? Was it just because of the Society you joined then?
Alexandru: To be honest not really about the Society. To be honest in the first year I only spent most of my time I spent with Romanians which is not the smartest thing now if I think about it but that’s I think that’s why mostly because all of my friends are Romanians so I wanted to move with friends so I moved with them=

Henry: =yeah well you say about you might look back and you think differently but I suppose it is just interesting because we always have choices don’t we after the first year who we want to move in with? And it is just a matter of who we end up closer to

Alexandru: [I didn’t] really know any other people that close to be able to live with them. Because when I came here for computer science in my year we were at the beginning thirteen Romanians out of 120 people. So it’s quite a lot so I was in a small group and we were really happy always hanging out together. So I didn’t really go out of that group to meet other people.

Henry: [yeah] mmm no that is fair enough. So um Yeah I suppose you have answered that it’s cos obviously I have got an idea of questions but as you are saying things I am trying to sort of relate it um so ha- when you moved into your Halls then did you find then with your course in particular did you find that you were able to settle in quite easily erm to the everyday stuff of living in the UK? Did it- did it feel like you had to try very hard because you had your English?

Alexandru: =No it didn’t feel hard at all.

Henry: Was it okay?

Alexandru: Yes I actually really enjoyed it and I really enjoy it. And when I go back back to Romania it feels so different=

Henry: =feels different

Alexandru: Yeah at the moment I feel like I don’t belong here because I got so used to being here and all of my friends are here My life is here basically because I work here I go to uni here. I am not really attached to Romania anymore.

Henry: so=

Alexandru: =I am bu- (2)

Henry: Yeah How then you say you identify living here and your life is here how does being Romanian fit in with that? Is that just something that=

Alexandru: =It doesn’t really get in the way because people don’t really look at where you are from so that counts a lot

Henry: So you don’t feel it is very important really in terms of how=

Alexandru: =No doesn’t really matter where we are from
Henry: okay

Alexandru: to most people at least

Henry: Yeah (.) that’s often the case with most people. So (. ) God (. ) you are whizzing through these questions (. ) you are answering them very concisely. um (. ) You say you are at this tech Company (. ) you are at the Android job you were telling me about (. ) you live in Sheffield. Do you actually live in the city centre or↑?

Alexandru: =Yes (. ) I live in the city centre in S3.

Henry: right (. ) have you always lived in Sheffield City?

Alexandru: Yeah.

Henry: So you have not actually moved out to the countryside or=)

Alexandru: =No (. ) I haven’t been to the countryside but I have travelled quite a lot with my previous job. So I have seen quite a few cities in the UK=

Henry: =yeah (. ) Do you want to tell me anything about any of those experiences you had? Any particular places you have been to↑ or anything you particularly enjoyed?

Alexandru: I have been to loads of places. This summer I was in Leeds and I really liked it because it is flat=

Henry: =Yeah (. ) no hills (. ) yeah

Alexandru: And it is a lot more European I guess and a lot cleaner and tidier and had flowers and yes it looks=

Henry: =Better maintained I suppose?

Alexandru: Yes.

Henry: Yes [(inaudible))] no you go=

Alexandru: [(inaudible))] =I have also been in Liverpool (. ) Blackpool (1) they’re nice.

Henry: Blackpool I suppose you went for the rides and the [er] is it Blackpool Tower?

Alexandru: [yes] yes (. ) been to the rides. I have been to Alton Towers which was amazing. I have been twice. I wasn’t impressed by London (. ) I really don’t like London I hate London=

Henry: =No I totally agree with you (. ) it is far too big (. ) far too[busy]

Alexandru: [Yeah (. )] way too crowded

Henry: Yes (. ) I definitely agree with you.
Alexandru: Yes. I have been two or three weeks ago in London for a daytrip and it absolutely exhausted me.

Henry: Yeah at the end of the day you just feel like “I don’t want anymore people [now] I’m done” Yes I know how that feels.

Alexandru: [yeah] The Tube was so crowded and-

Henry: s- I suppose you nonetheless like the city life? You like the idea of=

Alexandru: =Yes I like the city life but not as big as London. So Sheffield is perfect for me or or Lee::s or Manchester. London is way too big and way too crowded. And everyone’s really in London at least everyone’s really in a rush and they are not kind to each other anymore because they are in a rush and they have their own things to worry about. I think life in London is more stressful than here.

Henry: cu- so you can’t find yourself moving down there for the for the=

Alexandru: =No I hope I will never have to move down there=

Henry: =Do you know where um your sort o- in your Industry where the jobs are do you know where you might end up?

Alexandru: Yeah most of the jobs are in London obviously and Cambridge and I think Birmingham is quite a good place as well. But I think I am going to end up in Sheffield because the company I am working for uh so currently they have offered me a contract until the end of June a part-time contract. And they said that they really want to keep me up. So: it depends on how the company’s financial things are going to go. If everything is going to go right they are going to offer me a contract in January=

Henry: =Oh okay. So if they don’t offer you you will have a look in Birmingham or was it Manchester and Leeds did you say?

Alexandru: Manchester. Cambridge yeah.

Henry: Cambridge yes. Oh okay then. I suppose it’s just a matter of waiting and seeing and h[ou[ping] that they find some money somewhere to employ you. It sounds like your plan is to indef- to me that your plan is to indefinitely stay in the UK then?

Alexandru: [Yea:h] yes definitely I will definitely stay here.

Henry: You say you have got friends here have they all more or less come over for study reasons?=

Alexandru: Yeah all of them yeah

Henry: So what was it like- you were all like I dunno how old are you when you leave school in Rom[ania]?

Alexandru: [er:] I was in nineteen.
Henry: nineteen. Yes (.) did you all sort of come at the same time for all the different courses you were starting?=

Alexandru: =Yes.

Henry: What about the family side then. How does your family fit in this? Are they back in Romania?=

Alexandru: =Yes (.) all of them are back in Romania and even from the beginning they have been really supportive because I decided to come here two years before I graduated from High School.

Henry: Right (.) so you were seventeen?

Alexandru: Yes: seventeen (.) when I told them that I really wanted to come study here they took it as a joke=

Henry: =Really?

Alexandru: Yes (.) they were like “Oh yes (.) of course (.) go ahead” (.) And then when they actu- realised that I am going to (.) apply and taking an exam test er:: English test (.) u::h they were like (.) [“Okay (.) let’s talk about this] How much money do you neec::d and what does this invol::ve?” and (.) I sort of had an agreement with them that they would support me for my fi::rst year and the::n I would have to find a job and obviously support myself (.) and pay for everything.

Henry: [((laughter)) um (.) you pay the same rates don’t you?

Alexandru: Yeah.

Henry: It’s just the accommodation (.) do you get any support for accommodation?=

Alexandru: =N::o

Henry: It is purely what you can=

Alexandru: =Purely what I can.

Henry: Right. So I suppose it was quite a big deal then for your parents to say (.) “well w- we’ll support you.” Because it sort of puts pressure on both of you doesn’t it=

Alexandru: =For Romanian people it is quite a lot of money (.) yes it is a lot of money to: support someone in the UK. (.) Because the Hall accommodation is so expensive (.) so much more expensive- I think I was paying for (.) so in Romania you pay for accommodation if you live in a uni hall about twenty pounds a month [including]

Henry: [twenty po]unds a month?=

Alexandru: =Ye[s]

Henry: [A] month (.) gosh=
Alexandru: And maybe twenty five pounds during winter time.

Henry: Oh I see ((laughter))

Alexandru: So it would have been a lot more cheaper to study there. Plus that I wouldn’t have ended up with a loan because now I have a tuition fee loan and in Romania if I would have good grades which I had at the time I would have had been uh had a grant from the university so I wouldn’t have paid any tuition fees.

Henry: [wow::] Right so it was quite a big decision for you then to sort of trust that the industry and the courses that were there were worth the money I suppose?

Alexandru: Yeah

(1)

Henry: Wow that is such a- yes it is so profound because when I was looking at uni my accommodation I think the cheapest uni accommodation is something like forty nine pounds a week and that is the cheapest in the UK. Mine was about fifty six so that is really good.

Alexandru: [yeah Y]es it is really good=

Henry: =And yet twenty pounds a month wow I mean I can just see the difference

Alexandru: [Well] the difference is that here you live in your own room while there you shared a room with another person or another two people.

Henry: Oh okay so the rooms were bigger then?

Alexandru: Yeah [((laughter))] [They would] have to be bigger wouldn’t they?

Henry: Slightly=

Alexandru: =Gosh oh okay. So you say your family were really supportive um how have you found juggling sort of like the family there and you being here? Have you just sort of made the occasional phone call and left it at that or [do you often go back?]

Alexandru: [We Skype quite often:] and they call me on my phone b- cos now I am really busy: with uni and with my job so I don’t get to stay on Skype so: often so they call me whenever they feel like they need to talk to me and I ca’t ll them as well (((cough)) But it wasn’t too difficult to keep in touch I guess if you really want to keep in touch you find the time and you find a mean of keeping in touch.

Henry: [yeah ah] (1)

fair enough because it just seems to me that four years is-

Alexandru: =It is three years (. ) yes this is the fourth one.
Henry: The fourth (.), yes (.), yes. That they might feel like it is quite a long time from being like (.), “You’re joking.” To all of a sudden (.), “My God (.), he’s going (.), it’s happening.” And then all that time (.), I suppose- do you go back for summertime or have you just been working during that time?

Alexandru: In my first year I used to go every holiday (.), I went back every holiday. Then in my second year (.), I stayed here for the whole year so I went in the second December (.), second year home for Christmas break in December and then I didn’t go until the next December for a whole year in the meantime I got the job so I couldn’t leave=

Henry: [ah] =Ye:s (.), so it just meant that you were here the whole time then?

Alexandru: Yes (.), but it was a lot easier than I expected it to be. Because in my first year from September when I came here until December I actually started missing home and being home but afterwards I was fine.

Henry: and (.), I suppose what you were saying at the beginning (.), you started to feel that when you go back it doesn’t quite feel the same?

Alexandru: Yes. When you go from something alright to something better it is quite hard to go back. so (.), Because in Romania people are quite poor and that stresses them out and they are not kind to each other and all of them are like (.), I don’t know (.), um moody (.), grumpy. In the end it gets to you (.), and it gets you in such mood as well.

Henry: And is that something that looking back (.), was something else that you were aware of (then?)

Alexandru: [No (.), not really] no. Because here people when they have (.), some problems because everyone has their own problems they leave them at home (.), they don’t take them to their job. So even if you go to the store (.), even if it’s like a very badly paid job (.), that person still puts a smile on their face when they are there while in Romania you don’t get that.

Henry: Yeah (2) You have had then (.), by the sounds of it (.), a really positive experience [being here]

Alexandru: [Yes (.), so far=]

Henry: =And you have not had a sense of (.), you know y- you were saying about moodiness (.), I think that captures it really well (.), this sort of like you have never had people (.), er: grumpy with you (.), or off with you and you don’t know why? You have never had any experiences like that then?
Alexandru: No:: (.) not really (.). no=

Henry: =No

(1)

Alexandru: All my experiences were nice and (.). welcoming and everyone was like (.). "Oh you’re from Romania (.). how is it? How are you finding it? I know: (.). some Romanians.” uh (.). I used to work in ((omitted)) at a store (.). I was promoting Windows 8 and I used to (.). talk to people quite a lot during the day and once a gentleman came and he asked me where I was from and I told him that I was Romania. He was like (.). “Oh yes (.). I know some Romanians they are really hard working” so (.). pretty much every time I heard something about Romanians it was positive things.

Henry: [mm] So I suppose the thing I want to get on to (.). so what are your thoughts then with all those positive things in mind then (.). in your personal experience what are your feelings about the way that the media sort of- or at least things on television and the news portray things like what they call ‘Eastern European migration’ and things like that. Does it bother you? Do you feel like (.)?=

Alexandru: =er:: yes actually it does. It bothers me because most of the things are not true and they are focussing on a small group of Romanians which aren’t really Romanians (.). they are gypsies.

(1)

Henry: mm

Alexandru: And they are focussing on the bad things that small group of people do: (.). while (.). they are completely ignoring what other people do which are like the majority who go to work (.). who pay taxes (.). who study here (.). who (.). actually contribute to the society. (.). It’s quite annoying (.). And they are also exaggerating because before (.). I don’t know if you were aware but we had work permits until [2014] and before lifting those working restrictions all the newspapers were like (.). “Oh my God millions of Romanians are (.). They’ve already bought their tickets (.). they’re coming (.). brace yourselves.” And on the 1st of January only one Romanian came.

Henry: [mmm] [y- mm] Yes (.). I am trying to remember his name now. [Victor wasn’t it?]

Alexandru: [Yea:h yeah (.). exactly. And he left in the meantime because (1)

Henry: Well yes he was hounded by the press. If I remember right (.). was he washing cars?=

Alexandru: =Yes (.). initially (.). yes.

Henry: He was doing something like that (.). yes. And then he split up with his gir:lfriend I think (.). something like that.
Alexandru: yeah (. ) I think because he got so much media attention no one wanted to hire him afterward so he had to leave and go back.

Henry: [mm] so I suppose it is more of a question of how the media represents it as a generic thing rather than you feel like it has been displaced on to you? Because you say you have not had any negative experiences like that which is (. ) I suppose it is a testament to how positive Sheffield is then? Rather than=

Alexandru: [Yes] =probably different in London.

Henry: In London. Yeah because the general impression seems to be that (. ) it wouldn’t be so (. ) every day it wouldn’t be so- so nice (. ) that is just the (. ) I don’t know but it is a positive thing isn’t it?

Alexandru: Yeah

Henry: You said about work permits then (. ) was it something that when you were applying did you have to fill out any sort of paperwork like a [study] visa or something?

Alexandru: [yeah] Yes it was a bit of a nightmare because before I came here they changed the regulations and when I came here to get a work permit I was required to: er (. ) get insurance (. ) private medical insurance which was £40 per month. And that put a bit of a strain on my budget and on top of that the application process took six months (. ) five six months something like that. So I sent my documents and then I got the work permit back in about six months.

Henry: [ye: ah] Yes (. ) in some of the other interviews that I have done so far a theme that has come up (. ) er::m (. ) what you were just saying about how long it took to get papers through (. ) it wasn’t actually difficult to do it (. ) [it was] easy yeah

Henry: just a long wait=

Alexandru: =Yes (. ) it was a long wait. And (. ) it was really annoying because they were keeping your ID:

Henry: What your passports and things like that? Was it the Home Office you were sending it to?

Alexandru: [Yeah] Yes (. ) Home Office (. ) U[K Border]

Henry: [Who of] course are obviously very good with passports ([laughter])=

Alexandru: =Yes (. ) I think they actually lost some IDs for some people (. ) And the thing is that quite a few of my friends didn’t apply as soon as they got here so they had to wait for more than five or six months for them (. ) it was like eight or nine months.
Henry: right (. ) That is one of those sorts of untold stories then isn’t it (. ) that it is sort of?

Alexandru: I was aware when I came here because I did loads of research before coming here about everything and I knew about it. And most of the people that I know of knew about how long it takes and about the whole process. Like you said the process is really easy [you] just had to complete quite a big form (. ) send your ID: (. ) the proof that you have medical insurance and that you are a student. I think that is it. Oh yeah and that you can financially support yourself and you are not going to ask for (. ) financial support from the Government. And that was about it.

Henry: [mm] So I suppose then (. ) how- did you attach any meaning to it personally then when January the 1st came and all those sorts of things (. ) Because obviously you wouldn’t need to do those sorts of things now in the same way would you?=

Alexandru: Yeah

Henry: Was that something quite nice for you to know that if you ever did something (. ) if you ever returned and then came back again or something like that (. ) that you wouldn’t have to do as much paperwork?

Alexandru: I really didn’t think about it (. ) um I thought it was nice because I know of the struggle that other people went through and I thought that (. ) if other Romanians come to study here or to work here it is going to be a lot easier for them. But at the same time I was a bit worried because (. ) to be honest I thought that a lot more Romanians are going to come here to work and mostly gypsies. (. ) [And:] I am not really fond of seeing gypsies here because normally they (. ) Maybe some of them work (. ) I don’t know (. ) but quite a few of them are like into stealing and (. ) even now like in London there were some people (. ) you know the bridge next to Big Ben=  

Henry: [yeah] =oh yeah

Alexandru: they were doing (. ) playing a game with- I don’t know if you know it (. ) it is a small ball with three cups and they put er: the ball under a [cup and] then [they just move]

Henry: [mmm] [And then then] they shuffle it (. ) yeah

Alexandru: Then they were playing that game and people were actually betting twenty pounds (. ) money which you are never going to win because they are so good at it that they are always going to trick you and you are never going to get the right cup=  

Henry: =Yes and it turns out the ball was chucked over the bridge or something (. ) it wasn’t even there=

Alexandru: =Actually when I passed by there was a guy who was like (. ) “Oh my God (. ) I won (. ) I won (. ) I won but it was one of them.” He was Romanian=
Henry: Right, oh okay then. So it is this sense I suppose that what you were saying about Romanian gypsies they are misrepresenting Romanian culture to some extent.

Alexandru: [yeah] That is the thing and with media they don’t like distinguish between gypsies and actual Romanians. They put all of us in the same pot. They don’t say that “Gypsies moved into a park in London and they have tents there.” They say “Romanians moved there.” And obviously if you don’t know the whole situation between Romanians and gypsies when you read the newspaper about that you actually get that impression that that is true and then obviously when you see a Romanian you are not happy to see him around or at your work place.

Henry: [mm] Is there a comparison that you have noticed being in the UK: that would help make sense of why that is a problem. So can you think of a difference in English or British culture where we have different groups of people? Because it seems to me that when you do see that sort of representation it is based on people just not knowing that there is so much. There are lots of different people isn’t there that make up a culture? Have you noticed anything yourself? Like you were saying about the accents before that you realised how different all the different English speakers speak like. Can you think of any examples or I suppose I am trying to get your perspective on whether there is an equivalence?

Alexandru: [yeah] In Romania you mean?

Henry: [u:m] In England.

Alexandru: In England.

Henry: You were saying about the gypsies and Romanians in Romania. Have you noticed anything here? You don’t have to have done I was just wondering really?

Alexandru: =No I was just thinking no.

Henry: Because it is interesting isn’t it when you are a member of a particular culture and then people don’t acknowledge that there is so much difference within that culture.

Alexandru: Yes. The only thing I can think of is that all the taxi drivers are from Pakistan most of them at least. That is like a general knowledge but that is not a bad thing.

Henry: [yeah] It is a historical phenomenon really. When the Commonwealth was sort of changed a lot of Commonwealth nations like India and Pakistan they were able to come with much less restrictions than they are not that they are now but than they did previously. But there were certain niches in the job market that they just filled so yes taxi drivers newsagents certain jobs just got filled. Yes
it is interesting you point that out because it is now associated with them.

They sort of do that (.) that is just what [hey do] yes. okay so (. ) um: d- you
( .) alluded to this earlier. do you feel like you have changed as a person then
since moving here?

[yeah] Yes ( .) I think I did. First of all
my English is a lot better. Then I have also become more confide↑nt and I
also learned how to cook and how to wash and how to do loads of things
which weren’t done by me=

=Yes ( .) I suppose you are looking after yourself?

=Yes (. ) so it allowed you a space then to discover all that stuff?

=Yes. Actually I think f- ( .) personally for me I think it was better coming
here because if I had been in Romania probably my family would have sent
me foo:d and (. ) cleaning up in a small room with other people (. ) I suppose
I would have done it in the same way I am doing it here. But here I have to
manage my mone:y ( .) I have a cer
tain budget and I have to stick between
that budget and I had to find a job (. ) u::m I also had to go open an account.
If I was ever ill I had to go to the doctor: s (. ) there wasn’t anyone to look
after me: so all these things I think they sort of influenced.

=mm And they have helped you=

=Become more mature I guess.

=You wouldn’t see it as it has made your life more difficult?

=Because you do not have your parents to do i[t for you]

[Maybe at] the time it was
difficult but it was for a good thing in the end.

(.)

I suppose (. ) Yes. Well fingers crossed for the company having the money
to employ [you I] suppose (. ) that is what it is all going towards isn’t it? um
(.) u::h let’s think. (1) s- so since moving then what sort of things would
you say you have adapted to living here that you had to do (. ) I don’t know
is there anything you have had to do differently since moving here? Like for
example you were saying about learning to cook (. ) have you had to learn to
cook in different ways than what you would have been used to in
Romania?= 

[yeah] =u:h Not really because you can find all the ingredients
you would use in Romania (. ) you can find them here as well. The thing I
adapted is (. ) food as in when you go out because I used to be quite picky
and I still am quite picky and I didn’t used to eat anything spicy or if it looked quite odd. Now I think I am quite over that anyway from most places.

Henry: Can you think of anything that you have sort of thought “I’ve ordered this and I’m not sure if I want this?”

Alexandru: =u:h Piri piri chicken for example=

Henry: =Okay

Alexandru: The first time I had it I cried because it was so spicy.

((both laugh))

Henry: Yeah I mean I can’t sta- was it Nando’s Piri Piri chicken type thing was it?=

Alexandru: =No it was a Pakistani fast food I guess=

Henry: =Because it is a terrible feeling isn’t it when you don’t realise how hot it is. Especially when it is like a little random independent place and you don’t really know because you have never been to a place like it. You order it and then it is “I can’t have this”=

Alexandru: =And then first week when I came here we had like a free meal from our accommodation and we got beef with pea mash peas mash and what else? And gravy and I found gravy absolutely horrible. But since then I started liking it:=

Henry: =Really? Oh that is so interesting because that is the same with me actually. I used to hate gravy when I was little but then as I have gotten older I have started to have it and it is the most horrible looking thing isn’t it? This brown thing on your plate all this brown water or whatever er so I suppose now do you order Sunday Roasts and things like that?

Alexandru: [yeah it is]

Henry: =Yeah sometimes yes.

Alexandru: =I am alright with it now yeah

Henry: =Yes oh okay. So as you say you still cook Romanian food and you are quite happy to have that as part of=

Alexandru: =Yeah

Henry: =Yes. And is that something Because you say you lived with=

Alexandru: =with other Romanians

Henry: Yeah d- you er do you cook dinners together or do you just sort of tend to just do your own thing? Cos you said you were really busy now=
Alexandru: =Yea:h (.) at the moment yeah (.) At the moment I actually don’t really
cook- because I don’t really have time (.) Today I left at 10:00 am and I
haven’t been home since then=

Henry: =Gosh.

Alexandru: um (.) but I used to. One of my flatmates is my best friend so we used to
cook together for our second year and most of our third year (.). Because
during this year I was doing the washing (.). he was doing the cooking or the
other way round. And it was a lot easier=

Henry: =Yeah (.) saved time?

Alexandru: Yes.

Henry: I suppose also it must be nice then to keep that link with home as well to
have something that you would have had at home?= We weren’t really cooking that many Romanian dishes to b[e honest       

Henry: [Oh weren’t] you?

Alexandru: No (.) we were just looking up recipes on the internet=

Henry: =And I suppose it was things like pasta and stuff that would be easy to do
as well?

Alexandru: =ye↑ah (.) Yes (.) at the beginning yeah. My friend is really good at
cooking so we tried all sorts of things=

Henry: =You did the cooking? ((laughter))=

Alexandru: =Yes (.) we started off with pasta and we did other stuff as well.

Henry: Yes. Because it- it is quite a nice time I think when you are living with
flatmates at uni you can (.). you can all muck in together and as you say you
can share dinners and all that sort of thing. erm (.) So (1) if you are happy to
I am quite um (.). happy with what you have said so far. I am just wondering
whether I can get a few more general discussions going about as far as the
UK goes (.). um (.) as I am quite sure you are aware of living here (.).
immigration is seen as this sort of like horrible s[ubject]t that we just can’t
talk about. And I suppose I am just interested in how you have understood
this since you have moved he↓re. How you have made sense of it really. So
um (.) I suppose the first thing I would ask you is what are your general
impressions? If you ever put the telly on or if you ever put the news on is it
something that you feel like (.). “Oh again?” Or is it something that you
think (.). “Oh it’s important we talk about this?” I don’t know (.). what sorts
of thoughts do you have?

Alexandru: [yeah] Well now: there isn’t that much of a discussion about immigration (.). at least I haven’t seen
any major subjects but it used to be before the work permits things. And I
like you said after a while got to the point where I was like (.). “Not again.”
Because they were on and on and on (.). about the same thing and there
wasn’t any point in it anyway (.). they would just have to wait (.). those were
the regulations (. ) they would have to accept them and they did accept them
in the end. And it turned out that it wasn’t as bad as they were expecting it
anyway. I think they are making a big fuss out of the whole immigration
thing because it’s a subject (. ) quite a sensible subject and the politicians at
least they try to: to get votes out of this by saying they are going to li↑mit it
or they are going to forbid it or stuff like that. I don’t know why some
people want that because in the end: I personally believe it is a good thing
as long as it is controlled and people don’t take advantages of the good
things like the social (. ) support you get here. But yeah (. ) in the end I think
it brings a lot of (. ) money into the economy. Even if people just come to
study here and then go back (. ) after all they spend money on tuition fees
( . ) on food (. ) on going out: (. ) everything here=

Henry: =Yes (. ) you are really good example of that because you could have
stayed in Romania and it wouldn’t have been=

Alexandru: =Yes (. ) it would have been a lot cheaper

Henry: Yea:h (. ) And then you have come and you have studied and you have lived
in accommodation that is four times the price that we have ((laughter)) and
(. ) yea:h (. ) I suppose the sums do add up in that instance don’t they? (1)
um (. ) So I suppose um (. ) the question you sort of hinted at is something
that was hinted in your answer there (. ) is about it being controlled. Is it
something that- do you think that someone’s ability to move should it
should and can be a right? Like in the EU we can move around now (. ) is it
something that- should we be more controlling on how people move about?

Alexandru: I think people should be allowed move to different countries (. ) not move to
visit other countries and if they want to move at their own expense (. ) to be
allowed to move at their own expense. But if they want to come here and
[s- work] er: I think there should be some sort of work permi:t but it could-
should be: something that should be easily obtained by anyone who wants it
( . ) as long as they meet those criteria (. ) because like with the
gypsies they came here to steal. I think that could have been a bit more
controlling on how they move about?

Henry: [mmm]

[mmm] Can you see a

situation then where it is not necessarily how much money you have got in
your bank but your willingness to work and all those sorts of things then?
Do you think it should be based more on trying to assess whether people
want to contribute?=

Alexandru: =Yes (. ) I think it should be assessed on what that person will contribute to
that society. Because if I come here and I am going to stay here and in the
end I am going to pay taxes and maybe I am going to have my own family
here so those are beneficial things to the country after all. While if I just
come here and then just steal off people and scam people for a month and
then I leave (. ) that’s wrong obviously. (1) But I don’t think that they
should limit like health benefits and stuff like that=
Henry: [mmm] =You don’t think they should?

Alexandru: They shouldn’t because (.) those things are vital things. So if you come here to visit and you get sick (.) obviously you should get (.) medical (.) support=

Henry: =So when you say about the idea of you staying here and having a family (.) and becoming a part of the culture. Do you feel like there is sort of a line then where (.) talking about social security and things like that it just becomes unhelpful because in that instance do you feel that you should be entitled to that support?

Alexandru: Yes (.) obviously if I have been working for five years and I have been paying taxes for five years obviously I should be entitled to medical [stuff] (.) even if they decide to change the regulations about visas and (.) other things like that.

Henry: [mmm] Yes (.) it is a [very] (.) it is a [tricky subject=]

Alexandru: [It’s a] tricky subject=

Henry: =It is tricky isn’t it (.) u::m (.) but I suppose it is about fairness ultimately and what actually counts as fair because it just seems to me (.) at least from my perspective that some of this stuff is inherently unfair that somehow (.) where you are born is just so important isn’t it as to what you are entitled to. It is so strange isn’t it? It is not based on what you have contributed it is based on what your passport says. It is weird isn’t it? It is weird but then I get (.) I study it all day long so I suppose I do end up just thinking (.) “What does it mean?” (.) Another question I want to ask is- I don’t know how much you know about Margaret Thatcher?

Alexandru: [figure] u::h (.) No (.) not really. I guess it is important when you go to America for example or Canada. I have been to Canada last year and when they were asking me where I am from and I was saying ‘Romanian’ (.) I saw in their faces that they weren’t really sure where it was on the [map] And I was always saying (.) that “I’m from Europe but from Romania.” And (.) I was always mentioning Europe. So: (.) I guess in that sense it is important to have the
European identity but (.) when you are here in a European country (.) I
don’t think it really matters (.) because after all I don’t know how close (.)
even now the borders are free and you can go to any country and study
there or work there or just move there after all every country still going
to have their own traditions (.) their own customs and most people are
going to stick to those. so (1) Within Europe I don’t have a sense of
being European (.) I have a sense of being Romanian.

Henry: [mmm]
[yeah] =Yeah. When you say that you are
European it doesn’t really define you more than (.) at least in my
perspective that more than that you are from the actual continent ‘Europe’=

Henry: Yeah (.) yeah that’s fair enough because it is something that with all of this
EU stuff it is seen as (.) as far as all the actual laws are concerned it is like a
second layer of citizenship (.) that we are British or Romanian or French
or whatever (.) then we are European. I suppose it is just interesting to get a
sense of whether that is important to people that are moving around=

Alexandru: =When you say that you are European it doesn’t really say that much about
you besides the fact that you are from Europe.

Henry: Yes (.) you can’t argue with that can you? ((laughter)) What else can I ask
then? uhm (.) something I suppose I would just like to get a bit more
discussion on is I don’t know how much longer you have got?=

Alexandru: =Oh it’s fine (.) don’t worry.

Henry: This will probably be one of the last questions really. You talked about how
moving here (.) it is really important that you spoke the language and you
have contributed and you have supported yourself. Is this something as a
value that you think whenever we move around we should try and adapt to
the new environment and try and support that?

Alexandru: Yes (.) obviously. So there are people from different countries who come
here and then they just form their own small community and they don’t
really interact or they don’t really adopt that countries customs; or
traditions. And they actually judge people for doing Halloween or stuff like
that. So I don’t agree with that. When you come to a country I think you
should obey their rules and you should as much as possible get used to
their traditions and the way they are (.) on a daily [basis] because we are so
different (.) like every country’s so different. And even within a country
people are very different (2) you can’t (.) expect people to change because
you came here. You obviously came to a country where those customs were
there for years and [years] and you need to get used to them. Because after
all you came here (.) you went to that country (.) they didn’t come to you=

Henry: [mmm]
[yeah] =And do you feel like you have uhm
managed to do that quite successfully then in how you’ve your life has evolved here (...) that you have been able to make that transition?

Alexandru: =Yeah (...) I guess so (...) yeah. I have definitely obeyed all the rules here ((laughter)) and (...) I got used to like the British lifestyle and how they go and that if you stay in a queue you don’t get angry (...) you just stay there and wait patiently ((laughter)) and you’re still polite to the person in front of you=

Henry: =Yes. Is there anything in queuing in Romania? Is there a particular=

Alexandru: =Yeah (...) people absolutely hate it because before 1990 when we were a communist country they (...) people used to queue up to get oil (...) like cooking oil or sugar: and that stuff and they had to queue for hours. So they don’t really understand the concepts of queuing and they absolutely hate it. And if you go to Romania and if people stay in a queue for a long time they become angry and (...) grumpy

Henry: Right. And it feels like it is part of that (...) almost a reminder then of the time when you had to queue up for everything.

Alexandru: Yes (...) I think for them it is a reminder.

Henry: Yes. Because of course it wasn’t that long ago was it? What was it ’91?

Alexandru: It is 20 something years.

Henry: 20 something years now?

Alexandru: 24 years.

Henry: And that was since (...) I can’t remember his name now.

Alexandru: Ceausescu.

Henry: yes (...) since the dictator was=

Alexandru: =Yes (...) he was killed.

Henry: Yes. So (...) I mean how old are you?

Alexandru: I am twenty two.

Henry: Twenty two (...) oh the same age then. So I suppose it is something that=

Alexandru: [Oh really?] =Yeah. So it is something that (...) we were just born when it was all happening and you have I suppose grown up as it was changing?=

Alexandru: =Yes (...) it was a transition period right after I was born to 1998 (...) yeah

Henry: and how um (...) do you feel that has um (...) any effect on how you have decided to see not just your career and moving about but also how you see your education. Is that something that at least in your family (...) the way they have talked about is it something that they have valued for you?
Alexandru: yeah (.) this transition period actually influenced me from an education perspective because um (.) every year they change stuff in Romania. They change how exams are (.) they change the curriculum (.) they change everything. And it is so:: annoying because you start off thinking that (.) “Right at the end of the eighth year I’m going to take a test which is (.) on a certain structure.” But at the end of the eighth year typically=

Henry: [that sounds like the UK to be honest] =It doesn’t work (.) it has all changed (.) “What we’re not doing it?” ((laughter))

Alexandru: Even since I finished High School (.) they’ve changed the Baccalaureate exam at least twice I think in three years (.) So they keep experimenting at our expense=

Henry: =To try and get this perfect system (.) to try and [catch up I suppose]

Alexandru: [Because there is like this image of UK and Nordic countries that they have a very good educational system and everything is perfect and everyone is happy. Which is not totally true but obviously it is much better then what we have but they are trying to get to a perfect system which is never going to happen obviously]

Henry: But they are trying it too fast I suppose. Is that sense that=

Alexandru: =They don’t wait to see the results of what they did. If they don’t come in a year they change it again.=

Henry: =Yes (.) so they are getting results for about ten different things they have tried ((laughter))

Alexandru: They have changed the way the Baccalaureate (.) which is at the end of High School (.) the= it’s structure. I think they changed it five or six years ago and uh: (.) right after they changed it about fifty five percent of the candidates failed=

Henry: =Wow (.) fifty five percent?

Alexandru: Yes (.) because every year- and that time they changed it in a good way because they introduced cameras in all the classrooms where they were taking exams=

Henry: =So they can’t cheat?

Alexandru: Yes (.) so they couldn’t cheat. Because cheating is a very important thing to Romanian students and after that things got better (.) because there were way too many R- Romanians who had degree\ls. So we have way too many accountants because everyone was doing accounting. It was really easy↑ to get into accounting (.) everyone was doing accounting. I think in the university in Bucharest in the capital they were having three thousand graduates every year so the market was obviously overflowing by accountants and other subjects as well. Also er (.) in Romania it is mostly public universiti:es (.) private ones aren’t thought of very well because
some of them have done fraud by releasing diplomas for people who haven’t even shown up to lectures=

Henry: =Oh yeah () false schools really. They are [just people] paying to have a piece of paper sent them=

Alexandru: [pay fees] =Yeah () exactly and they get it in three years. () So yeah () in that sense it has changed for the better. It is a lot fairer to people that () to students that actually study () it is a lot more fair

Henry: Are there any other ways that you can think of- In your family is it something () the Communist period and the sort of () I don’t know what you would want to call it () what would you want to call it () [the democratic] time? Marketised () you know () whatever. Is it something that your family talk about in different ways?

Alexandru: [Yes marketised] Yeah so the duration of family members which are the same age as my father which is like about 40 they like the current system and they really enjoy being in it and the way it works. When I have relatives who are like seventy or even eighty and they keep crying about the old system because they were better in the old system. Because back then when you graduated from High School you would have had your own apartment straightaway and the job. So everything was secure while now () after you graduated it doesn’t mean that you will get a job. You will actually have to work for that=

Henry: =right () And is it something () I mean you were saying about how much it cost to rent in Romania () or house prices do they reflect that as well?=

Alexandru: =Yeah () they are a lot cheaper.

Henry: A lot cheaper?

Alexandru: Probably a house that you would paid here about two hundred thousand () you would pay in Romania about seventy thousand

Henry: So () it’s quite a realistic option that you would buy property back in Romania if you couldn’t find a job to get () a house here then?=

Alexandru: =Yeah () well then again=

Henry: =But that is not your older relatives see it () they see it as ‘it is even more expensive than when we were younger’=

Alexandru: Yeah () obviously. But if you compare prices to- to UK in Romania everything is really () really cheap.

Henry: It is interesting isn’t it () because you uh have got so many different () you know all the history that helps inform how a country works. And you were
saying how your different family members see it. Do they ever say anything to you? you know when you are on the phone to them about what you have been doing or whatever? do they ever make any jokes about you living here or how much you have changed or=

Alexandru: =No.

“the only thing is that the old ones are complaining and they are like “Oh my God you’re there and you’re all alone with foreigners.”

Henry: Really? [aww]

Alexandru: [Yes] that is their general idea that everyone’s really cold and distant.

Henry: [yeah but then what do you say]

Alexandru: [It is not true. No matter how many times I explain that] that is not true they’re. It is like a concept in their minds because I think that was the concept when they were under Communism so they can’t really get over that.

Henry: Oh yes. Yes I suppose it would be. They were all “You shouldn’t talk to any of them” they’re bad people type thing.” aw (1) So I suppose no amount of persuading from you. “It’s nice (.) honest I like it.”=

Alexandru: =No. it is not going to work.

Henry: No. I suppose what will it take (.) you graduating? Will everyone come o✈er when you graduate or will you just=

Alexandru: =Yeah.

Henry: Hoping so. Yes (.) it is just when they are getting their flights isn’t it? (1) Because that will be quite a proud moment then for a lot of you family won’t it?=

Alexandru: =Yeah. obviously yeah.

Henry: Has anyone else in your family gone to uni in Romania or is that the sort of thing=

Alexandru: =From my immediate family (.) no. So my father and my mother didn’t go to uni they have just High School. On my mum’s side her sister’s husband went to uni (.) he is a Medic and then their son is a Medic as well. er:: But that is pretty much it. I have family members who are my age who went to uni like in the old days they didn’t really go to uni=

Henry: =No.

Alexandru: It was a lot harder in the Communism period because there weren’t that many universities and it was very competitive (.) very (.) very competitive=

Henry: =Yes. I shouldn’t imagine there were many places and then even what you learnt was probably (.) I don’t know what was it (.) a degree in how to fit into the Party?=
Alexandru: =Yeah.

Henry: And how to help run the Party I suppose would have been=

Alexandru: =And also the degrees were changing (.) as far as I know at least and as far
as I heard (.) the degrees were changing and adapting to the market. So they
would have unlimited number of places for accountants (.) if they did need
accountants and more for Medics if they needed Medics.

Henry: But it seems that they got the accounting thing wrong from what you were
saying earlier=

Alexandru: =Yes.

Henry: there are just too many accountants.

Alexandru: Way too many. Because now they don’t really care about the market or if
those people actually can get employed afterwards (.) they just want the
money=

Henry: =mm if you want to do it that is your problem.

Alexandru: Yes (.) exactly.

Henry: Yes (.) very similar to here to be honest. I mean the most- I don’t know
what it is like u:m (.) at Sheffield but our employability percentage is this
(.) as though you know that (.) it spea[k{s for itself doesn’t it?] Yes (.) within
six months they found a job (.) you have got no problem (.) even though
they don’t say what jobs you have gone into. You have probably not gone
into anything related to what you’ve studied but uh (.) I shouldn’t imagine it
is what will be your case because how long have you been working at the
job that=

Alexandru: [Yeah advertise yeah]

Alexandru: =My current job is six months.

Henry: Six months.

Alexandru: But I have been working in a different job for another year.

Henry: And what were you doing in that other job?

Alexandru: u:h (.) I was an IT assistant.

Henry: IT assistant.

Alexandru: Yes (.) for the uh English Language Teaching Department at the
university. I was just helping out their technical officer and computer
staff- like installing programmes and helping out people who use Word or
Excel=*

Henry: =Oh okay (.) right. Because it seems like you are very tech minded.

Alexandru: Yeah.
Henry: You must have found it very funny when I was playing with the recorders and I was like trying to get it to work.

Alexandru: I was actually thinking that at my previous job we used to have one of those.

Henry: What this particular recorder?

Alexandru: Yes.

Henry: Yes I don’t know how old it is. I mean it is =

Alexandru: It seems ancient.

Henry: I can’t comment. I couldn’t possibly comment. It is it is something that. I think it is part of the research thing uh but you are really conscious that your technology’s working and everything is it becomes quite obsessive but I suppose I think yeah you sound much more tech minded than me. You say “Oh yes I just help design Android stuff and it’s all it is a language isn’t it=

Alexandru: Yeah

Henry: Being able to speak with the codes and the programming as well yeah I suppose you speak three languages in that sense then don’t you?

Alexandru: More than that yes.

Henry: You speak more than that anyway?

Alexandru: No I speak Romanian and English and then I know other programming languages.

Henry: Other programming languages yeah. aw Well I think I have more or less covered everything and I am also conscious of time. We have been talking for about three quarters of an hour now so Is there anything else you would like to say or anything else you would like to tell me about that I have not asked? um I don’t know what you were expecting with the interview so I suppose=

Alexandru: I don’t know what you are looking for exactly?

Henry: Well it is simply I wanted to get a sense of how um what your experiences were of moving here which you’ve talked about. Your background and how you feel about your life in the UK. How you feel about we talked about debates about immigration and how you understand those and how you know So I suppose really it is just all those things and it is not sort of like a coherent thing because I am just quite interested in how you talk about your life and how it is unfolding for you I suppose because it is something as far as the literature is concerned there’s not we don’t know a lot. We know a lot about Romanians in the media but we don’t actually know how Romanians living here what is it like for you guys? It is something we don’t know as much about you know so it is something that=
Alexandru: There are people who don’t enjoy it here. I have a friend who is studying in Surrey and she is going to graduate this year and she is going back.

Henry: Is she?

Alexandru: Yes. She didn’t like it here (.) she didn’t like the people. She thinks that everyone is really cold and she couldn’t really adapt here.

Henry: mm so she has found the opposite to you then really.

Alexandru: Yes (.) personally I don’t really understand it but I guess it depends on what people you interact with and friends you manage to make.

Henry: And she is at Surrey Uni?

Alexandru: Yes.

Henry: Because I mean Surrey is quite up there as far as the uni’s go (.) it is in the middle of the countryside. I wonder if it is sort of (.) I don’t know

Alexandru: I heard it is a small city as well.

Henry: Yes (.) it is not very big at all. So it could be that she has just not met many people or of course the people at the uni um=

Alexandru: She said that she enjoyed the course and she really likes what she is studying because she is doing Tourism Management (.) I think yeah (.) And she even got a year in the industry but she still wants to go back. There is another factor which I personally think counts towards her decision that fact that she has a boyfriend back home and they have been together for a few years now. So I guess that is a big factor.

Henry: Is she thinking maybe about (.) starting her life with=

Alexandru: probably (.) yeah

Henry: And what about you (.) if you don’t mind me asking? Is that something that is a factor for you in staying here or moving back home?

Alexandru: Well I didn’t have anyone before coming here so I wasn’t really attached to Romania from that perspective and I don’t really have anyone there now or here now so I am like (.) free to move around=

Henry: =Yes (.) so I suppose yes you feel like=

Alexandru: =It is easier to make decisions.

Henry: It is (.) yes (.) easier not having to think about all that other stuff as well (.) yes. Yes (.) I think you have hit the nail on the head with your friend (.) that is definitely=

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Alexandru: =Yeah(.) it is quite a big factor.

Henry: Yes and you say she doesn’t talk about it very much as a thing?

Alexandru: No(.) not really.

Henry: That is interesting because all those other things seem like(.) “Well I don’t enjoy it and is this wrong(.) is that wrong.” There is that big thing actually=

Alexandru: =When you don’t enjoy it here and your heart is somewhere else obviously you see all the bad: things.

Henry: Yes but for you not having that root if you like allows you to think more freely about(.) like what you were saying moving to Manchester or Lee:ds or Birmingham or London or wherever(.) it ends up. That is the sort of thing that (1) I suppose we don’t hear a lot about when we think about people moving around for different reasons(.) you don’t think of it as erm (.). because you want to(.) because it is actually part of(.) like you were saying earlier(.) growing up and finding yourself. It is seen as you know(.) “We’ll move here and there’s not enough houses and the countries going to sink.” That is what is all talked about and I suppose that is just something that has just come out of your interview and it has been so nice listening to it. Because it makes a change from what I normally listen to ((laughter)) Part of my research is interested in how the media and politicians talk about immigration so(.) often it is all these sorts of like negative and resource based arguments and it is always like(.) “We’ve got to be rational. We’ve got to be practical. We’ve got to be sensible.” I think it is balance isn’t it? So yeah(.) I mean I don’t know if there is anything else you want to mention? But if there is not then er(.) yeah I suppose I am quite happy for us to stop here if you are happy to?=

Alexandru: =Yes(.) sure.

Henry: Yes(.) okay then.

Alexandru: =If there is something(.) I can email you.

Henry: I suppose its um

((transcript ends))
Transcript 3: Felix

1954 Henry: Right that's recording as well. (.) Okay. So: (.) that's yours (.) I've got mine.

1955 Felix: This is mine?

1956 Henry: Yeah: so if you're happy (.) what I might do I might write a few things whilst we're [talking]. er:: the schedule I've got really (.) it just depends how the conversation goes. Obviously we were talking quite a lot downstairs. It might be that we end up retracing some of that throughout (.) if you're happy to talk over it again. I suppose I'd like to start really (.) if you're happy to (.) talking a little bit about yourself. Perhaps (.) where in Romania you are from.

1957 Felix: [Sure] I'm from Galatz (.) this is my home town. It resembles Sheffield because they do a lot of steelworks (.) the industry of steel.

1958 Henry: Okay. There is industry.

1959 Felix: That's quite a good resemblance.

1960 Henry: Is there any particular name in Romania you give for it? Like (.) Sheffield is known as the Steel City (.) isn't it?

1961 Felix: Yes.

1962 Henry: Is there a name that it's known for there?

1963 Felix: No (.) not for it. The guys at the football stadium (.) they named themselves the Steel Boys.

1964 Henry: Really?

1965 Felix: Yes.

1966 Henry: Okay. So there is a bit of (.) for it? Is it a big town then?

1967 Felix: Not quite. It's an average town. It's not very small (.) but it's not the biggest.

1968 Henry: No (.). okay. I can see what you mean by (.) it's like Sheffield. It's not like London (.) but it's not a random=  

1969 Felix: =Yes (.) exactly.

1970 Henry: Okay (.). then. How are you? Are you 20↑?

1971 Felix: Twenty one.

1972 Henry: Twenty one. So you went straight from finishing school to uni here then?

1973 Felix: Yes.
Henry: Yes. What about your family background then? Are you the first to have gone to uni?

Felix: No. I don't think so. My mum I think she's got two degrees but I don't know much about that.

Henry: No.

Felix: I'm sure they've been to college and university and all that stuff. But I don't know much about it.

Henry: No. I suppose it felt quite natural to you as a possibility of going to uni from school?

Felix: Yes. It was like a must for me. I felt like this was the course of life going to uni. Because when I was in primary school maybe I don't know I can't remember but my mum did the second degree for her job.

Henry: Right. I suppose there's a sense that that was the most logical step for you to repeat what?

Felix: =Yes. I would have felt guilty if I hadn't come to uni. She was still working she was taking care of me and she was going to uni.

Henry: She was doing it all. She sounds like quite a woman then really.

Felix: Yes she is.

Henry: Yes. How does she feel about you coming to the UK to study then? Did she talk to you about it?

Felix: I like to think that she's proud. Yes I think she is. My parents are.

Henry: Yes. Would you be able to tell me a little bit about the process leading to your decision to come here? What sort of things were you thinking about when you were thinking about uni?

Felix: I wanted to do Psychology. I think it was easier for me to come to England than doing Psychology in Romania. In Romania how can I say this I learnt how to get into uni. Like what to do. I had to take an exam and my grades counted a lot. The option of coming to England was much easier. Just the final year exam counted for coming to England to study.

Henry: I see. The entry requirements were lower to come to England then as opposed to staying in Romania?

Felix: Not lower but they were easier. In Romania they're not as high but there is a lot more stuff to do like taking more exams and studying more.

Henry: Right. So you had to do much more to get into uni there?

Felix: Yes. I like to think so now that I've come to England.
Henry: Yes. It was quite a practical decision then really?
Felix: Yes. I like to think so. It was more practical. Also it broadens my horizon. When you go on a holiday and visit other countries it's really not at all like actually staying in a country. Actually living for long periods of time.
Henry: How do you think that's different then? How would you describe it as being different?
Felix: You need to get a job. I haven't. I'm not proud of myself. I had a couple of months ago but it's my third year so I was thinking I would get one in my first year. I'm not proud of that.
Henry: Was that a conscious decision you made once you got here and you started your course to not get the job then? It sounds like you=
Felix: =I tried to get a job but when I saw it nobody would call. I just didn't think I'd get the job so I left it.
Henry: That's fair enough. It was a matter of sending CV's out and then receiving no feedback.
Felix: Yes and not having any feedback.
Henry: Yes. That's fair enough. It's quite a difficult thing. Obviously the time when you would have been looking for a job that would have been 2011/2012?
Felix: Yes 2012.
Henry: Jobs aren't great are they?
Felix: Yes.
Henry: No that's fair enough.
Felix: Also I think I'd do better if those employers would give me the opportunity of having an interview with them because that's how I got the job this year. I got the job with G4S as an events steward. It's fun. It's not really much money but it's fun. You get to see all the football matches.
Henry: Yes exactly. Yes.
Felix: I like standing. I'm not much of a sitter.
Henry: No. It must be hard to study then.
Felix: Not quite because=
Henry: =What you just stand up read type thing?
Felix: No. They don't call you. You get the opportunity to go wherever you want so that's absolutely brilliant.
Henry: Because you are flexible then? You can work as much or as little as is suitable.

Felix: Yes (.) exactly. You cannot go to any events for three months (.) until you get fired.

Henry: I see. So they're trying to make sure that people don't take advantage then?

Felix: Yes. Even with all that (.) you don't get paid if you don't go to the job. Also (.) with living here (.) abroad (.) you need to get your own place. It's quite a difficult task.

Henry: I see. So they're trying to make sure that people don't take advantage then?

Felix: Yes. Even with all that (.) you don't get paid if you don't go to the job. Also (.) with living here (.) abroad (.) you need to get your own place. It's quite a difficult task.

Henry: Did you go to a letting agent then?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: You looked online and↑?

Felix: Yes. It's quite a difficult task.

Henry: Did you go to a letting agent then?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: You looked online and↑?

Felix: Yes. It's quite difficult if you don't have the financial support. It's really difficult because we have to pay six months in advance.

Henry: Six months?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Wow.

Felix: The second year we moved and negotiated a bit and we only had to pay three months in advance. Then we had to pay each month. When you first go to a letting agent (.) it's quite hard being a foreigner.

Henry: What sort of things made you feel that way when you were talking to them?

Felix: Because you are not living in England= Having a permanent address (.) that sort of thing?

Henry: Yes. Also (.) I can understand this (.) I'm not offended (.) I can understand all those measures they take because there are bad people that they don't want to work with.

Henry: Okay. In terms of the UK (.) specifically then (.) was there a language element to that as well? That because you're able to speak English you↑?

Felix: Yes. I was quite confident at first.

Henry: At first?
Felix: Yes (. ) before coming to England. I was quite confident with my English speaking. But then everything blew my confidence. All these accents (. ) In Romania (. ) I think they put more accents on studying American English not British English.

Henry: Right. Okay.

Felix: All these accents here in England made me rethink the whole thing.

Henry: Did you find it quite difficult then when you first arrived?

Felix: At first (. ) yes. The first months or so. But then it felt maybe more natural.

Henry: Do you feel like your accent has perhaps changed then?

Felix: Yes (. ) a lot.

Henry: You said about the American English. Were you coming (. ) to begin with (. ) speaking with that accent?

Felix: Yes (. ) a lot.

Henry: Yes. Did anyone say anything about (. ) "Oh (. ) you're American."? Did anyone ask or did anyone think that?

Felix: No. I felt I was speaking like a Russian immigrant (. ) like that guy from GDA.

Henry: Oh yes.

Felix: At first I felt like I was speaking like him (. ) but then (. ) with time (. ) I practised more.

Henry: Did you just (. ) as you were going along (. ) just try and modify how you were saying things?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: You didn't go to any English classes or anything like that?

Felix: No. I tried to make friends and talk more.

Henry: So you say you were consciously making an effort to try and=

Felix: =Yes.

Henry: Yes. Would you say that's probably the best way (. ) looking back (. ) to have done it then? Do you think that was a=

Felix: =It is a way of doing it. I don't know if it's the best (. ) but it was a good way.

Henry: It worked for you.

Felix: Yes (. ) it worked. A bit. I still stutter and I can't express myself quite the way I would like to.

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Henry: Is like (. ) you know the Romanian word but you're just trying to think of the equivalent word?

Felix: Yes (. ) quite like that. Sometimes (. ) even in Romanian I don't know the word (. ) so it's really hard.

Henry: It must be hard (. ) yes. What language?=

Felix: =Yes. Because (. ) if I knew it in Romanian I would Google the translation.

Henry: It wasn't something you thought about going to any other country in Europe to go to uni then? Like Italy or Spain where they speak (. ) I think it's a romance language like Romanian (. ) isn't it?

Felix: Yes. It's a Latin language like Spanish or Italian. I thought (. ) I already know English so that's the main thing.

Henry: Yes. So it just made that easier.

Felix: That's the main reason.

Henry: Yes. I'm quite interested in this (. ) what you're saying about your decision to come to England. Was there anything in particular about England that you had any ideas about before coming? What you might have expected or things that you already knew (. ) that people talked about in Romania as what the British are like.

Felix: Culturally or uni?

Henry: Yes. In terms of culturally (. ) but then the uni as well. What you know about any of it.

Felix: I didn't know anything about university here. I really always feel like a lucky guy. I just always go along with things. I don't know why (. ) but it works for me. I feel quite lucky. Culturally (. ) I didn't expect much because when you expect things you always get disappointed. I don't know why (. ) but it's always like that. So I didn't expect things to be in a certain way. I just came to England. It was a cultural shock (. ) but I got along. I just got along.

Henry: Like you said (. ) you tried to be laidback and just go with it.

Felix: Yes. It was a shock because there are quite a lot of immigrants here. I was hoping to meet more English people (. ) British English (. ) and that was a bit of a shock for me. Even though I know there are other ethnic groups that are English. They've established themselves quite a long time ago here. I don't know (. ) I still feel like there are a lot of immigrants here. That was a bit of a shock. If you know (. ) the first Bulgarians and Romanians (. ) I quite understood their concerns. I was a bit offended because I'm Romanian myself (. ) but not as much as other Romanians were. I understood a bit of the concerns around it (. ) because as I have already told you (. ) there are a lot of immigrants here. A lot. Maybe I'm not used to it living in Romania.
Henry: So you were thinking (. ) perhaps (. ) that there might have been a stronger British presence (. ) I suppose?
Felix: Yes. I feel like there is not a majority of English people. I feel like there is 40% British English and then all those other ethnic groups.
Henry: Do you think perhaps that (. ) even though you say you've enjoyed it (. ) that perhaps you've not had the full English experience being perhaps then?
Felix: Exactly (. ) yes. Maybe it's just that I was thinking more about posh people.
Henry: Once with the London=
Felix: =Yes. Being at uni (. ) you don't get the chance to meet all those people. They have got their own group so you don't get the chance to meet them.
Henry: There remain (. ) probably (. ) some parts of life here that you've not experience yet.
Felix: Yes.
Henry: Is it something that you would ever think about (. ) after you finished (. ) if you managed to get a job here (. ) that you would think about staying?
Felix: Yes. If I managed to get a really good paid job (. ) a well paid job (. ) I would really consider moving to London (. ) maybe (. ) because I've got a lot of friends there. Yes (. ) I would consider moving (. ) maybe (. ) definitely. I don't know (. ) we'll see.
Henry: Yes. I suppose you want to keep your options open and see what happens when you finish. I suppose you want to get your degree finished don't you?
Felix: Yes. I work on what I have at the moment. I am a bit of a dreamer (. ) but I try to keep my head in what I've got at the moment.
Henry: When you say you're a dreamer (. ) what sort of ideas do you perhaps have about where you might end up?
Felix: I tend to aim high (. ) really high. But then I also think I don't want to be disappointed. So I don't know.
Henry: Yes. Because there's a bit of a tension there (. ) isn't there? If you've said only about having expectations it can be difficult to meet them.
Felix: Yes. I don't know. What was your question again?
Henry: In terms of what we were talking about right now?
Felix: Yes.
Henry: It was about what sort of ideas you've got about where you want to be in the future.

Felix: I really want to get a job that pays me well to do what I like. I like sports a lot. I just want to get the opportunity to have my own hobbies. I guess.

Henry: So like what you're saying with the job that you're doing at G4S, even though it doesn't pay as much you like it that you can see games and have=

Felix: Yes exactly. At first I thought it is in the security sector so it might be good for my CV because I am also doing the criminology degree.

Henry: Yes.

Felix: But then when I see that I get to watch football matches it was so much better.

Henry: So it's got all the professional aspects and you get to watch football?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: No that's fair enough. You say you were playing football three times a year earlier. Is it something that you would every think about trying to go for that as a profession?

Felix: Yes I thought about it but I don't know. I feel a bit too old to start now.

Henry: It's a very ageist sport isn't it?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: You've got to get in there when you're 14 or whatever and then keep going. Then once your leg breaks that's it.

Felix: At this time I should have had my career I don't know summer high=

Henry: You wouldn't ever think about perhaps going back to Romania and seeing if you could join the Romanian football team then?

Felix: I would love it but I don't see that happening. I would really love it.

Henry: Have you got a very good national football team? Is it a very good one? I don't follow it personally so I don't know.

Felix: At the moment they are improving. I think they are better ranked than England.

Henry: They probably are. We're usually knocked out in the first round of play aren't we?
Now (.) because they have been improving (.) I think they are in the first 20 in the FIFA world ranking.

How many teams are there in total in that ranking?

All of them. All the national teams.

Really? So 20 is pretty good then (.) if there are hundreds of countries.

Yes (.) it's really good. Yes. Back in the 90's they were like the third team in the world.

Third? Really?

Yes. They could have won the '94 World Cup then.

Why didn't they then?

I don't know. It's just they didn't have the chance. I don't know.

That's interesting.

I haven't seen it because I was one year old at that time.

Yes. That was in the 90's?

Yes. In the '94 World Cup. You probably know Hagi.

Right. Okay then. What about when you first came to the UK then. Is there anything you can particularly remember about when you first (.) You know this question about culture shock?

On the first days I got here (.) I went out with my friends. There were five of us and we stuck together. We couldn't find the place. We lived in a top hotel. In those days we tried to get used to speaking English and get used to English people. We went to a Starbucks to grab a coffee and the cashier asked me what I wanted. I don't remember what he said because I didn't understand a word. I was looking at him (.) "Are you speaking English?"

Is that what you were saying about the English that you weren't expecting because it was not what you had been taught?

Yes. Maybe he had an accent (.) maybe not. I don't know. It was that shock that struck me.
Henry: How did that experience unfold then? Did they something differently and then you got it? What happened from there then? Did you ever get a coffee?

Felix: Yes (.) I got one.

Henry: You managed to get one.

Felix: I don't know how. Maybe sign language.

Henry: Okay.

Felix: It's this joke between us Romanians that we get muscle fever from talking with our hands.

Henry: I've never heard that before.

Felix: Yes. It's sign language.

Henry: Yes (.) having to (.) Mind you (.) could it have been that Starbucks have such a technical range of words they used to describe coffee?

Felix: Maybe (.) yes.

Henry: It's not straightforward when you go in and you ask for a coffee. They say (.) "Well (.) we've got a whole selection."

Felix: Yes.

Henry: That's what they sell.

Felix: Yes. Maybe (.) yes.

Henry: It probably was made worse by that (.) wasn't it? I don't know what to order when I'm in there. When they ask me if I want a Macchiato or something (.) I think (.) "Just a coffee is okay."

Felix: Exactly (.) yes. But still (.) I didn't know what they said. It's like the cashier said a whole phrase in just one word. I felt like that.

Henry: Yes. So speaking more like German then because that's how the German language works (.) isn't it?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: That's weird. Where did you end up living then in your first year? You were saying you lived in a hotel at the beginning.

Felix: Yes. After the hotel experience (.) we found a newly built student accommodation. It was so new that it wasn't even finished when we made the booking.

Henry: You were quite lucky really then (.) to find it?

Felix: Yes. They accommodated us for a week at a hotel because it wasn't finished. We were quite lucky to find that student accommodation.
Henry: Did your parents help you out when you first came and you didn't have any accommodation? Did they help pay for the hotel?

Felix: Yes. They did all my financial support.

Henry: Yes. Something that's coming up a few times in these interviews is that there is a financial side to coming to study here. It costs way more than if you had stayed in Romania.

Felix: Yes. Exactly. It is quite expensive living here (.) but you just have to support the consequences.

Henry: You moved into student accommodation. Was it like halls of residence then? Was it a block of flats with different rooms in it?

Felix: Yes. It was quite different from all the other student accommodation. The other student accommodation (.) each student has their own room and they share a kitchen. But we lived two per room.

Henry: You shared a room?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Right.

Felix: We didn't mind because we knew each other so we got along really well.

Henry: Yes. Is it a group of guys (.) all of you?

Felix: Yes. That's why we don't mind.

Henry: Yes. I can imagine that must be quite a thing. If you're living with someone you don't know (.) quite a thing to get used to that.

Felix: Yes. You can stay in a room by yourself (.) but it's much more expensive.

Henry: I suppose less fun.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: It's an experience. It's something that you wouldn't necessarily do again (.) but it's something that=

Felix: =Yes (.) it was fun.

Henry: Yes. The guy that you were staying with (.) is he a student here as well?

Felix: Yes. He is now in his placement year. He's doing tourism.

Henry: He's done an extra year then?

Felix: He's in London at the moment.

Henry: Is he?
Felix: Yes.

Henry: Do you miss him then? You probably don't see him as much if he's on his placement.

Felix: No. We talk. We've got this social group on Facebook.

Henry: Yes. I suppose going from living with someone in the same room=

Felix: =Yes. We've been classmates for eight years so it's nothing.

Henry: Yes. You get used to it.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: After living in that accommodation you say you moved into Was it a house then you moved into?

Felix: Yes. A flat.

Henry: You moved starting from that house to a flat?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: That's when you lived with your girlfriend?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Well ex-girlfriend is it? Sorry.

Felix: Yes I don't know. Let's say ex for the moment.

Henry: Yes. That was the start of your third year was it when you moved in?

Felix: No second year.

Henry: Oh you've lived there since then?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Wow. How have you found going from student accommodation to a mainstream flat then? Obviously all your bills it's all separate then isn't it?

Felix: Yes. I thought it is so much better because it's all yours. In the student accommodation we didn't have much of a kitchen so we couldn't cook much. We really had a hard time with food. Eating out is quite expensive here. If you do the groceries constantly it's not that much of a difference from the Romanian source. But eating out is very different.

Henry: What's been your experience of food then while you've been here? Have you tended to stick to the food that you know or have you found that you've ended up trying lots of different things?
Felix: Yes. So and so. I didn't try all of them. I found it very different that English people eat beans for breakfast. We have beans for lunch maybe.

Henry: Yes. So some instances where you think (.) "That's a bit weird."

Felix: Yes. style.

Henry: You were saying it was a lot nicer for you when you moved into this flat (.) to have a bigger kitchen?=

Felix: =Yes (.) because I could cook for myself.

Henry: Yeah (.) something that you’ve er- were you good at cooking prior to coming or is it something that you=

Felix: =Not quite (.) no

Henry: [You picked it up along the way [then?]]

Felix: [Yeah I] picked it up.

(1)

Henry: I suppose it's that mum you were talking about i- she sounds like a wonder woman being able to do everything (.) she probably did the cooking as well.

Felix: Yes. Back at home she would always cook. I really hate wash[ing the dishes because] I've never washed the [dish]es (.) back at h[ome]

Henry: [((laughter)) ] [yeah] [yeah] so it's something yeah (.) that you’ve had to=

Felix: =I can cook (.) I can make a mess. But I really hate cleaning it up.

Henry: Is that something that your ex-girlfriend prefers to do? Does she tend to do the cleaning?

Felix: No: (.) we quit- fight about those t[opics]

Henry: [Over] that topic.

Felix: Yeah

Henry: aw- (.) I think it can be a problem (.) can't it (.) you know when you’re trying when you both hate doing some[thing (.) it] just doesn't get done then (.) does it?

Felix: [Yes: yes] an::d I considered buying (.) a dishwasher (.) but it's too much money (.) and like (.) I'm leaving in a couple of months.

Henry: mmm (.) so it would be something that you'd end up leaving behind (.) probably.
Felix: Yeah
Henry: yeah (.) I want to- if possible go back to what you were saying (.)
when we were at the coffee machine you were saying that you feel
homesick now: rather than when you first ca↑me=
Felix: Yeah. I don't know why. Maybe it's just me (.) it's just the way I
am. Because (.) at first (.) I really wanted to try the experience of
( .) n- living by myself. I don't know if I err: ( .) I feel homesick
because ( .) I don't live with my pa↑rents anymore. Maybe I just
feel homesick because I've er:: got a lot of friends back ho↓me and
I've really had a: ( .) great time in the summer [holidays]
Henry: [When y]ou go back h[ome]
Felix: [Yeah]
Henry: It sort of reminds you=
Felix: =At least er t[his ( .) this summer holiday ( .) so.
Henry: I suppose ( .) when you fi:rst came you had all those other guys
around [you] and it was the start of somet[hing] I suppose it might
ha- distrαct away from feelings that you know [if you didn't have
] So when you go back to Romania then ( .) will you move
in back with your parents? Is that the plan? Could it be quite
weird=
Felix: [Yeah]
[yeah]
[It definitely does yeah] I don't
know.
Henry: [wow] =so they
invested in a flat?
Felix: Yes.
Henry: So you'll be going from this flat to er- ( .) one back home=
Felix: =yeah it's really nic::e. I've seen it like once this er ( .) this summer
and it's really nice. I would see myself living there but ( .). I don't
know if I want to ( .) er: live back in my home town. Because there
are not many opportunities for li- I dunno ( .) a jo:b. I'm thinking I
would be better starting my ow:n thing my own company ( .) like er
( .) being an entrepreneur=
Henry: [Yeah]
Felix: =Yeah. I don't know why. Maybe it's just me ( .) it's just the way I
am. Because ( .) at first ( .) I really wanted to try the experience of
( .) n- living by myself. I don't know if I err: ( .) I feel homesick
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in back with your parents? Is that the plan? Could it be quite
weird=
Felix: [Yeah]
[yeah]
[It definitely does yeah] I don't
know.
Henry: [wow] =so they
invested in a flat?
Henry: What sort of thing can you see yourself doing?
Felix: I don't know (-) I (-) really don't know. Maybe selling stuff (-) products.
Henry: Like a Dragon's Den type thing?
Felix: Yeah (-) maybe: (-) I have to study the market ((laughter))
Henry: That's always the thing (-) isn't it? You've got to find something that will fit. If you want money from someone anyway (-) they'll want to know that you've got a-
Felix: cos (-) I see a role model in my dad. so (-) he does this like. He has this er business
Henry: So it's something that is modelled then (-) you can look to him and think-
Felix: Yeah.
Henry: A bit like we were saying about your mum having the two degrees=
Felix: yeah=
Henry: =They sound like quite an inspirational pair for you really.
Felix: Yeah (-) they are.
Henry: Like there's a lot to look up to.
Felix: Yeah. They surely are.
Henry: ye:ah (-) What about working with your dad (-) is that ever something that you've thought about?
Felix: well (-) He did throw this deal like (-) er::m (-) this summer like (-) I went t- with him to a tennis competition (-) father and son time. erm and uh- (-) I went to see the guys working at er (-) his business. and er (-) he told me that (-) "Maybe someday you will work here. You'll take care of my business" so=
Henry: =What did you think to that then (-) when he said that?
Felix: I don't know it er (-) it made me really happy (-) at that moment. And now (-) I don't kno↓w. but er (-) I don't want to depend on that. so (-) yeah=
Henry: =I suppose (-) in the same way (-) it comes across that you think it's nice that that's a possibility.
Felix: Yeah. It's really nice to have that opportunity. But I don't want to consider it as a possibility for the moment becau↓se (-) I think I have other opportunities or possibilities.
Henry: Like you say (.), becoming an entrepreneur and doing it all yourself.

Felix: Yeah and also (.), this guy my mum works for (.), he's also close to my fa approves. And (.), we go out for dinner and stuff. He's also been like a role model for me. He's also an entrepreneur. He's um (.), he's changed the profile of the work he does. Like (.), at first he was at a store (.), selling furniture. I don't know (.), I can't remember. Then um (.), he had this store (.), in which he sold like (.), those bricks that (.), what do you call them? that you pave the streets with.=

Henry: =Yes (.), like slabs sort of?==

Felix: =Yes. Kind of. Now he um (.), owns this (.), private er:: (.), hospital. Let's say hospital

Henry: So he's into healthcare then?

Felix: Yeah

Henry: It is like what you were saying earlier about the doctor that you went to see in Romania (.), that's the sort of=

Felix: =Yeah. I went to the um (.), uh (.), the state hospital=

Henry: =Okay. You didn't go to a private place?

Felix: No. Because they don't have that much stuff that they do at the state one. The regular local hospital.

Henry: So when you say you're feeling homesick (.), is Romania (.), when you think of home (.), is that what comes to mind for you?

Felix: Like?

Henry: As far as when you think (.), "I want to go home (.)," that's what- is Romania home for you then (.)? Whilst you're here it's not something that you've felt the same affinity to=

Felix: =I don't know. Maybe I just want to be closer to my family. Maybe. I feel like they've done a lot for me (.), and I can get a chance to make it in Romania (.), I would definitely take that opportunity.

(1)

Henry: That's fair enough. At this point (.), you mentioned earlier (.), actually (.), about the Romanian and Bulgarian sort of (.), immigration thing that's been going on. I wanted to ask you a few questions about immigration as, something that you see on the news and how you see it debated (.), um (.), as part of the interview. So I'd just like to start by asking you how do you feel- because obviously you've been here for two and a half years now (.), if you follow the news (.), and watch television you will have probably come across quite a lot of stuff (.), won't you? What are your thoughts on that?
Felix: [Sure yeah] I felt that immigrants are not that welcomed (. ) maybe. I don't know. It's just what the media gives. People (. ) they don't seem to care that much. I mean I’ve had these er (. ) tutors that have been really kind to me=

Henry: [yeah] =mm it sounds like you're suggesting there is a mismatch between what the media think it is and what your experience of it has been being here=

Felix: =Yeah. I don't know. I think (. ) in my study years (. ) I came to the conclusion that the media deceives people a lot (1) I don't know why but it seems that that's my conclusion.

Henry: You don't have any thoughts then on why (. ) perhaps (. ) they would do that?

Felix: Different interests. I mean its (. ) there are some powerful people that want some things being done

Henry: How do you feel about the labels that have been given then? like (. ) you were saying about Romanian and Bulgarian (. ) both nations were accepted into the EU at the same time. How do you feel about the idea that you're classed almost as one country when it's talked about? Is that something that's ever occurred to you?

Felix: No not quite (. ) they- (. ) they did make it seem like they talk about immigrants (. ) so I didn't mind that.

Henry: Okay. What about um (. ) when they say (. ) sometimes it's used i- in place of that one (. ) they say Eastern Europeans. Is that something that's ever occurred to you?

Felix: It doesn't bother me.

Henry: It doesn't bother you?

Felix: No.

Henry: No. cos (. ) some people can feel like there are connotations to come of these labels=

Felix: =I know. Not all of them (. ) but some people when you talk about being Romanian or being Eastern European (. ) they: think about gypsies and travellers and all that sort of [stuff]. But (. ) I don't mind. There are these people (. ) they exist the↓re.

Henry: [mmm]How do you feel- as a Romanian then are you happy with (. ) um (. ) the way that the media talk about Romanians as a whole [then]

Felix: [Not] quite (. ) but what can you do? (laughter))

Henry: In w- what way? Do you want to expand on that?
Felix: well I've seen some uh:: some like reports that make this category of gypsies. Instead of saying Romanians they say gypsies and that sort of news uh reports that er make this category of er gypsies. Instead of saying Romanians they say gypsies and that sort of stuff. I think er there are certain people that do that. Not I don't think we should generalise that people think Eastern European people are gypsies or something like that.

Henry: [mm] And is it something that if you- if you had anything- if you had the stage and you had the opportunity to say something different what sort of things would you say to dispute it? Is there anything that in particular you feel like they shouldn't speak about people in that way or that they should say instead

Felix: [well] No they shouldn't erm [well] No they should erm [well] No they should be saying something more positive. The media uh it's like uh not reporting all the stuff that's going on. It's like reporting all the bad stuff it's not focusing on the bad stuff. And also there are a lot of Romanian people or Bulgarian other nations that are quite mad[e it]. They're quite important. They made something of themselves.

Henry: [mm] so there is an untold story then?

Felix: Yes. =I'm a bit too small for this.

Henry: Like Felix who is at uni who is now going to make his day in the world=

Felix: =I'm a bit too small for this.

Henry: I suppose but you're one of those examples aren't you of people that are getting on a bit?

Felix: Yeah. But I'm saying like I've seen this clip on YouTube it was about Romanians. I think it was made by O2 the phone company. And it was this musician Romanian musician all of them were Romanians that was teaching at London University. So that's quite big that's quite important. Also there was this reporter that worked for maybe BBC or I don't know who that made a lot of stories that was Romanian in a good way because she was Romanian. There was also uh this bakery owner that had her own like shop and did Romanian products Romanian food. They seemed like role models let's say.

Henry: [mm: ] Is what you're saying it's a nice thing to see a positive side?

Felix: Yeah its good to see people achieve something really important. That's the untold story. I've heard this um debate on alcohol. Even with alcohol the media uh misreports what happens
because of the alcohol industry and because there is a lot of interests. and because u:m The alcohol industry er (. ) funds the organisations that should inform people about the health risks that alcohol may ur (. ) I dunno (. ) may l- lead to. (1) so there was ur (. ) there was this report (. ) this article that said the media (. ) didn't say anything ur (. ) about deaths related to alcohol (. ) which were about two hundred and something. But covered all the stories about other drugs that were much less (. ) like two.

Henry: Yes. So I suppose it's things like heroin (. ) all the dramatic things (. ) they're reported. But then the biggest killer=

Felix: =Yes.

Henry: It's the same with smoking (. ) I suppose (. ) as well.

Felix: Yes. But there is a lot of conflict of interests. People in the alcohol industry want to make their money. I think (. ) if other drugs were legalised or maybe alcohol was banned (. ) it would be a different story.

Henry: Is that something you feel strongly about yourself then (. ) about legalising drugs? Just as a=

Felix: =I don't do much of it.

Henry: Have you tried drugs before?

Felix: Yes (. ) I have. I think of it as that period (. ) when you're a teenager and you need to be rebellious. You need to try new stuff. I've not done serious drugs. I don't know. I tried it a bit.

Henry: Yes. I can identify with that myself. You just go through phases (. ) don't you?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Sometimes (. ) just even one phase (. ) where you just tried it. I've done it now (. ) that's it.

Felix: The thing is (. ) you know there is always a guy that has cannabis or something and says (. ) "Let's smoke. Let's go there and smoke."

Henry: Is that because of where you're at in terms of doing your dissertation and those things or is it just simpler than that?

Felix: Maybe. Maybe unconsciously. I don't know (. ) it just feels like I've grown up.

Henry: That's fair enough. It's a personal decision to do it (. ) isn't it?

Felix: Yes.
Henry: It must be difficult (.) sometimes (.) in those situations. "Don't be boring (.)" that type of thing.

Felix: Yes. Also (.) I don't really like to be influenced by other people. That's what happens when your friends have drugs or drink.

Henry: Yes. You said earlier about being laidback when it comes to thinking about settling in Britain and going along with it. Is that something that also applies in a situation with your friends with the drug situation then? There you're saying something different (.) aren't you? Is it because you're with friends so you feel more comfortable just saying no?

Felix: I don't feel the pressure of the peer group (.) no. I just have my own beliefs.

Henry: Yes. You feel like you can say no to them.

Felix: Exactly. I've got some good friends.

Henry: Yes. It's an important thing (.) isn't it (.) that you can say no to them?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: And not feel like there is a repercussion.

Felix: We've got this group (.) and even some other friends say no if they don't want to. We don't make a fuss about it. It's not that peer pressure you hear all the time.

Henry: When you were applying to the uni here (.) that would have been 2011 (.) is that right?

Felix: 2012 (.) I think.

Henry: 2012. It might have been going over into the New Year (.) I don't know.

Felix: It was the winter between 2011 and 2012.

Henry: Yes. Did you have to apply for a student visa at the time?

Felix: No.

Henry: You just applied.

Felix: Yes. Because we're also Europeans.

Henry: Yes.

Felix: It's about EU students.

Henry: There was the transitional time (.) wasn't there? So you might have had to=

Felix: =Yes.
Henry: You just brought in the European dimension. Do you think looking back now if you were perhaps doing the same thing again or if you're thinking about it just as a generic thing do you feel like it's the right thing that people are entitled to move now whatever uni they want to go to in Europe? That that's something open we can move up. Is that something you see as a good thing?

Felix: Yes. I'm definitely for it. As I've said earlier it's really good to see different place to live in different places not only see. Having that experience is just priceless.

Henry: You feel like you'll be going back home to Romania and you'll feel like you've benefited from that experience?

Felix: Yes. You've gained this knowledge that's really important I think.

Henry: Have you spoken about this to anyone else English here whilst you've been living here? Moving around is that anything that's ever=

Felix: =Not quite no.

Henry: No?

Felix: No. I don't think so.

Henry: I was just wondering whether your experience is that that's how other people understand migration and moving around is a good thing. Whether that's been in your experience that=

Felix: =I haven't formed an opinion on this.

Henry: No?

Felix: No.

Henry: No that's fair enough. I was putting you on the spot there trying to think if you've ever had that conversation.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: It's a different perspective isn't it?

Felix: Yes. I've got pros and cons on this immigration topic.

Henry: Do you want to expand on them?

Felix: I think studying abroad is a really good thing. But when you've got this big influx of people that are migrating I think it may be bad for the culture. You may lose some cultural values among this.

Henry: Like what you were saying earlier when you came you were surprised there weren't as many British people here.

Henry: Yes. Do you feel like there is something about the British way of life that you've not been exposed to? Is there anything in particular that you think you should have been experiencing and it just doesn't feel like it's there anymore?

Felix: I don't know. I can't possibly know what's there because I've not experienced what's there.

Henry: Yes. I suppose that would sound silly. Not even perhaps as far as Romanian culture goes (...) that you knew what the British were like and then when you got here (...) it's like (...) "No (...) that's not what you're like. I can't even see that anymore."

Felix: Maybe what you see in movies (...) that's where you make an opinion. I don't think I should have experienced anything else. I was expecting to see or talk or get in touch with more British people. But it's just the way it is.

Henry: You would say then that moving here has changed how (...) well you said it's enriching the experience for you and you've got a lot out of it.

Felix: Yes. It definitely was.

Henry: Would you say it's changed the way that you see yourself?

Felix: Yes. It definitely has.

Henry: In what way has it changed then?

Felix: I don't know. I feel like I've grown up. Before coming to England (...) I was only about getting out with friends (...) doing nothing (...) being a teenager. But now that I've come to uni (...) Maybe if I had done uni in Romania it would have been the same thoughts. But with this experience (...) living abroad (...) it's broadening my knowledge.

Henry: It's certainly more dramatic (...) if anything (...) isn't it? Because even if you'd have had the same experience in Romania you wouldn't have had (...) probably (...) as many challenges.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: There would still have been challenges.

Felix: Yes. Most of the people I know back in Romania don't like the uni life.

Henry: Really?

Felix: Yes. I've heard a lot of them dropped out of uni.

Henry: Really?

Felix: Yes. After the first year.
Henry: Yes. What sort of things have they said to (. ) was it your friends or you directly? What sort of things are they saying then as to why they dropped out?

Felix: They're not friends (. ) they're more like acquaintances. People I know.

Henry: Friends of friends and that kind of thing.

Felix: Yes (. ) exactly. Stuff like that. I think they are a bit spoilt.

Henry: They just couldn't hack it on their own and having to do everything themselves?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Since moving here (. ) do you feel like you've adapted quite well to the (. ) Obviously you're saying about there not being as a strong a cultural presence here as you thought. But do you feel like you've fit in quite well whilst you've been here?

Felix: Well I had to adapt. I don't know. I don't like I quite fit in this culture because (. ) as I've already told you (. ) people have this perception that on the weekend they have to go out and drink. I don't feel like it.

Henry: So you don't feel like I belong=

Felix: =I feel like I don't belong. Those are my thoughts.

Henry: So (. ) as a Romanian (. ) you don't feel like you don't belong (. ) it's more that you just=

Felix: =It's just the culture (. ) yes. It's not that I'm Romanian and I will meet English or other cultures.

Henry: It's more to do with sorts of things people end up doing?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Then again (. ) you like to go to the football (. ) don't you?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: It's that sort of thing that's a commonality (. ) isn't it?

Felix: It's quite expensive to buy a ticket here. I've never been to a football match paying for my own ticket. I've just worked.

Felix: It is. I've worked at Rotherham Stadium. Now they are in the 2nd League Championship. Even if they were in the 2nd League (. ) it's still exciting. I quite like it. It's not even on the same level with the 1st League in Romania. I think the 3rd League (. ) maybe.
Henry: Yes. Do you think it's important then (.) as a principle (.). that when people move (.) that they try and integrate to the place that they move to?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Coming here (.) do you feel like it's important that you retain some ties with where you've come from?

Felix: It's got pros and cons. I've got pros and cons with this as well. If you still have your beliefs you can get into conflicts and things like that. But also (.) you need to adapt. Obviously you've come here (.) or anywhere abroad (.) to change your life. To make a change. To arrive. I don't know. There was this thing that made me a bit (.) not to be seen racist or anything.

Henry: You're welcome to say what you want to say.

Felix: Last year I heard that maybe Muslims (.) I don't really read the news (.) with this halal meat. You've probably heard of it.

Henry: It's the way they kill the animals.

Felix: Yes. The way they kill the animals. They made such a fuss about it that they wanted big fast food companies like McDonalds and KFC (.) they wanted them to make halal food. I felt offended because they came to a different country (.) imposing their beliefs. I felt a bit offended. I don't have any word for this.

Henry: No (.) offended (.) I get what you mean.

Felix: Maybe bothered.

Henry: Is there not perhaps a line to draw then where (.) if the majority of the culture you've gone to are treating in such a way=

Felix: =You definitely don't have to forget where your roots are (.) but still (.) there is a limit.

Henry: Yes. There's the other side (.) isn't there? That if the majority culture is imposing their own values to the extent that the people who move here feel alienated.

Felix: Yes. It's such a debatable subject.

Henry: Yes. That's why I am studying. It is a difficult subject isn't it?

Felix: Yes. You've got your arguments. You feel like it's not reaching an end. You feel like you can't reach a conclusion. It's like a problem that you can't solve.

Henry: I wonder if it's because we've not yet developed a way of thinking about it that doesn't have those opposite arguments.

Felix: Yes.
Henry: Because most time people are arguing from those sorts of perspectives aren't they? It's either "We have the right to say no to people." and the other people are "We've been hurt too (. we have a right as well."

Felix: Yes. Exactly. There are these extremists they bother me. I always felt like in life you have to be balanced you have to do a bit of everything. You have to know your stuff. You don't need to push your limits in a bad way. You need to improve yourself but you need to keep a balance. That's how I broke my arm.

Henry: What did you do about that then?

Felix: I tried something I've never done before because I wanted to impress some people.

Henry: Do you regret doing it then looking back or did you feel glad you're doing it?

Felix: No. It felt like a good experience. A lesson learnt. I won't do it again. You need to push your limits but you need to know how to push your limits.

Henry: One of the last questions I was going to ask you was you said earlier that we're all European. Is that something that you feel quite strongly about as far as a national=

Felix: =Well in the end we are all people. There were these sections in my application form. If you're European you need less paperwork than if you're an international like Asian or American. You need a visa and things like that. That's why I said we're European. I don't know if England is in the EU at the moment. I've heard talk about this topic. If they are and thinking of getting out of it or if they aren't and thinking of getting into it.

Henry: You mean it feels confusing as to where they are?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: What sorts of things make you think that then make you confused? Is it?

Felix: It made me confused because I've not looked into this topic much. I've just heard about it.

Henry: From what I understand it the UK is in the EU. This is all part of the argument isn't it? Part of it is people are unhappy because what it means that they're giving up a lot of national powers to do things in order to form part of a broader project which is what the European Union has=

Felix: =Yes. Globalisation.

Henry: Yes. The European Union isn't=
Felix: =I don't quite like this thinking of globalisation. We're not the same but we're still people. We need our cultures to be different in some ways but in the end we still need to get along.

Henry: Of course yes. Do you think perhaps that part of that globalisation is that as people talk and get to know each other the different cultures that will start to trade off values and start to come together more closer to things?

Felix: Yes I think so. It will happen at some point. It already is happening.

Henry: Is that a sad prospect to you then that Romania might stop being Romania as you know it and might just blow into some sort of merger thing?

Felix: I really don't know what to think of it. I really started to see that a lot of Romanian people started to speak English. Not in a usual way of going to a store and speaking English but on Facebook posting in English.

Henry: Right.

Felix: Even between friends speaking in English. Maybe because of the movies they see and all the stuff they find themselves in those characters. Maybe. Or maybe because of the globalisation.

Henry: Yes. When you're on Facebook then are you on Facebook?

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Do you post in Romanian then?

Felix: Yes. I usually post in Romanian grammatically really straight.

Henry: Spot on.

Felix: Yes spot on.

Henry: Is that something you've ever spoken to your friends about? Do they ever post to you in English or do they just=

Felix: =Yes. I've posted in English before. I'm not as strict.

Henry: It's an interesting thing because obviously when you're bilingual or you speak more than two languages Do you speak more than two languages?

Felix: A bit. I studied French in high school but I can't remember much.

Henry: No. We studied French and German and Spanish sometimes in some schools. But generally we don't learn to the level I probably remember as much as you.
Felix: I wouldn't be able to keep a conversation going.

Henry: That (.) of course (.) says a lot about your level of English now (.) because you've been able to talk to me for over an hour now.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: And talking about some pretty difficult subjects. I can't even talk about them sometimes. I can't even find the words.

Felix: As I've said (.) I've studied English for about eight years or more (.) maybe twelve. I've learnt a lot of grammar. I've not spoken much (.) but I've learnt a lot of grammar in English.

Henry: When it comes to your friends (.) do you feel like (.) Because you moved with your Romanian friends when you first came. Is that something that you would do again? That you would do it the same way again in terms of coming with friends to a new place.

Felix: Yes (.) I think so. You need the support of other people and you need the support of friends mostly. If you just met someone it's not the same as with people you've known for ages.

Henry: I've pretty much run out of questions now. I've covered (.) pretty much (.) everything with talking about you and about your life here. At this point (.) I don't know if there is anything else that you want to talk about (.) anything you want to add? Obviously (.) I've asked you questions (.) it might be that you've come thinking (.) "I think he'll ask me about this or we might talk about that." I don't know if there is anything that you might= I don't know. I've said it's been a really good experience. If someone would be asking me if they should study abroad (.) I would say (.) definitely yes. Even with all these immigrant labels (.) it doesn't matter much.

Felix: The labels don't mean much to you?

Henry: Yes. Even to other people (.) it doesn't have to mean something. It's just media after all. I've met a lot of people here and not one of them was racist or discriminatory.

Felix: So it's almost made up?

Henry: Yes.

Felix: Blown up to be something that it (.) perhaps (.) isn't.

Henry: Is it a label that you would identify with? If someone said (.) "Are you an immigrant?" Would you say (.) "Yes (.)" or is that something that= I've thought about it. I am (.) bottom line (.) I am. It scares me to think that I am. I don't know why. It makes me think I'm not part of
that culture of being an immigrant. Being (.) not unwelcome (.) but not being a part of that culture.

Henry: Because it differentiates=

Felix: =Yes. It makes you different. Exactly.

Henry: Yes. It's an interesting thought. This is something I have trouble with myself because I've actually said on my information letters (.) Romanian migrants. When I use the word migrant I always think of someone that has moved from one place to another. I would call myself a migrant because I moved from Leicester to Lincoln to Sheffield to where I am now in Derbyshire. So I've moved several times in the country (.) so not actually abroad. But it hadn't occurred to me (.) and no one has said it yet actually (.) when it comes to how you identify with that label (.) that it can be problematic.

Felix: Yes (.) it can be (.) a bit. I really don't feel I belong here (.) in some ways I mean. It's not a thought that would keep me from continuing to live here. But it's still (.) when you go to bed (.) you still think (.) "I should be going back to Romania. I should be going back home." It's that thing that when you live for 18 years somewhere (.) you belong there. You find yourself in that place.

Henry: Like you said (.) that word should (.) isn't it (.) that it feels right.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: It's an interesting thing (.) isn't it? Some people move and then they never return.

Felix: Yes. I've met some people=

Henry: =Then they transcend that (.) don't they?

Felix: Yes. They just=

Henry: =Then people like you were saying (.) you feel homesick.

Felix: Yes. I've known people that moved to England and never came back. I've met people that came to study here and after the first year went back to Romania because they couldn't adapt. It's just different people. After studying Psychology I realised you cannot generalise.

Henry: The one thing Psychologists try to do.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Yes. It's an interesting subject (.) isn't it?

Felix: It's really hard studying something because that's what studying is about (.) doing reports and things like that (.) you need to generalise. When you come to think about it (.) you really cannot.
Henry: No. Or if you do (.) you do it at your peril because someone else will say (.) "Well (.) actually (.) that's not the case because you've done this."

Felix: Yes. You always find that thing that's not like that. So that is the exception to the rule.

Henry: It's been a really interesting interview. I think you've had a lot of really interesting things to say and reflect on really.

Felix: It may be because I'm studying Psychology.

Henry: It might be. It's not always a prerequisite. I've known some people before that have stood there and haven't got a clue to start thinking about how it might inform how they think about life. It's like (.) "I learn it and it's in the book." It never goes through you. In some people it does. Obviously (.) it does with you because of everything you've said.

Felix: Yes. Because I've been interested in Psychology and all the stuff (.) I became a bit more observant of things (.) of little things. Always.

Henry: Yes. We've probably done that with each other today.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Things we're not even aware of. It's like learning a new language again (.) isn't it (.) and ways of seeing the world?

Felix: Exactly. Yes.

Henry: I don't know if there is anything else you want to say? Anything else for the sake of the interview. But if you're happy (.) I'm quite happy to stop now (.) at this point.

Felix: Yes.

Henry: Yes?

Felix: As you wish.

Henry: Yes (.) of course. ((transcript ends))
Transcript 4: Anna

3043 Henry: wait until that comes on ((shuffling: 10 seconds)) okay, so if you’re happy to start then I guess we’ll start off by you just telling me a bit about yourself so whereabouts in Romania are you from?

3046 Anna: The capital city Bucharest=

3047 Henry: =The capital?= =Yes (.) and I study Architecture= =okay=

3050 Anna: (1) I really enjoy it.

3051 Henry: yeah what year are you in?

3052 Anna: er second year.

3053 Henry: okay have you um have you been to the UK just for the course?

3055 Anna: uh yeah.

3056 Henry: You came what was it just over a year ago?

3057 Anna: Yes a year ago. A year and a half yeah year and a half ((laughter))

3058 Henry: Yes I suppose it is [a year and a half isn’t it?]

3059 [((laughter))

3060 Anna: Yes I know.

3061 Henry: It flies by doesn’t it?

3062 Anna: Yes.

3063 Henry: You’re from the capital city um What about your family background then? Did your parents go to uni?

3065 Anna: Yes they did both of them but I think they went to uni when they were around thirty so they weren’t as young as I am now [when they went to uni]

3068 Henry: [oka'] [Right so they went to uni before they had kids and all that sort of thing then?]

3070 Anna: Yeah yeah

3071 Henry: So you’re sort of following in their footsteps in a way by going to uni yourself then?

3073 Anna: =Yeah somehow [((laughs))]

3074 Henry: [Did they encourage you to go?]
Anna: =Yeah (.) yeah (.) definitely. Well (.) it was my decision in the end (.) but they just made sure I knew about the possibilities.

Henry: mm (.) okay then (.) How old are you (.) if you don’t mind me asking?

Anna: Twenty. Yes (.) I forgot to mention.

Henry: yu- that’s okay. (1) So (.) cou[l]d you tell me a little bi:t abou::t erm (.) the process that led up to your decision to stay in the UK? You would have been eighteen (.) getting on close to finishing school?

Anna: Yeah.

Henry: What sorts of things were going through your mind at that point?

Anna: Well (.) I’d wanted to be an architect from since I was like (.) ten years old=

Henry: =okay

Anna: so I started to search about different architectural schools (.) not only in my home countr[y]. Sheffield here was the most intere[st]ing one because (.) Im dunno it had that focus on ‘Environmental Design’ (.) and I was really into saving the planet and helping the people you know (.) It was just like the perfect choice.

Henry: Yes (.) so it was something about the underlying value [of the] course (.) then (.) and about co[nserv]ation that really caught your eye?

Anna: [yeah] [yeah] [yeah]

Henry: so a lot goes through your mind (.) then- we walked into this buildin[gl]. A lot goes through your mind about how it’s designed (.) [what goes on (.) is it] sustainable (.) what’s the e[nerg]y efficiency (.) and that sort of [stuff]?

Anna: [yeah ((laughter)) ] [yeah]

Henry: a:w (.) that’s great. so (.) so it was really more to do with the course itself tha- than where it was?

Anna: yeah yeah yeah

Henry: Ri:ght (.) okay (.) that’s interesting.

Anna: I even started to like (.) lear:n French (.) just in ca:se.

Henry: wha- (.) there was another course in France that you might have gone to instead (.) then?

Anna: Yes (.) but this one is better (.) I think (.) for me.

Henry: Yeah (.) but was the French one an insurance choice (.) then (.) like if this one didn’t work out (.) then you would go there?

Anna: er:m no↑ the insurance choice was in UK as well ((lau[ghter]))
Henry: all went wrong (.) you would go to France (.) then?

Anna: Yeah yeah

Henry: okay. Were you always set then (.) on moving away from Romania to study (.) then? Was that something that went through your mind? You were saying that there were the UK courses and then there was also France. You didn’t want to stay in Romania?

Anna: Well (.) not really. Mainly because of the course and because the educational system is a bit different (1) like (.) at least here (.) someone is listening to your opinion (.) and I’m really interested in talking to people (.) not just studying (.) reading from books and that’s it.

Henry: [mm] That’s interesting. So=

Anna: =I was studying for two years to go to a university in Romania. Then (.) after two years (.) I was like (.) “Okay (.) I’m not going to do this (.)” because I did not like the lecturers and stuff like that. I really didn’t like them. I was like (.) “Okay [(laughter)] I’ll go somewhere else.”]

Henry: [yeah]

[(laughter)] Could you tell me a bit more about that (.) then? What sorts of vibes were you getting from them when you were talking to them?

Anna: I don’t know. th- they (.) they were looking at me as if I’m just like (.) another student. “We have thousands of students and you’re just one of them”=

Henry: =Yeah

Anna: Then (.) u::m (.) I think almost the same thing happened when I tried to get a place in France. They were having like (.) the same attitude. Here (.) it was so different because everyone was so friendly and I could ask questions (.) which was really important for me because obviously (.) I wanted to know more about the course (.) the people (.) the staff and things like that. Here at Sheffield (.) they were really (.) really friendly.

Henry: So you came for an open day (.) then (.) did you=

Anna: =No (.) I didn’t.

Henry: No. It was just (.) “Apply (.) got it (.) came straight here (.)” and that was it?

Anna: er yeah (.) I gave er (.) I made like fifty calls or something=

Henry: =Wow. You hit the ground running then really

Anna: Yes. They were really nice. I requested a Skype interview because I wanted to ask more questions about the course (.) and they were really
happy about that. That guy was so happy. He was so enthusiastic about the
whole thing=

Henry: aw: that’s what you want to hear (. ) isn’t it?=

Anna: =Yeah yeah=

Henry: =aw (. ) that’s great. (. ) When you- um (. ) were applying (. ) was it just a
simple matter of (. ) you were given a conditional offer (. ) then (. ) and you
were just waiting for your [results?] I was almost sure I was going to go to the UK.

Henry: Okay (. ) you were always sure=

Anna: =Yeah

Henry: so wh- if you cou- go take your mind back (. ) obviously (. ) it’s a year and a
bit ago so it might b- be a bit tough to begin with (. ) but if you could just
take your mind back to when you got your results and you knew that you
were going to come to the UK (. ) was there anything that (. ) you started to
prepare yourself for? Obviously (. ) it would have involved some movement
(. ) wouldn’t it?

Anna: Yeah. I knew some things about the British culture and so on. I was (. )
think I was a bit too confident about my English skills (. ) which weren’t
that good (. ) but I started to research like er (. ) the living costs and stuff like
that because I wasn’t aware of those kinds of thing. I didn’t really do that
much research. I just packed my stuff and came here. ((laughter)) I was (. ) I
thought I was prepared for any kind of situation (. ) but I wasn’t=

Henry: =okay. There are a couple of things I’d love to pick up there. You were
saying (. ) to begin with (. ) about British culture. What sorts of things did
you expect or did you think you you know=

Anna: =I think it was exactly as I was expecting it (. ) like with people on the street
(. ) nice staff in the coffee shops (. ) and stuff like that.

Henry: okay um (. ) yeah (. ) because you were saying that you were expecting what
the British culture was like. Was this how people acted or in terms of what
sorts of things=

Anna: =It was (. ) “What do they like to do and to eat?” and stuff like that=

Henry: =okay=

Anna: =because it was quite different to what we used to eat (. ) do and stuff like
that.

Henry: Okay. There was something else in your answer (. ) then (. ) that interested
me as well. I’m trying to think now. Could you repeat the last bit of what
you said? Sorry=

Anna: =About how (. ) I prepared for my experience.
Henry: Yes (. ) so you were saying that you felt quite confident with English?

Anna: Ye:ah.

Henry: What actually happened when you arrived (. ) then? Were you surprised by↑=

Anna: =They were more informal than I thought they would be with their spoken English and stuff like that. Then (. ) the Yorkshire accent was just mad.

Henry: Was it? (laughter)

Anna: Yeah (laugh) Now (. ) I like it. I really like it now.

Henry: It was hard to penetrate what they were sayin-

Anna: Yeah (. ) something like that.

Henry: um (. ) does that have anything to do with the accent that you were taught when you were learning English in Romania? Could that have had something to do with it?

Anna: I don’t think so cos (. ) because I had been taught in my high school a standard British accent. It’s just that the words were too fancy (. ) formal and stuff like that.

Henry: okay (. ) um (. )When you were saying that you were preparing to come and you were looking at accommodation (. ) what sorts of things were going through your mind with the accommodation (. ) then? Was there anything in particular that you wanted that you had set your mind to?=  

Anna: =Yeah I wanted a shared one because I had no friends here. I was on my own. I wanted to meet someone and make friends (. ) so I started to look for shared houses. Then (. ) I found a website from the main University website with University accommodation. I was like (. ) “Okay (. ) these guys are going to be students with me↑ (. ) so (. ) yes (. ) I think I should go there”=  

Henry: =Was it done through the University (. ) the shared houses (. ) then?

Anna: Yeah

Henry: Did you have any idea who you wanted to live with? did you=

Anna: =No (. ) it was completely random.

Henry: Totally random? How did that turn out for you (. ) then?

Anna: Really bad.

Henry: Quite bad?

Anna: Yeah.

Henry: Why was that (. ) then?

Anna: I lived with three other people: two boys and one other girl. uh (. ) She was from London (. ) and then one of the boys was from Cambridge. The other
was from Liverpool. I think. He had a weird accent but he was really funny. When I got there it was really late at night and they were having some party and I joined them. It was really nice. We were talking about stuff and things. Two days after that party one of them thought about asking me where I was from. you know cos of yeah When I said “Romania” they were like “Oh okay” and they suddenly stopped talking to me=

Henry: =Really?

Anna: It was so weird. Every time I went to the kitchen to cook something if I didn’t say “Hi” they wouldn’t like notice that I was in there and stuff like that. But I didn’t really get upset. I was like “I’m going to be patient. I’m going to try” you know. In the end I think we’re friends somehow. We started talking about four months after I moved in. It was a bit sad at the beginning.

Henry: mmm. That must have been hard for you then just moving over and then=

Anna: =Yes because like I had this idea “I’m going to meet new friends and like well most of them will be friendly” and stuff like that but it wasn’t like that.

Henry: mm so looking back then how do you make sense of that now in terms of What was that about for you?

Anna: I dunno what to say. Maybe they were just not used to in England. I don’t know what to say.

Henry: Have you stayed in contact with them?

Anna: Yeah [I’m talking to] them. and talking to them I just had to be patient and wait for them to like accept my situation.

Henry: [mm talking] and it’s interesting isn’t it because you’re saying that it was you that had to be patient and they would come around to it rather than you being patient that moving here you’d be able to adapt and settle in?

Anna: Yeah=

Henry: =It’s interesting that you put it that way around isn’t it and that they needed to adapt to it?

Anna: Yes: I felt like I was doing my best because I wasn’t like judging them or stuff like that but it was weird. Every time they were going to the laundry room they were locking their doors and stuff like that. It made me feel really awkward but I wasn’t doing that thing because it was pointless I mean yeah so=

Henry: =It’s an interesting story.

Anna: Yes.
Henry: That’s one of the next questions I was going to ask about initial experiences you had when arriving. Can you think of any other things that - not necessarily wei- ones like what you just said about your flatmates (.) but when you’re first arriving (.) you’re settling in and getting a sense of where you are now (.) is there anything that you can remember as being particularly poignant in your memories?

Anna: I don’t think so. I think this is the main one.

Henry: That was the main one?

Anna: Yes (.) because every time I’m thinking about last year when it happened (.) this is the first thing that comes into my mind yeah

Henry: What about on your course (.) then (.) in terms of people that you met on your course? With your lecturers (.) you were saying that the lecturers were really useful when you were applying?

Anna: Yes (.) they were really nice. I just love them. the- (.) mostly (.) there are British people on my course. and (.) there are only three international people with myself. At the beginning it was the same (.) and now (.) it’s worse (.) I think.

Henry: In what way?

Anna: It’s just that everyone is (.) nice to you and then kind only when they need stuff. And it’s really weird. Last year (.) and I think it was the end of the second semester (.) I was just in the studio working. You know when you’re studying Architecture (.) everyone is in the studio and you’re supposed to help each other?

Henry: Yes.

Anna: so it was the huge group and then the three of us (.) which was really weird.

Henry: Ah (.) a bit lonely?=

Anna: =Yes. It was a bit weird. Some of them were just like talking about Romanian people and saying really rude stuff and (.) I was there and I could hear them. I dunno. I think they just moved on (.) or I hope so.

Henry: In those particular instances (.) then (.) was this something that you challenged or was this something where um (.) like you said before (.) you were being patient with it?

Anna: Yes (.) maybe it challenged me (.) because you know (.) it’s easier to make progress when you work as a huge group. I had to study more and I had to catch up on my own. Which (.) I think it was better. This helped me a lot because I actually got big marks and so on. But then (.) they said (.) “How can a stupid Romanian girl have huge marks?”I was like (.) “What’s wrong with you people?”Maybe it was because of the competition (.) because it’s a very competitive area. I don’t know what to say=
Henry: Yes (.). I wonder (.). perhaps (.). if (.). about what you’re saying (.). it’s more to do with them and how they see competition rather than how (.). anything to do with you=

Anna: =Yeah (.). I think it’s just this way.

Henry: So what about (.). comparing then to now (.). then (.). do you find it’s much easier to work now or do you still find some of those challenges?

Anna: Yes (.). cos like (.). I’m friends with some of them (.). but the others are just worse than they were at the beginning.

Henry: Worse?

Anna: =Yeah

Henry: =Yeah

Anna: It’s just like some of them friendly and some of them are not.

Henry: =yeah (.). I can see what you’re saying in that you don’t understand why they think that (.). but let’s say we’re in a situation ur (.). where someone says that to you. What would you say back to that? What sorts of things come to your mind as far as what you are entitled to say to them? (1) Does that make sense?

Anna: No: not really ((laughter))=

Henry: =Sorry (.). I’m thinking as I’m saying (.). you see. um (.). If I were one of those students here (.). what sorts of things go through your mind if I’m saying that you’re not entitled to be a student rep? Has your view changed over time to be more assertive about what you can and can’t do (.). or is it something where (.). like you were saying (.). you’re friends with the students that stay and then you just stick with that?

Anna: I don’t know. I’m still trying to talk to those people. I’m doing my best and I’m doing my part (.). but I can’t tell them (.). “Do your part because I’ve done mine.”It’s your idea=

Henry: =I see what you mean (.). yeah
Anna: I don’t know. Maybe it’s their education. I don’t know what to say.

Henry: Of course it’s difficult (.). Isn’t it to ponder why people say the things they do? Yeah it’s difficult (.). Isn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: So aside from the more curious characters on your course (.), how do you find life in the UK more generally (.)?

Anna: Oh (.). I think it’s nicer than Romania. I sunno. Maybe it’s because of me moving (.). But I feel that I have more responsibilities than I had when I was back home.

Henry: Yeah (.). So you feel like it gives you more of a chance to do your own thing (.). I suppose?

Anna: Yeah.

Henry: That’s moving out of home (.). I suppose (.). As much as anything (.). Isn’t it?

Anna: Yeah. Apart from my flatmates and course mates (.), everyone is so nice and kind.

Henry: And what about erm (.). If I could go back to your family (.), again (.), and your parents (.), in terms of when you said about how nice it feels to be independent (.), did they look after you quite a lot when you were at home (.). Then?=

Anna: =No (.). Not really. It just feels different here.

Henry: Can you expand on that and why it may feel different?

Anna: Because (.). Maybe it’s because of the society and of the way people talk to you on the street and help each other. Yes (.). Maybe that’s way. I don’t know. I’m not sure.

Henry: Do you stay in touch with them?

Anna: My family?

Henry: Yes.

Anna: Yes (.). Obviously. ((laughter))

Henry: Well (.). I was just wondering. Is it a regular thing? Every night or is it just every now and again when you have time?

Anna: We text each other every day (.). But it’s not for=

Henry: =It’s just that fitting them in your hours of work?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: That’s fair enough. Obviously (.). With the Uni experience (.). Some people approach it like (.). “I’m just going to freeze them off for a little while. Not for ages (.). But just long enough that I can get on (.). That I don’t have to rely
people have a really close relationship and they get closer when they move away. I’m just curious I suppose of when you’ve got a continental divide. You’re at the other ends of Europe aren’t you?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: How are they finding it? Do they find it difficult?

Anna: My parents?

Henry: Yes.

Anna: A bit because I’m an only child.

Henry: Okay that changes it doesn’t it because you’re their baby?

Anna: Yes. Suddenly they are completely worrying about me.

Henry: If anything it’s you trying to “I’m okay. Just let me do it”? ((laughter))

Anna: Yes something like that. ((laughter))

Henry: Oh that’s fair enough. You say you’ve had really good experiences meeting new people here. Do you do a lot of things outside of uni when you meet people then?

Anna: Yes I play tennis.

Henry: Do you play it every week then?

Anna: I used to but this semester is so demanding that I=

Henry: =You just don’t have the time?

Anna: Yes I went to some basketball sessios because I’m really into sports.

Henry: Yes it sounds like it.

Anna: Then I just went to random events. I think I met around 9 or 10 British people who speak Romanian.

Henry: Wow.

Anna: It was so weird. They were like “Where are you from?” I was like “I’m from Romania.” They were saying “Hello. How are you?” in Romanian. It was really nice.

Henry: Oh that’s great.

Anna: Yes most of them I think were really good and they had a proper accent. It was a bit weird. I asked one of them “Why have you decided on studying Romanian?” They were like “We have Romanian friends
and it sounded interesting. We wanted to know more about the language
and the culture.” Yes (. ) so that was really nice.

Henry: That’s a pleasant experience (. ) I suppose (. ) isn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: They’re people that played tennis and basketball (. ) then (. ) when you’ve
met those people or is this just a round-up of the things you’ve been to?

Anna: Most of them were asking me about teaching them Romanian. They were
like (. ) “Teach us some words. Teach us to do something. Cook some
Romanian meal for us.” They were asking a lot of questions. They
wanted to know lots of things about Romanian people (. ) culture and stuff
like that.

Henry: Do you cook quite a lot of Romanian food (. ) then?

Anna: I do (. ) yes.

Henry: Other people I’ve spoken to don’t tend to do it as much.

Anna: Really?

Henry: Yes. I’m just interested in that. Is it something that you quite like to↑?=

Anna: =Maybe it’s just something that keeps my mind away from the project. I’m
working from home and I feel like having a 30-minute break. Then (. ) I go
and cook something and can go back to my study.

Henry: It sounds like it’s quite therapeutic for you (. ) then (. ) and it gives you a
chance just to get away from it for a bit?

Anna: Yes (. ) a bit.

Henry: Obviously (. ) with your Architecture (. ) you have crits (. ) don’t you (. )
where you have someone that comes and scrutinises what you work on a
wall?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I have had some friends that did Architecture (. ) so I imagine it’s
comparable to some extent. How have you found those experiences (. )
especially early on (. ) obviously (. ) when you were saying you felt less
confident when you arrived with your English? Is that a particular angle
that you found (. ) being put on the spot↑?

Anna: No (. ) not really. I was okay with that.

Henry: You found that okay?

Anna: Yes (. ) just more like general face-to-face conversations.

Henry: I suppose (. ) because you love your course (. ) that helps (. ) doesn’t it?
((laughter))
Anna: Yes. Crits were really nice. At the beginning (.) I didn’t put in that much effort because I had been enrolled in a two-year course for Architecture and I was a bit more prepared than the others. Then (.) I realised that I still needed to improve my skills and my knowledge. Yes (.) it was easy at the beginning. I still think it’s easy. I don’t know why. I don’t know if you know (.) but we have high school and college together as some sort of four-year degree. For that one (.) I did Maths and Computer Science (.) and it was really hard (.) so this one feels a lot easier.

Henry: Yes (.) do you use AutoCAD?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I imagine if you’ve done Maths (.) there is quite a lot of=

Anna: =It’s not only knowing about AutoCAD (.) because Architecture is about solving problems (.) and if you do Maths (.) when you’re doing Maths (.) you’re solving problems. That’s why I found it easier.

Henry: Yes (.) I suppose when you’re trying to fit things in certain spaces and you’ve got to?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.) I can see what you mean. It helped prepare you quite a lot (.) your earlier schooling (.) then?

Anna: Yes. I think up to that stage of education (.) Romania is really good (.) but afterwards (.) it’s just a waste of time. That’s just my personal opinion.

Henry: Of course (.) yes. Like you said at the start (.) it was never an option to stay in Romania (.) then?

Anna: It was in the beginning (.) but as I did more and more research (.) I found that I didn’t want to go there anymore.

Henry: What would have been the options for you (.) then? You would have stayed in the capital (.) presumably (.) then?

Anna: Yes (.) I think so.

Henry: Obviously (.) it’s all (.) “What could I have done?” Obviously (.) you made a particular decision (.) but it’s interesting.

Anna: I’m that type of person who is putting a lot of effort into what they are doing (.) and I felt like my effort wouldn’t be appreciated enough or criticised enough in Romania at something like university level. Yes (.) I just decided (.) “I can do something better with my effort.”

Henry: Yes (.) I can remember you saying at the start. It’s this sense that you just go through it and you want to be noticed either way. You just muddle through it. Whereas (.) here (.) you’re recognised.

Anna: Yes.
Henry: At least at uni or even beyond (.) is being valued and recognised something that is important to you in what you do?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I suppose you want to go on to do Architecture (.) then (.) as a profession?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Isn’t there a Master’s that you do afterwards (.) like a top-up thing?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Is that something that you’re interested in doing?

Anna: I think you need to have some job experience before you go to the Master’s (.) so I’m not sure. If you have a good portfolio (.) you can go for the Master’s (.) but I don’t know. I definitely want a Master’s (.) yes.

Henry: You want to be able to call yourself an architect at the end of it (.) then?

Anna: Yes (.) exactly. Yes (.) I really like studying Architecture.

Henry: As far as the immediate plans are concerned (.) then (.) obviously (.) you’re taking on your second year now (.) aren’t you?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Is it that once you’re finished (.) to try and find a job in the UK? Is that what you’re thinking (.) then?

Anna: I don’t know. Honestly (.) I will maybe search for some internships in Switzerland or France. I don’t mind going somewhere else because I just want more experience. Do you see what I mean? I don’t mind moving. I don’t mind going somewhere else.

Henry: Yes (.) so you’re quite open-minded to that side of things (.) then?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Presumably (.) you’re quite confident with your French as well (.) then?

Anna: Well (.) I was (.) but I haven’t practised in a long time.

Henry: You’re willing to learn (.) I suppose?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: It’s interesting because (.) if you don’t mind me saying (.) you almost don’t seem to be bothered by national boundaries. You just seem to be (.) “I’m quite happy to flow around and get on with it.”

Anna: I just want to know and see as many things as I can see.

Henry: At this point (.) I’d just like to ask a few broader questions about the UK and about how you think about the UK (.) because (.) obviously (.) that’s where we are at the moment. You’d have seen on the news (.) I imagine (.) quite a lot of stuff about Romania?
Anna: No (.). not really.

Henry: You’ve not?

Anna: No (.). I’m not watching news.

Henry: You don’t watch it at all?

Anna: Yes (.). I’m reading some newspapers (.). but (.). I’m aware (.). to a certain extent (.). about some stuff.

Henry: Sorry (.). it’s probably presumptuous of me to assume that you have (.). Obviously (.). I monitor it because that’s simply what I do. As a researcher (.). you presume people are more involved in the things=

Anna: =Yes.

Henry: Do you have any thoughts (.). generally (.). about the way that British people talk about migration or the way that it’s debated? Is it something that you’ve ever given much thought about?

Anna: Not really (.). but I think most of the British people I’ve met are just okay with migration because some of them migrated some years ago and then came back to the UK. Yes (.). I think most of them are open-minded when it comes to migration.

Henry: Obviously (.). Romania and Bulgaria recently gained accession into the EU and they could move around freely. That was something that was talked about quite a lot in the UK. If you moved here a year ago (.). that would have been the end of 2012. Is that right? Oh (.). no. It would have been 2013 (.). wouldn’t it?

Anna: Yes (.). 2013.

Henry: Yes (.). the end of 2013 (.). so January would have been not far away. When you were coming here (.). the months preceding would have led up to=

Anna: =Oh (.). you mean with the jobs and=

Henry: =Well (.). in terms of when 1st January 2014 happened. It meant that people could move around freely without job visas or anything like that.

Anna: Oh (.). yes (.). so it was for jobs? No (.). I didn’t talk about that one.

Henry: Is it something that occurred to you when you were looking?

Anna: No (.). not really (.). because I was only focusing on my education. I think it’s quite an important reason for most Romanian people: to come here (.). the way things were. Yes (.). I think so. When you’re back home and people are talking about going abroad to work and stuff like that (.). I think there are more people talking about going abroad to work rather going abroad to study.

Henry: Obviously (.). like you say (.). you don’t follow the news very much. Even if it just newspapers or the things people talk about (.). about the way that it’s talked about or the sorts of people that are being talked about (.). is there
anything about it that seems odd or that sticks out at you? As someone who
has moved here (.) obviously (.) you have that different perspective.

Anna: Yes (.) I see what you mean. Almost every time I was reading an article in a
newspaper about Romanian people (.) they only had negative impressions. I
don’t get why. Well (.) I actually get why (.) but it’s not like all of the
people are like that and stuff. I don’t really mind.

Henry: What about in terms of you saying you could see why? Could you expand
on that a little bit? You know you were saying ( .) “I can see why ( .)” for
that side of it? What side can you see there?

Anna: I think most people are talking about gypsies. I’ve recently been to Italy ( .)
and ( .) actually ( .) I think there are more gypsies there than in our country
( .) but people don’t talk about the Italian gypsies. I don’t know. Before
Romanians came to the UK ( .) there were some people from Poland
working here ( .) so I think they had the same attitude.

Henry: Yes ( .) it does seem to be a historical thing whenever there is a new load of
people.

Anna: I don’t really think it’s about Romanian people. It’s just a general attitude.
It could have been people from Switzerland ( .) Norway or ( .) I don’t know.

Henry: It’s just panicking?

Anna: Yes ( .) I think so.

Henry: Does that have any bearing on how you see the British in a general way?

Anna: No ( .) I don’t think so.

Henry: You were telling me your experiences have been really positive?

Anna: Yes ( .) I have a very positive attitude towards British people.

Henry: It seems like it’s only the minority of people that you’ve had a weird
experience with ( .) like the people you lived with or the people on your
course. It seems like ( .) generally ( .) they’re in a minority.

Anna: Yes ( .) I think so ( .) at least from my experience ( .) or I was just lucky. I
don’t know. (laughter)

Henry: When you were saying about perhaps moving to France or Switzerland ( .)
as a really general thing ( .) with your ability to move around ( .) do you
think that should be a right and that we all have a right to move around? Is
it something where ( .) perhaps ( .) you think it should be controlled
according to what skills or education you’ve got or what sort of work is out
there available?

Anna: Oh ( .) that’s a tough question. I don’t think it should be controlled ( .) but I
think that every country should make sure that they have a proper
education. After all ( .) it’s about education. I don’t know. It’s just my
opinion.
Henry: You think if everyone has got a similar standard then it wouldn’t be a problem who moves around where because everyone is at a similar=  
Anna: =Sort of.  
Henry: It sounds like what you were saying earlier. You like the idea that you can just move around and experience things rather than having to fill out forms and having to tackle that side of it.  
Anna: Yes (.) and it’s a bit sad (.). when you compare the level of education of people from the UK to that of ones from Romania (.). where it’s a huge difference. That’s a bit sad. Maybe that’s why people don’t like Romanians. I don’t know. I’m just saying.  
Henry: When you say (.) ‘it’s a bit sad’ (.) is it something where you feel like it should be challenged?  
Anna: I think it’s just about Romania developing more in this field.  
Henry: I suppose Romania’s history in that sense is really important (.). then (.) isn’t it?  
Anna: Yes (.) it is.  
Henry: There is only so much we can say about a country that has only been existing as it is for 20 years.  
Anna: Yes (.). I know.  
Henry: Is that something that you ever think about? It’s something you probably would have studied from school (.). isn’t it (.). growing up?  
Anna: Yes.  
Henry: I suppose it would have all been making up the history as you go along really (.). in a way (.). wouldn’t it?  
Anna: Yes.  
Henry: Is that something your family ever speak about at all?  
Anna: Yes (.). especially because I ask a lot of questions about (.). “How was it before the revolution in 1989?”  
Henry: What sorts of things do they say?  
Anna: They say the difference is huge. They feel more independent. They don’t feel controlled anymore. I don’t know what to say.  
Henry: No (.). of course. Obviously (.). neither of us were born then.  
Anna: Yes (.). they prefer it this way (.). the way things are going now rather than how it was before.  
Henry: I suppose (.). also (.). it meant that you could go away and study somewhere else? For them (.). is that a good thing because (.). “We can’t keep her (.).”
then? ((laughter)) Since moving do you think you’ve adapted to the UK life quite successfully then?

Anna: Yes I think so. I think I’ve adapted better than in Romania actually.

Henry: Really?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: In what sorts of ways? Could you expand on that? Take your time. We’re not in any rush. These are hard questions.

Anna: I think it was mainly about the people like I said before. People are more friendly here so you can express yourself a bit more. I don’t feel that here people are so judgemental as they are back in Romania. It’s my experience. I have some Romanian friends and their experience is just the other way around.

Henry: If I’m interpreting this right if your environment is positive and people want to talk and engage=

Anna: =It’s all about the society and the people at least for me.

Henry: Yes I’m interested. In terms of what you’re saying about back in Romania people aren’t as keen to talk to each other then? Is that the general sense that you had growing up?

Anna: Well they are but it doesn’t feel that friendly. Sometimes it feels as if they have some sort of obligation to talk to you and to answer your questions.

Henry: People don’t seem as happy about it? They’re just doing it because they have to?

Anna: Yes they seem grumpy.

Henry: I understood earlier when you were saying “I don’t know why someone British would say that.” Obviously growing up in Romania it might have more of a bearing on this particular angle. Why do you think people would be grumpy or feel obligated but not want to?

Anna: I think they started to be grumpy 20-something years ago. When you can go anywhere and see how the other people are living and stuff like that when you go back to your country and it’s one century Yes I don’t know. Maybe it’s just about their way of living.

Henry: Do you think perhaps in time it will get easier for people then as things catch up a bit?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I don’t know what it’s like for you. Do you go back home very often?

Anna: Yes I do or my parents come to visit me.

Henry: They come to visit you?
Anna: Yes.

Henry: Oh (.) okay. That’s interesting. Do they stay in a hotel in town (.) then?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Which way around do you prefer it? Do you prefer going back home?

Anna: I think it’s both.

Henry: You like both? You just like to see them?

Anna: Yes (.) but (.) sometimes (.) I prefer going back home because it’s not as if my whole family is going to come here (.) with my grandparents and everyone.

Henry: No (.) of course (.) because it means that you can see everyone (.) then.

Anna: Yes.

Henry: It’s also (.) to some extent (.) on your terms as well (.) isn’t it (.) because (.) then (.) you can go out (.) see other people and do other things rather than look after your parents when they’re here? ((laughter))

Anna: Yes (.) I know that. ((laughter))

Henry: It’s interesting that you say they come to visit you. They must be quite keen on experiencing life here. Is it a few weeks or so when they stay or is it just a few nights?

Anna: No (.) just a few days.

Henry: Just a few days? It’s not far on a plane (.) is it?

Anna: Two and a half hours.

Henry: Yes (.) it’s not too far (.) is it?

Anna: No (.) that’s right.

Henry: I always think it’s further away than it is. I’m not very good at geography. I’m interested in what you say about expressing yourself. Do you feel (.) when people move to different places (.) people should be able to be who they want to be and just express themselves (.) or do you think people should try and settle in and become more like the society they move to?

Anna: I think it depends (.) because everyone has their own way (.) themselves. I think most of my Romanian friends just came here and they were like (.) “Okay (.) I’m never going to go back. I just want to say here.” I’m always asking them (.) “If you came here (.) why don’t you go somewhere else (.) experience more (.) and maybe if you really like it here (.) come back after a few years or a few months?” Yes (.) from my experience so far (.) the UK is the best (.) I think.
Henry: In terms of the question then do you feel like you should be open-minded to be moving around but still be yourself? That seems to be what you're saying then. You be yourself experience different things and change as you go through it?

Anna: Yes but people anyway tend to want to settle down somewhere.

Henry: Do you have any idea where you'd like to settle down?

Anna: At this point no.

Henry: It sounds like you're eager just to get on and see what there is out there really.

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Can you think of any other places that you'd like to visit? You were saying about France and Switzerland?

Anna: I've never been outside Europe and I really want to go to Asia.

Henry: Asia?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Whereabouts in Asia? It's quite a big place isn't it? ((laughter))

Anna: Everywhere.

Henry: Everywhere?

Anna: Yes I think.

Henry: Oh wow It's quite a big place to tick off the list really isn't it? with all the different countries?

Anna: When we're studying our data it's just so crazy when you see what they're doing out there. We just want to go there see and experience it ourselves.

Henry: It's places like Dubai I suppose and all the tall buildings there?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I suppose St Basil's Cathedral in Russia? That's quite a bit of an architecture isn't it? Then the Great Wall of China? There are all sorts aren't there? There is so much.

Anna: Yes I know.

Henry: They're the sorts of things you want to see: those great big monuments and tall buildings?

Anna: Yes. No just about experiencing. I think at some point when I'm going to be older I'll have this feeling of wanting to settle down somewhere.

Henry: But wait until you feel it?
Anna: Yes.

Henry: I don’t know if there is anything you can say about this (.) but you’re obviously really passionate about architecture. That’s what is always coming out: that you’re really passionate. What is it about a building? What interests you about them?

Anna: I don’t know. It just makes you feel a certain way. Some people listen to some piece of music and it makes them feel a certain way (.) and the same happens to me when I am seeing a building or when I’m walking into a building.

Henry: What sorts of buildings do that for you? Is there a particular type of building or is it a certain era or a certain design?

Anna: I open my mind to everything (.) but I generally like open spaces.

Henry: You like this sort of place (.) then (.) with all the glass?

Anna: Yes (.) but this room (.) I really don’t like. (laughter) It feels crowded.

Henry: In terms of what? Because you can see everyone everywhere (.) with all the glass and you can see all the rooms?

Anna: Even for this room or what?

Henry: Sorry (.) yes. I meant this building (.) but what were you↑?

Anna: It’s just because every time I am seeing a new building I like (.) I am trying to think of what the architect was trying to do and what was he or she thinking about. It’s really challenging. People express themselves through paintings and books (.) but I think that architecture is harder because when you see a building (.) you can’t be sure that he wants to talk about how the wind blows into that building or stuff like that.

Henry: It’s tough (.) I suppose (.) because it’s artistic but it’s also functional. Whereas a painting is just artistic (.) isn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Obviously (.) it does a function because it sits in a living room and it looks nice. That is a function. I suppose with a building (.) it has to do certain things as well. I can see why it’s challenging (.) really. What about in the UK - because we have quite a lot of old buildings here - in terms of the old (.) medieval (.) gothic type?

Anna: My architectural experience in the UK: I think it was the best. When you’re passionate about architecture (.) you want to go everywhere and see everything. I think the UK is the best so far.

Henry: You’ve been to some different places (.) then?

Anna: Yes (.) because it’s not only about having certain buildings. It’s about preserving them and having some moral concerns about=

Henry: =It’s pride (.) I suppose (.) for your heritage (.) isn’t it (.) in a way?
Anna: Yes.

Henry: Yes (. ) I remember you saying at the start about the conservation side. It’s something that appeals to you (. ) the idea that you could go into a job where you’re looking after old buildings and maintaining them (. ) then?

Anna: Yes (. ) that would be nice.

Henry: There are places like (. ) The Heritage Trust (. ) is it? I think it’s the Heritage Trust in the UK. There are organisations that just do that (. ) aren’t there? They just look after the old buildings.

Anna: Yes. I think British people are more sensible (. ) not only when it comes to architecture (. ) but (. ) in general (. ) they’re more sensible about their way of living and doing their jobs.

Henry: It’s an interesting point you raise (. ) I suppose (. ) because if there is one thing that you find quite a lot of (. ) it’s a lot of debate and a lot of drama about countryside (. ) maintaining the countryside and keeping the tranquillity. With all the old buildings (. ) Stonehenge and all these sorts (. ) “We’ve got to keep it as it is. We’ve got to freeze time and maintain it.” There is a real sense of that. I suppose you probably see it a lot with architecture (. ) with all the listed buildings (. ) where you can only do certain things to it because you can’t damage it?

Anna: There was one in Sheffield: Park Hill.

Henry: Park Hill?

Anna: It’s near the train station.

Henry: Which way from the train station?

Anna: As you go up to that hill at the back of the train station.

Henry: I’m trying to think. Is it near the Owen Building (. ) near City Campus? Is it near there?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I’m trying to think. My knowledge of Sheffield is not that good.

Anna: It’s fine. Don’t worry.

Henry: What sort of place is Park Hill?

Anna: It’s a residential area (. ) with flats for people. If you remember (. ) it has coloured glass on the windows (. ) with red (. ) green and yellow.

Henry: No (. ) I don’t know. I’m just interested in what you’re saying about it being a=

Anna: =I really think that British people are more sensible when it comes to everything.
What about when it compares to Romania then? Does Romania have that same sense of ‘sensible’ or that appreciation or desire to maintain old buildings? Is there a similar thing there?

I think they have this but only to a certain extent because when you’re living in a developing country you also have to think about the money. If it’s not suitable for you to keep that building you have to hike=

=There is a tension there? You see a tension between the country wanting to move on and get in the world and preserving its history?

Yes. It’s quite a=

=You take a position that we should try and look after those buildings no matter what?

Yes (kind of.

It’s interesting because it’s something that’s quite easy to neglect isn’t it where you’ve come from than just to think of where you’re going to?

Yes.

It’s an interesting thing. I’m just trying to think now we’re talking about buildings. I think it’s really interesting because we experience them every day don’t we?

Yes.

We take them totally for granted. I think with architecture you can actually take a moment and think “What’s going on there?” I can see why you’re passionate because it’s something that is so important. We need buildings and we need good buildings. You certainly know when a building is badly designed don’t you when it doesn’t do the function you want it to?

I hope so.

I don’t know if there is anything else you want to add. We’ve talked about quite a lot really haven’t we? I’m just thinking anything about buildings now. I’m going to go and study Architecture now. You’ve persuaded me. I don’t know if there is anything you want to talk to me about in terms of your experience of moving around and in terms of where you want to be or if there is anything you were expecting to be asked and haven’t been.

When I moved here it was a bit strange because when I met Romanian people they were sticking to each other. Do you see what I mean? I was more like “Let’s have international friends let’s have Romanian friends and let’s have all kinds of friends I know” but they were more sticking to each other and they are still doing that thing.

You see that as perhaps a challenge then: that people feel tempted when they move around to stick to what they know?
Anna: Yes (.) I think so.

Henry: Whereas (.) in your experience (.) it’s almost like what you were saying about moving to different countries. It’s not so much of an issue. Just chat to loads of people (.) just get to know people (.) and be open-minded.

Anna: Yes. Basically (.) it’s all about the experience. I just want to make sure I have as much experience as I can have. It’s about knowledge. It’s not about sticking to Romanian people when we move to the UK just because (.) I don’t know why.

Henry: Feel free to have a think about. Is it something where (.) perhaps (.) your Romanian friends attach a lot of significance to being Romanian?

Anna: Maybe.

Henry: That you have a common language (.) a common culture and that’s what is important? Whereas (.) for you (.) it doesn’t seem like it comes out as strongly (.) because you seem quite keen to=

Anna: =It actually is. I really love my country and I really love Romanian people. I think it’s good for you to experience more. If you make the effort to move here and start from the beginning (.) at least do it properly.

Henry: Rather than just do half of it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.) it’s an interesting point (.) then (.) because it’s flexing the tension. With when you go (.) what are you actually taking with you? Is it your entire culture or is it just enough to get by with what you know (.) like what you were saying about cooking Romanian food is a break for you (.) but then it doesn’t seem to dominate everything you do?

Anna: Yes. I don’t think it’s really a Romanian thing because I’ve met Chinese people sticking together and Indian people sticking together.

Henry: It’s the power of culture (.) I suppose (.) isn’t it (.) and sticking to the familiar?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Is there anything else that you wanted to↑

Anna: I was just wondering: Why are you doing this research?

Henry: Why am I doing it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Well (.) I suppose there are two things about it (.) really. The first thing is (.) as a British person living in the UK (.) over time (.) I’ve become quite aware of how problematic we find movement. Like I said earlier (.) I presumed that you would have been exposed to the amount of coverage in the media and things simply because I’ve been exposed to it all my life. It’s like a ‘perspective’ thing. I suppose it’s not hard to believe (.) but it’s
surprising in some ways. It’s positive (.) really (.) because (.) most of it (.)
you wouldn’t want to read every day. We just simply find it really difficult
to cope with people moving around (.) even though a lot of British people
emigrate. In Spain (.) for example (.) we have an awful reputation for just=

Anna: =Really?

Henry: Places like Benidorm: we’ve made a television programme about it in the
UK (.) but it’s the notion that we go to a place and we populate it like an
English place. They do an English breakfast. It’s tea and all the things that
we want. Spanish-speaking communities are often pushed out and then we
take over. That’s the holiday destination for most people when they retire
(.) but then when it comes to the idea that someone might come here and
live here (.) “You can’t do that.” We seem to have this weird attitude (.) so
as a British person (.) I’m aware of that and I’m trying to think about how
we talk about that and how we make sense of that (.) but in relation to how
people that move here make sense of it. The Romanian focus is quite
arbitrary (.) to be honest (.) because it’s a desire to learn about a group of
people that are moving here as a relatively new phenomenon (.) because (.)
obviously (.) with the Berlin Wall and the more recent EU accession (.) it’s
a relatively new thing. In 20 years (.) if not more recently in the past 5 years
(.) a lot of Romanians have come to live here. Obviously (.) with the work
visas (.) you’ve been able to come for quite a few years (.) but with the
study stuff (.) it’s all happening now. My reasoning (.) really (.) is that just
as far as research goes (.) there is not a lot that is known about (.) “What’s
the experience of people that come to live here?”

Anna: There was this presidential election in Romania two weeks ago (.) and
people from abroad were just going mad about this. They were like (.) “We
really want to go back home.”

Henry: What (.) to vote?

Anna: Yes. Not to vote. Just moving back home for good and for living there.

Henry: What was going on there (.) then? Why were people sparked by the election
(.) then (.) to move back?

Anna: I’m not sure (.) but I think one of the candidates was into the Russian
system. Then (.) the other one was more open to the euro and making
contact with other European countries. People who were living abroad were
like (.) “This country has to continue its development (.) because we would
really like to move back home.” I think most of them find it really hard to
move and leave their families.

Henry: It’s an interesting thing you’re talking about there because=

Anna: =Some of them (.) Sorry?

Henry: No (.) that’s fine. No (.) of course.

Anna: I was talking to some of them. Obviously (.) you adapt to a place when you
are there (.) but they were like (.) “Oh (.) when I’m going to bed (.) I’m still
thinking about my family and my friends in Romania.”
Henry: This is of the people that are studying here (.) is it?

Anna: Some of them are students and some of them are 40 or 50-years-old.

Henry: They’re finding that separation really difficult?

Anna: Yes (.) even after 15 or 20 years (.) they’re still saying the same thing.

Henry: That’s really powerful. I don’t know how you find this (.) but it seems hard to imagine how someone could be carrying on living in that way (.) missing their family so much.

Anna: Yes (.) I know.

Henry: I suppose (.) if that’s the only way you can find work and pay the bills (.) it’s tough (.) isn’t it? What you were saying about the election (.) then (.) it’s almost like there were two ways of facing: towards Europe or towards Russia. It echoes a little bit what has happened in the Ukraine recently (.) doesn’t it? That was what happened there (.) wasn’t it: either further integration with Europe or move towards Russia (.) who supplies all their oil?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: It’s an interesting question because I suppose it’s about (.) “What does it mean to be Romanian? Where do we want to be in the world?” It’s an interesting question (.) isn’t it?

Anna: I think (.) at this moment (.) Romanian people just don’t care. At least since I was born (.) it has been like that. They generally don’t tend to have an opinion. They are like (.) “We just want to be here with happy ever after (.) and that’s it.”

Henry: Not think about other stuff? “Just let us live and be happy”? Yes.

Henry: I suppose it’s about not committing. It’s a fixed position (.) but just a general (.) “Let us be”?

Anna: Yes. It is just because of so many years of communism. They don’t have hope anymore. They’re just like (.) “We just want to be happy and live here.”

Henry: And be left alone?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Do you feel that’s the effect of living in an authoritarian state that is monitoring everyone’s movements. What were they called? Is it the Stasi? That might be a different equivalent (.) but (.) You said that people maybe want to move back. I wonder if one of the particular sides won the election (.) it meant something about the direction the country would go in (.) and that might make them happier living there.
Anna: Yes (.) and people were really worried about the elections (.) because I think in the past 30 or 40 years (.) we knew people just hated immigrants (.) if you see what I mean. Not ‘hated’ (.) but they had that attitude that their place was not there. The new president is German. He’s from a German family (.) but he was born and raised in Romania.

Henry: Yes (.) so he’s like a second-generation immigrant (.) born as a Romanian but family (.) German?

Anna: Yes. I was really surprised.

Henry: That he has managed to get to the top?

Anna: Yes (.) I was very surprised that Romanians actually voted for that guy.

Henry: It’s interesting. What does that say? Is it saying that they’re not bothered about his background (.) or is it that they like his background and that’s part of it? It’s interesting (.) isn’t it?

Anna: I think it says that they’re more open-minded than they were before. The older people: not my grandparents (.) but just grandparents in general and people of 70 or 80-years-old prefer going towards Russia. Maybe it’s just because for more than half of their life (.) they’ve lived in that=

Henry: =It’s what they’ve always known?

Anna: Yes. I was really pleased to see that they have this sense of going to the right direction.

Henry: I suppose when you’re saying (.) ‘right direction’ (.) for you (.) that’s democracy?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: It’s interesting (.) isn’t it (.) because it’s trying to get into the head of someone who would want to live in a regime like that?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I agree with you. It’s how we would see it (.) isn’t it (.) because that’s all we’ve known?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Again (.) it’s what we know (.) but then it feels right (.) that giving people a say. You were saying about the chap who won the election with the German descent and background. What sort of party does he belong to? What sort of politics do they?

Anna: I’m not sure.

Henry: It’s not something like a left (.) a Conservative or a Labour Party?

Anna: I think he switched from one=

Henry: =Oh (.) did he move from one party to another or something?
Anna: I’m not sure. Maybe they joined together. I’m not sure because I was doing a project. I was away so I didn’t really bother that much. I was really busy.

Henry: I was just wondering whether you knew because it also says a lot about where on the spectrum they are as to what they talk about and what the issues are. Then that obviously affects how people want to vote for them.

Anna: The Liberals or something like that. I’m not sure.

Henry: He’s probably promising lots of tax cuts. Is there anything about Romania that you feel like you want to talk about? We’ve talked about the political context. Is there anything about the culture language or anything that at least since moving to the UK that you’ve reflected on more?

Anna: I find the language very hard to learn.

Henry: Is this English?

Anna: Romanian.

Henry: Romanian?

Anna: I’ve studied apart from English French Russian and a bit of Turkish and Romanian seems so hard. Not as a native speaker. I don’t think you’re aware of that but when you have more knowledge about other languages you are like “Whoa this is really hard.”

Henry: You think that even though you’ve learnt English? English is supposed to have a reputation for being hard to learn doesn’t it?

Anna: Really?

Henry: That’s what people have told me. Obviously I don’t know that because English is my mother tongue. Then because we have so many exceptions to the rule and we don’t have a very clear structure for words. You know like with German you have masculine feminine and?

Anna: Yes I know but English is so logical compared to Romanian.

Henry: It doesn’t seem to follow the same rules? Not the same rules but it doesn’t seem to follow a rule system then?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: It’s interesting you say that then. It’s a romance language isn’t it? It’s like Italian French and Spanish then?

Anna: Yes. It’s really weird because we can actually understand when French Italian Spanish and Portuguese people talk but they can’t understand us. (laughter)

Henry: How does that work? That is weird.

Anna: I don’t know. Yes it’s really weird.
Henry: Is that something from your own experience or your own beliefs? Is that something that Romanians value: that their language is a romance language and it’s a Latin language? Is that something that is quite important or ever talked about?

Anna: Yes (. ) I think so. When I used to study ( . ) all the teachers were like ( . ) “Don’t forget that we’re speaking a language which was derived from Latin. ”

Henry: They would make a point of saying it?

Anna: Yes (. ) they would keep on talking about Roman people and Latin stock.

Henry: The history?

Anna: I think they are quite proud.

Henry: It’s interesting. I (. ) personally (. ) was surprised when I was researching it and learning a little bit more. I would have thought it would be a Slavic language (. ) simply because of where in the world Romania sits or the other surrounding countries and the Slavic languages. Is there a border with Greece?

Anna: No.

Henry: There might not be. Obviously (. ) we’ve got the Mediterranean connection (. ) but the rest of it is Slavic (. ) isn’t it? I find it really surprising. It’s like an odd one out. Yes (. ) it was just interesting. From what you said (. ) it does matter?

Anna: Yes. Actually (. ) most people who live in the UK now have lived here for 15 or 20 years. They are all saying (. ) “Oh (. ) I miss my beautiful country.” They are always talking about the landscape and the villages.

Henry: They miss the country?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Are there quite a lot of small villages in Romania (. ) then? Is that more rural?

Anna: I don’t think at the moment (. ) it’s more rural. I haven’t asked them (. ) but I think 30 or 40 years ago (. ) there were more villages than cities and towns.

Henry: It has become more urbanised (. ) I suppose (. ) as it has developed more?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: What about Bucharest (. ) then (. ) as a city growing up in? Obviously (. ) it’s the capital city (. ) so it’s the place to be (. ) isn’t it?

Anna: I really like it. At some point in the 18th or 19th century (. ) people were saying that it resembled Paris. People still stick to that idea.

Henry: Well (. ) understandably. It says good things about it (. ) I suppose (. ) doesn’t it?
Anna: Yes. I really like it. Actually (. ) I feel safer back in Romania than here.

Henry: Is that because of what’s familiar and what’s known to you then (. ) do you think?

Anna: No (. ) not really. When I’m thinking about criminals and people being robbed and so on (. ) I think Romania is safer. It just feels safer. I think in the past three months (. ) five or six of my friends were robbed in Sheffield?

Henry: Really?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Wow. In one go? Was it all part of the same thing?

Anna: No.

Henry: Separately?

Anna: Separate (. ) yes.

Henry: Gosh. That’s a string of bad luck (. ) isn’t it (. ) all in one go?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Were they all connected or the same person?

Anna: No (. ) not all of them were Romanian (. ) actually.

Henry: It wasn’t like in the same area (. ) someone was going from house to house (. ) robbing?

Anna: Yes. I feel safer being there.

Henry: Understandably (. ) it only takes something like that so close to you to make you realise (. ) “God (. ) it can happen.” It won’t necessarily happen (. ) but it can happen. You say you feel safer. I imagine there is quite a lot to do in the capital (. ) and growing up (. ) there must have been stuff to do all the time. Being an only child (. ) it must have been great for you (. ) having stuff to do every weekend and things?

Anna: Yes. There are so many opportunities (. ) but people are not that involved there as they are here. For example (. ) I went volunteering for a thing for about two years (. ) to help children improve their literacy skills. We had 40 or 50 children (. ) and there were only three hours.

Henry: Wow. This was a voluntary thing?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Wow. That’s intense.

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Oh (. ) gosh. How long were you giving to that? How much time were you committing to it?
It was three hours per week. I think because it was all different topics. One hour for Maths. One hour for studying Romanian and then the other one was just their choice. They were saying “I want to know more about history.” or art. I just helped them. I think and I hope this thing is beginning to grow. My friends from high school when I was talking to them were like: “Okay we’re going to talk later because I’m going to do some volunteering work now.” Yes (.) I think people are starting to realise (.) “We can be involved in lots of things.”

I suppose it’s that community spirit of getting involved and doing things?

Yes.

There is not as much of that then?

No (.) it wasn’t good. Oh (.) 20 or 30 years ago (.) we woke up in the morning (.) we’d go to the job (.) go back home (.) and that was it.

I suppose it’s a cultural thing (.) isn’t it (.) trying to shift people’s habits into thinking more openly about doing stuff?

Yes. I was really surprised because my mother was working in a hospital back home and she asked me if she could give some of my toys to an orphanage (.) which was somewhere in Africa (.) I think. I was really surprised that they were doing those sorts of projects.

That she was thinking about what to do with them?

Yes.

It must have been quite nice for you (.) then (.) what with your volunteering and things (.) to have that? It’s obviously difficult because you’re thinking (.) “What are you getting rid of?” “Let me look at it first.” ((laughter))

Yes. ((laughter))

Nice (.) nonetheless. What does your dad do? You say your mum is a nurse (.) then. What does your dad do?

He’s an engineer. He’s working in construction.

You’ve followed in a similar? Obviously (.) not the same thing (.) but it’s\textup{†}\textsuperscript{=} maybe just a bit because when he was working from home (.) I was always like (.) “Oh (.) what’s this? Why does this fall like that?”

You sound like you were the sort of child that was always asking questions.

Oh (.) yes (.) I’m so annoying. I’m still so annoying. ((laughter))

Yes (.) I was like it quite a lot when I was younger. I was asking questions.

“Why?” “Well (.) why?” “I don’t know why. It just is.” As a child (.) looking back now (.) I think (.) “Oh (.) I feel sorry for them.” “Why is it round?” “Well (.) I don’t know. It just is. I’ve never thought about it before.
and I’m having to answer to a child.” ((laughter)) Do all of your family live in Bucharest?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: You’ve more or less grown up in the same patch and everyone is around you and local?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I suppose you’ve travelled across Romania as you’ve grown up then (.).

Anna: Yes. Every time I’m going back home (.). I’m like (.). “Let’s go somewhere. Let’s visit someplace.”

Henry: You’ve always got an itinerary of what you want to do (.). then?

Anna: Yes (.). because there is always something you can see. There is always something new (.). because it’s quite a huge country. As a surface (.). I mean.

Henry: Yes (.). well (.). much bigger than England is anyway (.). isn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: The other city I know (.). and the participants said they lived just out of it (.).

Anna: Iaşi? It’s the second largest city. I think it’s got two universities.

Henry: Iaşi? Is that it? Sorry. That’s the only city I know of.

Anna: Yes (.). I think that’s my favourite city in Romania.

Henry: Is it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: In terms of things to do (.). I suppose? There must be a lot to do (.). because it’s supposed to be known for all of its cultural history and that (.). isn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Is there anything more you want to talk about? I’m out of questions. If you want to talk to me about any more (.). I’m happy to listen. It’s really interesting to listen to you talk about Romania (.). because (.). obviously (.). like you say (.). you’re really passionate about everything (.). aren’t you?

You’re a very passionate person.

Anna: Yes. I’ve met a few British people who have travelled to Romania. They were so pleased by the landscape (.). but they were saying that people in the villages were a bit grumpy and not that friendly. I think this happens only in the remote areas.

Henry: Yes (.). that aren’t as exposed to all this stuff?
Anna: Yes. Most of them had a really positive idea about Romania and they really enjoyed their trip and experience there.

Henry: Is it a matter of engaging with people in a positive way? Is it that ‘grumpiness’ issue of saying (.) “What do you want?”

Anna: Yes (.) there is that.

Henry: Is it them realising that I’m just here to explore what it’s like and (.) “Welcome”?  

Anna: Yes (.) I think so. I think people (.) when they travel to Romania (.) they really like it because it’s so different than the other countries. It looks savage at some point (.) with the landscapes and everything (.) but because it’s not such a developed country (.) you could still find those beautiful landscapes.

Henry: What (.) untouched by industry?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.) not like Germany or somewhere that has flattened everything and everything has got buildings?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: There are quite a lot of mountains (.) forests and natural scenery (.) then?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: The sorts of things you would want to find on a postcard?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: When you think about a place to grow up in (.) to have that on your doorstep (.) it’s quite nice (.) isn’t it (.) than to live in a more urbanised environment where you’re not exposed to so much green? In the capital (.) it must have been quite nice for you to get out the countryside?

Anna: Yes. I think I spent all of my summers with some of my grandparents because they were living somewhere near the mountains. I was there for three months every summer.

Henry: You must have learnt quite a lot (.) living there as well (.) then (.) because I suppose it would have been a lot more basic living (.) wouldn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Not quite everything at your beck and call (.) with dishwashers and the rest of it? It would have been more basic (.) wouldn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: If you could make a choice (.) then (.) if you were to move back (.) of living in the city or living in the countryside (.) would that be a hard decision for you?
Anna: I think so.

Henry: Yes (.) because you like the benefits of both?

Anna: Yes (.) obviously.

Henry: It’s hard to think (.) really (.) what I prefer. I like the idea that I’m on the edge and I can go to both and get the benefits of both. You don’t want to be in the middle of nowhere and can’t get anywhere. That’s the only thing (.) isn’t it?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: Is it hard to get around in Romania (.) in terms of the roads and the rail links?

Anna: Well (.) I think it’s better with the roads now (.) but 10 or 15 years ago (.) it was awful. I remember my parents talking about a trip when they were going to the sea (.) and it took six hours. Now (.) it takes about 2½ to 3 hours to get there.

Henry: Yes (.) I can imagine the quality of the drive would have been ((laughter))=

Anna: =Yes (.) so terrible (.) but now (.) it’s better.

Henry: To be honest (.) I don’t think it’s very good here (.) really. It would probably be better in Romania (.) as a developing country (.) than it is here. Some of our roads are awful.

Anna: Really?

Henry: Yes. Well (.) I think it’s to do with maintenance and people don’t want to commit the money. “It’s fine if they get done (.) but I’m not paying for it.” ((laughter))

Anna: Yes (.) that’s weird.

Henry: What time are we on?

Anna: No idea.

Henry: I’m quite happy to stop here (.) if you’re happy to do that.

Anna: Yes (.) that’s fine by me.

Henry: Yes? Is that alright?

Anna: Yes.

Henry: I’ll turn off the recorder now. ((transcript ends))
Transcript 5: Marina

Henry: I would like to start going back to before (.) away from any of the migration stuff and just tell me a bit about yourself really. Obviously you are a student at Sheffield. What do you study?

Marina: I am doing MSc in East Asian Business at the moment. I graduated in Psychology in the UK and I have also done a study abroad (.) exchange programme in Japan in 2012. When I went there (.) basically (.) I was doing my course although I didn’t really do my course in Japan. I did more of Japanese language and a lot of other courses that were meant to be related to what I was studying here but actually they weren’t. In practice they weren’t really. And about myself (.) in general I guess I identify myself as an international student (.) not international in terms of the UK definition (.) like standard definitions of EU. But I think it is quite strongly embedded in my identity the fact that I am a student (.) still a student even though I already worked in the UK for a year for example and other reasons for why I would identify myself in other sorts of ways maybe. Yes (.) I don’t know exactly what else.

Henry: Okay (.) yes that is fine. Whereabouts in Romania are you from?

Marina: I am from up North in the country so I am not from the capital. I am from a fairly small town I would say (.) I mean quite small.

Henry: So it was quite a rural lifestyle then (.) sort of countryside and? Is that sort of?

Marina: Yes (.) I mean it was a quiet place. People knew each other (.) all of them being between like a small town and not very developed I would say (.) sometimes. Even though saying that I am not from the capital (.) I spent quite a lot of money because I moved to the UK as soon as I was 18 years old which is the legal age in my country. Saying that (.) even before I moved here I did spend a lot of time in Bucharest which is the capital (.) so I was sort of used to a big city and stuff.

Henry: Yes. So you grew up in what you would say probably quite a quiet (.) everyone knows each other (.) a local place but then you were still quite happy going into the city and experiencing life there then?

Marina: Yes (.) that is right.

Henry: Oh okay then. What about your family background then? Are you the first go to uni or is that? Did your parents go?

Marina: My parents didn’t graduate uni or didn’t finish uni but I think I am lucky to come from a family that has quite a good education (.) like educational background. And I am actually quite lucky to be able to say this but in my town my family was quite well known and at least my grandparents’ family they were quite wealthy as well and I guess that made an impact on my education. Because I was brought up by my grandparents when I was young (.) more or less. I mean I have sort of seen my grandparents as my parents
more than I have seen my parents if that makes sense. So they are the ones who educated me and directed me like more or less. Both of my parents went quite high in university and they had quite good positions when I was young so.

Henry: Okay so it felt quite a natural decision then?

Marina: To go university it did yes. I mean that is a lot about how Romania works as well but I think I don’t know nowadays but the number of students of my age attending university is quite high in Romania I believe.

Henry: In Romania?

Marina: Yes it should be. Because I have checked some statistics on that actually and I know that about I don’t know 20 years ago it was very low which makes sense because of the Communist system but now I think it is supposed to be quite high as compared to other European countries because I don’t know but all my friends and I don’t come from like a big city or the greatest one but there wasn’t really a choice for me. I never ever considered not going. It was like I almost took that for granted it was the next natural stage to take.

Henry: Yes so when you were at school getting close to finishing it just felt like “I’m off to uni then.” That sort of thing?

Marina: Yes. It is like “Oh okay I’m just going to next grade.”

Henry: Yes oh okay and you say that is how your other friends were then as well?

Marina: Yes I think so. Yes obviously. I remember my first year in the UK I worked as a student ambassador you know what that is?

Henry: Yes yes representing the students of the. Was it one year group just the first years was it or the second years?

Marina: I can’t remember.

Henry: Or was it just everyone?

Marina: Yes everyone. I was just working for the union as a student ambassador and we worked with prospective students people that were thinking.

Henry: Oh open days that sort of thing?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Oh I see yes sorry. I thought you meant on the course sometimes you have student ambassadors for the course.

Marina: Oh no.

Henry: But don’t worry about it.

Marina: Well I mean I would do things like that on the course as well but no I am talking about I think that is called course rep and I did that as well.
Henry: You are very productive aren’t you?

Marina: I am quite involved with a lot of things I think or I used to be. And yes I was being a student ambassador in my first year working basically (.) it was a part-time job I had. And we did both open days and we did these school visits where prospective students would come there. At the training sessions (.) we were just so more encouraged to convince to come to university (.) not necessarily to our university which I would have understood (.) it is the case that is why I am paid to get people to come there so the university can grow. But we were like encouraged to convince them to come to university and I was like “Why?” It was so surprising for me the emphasis that was made on that because I thought (.) “That’s just (.)” It was weird (.) it was really weird. I don’t know exactly how to convey it now. Now I am used to it and I know it is important and you need to emphasise that to young people (.) to promote higher education and stuff. But at that point back then for me it was quite (.) “Why would you need to do that? People are already aware that they need to go to university (.) they need to (.)” For me it was something that everyone wishes (.) it was natural for people of my age obviously to want to go.

Henry: Forgive me if this might seem like maybe putting words into your mouth (.) feel free to disagree with it but did it feel like a cultural thing perhaps that it just felt so natural to you that you would value education (.) why does it need to be?

Marina: Oh no you are not putting things into my mouth actually. It is helpful because it helps me develop my ideas. I think it has to. I think it is true that Romanians will be more likely to think like me if that is already where you are heading to.

Henry: Well I suppose it is because what you were saying earlier (.) it felt really natural for you to go to uni so it almost seems like growing up (.) you speaking it for your generation that that is a natural thing that you guys were taught from a young age. The idea of coming here is a course rep and then trying to promote the young people here to go to uni it is sort of like (.) why do you need to? Because it felt natural to you. I suppose I was just putting pieces together maybe. I don’t know what your thoughts are?

Marina: No that makes sense. I do think that it is a cultural thing as well. I think Romanians because of the way our education works and the way we have been sometimes directed by our chosen school and yes (.) Even now (.) look (.) this is a very good example because it is hands-on. You asked me like if (.) you started with this question saying that (.) “Well was it something that you’ve long considered?” And I was like (.) “Oh yes obviously.” I didn’t expect you to ask that. Like as I said now I know what it means and why people keep emphasising that but I still didn’t expect you. I wasn’t surprised this time because you asked. Just to make it clear (.) I wasn’t surprised you asked but I still didn’t think that would be the first question.
Henry: Well I suppose they are little pieces aren’t they and they help make sense of the bigger decisions don’t they? Because they are all little influences aren’t they? If you don’t mind me asking how old are you?

Marina: 23.

Henry: 23 so.

Marina: 5 years here (.) a lot.

Henry: 5 years (.) yes. This might be asking for you to go back in time quite a way but can you describe to me (.) could you relate back to your thoughts that were leading up to? So you were just about to finish school and you knew that you were going to go to uni (.) what made you choose Sheffield? What brought you to that point (.) can you remember?

Marina: You mean what made me choose Essex because that is where I went first.

Henry: Oh Essex (.) that was for your undergraduate and then you came here for your (.) Sorry (.) yes.

Marina: That is alright (.) don’t worry. So what made me choose Essex and made me choose to come to the UK as well?

Henry: Yes (.) all those (.) yes.

Marina: Well I guess it is a bit (.) Yes (.) I need to think back. I guess it was (.) I really (.) personally I really wanted to study abroad and it was (.) is that 11 or 12 grade here? It was basically 2 years before I was going to graduate from High School or College and I started thinking about where I was going to university and where I wanted to study. I knew what I wanted to study (.) I knew I was going to do psychology but I started thinking where. And my options were really there is this university in the city next to where I lived (.) where I am from or the capital really. Because the other big city in Romania that has a good university it was far and it didn’t really tempt me much having done a summer course there. I didn’t feel I liked the city (.) so that wasn’t an option. So I had these two options in Romania out which one was convenience and the other one was a good option (.) the capital (.) right? But I just felt that I wanted more than that and I thought I would have been definitely happy if I went to university in Romania (.) in the capital but I didn’t want to miss on the whole experience of living in another country and mastering a foreign language and for me it was like I wouldn’t have chosen to study in Romania. Because it was my own country and because of the experience that you get studying abroad (.) I would of never chosen to study there (.) no matter what course I would have got in or what sort of university. Because you are probably aware of it but Romanian’s get heavy subsidies from the Government to study. If you have good marks you can easily go through university without paying anything. So I would have never liked to have chosen that for (.) because of the experience. Okay (.) sorry back to your question. I chose to come to England because I had two options basically (.) I had Spain and the UK.

Henry: Because you spoke Spanish and English?
Marina: Yes (.). I mean because I could master both of them. At that point back in time I wasn’t like very fluent. Possibly English was my better language but I wasn’t just nearly as good at it as I am now because I wasn’t a strong language student in High School. I need to admit that. And I ended up choosing England because of two main reasons. Because the education system in Spain tends to be quite, it is less. I would say it is less easy for foreign students to accommodate there. It is quite intense workload. It is a bit similar to the Romanian one as well so I thought if I was going for other (.). I am going abroad for a reason I could as well choose something that would actually make it worth it. I thought UK education system would be a completely different experience as well and then I went to Essex and not to other universities that I applied to (.). where I was accepted because there was this scholarship that I got from them. So I think the financial aspect of it was important because I probably would have been accepted to better universities.

Henry: But there was that practical element for you then?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Yes. What about accommodation then was that something else that dictated what sort of place you were thinking of going to? Where you would end up living?

Marina: What exactly do you mean (.). in terms of?

Henry: Did you live in Halls when you were at uni?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.). so was all that stuff sorted alongside your scholarship then?

Marina: Yes (.). I think the accommodation aspect of it (.). it is involved in the financial (.). As I said (.). I mentioned the financial aspect of it. Because as I said I could have gone to university in Romania for free and I would have had a good (.). like quite good lifestyle but coming to the UK was a bit of a (.). not like a burden for my family to support me here at the beginning (.). mostly. And now I am doing my Masters (.). poor them (.). I don’t know. And yes it was a bit of a burden so I had to consider trying to just be appreciated for the support they gave me. So I said (.). “I could as well go now to the that I was accepted to but that would help my family.

Henry: Yes (.). so you were going in the general direction of what you wanted but you were happy to compromise a little bit?

Marina: Right (.). yes that is it.

Henry: That is fair enough. I suppose I only asked that because another interviewee has said to me that accommodation in Romania would have cost (.). I think it was (.). I can’t remember what he was saying now (.). I think something like £20 a month compared to £100 a week or something that he was charged here. There is a massive gap and those things obviously influence.
Marina: Well yes I don’t know if this is relevant but to be honest for me it was like you know I told you I had the convenience option. In Romania I had the convenience option and then I had the good option which was the capital. The convenience option pretty much meant that I would have gone to Iaşi which is quite close to my hometown. It is a big city where you get a good university.

Henry: Is that the big cultural city?

Marina: Yes no wait hold on I think that might be Cluj.

Henry: Is it? I am trying to think is it Iaşi?

Marina: Iaşi. It is a cultural city you get universities there.

Henry: Yes it is known for its sort of universities isn’t it?

Marina: Yes. It is one of them there are three of them like three big cities. And I had a family friend who had an apartment there and he moved to the capital and he was more than happy to give his apartment to me to live there while I was at uni. So I had accommodation sorted for all three years that I was studying.

Henry: So it really was quite a in this practical everything would have just unfolded naturally if you had stayed whereas if you were choosing to go somewhere else everything would be up in the air wouldn’t it for you?

Marina: Yes I think so. But as I said that is why I am saying this just to emphasise how much I didn’t see it as an option. I said “If I can go abroad I will go abroad no matter what. I’d rather go like even if it’s not as good a university even. I’d rather go abroad because of the experience.”

Henry: And what sort of things about the experience attracted you then?

Marina: Well I have already mentioned language like mastering a foreign language. And then it is hard again to talk about. But I think it is the fact that I had to learn to take care of myself. There wasn’t anybody to call when I thought “I’m hungry and I’m lazy to cook.” There wasn’t anybody. And I had to make new friends. I had to learn how to make foreign friends because I would have to learn all these things. I guess the practical aspects of it I just. Even though in the UK it is quite common that students get a part-time job and stuff like that and I felt that is a positive thing and I felt that I want to be able to get involved in different activities while in Romania I could have done that. I already had a part-time job when I was in School in Romania which was very unusual for students of my age. But I felt that I could become more competitive if I am doing that here if that makes sense?

Henry: Yes definitely yes. So when you had your sights set on Essex and you were going to come to the UK that you were going to study here. What sort of things were you expecting before you came? Was there anything that knew about the UK that you were preparing yourself for or things that you
might think would be challenging or? Can you remember anything like that?


Henry: Better weather?

Marina: Bad weather.

Henry: Oh bad weather (.). yes.

Marina: Well (.). yes (.). I expected that that was going to be a problem. It wasn’t as much when I lived back in the South (.). I think. I think it was better than I expected it. Other than that (.). yes I have got two points here I think that are very important. One thing was that is something I expected and it didn’t happen (.). ever. So pretty much I expected I was going to come here. I think it is important somehow (.). I had a boyfriend back in my country at that time so I was in this mindset when I came here that (.). “Oh I’m just going there because I want to learn and I’m coming back.” And I went and I was expecting that I would be studying so hard (.). I would have to work so hard to actually be able to make it to a level and be as good as other British students for example might be. Because of their language advantage obviously and other advantages of course. And I would just have to work so hard (.). I might do well or I might do just average (.). fair enough but all I would be doing (.). I mean not all I would be doing but I was expecting that I would be working so hard for it. While when I actually came to university and I went to university I realised that I worked very hard but it was a different sort of work I had to do. I had to work on myself to learn how to adapt to a new environment and learn about different educational standards (.). about different sort of things that are required from a student here. That was difficult to grasp. That was difficult to (.). So basically learning for different things. It wasn’t anymore aiming for good marks (.). it wasn’t anymore about being the best student (.). being the one that the teacher recognised and praised in a class or something like that. It wasn’t about that sort of thing anymore it was more about things like getting involved (.). being a good team player and things like that. So I had to learn a quite different system of values (.). educational values I mean by this. Well that was something I expected that didn’t happen. Something (.). what sort of things I have? I expected (.). I remember now. I have mentioned already (.). I came here because I wanted to just study (.). learn (.). and come back eventually.

Henry: So it was going to be a clear circle thing (.). you were going to go (.). do it (.). come back (.). it was going to be?

Marina: Yes (.). I mean I wasn’t going to stay in the UK (.). I wasn’t planning (.). I am still not planning to stay in the UK for a long but you never know (.). now I know that. I didn’t back then. So I expected that as a Romanian student in the UK because of the quite recent integration of Romania in the EU (.). I expected to be discriminated against. I thought that. And I also expected that (.). well there was something else on the media I wanted to say.
Henry: Take your time.

Marina: There was something that just came to my mind when you first asked it (.).

Henry: So maybe if I repeat the question in a different way. When you knew that you were going to come to the UK what were you preparing yourself for? What sort of an environment were you thinking you were going into? Was there any sort of cultural things that you thought (.)? “I’d better be aware of that?” Or was there anything that surprised you when you came? “Oh I didn’t realise it was that way or”=

Marina: =Right (.)? I think this is a good question. I was trying to (.?) yes (.?) learn about day to day sort of culture (.?) customs so I wouldn’t be awkward in an interaction or a (.). I tried to prepare myself for that but before coming to study here I had already been to the UK a few times just travelling.

Henry: Oh okay (.?) yes so you were familiar with sort of the map? You knew vaguely where things were and that sort of thing then?

Marina: Yes (.?) yes. I think that was a bit easier for me personally because having been to the UK before I was like (.?) I already know I need to say (.?) “Thank you and thanks. And sorry (.?)” Every five times when I am not hearing a word (.?) there you go. Things like that (.?) so things like that I was already used to so I didn’t worry myself too much about it before coming here. As I said I think what I worried about was language (.?) a barrier for my studies and getting (.?). I probably was a bit concerned about (.?) “Am I going to be able to make friends? Am I going to get?” But at the same time I was a bit (.?) “Oh I’m just going to go back to Romania to my boyfriend every time that I have the opportunity to and (.?)” I mean I was concerned (.?) “Am I going to be able to make friends?” But at the same time I was a bit like (.?) “And if I don’t I’ll just carry on with my studies and then (.?)” If you see what I mean?

Henry: So you were saying earlier (.?) I think this was the first point you said (.?) I know there is a second point that you are waiting to remember but we will keep that in mind. The first point you said was that due to the recent integration of Romania you were anticipating discrimination?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: What sort of things relate to that?

Marina: And not only the recent integration but I guess I expected discrimination (.?) well I feared it I am not sure if I expected it. I think that is a bit too much to say but I feared I might have been. Because we in Romania (.?) when I say we (.?) I don’t always agree with that. I don’t always do those things to be honest but when I say we it is because I can see it is quite a generalised attitude. And I think you are trying to get to that (.?) the attitudes of Romanian students or (.?) I mean you are trying to get to Romanian or never mind. Never mind.
Henry: Oh God. I am interested in your view. However you want to articulate that. However you want to.

Marina: Well anyway. I think that Romanians tend to have this sort of victimised view that everyone outside the borders just blame Romanians for being that way or the other way and that they aren’t. They personally aren’t like that. But they just kept like re-embedding those sorts of views. It is UKIP maybe. I don’t think foreigners see Romanians that way. I think most foreigners have a quite accurate view of Romanian people but Romanians themselves just like to keep like making it as if everyone blames Romanians for having gypsies for example. So having been Romanian and having lived there for 18 years I had those sorts of views embedded and as much as I don’t like to accept that I am sometimes like that. In terms of that. I think that yes. I might sometimes if someone just acts really rudely towards me I sometimes might think “Oh it’s because he thinks I’m Romanian and I’m not worth it.” But yes it is not like that necessarily. And I think right. I think expected that I might have sort of moments when someone would treat me not rightly. I would think. But that is because I guess in Romanian media you get a lot of these cases showcased in the media where Romanians just go abroad because they either get unfairly punished for something that they didn’t do or they just did something horrible earlier. And you get a lot of this news about a Romanian man in London or a Romanian man in. I don’t know wherever. So I think that is part of it.

Henry: So when you were saying for 18 years you look back now and you feel like you had those attitudes they were part of you. That is what you had grown up in. Do you feel like you became aware of that when you moved here? That you sort of stepped out of that. “Oh I’m seeing it in that way.” Because it sounds like you are looking back on it in a different way now?

Marina: I definitely think having lived abroad for so long helped. Like changed us yes.

Henry: It changes how you see Romanians as a category or whatever but then how you were back then as well. It seems like you are in different places now when you think about it?

Marina: Yes. I am definitely in different places. And also I think that because I lived in Japan as well in the meantime alright so it is not only the UK. It is the fact that I have travelled to several other countries. I was in Spain for a while as well. So I travelled to different countries. I interacted with different people. I have seen how the Romanians are seen from different countries people’s perspectives. Japanese people might have given a different reaction. “Oh you’re a Romanian.” Than a British person will have. That British people generally have. So I went to different countries. I have seen Romanians are see differently and it is not a case that Romanians are seen the way I used to see them. I used to think that Romanians are seen like other people when I was in Romania and lived there. So yes I think that definitely made an impact. But saying that sometimes those deeply embedded beliefs that I had are still with me and I
am over them but there is just something there unconsciously. Unconscious forces that are there. I don’t agree with them. I don’t believe them but they might influence my actions.

Henry: Almost like auto pilot? If you are not aware of it you could just end up doing things or reacting in certain ways and then “What a minute? What am I doing?” Is it that sort of thing?

Marina: Yes. This is not to say that if a shopkeeper treats me rudely it is because she think I am Romanian. No.

Henry: Lots of thinking on.

Marina: Yes

Henry: Yes. I know what you mean.

Marina: It is not to say that in that sort of case. It is not everything that if someone does something towards me that I find rude or anything like that it is not because I am automatically accusing her for discriminating me. No. But I kind of like well sort of. There are times when I don’t know maybe and this is a personal one. I don’t know if I should get to this now. Maybe it is one of your later questions.

Henry: Of course yes.

Marina: Oh hold on. Let’s just move forward keep moving and then I will come back to it at a better point maybe.

Henry: Yes sure. Can you think of any particular experiences you had when you first arrived? When you were saying about you were conscious about you wanted to master the language I think in your own words that is what you were aiming to do and to learn how to live on your own and all those sorts of things. Can you think of any examples when you first arrived and you were setting in here? I mean challenging experiences you might have had? Or any particular moments anything awkward with people or? Can you remember anything like that when you first came? Some people have stories don’t they? When they first go to somewhere tangible experiences you may not have.

Marina: Yes no I am sure I do it is just that it has been a while now for me.

Henry: Yes no I understand that because of course you have sort of moved around a fair bit since then haven’t you so it is trying to locate that particular time isn’t it?

Marina: Yes. Because I can totally think about some of when I came to Sheffield but thinking back to some.

Henry: Well Sheffield tell me about Sheffield? Because that is still a movement isn’t it? You have moved from the South to the North haven’t you? Like you said earlier it is colder so it is a bit different.

Marina: Yes I mean I don’t know if this is a good example but it was just a story. I came to Sheffield and because I had left my charger back in Essex I
didn’t have one. So I had to get to uni without having a GPS right? And that is when I asked somebody for directions and he was from Sheffield obviously so he had that accent and I was just literally not able to help my laugh and pay attention to his like his instructions.

Henry: So he was saying things. Did any of it sound familiar or was it all just totally?

Marina: No it was just the accent. I could understand what he said totally but it was just the accent and I just couldn’t bring myself to pay attention to the instructions because of it.

Henry: You were focussed on his accent oh dear.

Marina: But that is just it is not necessary that one is a irrelevant thing. Oh let me think back about things that might have been difficult. I can think about plenty about Japan and others but I am sure there are quite a few because Romanian students complain all the time.

Henry: What about when you moved to Japan? An experience there maybe? Because I suppose you speak some pretty good Japanese then to live there for a time? You must have.

Marina: I speak very basic Japanese I think.

Henry: Okay.

Marina: Yes just conversation Japanese. But when I moved there I didn’t know any Japanese.

Henry: Right so you learned more or less from scratch when you moved there then?

Marina: Right yes.

Henry: So that must have been quite challenging then to say the least?

Marina: Yes. Oh right well hold on I have remembered something. I think one thing exactly my first day when I moved to the UK and I had an awful day when you are moving abroad. You have all your luggage with you and I was tired and my bus ticket I had a problem with my bus ticket. So I got to my rooms in uni and I had this huge suitcase with me and there was a girl in my kitchen and she wasn’t even like having dinner or something. She was just chilling really chilling. And I know I was just sort of tired and I couldn’t get figure out how the door worked because there was a card.

Henry: What like those scanned things then?

Marina: Yes. So I couldn’t figure it out. Basically there was like this fire door before and there was one of these doors right. So I didn’t find the room basically you know it sounds funny and it might sound it is because I got lost very easily. But no actually the way the flats were it was just sort of confusing. You had to go right to the right again to get to the room.
Henry: And there were obviously loads and loads of different flats and different bedrooms and some of them are not even open (.) they are fire exits. It is confusing in Halls isn’t it?

Marina: Right (.) exactly. So I couldn’t find the room so I asked the girl (.) “I have a card.” Because I (.) there was this fire door (.) that was the third. So there was a three on it and I had a card for my room. I thought that was my room because my room was number three and I had a card but that had a key. You needed a key to open the door. So I asked the girl who was in the kitchen at that time (.) “I’ve got a card and it’s supposed to (.) Can you help me?” And she was just like (.) “Oh (.) yes I think that’s not the door (.) just keep looking.” And I was (.) obviously I had my luggage and stuff so I I didn’t want her to help me with my luggage or anything like that (.) even though that would have been nice given that she had already arrived and stuff. But at least be a bit more hospitable. She just asked me name and I think that is one of the things that because we were talking about experiences (.) awkward or (.) I didn’t feel offended (.) that wasn’t a big deal but I felt awkward because I felt that that is not how things are supposed to be. That is a cultural thing probably because I was in Romania and I had a lot of foreign students friends and I was always trying to make it easier for them as a foreign student. So I think that is part of the culture that was awkward for me. But that is just one thing that I remember.

Henry: You found your room in the end I guess?

Marina: Oh right (.) yes obviously.

Henry: Happy ending (.) eventually.

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Did someone else help you in the end or did you just managed to find the right room?

Marina: No I managed to find it but due to her instructions. It is just that the way she responded to me wasn’t very natural to me.

Henry: No (.) I suppose it almost seems quite dismissive in a way.

Marina: Yes. I would think that because we were going to be flatmates. She was a nice girl (.) it was a bit surprising. So that is what I remember now. Right (.) other things? I can’t really think (.) I think I might remember other ones as we talk and I will come back to it if you don’t mind.

Henry: Yes. How have you found because obviously it is such a broad period now because you have been here five years (.) I totally appreciate that it is probably quite a vague question in itself. But how have you found settling in (.) living in the UK? The time that you have been here obviously that you weren’t having a year abroad in Japan. How have you found life here? Have you found that you have settled in nicely? Learning the language? Learning the ways?
Marina: Yes (.) given that I spent quite a long time here and I got involved in different activities. Not only have I gone to school here I have also had a gap year when I worked in the UK. So I think that is important (.) a very important part of it that makes me be able to say (.) “Yes (.) I feel I’ve settled in well now.” Because I have been in different positions in society (. ) in organisations. I have had different jobs as well so the fact that I was able to change them and to get them I think that makes me feel that I am integrated well into society and not only jobs but also roles (.) volunteering or other social roles. I think UK does a really good job for support. As a student I have benefitted from like amazing support (.) I don’t know what other countries have that sort of system in place (.) probably they do. I mean if I think about the States (.) even Japan did a good job on that but I tend to think that that is because it is just the university that I went to. So I tend to think that if you went to Japan as a student you wouldn’t get the support that I got in Japan. But UK does a great job it is not only my university (.) it is just the UK does a good job with integrating international students. That is because (.) in my opinion (.) in my view it is because the UK education system is tending to become privatised. So it is becoming more of a business and because of that they want to attract international students and there you go (.) it is needed.

Henry: Yes (.) for people to come you have to support them.

Marina: Yes but I think because they are doing such a good job it was just easy for me to integrate. It was probably going to be one of the easiest countries to integrate in to be honest.

Henry: In relation to the society more broadly (.) did that make the integration side easier? Because the uni helped settle you that everything else became easier? Because it sounds like it was almost a key to unlocking the door for you because the support was there you were able to get on and sort everything else out.

Marina: Oh right (.) that is interesting because it just makes me realise that I didn’t think about the integrating the society part.

Henry: No (.) obviously uni life is part of it but you were saying about lots of different roles and volunteering. So you obviously are engaging with society in different ways aren’t you?

Marina: Yes (.) I mean yes you are right. I think uni was a really good link to that because as the story goes I went to Essex University which was a campus based university so you have the town there (.) Colchester town and then 20 minutes by bus it is down wi[th the]

Henry: [Yes (.) s]elf-contained shops and everything on (.) Yes.

Marina: Right. So for the first couple of years maybe one or two years (.) for me it was mainly just integrating in a campus. It wasn’t much. Okay (.) I would just go on the weekend to town but it wasn’t much about interacting with locals or (.) Actually it wasn’t really much. I barely knew anyone else apart from uni people.
Henry: I should even the shops was run by students because they all would have worked part-time and I imagine it was just the same community wasn’t it I suppose?

Marina: Yes. So I remember about the end of my second year I moved out for a summer holiday (.) my second summer holiday at uni I spent it in the UK more or less (.) I mean mostly. And I remember because I could have got an accommodation in campus but I just moved with some friends (.) I remember. And I moved out basically in a neighbourhood. It was still close to Campus (.) so still not in the town centre or anything like that but it was out there in the world (.) it wasn’t in Campus anymore. So (.) yes I remember that was a bit of a strange feeling. I wasn’t used to it and also I then remember (.) I can point out when I graduated and that is another crucial point for me. Because I was going to return to Romania to do my Masters but last minute I didn’t. And I was here still (.) graduated. I didn’t have my plans because plans just sort of were changed. I was going to go back and all of a sudden I changed my plans and I was here (.) no plan (.) like really much. I had to find a job here because I was here. And that was when (.) because I then worked here I got an internship and had a gap year working in the UK. That made me feel (.) “Okay (.) now I am integrated (.) I am more or less just as a British person.” Because I sort of started to see myself more like a national (.) not a national of this country because I don’t identify myself in terms of nationality but I started to see myself more equal I guess. Well not equal because it is not a quality thing but more like the same as anyone else who lives here (.) if you see what I mean. So that definitely helped integration.

Henry: It is really interesting. It sounds like as you are telling me that story as the next stage of your life occurs you are looking at everything else previously a little bit more differently. So when you are living on the campus (.) the self-contained campus you are moving here and you had those experiences there. And then when you moved out of that Campus you were getting a little bit more involved with different things (.) changed again. And then you were saying you finished and you graduated and then you moved again and had to get a job (.) had to find somewhere. So it is changing (.) it is evolving isn’t it?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.) it is very interesting. You are looking at things slightly differently aren’t you? Do you feel like you were aware as your uni life I suppose and as your job (.) you got that job do you feel like you knew those changes were occurring or did you just find yourself getting on with it and doing it. Because obviously this moment of time we are talking about it aren’t we and I am asking you directly but can you remember looking back that you were making those conscious decisions? “Well I’ll do this because that will help me achieve that?” Or was it more just sort of (.) “Oh that sounds good I’ll go with that?” Was it more on the spot? Because of course now you have got all these (.) You know where you want to be don’t you? You have got plans haven’t you?
Marina: Well (.) yes I mean it is hard to say now. Possibly (.) I think I wasn’t as aware of what is happening to me because of the choices that I made at that time. So (.) no (.) because I remember it was about the time when I said I moved out of Campus.

Henry: So you moving in to that little town between the Campus and the city?

Marina: Well it was in town (.) it was in Colchester town but it was just quite close to campus. So it wasn’t town centre (.) it was just in town (.) the first time I lived outside of Campus basically. And about the same time I started volunteering for an organisation in town and that is when (.) it was probably some of the few interactions that I had with people that weren’t involved in the uni other than shop assistants and stuff like that (.) and the doctors. I remember at that point when I started volunteering there every week I was realising (.) “This is helping me integrate.” I was aware of it. It was a different sort of interaction. I wasn’t a student (.) I wasn’t a customer anymore and it didn’t feel like I was (.) It felt like I was out there in the world in a way (.) it didn’t feel any more like I was home where I am protected and everyone around me is like knowing the situation I am in and is trying to make it easier for me. So it felt like as soon as I started volunteering there I realised (.) And it was volunteering (.) it wasn’t a job. I wasn’t (.) Well it was quite flexible (.) it wasn’t anything like an internship that you are volunteering but you are still employed. No (.) it was quite relaxed (.) quite chilled but still you were out there in the community.

Henry: What were you doing? What was your role in volunteering?

Marina: Oh it wasn’t even a very clearly defined role. I started it because I was doing English lessons to refugees and immigrants. I just got involved because of a friend really who was coordinating it and he needed help. So I said (.) “Okay (.) I can help. It’s summer holiday (.) I haven’t got any classes (.) I can do that.” I ended up doing quite a few like office based tasks as well.

Henry: Admin type things?

Marina: Yes (.) wherever they needed it really. But it was out there in the community (.) people that didn’t have a clue about what was going on at uni and it wasn’t all that.

Henry: And very vulnerable people as well.

Marina: Yes but I didn’t have to work directly with them much.

Henry: Okay. You have hit the nail on the head there I suppose with the question of what point did it feel tangible that you were integrating? That was when you were dealing with people external to the uni and it was not for a purpose other than the purpose that you are there for rather than as a customer (.) you are entitled to this help. You are entitled to this (.) you are being taught. That is interesting. If I can just I suppose change direction a tiny bit (.) ask a broader question. So obviously you have moved around a little bit (.) well a little bit (.) a lot. You have lived in quite a few different places within the UK as well as obviously beyond as you have talked about.
If I was to ask you where home is for you? Is that something that you would feel quite torn on answering or is it something that feels quite clear to you?

Marina: No (.) yes I think it is not necessarily clear because I tend to say to everyone that asks me this is wherever I am really. I am that sort of person who feels quite happy in just being (.) two things really. Home is where I live (.) if I go to my home and I just crash on my bed (.) wherever my sleeping bed is (.) that is where home is for me now.

Henry: Oh (.) a bit like a turtle then with the shell on your back. Wherever you go that is?

Marina: Well not really because (.) yes I mean now that I am in Sheffield (.) I moved to Sheffield. Sheffield is my home really but (.) Hold on (.) I am forgetting my second point. Oh I forgot it whispering The second one I was going to say (.) there are two things right. No I mean for me home is where I am at. It is definitely that I don’t see Romania like my hometown as home anymore (.) not anymore no. I [m more]... [And th]at is in spite of perhaps your grandparents (.) your family being there?

Henry: Because of when you did it and what the circumstances were?

Marina: Yes (.) that is the thing. Despite the fact that they are there and I love my family and I have a good time when I go there (.) it is just that (.) Because I think that the way I integrate (.) I don’t know if that is the case but because I happened to lead my adult life in the UK. So I went out of school and as soon as I started being (.) because at that age (.) 18 you are starting to be on your own pretty much. So all of the things that I had to do for myself (.) starting to build up my own life (.) I did them in the UK. So I think that if I would have come here when I was at 21 and if I already had a job like a proper job in another country (.) I think that would have made a big difference. But because for me it was like all the things that I started to (.) you know get a job (.) create your social circle (.) all those things (.) they were in the UK. I didn’t have to do them here (.) in any other country. So I think that made a lot of difference to the process and the way I feel towards myself and how I see myself.

Henry: Because of when you did it and what the circumstances were?

Marina: Yes and where I see home is (.) right? Because up until 18 you were just being given (.) there is your family (.) that is your home (.) that is your hometown (.) that is the school that you go to. Once you are legally not old and once you go to uni (.) it is in your hands now so what your life is like (.) that is how I see things. What your life is like (.) it is what you created. And I think what I have now in my life (.) it is all what I created. So I think that it is pretty important for me. So I see it like quite a thing because it was my choice to be and to create me around this. And so that is why I think it down puts the fact that for me home (.) it was in Romania back then. That is why I can’t say (.) I am not saying (.) “UK is home for me now.” Nor is Japan or (.) well Japan is the place where I feel I belong. When I lived in Japan I was (.) I had never been to Japan before but the very first week I arrived there and the people I interacted with I felt that I belonged here. I
felt that the values of the people I am interacting with every single day are a lot closer to my values. And I felt that (.).

Henry: It felt right?

Marina: Yes (.). exactly it felt right to be there. I felt that that is where is the place that I am supposed to be most of the time and I felt I didn’t want to leave it. I felt I could live all my life there.

Henry: It must have been hard leaving it then?

Marina: Oh it was awful to leave (.). yes I was almost crying.

Henry: No (.). I can understand that because if something clicks unclicking it is not a nice experience.

Marina: Right (.). yes that is true. That is very true.

Henry: Did you make any? Well I suppose you would have made quite a few friends when you were out there then?

Marina: I did.

Henry: Do you stay in touch with them?

Marina: Yes (.). it is difficult because we are all busy people (.). I am doing my= Life gets in the way doesn’t it?

Marina: It does and they graduated as well (.). they moved around. But I am in touch with most of my friends there and as I said (.). nor is Japan home even though that is the place I feel I am like accomplished. If I am there I feel I am most accomplished (.). I most likely to be accomplished. But nor is Japan (.). it is just the place where I am really and now it just happens to be Sheffield is home for me.

Henry: It is really interesting because I think what you are getting at is (.). from how I understand it it is more profound than a place because it is in you. It is actually mobile because it is in you (.). in wherever you set up shop and establish everything that is what it means to you. Because that involves you making relationships with people and getting out there and doing stuff. It is not just a place.

Marina: No (.). it is not. Home is not a place for me.

Henry: That is really interesting (.). it is really (.).

Marina: For me that is where home is (.). that place where I can crash on a couch when I get home and I am tired. Or the place where I am having my morning coffee and moaning about my life and things like that.

Henry: Yes. Is there anything (.). you know previously we were talking about (.). what was it? Experiences (.). I am trying to think now (.). You had two points didn’t you and you couldn’t remember the second thing that you wanted to say?
5006 Marina: I might have touched on it.

5007 Henry: Do you feel satisfied with (.) Because I am conscious that we will move on to a bit now that is a bit less (.) It is more generic (.) it is not just about you so I wouldn’t want to get to a point where you would feel like (.) “Oh I can’t remember now.” I can’t even remember what question it was related to now. (5) I can’t think.

5014 Marina: It was (.) oh maybe if I can=

5015 Henry: =We have talked about a lot haven’t we?

5018 Marina: Yes. Was it about integrating (.) I had two points.

5021 Henry: And why it was important I think. Because you said two important points you said the first point. Oh yes you were talking about your expectations when you were coming here. Because you were saying that you feared perhaps discrimination. What was the second point (.) can you remember?

5026 Marina: I think I might have touched on it on a sort of different level to be honest about that what I said. Yes (.) as I said because I don’t want that to sound wrong the being discriminated I guess but I was expecting to be an outsider I guess (.) putting it like that. I was expecting to be an outsider. I didn’t expect. Oh look an example that I can (.) I remember my first year (.) I am definitely not thinking like that now but I remember my first year there was the course representative role that was offered (.) you know a course rep is basically in the course that is responsible for the other students.

5033 Henry: Yes (.) that is what I thought you meant when you said Ambassador earlier (.) so yes.

5039 Marina: So first year it was advertised by the course coordinator and I wanted to go for it but I felt it was not sort of right for me in a way. I should say most students in my course in undergraduate (.) they were British. Like not a vast majority (.) not like 99% of the students but a good majority so that most people were British. And I was willing to go for it to be course representative but I thought (.) “Should I? Is it for me? Am I entitled?” I just felt (.) “No (.) there should be a British person to go for it because there are more British students on the course.” I don’t know why I thought that. I remember thinking like that. So that is what ties into me feeling as an outsider and being perceived an outsider. So what stopped me for going (.) I ended up being course rep the next year but I remember that is why I didn’t volunteer to be a course rep in my first year. And it is because I thought (.) “I’m an outsider and people see me as an outsider.” So I thought (.) “Maybe students in my course won’t see me as the most appropriate person to represent them.” So I just said (.) “Oh maybe it’s better for someone else to do it because they’re just more- Does that make sense?

5051 Henry: If you don’t mind me asking then if you could have a conversation with yourself then what would you be saying (.) who you are now what would you say to yourself then? Is there anything you would do differently? What would you tell yourself?
Marina: I would like if I could just be me now and go to the person in that moment. I would be like “That’s the wrong way to think.” Because first of all you were representing the students on your course and you were one of them right? So just because you were a national minority it doesn’t mean you were not part of it. And I think I was wrong to think that way and I also think that I was just as suitable to act as a course representative as any other student in my course. The only thing would have been the language at that point because it was early in my first year. So that would have been my only disadvantage for the role but I think I had advantages as well having good sort of people skills and even negotiation all moderated by the language barrier at that point. Because it was the first few weeks in my first year. Yes I would just say I think I was wrong to interpret the situation really and I would just try to convince myself that the way I am seeing things is actually not truthful like representative.

Henry: So you would emphasise all those advantages that you could have offered that you had you should have allowed yourself to stick to those more so then think about why not?

Marina: Yes I mean I guess

Henry: Focus on why you would be good at it rather than why you are not appropriate for it?

Marina: Yes. I mean I guess I would say first of all you need to realise that you are just entitled as anyone else to be the course representative in that situation and just when it comes to quality and when it comes to being able to do a good job with it let people decide. Because course reps are elected by votes by the students in the course. It doesn’t really matter if you make it but it is wrong to think that you are not as suitable as someone else.

Henry: Yes at the end of the day if several people have gone for it they will ultimately elect. So even if you weren’t right for it if anyone wasn’t right for it then it might be that they are not even elected anyway. So I suppose it is.

Marina: So I would just say “It’s wrong to think you’re just unsuitable.”

Henry: Was it a good experience when you said you did it in your second year was it a good experience for you?

Marina: Yes. By that point I would have already had some jobs so by that point it was just another part-time job kind of thing.

Henry: Yes more stuff that you were involved in?

Marina: Yes. Yes I mean I think that that helped me make a few more friends. I already had a few British friends in my course but that helped me make friends with the British people in my course more because other than it is usually like that it is usually that you don’t make friends with the people in your course it is your flatmates. It is people like in clubs societies and maybe some other friends that you can have from home or anything. But I personally found that I don’t easily make friends with people on the course so having been the course representative.
Henry: Having that purpose I suppose.

Marina: Yes (.) that helped me.

Henry: That clearly defined role and it could (.) yes.

Marina: That helped me make friends with people on my course and people that happened to be British at that point. It is not the case now.

Henry: So if you are happy to I was wondering if I could just ask you a few more broad questions I suppose because as you would probably imagine (.) as I think most participants have (.) I am particularly interested in Romanian migration because of the recent accession into the EU and the way in which Britain has interpreted this. It is a very explicit thing now (.) how often immigration is talked about. Obviously student numbers is a part of that but I am just wondering really what your thoughts are (.) when Romanian migration is talked about in the news or on television (.) is it something that you feel particularly strong about in the way some of the arguments are put forth (.) back and forth. Is it that something that you ever pay much attention to?

Marina: I have to say that I don’t watch TV at all so I wouldn’t be up to date (.) I wouldn’t be (.)

Henry: No (.) no well obviously it has happened for four years or so (.) so it doesn’t have to be what was on the news last night.

Marina: Yes (.) okay but that is the thing that even if I don’t (.) I never watch TV (.) I am still exposed to it and saying that I think I am still more likely than let’s say a French student to click on that link when it shows on maybe anywhere. If I am on Facebook and someone posts it I am more likely to actually click on it. I usually don’t do that (.) honestly speaking because I am not interested in politics. That is my reason why. But I am more likely than someone who is not a Romanian to click on that news and read them and find out about them. Like the way I see the things because I have been one of the students that came to the UK in actually one of the very few years that Romanian students were allowed to come here. I think I was the third generation so basically at my uni (.) when I came to the UK there were like 30 Romanian students in total and the year I came there were another 100 and something that came at the same time. So that was quite a (.) you know one (.)

Henry: It was all new wasn’t it?

Marina: Yes (.) it was a new thing and without comes along other aspects of it. And I have had to (.) you are probably aware of it or not but there was a yellow card (.) as a Romanian student you had to obtain to work in the UK.

Henry: Like a student visa? Is it a student visa?

Marina: Yes (.) I mean you can see it as a visa. It wasn’t a visa because you didn’t need it to stay in the UK you just needed it if you wanted to work in the UK. So you had to apply for that sort of card (.) even if you were in a student to be able to work and you were still restricted for 20 hours a week
by law. At that time if I wanted to work I had to apply for it (.) so I applied just to have it. Because you don’t need it for volunteering activities I think unless (.) It is just the way the law works. I remember I needed it to be (.) It was a volunteering position but I would get accommodation subsidised so I would still get some benefits out of that. And I needed it for that one I think (.) or not. I can’t remember. Anyway if I wanted to have a paid job in the UK I needed it (.) so I applied for it. Let alone the fact that it took like a year for it to be issued.

Henry: A year?

Marina: About a year (.) yes.

Henry: Wow.

Marina: Romanian students don’t need it nowadays since like January 2014.

Henry: Yes (.) it has all opened up now hasn’t it?

Marina: Right. And also I remember my friends in my first year when we were all like new here and applying for it (.) there were quite a few situations when they got (.) like things were very confusing (.) you might be aware of it. Thing were very confusing and it just felt that they were trying to make things like life more difficult for us. I remember (.) I sent all my paperwork and I didn’t get a reply for obviously a few months and then I got back a reply saying that I didn’t send a paper that I did send and that I had to send it. And then I had to send it within a certain time but it was just the time when I had my Christmas holiday (.) or no (.) Easter holiday (.) it was Easter holiday. So I would have been back to Romania for a whole month (.) I got that mail in the meantime.

Henry: Yes (.) so they see it as (.) well you’ve not responded in this time type of thing?

Marina: Yes but they could have eventually assumed that I am out of the country because I am only a student here. But let alone I got a letter and then I got the card after (.) before I actually (.) So it was just complicated (.) not see-through (.) not clear the procedures. And I think that it just felt like they were trying to make our life more difficult. The way I see it is that a lot of my friends are complaining about media and how Romanian immigration is portrayed in the media (.) personally I see it as a very natural trend that is happening. I think that I just happen to be one of the first Romanians that immigrated to the UK (.) historically it just happened to be like that. And I think it has always been like that with immigration. If there is an immigration wave from one country to another (.) that immigration wave is going to get pointed at in the media. And it is natural (.) it is always going to happen (.) you can’t help it so I don’t get bothered by it. Even if it is really bad news that is ridiculous (.) it is absolutely untruthful just down putting Romanians in some sort of way. I don’t get bothered by it (.) I don’t get it upset it is just natural it is going to happen and I just see it like (.) well it is going to pass. People are going to settle here and some of them are going to go back and British people are going to learn about Romanians more and you won’t get as many as you get now (.) like good or bad news
about Romanians (.) or news about Romanians (.) what the hell it is just
Romanians (.) it shouldn’t be like that. I think that the media (.) I think it
was before January 2014 when there was like this huge amount of media
coming in about Romanians and Bulgarians in relation to immigration.

Henry: It was the countdown to the day.

Marina: Right I remember that. Well (.) yes and there were those things that people
were saying about UK thinking of leaving the EU and all sorts of funny
stuff.

Henry: They are still talking about it now. Obviously I follow it you see so it has
only got more so I think really.

Marina: Oh right. And there was something else as well I remember. What was it?
There was news about (.) oh I can’t (.) It was on British like websites and
channels and about just (.) “Ah they will kick all Romanians out and stuff.”
Things like that which I thought (.) And a lot of the reports I felt that they
couldn’t have possibly been accurate (.) I am not a statistician or anything
like that but I felt that they couldn’t have possibly been true about crime
and rates.

Henry: Well you have done psychology (.) you will have a fair idea of stats anyway
won’t you? As placed as anyone to think how could there be 29 million
people coming when there are not 29 million people living in the country. It
is that sort of thing isn’t it?

Marina: Yes (.) things like that. So I felt because of that sort of news (.) I felt that
there was this documentary which I didn’t watch but I happened to see a
trailer of it because it was there on Facebook and I clicked on play. And I
think that said it (.) the way I see things. And I do feel UK media and the
British like some of the representatives not all of them obviously (.) I am
sure it is not all of them. Even if I am not up to date with the topic or with
what is happening in the politics (.) what certain politicians do or say (.) I am
sure it is not all of them. But I feel that some authorities and media (.)
some media channels obviously not all of them again have misrepresented
the UK because the UK is such a powerful and rich country and you can’t
possibly not see how immigration helps the UK and the UK economy. So I
think while there will be negative aspects to this immigration wave for
British citizens (.) there is definitely (.) Still let’s not put it in absolute
terms (.) let’s not say it is a good thing for the UK but it has its advantages.
And I think like just portraying it in such a negative way (.) they have just
down put their own name (.) I think.

Henry: So it is about putting it in a certain perspective then really?

Marina: Right (.) yes.

Henry: So when you said earlier about other people you know get quite annoyed
about the way Romanians are misrepresented in the media (.) that is the sort
of view they have. And you say (.) “Well it’s a historical thing (.) it happens
when new people come.” Do you feel in that sense then that we should take
a more relaxed view because we know it will get better in time or do you
think we should challenge that when it happens to try and get people think differently in the first instance? Does that make sense?

Marina: Yes, it makes sense. It is a good question. I was thinking about it.

Henry: Because the thing that is often said well it is often said in this context anyway for me to bring in the argument is that it is racist to talk about immigration or that it is not racist. I am only talking about numbers but then they are only talking about. I don’t know the number of Roma that have come and it is always showing the Roma that are on the streets begging. People might get annoyed at that and say, “Well it’s misrepresenting or it’s.” Or is it just telling the truth? I suppose they are the sort of things that can sometimes come to light in the representation.

Marina: Yes, I mean to answer your question I think it should be challenged. I think in any country sort of thing any immigration wave. It should be challenged but at the same time I think it is very difficult to do that and it is natural that you know not conflicts but sort of clashes may arise. So I think that is why I am more like, “Ah hands-off the situation.” I don’t want to get involved. I don’t want to. I don’t care about it much because I think it is a matter of habit and it is a matter of the human nature.

So I think while we might be able to do things to improve the situation you won’t be able to change the situation. So at this point in our human development we are not actually able to deal with in-group/out group sort of the situations that tie-in to immigration. So yes it is positive and it is good to try to change which I think is probably the reason why I was happy to volunteer to take part in this research. Because it looks into that, it looks into this sort of. It looks into immigration and it looks into about why do sort of concerns about immigration waves may arise and it looks into out group and in-group and how out groups are perceived.

Henry: And that is ultimately what it is always about. It is always about how we see each other isn’t it?

Marina: Yes, exactly.

Henry: On that language level.

Henry: I am just trying to think, I haven’t looked at the questions for a while and you have answered quite a few of them. So I suppose if I could just ask one last question really because you have answered all the other ones and you have been very comprehensive. You were saying about migration being, you know over time you get waves and groups of people that come and it is a natural part that there is sort of a friction if you like when people move. And you were talking about the yellow card experience and how long it took you to get that. Do you think it is something that should be a right for people to move around when or however they want to or do you think it is something that should be a privilege and should be earned with time? So obviously Romania had to wait and you had to get that yellow card. Now you can come and go whenever you want to. Do you have any feelings about that, whether you think it should be a right for everyone to move
around as they want to? Or do you think it should be based on skills like some countries do or? I don’t know. Do you have any feelings about that?

Marina: That is a very tricky question to be honest. Oh no I have got my answer for that but I mean because I am anti-nationalist so I think there should be no countries no immigration restrictions. But I cannot not be concerned about the political risks of that and social risks of that if all doors are open and African countries would be able to immigrate somewhere else. There would be huge social risks that would be created and that is a bit idealistic to think like that but I think generally we should be moving as a race we should be moving in the direction of people having more freedom in terms of where they can live and they want to settle down. And I think that is positive not only for economics that is just positive for our own wellbeing for the human race really.

Henry: That is a really interesting idea really.

Marina: I think that wouldn’t pose Because what thinking like that what I am concerned about is about cultures. If people could live anywhere then we might be losing heritage and our cultural ways but I don’t think that is the case. I think culture would still be preserved even if there were no political borders.

Henry: What about with Europe then? Because I suppose you could say that it has been de-nationalised to an extent in the sense that we can all move around in Europe a lot more freely. Is that something that you feel quite strongly about? Is that a good thing?

Marina: Yes I think you are exactly right. And I think that is a regional phenomena that I see it I would like more of that at a global level. And I think that that is good. And I am starting to feel more like when I go to Germany or France or Netherlands or other EU countries I am starting to feel more of an EU like citizen. Even like here I am starting to feel more as an EU citizen but UK is always a bit separate. But I am starting to feel more like an EU citizen than a Romanian. And as I mentioned it in the beginning I personally don’t like to identify myself with the nationality. Whether in the future I might have Japanese citizenship or UK citizenship that doesn’t matter I don’t like to identify myself with the country I am coming from.

Henry: But you were saying about identifying with the EU then you feel an affinity to being European that is something that means something to you?

Marina: Right you point it out very well I think. No I mean I wouldn’t be particularly proud to identify myself as a European citizen but the reason I like it in this context is because it feels a bit more like what I was saying before that we shouldn’t have countries. So EU is sort of=

Henry: =There is more commonality between people sort of thing? That if you say “You’re an EU citizen.” It feels like you have got more in common with the people around you.
Marina: Yes (.). it sort of enlarges the circle (.). it is not a country anymore (.). it is this mass. And it is going towards that direction of a global citizen that you are just a citizen of this Earth and you can be freely living (.). just creating your life wherever you want on the Planet. So I think that I like to think about myself as EU because it is heading in the direction of a global citizenship which I am thinking would be the right thing for us. I am sort of promoting EU citizenship so it can then become bigger.

Henry: A bit more than that?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.). that is a nice idea really isn’t it? It just feels because we do often think with blinkers on don’t we? We always think (.). like what you were saying when you first moved (.). you know when you were 18 coming to the UK (.). it was only when you moved here and you were looking back that you feel like your culture was informing how you were seeing everything. And you couldn’t necessarily have known otherwise unless you had moved around and you had started to see beyond that. It is a really interesting perspective there. Yes (.). sorry.

Marina: That is alright.

Henry: I can think about these things forever because obviously that is what I do. I am quite happy at this point. Is there anything else that you want to talk about? Anything else that you wanted to tell me about that I have not asked or that we have not touched on?

Marina: Just to get just a tiny bit back to your point. It related to this EU citizenship and global citizenship and how (.). I think that is impressive because there was I think (.). possibly Charles de Gaulle or someone around the Second World War has said that in a sort of conference and I can’t remember which one it was. But someone basically maybe like (.). what was it more than 50 years ago? Had said that in the future we will only have two major countries (.). which they might be wrong with China coming up. But we will have two major countries that will lead the world and that is going to be the European States (.). United States which will then be incorporating different cultures and different regions all with their specificities. And I think that is the direction which we are heading. And that is going to come to incorporate more to the extent to which we will become global citizens and just have freedom to move. I don’t know if that is going to be happening in my lifetime (.). I am hoping it is but (.).

Henry: It will be interesting (.). won’t it? And all this sort of national press on immigration it is sort of then is dwarfed isn’t it? It is awful trivialled isn’t it? Why are people making such a fuss of French people or German people or Romanian people or whatever because it will all be on a bigger scale then (.). won’t it?

Marina: Right.

Henry: Yes. What was the name of the? What you were saying (.). the person with that theory (.). the European and American continent?
I think it might have been Charles de Gaulle at a conference in Paris.

De Gaulle? Was he French(.) was he the General(.) come Prime Minister type?

Yes(.) I think so. I am not sure(.) I might be wrong. I might be mis-
remembering because this is something I know from my history classes
back in school. So it is quite a few good years back.

It sounds familiar. I think he was quite a nationalist. I think he was quite (.)
yes. I remember studying him in school as well (.)
The name rings a bell.

It was a declaration that he has given at one of the major congresses(.) like
political meetings(.) it was a major one after one of the wars. And I am
thinking it probably was the Second World War.

Yes(.) it would have been more(.) yes because of the Cold War probably
(.) that sort of climate would have probably made them much more(.)
obviously European unification was a big thing then wasn’t it?

Yes but at that point in time he was just(.) “It’s not going to happen.” I
think it is a visionary(.) he was a visionary man to say that.

Yes(.) very much a man of the time thinking about how to prevent that war
again on a worst scale. It is very interesting then isn’t it to think about
where it is going to end up.

So that is what gives me hope that eventually the Planet is going to look
like the way I think it should look like as a global sort of place where
people have freedom to move around(.) wherever they want to live. And
live in the culture they feel that(.) Because I just think the West and the
East(.) I just think that we might be tempted to think(.) “Oh if this country
was to be open(.) everyone would go wherever(.) New York(.) Paris(.)
London(.) Tokyo.” I don’t think that is the case. I think it might be in the
first instance and you would get some quite serious issues with immigration
and population(.) higher numbers of population in this sort of place but I
think eventually people(.) sooner rather than later would end up in different
places.

That it would even out? Because it has to surely. People would move if
there wasn’t a job there for them or if there wasn’t a place to live or if there
wasn’t enough food or electricity(.) people would just move wouldn’t they?

Yes. And not only that(.) like not only these practical aspects but I think
some people would just give up all those commodities for being in the
culture that they want to be. And speaking the language that they wanted to
speak.

And for you that would(.) by the sounds of it involve speaking Japanese
wouldn’t it?
Marina: Yes (.) for me yes. I am planning on doing that so that would apply to my particular case. I would just have my modest job in the city in Japan (.) that is not Tokyo necessarily than being well off in London and stuff like that. I think I would be much happier there.

Henry: You are happy to risk it for the climate (.) you know for the volcanoes and the earthquakes?

Marina: Oh yes.

Henry: I mean that idea personally terrifies me but then the buildings are much better there aren’t they? They are designed to withstand earthquakes aren’t they?

Marina: Yes. But even so like Japan (.) I would still choose to go somewhere in China or Taiwan maybe rather than (.) I am not planning to stay in the UK all my life. I have enjoyed it here (.) it was a tremendous time (.) I loved it. I don’t feel British but I feel I am part of the UK. I feel I am part of the community and I am very grateful for the years that I spent here but it is just that I feel I belong somewhere else. And I think we all might have this sort of place. Some people maybe not but I tend to think people would generally have a place they feel they belong to. So if there was free immigration and free movement around the globe (.) people would end up living in the place that they belonged to. That might sound a bit idealistic.

Henry: Well (.) I was just going to say then even though it does sound idealistic (.) you know not as an interviewer here but from a personal point of view I totally agree with you. I think we should think idealistically otherwise what have you got to aspire to? That really is (.) for me (.) the ability to move (.) it doesn’t even matter if you don’t but the idea that you could (.) you have that freedom it is quite a wonderful thing isn’t it?

Marina: Right. What else I would like to add? I don’t know if this is relevant but it was interesting because I knew I was having this interview with you. And a few days ago it was posted on a group (.) on a Facebook group (.) Romanian students somewhere. It was a post about a blog (.) a British girl I think she was posting about how us Brits see Romanian students (.) and that was interesting for me because I haven’t really thought much about it.

Henry: About how other students might see you?

Marina: Yes (.) I have thought a lot about how I see British students but I have barely thought anything about how British students see Romanian students. Not me (.) as an individual but Romanian students as a group. And that was very interesting because if you ask me how do you think British students see Romanian students? I would have probably had a lot more relaxed opinion that what I had before coming to the UK. But it would still have been less positive as compared to the past. Now I know that is just one post written by one person but the sorts of arguments that she brought in and the sort of things that she was talking about as Romanians students in the UK being quite generally hard working (.) studying quite diligently and things like language abilities and (.) What else was she saying? She was talking about being quite knowledgeable and having a good idea about several
topics. So things like that which I couldn’t disagree with. I think that because of the education that we have received in Romania and because of all the sort of things that we had to remember (. ) I think that is what created the opportunity for us to sort of embed these sorts of advantages. It doesn’t necessarily have to be like that but it is a ground on which you can build disadvantages. So I think it is probably not untrue. So those are things that I actually never have thought of in terms of like (. )

Henry: Thinking outside the box to what other people might think?

Marina: Yes (. ) I didn’t used to see them as advantages and now I am thinking. Because I saw them more like just natural things to have (. ) to be. So I think it is very interesting from that point of view to how do you see the Romanian students as a group (. ) not me.

Henry: It has just occurred to me (. ) you mentioned earlier if you don’t mind me asking did you say you have a boyfriend in Romania?

Marina: I dated a guy for all the way through my undergraduate that lives in Romania.

Henry: So there was a distance thing going on there?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: Was that difficult for you?

Marina: On a personal level (. ) yes. Yes (. ) on a personal level there was.

Henry: Because I think it very much is part of your experience isn’t it? If you are having to keep that tie whilst being here and setting up a new life. I think it probably would be inaccurate I suppose wouldn’t it to see it purely as you starting life here if you are having to keep that sort of commitment going. It just occurred to me (. ) I remember you mentioning it earlier.

Marina: No (. ) that is quite a good point you made there actually. Because I think that deterred my (. ) not deterred but delayed my integration in a way. Even in the campus community because I was less likely to get involved in clubs (. ) to go out to do activities because I was sometimes not tied to a person who was abroad (. ) in another country. But I was so keen on that relationship that I wasn’t as much interested in going and meeting up and setting roots here and making friendships that would tie me to this place. So I wasn’t that much keen on that. Once my relationship started having less and less importance (. ) I would say and I started to make more friends where I was in the UK and started to value more really what I had in the UK. It was (. ) as you said (. ) it was almost as a dual thing. I had two sorts of (. )

Henry: Two lives?

Marina: Yes (. ) kind of like that and you can see it like that. So once I started to (. ) my relationship started losing importance for me and the life that I had there (. ) that sort of thing and I started to value this more (. ) I started to realise
that maybe if I didn’t have that tieback to Romania I would have integrated much faster. And I would have started to feel part of the community.

Not that I didn’t feel enough like that but if I didn’t have that I think I might have been (. . .) I would have done some steps earlier like going out in the societies and going for some sort of jobs like the one that I mentioned to you about (. . .) that brought me some advantages.

Henry: The volunteering (. . .) the English classes and that?

Marina: Yes. So that was something that I didn’t have to do. I didn’t have a good reason to do it (. . .) I didn’t have a specific purpose for doing it it was just because my friend asked me to and because I thought to myself (. . .) “Well this is going to help me. It’s going to put me out there in the society interacting with people. Give me some work experience.” And that was something that I wanted to do. It was a good thing (. . .) I have seen it as a good thing. Even though as I have said at that point I wasn’t planning to stay here for as long as I stayed in the end. So I thought that was good. I wanted (. . .) it was obvious that I wanted to get integrated (. . .) to be more of a citizen here (. . .) so that is why I went for it. And I think that if it wasn’t for that link that I had in Romania I would have been keener on taking these sorts of steps before. I mean way sooner in the process of me being a student here (. . .) integrating.

Henry: That is very interesting. It sounds almost like (. . .) if I have interpreted correctly that almost like it was an anchor and it was holding you in a certain place rather than letting you move on with settling down here. It was somehow (. . .) not necessarily stopping you but it was holding you back maybe.

Marina: Yes (. . .) it was holding back from (. . .) Because you know when you live somewhere (. . .) you make an investment in the place (. . .) in the people so it was making me less likely to be willing to invest in something.

Henry: Yes (. . .) I am just thinking (. . .) I didn’t mean holding back as in in a negative way but just hold you back from perhaps doing something that you might have wanted to do. Because with any decision you do that means you can’t do something else (. . .) just in that sense.

Marina: Yes (. . .) no it did make sense. I just wanted to (. . .)

Henry: Yes (. . .) say that relationship was a waste of time (. . .) why are you bothering. I just realised it when I said it (. . .) that probably sounded quite harsh.

Marina: No (. . .) it didn’t sound wrong. I just wanted to add to that. But I think that is right.

Henry: Yes. If I had listened to it (. . .) yes I don’t think that I was (. . .) I myself have been in long distance relationships so I can relate to what you were (. . .) yes when you are investing in things it is important that (. . .) I suppose (. . .) yes (. . .) it is about knowing what you want to invest in and knowing that it will have a consequence for other things you can or can’t do (. . .) because you are on the phone to them or whatever else might be going on.
Marina: Yes (. ) I think that is my point about it (. ) about investing and for me it would feel that it is complicating my life more if I invested in the (. ) That was just for the first like (. ) thinking back on it (. ) it was probably the first two years that I was more likely to feel like that. It was in the first two years that I was a lot more confident that for me it was going to be the studying experience here and then I will go back to Romania for a while. Because I always knew I wanted to move to East Asia but as far as my plan actually went was go finish uni in the UK (. ) go back and then find a way to move to East Asia. Because I knew I wanted that before I came to study in the UK. I would have probably gone to study in East Asia if I could have afforded that but it wasn’t really an option for me because of high costs of education in Japan or countries like that. So I think it was for the first two years that I spent in the UK that that cost of investing in the people around me here in the UK was weighted a lot more. I am actually like saying this from the student perspective (. ) I think it is good when you go to a new country to study to not have that sort of thing that ties you back (. ) whether it is a boyfriend or a girlfriend or if it is a group of friends or anything else. It can be other things but I think it is beneficial if you don’t have and if you tried to just leave that behind and see what life brings to you and make the most out of that (. ) that moment.

Henry: So I suppose it goes back to the thing you were saying when I asked you about what home was to you? That the place you are at now (. ) what you are doing makes sense to you because you are simply starting (. ) If you want to go somewhere (. ) this is what it will involve and that is how you do it and you are liberated in that way. It sounds like you know where you are at because you have had those experiences of being held down in certain ways?

Marina: Yes (. ) I think that is right. I think that helped me thinking in that way (. ) this experience helped me think in that way. Though this is not to say that back when I was in my second year maybe I thought of home as being in Romania. Because at that point I still saw UK as my home because that is where I lived and as I said that is where I was carrying on my day to day activities. So I still think I saw the UK (. ) my student accommodation as my home but I have learned from being somehow tied down to that (. ) I have learnt the importance of not regarding (. ) Not letting yourself being drugged or something. And the importance of making the most out of your situation and circle and that has helped me. That help me gain confidence ultimately because we are just individuals (. ) we don’t have anything really. We are born in this world just as we are so that is what we should most rely on. The other things that come with it (. ) yes those are advantages and I am lucky (. ) I am sure likely to have some other people to have of their own but in the end it should be that we are just on our own. So that is how (. )

Henry: Very philosophical that is.

Marina: Okay (. ) sorry I didn’t mean to go like that.

Henry: No (. ) no I love it. I could read philosophy all day (. ) yes. It is interesting speaking to a psychology graduate who talks so philosophically about things. Normally people that do psychology tend to be quite (. ) My
background is in psychology but often you get sort of a (. ) I don’t know it is much more surfaced level behavioural type (. ) “This is the way I think about it (. ) ” That is it. Whereas some of your answers they are penetrating (. ) they go right through and it is nice. It has been really interesting talking to you about your experiences.

Marina: Yes (. ) I hope it helped.

Henry: It has been really nice listening to your stories really because it is very unique (. ) your whole story is unique isn’t it in its own way?

Marina: Yes (. ) I mean I didn’t know exactly what your study was about because you didn’t want to tell me. I think that is part of your purpose of the research so because of that I just tended to lay it out and you can choose what is interesting for you out of the experience that I tried to sort of portray there.

Henry: I hope it doesn’t seem like I have withheld it in a deceptive way?

Marina: Oh no.

Henry: I suppose it is that (. ) like with the schedule I have got these are just sort of prompts for me to think about certain things that might be pertinent as you talk (. ) well as people talk about things. But I suppose it is not something that you could sort of write an answer to and ever do justice to it because I think you could always think about it in different ways. So I suppose I am always relying on how people understand that question when I ask it however difficult and obscure I might make it sound. Because obviously we always make things sound more complicated when we say it as when we write it but I wouldn’t want it to seem like a (. ) “This is your exam question (. ) how are you going to answer it?” But I understand and actually because you emailed me didn’t you? You emailed me to say (. ) “If you could send me the questions so I can have a think about it.” I did feel bad I must admit because I felt (. ) “Oh she wants to prepare. She wants to make sure that she can do justice or whatever to what I might ask.”

Marina: Oh no (. ) sorry I interrupted you. Carry on.

Henry: No (. ) no I was just going to say it has been really interesting listening to your stories.

Marina: Yes (. ) the reason why I said that is because I think you are focussing on some topics in your research and I wanted to help you. And I thought that because of my experience (. ) I have quite vast experience of being in the UK and studying here and all the (. ) I have been through all the (. ) most of it at least Romanian integration in the EU period. So I thought that I would be able to help you and I am probably going to be able to speak about these sorts of aspects that you are looking at. But I wanted your questions because it has been such a long time (. ) as then you have seen. I am sure I would have had examples that were relevant and I just wanted to think about the examples that I could give because it is just difficult to remember things at times when you don’t (. )

Henry: Yes (. ) understandably yes when you are asked on the spot.
Marina: So that is why I thought. But if you thought it was better for me to not know the questions or the sort of questions.

Henry: Well I mean you came up with some examples earlier anyway didn’t you? I suppose it is really that sometimes the examples can help make sense of what you want your answer to be. Sometimes the answer can seem quite abstract and then you ask for an example (.) “Oh actually this is probably a better way of saying it.” That was the main thing really (.) it is not that I will necessarily (.) “This is their example (.) this is what it means.” It is more just as a sense making thing to help you or any participant think about what sort of answer might make sense because it is based on something that you might have experienced.

Marina: Right (.) that is exactly the point (.) yes. Because as you said I sounded quite philosophical (.) I didn’t want to sound like that.

Henry: Well no (.) I like it. I like that sort of discussion because ultimately it does actually quite often go down into that (.) what do you actually want it to be about? What does it actually mean to you? And that is a very deep question (.) for everyone it is a deep (.) personal question isn’t it?

Marina: Yes.

Henry: When they move around and when they start a new life somewhere it is as basic as it gets isn’t it? Like what you were saying.

Marina: Yes (.) I think that if I would have had the questions in advance probably I wouldn’t have sounded that way because all I have said are things that I probably believe in (.) right but they are just empirical evidence and they aren’t very well formulated because I don’t always think about them.

Henry: No (.) no and this is the thing we just live our lives don’t we? Not always (.) “Oh I wonder how I’m doing this or that.” It is exhausting (.) you couldn’t do it every day.

Marina: Yes. So that is why but it is not a big thing. I hope that touched on the points that you are investigating and?

Henry: Yes (.) it has been a really interesting interview and I have really enjoyed our conversation. Hopefully it has been enjoyable for you as well but it is (.) I will turn these off now. I think the thing that people feel quite ((transcript ends))
Transcript 6: Alina

5641  Henry: -for some reason. To begin would you just like to tell me a little bit about yourself
5642  (. ) so what you do?
5643  Alina: Yes (. ) I just graduated from university last year and now I am working for a
5644  government department.
5645  Henry: Do you live in Sheffield?
5646  Alina: Yes (. ) I live in Sheffield. Shall I talk a bit more about it?
5647  Henry: Yes (. ) anything you feel (. ) Like where in Romania you are from?
5648  Alina: I am from Bacau which is the Moldova part of the country which is in the east. I
5649  came to the UK in 2005 as an au pair. Then I moved to London to work (. ) from
5650  there to Maidstone and then I moved to Sheffield for university and now I work
5651  here.
5652  Henry: So you have moved quite a lot.
5653  Alina: Yes.
5654  Henry: When you say you moved here in 2005 what was the term you used?
5655  Alina: As an au pair (. ) which is like a country exchange programme to build on your
5656  language skills (. ) to learn English and to go to English (places). At the same time
5657  you are looking after the children in the family like a live-in nanny sort of=
5658  Henry: =Okay (. ) I have never heard of that term.
5659  Alina: I think it is open for every nationality so you can travel a lot. You just have to be
5660  under 26 and be able to look after the children for five hours a day. The rest of
5661  time you are=
5662  Henry: =Free to roam and do what you like.
5663  Alina: Yes.
5664  Henry: So it is a little bit like Erasmus then in a sense you do like an exchange thing but it
5665  is obviously based on doing a little bit of babysitting.
5666  Alina: Yes (. ) it is not academic basically because you have to pay for your own college
5667  tuition in a way. You do get pocket money from the family. It is like an
5668  ethnography in a way because you live within the culture.
5669  Henry: Was it an English family you ended up staying with?
5670  Alina: Yes.
5671  Henry: And you bonded with them over the time that you were↑?
5672  Alina: Yes (. ) for six months I lived in a small village and then I moved to London to live
5673  with another family. I basically wanted to broaden my horizons and live in a
5674  bigger city to experience life in a different way.
5675  Henry: Your experiences of moving to somewhere that you didn’t know what the family
5676  was going to be like necessarily (. ) how did you find that?
Alina: I was 18 at the time so I didn’t really care that much about my safety.

Henry: You were a bit naive and all of that sort of thing.

Alina: Yes (.) you kind of have that perception of England of being perfectly safe and nothing can really happen to you and everybody is really nice. I never actually had any problems (.) I think that took me a year. Then I moved back to Romania to study at university as I had always planned. I wanted to earn some money and pass my English test which was quite expensive in Romania so this way I could pay for it. Then after a year I fell in love so I came back for romantic reasons. We moved to London together (.) from there we worked for a year and a half and then we decided to move outside of London for financial reasons and for job reasons for my husband as well. Then after three years of working in accountancy I decided to go to university to start a new degree because I wasn’t happy with the degree I was doing in Romania.

Henry: Was it accountancy you were doing in Romania?

Alina: No (.) it was economics for one year. Then obviously I had to decide if I should stay there to finish my degree or to move back to England. Like I said for romantic reasons I decided to move back to England. Then I have studied accountancy with the Home Learning College while I was working for a year. I got a job as an accountant in Maidstone and my husband requalified as a lorry driver at the same time. We decided to pack everything and move outside of London. It was an economic decision (.) but mostly from a cultural point of view we wanted to get away from the Romanian community from London as well and just start a new life. After three years we decided to get married and save up for a house (.) so that is why we decided to move to Sheffield because the houses were cheaper here. I got accepted at university here (.) so basically we could have=

Henry: =Everything fell into place didn’t it?

Alina: Yes.

Henry: And you have been here since.

Alina: Yes (.) four years now.

Henry: You say you moved in 2005 when you were 18 that would make you 27?

Alina: Yes (laughter)

Henry: So you have been here for quite a while obviously moving back and forth and moving within the country.

Alina: Yes (.) only once.

Henry: There is a lot to take in there. If you don’t mind me saying I can’t believe how quickly you were able to recall all of that because that is quite a lot of life that you are talking about.

Alina: Especially if you have to fill in application forms and you have to put your last addresses for three years.

Henry: Yes (.) I suppose you will have to reflect on it won’t you.

Alina: True.

Henry: If you don’t mind me asking is your husband English?
Alina: No, he is Romanian.

Henry: He is Romanian as well.

Alina: Yes, he had more of a tumultuous life than me. We met the third day after I arrived in England which was pure luck. The next day after we met he was deported back to Romania because at the time we were outside of the European Union. Basically we were separated for a year so that is why I decided in the next year to move back to Romania.

Henry: He would have moved back when the transition controls started was it?

Alina: That was in 2007 because he had one year of interdiction so he couldn’t leave the country.

Henry: Did he have to get a work permit after that?

Alina: Yes, it was a yellow registration card I think or a blue registration card they called it at the time.

Henry: It must have taken quite a while to get that through as well.

Alina: Not really.

Henry: Didn’t it? Okay.

Alina: When he came back he started work with the same employer that he worked for before so he was allowed to work without an actual registration card. During that time he managed to set up all the bank accounts proof of address and so on so in a couple of months he managed to get the yellow card.

Henry: I suppose it is like what we were saying earlier with me it is not what you know it is who you sometimes.

Alina: Exactly.

Henry: Because he already had a job and he already had a relationship with an employer it made life easier.

Alina: Yes, because the employer was foreign as well that made it a bit easier I guess to understand for them.

Henry: Yes because they could have a sense of what sort of challenges he might face.

Alina: Yes.

Henry: What about your family background are you the first to go off and do uni and all of that sort of thing?

Alina: Yes, I come from a working class background. My father works in a factory and my mum is a teaching assistant. I was the only one to go to university. My brother tried but he couldn’t afford it financially. One of the reasons for me leaving the country was to raise some money was so I could afford to go university back home. I always wanted to study in a bigger city and the city I came from was quite small and it only offered limited options because it was so expensive I decided to go and work for a year and pass my English test and so on. I always thought I was going to go to university and I never thought it was never out something out of the ordinary. Everybody in my generation went to university as well. I went to a good high school and a bilingual college as well and they always instilled that in us. I am sorry.
Henry: Do you want me to pause the recorder?

Alina: No, that is fine.

Henry: Honestly if you want to answer it that is absolutely fine because I can just pause it. It is not a problem.

Alina: At the college I was studying at there were a lot of English professors coming to teach certain things for example English or ecological studies or so on. We had an English library as well with books donated from England as well. We always had a connection with England so it was never. We had the British Counsel. I think that is what it is called and they always encouraged us to learn English and so on. Everybody in my generation basically went to university. I was the first one in my family to go to university. Everybody else after me went as well. It is more of a generation thing.

Henry: It certainly comes across that way that even though your family might have had different trajectories for you within your own friendship groups at school it just felt like a natural. I suppose that would have been what your teachers were trying to instil in you as well.

Alina: Yes, exactly.

Henry: Something that seems to come across with the Romanian education system is as time has gone on they seem to be emphasising that path more. From what another participant was saying there is quite a big emphasis on accountancy and a lot of courses in that.

Alina: Yes, working in banks.

Henry: Banks.

Alina: Yes, that is the number one university degree. I think banks and finance.

Henry: So the opposite of here then where you wouldn’t want to do banking now. (laughter)

Alina: It is probably because when they choose the university degree they have to choose practically because if you spend a lot of money on university you have to make that money back in some way.

Henry: [Yes] once you finish you can’t go and do something frivolous like zoological studies if you don’t want to become a vet or something.

Alina: Yes, exactly.

Henry: I am going to have to be quite careful because the questions are quite sequential but we are talking quite a lot of different things.

Alina: I will try to be more.

Henry: =No, that wasn’t an evaluation of that. It is just to forgive my hesitation sometimes with the questions. You started it in Romania didn’t you? You did a year there?

Alina: Yes.

Henry: As far as going to university in England then was it purely based on your own personal circumstances that made you choose to finish off in England then?
Alina: I think it was a personal choice because I felt quite disappointed in myself for not graduating from university. My husband always encouraged me to go to university because he knew that is what I had always wanted. I think it took us a day or two to decide I was going to go to university. I went through the clearance process so I only had a couple of days to decide. We just packed our bags and decided I was going to go to university. Obviously I had to decide on a city that allowed us to buy a house as well because that was on our to-do list as well. Sheffield has a reasonable house price range so that was one of the reasons I decided on Sheffield. It was between Sheffield and Northampton. I always wanted to study psychology and sociology and because in Romania I studied economics purely from a financial point of view because it would have been a good job after graduation. I kind of felt that if I am in England I am allowed to study whatever I want. I had already decided I didn’t want to work with numbers or finance. I had already worked as an accountant for two and a half years and I didn’t like it. I hated it. Then I decided money is not everything in life and if you can study whatever you want you might as well=

Henry: =Do something you enjoy.

Alina: Exactly so for three years I just read whatever I wanted. I didn’t really have to decide at that point exactly what I wanted to do with my future afterwards so I could just focus on my studies and just enjoy my time here. It was kind of a break from real life in a way. I didn’t really have to focus on the finance side of it probably because we already had some money saved up. We had a house we didn’t really have to pay any rent and our mortgage was really low as well. I didn’t really feel forced to=

Henry: =So it wasn’t pressure for you.

Alina: Yes exactly. It was my choice to work part-time. I had three jobs while I was at university but it was always in areas that I wanted to work in. It was in social research or doing volunteering with children. It was always something that I wanted to do which is a luxury sometimes because you can’t say that everybody works in their dream job. For me it was a good time for three years and now as well.

Henry: You do come across as someone who likes reading.

Alina: Yes.

Henry: You saying “I can read whatever I want.” You sound like the person who would like to just go to a library pick something off the shelf and have an afternoon with their book.

Alina: Yes when I was younger my mum used to drag me out of my room so I stopped reading and stopped studying.

Henry: You’re joking? Most parents drag their kids to their rooms to study!

Alina: That is how I ruined my sight that is what she always said. (laughter)

Henry: You were saying earlier on when you were coming to England you had some ideas of what England was like could you expand a little bit more on that? Things that you had about the culture and what the people were like anything like that.

Alina: I remember the first time we got cable TV it was after communism fell. We got a black and white TV and we got cable. It was Cartoon Network and all of the English and American kind of TV. That is how I learned English so that was
my first contact with the language I was like five or six or so. I know my
brother and I used to speak in English with each other so we can pretend that our
parents couldn’t. Obviously they don’t speak English so they couldn’t
understand us. We always had a dream that we were going to go to England
together my brother and I and sell tulips. I don’t know why. That was my first
experience and my first thought of England. Then obviously after I went to
school we had a lot of contact with English people. English tutors and English
volunteers. I volunteered for the Red Cross which had a country exchange
programme with people from Sheffield University actually. We were the hosts at
home for an English group so we talked a lot then about England. They explained
to me how England works. The university system and what you can study. I think
that is what made me believe that maybe England would be a good choice for me.
I never thought I was going to move here that was never in my plan. I always
wanted to go to university in Romania to study literature and Romanian culture. I
was quite interested in anthropology and the traditions of Romania. I used to work
on projects relating to culture traditions and religion and so on. The traditional
wear and older style of languages and so on. I never actually wanted to move to
another country probably because I loved Romania traditions so much so it was
never really on the cards. It was just to broaden my horizons in a way to pass
the English test which was important. Most people in Romania speak English
anyway so it was mostly a requirement for most high paid jobs to have at least one
foreign language. At school you are usually taught at least one language mostly
two foreign languages for this reason so you can have better choices in life in the
future.

Henry: Are there other languages that you speak then?

Alina: Only French and English and English doesn’t really count as a foreign language
any more does it.

Henry: Well if you are in Romania it is a foreign language so it is quite reasonable.
Obviously we are speaking in English now but it is quite reasonable to say that
from the perspective you are speaking from.

Alina: Obviously most Romanians speak and understand Italian and Spanish because of
the similarities in the language.

Henry: It is the romance language isn’t it.

Alina: Exactly because we study Latin which is not really a foreign language we
study it for 12 years as well.

Henry: Really?

Alina: Yes.

Henry: It is quite an archaic language because it is an

Alina: It is a dead language.

Henry: For people who speak Latin it is like the papacy they speak it but that is as far
as it goes really. The rest of it professors at universities that are reading an old
roman text or something.

Alina: For us it is quite easy because 80% of Romanian is Latin anyway. It is kind of like
speaking Romanian but without the accent.
Henry: That is an interesting way of putting it so if I could learn Latin then I could learn Romanian in that way.

Alina: Yes that is why I think if you learn Latin you already have four or five languages that are open to. It is the same with Russian if you speak Russian then the similarities with all the Slavic languages. It is not 100% the same but it is quite similar [we’re going to] go off track now=.

Henry: [We will probably] have to go a bit off track. When you first arrived in the UK can you think of any particular experiences anything tangible any weird or memorable things that happened to you or conversations you might have had?

Alina: I remember the first day when I got in the house I was picked up at the airport and I didn’t get the chance to meet the children that I was going to look after. Then in the morning I woke up and in my mind I was still in Romania somehow so my mind didn’t process the English language so I started speaking to the children in Romanian. In my mind I thought I was speaking English so the children actually got really scared and thought there was a weird person talking a different language to them so that wasn’t too pleasant.

Henry: Then after a few seconds you snapped out it.

Alina: Yes I think I had a panic moment that night as well. It was like “What am I doing here?” I didn’t have any phone cards or anything to phone my family to let them know that I was okay. I think in the first week it was scary to be on your own especially in a small village with people that you don’t know. You don’t really know what to expect. It is in a foreign country and everything is in a different culture and even the food obviously the tea. I didn’t know beforehand that English people drink tea with milk. I always thought it was English tea but actually no it is with milk.

Henry: Prior to that would you have drunk tea black without any milk in?

Alina: No we only drink herbal teas and it is only if you are sick or ill.

Henry: I see so the sort of Lemsip type of things here really.

Alina: Yes or like mint tea or chamomile tea. You have herbal teas especially for disease that is why it took me a long time to get used to the cultural aspect of drinking tea. It still works now if somebody comes from Romania it is like “Why are drinking tea? Are you sick are you ill is there something wrong with you?”

Henry: That is quite an interesting thing because of course when we went to get the drink earlier I asked if you wanted a seasonal coffee because obviously in Starbucks and places they make a (thing) out of Christmas don’t they. You are obviously quite happy drinking tea now and over time=

Alina: =It took a while.

Henry: Yes over time you have got used to it.

Alina: Yes I think it is representative of England as well. You kind of have to adapt as well. It was something that we worked quite hard at from all points of view not just drinking tea.

Henry: Forcing yourself to drink tea “I will like this.”
Alina: That is what it was at the beginning (.). “I have to like it.” If you are in an office environment or anywhere else with English people you don’t really want to be seen as not belonging. You don’t want to be the weird one out. As you know in an office environment everybody makes tea for everybody else. If people are offering you tea you have just got to drink it (.). you can’t really say no.

Henry: So in your experience it has been quite a useful thing to drink tea because it gives you that resource to=

Alina: Yes and you always have to have tea in the house. It was quite awkward at the beginning when we had workers doing something in the house. You had to offer them something and they said they wanted tea. If you didn’t have tea they would look at you funny as if you are an immigrant. You have to adapt (.). “Why don’t you have tea in the house?”

Henry: As far as the food side goes you were saying the food is different. Do you prefer Romanian food or is it something that you have got used to English food as well?

Alina: I have grown to like it (.). grown to accept it. Obviously we have fish and chips (.). but it is still difficult to adapt to the takeaway culture (.). to the processed food culture. Obviously I cook a lot and food is perceived in Romania as part of the family. I know it is a bit sexist but the woman still cooks in the family and the man doesn’t in most situations I would think. I have always done it because I was taught from an early age how to do all the Romanian foods.

Henry: Home economics and that sort of thing.

Alina: Yes (.). exactly. It is kind of a normal thing. My husband prefers English food more than I do (.). so I tend to cook English food if there is such a thing as proper English food.

Henry: It is a weird thing for me to say English food because there aren’t that many things we eat that are actually English because you call a curry as English food even though we eat it here. I appreciate that is probably a weird question.

Alina: I think the takeaway culture is quite central to the English way of life as well. We don’t have takeaways in Romania except for pizza lately I think it is an Italian introduction. We don’t really do that (.). so every time we have family round and we order something it is perceived as being a big no-no somehow.

Henry: It is better that you cook from scratch.

Alina: Yes (.). exactly.

Henry: At a family event what sort of things would you cook?

Alina: Now we are organising the Romanian Christmas meal on Friday so all the women (.). It sounds so sexist if you think about it now (.). but that is how we do it. Each woman has her own (.). Probably because we come from different parts of Romania so each of us know how to cook something else. For example the stuffed vine leaves which are quite common on Eastern European countries (.). lots of meat products (.). smoked products and smoked sausages. We just got a package from my parents they sent 100kg of homemade wine. I don’t know if you know in Romania everybody has their own vineyards (.). vodka and so on. We got a big package and homemade food from my parents and my husband’s parents. It would be mostly pork (.). pork is the staple diet in Romania. You smoke it (.). brine it (.). pickle it (.). That is kind Romanian food.
Henry: It sounds like a really interesting combination of different Mediterranean and Central European. Sausages that is quite German isn’t it and you have got (. ) I am trying to remember now what you said prior. It has gone now. Anyway (. ) it comes across that there are different cultural strains there that seem to.

Alina: Romania was under foreign occupation (. ) so I don’t think we were ever a sovereign state. Obviously from recent history we were (. ) but before that it was always the Turkish influence which was quite strong as well. The Greek influence (. ) the French influence a lot of it as well and mostly the Roman Empire which is where we got the language as well.

Henry: When you think about Romanian culture is that something that you think is talked about a lot that you have descended from the Roman Empire or the Turkish influence?

Alina: I think so especially the Roman Empire. I think that is why it is easier for Romanians to go and live in Italy because that is the number one immigrant destination. I don’t know how many millions of Romanians live in Italy (. ) half of my family lives in Italy as well and half of my husband’s family lives in Italy. I think there has always been a connection with the former Roman Empire as well. Everybody knows about it (. ) so what we inherited from them. Obviously there is only a small Catholic community. I am a Catholic as well and from my point of view I know a bit more about that because we always had financial help from the Vatican as well. It was always a religious and financial relation to Italy and obviously the former Roman Empire as well.

Henry: It is really interesting because from what you are saying it seems like Romania is almost like an amalgamation of European countries in one rather than a member. Obviously different nations have got very distinctive identities haven’t they (. ) but from the way you are talking about it Romania seems to be a product of everything.

Alina: Yes (. ) that is how it feels as well. I don’t think we actually have an identity in a way. We talk about identity a lot and everybody is being asked (. ) “Who are you?” Or (. ) “What are you?” You don’t really know what to answer in a way especially now because I am also a British citizen so I have double citizenship it is always difficult to answer the question I think. I don’t feel Romanian but I don’t feel English either so I am somewhere in-between somehow. I think with certain areas I am Romanian and certain areas I am British. I will never be 100% British probably because of the accent that is the first question that everybody asks. When you meet someone it is like (. ) “Oh you have got a weird accent (. ) an interesting accent.”

Henry: Yes (. ) interesting is an easy way of getting around the (. ) “You sound different.”

Alina: At work every time when I move to a different team it is kind of awkward because everybody is avoiding the question but they nominate a person to ask (. ) so that is a bit awkward as well.

Henry: I think that is an English thing.

Alina: I don’t find it rude to be honest.

Henry: I think it is a way to address it (. ) but not like=

Alina: =I bought a cup saying ‘Romania’ on it so I just put it on my desk. That caused confusion because they only read the first part of it and thought I was from Rome.
Henry: It doesn’t always work.

Alina: “Oh she is Italian.”

Henry: So the flag didn’t work then?

Alina: No (.) not really. I will try later.

Henry: It is really interesting.

Alina: Probably because I am the only foreign person in the whole department that makes it difficult as well. That was kind of rude of some people to ask (.) they actually asked if I have a work permit to work there.

Henry: Is this recently?

Alina: Yes (.) the last couple of months. My husband gets some awkward discussions as well at work. I think lately it has been a bit worse than it used to be at the beginning. In 2005 nobody actually cared or they were generally interested in where I was from and talking about my country. Now because it is all over the media and obviously we have had a bad reputation lately it is kind of awkward and you kind of take it personally in a way every time somebody asks you. It was fine before because they had a genuine interest (.) but now it doesn’t feel so genuine anymore.

Henry: In the nine years you have been here it sounds like you are noticing a gradual trend (.) a change then in the way that=

Alina: =It is not really gradual.

Henry: It has been quite severe then?

Alina: Yes (.) I think from one month to the other or from one to three months. Obviously it is the media that has portrayed us in such a way. That is why I was wondering why does that media only talk about Romanians and not Romanians and Bulgarians? Probably because there is a smaller proportion and they are a smaller country obviously. There are some Bulgarians here as well (.) why aren’t people interested in them or why aren’t we protected from a bad image as well? I know we keep going back to the minority issue within Romania but there is a minority issue in Bulgaria as well. You can’t really blame the bad reputation on that. I actually had a recent experience. I am a blood donor so the lady who was taking the blood she was asking me where I am from and if I am from Romania. She said (.) “Have you seen the situation with the Roma gypsies in Page Hall I know there is a problem there. Are you familiar with them (.) are you friends with them?” Assuming that we are from the same country (.) the same culture (.) probably from the same village and I am the same as them and so on. It kind of felt a bit put to one corner in a way. I had to explain the difference between countries (.) which kind of felt a bit awkward.

Henry: I imagine from what you are saying it is difficult because you want to get yourself out of that position. You also want to educate to some extent (.) but not so it seems that you are condescending.

Alina: Exactly.

Henry: It is a difficult tightrope isn’t it?

Alina: It is a different country so you don’t really want to say that. Slovakia is there and Romania is in a different part. I don’t know why people confuse Romania with
Russia which is totally not the same country just because it starts with R. I don’t think fair for me to generalise this. It has only been a couple of situations so obviously not everybody is the same position. There are people more genuinely interested (.) it is not necessarily a negative thing. I think it has happened more lately.

Henry: From my own perspective I think some of it might have to do with the way the UK culture is towards Europe in a general way. We are an island which is a start and as a people we are separate. It does perhaps inform how and it could even excuse (.) “We don’t know anything (.) but it is alright we are not attached to anyone.”

Henry: If you asked anyone what they know about Romania (.) if they don’t think it is Russia they would probably say Transylvania.

Henry: The other thing I supposed as well you were saying confused with Russia. I must admit I was surprised when I learned Romanian is a Latin language and not a Slavic language. I was surprised because the entire region really is influenced by=

Alina: Yes (.) that or the orphan situation that was in the news before communist times. They are the associations of orphans with disabled children (.) Dracula and Transylvania. We do have some good things that people know about like Hagi or Nadia Comăneci in sports. I think that is kind of our saviour because we did have some positive things in the media. Obviously we do have positive things that are not portrayed in the media. It is just the perception of people I think it comes from the media mainly.

Henry: The bad points (.) corruption is the same.

Alina: =Yes (.) that is why we are quite special in that way I think. Even the mentality is Latin (.) the way of life is Latin is well. You can have a palpable difference between Bulgaria for example and Ukraine. We have friends from Ukraine and they have different personalities and different ways of living their life. In Romania I think everything is around family (.) food (.) parties (.) more like a=

Henry: Before a siesta in the afternoon it would be about family time and everyone is together.

Alina: The bad points (.) corruption is the same.

Henry: Not as bad as Berlusconi surely?

Alina: No (.) maybe worse.

Henry: Maybe worse?

Alina: It is getting better now with the new president I think lots of things will change. In the first day when he was president he already arrested 30 people on corruption from the parliament. I think they were trying to get the political immunity for all parliament members. He just destroyed that legislation basically because they were trying to obviously get self-immunity which is= 

Henry: =Yes (.) I suppose it was a bit like what Berlusconi was doing towards the end of his. He was trying to make it so that prime ministers couldn’t be arrested or something like that. You can tell it is a little bit of a vested interested. ((laughter))

One of my questions was about how you found settling in. You have applied for
British nationality and obviously been granted it. I suppose your language test was a thing on your side on that part wasn’t it?

Alina: Yes (.) you don’t actually get a language test. It is a life in the UK test (.) which is—

Henry: =A citizenship test.

Alina: Yes (.) exactly.

Henry: So English proficiency is not↑?

Alina: No (.) I think they assume that you have to know English enough so you can pass the test because you have a book and everything. I found the test quite difficult to be fair. I like history (.) I like to think I know a bit of history and I know a bit of geography but then I think that was a bit=

Henry: =I failed.

Alina: You failed (.) lots of English people did actually.

Henry: I failed and I am born and bred here. I did a citizenship GSCE (.) I was one of the first years to do that. When would I have taken it 2006 or 2007? Probably the second or third year that citizenship GCSE (.) I got a C in it and I failed the citizenship test. I think there is a little bit of a thing going on with how hard they make it.

Alina: Yes (.) I mean to be fair when I studied English in school we studied the origins of English and we had to learn ‘Beowulf’ and so on. We had quite an in-depth knowledge of England and English culture and then you get some weird questions in the citizenship test.

Henry: Like King Arthur and ‘Beowulf’ and things like that. How many constituencies does it have?

Alina: Yes (.) I don’t even care.

Henry: That is the point how many English people care when you think 10% of people voted for their police commissioners when they were brought in and a 60%-odd vote in the elections on average. You think how constituents they wouldn’t bother to vote=

Alina: =I do think it is fair on the other side because I think citizenship is something that you earn you shouldn’t be granted it just because you are here and that it is. I think you want to do it (.) you have to want to be involved and you have to be integrated enough to care. If you are going to live in this country you might as well know everything about it. Obviously you have the advantage of learning everything in history (.) probably learning it (.) but then we don’t. What if other people don’t know anything about England? I think they should be at the same level of knowledge as people who were born here. I think sometimes it is kind of easy for some people to pass the test.

Henry: How would you feel about in your particular situation you would have had lots of different work experience and voluntary experience here. Do you not feel that would have been enough if you’d applied to say (.) “I want to live here (.) this is me.” “Now you got to pass this test.” Do you think that was probably the right thing?
No (.) I am probably harsh as a person with myself and with others. It is more of a principle thing. If you care enough you would jump through hoops. It doesn’t really matter how hard it is if you really want to be a British citizen it shouldn’t just be put on the table for you just because you have done some things. I think you should go through a process. I think it is the British way of doing things as well in a specific order. It took us five years to get all the papers together. When we applied for citizenship we had to prove everything that we have done here for the past six years or seven years. We had a proper file like in offices full of everything (.) just in case someone asked we kept everything. We knew that we were working for our citizenship (.) so every single year we ordered them per year (.) per month and so on just in case somebody was asking us.

Yes (.) probably it is more of an OCD thing.

It benefits you though doesn’t it?

Yes (.) that is why I don’t really understand people who say they don’t really keep things. It is kind of your own fault if you don’t get the British citizenship. We always knew what we were working for (.) so we applied for the yellow card and then after a year for the blue card. Then he applied for the blue and then I get the blue card. Then indefinite leave to remain and then British citizenship. We always had the plan (.) so I think it is fair that they should make it hard for people to get it because if you want it you are going to get it (.) but it shouldn’t just be given away I think.

When you were saying earlier that even though you have got an affinity to both Romania and Britain you wouldn’t necessarily feel like you fit neatly into one or the other.

No (.) it is something to do with the age that I moved as well. I moved when I was 18 straight after I finished high school. I didn’t really develop an understanding of life in Romania as such.

As an adult.

Exactly (.) I never worked. If people asked me what the tax was in Romania I wouldn’t know or what a payslip looks like (.) I wouldn’t know I only worked summers cash in hand. Once I had finished my equivalent of A-levels I just left. I can’t really compare it to one another. My husband for example he always wanted to leave the country even during communist times. He has been through a lot (.) he tried to pass the borders a lot (.) he was in a (way)=

He sounds like quite a character.

Yes (.) he is.

He sounds like he has done quite a lot of moving.

He is a great person.

Is he older than you?

Ten years older.

Hence why he was old enough to dis-appreciate the communist regime because we would all have been growing up then wouldn’t we.
Alina: Yes (.) absolutely. He comes from a family of rebellious people in a way should I say.

Henry: Colourful.

Alina: Yes (.) he ran from the country. He lived under a bridge in Budapest in Hungary for a year before he was discovered. Then he went to live in Germany and then in Hungary again to study at university. He got a scholarship there and then he gave it up and went back to Romania and then to England and so on. He always wanted to leave the country. I think his influence rubbed on me because I never wanted to live in England (.) but because he wanted to live in England so much we had to come to an agreement in a way. I think if it wasn’t for him I would still be living in Romania (.) which is kind of weird because everybody I know is coming not necessarily to England but are leaving the country. That is so much more difficult for them now because they are 27 and to have to go give up everything that you worked for in Romania (.) experience (.) work and so on and just start again I think that is [Recognition] isn’t it. Everything they have worked towards that is recognised in the place they are in having to (.) Your roots get deeper don’t they?

Henry: [I suppose from what you were saying you made the decision to go at the time you did you had not developed those ties that would be difficult for you to do if you went now.

Alina: Yes (.) a year after I lived in England when I went back to Romania to study at university it all felt foreign in a way. It only took me one year (.) but I think I did develop a bit of Englishness somehow. It felt wrong whenever I had to deal with corruption or being treated unfairly. I was kicked out of my dorm room because someone else had paid for my place. At 12 o’clock at night I was in the middle of nowhere with nowhere to stay. It probably wouldn’t have bothered me before but because I lived in a fair correct country in a way that is how I perceive England to be. I know it has got problems (.) corruption and so on it is just at the personal individual level it is not as bad. I have never had any problems with corruption here (.) but in Romania every single time I go back or as I was in university it just felt smothering somehow and frustrating (.) it is like talking to nobody basically. That is a feeling of being powerless I guess.

Henry: You were talking about a sense of Englishness and fair play I suppose (.) something someone else has talked about before is how Romanians don’t like queuing.

Alina: Yes (.) that is the first thing I learnt.

Henry: I was just going to ask if that is something you can identify with? Obviously you can (.) so fire away.

Alina: It is quite funny when I used to work in London I used to work in the Royal Parks in the coffee shops. Everybody was just queuing up (.) but they didn’t really know what they were queuing up for. They were just in the queue and when they ended up being in front of me it was like (.) “Oh (.) so what do you sell?” “Why did you
queue up if you didn’t know what you were actually wanting?” “There are 10 people I might as well just join them.”

Henry: Like a magnet (.). “There is a queue it must be good.”

Alina: I know (.) that is a really funny thing a cultural difference with the queues. I think that reflects a lot of a country’s culture. If you go in airports you see the English queues going on after the other. In Romanian queues you just see everybody (.). There are no straight queues (.) if you see one person you just move after the next person so it is just a mountain of people there is no order.

Henry: People just trying to cut in front of each other.

Alina: Exactly (.) you are just like half a metre before. I think that says a lot thought about the country the queueing systems and the order that English people like (.) British people (.) should I say British?

Henry: Whichever one you like. They are both right in their own way English could be the language and it could be whatever.

Alina: True.

Henry: It is interesting when you were saying about the queueing because in the dormitory someone else had taken your place it is almost like they had cut the queue. You had reserved it and then someone else has cut in front of you after you had paid.

Alina: Yes and they lost my contract basically. It never existed.

Henry: That is a very interesting instance where you would feel more aware that some change has happened (.) some sort of shift in the way you are thinking. It takes that violation because living in it you sort of just get used to it don’t you.

Alina: Yes (.) that is what everybody living in Romania says. I ask them (.) “How do you live like that?” “I just get used to it.” It is like every single time they are faced with corruption and not having money to pay for doctors and so on. Lots of tragedies happen as well. My mum keeps me up to date daily with what happens. Every single time when something unfair happens it is frustrating because you are thinking it has been 25 years since communism fell and nothing has changed or it has changed for the worse. Sometimes you feel hopeless because you think if you ever wanted to go back to Romania you wouldn’t be able to survive the system. I wouldn’t know who to pay at what point to get what. If you don’t know who to pay obviously you are going to be at the bottom of the queue. Every time you have to be prepared to know who to bribe basically. It is not as bad as it used to be (.) but normal people still get confronted with exactly the same situations as before. I don’t know how to deal with that (.) I don’t know how to bribe people. I don’t know who to bribe (.) I don’t know how to do it without shaking.

Henry: Do you want to?

Alina: That is the thing.

Henry: I suppose that is the other thing that you seemed to get that earlier that it was annoying (.) it was quite an inconvenience and quite dangerous being kicked out at midnight.

Alina: Exactly (.) I wouldn’t want my children to live in that kind of a system. I like certain parts of the Romanian culture that I miss. I miss the simplicity of things (.) of life and not having to wonder all the time about paying the mortgage and so on.
It is kind of easier to live there. You don’t have to worry about going on holiday because you are kind of on holiday all the time.

Henry: The weather sounds better.

Alina: Yes (.) not in the winter time but it does.

Henry: It seems like an obvious question (.) but if was to ask where home feels for you how would you go about answering that?

Alina: I would probably say Sheffield. I think there has been quite a bit shift in perspective since we bought the house. Before that we always felt that we didn’t have a home somehow because we always rented houses and moved. We didn’t have our own stuff (.) our own objects or our own personal things. When we first moved to Maidstone we only had a really small Renault Clio stuffed with stuff. When we moved to Sheffield we had a big lorry full of stuff. It is just the fact that you grow roots somewhere and the buying of the house which is the top priority list of most Romanians that is their goal to buy a house (.) to have roots and to have a family and so on. I think that changed what we call home when we bought a house (.) so now I think it is Sheffield. Every time we go abroad or somewhere else you do come home and you do feel like you are home. But then if you go to my parents’ home for example because we don’t have a house or any property in Romania you still consider your parents’ house home (.) but it is not as it is here. Everything that you know is here now. It has been four years since we bought the house so I think Sheffield would be home.

Henry: We have talked about so many different things (.) you know what we were saying about the media and you were saying you are noticing a shift in how people are asking question (.) they think you are Russian or things like that. I am wondering perhaps if you have got any general views about the way that at least in the past few months the migration debate makes you feel as a citizen living here? Of course you have the dual nationality I suppose there must be quite a lot of things that cross your mind when you put the telly on or you read the paper.

Alina: Yes (.) obviously every time the word Romania comes up in papers you know that it is going to be negative. I always wonder if they are going to say anything good about Romania and they kind of never do. I was looking forward to someone mentioning the result of the presidential campaign. It is a good result and it is in the right direction (.) at least something positive and it never actually happens. In sport or something (.) it is kind of like it is all bad (.) Romania is all bad and there is nothing good to offer. It is like for example why does nobody say the Romanian Olympics there are a lot especially in international mathematics (.) IT and so on? Why doesn’t anyone say anything good about Romania? There are lots of good things. Why does (.) not Prince William his father (.) I have forgotten his name. Prince Charles (.) he has a house in Romania (.) he has got property and he visits all the time (.) how come that is never in the media? Now obviously there is a lot more about Romania than there used to be because of the rise of UKIP (.) English Defence League (.) the BNP and so on. One really upsetting thing especially for me personally is when we got the UKIP flyers in the post treating us like criminals in a way. I don’t know if you have seen them there was a comparison between Romanians and they were written in the way that (.) ‘Watch out if you have got a Romanian neighbour.’ I kind of felt that my privacy has been invaded somehow. Obviously our neighbours know us and they know that we are Romanians. I was wondering (.) “I wonder what is going through their heads (.) ‘I should watch (.) I should keep an eye on the Romanians next door.’” I felt a bit betrayed because we try to be good citizens. We try to have an education here (.) to pay all the taxes (.)
to volunteer (.) to have a good job and to give something back all the time. We always say positive thing about Romania and ever since we got here we try to integrate and to have good relationships with everyone that we meet. We help our neighbours to take the bins out for them and so on. Then all of a sudden it has kind of turned against us somehow. You kind of take it personally to be fair. I think it is different because we have been here for eight or nine years and we have seen a difference in perspective from British people of Romanians. Like I said before nobody really knew anything about Romanian and I think it was a better position.

Henry: Didn’t know good or bad.

Alina: Exactly (.) it is not the bad advertising is advertising or whatever they call it. I think if they don’t have anything good to say they might as well not say anything. I always felt the English had something against Romania from a historical point of view. The same with the presentation of the orphan situation back in communist times I think it was mostly England that had a problem with it. I think they always (.) I am using the us and them situation. It is more from the media point of view (.) but as a society they always had something against Romanians in a way. I think it has been worse now with the anti-immigration campaigns and so on.

Henry: It is a difficult question and I am not going to pretend that I know the answer by asking it. What sort of things do you think could be motivating that sort of campaign against Romania and against Romanian citizens coming to live here?

Alina: Recently I think from a political point of view everybody wants to win the anti-immigration campaign for the people. If you find a scapegoat for all of it I think it is a winning situation for them. A couple of days ago when they were saying immigrants had blocked the M25 or whatever because there are so many immigrants in the country obviously we blocked everything. It is just trying to find a scapegoat for the entire economic situation and trying not to draw attention on their problems and the political problems. If you solve immigration then that is it. Every time there is a talk about immigration there is always a Romanian person. I don’t know if you watch ‘Dispatches’ there was a documentary about immigrants and out of five people three were Romanian immigrants and the other ones I think one was French and one was Italian. Obviously I am subjective because whenever I turn on the TV and there is something about immigration I probably turn into the Romanian point of view. It does make you wonder. I think it was about benefits at the time (.) did you really have to show three families of Romanians? With the pick-pocketing documentary they were showing most of them were Romanians. I am sure that is not the realistic point of view. I am sure there is not such a high number of Romania pick-pockets in England so why do they just focus on the bad things somehow? I don’t think that happened before. Since 2005 we never saw that much of Romania in the media. I know now it is just the political context and the economic context that is actually pulling it to the surface. But like I said if in all statistics we are put together with Bulgarians how come in the media we are kind singled out somehow?

Henry: It seems to be like a combination of all the economic situation and bad timing that it could be anyone (.) but it just happens to be Romania.

Alina: Yes and nobody actually apologised. I remember on 1st January when they were expecting a million Romanians to come flying=

Henry: =Was it Victor Spirescu? He was the only Romanian they found who actually wasn’t already living here. That was something that some people were making fun of they are already here (.) what is the problem? You didn’t even realise they were here that is how much of a problem they were. ((laughter))
Alina: Nobody said anything about that.

Henry: No (.) that is a common thing isn’t it that they don’t often apologise if they get it wrong. “Sorry for the six years of nastiness we will close the paper now.” As if.

Alina: I think it is frustrating that nobody is taking our side. Our ambassador he never says anything (.) why doesn’t he say anything? He should protect our reputation somehow. The cultural institute in London doesn’t really do anything. It should be there for the diaspora so it should kind of protect our interests. I never needed them and they only organise high end events. I don’t know if you have ever tried to contact the Romanian consulate if you do they are only going give you access to high level people (.) parliamentarians or diplomats and so on. They don’t really keep in touch or have any kind of information about the Romanians that live there. That is why nobody goes to them. I think that is their purpose to bring together all Romanians in the diaspora.

Henry: That is what the name implies rather than all the high flyers. It seems to be a problem with priorities then really. The priority is not on the everyday experience of anyone who falls under the Romanian (category) (.) but rather who is worth protecting=

Alina: =Yes (.) something like that.

Henry: It is quite frustrating picture you paint really.

Alina: And I am a positive person.

Henry: This is the thing because it is undoubtedly negative. I suppose related to this is a question. You were talking earlier about citizenship being something that you felt should earned. With all this recent press it is all really about this notion that the free movement of the people is now becoming broader and broader. You have got such a long perspective of this because you would have seen the blue and yellow cards and you have seen the different phases. Do you think the movement of people is something that should be free? Obviously you have had different experiences of this. Do you think it is something that should be controlled (.) you should apply for things and you should be able to be more restricted?

Alina: I think it needs to be controlled definitely. Probably because like I said before you couldn’t actually see (.) I don’t know who to explain it. There was a bit of sieve so not everybody could come to England (.) not all kinds of people without actually deserving to be here (.) so all of those people used to go to Hungary or Italy. Once the restrictions were raised everybody came with no limit on what kind of qualification they should have or what kind of experience they should have. That is not just for Romanians I think it is in general. I think immigration should be controlled in every country not just in England (.) America or so on. I think every country should protect their own interests before thinking about the interests of other countries. I know obviously the European Union and so you have to adhere to that policy. I don’t think that is in the best interests of England. Before I used to feel proud to be in England because I knew that not everybody else could get to England. I had to go through a visa process (.) I had a two hour interview and I travelled to [Bucharest]

Henry: [You earne]d it essentially.

Alina: Exactly (.) that is why I keep thinking about the same situation. I think only certain people who work hard for it. Not necessarily from an education point of view because obviously you can come here as a builder but you should have a bit more experience. You should bring something to the table (.) it shouldn’t be just you and
another 2 (.000) people who know how to do exactly the same thing. It has to be a separation between who gets to come here and who doesn’t. If not you just get all kinds of people from everywhere so you don’t need so many researchers or so many doctors. Obviously you need doctors. I think it should be on a skills system somehow like it is from outside the European Union. Although that has its own problems I still think it should be controlled. I always thought that it is not just because I am here so screw everybody else I don’t care.

Henry: Of course but that was how you got here so it is not like you are applying a different lens that you got here however you like and then everyone else should be controlled. You actually did experience that yourself so it is based on your experience.

Alina: I kind of feel after we came and after the restrictions were lifted or part of the restrictions were lifted lots of my friends came here. I don’t think it is fair that I had to go through a lot and they didn’t. It is a selfish point of view but I don’t think it is fair because they didn’t have to work for anything.

Henry: There is a logic to what you are saying that it should be based on some sort of criteria.

Alina: Yes I know a lot of people and some of them are my family unfortunately but they came here and they shouldn’t be here in the first place. They don’t know how to do anything. They should have a job and a skills set doing something and not just be here and that is it. It shouldn’t be enough to just be here.

Henry: Feel free to come back and see how you think about this. It seems to be a sense of you agree with some of the criticisms when it comes to not just Romanian migration but the broader migration issues that are debated. You can identify with the sense of the control but there is another sense that it is quite cutting sometimes the way it is talked about and it descends into something.

Alina: Yes it because what is fair is fair. Basically I understand the idea in the media that immigration has to be controlled that is fair enough but why does only immigration from Romania have to be controlled why not everything else? They keep saying that European Union immigration needs to be controlled but nobody says about German immigration do they? Do they ever present a case of a German person coming here? Did someone wait for the Germans in the airport to see how many people came through? It is all of these situations it is not fair that we are being singled out somehow. I think that is the only thing I have problems with or the fact that we are being portrayed as criminals. What has that got to do with the immigration system in a way? If you are going to have a normal debate you should look at all of the countries involved and not just it is the same with the limited restrictions for Romania and Bulgaria why were we the only countries that we got partial restricts? Why didn’t Poland and Germany and so on why didn’t they have the need to apply for a yellow card and a blue card why was it just us? I feel that we have always had to work a bit harder to be at the same level with the rest of the countries from the European Union as if we are like a second class country somehow. It is like the European Union and Romania and Bulgaria somehow. We are A2 countries we are not A8 countries it is like we are in a separate group somehow there. The media has a way of whenever they talk about migration they give examples of the newer countries just because we are a poorer country. They came to Romania to film the gypsy palaces and that doesn’t say anything about Romania it is just a small minority in a small village. Obviously that is a gypsy village it is not Romanian villages everywhere. Why didn’t they make a comparison between
Henry: [When Nigel Farage came to visit and he had his little tour. That is precisely the sort of thing when they were following him round that he went to see this tiny minute little village that no one has ever heard of. Probably most Romanians will never have heard of it.

Alina: To be fair the one good thing that we had in the English media was the ‘Top Gear’ documentary when they filmed it in Romania. It actually said that we have the best road in the world.

Henry: Wow (.) for ‘Top Gear’ that is a real compliment English roads don’t compare to anywhere let alone=

Alina: =When they went to the seaside I think they had Lamborghinis or something and they said (.) “I hope nobody is going to steal them.” Then there was a row of all the very rare cars in Romania. Obviously there are very rich people in Romania. Most people invest in cars and luxury products (.) so there is a big gap between the poor and the rich. They were surprised there are rich people in Romania. Not that that has increased our value in the eyes of the English but then it portrayed a different kind of Romania and not just poor and uneducated (.) which is not fair to do that.

Henry: So it is about a sense of balance that there is more than meets the eye.

Alina: Yes (.) obviously they are only looking at what is in the media’s interest. If you want to present something you are going to go looking for that something. You are not going to look at the whole picture and then give a balanced view because that is too professional isn’t it. I do agree with a control on immigration.

Henry: How do you feel like your movement not just from Romania to the UK but within the UK (.) how do you think that has influenced or changed the way that you see yourself? Obviously it has been quite a long time that you have been moving around. Feel free to just focus on one particular move if it felt pertinent (.) obviously you spoke about getting the house in Sheffield that was quite (.) How has it influenced how you see yourself?

Alina: I am not really sure. I don’t think the moves actually influenced me as such outside the buying of the house in Sheffield and going to university. I don’t know (.) I think certain moments in time that influenced me. Obviously I went to university (.) we got married (.) we bought the house (.) we changed our lifestyle completely and we made new friends. Not that we necessarily gave up our old friends.

Henry: Yes (.) you were saying you moved out of London to get away from the Romanian community that was the phrase you used wasn’t it?

Alina: Yes (.) we always felt that we are not Romanians in way so that is why we got away from the partying and the Romanian lifestyle like having to buy presents for everybody for their birthdays (.) for baptisms and weddings. They are really expensive as well so you have to baptise everybody and everybody is relatives with everybody. I don’t even know what that is about.

Henry: Is it a bit too intense?

Alina: A lot. Just keeping a kid awake until 2:00am when he is one you have to cut their first bit of hair and then stick it with wax on two gold coins and it needs to be holy in the church I don’t know where. I think that is a lot and it is a lot of pressure to keep up with all the traditions because if you are here you have to keep all the traditions. I think that is a bit too much. There is a lot of tradition that is inconvenient in a way. The music (.) we don’t like the Romanian music. It is like
Romanian gypsy music which we never liked and the fact that they all invest in cars and luxury products and we always wanted a house that was the priority. Obviously they want that too (.) but first they have to have the newest BMW and the new Audi. That is why we wanted to get away from that place. I think that changed us as well. That changed me because I always knew what I didn’t want to become. I didn’t want to be that kind of Romanian. I wanted to be a more educated Romanian with a good job and social status in a way. I know that might sound quite superficial (.) but if you want to integrate in a certain type of society you want to be at the same level. Like now we live in Parson Cross which is a working class (.) It sounds like it is a negative thing (.) for example on our street most people don’t work we are the only ones that wake up at six o’clock in the morning and go to work. People kind of make fun (.) sometimes they make fun (.”Why are you waking up in the morning? Oh you go to work.” It is unusual. That is why we want to=

Henry: =“Why don’t you just claim benefits?” That type of thing.

Alina: Yes (.) exactly. That is why we want to put some money aside to live in a better area should I say. I think social status is important for us. I think throughout our journey in Maidstone and so on we found ourselves a bit more. We discovered who want to be and the group of friends that we want to have as well. I think kind of shapes who you are continuously.

Henry: I understand it is quite a difficult question to answer. It sounds like each little move has prompted little moments for you where you think (.”We have done that now let’s think about this.” I quite like when you said the story with your citizenship that you were adding little bits of paperwork each time and it was accumulative.

Alina: Yes (.) that felt like we were getting closer to something. That is what we wanted to do. I brought my brother over and his three wife three years ago and we said we didn’t want them to go through the same processes of self-learning everything (.) all the immigration rules (.) the system (.) all the little gaps and everything they need to do. We talked them through everything so in two years which was less than it took us they had everything they needed. They bought a house as well and they have great jobs and so on. I think it took us longer because we never had any help from anyone and we never asked for help from anyone. We basically self-taught everything.

Henry: It is really interesting. Earlier you were saying about your husband and how he was a bit of a livewire and he got up to quite a lot.

Alina: Yes.

Henry: You were saying that he influenced your choice to move here. Seeing as you are married and you have got a mortgage it sounds a little bit like you have influenced him like he has settled down a bit. Even though you have moved where you didn’t think you would.

Alina: Yes (.) I think I changed him a lot. No one actually he was ever going to get married.

Henry: Really (.) so he has surprised everyone then.

Alina: Yes (.) I think so. Probably because my parents didn’t really agree with the marriage in the first place because he was never settled down. He was always moving around and never had a stable job and he was 10 years older than me. He didn’t come from a good family because there is some alcoholism problems there.
It was always a different relationship even the way that we met and so on. Three days after he was deported then we got together and then didn’t.

Henry: I can’t imagine that it was an easy first conversation to have with your parents and that this is ((laughter)) nope. ((laughter))=

Alina: =Well they kind of did a background check on him and then it turned out okay.

Henry: I suppose this is where you were saying earlier you were interested in Romanian tradition and culture. Then later on you were saying it was quite intense living in London and all the baptisms and keeping up. This is another instance where perhaps the tradition side was quite strong for you because your family were quite against the idea of that relationship. I suppose the tradition thing would come through there because he is not from a good family or because he is not settled in some way. They were using some sort of criteria to say (.) “This guy isn’t good enough for you.”

Alina: Yes (.) because obviously I was 18 at the time so they thought I don’t know anything basically (.) “Shut up and dump him.” Because I had that freedom I could choose whatever I wanted because I wasn’t in Romania. I wasn’t restricted to those traditions and to those rules. To be fair I have to say my father always travelled so every year he used to travel on a different continent with work. Every time he used to tell us (.) “Never stay in Romania you have to live abroad. You have to stay away from Romania.” I think he found my husband on the same level because my husband always wanted to live abroad and always wanted to move. That is why my father wasn’t really against him because he knew that he was going to convince me somehow to live abroad.

Henry: Of course he was trying to get out of Romania in the ‘80s like you were saying so they have that in common don’t they.

Alina: Yes (.) exactly. I think that made it easier for them to accept that I will marry him regardless of what they think anyway. They always gave me a lot of freedom which was quite unusual for my generation. Everybody had to stay at home and go to university supported by the family. The family always sent the packages every week with food and so on (.) which I never actually agreed with. I wanted to have independence and I didn’t think Romania was giving me enough independence to go and do whatever I wanted probably financially (.) but also from the cultural point of view because I was the only one who left the country from everybody that I knew at the time. People were against it (.) they were always blaming my mother (.) “How can you leave your 18 year old daughter to go and live on her own in a different country?” She was always marginalised for that because she allowed me to go.

Henry: There is quite a different interplay of things going on there. It sounds like it was more your mum who was disapproving of your husband if your dad was quite alright I am guessing. Then also they are quite keen on giving you the freedom even though they have got the tradition on that side when it comes to who you choose as a partner as far as you living your life. It sounds like quite a lot of different stuff going on there.

Alina: You have got a teenage daughter you probably have a lot of things to think about. You don’t want to give her too much freedom (.) but once they gave me the freedom they couldn’t really take it back now.

Henry: That is a good point because otherwise you would just never see them again because they can’t stop you.
Alina: Yes (. ) that is what would have happened probably.

Henry: Have you got any siblings by the way?

Alina: No (. ) just an older brother two years older.

Henry: So you were the baby of the family in a sense.

Alina: Yes (. ) only by age. Everybody thinks I am the eldest sister because I always protected him somehow and I brought him to England and I guided him. I was an accountant as well so I used to do all the tax returns of everybody of all the Romanians as well. I try to help everybody as much as possible.

Henry: So despite that age thing you still have a mothering thing to look after him. When I was saying about the baby I suppose in the sense of this concept of being the youngest of the children and a girl as well. Would that be a thing? I don’t know (. ) some parents are funny about their kids doing things aren’t they.

Alina: I think I was always the mature one everywhere so that is probably why I married a man 10 years older than me. I was always too mature for my age everybody kept me telling me that. I suffered from a bit of a depression episode before I decided to come to England because I didn’t think my future was good enough at that time. Basically everybody else at the college came from rich families. It was quite a good college and they had their lives planned out basically. My only choice for what I wanted to do was to move abroad.

Henry: I suppose when that is the only comparison you have got naturally it doesn’t feel like you match up.

Alina: Yes (. ) exactly. Now to be fair looking back I think everybody is kind of at the same level. I managed to rise to the expectation that I had for myself. I don’t think I could have forgiven myself if I didn’t graduate from university. It was more of a personal decision and I think my husband knew that as well. If I never graduated from university it would have always been his fault because I came here for him (. ) so if I didn’t fulfil my dream it would have been all his fault. That was never mentioned but he probably knew that.

Henry: At this point in time it seems like your roots are really starting to come down into the ground. Is there anything in the near future that you would aspire towards for the next step? You were saying about moving to a better area (. ) would that still be in Sheffield do you think?

Alina: Yes (. ) in Sheffield. But then we do have a back-up plan in case things do get too difficult with the migrant immigration problem. I know what happened in Italy and Spain where lots of Romanian communities were attacked after a long strip of negative media influence. They were attacked and a boy was killed in Italy because like I said there is a huge Romanian community in Italy especially in Torino (. ) which is the north of the country. They were getting so annoyed with their presence they started becoming violent towards them and lots of Romanians returned to Romania because of it. We always say in case something like that happens here we wouldn’t want to live in a country that doesn’t want us. Even if we built our future and everything here it is never excluded that we can move somewhere else. Last year we went to America to visit and ((name removed)) (. ) my husband (. ) has some family there. We don’t want to live in America (. ) but next year we are going to Canada because it was always our back-up plan. It is kind of similar to England but it is not America because we don’t like America.
Henry: Yes (.) there is Commonwealth Anglosphere.

Alina: Exactly (.) so we want to check it out next year to see if we have got a back-up plan because we have got family there as well.

Henry: So it is choosing places which have some relation to where you are now with family and connections but then=

Alina: =Yes (.) I think the only reason we aren’t moving to Canada now is because it is so far away from Romania. My parents are still alive and his parents are still alive so you always have to go back in a way. We try to keep it as rare as possible only to the minimum.

Henry: It does sound like you have got a lot diplomatic decisions to make (.) you can do certain things but it has got to be reasonable.

Alina: It was the same with our wedding. We did the civil ceremony here but we had to do the religious part in Romania with 300 people and all the traditions. We had to learn a whole book of what you have to do and what you aren’t allowed to do. Trying to=

Henry: =It sounds like you were doing that more for your family.

Alina: Yes and in a way for me so I wouldn’t lose touch with where I am from. Talking about the acculturation process you don’t really want to be assimilated in the culture without remembering where you are from. If we ever have kids I would want them to speak Romanian (.) know a bit about Romania and go to Romania to visit but just not live there I guess.

Henry: Is that something you have plans for?

Alina: No (.) not really.

Henry: You prefer the career path.

Alina: I always say that we are settled and we have a house and so on but there are so many things we didn’t get to do because we focused so much on getting the citizenship it kind of affected our lives. I could never get the job I wanted I had to wait three years until I got the blue card. It kind of delayed the progress that I could have made in those years somehow so I had a limited amount of options in terms of a job that I could do. I always think if it was freedom of movement from the beginning I could have progressed quicker. It is kind of like lost time in a way just because of the immigration status.

Henry: Like you were saying and linking it to where you think it should be controlled. That is a disadvantage then for you having gone through all that rigmarole and then it changed anyway. Then of course you can say you went through that and you have earned your place.

Alina: Exactly (.) that is where I am coming from with the earned aspect.

Henry: It is really powerful because you have given your time (.) your energy (.) your money and everything else.

Alina: Don’t get me wrong it was such a fun time. It is fun to be 19 and in England. It was such a huge step up to be able to earn your own money (.) make a living (.) save money (.) have holidays and invest in stuff. It was like you could have everything so you didn’t really have an excuse not to make the best of it and not to invest in you as well. That is why I don’t really understand people who come here
and they have everything on their plate given to them basically. They could have anything and they still don’t do anything with their lives. I think if you have got that opportunity it is kind of stupid not take it.

Henry: There is always quite a personal thing there. Pardon me for always bringing the politics into it. Recently there is all this talk about welfare and about how you shouldn’t be able to claim. I think the Conservatives are saying four or five years their proposal is. Is that something that rings quite true with you from what you are saying about earning and you shouldn’t just get everything handed to you?

Alina: =To be honest I don’t agree with benefits in the first place. I don’t agree they should just be focused on immigrants I think they should be focused on everybody. It is also not fair the thing with the four years because once you start working you should be entitled to the same benefits that you are paying into somehow. Basically if you are working you should get access to benefits. Obviously if you are not working you should never get access to benefits I think.

Henry: So it should be contribution based.

Alina: Yes. exactly. If you are contributing then yes. I don’t think it is fair that you should have to contribute for four years. Then on your fourth year you are ill and you can’t work anymore you are just like=

Henry: =Your three years are not worth anything.

Alina: Exactly=

Henry: It feels a bit cruel.

Alina: Yes.

Henry: To play devil’s advocate what about those whether they were native people or immigrants what if they have not contributed? They are on the streets maybe they were working but not for long or whatever the situation is would we see them starve to death?

Alina: No.

Henry: That is a difficult thing isn’t it?

Alina: Yes. (. ) it is something was thinking about quite recently when we went to America. That was a shock for me to see so many homeless people and then I realised I am not a=

Henry: =Land of the free.

Alina: Exactly and it is not really is it? That is why then I kind of changed my opinion on helping people for a while. I understand what you are saying if you have never worked and you are ill and so on people need to be helped but not indefinitely. That is why the good thing about Romania I have to say one thing is the fact you only get unemployment benefits for one year. After that year it doesn’t really matter what you do it is your own fault for not getting a job.

Henry: Yes (. ) it is a fair amount of time to get a job.

Alina: I think it should be a mixture between America and England because I think England is way too lenient with people you kind of have to work harder than that. If an immigrant could be here and not speak the language not having paperwork not having anywhere to sleep and they manage to make a life for
They themselves. If you are English you have you got all the opportunities in the world.

Obviously there is a difference of opportunity here as well with all the different
class systems and so on. I am not arguing against that. It is just that you could do
something here.

Henry: Everyone has got challenges but how do you make the best of those challenges?

Alina: Exactly there are so many opportunities here. You can’t really say that you
don’t have an opportunity. Even if you come from a poor background or nobody
went to university there has been so much talk about inequality and so on. I do
agree with that but everybody could go to university. I understand it is £9000 but I
would invest in me if I came from England and I didn’t have any other barriers. If
it is just the finance thing there are student loans and there are so many things that
you could do. I think that is getting on a high horse somehow.

Henry: Is that something that your teachers would have told you when you were at school
about investing in your future? When you say that do you find yourself thinking
“So and so told me that.”

Alina: Yes it was not just one person it was everybody. We were always bombarded
with “Learn as many languages as you can.” We had a course that taught us a
bit of every language. If you are found somewhere you have to know certain words
in every language just in case. It was all based on education education was the
number one most important thing that you have to do. It could be subjective I am
not saying that every Romanian is educated because the literacy levels are so
low in Romania especially in the countryside and so on. They would never be able
to go to university they would never be able to finish eight classes eight
grades. I think that is the real poverty it is not the relative poverty that is
England. In Romania there are families who are starving and they only send their
kids to school just to get the free milk and cookie they are given for the poor
countries. I think that is real poverty. We are always told because we are at high
school or secondary school we have come so far so we have to go forward as much
as possible. Everybody has to invest in their future and go to university=

Henry: Sorry to be fair we are at six o’clock.

Alina: We have to go.

Henry: Yes I am going to turn these off. ((transcript ends))
Transcript 7: Constanta

Henry: And they’re both on now. So I would just like to start if I can by you just telling me a little bit about yourself. So for example how old are you? er-wh You said earlier that you obviously h’ve come from work (.). what job do you do (.). so some stuff like that=

Constanta: =ah right (1) so er: my name is Constanta. I am going to be:: er turning 40 in the next (.) well actually this month. E::r I work as a be- (.). Business Partner for ((removed)). So it is kind of an analytical role basically. I live in Sheffield. I have been in the UK for fourteen years=

Henry: =Fo[urteen] (.). wow quite a while then.

Constanta: [Ye::s] and I lived in Leeds (.). within the last (1) sort of (.). seven years I lived in Sheffield but before that I lived in Leeds.

Henry: And you were in Leeds the who:le time from first arriving then?

Constanta: Yeah=

Henry: =So what was it- 2001?

Henry: =Ye::s (.) yes. And I:: came to UK (.). I: (.) got married to a Selby lad ((laughter)) e:rm that was in 2002 actually. I came with a fiancée visa↑

Henry: [mm] so if I could ju- if you don’t mind me asking (.). you met online (.). you were chatting for about four months and was that- no sorry you weren’t chatting for four months=

Constanta: [it was] =Yeah (.). yeah it was very rare. So over two years we had a long distance er=:r (.). relationship. erm (.). and er yes after that I got a fiancée visa and I moved here↑. [And] we got married after four months (.). that was 2002 when we got married so.

Henry: well (.). no (.). we were chatting for about (.). I think it probably must have been a couple of months or so↓ (.). two or three months=

Henry: =Yes (.). and you decided to come over to mee:t and sort of=

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Constanta: =Y[eah well he] he decided to come to Romania: but erm (. ) he broke [his leg so he] couldn’t travel. He bought the tickets (. ) he was there for Christmas (. ) oh no it was in the summer that he was meant to come. So I had to obviously because you could swap the tickets I came over to see him (. ) and we were seeing each other for two years (. ) every four months for a couple of weeks (. ) so yes.

Henry: [to meet up] [oh ((laughter)))] Wow.

Constanta: So it is quite different from what actually happens now in terms of immigration.

Henry: Yes (. ) exactly yes. Because you can about whenever you like now can’t you?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Could you tell me a little bit about your life before you came to the UK then? So whereabouts in Romania are you from?

Constanta: Right (. ) I am from the South. It is a town in the South by the River Danube and when I was 18 I moved away (. ) I moved to Bucharest obviously Uni (. ) I went to Uni. And after I finished Uni I decided to stay in Bucharest with just more social life.

Henry: More going on I suppose isn’t there than a little town (. ) isn’t there?

Constanta: Definitely (. ) yes. And for about 10 years I worked in Bucharest so yes (. ) well I mean do you want me to tell you what kind of jobs I have done or?

Henry: Yes (. ) sure.

Constanta: Just admin roles. I have worked for a marketing company (. ) I worked in an advertising company as well. So just stuff (. ) reports (. ) that kind of stuff. So I was familiar with Excel and Word. So I didn’t really pursue the career in sociology (. ) I didn’t become a sociologist or anything like that. So (. ) yes=

Henry: =It is more like what you are doing now (. ) you say you are an open access course in statistics (. ) you are formalising now what you know from all of your jobs then in a way.

Constanta: Yes (. ) I think it is a nice complement to sociology and it is (. ) Well I kind of want to (. ) I would like to be a statistician or a data scientist (. ) that kind of role. So (. ) I have decided this in the last year but just obviously I have had quite a lot of jobs. And I have kind of worked out what I want (. ) it is a bit late but it doesn’t matter does it really?

Henry: No (. ) no you can change at any point. That is the great thing about it all (. ) you can sort of decide it is not for you or you know you want to breakthrough a glass ceiling that you find with some jobs and you think (. ) “Well that will help me get to where I want to be” and yes. Okay then.
So (. ) some of my questions revolve around asking you about what led you
to first come ( . ) but you have sort of talked about this with your
relationship in a way.

Constanta: Well yes ( . ) I did. It was the relationship with Steve but I just ( . ) My
relationship with him was different from ( . ) I don’t want to put people in
categories but I didn’t have very long relationship in Romania ( . ) basically.
And I didn’t have a good relationship with my parents either. My mother is
an alcoholic and well kind of problems in the family ( . ) so.

To be honest it was quite easy for me to move because ( . ) of course I had
my friends but there was nothing really to keep me.

Henry: There was no root in a sense?

Constanta: Yes ( . ) yes. So it was easy but my relationship with Steve was much ( . ) it
was ( . ) I don’t know. I don’t know how to explain this ( . ) very ( . ) it is
different from the relationship that I had before. So I fell in love with him
so basically.

Henry: So I suppose it was almost like hope ( . ) you know it was just nice and new
and something that you might not have had previously?

Constanta: Yes (. ) I knew there was a risk obviously because you don’t live with that
person ( . ) you don’t really know ( . ) but I said to myself ( . ) you know (. )
“You can always go back”. It is not like ( . ) I can always go back and you
know there was very little for me to lose in changing circumstances ( . ) and
it was hard but there was very little for me to lose really. I had a job and not
a lot of sort of luggage with me so I didn’t have any furniture or anything
like that ( . ) do you see what I am saying?

Henry: Yes ( . ) so it was just what you had on your back sort of thing?

Constanta: Yes. I don’t know if you know a lot about Romania but usually unless you
are a very ( . ) very bright person and you have a bit of luck and you get a
good job ( . ) and then you can get into the house market etc. But usually
you have to know the right people to get the right jobs kind of thing.

Henry: That is something now I have come to learn=

Constanta: =I don’t know if anybody talked about it ( . ) but it is quite important that
your parents support you ( . ) to help you start a life ( . ) build a life. It is very
( . ) very important that you have that support from your parents and I didn’t
have it. And also ( . ) it is important that you know the right people or they
( . ) Well this is my personal experience so ( . ) So yes.

Henry: It is really interesting stuff. I mean it is ( . ) Like ( . ) obviously from what
you are saying family is really important as a sort of a cultural thing. So the
idea of not having that ( . ) you know you needed to make up for it in
different ways haven’t you? I suppose that was in a sense then what drew
you to stay in Bucharest then ( . ) after Uni? So much going on and?=

Henry: }

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Constanta: Yes because it (.). The thing is my town is like an industrial town and it was built around a big chemical factory which was closing down. So (.). yes it is quite hard.

Henry: A lot of the jobs were gone then?

Constanta: Yes (.). it is quite hard to find jobs. Like for example my cousin (.). he went back after Uni (.). he went back to his parents but his parents got him a job. So it was kind of guaranteed (.). come back because there is a job here. And my father said to me (.). “Come back”. Because I think parents feel like (.). “Oh I’m going to grow old (.). I need somebody to look after me”. In Romania most people are poor (.). I mean it depends how you define poor but they kind of rely on their families to look after them. So (.). obviously he wanted me to come back but I had a brother. My brother died a few years ago but my brother (.). well he was like very close to my dad so. I was quite selfish to be honest and I was like (.). “Well I’m going to live wherever I’m happy”.

Henry: Live your life (.). yes.

Constanta: Not just go back and tried to find (.). I probably would have found like a teacher’s job or something but I didn’t really want to (.). so. So maybe I do like to travel (.). I don’t know.

Henry: Well have you travelled around other parts of Europe as well or is it just sort of a relationship with England?

Constanta: Before (.). no. I didn’t travel anywhere before coming to England. It was the first time (.). I was 25 I think when I (.). 25 or 24 when I got on the plane (.). so

Henry: [And t]hat must have been quite an experience because thinking about it (.). I mean some of the other participants have been younger so it was a bit different I think. But you would have experienced to some extent the change in Romania (.). you know obviously ’89 and the revolution and whatever. So that quite important for you as an experience to get on a plane and sort of do it all for the first time?

Constanta: Yes (.). yes it was. Yes (.). it was it was very different and I remember when Steve and his parents waited for me at the airport in London and we stopped for a cup of tea by the motorway (.). and I saw them putting milk in tea. I was like (.). “What (.). no would you like a bit of a milk?” “Milk in tea”. And I just had the black tea but then I didn’t like the taste so I said (.). “Okay I’ll try with milk” and it was way better with milk so.

Henry: You preferred it?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Okay.

Constanta: But it was very strange (.). very strange to me.
Henry: How did (.). if you don’t mind (.) it is probably a bit of a weird question but how did it taste different (.) what sort of? I have not tried Romanian tea before you see or how you might have had it (.). so?

Constanta: Well it is just sort of strong (.). not such strong taste I think with milk.

Henry: So it is weaker?

Constanta: And weakens it a little bit (.). it is (.). Yes (.). in that way.

Henry: So that must have been really strange for you and you thought (.). “Oh actually I don’t”.=

Constanta: =Yes (.). well everything to be honest (.). everything. We had the Christmas Dinner and everything was (.). Obviously very (.). sort of from my point of view where I am coming from it is very civilised and people are way more polite than where in Romania. If I go back now I feel like they are very rude without actually they are meaning to be rude (.). but they don’t say (.). “Thank you” like every opportunity they have to (.). you know that kind of stuff. And obviously compared to Romania it is a rich country so you just notice all of a sudden (.). wow. You have that (.). I just didn’t grow up like that so (.). yes.

Henry: So it sounds like you had quite a few experiences where (.). I mean I don’t (.). Did you have any expectations when you first came (.). what the UK would be like?

Henry: No. So these were all quite important moments then when you sort of (.). “Oh this is what a Christmas Dinner looks like”?

Constanta: Oh yes (.). yes. Definitely (.). definitely (.). yes different (.). very (.). very different. And just from my point of view it was very family orientated (.). which kind of in Romania you do have because I grew up in a community (.). in a sense of people know each other on the streets. Kids play on the streets and they know their neighbours or if my parents are not at home then my neighbours would look after me. So I did grow up like that (.). but it was different. I don’t know the father (.). they were playing games (.). that is strange (.). we don’t do that in Romania (.). you know you eat (.). parents get drunk (.). kids play with each other and that is kind of it. But there is one thing that obviously yes the relationship I have with the parents it is very open and very sort of like close to their parents. I think it is probably the generations are much closer than they are in Romania where they (.). If I look now at the kids how they grow up in Romania the parents kind of let them interact with kids. There is not so much interaction with (.). Well it might be just my own experience but (.). So (.). yes so it was a massive change (.). so.

Henry: And what about the community (.). So you say you live in Sheffield (.). what is the neighbourhood like where you live at the moment then in comparison?
Well there is no real community. There would be through the church. There is a little church there in a village where I live and I did go to church for a couple of years. I am very good friends with our neighbours because they go to church and it is quite nice when you go out in the village where you actually say “Hello” to each other. But I got busy with my studying and I didn’t get the chance to keep going to continue the relationship.

Henry: Is that Orthodox church?

Constanta: No. it is Methodist.

Henry: Methodist.

Constanta: Methodist. Yes.

Henry: Because obviously Romania it is Orthodox in the main isn’t it?

Constanta: Yes. it is different again. Because in Romania Orthodox Church it is very traditional. it is almost like you are stuck in a thousand years ago. It is. people don’t interact that much they just go and kiss some pictures then they light a candle and that kind of stuff. While here people talk and debate and things so it is different so.

Henry: So a lot of the things that would even be semi familiar are then like with the church going to church even then it is still different?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Yes. it is quite strange for you in some ways then having to get used to the different ways that people do the same sort of thing like going to church?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Yes it is interesting stuff because it is. I suppose then it is. I mean when you say you go back to Romania and you say it feels like they are rude for example around the table is that what you are finding with a lot of different things? You almost find yourself thinking in like an English way?

Constanta: Yes. yes but I did make it. To be honest because I was. I didn’t relate to Romanians when I came here. I was. Just obviously my husband British and his friends and I kind of you know it was like somebody thrown in the water learn how to swim kind of thing and my English wasn’t very good. So I went to school I did the GCSE just you know especially when a job was turned down on me because my English wasn’t good enough. So I did an A level as well.

Henry: Oh gosh. good for you.

Constanta: Yes because I thought this is not okay well it is fine give me a time and my English will be better. And so yes I did kind of adapt I think quite well and- To be honest I love this country I love people as well. They are different from Romanians and they are much more reserved and Romanians are more straightforward but then in the same time they are
probably less reliable. I mean with English people you find that they don’t sort of like jump to (“Oh yes I’ll do everything for you”) I’ll help you” (. ) like Romanians do. But then if they would promise to help you they will whilst Romanians you just don’t know. But I am generalising here but they are more reserved and it takes a long time to actually build a relationship with somebody. But I think it is more mature that relationship generally speaking than in Romania. So yes I did meet some Romanians when I was in Leeds but just because we are Romanians doesn’t necessarily mean that we get on. So (. ) yes (. ) I have adapted quite well. I love the sense of humour (. ) I do and when my husband made me watch The League of Gentleman and I just couldn’t get to my head why is it funny when a man wears a skirt (. ) why is that funny? That kind of stuff. But then after I watched a few times you kind of get to understand it is funny and (. ) So (. ) yes (. ) I love the people. I think they are great (. ) the sense of humour (. ) the culture. Obviously now learning maths and learning how many statisticians were born here and mathematicians. And how many (. ) the contribution to the culture in the world (. ) it just (. ) I have a great admiration (. ) so.

Henry: And something I suppose that must have been quite helpful (. ) you know when you were saying you went back to school and learnt some more English. It must have been quite an advantage having a partner who spoke fluent English even though I don’t (. ) Does he speak another language? Just speak English?

Constanta: No.

Henry: Just speak English (. ) yes. So he is probably like a lot of English people (. ) only speak English. But it must have been a good advantage for you to be able to (. ) just to hear him speak all the time.

Constanta: And obviously that is the reason why I adapted so well because you learnt so much about the culture (. ) you know when they start talking about programmes that I haven’t seen (. ) I don’t know. When they explain it (. ) you know you have learnt so much and you kind of (. ) Well I am not saying that it feels like it is my country (. ) it still feels like it is (. ) Obviously I wasn’t born here but you feel like a citizen of this country. I feel like I have been adopted really (. ) you see what I am saying?

Henry: Yes (. ) it is an interesting point. So (. ) if someone were to say (. ) If someone was to ask you if you were (. ) Would you say that you were Romanian living=

Constanta: =Yes.

Henry: But you are living in the UK. So you wouldn’t say you were British then or English (. ) anything like that?

Constanta: No.

Henry: You wouldn’t go as far to say that?

Constanta: Well (. ) no (. ) just nationality I would say British (. ) but it is dual nationality so I have got Romanian nationality and British nationality.
Henry: Oh you have got (. .) you have got dual citizenship?

Constanta: Yes (. .) yes. Because (. .) I think in order to sort of renounce your Romanian citizenship it is a formal process (. .) you actually have to request (. .) you know fill in some forms (. .) pay some money (. .) that is how you do it. Otherwise you are kind of like given.

Henry: You just have both.

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Oh I didn’t realise you had both. I suppose actually thinking about it when you came over for the first time (. .) that wouldn’t have been that some people might have done.

Constanta: Yes (. .) yes. Because (. .) you have your Passport (. .) don’t you? Or your ID card. The only thing is obviously I am not registered as living in Romania. I don’t have an ID card (. .) so.

Henry: That is interesting stuff. So I suppose living here for 14 years (. .) it might be a bit of a silly question to ask but where would you say home is for you?

Constanta: Here.

Henry: It is here (. .) in Sheffield?’

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Were you with Steve when you were living in Leeds as well?

Constanta: Well (. .) it is a bit more complicated because I have divorced Steve eight years ago (. .) and I=

Henry: =Oh gosh (. .) sorry (. .) I am thinking about like you were still with him now.

Constanta: No it is probably better if I say it now. But I married Peter (. .) he is from near Darlington. So we have been together eight years (. .) well actually I divorced Steve longer than that because I have been with Peter eight years now (. .) so. But he is still British so you can (. .) It is kind of the (. .) From your point of view it is kind of the same.

Henry: Yes (. .) I suppose I will just apologise for confusing the two now (. .) they have become the wrong person.

Constanta: No it is alright (. .) don’t worry. No I didn’t mention it (. .) so.

Henry: Right (. .) okay so you were Steve when you were in Leeds and then moving here you have=

Constanta: =Yes.

Henry: Okay (. .) right. Let me go back to the thing because we have=

Constanta: =But home is in Sheffield for me.

Henry: I suppose we could probably think about more to do with the media things (. .) if you are happy to do that. Because (. .) something that (. .) You have a
Wealth of experience with this because you have been here for so long you will have seen everything wouldn't you? How do you feel about the way that Romanian migration in particular is talked about in the media at the moment?

Constanta: I just think it is a bit unfortunate to be honest for Romanians to. Because I think it is all circumstantial. Obviously there had been Polish people before us mass migration. But I think now it is more political really. So it is really in my view it is more of a tool really to uncontrol migration and all that kind of thing. So I personally think it is just unfortunate that we have just kind of been at the wrong time. I think it is all to do with change of Government obviously from Labour into Conservatives and what people prefer and they just use it in their as an electoral tool. That is my view I am trying to be a bit more objective than just kind of But the way I feel about it I don't know sometimes of course I feel a bit of about that the other day it is I am not used to standing up for myself maybe because I was raised in Romania and they don't teach Well they didn't teach me that that is for sure. Because for example if you apply for a job and you get an interview with a recruitment agency and they are kind of interested to well obviously yes you are not British so they ask you. But I don't understand why they ask you well why did you come? Not why did you come how did you come here or something like that. Because if you think about it it is nothing to do with your ability to do the job. I mean you could say how long have you been here? Yes that is fair enough but you can judge by my CV what I have done my skills my English if I am suitable for the job. It is completely irrelevant why how did you get here or something like that you know what I am saying. So I think I should challenge them well why do you need to know that. In what way this is going to help you assess if I am suitable for this job do you see what I am saying? So I do feel sometimes questioned unnecessarily. Of course because people here my accent and they can't place it they don't really know then they ask. For example at the till Marks and Spencers at the till you have a friendly conversation Where are you from? Romania. Because I don't like to say anything else that is where I am from simple as. And they would ask you So how did you get here?

Henry: On a plane.

Constanta: Well so why would you ask me that? So it is uncomfortable sometimes because I mean I can understand why people are worried because of what is happening in the media I can understand that. And I can understand that it is an easy target to say Yes blame everything on immigrants. Because it is the easiest thing to do they can't really defend themselves in any way. But it is I don't know. I don't know the political aspects ins and out why the they are part of EU so they can travel freely or UK has agreed to this. So I don't understand what the problem is really. So anyway sorry I am just going off on one.
Henry: No (.) no. No (.) the more you speak the better because it is sometimes (.) I don’t want to put ideas into your head really.

Dora: Yes.

Henry: So how then do you feel like? Because earlier on you were saying that you love living here (.) you know everything (.) You know you love the culture and you have got used to the tea and (.) How does that then compare when you see people like Nigel Farage on the news saying=

Dora: Yes but it is just=

Henry: =Because it just seems at odds then at what you understand to be the culture here (.) doesn’t it?

Dora: He is just using me as a tool (.) simple as. In my opinion he is just a political figure and he is just (.) He has got his own agenda and that is why he is saying what he is saying but I don’t particularly think. Because of my sort of background (.) unless you show me some figures to prove that (.) yes immigration (.) mass immigration (.) Romanians mass immigration is a problem on the black market (.) because they don’t pay taxes or on that.

Henry: Unless you actually prove then I=

Dora: =You must have loved it when he said that 29 million people will come and there wasn’t even 29 million people in Romania and Bulgaria in total! I think he said something about (.) “Everyone’s going to move here”. And there weren’t even that many people.

Henry: =You have had some interesting conversations between yourselves then (.) on that sort of (.) Whether it is a migration issue or whether it is something else then?

Dora: Yes (.) but then there is another thing as well. Yes (.) people do come but they come here to work (.) most of the people. Most people. I mean obviously there will be people who come here to steal or to (.) I don’t know there will be very few people who come to claim Benefits (.) that is for sure. And they come to work but if they can’t adapt and if they find it quite hard (.) they might make some money (.) let’s say in a few months or a year or so but then they will go back. I don’t think there is such a massive strain on hospitals or (.) Well my husband will have a different opinion because he is (.) Peter is (.) well project manager he works for (name removed) you know like building schools. And he says that all these new schools that they are building (.) they are building for immigrants and you know not necessarily Romanians but like Polish or whatever. And he kind of says (.) “Yes (.) there is a bit of a problem because there’s not enough” But anyway.

Henry: So you have had some interesting conversations between yourselves then (.) on that sort of (.) Whether it is a migration issue or whether it is something else then?

Dora: Yes (.) of course we talked about it. But as I said (.) like if you think of the population or the fact that this country’s overcrowded (.) as I said (.) “Just show me some numbers and” . You know if you see like population density or I know big patches (.) places where there will be problems (.) but I don’t particularly think (.) like they say (.) a hundred thousand Romanian immigrants or whatever it is total (.) coming every year and considering
how many go back. I don’t think that would be the main problem for the hospitals and obviously (.) usually (.) people and obviously as I said I didn’t look at the numbers or anything but there will be young people who come to work and it is very unlikely that they are going to get ill and they need hospitals. Do you see what I am saying?

Maybe with kids probably (.) having kids (.) having families they need to go to school and (.) Yes (.) so (.) yes we had some conversations but I think (..) I don’t think he particularly perceives it as a (..) yes it is a problem with Romanians coming to the UK.

Henry: No (.) I suppose from his point of view it is (.) I suppose he is thinking about just numbers that you know there is not enough space maybe but it is (..) Because it is interesting (.) because that is actually part of the thing (.) isn’t it? That it is about too many people coming rather than who they are in particular.

Constanta: But this is a speculation. I mean we just need to see exactly evidence for it. At this point of time it is very easy to sort of (.) I think it is playing on people’s fears (.) because (.) I think naturally people will be (.) I mean (.) I think this is a very tolerant nation but naturally people will have a bit of a (..) what do you call it? Xenophobia (.) they will be a little bit (.) you know (..) This is kind of like ours (.) what are you coming here (.) kind of thing (.) maybe. So it is just playing on that I think. But we just want to see evidence and then yes (.) fair enough there is a problem. But at this point of time I think it is just a speculation (.) so.

Henry: It is an interesting point you say about (.) You know historically having a little bit of that xenophobia because it is always (.) Obviously the British Isles they are an island aren’t they (.) or a collection of islands. So there is that sense of sort of being separate from Europe isn’t there?

Constanta: Yes (.) that mentality (.) possibly (.) yes. Yes (.) I think they probably perceive themselves as being different from Europe because of that. But if you think about it it is like maybe the reason why it is such a great country because there is so much immigration. If you learn a little bit about the history you kind of know there have always been people immigrating here and so (.) yes.

Henry: What about Romania as a contrast then? Because that is (.) I mean something I was really surprised to learn was that Romania had a romance language that descended from Latin. When I first started this project and I was doing a bit of a research I was=

Constanta: =Oh you didn’t know that?

Henry: No (.) I thought it was a Slavic language because obviously it is surrounded by Hungary and Ukraine (.) it is that sort of=

Constanta: =Apart from Hungary which is different (.) they are not Slavic. But yes (.) you are right it is Bulgaria and Russia. Yes (.) well=

Henry: =It is really interesting when I learned that.
Constanta: But they are sort of maybe half of it is kind of (.) It is descending from Latin but it has got a lot of Turkish influence and Slavic influence in the language (.) so. So what do you mean (.) compared to the UK?

Henry: Sorry (.) yes I wanted to just ask a bit about (.) like when we talk about how Romania is portrayed in the press (.) what sort of things like being a Romanian and knowing the culture and knowing the language and growing up in Romania (.) I suppose I just wondered what sort of things do you feel like are being missed out or things that aren’t ever talked about or things about?

Constanta: Well one other thing (.) you know this ‘Romanians are Coming’ (.) I hope you are watching it?

Henry: Yes (.) I am. I am watching very closely. I wanted to talk to you about it at some point.

Constanta: Because there has been some debate on Facebook about it and some Romanians are (.) “Yes (.) well of course they just could be controversial because it’s a TV programme. What do you want? You don’t want something boring on TV or you wouldn’t watch it”. Which is fine (.) I understand it but I am thinking it is just nice to put things into perspective and sort of give a bit more (.) bigger picture on to (.) There are probably people like that who come (.) sleep on the streets and they will do anything to make a bit more money to help their family (.) fair enough. But just mention that there are young educated (.) who can speak English people who come here (.) you know just give a bit more (.) put things in perspective a bit. I didn’t like that (.) I didn’t like the fact that it is (.) I mean I can see that it is a positive twist to it because they kind of like want to say (.) “Well these people are not coming here to take your Peterefits or anything like that”. They don’t necessarily want to do that. They’re not a problem in that sense (.) but they’re desperate people who are coming to work and they will have a contribution to (.) is it (.) the Government isn’t it (.) National Insurance and that kind of stuff. So (.) maybe yes you could say yes there is a bit of positivity in it. But I just (.) I still think it is quite disguised that positivity because I am trying to see from other people’s point of view and there will be a lot of people who are going to vote in the next five months or six months or whatever (.) who probably average (.) Not necessarily (.) to be honest I am not sure if education has anything to do with it but usually I think less educated people would probably be more adverse towards immigrants (.) I am saying (.) I don’t know. Would look at the programme and obviously they will say (.) “We’re better off without the (.) We don’t need them. Why do we need people to sleep in the bush?”

Henry: Well that is the thing (.) isn’t it? Because some of those images were very stark weren’t they? I mean (.) I think in the first episode there was a couple of guys sleeping in a car park (.) and in the second (.) Well I think later on in that episode they go to a block of flats in Romania (.) they are derelict aren’t they? And the whole family is living in a small=

Constanta: =Yes (.) there is no industry (.) there is no economy (.) and to be honest (.) yes there is a lot. There is all over Romania like that. Where my
grandmother’s village where I grew up with them. Well I just visited
during holidays. Young people they all go to Bucharest
which is the capital. Like London for the UK. And they just go there
because there are no jobs because let us just be honest, people move
because they want a better life and they just want jobs. If you are going
to stay in a place where there is nothing to do and you can’t make a living
you are not going to stay there. I mean this is just like human nature
everywhere. Not necessarily just in Romania. So that village is kind of not
Because there is a lot of agriculture but people are not organised enough
to. In agriculture these days you kind of have to have a big farm to be
profitable. Like if people start out or have my own piece of land here I
have my own piece of land here you are not going to produce a lot and
you are not going to. You are just going to make a living for yourself. It
is kind of going back to primitive times kind of thing. So they tend to be
like that. So it is kind of young people leave the village and you only have
elderly people living there. But young people getting jobs they come back
to help and. I don’t know what is going to happen in the next 20 years really when generations change and=

Henry: =I suppose that is where you hope that the EU will sort of pull its finger out
and start to↑?

Constanta: Yes. But it is still up to Romanians though isn’t really? They will get
support from the EU but it is really still up to them. And there is so much
corruption it is crazy. Because I think the poorer the country becomes the
more corrupt it becomes as well. So I don’t go back to Romania very
often. And to be honest because it kind of changed every time I went
back I was closer to the culture but obviously now I am further. Further
away and I don’t really care so much. Because I don’t feel like I have
anything to share in the future with Romania do you see what I am
saying? So I don’t know I am hoping that things will change for the
better. I don’t want to be too pessimistic.

Henry: No. But I suppose Is it that sort of feeling I suppose you are describing
when you go back you are sort of feeling like there is less and less. Like you say less and less to talk about?

Constanta: Yes. Connection or=

Henry: =Yes because all your roots are here now. Everything is here.

Constanta: Yes and I don’t see my family. Yes I go probably once very two years
once every year. My brother died so I was quite close to him I used to go
and see him but he has got a boy. He is 10. So I kind of go to see my
nephew. I don’t have children myself you know for me I kind of want to
be a little bit part of him growing up. But that’s I tend to sort of like
visit and get him here for a week or two and. You know share the time
(. you know like we will just go on a bike ride or I took him climbing
yes so.

Henry: He must like it here then? It is sort of like a It is like a holiday isn’t it
really?
I think he just likes spending time with me and that fact that I actually interact with him (.) because I play (.) you know we do things. Like his mum doesn't interact (.) she interacts with him as a parent but I interact with him as a (.) I am not saying a role model but somebody (.) you know an adult. It is got a different]

Henry: [Yes(.) like] a mentor sort of thing?

Constanta: I think so (.) and it could have been my brother’s influence as well. Because he was looking up to me so then my nephew probably sort of like got that. So he likes me in that way. But we (.) I always (.) like when he comes here I always sort of have things to do (.) you know (.) planned to do things and swimming or do that or do that or a bike ride. So he just loves that.

Henry: Yes. That must be really nice (.) I suppose you have a week off work and you sort of↑?

Constanta: =Yes.

Henry: Yes (.) that must be lovely for you to have just the time away from everything and sort of just focus on a child?

Constanta: Yes (.) because I don’t have children so obviously (.) Last time it was in August and it was my friend (.) she is the same age as me and she has got a girl who is 8 (.) ((name)) is 10. So we went to the Science Museum in London (.) and that was cool and to Magna Centre. We went to Centre Parcs as well (.) so.

Henry: Loads to do in Centre Parcs isn’t there?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: You are spoilt for choice really aren’t you?

Constanta: Yes. It was a bit expensive because I am not used to=

Henry: =Well that is the thing. You pay for each activity don’t you (.) that is the thing.

Constanta: Yes (.) that was a bit like (.) Maybe to be honest the swimming pool would have done everything for them (.) because they just like when I asked them (.) the only thing that he liked was the quad bikes (.) he liked that. And so that was worth paying for but everything else I think it was just (.) Because I asked him (.) “What did you like from everything that you did?” And he said just swimming pool (.) just take him to the swimming pool and slides and that is it.

Henry: Yes then again (.) I think if I remember right (.) is there just one Centre Parcs? I think there might just be one.

Constanta: Oh there is loads (.) about five or six I think in the whole country.

Henry: Yes. Because the one I went to (.) it had like a big (.) It is almost like a big slide but it is going right through the swimming pool building (.) it is
massive. For children it is wonderful because they can go round these sort
of rapids and it is=

Constanta: =Yes (.) you have probably been to the same one. It is the one that is in (.)
Just close to us (.) I think around Nottingham I think.

Henry: Yes (.) I think that was the one we went to yes. But it is great for children
(.) it is sort of (.) Yes (.) I don’t know (.) is there anything comparable to
like that in Romania?

Constanta: No it doesn’t (.) it doesn’t.

Henry: Adventure parks or anything like that?

Constanta: No (.) it doesn’t. But it has got (.) To be honest I grew up in Romania and
it is quite nice because it is a very simple life (.) and you kind of appreciate
that. So he gets to see his grandma in the village (.) and I think the
connection that people have with the land is quite (.) I don’t know it is
simple but it is (.) I don’t know (.) it is good because it is like the basic
values in life. You just work a little bit (.) eat for your food and then you
rest (.) and I think that is basic but it is very important to have that kind of
stuff. Obviously he just loves playing games on a computer and all that kind
of stuff but it is good to have a bit of that connection I think. Because I had
that and you kind of appreciate it.

Henry: Yes (.) it is interesting you say that because obviously they were very
different here in comparison (.) isn’t it? Because the connection with the
land is not really there in the same way if at all (.) is it?

Constanta: No.

Henry: I suppose we have the countryside but it is a very different sort of
relationship (.) isn’t it?

Constanta: Yes (.) it is. It is kind of removed in a way. Yes (.) it is () It is not that close
because obviously you go to the countryside and walk but you don’t feel
like you connect to that place.

Henry: You don’t live on it or↑?

Constanta: =Yes.

Henry: Yes.

Constanta: Whilst I felt like you are kind of different to that place (.) like when I was
with my grandma and you just go (.) You just walk to the forest five
minutes and you just walk with your friends (.) go for a swim or something.
He has got loads of friends in Romania so he is happy. I think he is happy.
But yes I think he would probably notice the difference (.) because he
doesn’t (.) He lives in the town where I was born and raised so (.) That
industrial place (.) so. So (.) yes I don’t go to Romania very often.

Henry: No and I suppose from what you said it is understandable. Because (.) if
you feel like there is less connection (.) in turn the feeling to return when
you do come back to the UK it gets weaker I suppose (.) doesn’t it?
Constanta: Yes it is just people really (. ) just a few friends and a bit of family (. ) my nephew but (. ) So it is nice to see them when I go. But I don’t feel like I want to spend too much time. My circumstances are quite different because of what (. ) I mean I have Romanian friends who love their families and they go back and (. ) But I don’t have that (. ) so it is different (. ) I suppose. I don’t know if it is relevant in any way to?

Henry: Well it is because it is your experience and that (. ) Yes that is the thing (. ) I mean it is something that from what you were saying earlier like with the experience with your mum (. ) that sort of thing it is important in your life. It shaped where you got to (. ) so of course it is important. Yes it is (. ) Something I would like to just touch on. So when you first moved you say you were on a (. ) was it a Fiancée Visa (. ) is that what you called it?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: Yes (. ) so you would of applied for that and waited probably ages for the Home Office to get back to you and say (. ) “Yes you can come”.

Constanta: Oh no the Visa I got from Romania.

Henry: Oh you got it from Romania. You didn’t have to go like the British Embassy or something?

Constanta: Yes. The British Embassy in Romania in Bucharest (. ) that is how I got it. Well (. ) I mean if you want me to talk about the experience of actually visiting UK (. ) 14 years ago=

Henry: =If you can remember that far (. ) by all means.

Constanta: Well (. ) yes because there were things like (. ) There were people queuing in front of the Embassy (. ) they kind of like come sort of midnight (. ) so they queued to=

Henry: =Camping outside (. ) waiting for it to open?

Constanta: I don’t think they were camping (. ) they were just waiting.

Henry: Just waiting (. ) oh gosh.

Constanta: Yes. In the past (. ) I don’t know if that is the case now to get a Visa. There were like massive queues so I queued a few hours before I actually got in. I was interviewed and that was (. ) As I said the reason why (. ) because Steve was quite happy to come and see me but it just happened that he bought the tickets for the plane and he broke his leg and he couldn’t fly. So (. ) then he was trying to swap the names so I could fly (. ) obviously he had return tickets so like two weeks and come back. And so obviously you have all the applications and you have to prove that you know this person as well (. ) photos of me and him together etc (. ) letters (. ) etc. So you put the application forward (. ) so I queued a few hours and then you get in and then you get an interview with the (. ) Oh I don’t know (. ) Consul (. ) Consul I think it is called. And I remember now (. ) it was a young guy who obviously questioning (. ) you know when did you meet (. ) blah blah. How long is the relationship? I mean I think he was trying to see if I have a real
relationship with Steve (.) and then I remember this question very clearly
because he basically asked me (.) “So how do I know you will come back?”
And I was a bit shocked because I didn’t expect that sort of brutal (.) yes.
But I think they are meant to be like that (.) those questions because you
can’t really hide when you are faced with that.

Henry: No. I suppose they are trying to expose everything aren’t they? And then
see if there is anything that doesn’t add up.

Constanta: Yes. Because I had a return ticket but the thing is I had a job in Romania
and I said (.) “Well I don’t know anybody there apart from Steve clearly. I
don’t know his family but I have a job here (.) I wouldn’t just stay there”.
To me it didn’t make sense because I was invited for a visit for two weeks.
Anyway I passed the interview (.) so he gave me the Visa to visit him (.)
and once (.) I think once you have the first Visa and you came back then I
think they kind of know that you are just visiting and you come back. The
thing is they probably looked at the fact that I was not married (.) I didn’t
have property in Romania (.) that kind of stuff.

Henry: Nothing to tie you down to come back (.) yes.

Constanta: Which it kind of was true (.) you know it was right because that is kind of
things that (.) As I said I have friends in Romania because they have
children (.) they have family there (.) they have jobs (.) they are not going
to try to emigrate because okay yes maybe it is tough or whatever but they
are settled (.) aren’t they?

Henry: Yes (.) yes of course (.) yes.

Constanta: So that was the first experience and then it was easier to get the Visa. And
the last one was just a Fiancée Visa (.) it was not that difficult to actually
get it (.) so. But yes I remember people queuing and=

Henry: =Gosh. And how does that compare to now then? Because (.) I mean
obviously it was (.) Was it January 1st 2007 when Romania became
formally part of the EU but then obviously it was last year when the
transitional control was ended (.) wasn’t it?

Constanta: Yes (.) when they can (.) Was it last year or two years ago (.) I can’t
remember.

Henry: Twenty fourteen (.) so yes a year ago wasn’t it.

Constanta: The fact that you can work (.) they can find work. I think that is the massive
change to be honest. I don’t know because I hear about friends (.)
Romanians who come and they just like (.) I don’t know they live 10 in a
house in London somewhere. They are not in my circle of friends so I don’t
get to see these people.

Henry: No (.) you just hear it from people type thing?

Constanta: Yes or they work you know on the black market (.) so they don’t actually
pay taxes and things like that. And one of my friends was actually laughing
at them because they are so stupid. Because basically what they do (.) they
don’t pay. They just take all the money so even if they are self-employed they don’t declare. They take all the money and then they have cash and they want to buy a house. But they can’t get a mortgage because there is no history. There is no history of how much they earn. So my friend was kind of laughing at them because like this is not Romania. In Romania it is completely different if you have the cash you are. It doesn’t matter=

Henry: =Yes that must be. yes it must be a bit of a disappointment then in that sense. If you have sort of worked hard trying to just get the money together=

Constanta: =Save money and then not being able to get a mortgage.

Henry: And then the Bank Clerk it is just like=

Constanta: =You don’t earn enough to be able to pay the mortgage so I can’t give you a mortgage. Even if you have a massive deposit. So anyway.

Henry: So it was a big change then?

Constanta: Yes things are quite different.

Henry: And for the better would you say? Have they changed for the better or do you think it is?

Constanta: =In Romania?

Henry: Well in terms of having the freedom now to not have to apply for a Visa or. You guys could move to France tomorrow or back to Romania it is=

Constanta: =I know but it is not as simple as that though is it? Because=

Henry: =No (. I suppose not. I am making it sound like you just=

Constanta: =No it is not really because I think one of the things that you see in that documentary ‘Romanians Are Coming’ you really do need somebody to help you out here already live here. And people do help out.

Henry: Alex yes I think Alex he was the street cleaner he helped a guy that came didn’t he?

Constanta: Yes.

Henry: His English wasn’t very good was it?

Constanta: Yes but not what I am saying. It is like for example I have relatives right I have a cousin she is 23 or 24 and she is having a really tough life in a sense of she has done the. She qualified as a nurse and she worked for a year in a hospital as a voluntary to be able to get a job. So she didn’t get paid for a year but she had her parents support because her parents paid the rent. I didn’t have that. I prefer in a way that is why I kind of like just got a job as Admin and I kind of worked my way through because I just needed to earn money. So I will just learn a bit of Excel and just kind of do it. But she wanted to be a nurse so for a year she went so her parents helped her with the rent and every week she was
going back home (.) and she gets the food that will last for another week. So she lives in Bucharest now and so every week on a Friday or a Saturday morning (.) she goes back to her parents (.) her parents on Sunday when she goes back to Bucharest will give her food for a week. So you carry all the food you get (.) well (.) most of it anyway because it is expensive (.) food is expensive. So she will carry all that and they will give her money for the rent. So basically she was going to the hospital working let us say from 7 o’clock in the morning until 3 o’clock and then she was coming home and she was just not doing anything. Of course she would like to come here but I can’t help her because obviously I have a family (.) I live with my husband (.) I don’t have room and she can’t speak English. And I kind of like (.) Nobody helped me so (.) But do you see what I am saying? So that is what you need. So Romanians who are already established here (.) they will get their relatives to come and stay maybe for a month or two or three until they get a job and they can pay their own. So they have a roof.

Henry: Just to start them off?

Constanta: Yes (.) to start them off. They don’t really need a lot of money. And for a few months they would help them (.) they will give them food and they don’t have to pay expenses like the (.) I don’t know if you knew this but=

Henry: =Well (.) some bits obviously I have known from (.) But obviously it is=

Constanta: =But that is what (.) That is kind of one of the triggers (.) you kind of (.) There are probably loads of people out there (.) young people who would kind of want to come and get a job and start a life but if they don’t have somebody to have them (.) they wouldn’t come.

Henry: No (.) because they need that step up the ladder first.

Constanta: Yes. There are very few people who come and sleep in the (.) That is definitely (.) I would say that is more of an exception to the rule.

Henry: Yes (.) that is what they show (.) because that is what is out there to be filmed I suppose. But (.) I suppose (.) I have more or less finished with the questions (.) apart from (.) There is one I suppose I would like to just have a quick (.) I mean we are conscious of time (.) it is (.) the chap will be probably coming around in about five or ten minutes so (.) Based on what we have been talking about Visas and now fortunately that stuff is not there anymore. Do you feel like our ability to migrate across Europe should be a right or do you think it is something that should be? I mean you were saying about the people can only move if they are being supported. So even then it is not an ultimate right because they need to have something to go to. But do you think in principle we should be able to move wherever we want or do you think it is more something that should be planned and carefully controlled? You know in the way that some of these anti people would say that.

Constanta: I have no idea because it all depends on how the country is run (.) I think. I can’t see (.) from that point of view. You see I can only see from my point of view (.) my immediate experience. I don’t see from policymaker point of view. So from my point of view I think once the politicians have agreed that
this can be done then I think people have the right to do that. If this is an
agreement (.) I think what I am saying. But if they (.) I think they should
just kind of (.) As a citizen you should sort of play by the rules really (.) in
my opinion. Just don’t do anything illegal.

Henry: Yes you have set a really good example of that (.) you know like what you
were saying when you were turned down a job and you decided (.) well go
and do what I need to do (.) you know to get where I need to get to (.) an A
Level in English. Which is probably more than what a lot of people here
have got.

Constanta: Well (.) I don’t know people are different (.) but I think (.) I would say that
somebody who would immigrate and successfully adapt to the culture I
think are fighters. The people who fight (.) who will just not give up (.)
they will just work and they would not be people who are lazy or who can’t
be arsed. Because (.) they are not courageous enough to make that move.
For example my sister-in-law she doesn’t like coming here. She doesn’t like
anything not familiar. She doesn’t like the fact that she doesn’t understand
the language. She is comfortable where she is (.) it is hard. She doesn’t have
money (.) you know when I offer to help she doesn’t accept. She is that
kind of person. I don’t know how many people are like that but I just think
that if you have that journey where you have adapted and you work and you
have progressed (.) I think you are the type of person who will fight and
will just say “Okay well I’ll learn the language if that’s what it takes”. I
didn’t like that when they turned me down.

Henry: That is a really interesting characterisation when you say it is the
courageous people (.) it is the fighters. It is a very good way of putting it I
think (.) because it must be very scary to go somewhere that you are totally
unfamiliar (.) the language isn’t familiar and all these things that look sort
of vaguely like you have seen.

Constanta: And then when you leave you might not adapt. I know a lot of Romanians
who absolutely they live here but they don’t like it (.) they don’t like the
English culture so much.

Henry: And the food (.) that is something that some people have said (.) the food.
They just can’t get used to the food.

Constanta: Oh well I don’t have that problem. I like good food so and I cook every day
so. But I think it is one of the things that (.) you know it was hard for me (.)
it was the weather. Spending a lot of time indoors which I was not used to.
In Romania you spend more time outdoors.

Henry: You say with the land you have got more connection. So I suppose it is
something to do with that (.) is it?

Constanta: Yes. And I don’t know I just (.) I found it quite hard to be almost like
confined. You have to be inside all the time and the greyness (.) you know.
The language is a massive problem and the culture as well and you just
have to (.) It just takes time really to learn it. The jokes as well (.) when
people make jokes and you don’t understand (.) they have to explain and it
is not a joke anymore.
Henry: Yes. To be fair I am like that. I have never been very good with humour. My family look at me like “How can you not get that?” And I am like “Well I don’t know. I just don’t get it”. So sometimes it is not even a cultural thing. I think it is just a You are just on a wavelength sometimes aren’t you?

Constanta: Yes possibly yes.

Henry: No that is really interesting stuff. I don’t know if there is anything else that we have touched on that you want to talk anymore about? I am conscious of time.

Constanta: No no it is absolutely fine. As long as this was helpful.

Henry: It has been really interesting really interesting.

Constanta: It is different. I think in a way I wanted to have this interview because I knew that I was slightly different from the mass migration that is happening that has been happening recently and I have a different experience being married to a British man. And also because obviously because I have studied sociology I kind of understand it is important.

Henry: Yes. And from what I have heard with my other interviewees is that each one of you have got a sort of an a-typical different sort of life. I don’t think there is actually someone who has like a normal experience of moving. I think it is quite unique in how people experience it because everyone has different backgrounds don’t they and different experiences when they do move. But it has been really interesting obviously for me it is very informative because my other part of the research is looking at how the media portray all this stuff. So it sort of=

Constanta: =Well it might be a discrepancy between what you actually see in your research and what is in the media.

Henry: Yes well that is the point isn’t it? It is massively different. It is totally different and that is what is always so nice when I have my interviews it is just the It brings you back to the ground again after being sort of up there with all the newspaper headlines and whatever else. Yes so let me just switch these off. ((transcript ends))
Transcript 8: Andrei

Henry: That one is on. I can’t get this one going. That’s alright now as well. Let me just get my schedule. I have so much paper it’s ridiculous. Some of it I’m sure is unnecessary. ((laughter))

Andrei: I feel sorry for you having to transcribe all this afterwards.

Henry: It’s good fun. It’s nice because a lot of these interviews you find certain things happen certain moments and things are said and it sort of sticks. Then when you’re listening to it again you get to relive it again so it’s actually quite. Yes it’s a lot more fun than some of the other stuff I’ve transcribed before put it that way. If I could just start I would like you just to tell me a bit about yourself. For example you were saying earlier that you have a lecture and you said you’re doing a course in technology was it?

Andrei: I’m doing an architectural technology course. It’s a part-time course because I also work full-time.

Henry: Oh right. What’s your job then?

Andrei: I’m a principal engineer. I basically work in software development for a company called ((name removed)). We make software like ((names removed)) and other stuff.

Henry: So you know a lot of the stuff you’re doing on the course then already?

Andrei: Yes. This is the connection with the course that obviously I make software for people which I’m not necessarily 100% sure how they use it. So I’m here to find out how the software is used in the wild. At the same time I’ve got a long-term passion with architecture. I want to do a self-build at one point. So I’m really just doing this for myself just to learn how to build a house really.

Henry: How interesting. So it’s not from the point of view that you’ve reached a ceiling in your career and this is Because there are official qualifications you have to do to become an architect isn’t there?

Andrei: Yes absolutely. There might be a bit of that as well. I’m obviously working for Autodesk. To work for Autodesk it’s one of the four major software companies in the world so you’re at the top of the game by the time you get there. I guess you could say I’ve hit a ceiling in the sense that if I wanted to progress more and make more money I would have to give up a lot more of my life and that’s something I will never be prepared to compromise on. This is something I really like and that is not work anymore. It’s just fun.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: Unless I will be extremely comfortable financially in four years’ time when I finish this course then I don’t think I will ever get to practice architecture per se but you always stay in software development.
yes. Yes (. ) this is just really for me. All my life I've done what I felt I had
to do (. ) and now I actually get to do what I want to do.

Henry: That’s nice (. ) then (. ) to feel like you're at that point?

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: Because for a lot of people (. ) a lot of the time (. ) it can seem like they're
having to work to live (. ) as opposed to-

Andrei: That’s the thing (. ) yes. For me (. ) I don’t have to do this. If I fail (. ) if it
doesn’t happen (. ) I’m still absolutely fine. I’ve got a career. I get paid quite
well. I think it’s quite a privilege that at 35 years old (. ) when I’m a fully
grown man (. ) hopefully (. ) he says (. ) I get to do what I want to do. It’s
education (. ) and it’s really just because I really want to (. ) not because I
have to.

Henry: That’s nice (. ) then (. ) to feel like you're at that point?

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: How long have you been in the UK then?


Henry: Right (. ) so fifteen years ago?

Andrei: Fifteen years now (. ) yes. ((laughter))

Henry: Yes. Hence why your link with the other participant I mentioned about-

Andrei: ((name removed)) yes. She’s been here quite a long time.

Henry: Yes (. ) she arrived 2001 (. ) I think. So you've both been around for quite a
while. You will have seen quite a lot.

Andrei: We only met about seven or eight years ago (. ) actually (. ) while exercising.
We were doing British Military Fitness. Have you heard of those guys?

Henry: No. ((laughter))

Andrei: It’s ex-soldiers who come and train you. Obviously you pay them (. ) but
instead of going to the gym (. ) and sweating it out in a gym (. ) you go and
do it in the park.

Henry: It’s a very intense training session then?

Andrei: Yes. It’s the next level in fitness. ((laughter))

Henry: Yes (. ) it sounds like it. Gosh.

Andrei: That’s how I met her.

Henry: Is that with all of the commands and all the authentic sort of thing?

Andrei: Absolutely. I think if I had seven lives one of them I would have dedicated
to the Army. Not because I like following orders (. ) but just because I like
discipline for some reason (. ) in moderation (. ) and if I choose to follow.
Henry: I suppose that fits in with what you were saying earlier to me just about being able to cut bread out of your diet. That must take a lot of discipline to train you to think in certain ways.

Andrei: Well I got to a certain weight at one point. I think I was about 105kgs which was quite bad. I was working in computers. Obviously this was the only working job in town for a Romanian back then. I ended up working in computers for PC World. I was waking up in a morning getting in the car (. . .) getting to work. Get out of the car (. . .) stay in front of the computer eight hours. Back in the car (. . .) back at home (. . .) playing some games.

Henry: I can relate to that that sort of lifestyle of computers=. Andrei: =I was putting a lot of weight on. I went through a divorce with my wife. I wanted to change my life completely a new job a new girlfriend new everything new me. So I just ended up doing that. Then it culminated that in 2010 I cycled from England to Romania.

Henry: Wow.

Andrei: For charity.

Henry: Wow. That must have been quite a range of different geographies to get

Andrei: Absolutely (. . .) yes. The title of the whole thing was called ((details removed))

Henry: Whereabouts in the UK did you start then (. . .) from the start of that journey?

Andrei: Door to door (. . .) starting in Sheffield. Cycled to Hull. Jumped on the ferry. Got off in Rotterdam. Then through Holland Northern Germany down towards this the border with Germany and Austria. Into Austria (. . .) obviously Melk and all those nice places (. . .) and then Vienna. Then after that you’ve got Bratislava (. . .) because you’re going into Slovakia. Which is only like a 60m ride between the two capitals (. . .) because they're both close to the border. Budapest (. . .) and then into Transylvania (. . .) where I'm from. Because ((name removed)) is from the south (. . .) ((name removed)) is from the Moldova side of it (. . .) but I'm Transylvanian (. . .) so I'm a proper Romanian. ((laughter))

Henry: Quite an interesting (. . .) yes. I don’t know everything there is to know about Romanian history by any stretch of the imagination but Transylvania appears quite a lot in the way that the country has (. . .) as it’s had different faces over the years it seems to appear a lot as one of the centre points=

Andrei: =In my opinion it’s three different countries bundled up into one. We just happen to speak the same language (. . .) but our origins are completely different. The south was under Turkish rule for many (. . .) many years (. . .) so there’s a combination of Turkish with all the (. . .) I can’t remember. I don’t know the names in English (. . .) but all the migrating people that were around. There were quite a lot. They have in Moldova a Slavic influence (. . .) more
like Russian. Their accent is a bit more Slavic. Then you have Transylvania which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire so we’re more German more Hungarian more that type of stuff.

Henry: There does to be=

Andrei: =It’s like Wales Scotland and England. It really is. It’s quite=

Henry: =Yes the complexities in the way that=

Andrei: =It’s a conglomerate of three nations really.

Henry: Yes. Does that even translate into the accents and the terms for things and all that sort of stuff?

Andrei: Southerners speak very fast. The Moldavians have a very strong Slavic accent. We obviously I can’t help being biased ((laughter)) in Transylvania we speak the proper Romanian which is slow and you think twice before you say something that kind of stuff.

Henry: It’s more like I suppose a southern accent here then in a way? In the sense that it’s sort of like the Queen’s English is spoken. It’s more

Andrei: Yes like a cockney. Well no. See that’s considered posh more like unnecessarily I don’t know what the word is an unnecessarily posh kind of accent. But we don’t necessarily speak In Bucharest I think their grammar is terrible. They sometimes don’t respect the plural to the name. I don’t know if you’ve spoken any Romanian.

Henry: Some but not ((laughter))

Andrei: Basically we have a termination for every person for every single verb. So it’s not “I have” you have.” “He has” see that’s one variation in English but then everybody else is ‘have’. In Romanian for every person you have a different termination for the verb.

Henry: So it gets quite complicated? There’s a lot of shortcuts then that people go through to try and summarise?

Andrei: I think there are three or four types of past the different types of pasts and then there are a couple of types of futures I think. Yes it gets exponentially more complex. ((laughter)) Yes definitely a conglomerate of three nations.

Henry: Yes we will have to come back to this later on once we’ve found out a bit more about you in terms of what we were saying about different parts of Romania.

Andrei: Sure.

Henry: When you first came to the UK working in PC World was that the start of when you first arrived then?

Andrei: When I first came to the UK I had to work as a window cleaner for seven months. Because back then Romania wasn’t part of the EU and you still needed a visa just to get here. And for my tourist visa to be turned into a
working visa (. ) when I got married to a British citizen (. ) we married in
Spain (. ) that took seven months.

Henry: To come through?

Andrei: Yes. I remember ringing them a few times (. ) and I said (. ) “Well (. ) how do
you expect me to support myself for seven months?” and they said (. ) “Well
(. ) I don’t make the laws.” “Well (. ) if you were to lose your job tomorrow
would you last for seven months without an income?” So of course I
worked cash in hand as a window cleaner.

Henry: Just to make ends meet?

Andrei: Absolutely (. ) yes (. ) support myself. This is quite a crazy thing (. ) because
I was working with this guy called Ryan. He was English (. ) and he was
working cash in hand with me while he was claiming Jobseeker’s
Allowance. He also had a house for free given by the government (. ) so he
had a council house in which everything was paid. What he was doing (. ) he
was also living with his girlfriend and renting out the house that he got from
the state for free.

Henry: Oh (. ) God. ((laughter))

Andrei: That was my first impression. “Wow. You really can do anything you want
here.” ((laughter)) Obviously now I’m British (. ) now I will strangulate him
on the spot (. ) but back then I was just unsure. I was like (. ) “Really (. ) is
that how it works here?” That was the first impression.

Henry: What did you know about the UK before you came? Were you quite a blank
slate (. ) didn’t know what to expect?

Andrei: I knew where it was on the map (. ) and when I was in Spain I worked with a
lot of English guys. I used to live in Tenerife. In Tenerife I worked as a
time-share representative (. ) so I was selling time-share to people. I was one
of those guys. You can shoot me now. ((laughter)) But I was on the British
branch. You see (. ) I learnt my English back in Romania (. ) where I was
watching MTV. I don’t consider this by any means a virtue (. ) the fact that I
speak many languages. I think some people just have the talent for it.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: I am quite alright in about three or four (. ) but I’ve learnt English with an
American accent and then when I first met the Brits I couldn’t understand a
word they were saying. But these guys were southerners (. ) I think (. ) and a
couple of Scousers as well (. ) so it wasn’t easy.

Henry: No.

Andrei: Yes (. ) that’s what I knew about it. When I left Tenerife I knew that if I
wanted to make something with my life I’ve got to move to a proper
country.

Henry: I suppose you would have met some English people in Tenerife (. ) wouldn’t
you?
Andrei: The guys I was working with. And my wife was British of course.

Henry: Yes. So you speak obviously Romanian. English. Spanish and German? Is that the four?

Andrei: Spanish. German. I speak a bit of Italian. I'm not too bad in French either.

Henry: Gosh.

Andrei: Like I said, you just pick these things up. Formal education in Romania for languages was other than French everything was pretty poor. My English teacher was rubbish but the French teacher was good.

Henry: I suppose the advantage you've got is that Romania has so much in common with Spanish and Italian.

Andrei: Well, you put an S at the end of every word and you speak Spanish. ((laughter)) For example, you would say “Come ti chiami?” in Italian. “What is your name?” “Como te llamas?” in Spanish. And you will say “Cum te Cheama?” in Romanian.

Henry: So it's just so subtle a difference?

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: It's interesting. You're saying your first impressions then when you were in the UK is a bit dodgy.

Andrei: Well, I knew I was coming to an industrial town. I read a bit about it. I knew that Maggie came up and made a mess of the whole place and didn't requalify people just expected people to survive somehow after closing all the steelworks. Yes and obviously I entered at the lower level of society because I was unemployed. My wife worked in Tesco all her life so she wasn’t in a particularly prominent position and her friends were all just sort of I don’t know whether it’s low to middle-class because there’s a class in there. Yes I was in contact with those kinds of people but yes as I’ve lived here longer then I’ve learnt that there’s quite a lot to learn and there are some cool people and cool opportunities.

Henry: But quite a tough environment then it sounds like when you first arrived? Just trying to.

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: Until you're finally bedded in and

Andrei: It was good for weight loss. I tell you.

Henry: Good for what sorry?

Andrei: It was good for weight loss. Because I was working in Stocksbridge. Do you know where Stocksbridge is towards Barnsley?

Henry: Barnsley yes.
Andrei: Yes. I was quite clever with that. I cut off all my girlfriends. (laughter) I left home when I was 14 to go to study in another city. (.) for my high school. (.) and I was staying in a dorm. So I left home quite early. So I didn’t have any (. ) well (. ) some (. ) but I didn’t particularly miss my parents. (. ) let’s say (. ) every day.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: My grandmother used to take me travelling to Serbia. I don’t know if you know (. ) back in the day when the Serbian war. (. ) NATO bombed the crap out of-

Henry: In the early 1990s?

Andrei: Yes. Obviously Serbia was lacking basic supplies (. ) so Romanians would cross the border and sell them stuff (. ) and my grandmother took me to do a bit of that.

Henry: Wow.
Andrei: I went to Germany (.) because my auntie lives in Germany (.) so I stayed with her for a couple of months. So I knew what I was doing. I knew how to talk to border guards and how to cross things.

Henry: Street smarts (.) I suppose you could call it (.) couldn’t you?

Andrei: Yes (.) but you see as a child I had long hair (.) and I was listening to Queen and then to Metallica (.) and then back to the Doors and Led Zeppelin. I was reading a lot of philosophy (.) Emile Cioran (.) and Iliad (.) and all those guys (.) a lot of Balzac. I guess life made me a man. Necessity pushed me. Because when you're pushed in a corner you're really surprised. You surprise yourself of what you're capable of doing. If I would have been born in England I think I would have been a druggie (.) or something pointless (.) I think (.) because life would have been easy (.) and I didn’t have to do anything. I just ended up doing things out of necessity.

Henry: It’s interesting you say that (.) because the sort of environment you're talking about (.) when you're going to Serbia with your gran (.) that’s quite a turbulent time in that part of the world anyway (.) wasn’t it? Communism=

Andrei: =1998 must have been the hardest one in Romania after the Second World War. Iliescu came to power. Jesus Christ. Then Constantinescu came to power (.) and Constantinescu came on TV and he says that he wants to resign because he simply can’t do this shit anymore. If the president of your country tells you that when you're 18 (.) clearly you're thinking (.) “I’ve just got to get out of here.” I remember before I left I was so negative (.) so pissed off (.) and so ready to go (.) I didn’t care what was happening. I just wanted to get the fuck out. Excuse my French.

Henry: No (.) no. It’s quite profound. Because when you look back now do you feel like your view to all of that has changed as time has gone on (.) and you’ve lived in Tenerife and the UK?

Andrei: If I would do anything different (.) do you mean?

Henry: Well (.) just in terms of how you look upon what you did back then (.) yes (.) would you do anything different?==Sometimes I sit in bed and it haunts me at night. Particularly some experiences when I got locked up a couple of times (.) because they found me without a visa of course. Yes (.) some of that stuff comes and haunts me at night (.) and I try to push it away. I don’t know if you have this when you're in bed. Your defences are down (.) everything seems worse (.) like the fear of the dentist (.) that kind of stuff. ((laughter))

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: I don’t know if it happens to you. It happens to me.

Henry: Well (.) it depends with also the way the dream manifests. Because sometimes you can wake up and you feel like you’ve actually been-
Andrei: Not necessarily a dream. Just sitting in bed and just thinking of all these things. What I mean when I say they haunt me you just think “Oh how the hell did I get out of that one?” Yes some things I would have done differently but the whole journey was phenomenal. I think I’ve had first-hand life experience. The university of life. I think =

Henry: Yes that’s what’s so interesting what you’re saying because you tried university and for three weeks it just didn’t. Even though you say you have been reading philosophy which is presumably why you were. “Yes I want to do philosophy. That’s what I want to do.”

Andrei: Absolutely.

Henry: It was sort of like “What is this?”

Andrei: A muppet turned up and he started talking a lot of rubbish in class and had an argument with one of the teachers on the subject. I was like “No this is not for me.” I went to the big city and everybody was doing well everybody had cars. My mind opened up to the things that you can do. In Kluge where I went to be a student you could feel the Western influence heavily compared to my small town or the slightly bigger town that I went to high school. I was like “Oh man. I bet while I’m sitting here trying to learn this piece of crap somebody is throwing themselves off a bridge with a bungee cord. So what am I doing here? Why is life?” I felt claustrophobic. I just wanted to get out and do something cool.

Henry: You definitely did that. (laughter)

Andrei: Yes well in Spain obviously I was illegal for two years so I just busked a lot. I happened to play guitar so I played in the street a lot of times. Then I moved on and played in hotels and bars the Beatles and the Van Morrison songs for the English tourists.

Henry: You would have found a sort of momentum then wouldn’t you? Because you sort of knew what places you could go to.

Andrei: Well I started making 8000 pesetas it was pesetas back then which was about £40 and I was making that every night just for playing three hours. I was like “Wow this is good. I could do this forever.”

Henry: Yes. Just keeping out of sight of the police then?

Andrei: Yes but I made such a network of good people that I knew that were protecting me. I even knew a couple of policemen so I was pretty safe by that time even though I was completely illegal. At the time I went to the airport to leave Spain and I showed him the passport and he saw an entry two years ago and the visa expired he was like ((laughter)) I can remember what the guy said. He looked at me and he laughed and I was like “I know.” And he says “Anyway voila. Just go and fly.” ((laughter))

Henry: I suppose there’s sort of an irony in that isn’t there? Because you hear all these stories about here I think the British Government call them
detention centres. It just wouldn’t have been worth it. “Come forward so that we can sort it all out.” You’re happy to go at that point. 

Andrei: =No absolutely. ((laughter))

Henry: Oh that’s great stuff. Some of these questions you're already answering then because I suppose I’ve got a bit of an order to them all even though it’s quite.

Andrei: No worries.

Henry: Could you describe a little bit about after you settled in and you found your feet a bit more? How you’ve got to where you are now then? You say you were near Barnsley when you first arrived. Is that right?

Andrei: Well no. I was working there but I was living in Shiregreen then=

Henry: So you’ve moved around a bit before coming to Sheffield then?

Andrei: =(place) (place) (place) and then now I live in (place) in a really nice place. So seven months of window cleaning and that stuff and then as soon as the papers came through My wife back then was working at PC World was part of Dixons Stores Group so PC World the Link if you remember the mobile phone company. Mind you you might be a big young.

Andrei: The Link Dixons and there was Currys and there was another one but all four of them were one company the Dixons Stores Group. She was working in their insurance department for people taking extra insurance for the appliances that they buy a bit like what they try to sell you at Argos.

Henry: Yes. I think they call it Knowhow now at Currys. ((laughter))

Andrei: Yes exactly. So she was working there and she said “Well they’ve got a technical department” and I had started tinkering with a computer. While I was window cleaning I bought myself a Tiny computer. Again you won’t remember that. Tiny were some of the first computers sold in the UK PCs that you could buy at home. I bought a Tiny computer and I started tinkering with it at home obviously taking it apart straight away find out how it’s put together put it back together. I was like “Oh that was pretty easy.” So the first day I got my papers I said “Why don’t I apply for this technical department?” I went for an interview. I was straight in. They took me on. I’ve learnt all my stuff and all my geekiness there because everybody who was there was a technical geek. They had LAN parties. Do you know what they are?

Henry: Where people come and bring their PCs in?

Andrei: Yes because back then we had modems. Have you ever seen a modem? ((laughter))
Henry: A modem?

Andrei: Yes (.) basically you had to dial for the internet (.) and it would make like a fax sound (.) dial-up. You got a 56k per second transfer speed. We were gathering together to have these LAN parties (.) and obviously I was surrounded by English people. I didn’t spend any time with Romanians. Because I think I was the only Romanian in Sheffield (.) for a year at least (.) until ((name removed)) arrived. Maybe you have met people who have been here longer (.) but I don’t think there are. Yes (.) I did that for PC World. I worked there for two years. They made us redundant (.) because they found a cheaper building somewhere else in Nottingham. Then I started working for William Hill (.) the bookies (.) because I spoke all the languages (.) and I was technical. They wanted somebody that can answer when people ring up (.) “I forgot my password” (.) or (.) “My computer doesn’t install this software (.)” and that kind of stuff. Because they’ve got all this casino and arcade stuff online.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: Then they had an opening in Leeds as a software tester for the newer software they were putting out. I did that for a bit. I came back to Sheffield (.) worked as a senior ((title)) for ((name)) (.) which do ((removed)) software. See (.) again (.) that language connection. So I was getting in with the technical bit (.) but what I had that others didn’t have was the languages. After that I worked for the NHS. I was making the spying database (.) so that if you break your neck in Scotland they know who you are in London. The UK hasn’t got one of these still. Uzbekistan has one (.) but Britain hasn’t. So what happened in Britain (.) the government gave money to the local authorities (.) and each of these hired a software company to make them a piece of software to do their bits. Now you have 20 (.000 pieces of software (.) which does pretty much the same thing (.) but they don’t talk to each other.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: I was working building that for the NHS. Then I started at ((name removed)) (.) and I’ve been there for seven years.

Henry: So there is sort of a gradual slight change in the roles you're doing. It’s all sort of coming together as you go along (.) isn’t it?

Andrei: Absolutely. Considering I think I’m one of the few in Autodesk who is not a graduate. I don’t have a qualification. That’s by no means motivation to come and do the course that I’m doing (.) because I’m already doing really well.

Henry: Yes. As you say (.) you're doing it because you want to.

Andrei: Yes (.) it was gradual. It was learning on the job. I had my wits about me. Yes (.) that’s how it happened (.) professionally.

Henry: I wondered whether it’s one of these jobs that you're doing now that if you applied for it again you might not have the degree that they say is essential (.) and might not even get it. That’s the irony sometimes nowadays. You get
people that are in the job that they're in (.) they've change the spec so many times. ((laughter))

Andrei: The way it works in the software sector is the biggest question is what can you do rather than you have studied.

Henry: They are still more sort of old-fashioned on the skill side=

Andrei: =Well (.) yes. We have a graduate programme (.) which I manage at (name removed)). I employ graduates every year. I have somebody from Hallam working for me now (.) actually (.) and I'm just about to employ two more. Yes (.) we have graduates (.) in which they come in their gap year (.) and they're learning the job (.) and all that stuff (.) but we don’t (.) well (.) we look at their CV. When we hire permanent staff we don’t really care if they have been to university or not. If the guy has been working for (.) I don’t know (.) ((name removed)) for six years (.) and he’s doing the job (.) he’s in providing he’s not an arsehole.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: You can’t come to Autodesk (.) or you can’t come to me to employ you and say (.) “Well (.) I’ve just been to university for four years. Give me a job.” Because I will say (.) “Because you got drunk for the past four years you want me to give you a chance” ((laughter)) Yes (.) you have to sort of prove yourself. I don’t know whether that’s changed at all in the UK. I never had a problem (.) “Oh (.) we can’t take you on because you haven’t been to university.” It never happened.

Henry: I suppose (.) at least in my experience (.) the general consensus when people are talking about looking for jobs (.) the thing that most often turns them away is just they simply don’t tick the essential boxes. It’s all extremely stringent. But I suppose with the techie jobs they want someone who can just get down and just do it.

Andrei: Be a nice guy. Because I'm looking at your mug all day. You could be a really skilled guy (.) but if you're an arsehole you're not getting in. I would rather take a guy who was eager to learn but is a nice guy. Because it’s not my company (.) first of all (.) and secondly I have to work with you (.) not my bosses. So if I don’t like you then (.) That’s the biggest thing for me when I employ people (.) how much I like you. ((laughter)) Yes (.) you said ticking all the boxes. That might happen in other professions. I don’t think you can profess as a psychologist if you haven’t been to university. It’s not something you learn on the job. You have to ((laughter))=

Henry: =At least in a higher education sort of context (.) yes (.) there are some things you have to have (.) but generally it’s still more on the side of the traditional? That you can do this (.) you can do that (.) in a vague way (.) rather than?

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: It’s interesting stuff. In that sense (.) from what I'm getting (.) I mean we can move on to how you experience life here now (.) when you're seeing
Romanian migration on the news. How do you feel about the way that’s represented (.). or about?

Andrei: It’s a bit of a mystery (.). which I’m really busting my arse to try to understand. What’s this affliction to Romanians in particular? They even get mentioned more than Bulgarians.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: First of all (.). obviously we have the Roma problem (.). which you probably have had mentioned in all the interviews. I don’t know if you know much about how the Roma came to Romania and all that stuff?


Andrei: We’re talking 16\textsuperscript{th}/17\textsuperscript{th} century. These guys were from Uttar Pradesh and from the northern states of India. I’m even ashamed to say this (.). but they were in a caste (.). because they have the caste system there still. They were called the Dalits (.). which means the untouchable (.). but the untouchable in the sense that they are so low seen that you don’t even want to touch them. They came and they travelled through Asia into Africa (.). and then by the time they got to Greece do you know what the Greeks called them? Egyptians (.). because they came from Egypt. That’s where they got the ‘gypsy’ name.

Henry: Right. Is it just a simple translation thing that it just became=

Andrei: =Yes (.). so it’s Egyptians (.). and we started calling them gypsies now (.). but obviously they came in through the south in Romania. In Romania they flourished (.). because Ceausescu had this plan of growing his population as much as he could. He was offering free citizenship to South Americans. So the gypsies were getting benefits. The more kids you have the better. He was giving them all the shitty jobs (.). like cleaning and all that stuff. After the fall of Ceausescu now they had Romanian passports (.). so they started doing what they’ve been doing for centuries (.). started travelling again (.). and going to other countries. They’re happy to just pick up all their stuff and just go and move to France. But (.). like I said (.). this time with a Romanian passport. The first people that left the country (.). the first people who do anything shocking in the news (.). are going to be the gypsies. I’m totally sympathetic that somebody in Sweden must think that (.). “Oh (.). my God. All the Romanians I’ve met are brown-skinned (.). with long flowery dresses (.). and they all beg. So yes (.). all Romanians must be gypsies.” You have the other thing with Roma and Romania. Nobody thinks that Roma could come from the Roman Empire or definitely it’s a Roman’s language (.). which is what it is. Everybody associates Roma/Romania. “Oh (.). that’s where all the Romas are from.” That obviously tarnishes our image a lot (.). but you can’t just blame gypsies for everything. Now (.). Britain is not particularly alone in stigmatising Romanians. France deports a lot of gypsies. I don’t know if you’ve read about that.

Henry: They’re quite proud of their country in the way that treat minorities (.). aren’t they? ((laughter))
Before Romania went into the EU France was the biggest most vocal country to criticise Romania for the treatment of gypsies. Then when the gypsies come to their country the first thing that they do is they deport them. ((laughter)) So it’s hypocrisy. Particularly when things turn bad and there’s a downturn in terms of an economic downturn always the immigrants get it. “Oh it’s the fucking immigrants that come. It’s not us who don’t want to work.” It’s not the blonde blue-eyed Parson Cross army who just hang outside the Co-Op. No it’s clearly the Romanians who come here and work.

From what you were saying earlier it’s a thing behind an unfortunate merging of Roma and Romania is part of the-

What’s that film called with Jim Carrey? A Series of Unfortunate Events? ((laughter)) You’ve got the Romas and I recommend you go and search on YouTube to see what the Romas do in Oslo. They poop in the street. If you go to India this is what happens in India. It’s absolutely normal. People just get to a corner drop their pants and they shit. This is what the Romas do in Oslo dude. I’ve been to Oslo just to look at architecture with my girlfriend. I went for three days and we saw the Romas and we were shocked. It was like “Oh my God. I bet when they arrest them they show their Romanian passport.” I was like “There’s no” Yes obviously there are Romanians which are bad apples and they do crazy things. There are English people who do crazy things and there are Bulgarians and there are Germans who do crazy things. So there is still a bit of mystery. I know the Roma have a big part in it but I really don’t understand why because the Bulgarians are Romas and the Slovaks are Romas. Although the latest scandal in is with Slovak Romas=

=This is the thing isn’t it? ((laughter)) There does seem to be from what I see when I research this and look at it Roma is a very vague category. Essentially it’s a traveller. That’s often what it means. So it doesn’t really have a nationality. Yet it’s the word isn’t it like you were saying? It seems to relate back to a place because it’s sort of paraphrasing Romania.

That thing is phenomenal.

That’s the thing isn’t it?

At one point one of the people in power in Romania had this project of to change the name Roma to something else just to call them something different just to shake that image off. A mayor in Romania actually erected a wall between the gypsy neighbourhood and the rest of the city and he got in a lot of trouble for it. But I think it got to a point where they were burgling all the places in town. If you had a block of flats then a Roma family would move in and make so much noise and be so antisocial that everybody would start leaving. Then they would buy the flats cheaper. And they have six or seven kids per family no exception. Because they were selling their kids off you must have heard of this back in the 1990s.

Yes there’s some pretty terrible stories that stick don’t they?
Andrei: They stick (.) but quite a few of them were true. They were making kids to sell and getting €200 or whatever for a child. They have always been discriminated in Romania (.). There’s no question about it (.). Hitler wanted to erase them all. I think that’s really bad (.), but I really don’t have a solution to it. I don’t know what’s going to happen. Because if they haven’t integrated in the past 300 years I don’t know what we can do now (.). As Europe (.), to sort this out.

Henry: That’s an interesting sort of=

Andrei: =A different subject to study altogether (.). I guess.

Henry: Well (.), it’s all blurred (.). Isn’t it? And that’s part of the problem (.). Isn’t it? There’s a sense of (.). from what you’re saying (.). trying to differentiate the different groups in Romania.

Andrei: Any Romanian you will meet the first thing on the agenda would be differentiating between gypsies and Romanians. This is our national aspiration. It’s that bad.

Henry: In that sense (.), then (.). what we were saying earlier about-

Andrei: It’s racist. There’s no question about it. It is (.). yes.

Henry: The different areas of Romania (.). what you were saying to begin with (.). about the Moldavian region (.). the Southern Danube region (.). and then Transylvania. Is that something that you feel is shared across the different regions? That’s the Romania that combines everyone (.). in a way=

Andrei: =Well (.). you’ve got to look at the voting results for the presidential elections that we just had last year. Basically (.). Transylvania was all blue. Then Moldova and Oltenia were all red. It’s basically (.). if Romania looks a bit like this (.). it’s a bit like a fish (.). with the Black Sea here (.). Hungary here (.). Britain around here somewhere. Transylvania is a bit like surrounded by the Carpathians. Then you have Moldova on this side (.). and then (.). These all voted for the Bucharest guy (.). and all Transylvania voted for our own guy (.). who is German (.). by the way. Romanians voted a German (.). and we have a German president now (.). with German-

Henry: Which way round is it now? Is the blue the Conservative?

Andrei: The red is the PSD (.). which is the Social Democrat Party.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: It’s the old gang of communists. (laugh) Then you have the other guys (.). which are (.). This time we prevail somehow (.). but I think if you look at the elections map that really will tell you what a conglomeration of nations (.). which has got nothing to do with each other except for a common language (.). Romania really is. (laugh)

Henry: It sounds like it’s unified in the sense that they try and differentiate from the Roma?
Andrei: Yes (.) absolutely. Everybody feels exactly the same about the Roma (.) yes.

Henry: It’s a strong thing (.) isn’t it? It’s interesting the commonalities you were drawing with the UK (.) and the way that you’ve got Wales (.) Scotland (.) England. It’s the same sort of issue (.) in the sense it’s divided (.) but then the notion that we think (.) Well (.) I suppose there’s a similar case here (.) because there are Irish travellers that have a presence here.

Andrei: We’re risking talking ethnicity here and stuff (.) but I’m Romanian (.) my girlfriend is Romanian (.) the people you have met are Romanian (.) white (.) fair-skinned. As it happens (.) the Roma population (.) obviously because they're descendant from an Indian nation (.) they have darker skin. So I don’t think the Irish (.) What I’m trying to say is I don’t think the Irish travellers are the same with Indian Roma. They're just people who travel by choice. Again (.) like I say (.) it’s very blurry.

Henry: It is (.) but the sense that how it’s been appropriated in the media (.) in the public debate (.) it seems to have (.) I don’t know. You’ve already talked about it to some extent (.) but there seems to be an underlying sense that these things are all merged together (.) and they shouldn’t be. They should be clearly separated.

Andrei: Absolutely (.) yes. Romanians are not racist. They don’t have an issue with the gypsies because they have a different colour and stuff like that. It’s the actual culture that they’ve got a problem with. Particularly it’s just got worse from entrance into the European Union (.) and the gypsies going everywhere. Every time you read the news in Romania two Romanians arrested over there (.) and from the name you can tell straight away that they're ethnic Romas (.) because their names are quite different than Romanian names. Maybe once a year we hear that some guy with a Romanian name has done something stupid (.) but 90% of the time it’s just (.) I don’t know. Maybe the Romanian media also presents it in that way (.) but whenever you look on the BBC (.) with the guys who were trafficking that woman (.) and all that stuff (.) they're all Romas. Romanians have a major problem. We just don’t know what to do. (laughter) We don’t know what to do to say that we’re Europeans like everyone. We’re like the Hungarians and the Germans and stuff. It’s very tough.

Henry: I suppose it’s the same issue with this recent programme on Channel 4 (.) The Romanians are Coming.

Andrei: Yes. You saw=

Henry: =It’s the same sort of issue that you're talking about (.) isn’t it?

Andrei: Absolutely (.) yes.

Henry: I think most if not all that appeared have an identification at least with Roma. I’ve only seen it the once (.) but I remember Alex (.) the street cleaner (.) in Canada. I don’t think he was a Roma (.) was he?

Andrei: Oh (.) no. The guy who was doing all the commentary?
Henry: Not that chap. He was from Canada and he was street cleaning at one point. I think he worked with some travellers here at one point. He was in a caravan.

Andrei: Right. Okay. Fair enough.

Henry: It was maybe one or two. But it’s interesting because they weren’t differentiating these things.

Andrei: Yes, but they will never make a documentary about me or about ((name removed)) or (name removed)). People don’t want to see that in the news. People feel better sitting in their living room looking at other people who are worse off than they are. That’s what sells. Let’s just make a documentary about the success story of ((Andrei)). It would probably be quite interesting with all my travels and stuff and a reconstruction of all the shit I’ve been through. It would probably be quite interesting but it wouldn’t give you that feeling that “Oh, someone else is doing a lot worse” and make you feel bad about it. Bad news.

Henry: There’s an unfortunate thing with this sort of tie between what sells and the money side of it and what’s popular and what people want to see and what people should see.

Andrei: Absolutely. All my friends that know me and everybody who ever worked with Romanians and stuff I’ve never heard them saying anything bad and I had some quite frank conversations. So in that way I’m happy. I know that if you get to meet Romanians your opinion compared to what you see on TV is going to be like 180 degrees I’m sure. I don’t want to put words into your mouth but did you expect to meet these kinds of people when you thought you were going to meet the Romanians? Or did you expect to see the guys you saw on TV?

Henry: Oh I didn’t expect that no. ((laughter)) To be honest I’ve tried to shelve my expectations because part of the problem sometimes is you can go in and This is part of the challenge for me. I’m trying to be neutral but then undoubtedly there are things that

Andrei: Yes. You are human. Of course.

Henry: Exactly. Bias. ((laughter))

Andrei: You will react. No absolutely. You react.

Henry: We were talking about Roma and Romanian earlier. I was wondering how you feel about the way that Romania and Bulgaria has been put together. Obviously with the recent accession you can understand that they have

Andrei: Yes there’s an association through that yes.

Henry: Is there anything else that when you hear it talked about=

Andrei: Bulgaria is quite a small country compared to Romania. There’s about six million. Basically you just get Mercedes coming in and they buy Lada and everybody has a job. Romania is huge. There are twenty-three million of us. I think the way we were put together is because of the coincidental
entry into the EU. Funnily enough (.), there was a programme on the BBC (.) where they were showing Bulgaria and Romania (.) and they had the flags swapped. Have you seen that one? It was so funny. They had a map of (.) Romania (.) but with the Bulgarian flag over it ((laughter))

Henry: Researchers are obviously doing a good job (.) aren’t they?

Andrei: Exactly. I think Bulgaria is bundled in with Romania so that we don’t look like we’re just bitching about one country in particular. I don’t know. In the Second World War there were some goings-on. Obviously we fought with the Germans (.) because we had Andrei. Hitler came in and said (.) “Right (.) can I just cross over to go and screw the Russians” (.) and Romania was like (.) “Yes (.) absolutely cool.” By the time he was there it was like (.) “Right (.) I’m here now. You guys are fighting with me against the Russians.” Romanians were like (.) “Alright then.” Then towards the end of the war (.) when Hitler started losing (.) then the Russians came in (.) and they made Romanians fight the Germans. So we have this swinging image (.) as well. Which was one of the reasons why we weren’t accepted into NATO back in 1998 when we were candidates (.) because (.) “Oh (.) you guys are switchy.” We were like (.) “God (.) we had no choice.” “Yes (.) okay. No Hitler. Come on.” ((laughter))

Henry: It’s interesting. You show that France (.) for example (.) that was occupied. (.) There are interesting parallels (.) isn’t there?

Andrei: Have you been to France?

Henry: A few times (.) yes.

Andrei: The first thing I notice as an architecture student is that all their churches (.) everything is intact. ((laughter)) Because there wasn’t a bomb there. Do you know what I mean? The Romanians are making a joke on the TV now saying that (.) “Putin is threatening to enter Ukraine. France has already surrendered.” ((laughter))

Henry: It’s funny (.) because there is a similar view here (.) as well (.) isn’t there? They just let everything happen to them. ((laughter))

Andrei: “Okay (.) cool (.) fine.”

Henry: Yes (.) and they have to develop these national myths or stories about how they resisted the occupation.

Andrei: I don’t think the British public is that well-informed as to feel resentful towards Romanians because they fought on the side of Hitler at one point. I’m scouring all the possibilities (.) and I’m trying to explain it as much as you are (.) and when you find out you have to let me know (.) because I don’t know what the reason is. Why they have been put together I think purely because they coincide in entering the EU (.) and the same economic level (.) that kind of stuff.

Henry: Well (.) you will know far more about all this sort of stuff than me (.) but something that I have come across when I’ve been doing this research is something (.) is it the Tomesco report? I think about six/seven years ago it
was published (. ) to try and document (. ) not even explore. It was to try and analyse the events that happened during the Communist era.

Andrei: I don’t think I've heard about it.

Henry: It was commissioned by the Romanian president (. ) and various different academics (. ) and people that were involved either against the regime at the time or people that were living elsewhere in exile. They were trying to look at things that happened. Anyway (. ) from what I've read about this it’s trying to create a new version of what happened during that time (. ) and trying to basically bring Romania into the 21st century (. ) and portray it in a different way (. ) I suppose (. ) rather than just this baddie thing (. ) like what you were saying.

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: The impression I'm getting is that there is a sense that they're trying to move towards a different=

Andrei: =Romanians are desperate to improve their image. Seriously. They are totally pro-Europeans. There’s no resentment towards the EU or anything like that. But we keep getting all this bashing in the media. Romanians at one point are just going to say (. ) “Well (. ) do you know what?” It’s so unfounded (. ) most of the accusations that Romanians are going to come and invade. They didn’t. So all that shit that went on. Then you’ve got a muppet like Farage and stuff. A Frenchman married to a German woman as a British Nationalist. Seriously (. ) he’s just=

Henry: =Yes.

Andrei: You laugh about it for a while (. ) but after a while it gets serious when you have all these impressions. What I do hope (. ) and what I’ve seen anyway (. ) is that people which I value their opinion (. ) and people who actually count (. ) they don’t believe what they see on TV. Yes (. ) when it’s going to come to the EU vote of stay in or out everybody has a vote (. ) and if the whatever I want to call them come out and vote as well then I don’t know. It’s a tough one. Personally (. ) I don’t really care. I don’t want to die in Britain. I just want to come here (. ) finish my university maybe. When the job finishes for Autodesk I will probably move to Scandinavia or somewhere like that. Or move back home. I’m seriously considering that. Yes (. ) I think it would be a missed opportunity to get Britain out of the EU and lose all that trade. Because that’s the beauty of living in Europe. Half an hour on the plane and you're eating sausages with pretzels. I think it’s such a pity to (. ) Anyway (. ) ((laughter))

Henry: Yes (. ) sorry. A really interesting reflection there. What is making you think at the moment about moving to Scandinavia or back to Romania then? Is it the stuff like we’re talking about (. ) all the negativity= ?

Andrei: =It doesn’t faze me at all. Like I said (. ) whatever is on TV is a different reality than what’s around you (. ) of course. All my friends that I know love me. My employers love me. I never actually (. ) and I wanted to tell you this (. ) that I've never felt discriminated at all in England (. ) either
professionally or in any. I never felt like I was disadvantaged because I was Romanian. The only slight bit of doubt that I have is when I bumped into somebody at traffic lights. I was on my way to work as it happens and I was rushing because I was late. It was a bump. Then I gave a statement and I said “Yes absolutely my fault” all that stuff no argument. He said “Yes well it was quite a steep road.” Towards I was working for the NHS back then. It was a terrible rainy day and I tried to brake couldn’t in time. It’s just this traffic light right in the middle of the road. I should have known that anyway. Still I accept total guilt. My fault. But I got a £200 fine and five points off my licence and I got taken to court. That policewoman who interviewed me must have not liked my accent at all because I can’t really. It wasn’t like she had to make an example to anybody. This was just a bump. You bump people at traffic lights. That’s what happens. Yes that’s the only time where she either had a very bad day or she didn’t like my accent but I’ve got absolutely no proof to think that in any way she just wanted to do me because I’m Romanian. Other than that I never felt discriminated or pushed aside. I don’t know. Maybe people are scared of me because I’ve got a big gob. If you have a conversation with me and try to put me down I will probably make you cry in that sense because I’ve got arguments and stuff. (laughter) Yes but the bashing on TV is relentless and in the newspapers and stuff.

Henry: It must at times feel a bit surreal then from what you're saying if you’ve not had apart from what you were saying with obviously that time in the traffic lights any negative experiences with employers or people you’ve worked with because they know you.

Andrei: This is what makes me optimistic to think that people don’t really pay that much attention. People that count anyway. I don’t know. If I was to go and grab a job in a warehouse with Ryan maybe they will talk behind my back. “This Romanian is coming here to steal our jobs.” (laughter) In my profession nobody ever made me feel like I’m taking some English person’s place.

Henry: I think there is optimism to be had. Even on that strange documentary whatever it is on Channel 4. Some of what’s being said is rather ironic. They talk about “Yes we’re taking jobs. We’re taking the crap jobs.” (laughter)

Andrei: This is=

Henry: =It’s like what you were saying when you first arrived trying to just make ends meet. It’s nothing to do with any agenda or statistics=

Andrei: =This is what my mate Raoul was saying. He wrote an open letter to Channel 4 to thank them for actually although they were trying to show the worst of the worst still the only people that they could find were people that were actually trying to work. (laughter) It’s unreal.

Henry: Yes that spirit. Even if it’s sleeping in car parks they are willing to go through that horrible experience.
Andrei: Yes. Just to get the job=

Henry: =Yes (.) and it was just so profound. I think it was in the first one they talk about the car park (.) and (.) “We’ve got sleeping bags in that electric box” (.) and they say (.) “This is the plug (.) and we’ve got a tap for water” (.) and that’s what they need. And there’s a sense of being really humble with what they’ve got. ((laughter))

Andrei: I think we live in a very sick society (.) in which people who want to work are stigmatised (.) but the bastards who stay on benefits (.) and don’t want to do anything (.) are actually fine. Oh (.) our poor Parson Cross gang of 17-year-olds. They can’t find a job clearly because ((Andrei)) has taken their job as a principal SQ engineer at Autodesk. It’s crazy.

Henry: I suppose we will move on to a more (.) it’s a more abstract question really. It’s a difficult question to answer (.) and it’s something that I ponder on daily (.) so don’t think there is a definitive answer (.) but you talked initially about when you moved to Spain or Tenerife (.) and then you’ve enjoyed a lot of travelling.

Andrei: I was a hippie. Absolutely (.) yes. A free spirit. Loads of drugs. ((laughter))

Henry: Even though I suppose in the sense that it was quite informal (.) obviously (.) the documentation side of it. It wasn’t official. It was just you going for it (.) and doing what you wanted as and when you wanted (.) really (.) wasn’t it?

Andrei: Yes (.) I didn’t know where I was going. Most Romanians when they go and travel to work in another country have something set up over there (.) either some other family who has got a job for them or some old mate. I just hitchhiked. I didn’t know where I was going. I ended up in Valencia (.) on the beach (.) and after sitting an hour and looking at the sea (.) that’s when I started crying. I had a really good cry (.) because I was like (.) “Now (.) where am I going now? Because this is the edge of the world.”

Henry: Wow. So it was overlooking the Mediterranean (.) and=

Andrei: =That’s when it kicked in. I was like (.) “I’m actually here. Now what do I do?”

Henry: “What do I do?” And that’s as (.) what (.) an 18/19-year-old?

Andrei: This is another thing that haunts me all the time (.) is what the hell was I thinking? It doesn’t matter how young you are (.) if you’re five-years-old. “I’m going to a particular place (.) so that I can do that.” Not for a second it occurred to me (.) “What will I do when I get there?” Still today I don’t understand why I didn’t ask myself that question. So the first thing I did is I got my guitar out (.) started playing (.) made my (.)

Henry: It’s an interesting comparison (.) then. Because it sounds like you wouldn’t do it again now (.) knowing there’s (.)

Andrei: Well (.) if I had to I would probably do it.

Henry: Would you?
Andrei: Absolutely. People I met on the road (.) people who were PhDs (.) and
doctors (.) and engineers (.) who decided to pack it in and just go travelling.
Some of them made little bracelets (.) and rings (.) and jewellery (.) and
they sell them for €1. Some of them have some money in the bank (.) and
they just live very frugally. People go mad (.) and particularly people like
us (.) intellectuals (.) are prone to (.) It’s worse than a midlife crisis. You
just decide (.) “Okay (.) that’s it. I can’t do it anymore. I’m just going to go
and travel around the world.” I know people who do cycling around the
world. I know people who left everything (.) just went and did a self-build
(.) and then got out of the rat race. Yes (.) I could probably do it again if I
had to. I would do it again if I wanted to. I'm not scared of it. Some of it
was crazy (.) but I was in a very bad situation. I was young. I didn’t have
any money. I was illegal. Yes (.) there would be none of that now. If I did it
( .) it would be more in a balanced way. ((laughter))

Henry: I suppose the question I was getting at was even though obviously from
what you were describing it was a very unique situation (.) as to what
motivated you there (.) but nonetheless it was a good time?

Andrei: Absolutely it was. I wouldn’t take anything back. I think it made me the
man that I am today. You hear that being said all the time (.) but like I said
( .) when I was a kid I was on a cloud ( .) so that really grounded me. All the
need and the hardship really grounded me.

Henry: Is that (.) in your view (.) a price worth paying for the sorts of people that
might abuse that ability to move around and take advantage of other
people? Is it a right that?

Andrei: It’s two different things ( .) isn’t it ( .) really?

Henry: Because of course we can all move freely anyway now ( .) can’t we? We
don’t have to worry about any of the visa stuff.

Andrei: Well ( .) I sometimes go back to Romania ( .) and I go to my hometown ( .)
and there’s this kid who doesn’t like to go to school. He will sit down with
me ( .) and he will have a beer ( .) and he will say ( .) “Oh ( .) man ( .) you
need to tell me how you did it. Because I really fancy going and working in
another country. Make some money. Come back. Open a business.” That
kind of stuff. Because there’s still that wage gap ( .) obviously. They cry in
desperation ( .) “Tell me how you have done it. Was it hard?” All that stuff.
I’m thinking ( .) “Dude ( .) whatever I tell you now is not going to make any
sense to you. It’s certainly not ( .)” Oh ( .) is somebody waiting for this? No
( .) I don’t think so=

Henry: =No ( .) I don’t think so.

Andrei: I said ( .) “It’s not going to be applicable to you. Because when I came I had
three days left on my visa. You come with a Romanian ID card ( .) and you
don’t even show it to the border guy. You just slap him across the face with
it. You’ve got a right to work ( .) and you’ve got a right to do anything.” I’m
not sure whether that answers it. Can you ask the question again?=
Henry: =Yes (.) well (.) I was asking about whether you feel like the ability to move around is worth the price. You can end up getting some people that abuse that movement.

Andrei: Oh (.) right (.) okay. In balance?

Henry: It’s that ultimate freedom (.) really (.) isn’t it?

Andrei: I think the ability to move around and do whatever you want is priceless. Romania in total I think has something like two million Romas or something. I don’t know what the population of Europe is. I suspect=

Henry: =I think it’s nearly half a billion (.) something like that.

Andrei: I think the numbers have the answer. Of course it’s worth it. What I will add is I think that the British benefits system needs fixing badly. I think the problem is not the free movement. I think the problem is what attracts people to come and actually stay on benefits. Most of the Romanians I know (.) none of them stays on benefits. Most people come here to work. I have not met any Romanian yet who says (.) “Oh (.) I'm just sitting at home and getting money.” I met a Polish guy who did that (.) and we stopped being friends. Because he’s getting my money as well (.) because I'm paying tax.

Henry: Like you said earlier (.) nowadays you feel like you would wring?

Andrei: Absolutely (.) yes. From the moment I started paying tax I started asking questions. “Why am I paying tax for that?” “((Andrei)) (.) because everybody pays it. You're in Britain.” I was like (.) “No. The Brits have that thing that they just accept things (.) just because everybody else is doing it (.) but I like to question everything. If I'm going to pay my money towards something I like to know what’s being done with it. And I got the tax office to send me a breakdown on how they spend my tax money (.) because I just wanted to see.

Henry: That must have been quite a good feeling (.) to get the response back (.) and to sort of like?

Andrei: Yes. I wasn’t very pleased with the result (.) because I think out of (.) well (.) I earn in excess of £60 (.)000 (.) and I think my tax is roughly about half of that a year (.) because I'm in the 40% band. I just get trashed=

Henry: =Yes (.) 40% band (.) and then NI on top of it.

Andrei: Yes (.) so I think something like £15 (.)000 of my money a year is given for people on benefits and that kind of stuff. There’s another guy at the end of my road. Both him and his wife are just overweight (.) and they don’t work. I think a house which is worth something like £150 (.)000. They must have put £300 (.)000 or £400 (.)000 worth of equipment in the house (.) elevators (.) and lifts (.) and that kind of stuff. I’ve got a serious problem with people who don’t want to work and pull their weight. I've got a problem with that at work. I'm very German in that sense. I'm totally allergic to people who actually are not pulling their weight. I think the benefits system needs fixing. Not just to stop attracting the small minute number of immigrants
who come here and don’t want to do anything but to fix the British problem that we have with people not wanting to do anything as well. Because I think there are a lot more Brits which are refusing to work compared to immigrants coming in. Even the fact that there’s a debate about forced labour in Britain I think is ludicrous. “Oh you have to work if you want to earn any more benefits.” Of course you do. If it was me there would be a concentration camp with an electric fence around it. Jesus.

Henry: Yes. ((laughter))

Andrei: I hope I never get into politics because I would be absolutely ruthless.

Henry: I can remember at one point they were saying you have to do a certain amount of voluntary work a week to contribute something back and the response to that the critique and why it has been left there is they’re doing it for £2 an hour. “That’s so wrong. They should do it for minimum wage.”

Andrei: It’s unbelievable. ((laughter))

Henry: You think “That’s for charity. That’s the point. It’s not” ((laughter))

Andrei: There’s that woman who sued the government because she had to work on Poundland in order to keep receiving benefits. I was like “Oh my God.” Yes I’m quite passionate. I always voted Labour but I don’t know now I’m more inclined I don’t think Labour have anything in terms of fixing the benefits system. I think maybe the Conservatives are the closest ones that I’ve seen something done about it. And I don’t like the Conservatives.

Henry: No.

Andrei: Cameron really scares me. I find him abysmal when I look at his face.

Henry: They’re all quite a depressing bunch really aren’t they? ((laughter))

Andrei: So does Ed Miliband. I saw him live. Live? Jesus. I saw him in real life when I went to Manchester to do a course. It was just after the riots and Miliband was there sitting in the middle of people and he was talking and I just looked and it’s like “Oh God. I wouldn’t trust this guy with a fiver.” ((laughter)) Jesus.

Henry: Yes. Not very much charisma. Then there’s the whole bacon sandwich thing if you saw that.

Andrei: Yes and Farage I will probably just knock his lights out if I found him in the pub just for saying shit like “Oh I wouldn’t want to move next to a family of Romanians. Would you?” Oh you little twat.

Henry: No I still can’t believe=

Andrei: =I would deck him straight away. So the benefits system needs fixing in order to put an end to this excuse. “This is why we hate them. Because they come here to claim benefits.” No they don’t. Some of them will do a very small minute percentage but most of them. There are
400,000 Brits living in Spain. When I lived in Tenerife there were a lot of Brits which were on benefits.

Henry: We just all go there to retire. That’s the thing. And that’s what a lot of welfare goes towards. It goes towards pensions.

Andrei: Yes, true.

Henry: That’s the irony of it all isn’t it? Some of these things are just so remarkably confusing aren’t they?

Andrei: I would never compromise freedom of movement for (. .) I don’t know (. .) let’s go extreme (. .) for the couple of millions of Europeans which move around trying to skim off the system. I think it’s not even=  

Henry: =You said earlier when you started paying tax that felt like quite a shift in the way you saw living in the UK.

Andrei: Yes (. .) I feel I’m part of it. That’s it now. I would have liked to pay tax from day one (. .) but it took them seven months to allow me (. .) but yes (. .) as soon as I’m paying in money I like to know what I’m paying for.

Henry: Do you identify with something like Britishness or being English?

Andrei: Absolutely.

Henry: You would?

Andrei: Yes. The first time I realised that was (. .) See (. .) I went to Romania (. .) and sometimes I have discussions about politics with my mates (. .) people who are still there. They would come up with this problem (. .) and I would have an answer immediately (. .) straight away. It’s like (. .) “Well (. .) just sue them.” Or (. .) “I will take him to court.” “Oh (. .) my boss just sacked me. I will go to a work tribunal (. .) sort it out.” All my answers were British. No matter how much Romanian I want to be and all that stuff. The first time I walked into a bank was in Britain. The first time I was called Mr was in Britain. The first time somebody gave me a mortgage was in Britain. My whole value system (. .) my economical system (. .) my social system (. .) is British. There’s no question about it. I’ve got this affinity to Romanian stuff (. .) but I think in a couple of years’ time I would have lived longer in Britain than I lived in my home country (. .) so Basically I understand the idea in the media that immigration my value system is totally British (. .) I think (. .) in my head.

Henry: And it’s tied to (. .) like you say (. .) those experiences of doing stuff for the first time as an adult (. .) and being part of something?

Andrei: Oh (. .) yes. Growing up completely on your own (. .) no parents (. .) nothing (. .) no support. Nobody ever gave me anything for free in my life. Everything I got. I came here with a plastic bag (. .) basically. It’s all happened here. I’m completely grateful for that (. .) being given the opportunity. The funny bit was when I became British. I never wanted to do it (. .) because I just felt like=

Henry: =You applied for citizenship?
Andrei: Yes. The first time I came to Britain (.) back in 2000 (.) a woman turned up at my house with a laptop (.) doing the green card kind of thing (.) and she asked me all these questions. “What was the airline that you arrived with?” All that rubbish. She says (.) “Anyway (.) let’s move on to the next section. This is about your future British citizenship.” I was like (.) “I’m not interested. I’m probably going to just stay Romanian.” She did not have a box for that. She did not have an answer. It was like (.) “What do you mean?” I was like (.) “I’m really not interested. What would it give me?” “I don’t know.” I said (.) “Well (.) tell me (.) what would it give me?” She said (.) “Well (.) you can join the Army (.) and you can vote.” I was like (.) “Oh. The number of nights I stayed awake because I can’t vote I can’t tell you.” ((laughter)) I was like (.) “No (.) I will pay my taxes (.) and it’s fine. I don’t need to do it.” So (.) although I could have been British 14 years ago (.) it’s only how long ago? I think I did it in 2012. I will tell you the reason why I did it. A pension guy comes into work. We all pay into a private pension (.) loads of money. And the guy explained to us that we also pay a state pension. What you can do (.) you can ring the tax office and ask the tax office to allow for the money that you pay in the state pension to be invested privately (.) by your private company. That was the rule at the time. I thought (.) “That’s fantastic.” Because the pension that I’ve got at work allows me to go and choose the funds where it gets invested. So (.) rather than I pay in a pension (.) and it’s going to be fine (.) you go and choose. You track which fund is making money (.) which one has a higher fee (.) etc. etc. I was like (.) “It would be great to be in control of my pension money (.) how it’s invested.” I ring them up (.) and I say (.) “Well (.) can I do this?” They say (.) “Yes (.) of course you can” (.) the tax office. “But (.) may I ask you (.) sir (.) because you’ve got a foreign accent (.) are you British?” I was like (.) “No (.) no (.) I’m Romanian.” He said (.) “Oh (.) right (.) and how long have you worked in Britain?” I was like (.) “Twelve years.” He said (.) “Well (.) there’s a problem.” I was like (.) “What?” “If you are foreign you have to work in Britain thirty-five years before you see any money of your pension.”

Henry: Thirty-five?

Andrei: Thirty-five years. If you work thirty-four years in Britain you won’t see a penny.

Henry: Actually can contribute into it (.) and you won’t?

Andrei: You won’t see a penny. If you work thirty-five (.) However (.) if you are British (.) no matter how many years you work (.) you do get something back.

Henry: Wow.

Andrei: It was nationality by force. I started doing a calculation. I was like (.) “Oh (.) it’s only £1 (.000 to become British” (.) and stuff. I have to go to the town hall and tell then=

Henry: =Swear allegiance?

Andrei: Yes (.) all that stuff. ((laughter))
Henry: Sing the anthem (.). Yes.

Andrei: My boss (.). who is English (.). and the guys from work turned up (.). and they made a lot of noise (.). because they knew I was doing it by force.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: I was like (.). “Let’s just go.”

Henry: It’s crazy (.). because of course if you're born here you don’t have to do that. That’s what I find really=

Andrei: =Yes (.). it’s mad.

Henry: I've watched some of these ceremonies on YouTube (.). and it feels strange to watch (.). that we put people through that=

Andrei: =Some people really embraced it. Some people felt it was really solemn. It’s a lot worse in America (.). by the way. You don’t want to know.

Henry: Every morning in front of the flag in the schools (.). aren’t they?

Andrei: They were all making fun of me (.). “Ah (.). you're finally becoming British.” And every time we have a thing (.). and they say (.). “Oh (.). so what’s it like?” “Oh (.). so it’s better then?” I was like (.). “No (.). it’s just like this.” And they say (.). “Ah (.). one day we will have to make you British” (.). and all that stuff. Now two out of three jokes are about me being British (.). and how much I have to pay (.). and all that stuff. ((laughter))

Andrei: “You’re one of us now (.). ((Andrei)). You can’t get away.” That kind of stuff.

Henry: Yes. ((laughter))

Andrei: Yes (.). that’s the reason why I became British.

Henry: Like you said (.). nationality by force. You couldn’t not (.). really.

Andrei: No (.). because I would just chuck a lot of money away. Like I said (.). I earn quite a bit of money (.). and I pay a lot of money in tax (.). and a lot of money in my pension (.). so it would be shitty just to give it (.). Because that’s another thing. If I knew what they do with them (.). but (.). ((laughter))

Henry: When you know what they spend it on (.). yes.

Andrei: Exactly (.). yes.

Henry: It’s not even like you know they're going to spend it wisely.

Andrei: Exactly (.). yes. It will be probably given to that single 15-year-old mum with three kids at the end of my road (.). who is actually going and voting Farage to kick me out.

Henry: I can see why you're so scared of Labour (.). in that sense. Because it would be even worse (.). wouldn’t it? ((laughter))

Andrei: Yes. They're just sinister (.). aren’t they?
Henry: A shame (. ) really (. ) in a sense (. ) because (. ) Let’s talk about politics. I enjoy politics (. ) but it seems like all the main parties now are sort of taking this rough stance when we talk about migration (. ) and (. ) “Oh (. ) it needs sorting out. It’s such a problem.” I think apart from the Greens (. ) more or less.

Andrei: I voted Greens (. ) yes.

Henry: Yes (. ) and that’s the thing (. ) isn’t it? All the others now have taken this sort of (. ) “It needs to be controlled. We need to make sure people are paying their way.” ((laughter))

Andrei: The biggest problem that we have in Britain (. ) it’s somehow immigration (. ) and it’s not the fact that (. )The economy is booming probably because the immigrants are contributing as well.

Henry: So many from Europe have moved here. ((laughter))

Andrei: And now we’re doing better than all the other countries in Europe.

Henry: Yes (. ) put together (. ) I think (. ) more jobs.

Andrei: For some reason we don’t see that. We see a problem that more people are coming in. This is insular mentality. There’s no question about it. Britain wants to do its own thing. It’s got three pins on the plug (. ) the wheel on the other side. If they could they would have put milk in your tea. ((laughter))

Henry: It can’t be healthy. It can’t be a healthy way to think.

Andrei: No. You’re missing a lot of opportunities. By not opening your doors no fresh air is going to come in. Overall I think Britain is quite tolerant. There are a lot of people coming here. There are a lot of nations (. ) and there’s a conglomerate of (. ) I’m not saying open doors and let everybody in. What I’m saying is stop making that your national priority when you’ve got other shit to fry.

Henry: I think part of it is about the irony sometimes in some of the things that are said. I think someone in UKIP at one point said (. ) “We should knock the English Tunnel down (. ) and we should block everything off.” And someone said (. ) “Well (. ) we need to get the Polish builders to do that. Who are you going to get to do it?” ((laughter))

Andrei: I will tell you what. I have faith in this nation. I think people will see sense. If people wouldn’t have seen sense Britain wouldn’t be where it is this day. Because it’s always been an island (. ) people have always been a bit funny
and a lot of people are being idiots but Britain has got to a point because common sense eventually prevails. I've got a lot of faith. I'm angry by what I see on TV but it doesn't scare me. I just think “Water under the bridge.”=

Henry: =One day the switch for=

Andrei: =Oh probably nothing will ever change but they will never go to the extreme of actually taking it seriously and closing their borders and that kind of stuff. They're not going to do that.

Henry: Like what you were saying the British thing of just moaning about it forever and never doing anything.

Andrei: We will complain. We will moan about it. We will make TV programmes. We will say “Oh my God this is terrible.” When it comes to voting (“Oh shit.” (laughter))

Henry: “Still do what I normally do.”

Andrei: Yes. It’s not going to get out of the EU. I don’t see it.

Henry: No.

Andrei: All the trade is with the EU.

Henry: That will be the funny thing won’t it? When the elections come and UKIP doesn’t happen in the way people think it does and it’s all just been one big drama for three years for nothing. (laughter)

Andrei: Absolutely.

Henry: That would just be the icing on the cake. “What was all that for?” (laughter)

Andrei: Have you noticed the Romanian scandal sort of scandal it’s descended a bit? Then the Arab thing with the execution with ISIS went up. Now there was this thing about Channel 4 but it hasn’t got the momentum that it had maybe one year ago when “Oh God the Romanians are coming.”

Henry: It was a build-up wasn’t it to January 1st? That was part of the thing wasn’t it?

Andrei: Yes. Then we will pick on something else. We will pick on the Macedonians and Moldavians whoever wants to join in. Every year we have something to talk about don’t we? We need to moan about something like you say.

Henry: Hopefully something positive will come out of the end of it.

Andrei: Well it was the same in the 1960s. I don’t know if your parents told you. When the Pakistanis started arriving=

Henry: =With Enoch Powell and things like that.
Andrei: Jesus Christ. And the Caribbean and the Jamaican stuff. People thought (.)
    “This is the end of the world. That’s it.”

Henry: Well (. ) my family in particular (. ) my dad (. ) he experienced the A8
    accession (. ) with just the explosion of the labour force in the building
    industry. So I grew up with all of those ideas exposed. “Oh (. ) God (. ) it’s a
    bad thing (. ) because (. ) you know (. ) competition.” But then it’s sort of
    ironic (. ) isn’t it (. ) when we think about how all these different ideas come
    together? Because competition can’t always be a bad thing (. ) because we
    use that model in every part of our lives. And we think it’s a bad thing in
    one particular thing. ((laughter))

Andrei: Absolutely (. ) yes.

Henry: If it’s bad (. ) it’s bad across the board (. ) isn’t it=  

Andrei: = keep it stimulated and do well (. ) yes.

Henry: It’s quite funny (. ) really (. ) when you think about it. Because I think that’s
    part of the thing (. ) isn’t it? That we don’t just sit and think (. ) I say we.
    Everyone. You just get carried away with an idea (. ) and before you know it
    they’re making documentaries. ((laughter))

Andrei: Absolutely (. ) yes.

Henry: Immigration Street or whatever else. It’s sort of like a thing=  

Andrei: =They had Benefits Street (. ) wasn’t it? That was a massive scandal. Now
    there’s this with the Romanians. They're probably going to pick on (. ) I
    don’t know (. ) some Muslim street or something. They will pick on
    something. Particularly now (. ) because it’s in fashion (. ) isn’t it?

Henry: Yes (. ) I think you’ve articulated it perfectly (. ) really (. ) because the sense
    of momentum is gone now (. ) because there’s just this fear of this new (. )

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: They behead people. It’s even worse than defecating in the park.  
    ((laughter))

Andrei: Absolutely. 

Henry: It’s sort of like on another level. ((laughter))

Andrei: Well (. ) actually (. ) what else? What exactly are Romanians doing that’s so
    antisocial and bad? If you try to think about it (. ) to compare it anything
    near-

Henry: They sit on street corners and talk loudly.

Andrei: Yes (. ) exactly.  

Henry: It’s the British (. ) “I can’t get my sleep.” That’s the sort of thing that
    bothers people.

Andrei: Yes. I’m sure you can (. ) yes. ((laughter)) But compared to people-
Henry: “These loud people. They can’t just leave me alone.” ((laughter))

Andrei: Compared to decapitation (.) or Ryan renting out his social house (.) his council house (.) I don’t know (.) it’s minuscule.

Henry: It’s sort of dwarfed=

Andrei: =I don’t understand the fascination.

Henry: No.

Andrei: It’s crazy.

Henry: I’m wondering at this point if there’s anything (.) we’ve talked about quite a lot really (.) if there’s anything you would like to add or anything that has come to mind. There’s one last question I’ve got.

Andrei: Yes (.) go ahead.

Henry: You were saying earlier about drinking white tea.

Andrei: Yes.

Henry: Have you got any particular experiences of when you first tried it=

Andrei: =Here when I first arrived (.) and I saw my wife. She said (.) “Well (.) you have to put milk in your tea.” I was like (.) “You can’t have milk in your tea. Boiled water with milk. What’s wrong with you?” ((laughter)) Because there’s nowhere else in the world.

Henry: No.

Andrei: Well (.) obviously in British colonies I’m sure they do (.) but they don’t put milk in your tea in Germany (.) or France (.) and certainly not in Romania.

So that was quite strange. I quite like the fact that it’s in a way unique (.) and it’s got its nice things. Have you seen that thing on Facebook with a guy sitting at a table and a woman saying (.) “Tea?” And he says (.) “No.” Anarchy in the UK. ((laughter)) I find it quite funny.

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: There’s nothing that I don’t like about Britain. There are things that I would change. I feel part of Britain. I feel almost self-critical whenever I say things. Because whether we’re going to fix the benefits system really depends on my vote as well. So I’m more into (.) “Let’s fix it together” (.) kind of (.) “Oh (.) this is what the British are doing to me.” It’s not us and them. It has never really been (.) apart from the beginning (.) really (.) when I just couldn’t get in through the door. Once I got my first bank account (.) with an Electron card I think it was called (.) then I started feeling part of society. As I said (.) I go home (.) and I’m a stranger at home now (.) a bit=

Henry: =Yes. I suppose as time goes on you're more and more exposed to (.) like you were saying (.) the-

Andrei: Successful as a species (.) aren’t we? Adaptability=.
Henry: =Yes (.) but I suppose then it’s being able to hold those (.) Like what you were saying with all the different languages. There’s always a sense that you're tapping into all those different experiences you’ve had (.) and always reliving things.

Andrei: Yes (.) I’ve had a very rich life (.) like I said (.) and the fact that wherever we go (.) For example (.) with work every year we have a football championship (.) and no matter where we go (.) because it’s always in Europe (.) “((Andrei)) speaks the language.” So they just come to me. It’s like ((laughter)) “It’s fine.”=

Henry: =Wow. I suppose you epitomise all those European ideals=

Andrei: =I feel at home everywhere I go. I travel to Germany. I love Germany. I travel to France (.) Spain. I love Spain. Obviously I lived there. It’s so funny going back now to Spain (.) and just sometimes I go and visit places that I’ve been (.) and the parks that I slept (.) and trees I slept under.

Henry: Those same trees even? Are they still there?

Andrei: The trees are going to be there man. They were just=

Henry: =Humble beginnings (.) I suppose (.) and then=

Andrei: =Yes. Every time I go to Madrid I spend a day just walking through Madrid and seeing all my places.

Henry: Your personal landmarks (.) in a way (.) aren’t they?

Andrei: Yes (.) and nobody goes with me. I do it on my own. It’s a spiritual journey. ((laughter))

Henry: Does your girlfriend come with you?

Andrei: Yes (.) she comes with me. She gets to do something else that day when I decide I need to do my things.

Henry: And she’s happy with that?

Andrei: Yes. Sometimes I stop and I busk with people. I let them have all the money.

Henry: It’s nice (.) really. Because I suppose then you're probably meeting people that you see some of yourself in maybe?

Andrei: Yes (.) absolutely (.) but it was so different (.) and so extreme than my life now (.) that you can actually (.) I sometimes think about it (.) and when it comes at night sometimes it’s like watching a movie that I've seen before (.) but it’s certainly not me. It’s somebody else doing it.

Henry: Wow.

Andrei: I know that if I was to ever go and do it back it will come back naturally (.) and I will be absolutely fine. I'm resourceful (.) I guess (.) in that sense. ((laughter))
Henry: Yes (.) and I suppose in a way just blocking out all of the scary side of it and just doing it.

Andrei: You're always apprehensive about doing something that you haven't done before. With all my travels (.) and all that stuff (.) the night before we were going to cycle to Romania both me and Raoul were sitting in the Old Queen's Head and were shitting ourselves. And that guy is pretty travelled as well. I was thinking (.) “Dude (.) 2 (.).) 800km (.) just on our bikes. Cars. All that stuff. It's a whole continent that we're crossing. What if we get ill? What happens?” We were apprehensive. We said (.) “Oh (.) my God. I hope everything goes fine.” Obviously it went absolutely fine. We ended up staying in a lot of people’s houses (.) sleeping behind (.) I didn’t want hotels. I made it very clear. “I don’t want it to be a credit card luxury travel for a fat European dude.” Because I was still chubby. “I just want it to be a proper traveller kind of experience. I want to meet new people and ask them if I can sleep in their garden.” And we did. We stopped at pubs (.) drank loads of beers. We had loads of money. He’s earning a lot of money.

Henry: You just sort of stuck to the land all the way almost?=

Andrei: =Yes. The only times we slept in friend’s houses (.) because when I worked at SDL they got a lot of translators coming in. Those guys come and do a couple of years and they go back to their country. So everywhere I go in Europe now the chances are that there’s a guy I used to work with. ((laughter))

Henry: Yes.

Andrei: So (.) “Oh (.) you have to come and stay in my house. If you're travelling past my town you’re not sleeping anywhere. You come and stay in my house.”

Henry: It’s more to honour the friendships than to actually stay in the place then?

Andrei: Beer every night. Obviously nice beer in Germany. I think I put on three kilos actually on the trip. I didn’t lose any weight. “I haven’t seen you forever” (.) and they want to get drunk with you. And 150km (.) or maybe 200km (.) there’s another guy (.) and he wants to get drunk with you. So you're plastered every night. Then 150 miles the next day.

Henry: Someone has got to do it. ((laughter))

Andrei: Just imagine (.) you can eat whatever you want. You wake up in the morning (.) take a shower (.) and you go to a local bakery (.) because Germans have that (.) and you basically have to make a conscious effort to eat as much as you can (.) because you're going to burn 6 (.).000 to 7 (.).000 calories a day. So you have to force-

Henry: Oh. The amount of food you would have to eat.

Andrei: You have to force cookies down your throat (.) just because you know you're going to burn it (.) and you need to carb-up. It is cool.

Henry: A tough life. ((laughter))
Andrei: If I had the time I would do it every day. ((laughter))

Henry: Wow. What an achievement to have (. ) what is it (. €20 (. )000 did you say you raised?

Andrei: The way we wanted to do it (. ) I thought (. ) “Well (. ) I’m going to do it. Should we do it for charity?” Because I found out that people see this as an extraordinary achievement. People who don’t cycle think (. ) “Oh (. ) my God (. ) 100 miles. Is something wrong with you? How can you do that in a day?” You can. If you start at nine o’clock in the morning (. ) and you go until seven o’clock in the evening (. ) you have ten hours (. ) just to go ten miles an hour. You go a lot faster than that on the bike (. ) and you will do 100 miles. In the general public conscience (. ) they think it’s an achievement. It was like (. ) “Why don’t we do it for some charity?” Then we said (. ) “Well (. ) yes (. ) we can just collect the money and give it to some children’s charity or something like that.” But then we knew that some of these charities have heads which get paid £35 (. )000 a year. So we thought (. ) “Why don’t we remain in control of the money and do something with it?” Here’s the cool stuff. In my hometown (. ) it’s a mountainous town (. ) with a lot of villages spread across the mountains (. ) but it’s a house here (. ) and a house one kilometre away (. ) and the school is in my hometown (. ) for the kids. So the kids have to come every day six or seven kilometres to get to school.

Henry: Wow.

Andrei: They had a bus used to come and pick them up (. ) but then back in 2010 when the downturn came they had to scrap the bus.

Henry: You’re joking.

Andrei: Some kids were walking ten kilometres just to get to school (. ) to access their basic right to education (. ) a day.

Henry: In Europe? This was-

Andrei: Yes (. ) absolutely. So what we thought we would do is we will gather enough money not to buy them a bus (. ) but to buy them bicycles.

Henry: Bikes (. ) yes.

Andrei: Which makes them healthy (. ) because obviously it keeps them moving (. ) environmentally friendly (. ) completely independent (. ) etc. etc.

Henry: Fun. ((laughter))

Andrei: And absolutely fun. Obviously it has more repercussions (. ) because we said (. ) “We’re going to buy the bikes not from Giant or from GT Bicycles. We’re going to buy them from a local producer of bicycles (. ) so encourage local business as well.” So we had that connotation too. I tell you what. Orange Romania jumped in with £2 (. )000 straight away from the beginning. We went on National Geographic in Romania. I was in the Sheffield Telegraph. If you look back enough you will find an article with me. Obviously none of these companies give you money just because they
think you're cool. They give you money because whenever you appear in
press they appear with you. It's free sponsorship. Compared to what they
pay for a radio advert (.) giving you £1 (.000 is like nothing.

Henry: Yes. There is a little bit of vested interest (.) but then for you (.) what
purposes you could put it towards (.) and how many bikes you could have
got for that (.)

Andrei: Yes (.) absolutely. It was so well-planned (.) the whole thing (.) that it's got
no holes anywhere. Local business encouraged (.) for the local kids. You
don't give the money to anybody. They give the money directly through the
bikes. Then obviously he company who did the bikes gave us a few for free.
The Mayor started making bike locks and that kind of stuff. The helmets
came for free from another place. So it was watertight (.) like you say.

Henry: Yes. You would do it again (.) then (.) I suppose?

Andrei: Oh (.) absolutely. It's just I haven't got time (.) with school now and work.
When we finish here I just have to run home and do a lot of CAD for
Friday. Yes (.) I've got no time to do anything these days. As soon as school
is finished (.) in four years' time (.) I might just move back (.) build a cabin
on top of my mountain (.) and then just work from home and do small
contracts (.) a small extension here (.) a little house there (.) and retire.

Henry: You will have to invite all of your friends from across Europe that you've
met for your big 40th (.) won't you (.) at that point?

Andrei: Of course. Absolutely. It's going to be a constant party up there (.) man.
((laughter))

Henry: Yes. On top of a mountain as well. I know Romania is known for its
fantastic scenery.

Andrei: The Carpathians (.) yes. We've got everything. Sea (.) mountains (.)
everything. It's just inhabited= ((laughter))

Henry: =Yes. ((laughter))

Andrei: That's the only problem with it. ((laughter))

Henry: Try and find a place that's not been discovered yet. Well (.) I'm perfectly
happy to leave it there if you are.

Andrei: Magic.

Henry: As you say (.) so you can get home.

Andrei: I hope you got enough. ((laughter))

Henry: Plenty. Yes (.) plenty. I will turn this off now. ((transcript ends))
Transcript 9: Violeta

9116 Henry: And that one’s on (.) as well. Right (.) so I’d just like to start (.) if I can (.) by asking you a little bit about yourself (.) so tell me a little bit about how long you’ve been in the UK.

9119 Violeta: I came in March 2007 (.) so that’s about eight years ago. I came here because my sister was here (.) and I came for a holiday (.) but the holiday has extended for more than eight years.

9122 Henry: Right (.) okay then. So (.) you first arrived (.) it would have just been a few weeks (.) just staying=

9124 Violeta: I think it was the school holiday. No (.) March. It was for a few weeks (.) yes. But then (.)

9126 Henry: Mm. You liked it so much you stayed.

9127 Violeta: Yes ((laughter)).

9128 Henry: And presumably (.) then (.) you got a job (.) as soon as you sort of (.) you said you stayed at your sister’s.

9130 Violeta: I got a job after a month (.) six weeks (.) I think.

9131 Henry: Mm. What was your first job?

9132 Violeta: In a factory in Halfway. I think it closed down (.) now. It was really cold.

9133 Henry: A cold job? Long hours (.) and sort of (.)

9134 Violeta: Yes.

9135 Henry: What sort of?

9136 Violeta: I think it was packing (.) you know (.) like food (.) ready meals.

9137 Henry: Right (.) yes. It sounds like quite a cold job. How long were you doing that for (.) then?

9139 Violeta: I think six months. I was just too scared to look for another job (.) because obviously (.) I didn’t know Sheffield. I didn’t know anybody here. So (.) I just kept the job. But then I was brave enough to just leave (.) and get another job.

9142 Henry: Yes (.) so it just took a little bit of time to get used to everything?

9143 Violeta: Yes.

9144 Henry: So (.) when you were living with your sister (.) was it just the two of you?

9145 Violeta: And her boyfriend.

9146 Henry: And her boyfriend (.) as well. So (.) there were three of you. What was it like? A little house (.) then (.) or?

9148 Violeta: It was a house (.) but I didn’t get on with her boyfriend (.) so I left.

9149 Henry: Oh (.) gosh. That must have been difficult (.) then. Sort of awkward (.) with your sister in the middle.

9151 Violeta: Yes. That’s why I left (.) to be honest (.) because I didn’t want to get in a silly situation (.) so I just left. It’s better. It’s better that way.
Henry: Mm. It can be difficult (.) can’t it? Because it can sort of be like a third wheel (.) can’t it (.) sometimes?

Violeta: Yes (.) extra=

Henry: =When you’re moving into the new environment. So (.) you ended up moving into a place on your own (.) then (.) when you got a new job?

Violeta: Mm. Well (.) first (.) I moved into a share house for a month (.) and I couldn’t cope with that (.) because there was just so much noise. You had to wait in a queue to go and cook. You had to wait in a queue to have a shower. And I was like (.) “No.”

Henry: Oh (.) gosh. Was that a big sort of house share (.) or was it just a couple of other people?

Violeta: It was up on Granville Road (.) so I think there were four or five bedrooms. So (.) you can imagine people. Music on=

Henry: =Yes. Everyone’s got their own different lives (.) haven’t they?

Violeta: Yes. I managed to stay there for a month (.) and then I moved ((laughter)).

Henry: I can empathise with that. When I was at uni (.) sharing halls and whatever (.) it’s that sort of environment (.) isn’t it? Everyone’s got different lifestyles (.) haven’t they?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Different habits. Different (.) like you say (.) music (.) and=was this with people you know (.) or was this just an advertisement in the paper or something like that?

Violeta: No. I found it=I think one of my friends told me about it (.) so obviously (.) I just took whatever came first (.) to be able to move. But then I stayed there for a month (.) and I had to go. It was hard.

Henry: Gosh. Then what happened? Did you move into the flat that you’ve just moved out of (.) then?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: So (.) you must have been quite happy there (.) then. You’ve been there for quite a while.

Violeta: Yes. Well (.) I was living on my own (.) so I could do whatever I wanted. You know (.) if you want to go and have a shower at two o’clock at night (.) you just go and have a shower. You know (.) whatever you want to do.

Henry: ((laughter)) Yes (.) there’s no room for question (.) is there?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What job did you move to (.) then (.) from the factory? What was the job you got after that?

Violeta: I was doing a cleaning job at the hospital with an agency for (.) I don’t know (.) about two years (.) I think (.) there. Then (.) obviously (.) after I started to know Sheffield (.) and different people (.) I got another job. Well (.) I’ve got three jobs now (.) actually.
Henry: Mm. Wow (.) three? Quite busy (.) then ((laughter)).

Violeta: ((laughter)) Yes. I work as a carer now (.) personal assistant.

Henry: And how do you find that (.) then?

Violeta: I love it.

Henry: Quite a demanding job (.) isn’t it?

Violeta: Yes (.) but you just have to get to know the people you’re working with. But it’s fine. I love the job.

Henry: Mm. Rewarding (.) I suppose (.) isn’t it?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Is it with elderly people?

Violeta: Yes. Older lady with Parkinson’s (.) and the other one (.) she’s got spinal injuries. Knee replacement (.) hip. She’s got all sorts.

Henry: So (.) a lot of physical impairments (.) so you’re having to help them quite a lot with everyday stuff (.) really? Washing (.) and all the rest of it?

Violeta: Yes (.) yes.

Henry: Wow. They must have a lot of stories to tell you. A lot of sort of anecdotes.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: It’s nice (.) isn’t it (.) to be able to have something that you can go to (.) and feel like you’re making a difference (.) and you’re contributing (.) in that sense?

Violeta: Yes. Like one of the ladies I’m looking after (.) with the spinal injuries (.) she can’t really (.) well (.) she can walk (.) just to go to the toilet. And then she has to go back straight to bed. It makes me feel so much better (.) because everything I do for her is like a new life (.) because she can’t go out. So (.) I have to go and do her shopping so she’s got a normal life (.) like everybody else. It’s nice. I love it.

Henry: Yes. Do you get time to actually just sit and chat with them (.) as well?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: So (.) there’s that side of it (.) being sort of a friend to them (.) as well.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What about (.) So (.) are you still doing cleaning (.) as well (.) alongside that?

Violeta: Yes. I kept that on the weekend. I only kept it because it’s good pay.

Henry: Yes (.) of course. What about the third job (.) then?

Violeta: No (.) it’s the one with the Parkinson’s (.) the one with the spinal=

Henry: Oh (.) I see (.) so they’re two sort of=

Violeta: Yes. And then the weekend job. It’s enough ((laughter)).

Henry: Yes (.) I can imagine ((laughter)). So (.) you’re quite a busy person then (.) really?
Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Do you ever find time to sort of (.) Do you have any hobbies (.) or anything like that?

Violeta: Well (.) I did start going to the gym (.) but then I stopped (.) because I didn’t have time.

Henry: No. That’s the thing (.) isn’t it? To find the time to live your own life. And like you say (.) when you’re moving house (.) gosh (.) that must have taken up time (.) as well.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: I could understand (.) when you’re saying in the email (.) ‘I’m very busy up until that point.’ I could understand (.) with everything you’ve got going on (.) gosh (.) how do you manage to fit it all in?

Violeta: Just do it (.) I think.

Henry: Yes. So (.) could you tell me a little bit about life before you came to the UK (.) then? Whereabouts in Romania are you from?

Violeta: Northwest.

Henry: So the Transylvania region?

Violeta: Yes. It’s (.) like (.) on the border with Hungary (.) so it’s at that end.

Henry: Mm.

Violeta: Well (.) to be honest (.) I came to the UK on holiday because I was at uni (.) and working at the same time. My mum and dad couldn’t really afford to pay for my uni (.) so I had to get a job to be able to pay for the fees. But then I couldn’t work nights and then go to uni. I managed to do it for three months (.) and then that’s it. I couldn’t. So (.) I had to stop. Then (.) I came here for a holiday. I think it was two weeks (.) actually (.) holiday (.) and then go back and just start work again. But then the two weeks’ holiday just (.) eight years ((laughter)).

Henry: So (.) you were at uni in Romania (.) then?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What course were you doing?

Violeta: IT and maths.

Henry: IT. That’s something that’s come up quite a lot when I’ve spoken to people. They do a lot of those sort of courses (.) don’t they?

Violeta: Yes (.) because I’ve done it in college for four years. Only IT and maths. That’s all I’ve done. I didn’t really see the point in doing something else. That’s what I wanted to do.

Henry: Yes (.) that’s where your skills are.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Yes (.) so are you from just a small town (.) then (.) or are you from quite a big place?
Violeta: Yes (.) it’s a small town.

Henry: Mm (.) and you were living (.) I suppose (.) with your parents (.) and then went to=

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Were you doing high school? Were you living at home when you went to high school (.) or did you go abroad for that (.) as well?

Violeta: No (.) I was at home.

Henry: Mm (.) so when you went to uni (.) that was the first time you moved away (.) then?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What was that like?

Violeta: Good. Freedom ((laughter)).

Henry: Freedom ((laughter))?

Violeta: Yes. The first few months (.) my mum used to phone me. “Are you home (.) eight o’clock?” – “Yes.”=

Henry: =Oh (.) gosh. She was checking up on you?

Violeta: Yes=

Henry: =So she was quite a=I don’t know how you might describe it. But she cushioned you a lot (.) then (.) trying to look after you?

Violeta: Yes. She was just worried that something might happen (.) every time I was leaving the house. So (.) going to uni for me was like (.) “Wow.” ((laughter)).

Henry: Yes (.) because you got to just (.) I suppose you had to go somewhere quiet (.) though (.) to say (.) “I’m at home (.) now. I’m in bed.” You know (.) when there’s sort of like stuff going on in the background.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Oh (.) and how about your dad? Was he the same (.) then?

Violeta: No. My dad actually tried to convince my mum just to leave me alone. She was doing exactly the same with my sister and my brother. But that’s my mum. She worries about everything.

Henry: ((laughter)) Yes. I suppose she must (.) does she call your sister a lot to check up on her (.) then?

Violeta: No (.) it was only me. I’m the middle one. I’ve always been a mummy’s girl.

Henry: Yes (.) but I’m the same with my mum (.) to be fair. When you have that sort of connection (.) it makes it worse (.) in a way (.) doesn’t it? Because they become even more (.) close (.) it’s like (.) “It’s okay. I’ll let you know.” – “No (.) but you must tell me now.” ((laughter)).

Violeta: Yes.
Henry: So (.) you went to uni (.) you moved away. Whereabouts did you go to uni? Was it in Bucharest?

Violeta: No (.) that’s too far. It’s just like the next town.

Henry: The next town away?

Violeta: Yes=

Henry: =So (.) far enough to sort of get away?

Violeta: Yes (.) just to get a bit of freedom.

Henry: You say you came over for a summer break to the UK (.) then.

Violeta: Yes (.) I came in March.

Henry: Did you go back and finish your uni?

Violeta: No (.) because I had to stop anyway (.) because I couldn’t afford=

Henry: Mm (.) the fees?

Violeta: Yes (.) the fees (.) and obviously (.) because I had to choose between finishing work (.) stopping that (.) or ()

Henry: Or stop uni?

Violeta: Yes (.) so obviously (.) if I stopped work (.) then I’d have no money to pay for uni (.) so I couldn’t do it.

Henry: Mm. It’s interesting you say that (.) then. It sort of sounds like the link you had with going back (.) your course (.) when that ended (.) you didn’t have any reason to go back (.) so you thought you’d stay here and start a new life here (.) then.

Violeta: Yes. Well (.) when I decided to stay here (.) if I worked for six months (.) when you think about the wage (.) it’s like (.) oh (.) you know (.) six months (.) maximum a year (.) you can save so much and then go back and finish uni. But then you forget about the rent and the bills and everything else. So (.) in a year (.) you can’t really save any money.

Henry: No (.) and I suppose that’s a bit of a trap (.) then (.) isn’t it?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Because once you’re here (.) you’re sort of here and stuck in all the bills and deposits and all the rest of it (.) aren’t you?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Is that something that (.) when you look back on (.) you wish you’d known (.) then? How much it cost to live here?

Violeta: I don’t know. I don’t regret (.) I love here. I don’t think I’ll ever go back. Well (.) I’ll go for holidays (.) but not like to move back there. Obviously (.) when you’re somewhere else (.) when you come into the UK first (.) you don’t realise that life in the UK is expensive. If you tell everybody else (.) like (.) some of my friends (.) they ask me how much I get a month. And when I tell them over £1 (.000) or whatever (.) they’ll think that’s a lot of money. But then (.) it’s rent-

Henry: Mm (.) when you say (.) “This is what I have to pay for (.)”
Violeta: Yes. It’s all the other bills and everything else and you’ve got no money else.  
Henry: Was there anything else that you knew about the UK before you came?

Violeta: No, I watched a few programmes on TV about the UK but they don’t really show they just show London. All the fancy places you want to go. So when I came here it was a shock kind of because I didn’t know what to expect. What you see on TV and the reality is different. I remember when I came because I lived with my sister first and then Court Road in Sheffield. I don’t know that And it was just I don’t know. Half-naked kids outside. I didn’t expect to see that. Playing and I don’t know.

Henry: Didn’t quite match up Unfortunately.

Violeta: Oh no way. It’s just overcrowded. And in London I’ve only been there for a day and it just seems like people they don’t have a life. They don’t even look at each other when they’re walking. They just go home go to work and the same day after day. Same thing every day.

Henry: What was your impression of London then?

Violeta: Oh no way. It’s just overcrowded. And in London I’ve only been there for a day and it just seems like people they don’t have a life. They don’t even look at each other when they’re walking. They just go home go to work and the same day after day. Same thing every day.

Henry: That’s really it’s quite a powerful thing to hear you say. My experience of London is like you say it’s so crowded and big and people everywhere. And before you know it on the Underground or even at a bus stop there’s just people surrounding you. And then there’s no people and then there’s people. It’s just incredibly=

Violeta: Yes. Sends you dizzy.

Henry: Yes it’s that sort of feeling isn’t it? The architecture is about the best bit about it because there’s quite a lot of nice buildings and flowers and stuff.

Violeta: Yes (laughter).

Henry: But unfortunately you never see them because of the people (laughter).

Violeta: Yes you don’t get a chance because if you stop for two minutes somebody’s pushing you.
Henry: Yes. I’m wondering what (.) talked quite a lot about these. Just in regards to language (.) were you taught English at school (.) or?

Violeta: Yes (.) I did.

Henry: You sort of picked bits up along the way (.) that sort of thing?

Violeta: No (.) I learnt English in school (.) but my first language was French (.) so I only learned English I think for the last four years (.) then (.) in college (.) yes.

Henry: Right (.) okay then. So (.) you probably picked quite a lot of it up moving here (.) and sort of=

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Wow. What was that experience like for you (.) then?

Violeta: My first day in Sheffield (.) my sister sent me to the shop to get some bread and milk or something like that. And she knew (.) because=and it was (.) well (.) the owner. I walked in and I said (.) “Good morning (.)” or whatever. Then he says (.) “You alright (.) love?” I just looked at him and I was like (.) “What?” Because obviously (.) when you learn it in school (.) ‘love’ means something else. And then ‘flower’. I’m like (.) “What’s wrong with people?” Somebody called me (.) once (.) ‘chick’. I was like (.) “Do I really look like a chicken?” Because (.) you know (.) it means something else.

Henry: Yes.

Violeta: Obviously (.) I asked (.) I thought (.) “It can’t be that bad. I’m a flower (.) a chicken (.) I’m love.” But then obviously I knew what they meant (.) so (.)

Henry: Mm (.) yes. There is something to that (.) isn’t there? When we’re taught those words (.) they’re literal (.) aren’t they? It’s ‘chicken.’

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: So (.) if someone’s saying it in a slang way (.) it is a bit strange (.) isn’t it (.) the more you think about it?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: ((laughter)) Gosh (.) what must you have thought in the shop? Sort of like (.) “Is he talking to me?”

Violeta: Yes (.) because he said (.) “You alright (.) love?” I just looked around (.) like (.) “Is there anybody else here? No (.) it’s only me.” I told my sister (.) after (.) and she just=

Henry: Did she laugh ((laughter))? 

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Because that was what it was all about. It was a test (.) wasn’t it?

Violeta: Yes (.) yes.

Henry: Oh (.) gosh. So (.) I imagine you’ve had quite a few experiences like that (.) on the bus or whatever else.

Violeta: Yes (.) the bus driver.
Henry: Yes. Trying to make ends meet really. Make sure they (laughter) (.)

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: So (.) you were talking earlier about life here (.) and obviously you’ve got your house now. Is this where home feels for you (.) now?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Mm (.) so how do you feel about=? I mean (.) do you still go back to Romania? Do you still travel back?

Violeta: Well (.) yes. I go to see my mum and dad every couple of months. I have to go.

Henry: Yes (.) that’s an important point (.) isn’t it? I bet she’s still ringing up asking for you.

Violeta: Yes. If I don’t go (.) they’re coming over here (.) so (.)

Henry: And it’s better for you to go back? Less hassle?

Violeta: Yes (.) otherwise I have to go and pick them up (.) and then stay here with them (.) and they just want to know too many things (laughter)

Henry: Asking too many questions?

Violeta: Yes (.) so if I go over there (.) it’s better.

Henry: And what’s it like for you (.) then? Does it feel different when you go back (.) now that you’ve moved?

Violeta: Yes. It just seems like that’s not my place anymore (.) especially the first (.) like (.) usually I go for two weeks. The first week is just (.) obviously (.) I have to go and see all my aunties and everybody else.

Henry: Yes. I suppose your mum tells everyone that you’re coming back.

Violeta: Yes. I think the whole country knows. Then the second week is just (.) I can’t wait to come back. All my friends (.) if they’re not married (.) they’ve gone somewhere else (.) and it’s just (.) I don’t see the point. Here is my home now.

Henry: Mm (.) so I suppose there’s a sense that everything that you’ve got is here (.) now (.) and the more you go (.)

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Are there things that sort of stick out at you back home (.) that you never thought about previously? You know what you were saying with the slang (.) here? Are there things that are more noticeable for you when you go back? Sort of like (.) “Well (.) that’s weird. I’ve never thought about that.” Is there anything like that?

Violeta: No. I don’t know.

Henry: Do you know what I mean?

Violeta: No.

Henry: Sorry. In the sense that (.) you know when you were saying about different words (.) and they’re sometimes used a bit funny here (.) in comparison? Like with ‘chick’ and ‘love.’
Violeta: Oh (.) you mean the language over there?
Henry: Yes. Are there things that you notice now (.) going back (.) that since moving (.) you’re sort of like? Sorry (.) it wasn’t very clear (.) the way I explained it.
Violeta: Yes (.) yes. Because (.) you know (.) when you’re living over there (.) you just talk and think like everybody else. It happened (.) I think it was last year (.) I managed to catch pneumonia in June (.) when it was 35 degrees in Romania. Yes (.) don’t ask.
Henry: ((laughter)) Gosh.
Violeta: Yes. I’d been on holiday for two weeks (.) then ten days in hospital. Yes. Nice. So (.) I had to go to the pharmacy to get some tablets. Then (.) people (.) they don’t know to wait in a queue. They just push in or whatever. It does feel weird (.) because it’s like (.) “Well (.) I’ve been here before you (.)” if you know what I mean. “Wait in the queue.” Now (.) it does look different and it feels weird (.) but back 10 years ago (.) 8 years ago (.) it was just (.) no (.) just do like everybody else.
Henry: So the queuing then (.) to put it the other way around (.) when you first came (.) queuing must have been something that stood at you at being quite a (.)
Violeta: Yes. Looking like (.) you know (.) “Why is everybody waiting there?” Then I thought (.) “Okay (.) yes. You have to wait in a queue to go and pay.”
Henry: Mm (.) it’s interesting. I don’t know how you feel about this. Another participant was saying a lot of Romanians don’t like queueing because of what it reminds them of (.) in the past (.) when you’d have to queue for food and things like that. Is that something that?
Violeta: Yes. Well (.) I’m not that old to remember that.
Henry: No (.) of course (.) but in terms of your family or things that might have been taught to you (.) is that something that rings true in your case as well (.) then?
Violeta: Yes (.) yes (.) because even now (.) like today (.) I don’t know (.) over-50s (.) they still go (.) even if the queue is to the other end (.) they just walk in (.) and it’s like (.) “Oh (.) can you just give me some?” Whatever. They still do it.
Henry: So (.) it’s older ideas that are still—yes. Sorry. Can I ask how old you are (.) if you don’t mind?
Violeta: Twenty-nine. I’ll be thirty this year (.) yes.
Henry: Yes (.) so I suppose (.) as you say (.) you would have been just a little girl.
Violeta: Yes. I remember (.) but not a lot (.) because I was only a small child.
Henry: So it would have been when you were growing up. Everything was going on (.) everything was changing.
Violeta: Yes. I remember with the TV (.) you weren’t allowed to watch TV after seven o’clock or something like that. So (.) obviously (.) when I started growing (.) it was more like (free) (.) because I could do whatever I wanted. My sister (.) she’s older than me. She can remember. So (.) I presume for older people (.) they just don’t want to live that life again (.) but that’s no reason just to push in. [But they] don’t see it that way.
Henry: Yes. It’s a very British thing (.) isn’t it (.) queues? It’s a funny sort of (.) yes.
Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What about your experience of eating English or Scottish or whatever food and drink? What about those sorts of things? Do you eat a lot of food here or do you still cook a lot of Romanian food?

Violeta: Oh no. I have English food. I love Sunday dinners ((laughter)).

Henry: You have English food? Do you? Roasts and stuff.

Violeta: Oh yes. I love Yorkshire puddings. My mum they came here two years ago for Christmas. So obviously I thought “It’s Christmas. I’ll cook.” I bought Yorkshire puddings because I didn’t know how to do it. I know now. My mum loves it so now she’s having Yorkshire puddings and last time she said she had some onions in. Yes she’s just eating them like that ((laughter)).

Henry: Right wow. I must admit they are quite hard to make. They’re quite easy when you know the mixture but they’re hard to make a decent sometimes they can just go incredibly wrong can’t they ((laughter))? I’ve never been able to make a good-sized Yorkshire pudding. Never. What about drinks then? Are you happy to drink the tea and the coffee and all that sort of thing?

Violeta: Yes. I don’t really like tea. I just drink coffee. But I’ve never well I do have tea when I’m not very well. But I never drink well. Sometimes let’s say once a month I’ll have a cup of tea. But that’s me. I just don’t like tea. Even before I came here. It’s just coffee.

Henry: Oh okay. Again another participant was saying about how the tea tastes different. The tea’s different with milk.

Violeta: Yes with milk. The first time when I worked in the factory because we used to go for breaks like four four or two and twos. Then one of the girls asked me “Do you want a cup of tea?” And because it’s so cold you are so cold downstairs I said “Yes.” But then I was thinking like a cup of tea cup of tea. No milk. Then she came and I was like “Well I’m sure you did ask me if I want a cup of tea. You’ve got me coffee.” She said “No it’s tea.” But it doesn’t taste bad.

Henry: Mm. I suppose it was like something that is it something you had to have several tries of to get used to it?

Violeta: Yes ((laughter)). I had to have it because I was just embarrassed to tell her that I don’t like it. She was looking at me “Are you drinking?” – “Yes.” But it’s okay.

Henry: Yes. It’s a strange thing. Before I’d started these interviews it had never occurred to me. Some people do drink tea black but it had never occurred to me that some people drink tea without milk as a not as a choice thing but that’s just how you have tea. It’s amazing isn’t it? Because you had that opposite experience like “Why would you put milk in it?” ((laughter)) It’s interesting.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: So what about the neighbourhood the area you’re living in now where your new house is? How are you finding that neighbourhood?

Violeta: Well to be honest I don’t really know the area. My neighbour she’s all right. But that’s about all.

Henry: Mm. I suppose it’s all quite new isn’t it?
Violeta: Yes (.) I don’t know anybody there.

Henry: Yes. What about where your flat was? What sort of neighbourhood was that like?

Violeta: I knew the landlady there (.) and there was an old lady (.) not next door but one to me. Every time when I used to go outside to hang up my washing (.) she was just there talking for ages ((laughter)).

Henry: Oh (.) gosh. One of those neighbours.

Violeta: Yes (.) so I’ve got a good friend there.

Henry: Yes. She must miss you (.) miss the chat. Oh. You should invite her over for tea sometime ((laughter)).

Violeta: She knows where I moved to.

Henry: Oh (.) does she?

Violeta: Yes (.) before I moved (.) because she saw me packing (.) taking the stuff. She came and asked for my address. I was like (.) “Oops.” She did say she’s coming to visit me soon.

Henry: Oh (.) lovely. It’s nice (.) isn’t it (.) when you’ve got neighbours like that (.) because there’s that real sense of community (.) isn’t there?

Violeta: Mm.

Henry: Is there anyone else (.) or is it just this particular lady that you sort of befriended?

Violeta: No (.) just her (.) yes.

Henry: At this point (.) then (.) we’ve talked quite a lot about you specifically. I’d like to know any views (.) or any feelings you might have (.) about the way that Romanian migration is being talked about in the media (.) the newspapers (.) the television (.) what your views are on that.

Violeta: Yes. I don’t know if you watched the last (.) I think it’s Channel Four (.) with ‘The Romanians Are Coming.’ I just put it on for 10 minutes (.) and I thought (.) “No (.) I’m not watching this.” I know even some of my friends (.) because for some reason (.) they say I’m Polish (.) which to be honest (.) I don’t care. I can be Chinese if you want me to. I don’t care. Then they started talking (.) obviously (.) after the programme. “Oh (.) bloody Romanians. They’re all gypsies (.) and they’re coming here to do whatever they do.” Then they tell me (.) and I just (.) you know (.) okay. That’s your opinion. It’s your problem. When I tell them I’m Romanian (.) “No (.) you can’t be Romanian.” – “Why? Do you want to see the passport? What do you want me to do?” – “No (.) you can’t be.” And if you ask them why (.) it’s because I’m different. “Why? I’ve got two eyes (.) got two hands. I’m not different.” – “No (.) because Romanians are all gypsies (.) and they’re begging and whatever else they do.” So (.) to be honest (.) all the programmes or whatever they do about Romanians is not really helping. But then again (.) everybody’s entitled to think what they want to think.

Henry: Mm. As you say (.) the programmes (.) I have seen the= /

Violeta: I didn’t watch it.

Henry: I don’t know if the third one is out now (.) but I have seen them. I made a point of watching them. Most of what you see (.) they are (.) it is a very specific type of person in the sense that they come and they’re living on the streets. That’s their
life (.) and yet that’s not necessarily what everyone would experience (.) and that’s what they show.

Violeta: Yes. Well (.) I only watched it for the first 10 minutes. When they showed in Romania (.) where there was a Romanian gypsy. Where that guy comes from is where my mum lives (.) so it’s near (.) and I’ve been there before. There is nothing (.) what they showed on TV. All the dirt and stuff.

Henry: Oh (.) yes. The sort of opening bit when they’re riding the horses (.) and there’s rubbish everywhere (.) isn’t there? And that sort of (.)

Violeta: Yes (.) yes. No (.) it’s not. It’s not like that. To be honest (.) I don’t know where they got that from (.) And it’s like (.) I just don’t believe the programme. Living on the streets and then you get (.) first of all (.) to open a bank account with no proof of address. Then you get benefits when you’ve never worked (.) never paid a penny in tax in the UK. I don’t think that’s possible.

Henry: No. There are a couple of strange things that happen in it (.) that you have to=

Violeta: I didn’t watch it. Somebody told me. I don’t even want to watch it.

Henry: Yes. I can agree with what you’ve been told. You just see the phone calls being made (.) and then you see them at the cashpoint taking it out (.) and they say (.) “I love the UK. I love it.” And that’s the only part you see. It is quite dubious. From what you’re saying to me (.) then (.) there’s a sense that it’s not right (.) what’s being shown.

Violeta: No. It’s just (.) they don’t show anything else. They don’t show any positives about Romanians. Well (.) it’s more than gypsies. Gypsies are everywhere. It’s not only Romanian gypsies. But they don’t (.) like (.) I think it was last year (.) with the Olympic Games. Not last year (.) the year before.

Henry: The Olympics? They were 2012 (.) weren’t they?

Violeta: Yes (.) a few years ago.

Henry: Time flies (.) doesn’t it? It’s hard to keep track.

Violeta: Yes. It was the same with the Romanian gypsies (.) somewhere in Marble Arch or somewhere (.) but it doesn’t represent Romanians.

Henry: What sort of things (.) to you (.) would make you feel a little bit more easy about? What sort of things would you say are Romanian (.) as opposed to what is shown (.) then?

Violeta: Well (.) most of the people I know (.) like in Sheffield or anywhere else (.) they came here (.) they have a job (.) pay their taxes and just live a normal life like everybody else. Obviously (.) there are people everywhere where they don’t like to work (.) and they just go and think (.) “Oh (.) I’ll have that because it looks nice.” But that is like everywhere else.

Henry: Mm. So (.) I suppose it’s just that more (.) it’s not even about Romanian culture (.) then (.) in your view. It’s just simply that people are working and contributing and giving something. Yes. It’s quite a simple point (.) then (.) really (.) isn’t it?

Violeta: Mm.
Henry: A simple injustice (...) that’s (...) how about your experience? Have you been anywhere else in Europe? Have you moved anywhere else (...) or is it just the UK that you’ve been to?

Violeta: No (...) just Sheffield.

Henry: Just Sheffield? Okay (...) then. Some of our participants have been in other places (...) as well (...) and (.)

Violeta: No.

Henry: From what I know of the Transylvania sort of area (...) there’s quite a lot of commonality with Hungary and Germany and that sort of part of the world.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Is there anything (...) Is that the case for you (...) then (...) in your experience (...) that you’ve grown up with quite a lot of those sorts of ideas and cuisines?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Is that something that you’d like to (...) Are those sorts of places somewhere you’d like to go to in the future (...) or?

Violeta: I don’t know. This is my home now (...) so I just go anyway (...) just on holiday. To be honest (...) I don’t think I want to go. I’m happy where I am.

Henry: Yes. You just convey (...) it sounds like you’re already sort of happy in everything that you’re doing (...) with your jobs (...) and now your new house. It’s all quite (.)

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: It sounds like you’ve really bedded in. You were saying earlier about your experience with the tea (...) and that was in the factory (...) wasn’t it (...) the cup of tea?

Violeta: Yes ((laughter)).

Henry: What about other work colleagues (...) like in the caring jobs that you’ve got? What have been your experiences there (...) then?

Violeta: Well (...) most of them (...) they are really nice. One of (...) I think she’s about 65. She can’t hear you. She’s got a hearing aid (...) but for some reason (...) sometimes (...) it doesn’t work. Then obviously (...) when I talk (...) because of my accent (...) she kind of like (...) and it just feels weird. “Okay (...) just move away”

Henry: “That doesn’t help you hear me?”

Violeta: Yes. I can shout in your ear if you want (...) but you don’t have to come that close.

Henry: Yes (...) so that sense of having a different accent?

Violeta: Mm.

Henry: Yes. It’s sometimes a bit odd (...) isn’t it? When people can’t place your accent.

Violeta: Yes. A few times (...) I did hear them talking behind my back (...) when one of them said she can’t understand me because of my accent. And I said (...) “If you don’t understand what I’m saying (...) just ask me and I can repeat.” – “Oh (...) no. It’s fine. I can understand.” So (...) that’s why I don’t get it. If you don’t understand (...) just tell me. I’m not going to get offended. I’m not going to be upset. But they just
I don’t know. But now they know me well enough. I think they got used to my accent ((laughter)).

Yes, and I think some of it as well sometimes it can be more about them than about you.

Well, I can understand sometimes that they can’t understand me. But if you can’t understand just ask me to repeat. It’s easy.

Yes. It’s amazing because some people just have no experiences of meeting people with different accents or whatever and sometimes it seems like people don’t know how to deal with it.

Yes.

It’s the only sort of way they can “I don’t understand them.” As you say it doesn’t make any sense. “Why don’t you just ask?”

Yes. At the beginning when they were talking about me when they said they can’t understand I was just thinking “Well I was kind of the same when I came here.” I could speak English but it was hard to get used to the accent. So I thought “Well probably the same for them.” But I don’t know. A few weeks back they said exactly the same thing so I thought “Oh. If you don’t understand just ask.”

Yes, and that’s sort of your mantra then? You say it all the time?

Yes.

Make it clear to people.

Yes. I told them “If you don’t understand just ask me again.” — “No I can understand you.” So you know.

What’s the problem ((laughter))? Oh gosh. It seems like going in circles sometimes with them.

Yes. Yes. I’ve got used to it now so.

Yes. You’re very patient.

Well I wouldn’t say that.

You come across as patient. Do you not feel like you are sometimes?

I am patient but just to a point and then when I get to that point you don’t want to be around me ((laughter)). Then you might not be able to understand me.

Let’s see. What else have I got? How would you say? By all means ask me again if this doesn’t make any sense because I’m trying to run it through my head. Since moving has moving here changed the way that you see yourself? The way that you think about what you want from life and who you are?

Yes.

In what sort of ways?
Every way (.) because before I came here (.) I mean (.) living in Romania (.) if you don’t really have a good (.) job (.) you can’t afford=there was no way (.) in a million years (.) with a job like cleaning. Because (.) I mean (.) come on (.) a cleaning job (.) even here (.) is not something like nobody else can do it. But doing that back in Romania (.) there would be no way (.) not even to get a loan for a car. With that kind of job (.) no way. But since I came here (.) I passed my driving test (.) I got a car. Now I’ve just got a house. And to do exactly the same thing in Romania (.) no (.) and especially because I’m young. Well (.) I like to believe I’m young ((laughter)).

You are young (.) yes.

So (.) yes. My life changed (.) since I came.

So it’s these sense that (.) just having more opportunities [and being able to achieve more]

[Yes (.) and you get more help here]

Mm. So (.) there’s a real sense (.) then (.) that what things are available (.) what opportunities are available in Romania are a big factor in why you want to stay here (.) because you feel like there’s more of a future here for you.

Yes.

Yes. From what you were saying earlier (.) with your parents not being able to support you when you were at uni (.) that must have been really difficult for you.

From my understanding (.) a lot of parents do help their kids out when they do go to uni.

Yes (.) yes. I’ve got an older sister (.) then it’s me (.) and a younger brother. So (.) obviously (.) because it’s only four years between me and my brother (.) he was at college. Yes (.) he started college and I was at uni (.) so obviously (.) I had to pay for all the books and everything else at college. For two of them working (.) a wage (.) I don’t know if it was like (.) I think I’m pushing it saying £300 a month.

Gosh.

Yes (.) so paying the uni fees for my brother (.) and he’s a boy. He needs money to go out.

What jobs are your parents doing?

Well (.) they don’t work now.

They don’t work? Were they made unemployed from their jobs (.) then?

Yes. My mum (.) well (.) she’s not very well (.) so she can’t work. And my dad has just been signed off by the doctor (.) so no chance.

And is that because of health (.) then? To do with his job?

Yes (.) yes.

What was he doing before (.) then?
Violeta: In a factory (.) which kind of (.) not steel. It’s not cars. All these metals things and stuff. I don’t know what he was doing.

Henry: Mm (.) so there was sort of a lot of pollution and heavy lifting and a really manual job?

Violeta: Yes (.) yes (.) and always standing. That’s why he’s got a problem with his leg (.) now. Thrombosis (.) or whatever that’s called.

Henry: God. It’s tough going (.) because I mean (.) is there a lot of support for them? Because (.) I mean (.)

Violeta: No.

Henry: What’s the political scene like in Romania? Obviously here (.) and in France and Germany (.) there’s sort of austerity programmes (.) isn’t there (.) and government cutting the money that they spend on things? Is the same happening in Romania (.) as well?

Violeta: Yes (.) but there (.) they’re just cutting everything out=

Henry: =Because there’s hardly anything to begin with (.) there’s nothing?

Violeta: No. I don’t even know how much they get a month (.) but obviously (.) they don’t have to pay rent (.) because it’s their own house. So (.) all the income that comes (.) they just spend it on bills (.) and that’s it.

Henry: It’s a real challenge (.) isn’t it? Because (.) I mean (.)

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: How do your parents feel about all this (.) then? They must be quite angry with the situation.

Violeta: Yes (.) yes.

Henry: Yes. My mum (.) she’s really upset. But then obviously (.) now (.) after so long (.) she realises there’s nothing she can do. Obviously (.) she wants me to go back home (.) but doing what? I don’t want to go and sit there next to her for the rest of my life.

Henry: Mm. Have they ever thought about moving here? Is that something that they’d consider?

Violeta: My mum (.) she’d come tomorrow (.) but my dad (.) no. They came here for Christmas about two or three years ago.

Henry: Oh (.) when she learnt the Yorkshire puddings? Yes.

Violeta: Yes. My mum (.) I think she would come just to be with me (.) but my dad (.) no. He said no=

Henry: =He’s close to the town that he grew up in (.) and?

Violeta: Yes. He said not even that (.) I won’t bring him here again ((laughter)).

Henry: Really?
Violeta: No (.) he won’t come. For him (.) my dad (.) obviously (.) has never left home. Well (.) apart from coming here for two weeks (.) I think. It was his first time of seeing all these different people. I think my mum would be all right (.) just to know she’s here with me. But my dad would be like (.) “No (.) I want to go back.”

Henry: Not even having your sister here (.) as well?

Violeta: My sister is here (.) yes.

Henry: That’s what I mean. That’s not enough of a pull for your dad to sort of (.) that both his girls are here (.) and?

Violeta: No.

Henry: Wow. He really loves (.) really feels safe (.) where he is (.) then.

Violeta: Yes (.) yes.

Henry: Is that something that you and your sister have talked about?

Violeta: No (.) because I said (.) obviously (.) since they’ve been off (.) you know (.) not very well (.) I told my mum they could come and live here with me. But my dad says no. Because (.) he said (.) “What’s the point of coming here?” Because he won’t be able to work. First (.) he can’t speak English at all (.) and then doing what here? So (.) he said he might as well just stay at home (.) whatever income they get (.) just pay the bills (.) and that’s it.

Henry: Oh. I really hope that things improve for them. Is there a sense of=

Violeta: =Yes (.) probably in the next 100 years.

Henry: I hope it’s sooner (.) because there’s a sense there that really there should be support (.) especially for situations where their health is obviously aggravated by a job they’ve done. What is it? Thrombosis (.) did you say it was?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: I mean (.) it’s not come out of nowhere ((laughter)).

Violeta: I know.

Henry: It’s usually aggravated by something (.) isn’t it? Gosh. Tough going.

Violeta: Well (.) yes. That’s Romania for you.

Henry: Yes. The one thing that I always end up getting captivated by (.) when I’m researching this (.) is the landscape.

Violeta: Mm (.) yes.

Henry: Absolutely beautiful country. I mean (.) where you are (.) it isn’t that far from the (.) is it the Carpathian Mountains?

Violeta: Mm (.) yes (.) yes.

Henry: So (.) there’s quite a lot of (.)

Violeta: It’s a beautiful country to go on holiday to (.) and obviously (.) if you can afford it. But to live in Romania (.) it’s so expensive. The life in Romania is exactly like here (.) but then the wage is just below.
Henry: Mm.

Violeta: So (.) it is. Black Sea (.) that’s nice. There are so many places to visit.

Henry: Have you visited quite a lot of the country yourself?

Violeta: No (.) I have been nowhere in Romania (.) honestly (.) apart from uni.

Henry: Oh. It would be nice (.) I suppose then (.) to go back and visit some of these places (.) then.

Violeta: Yes. I’m going this year (.) when I’m going back (.) now.

Henry: Are you? How long for?

Violeta: I’m going for two weeks. My mum and dad don’t know.

Henry: Oh (.) don’t they?

Violeta: No ((laughter)).

Henry: Oh (.) that will be nice for them. You’ll just knock on the door (.) “Hello.”

Violeta: Yes. I did say to my mum (.) well (.) she thinks I’m going in September or October (.) because obviously I’ve just moved (.) so I can’t afford to go now. But I booked the tickets before I moved (.) before I got the house. I’m going on 15th June (.) so I kind of said to her (.) “Oh (.) I’ll surprise you.” But she said to me (.) “Oh (.) don’t do that (.) because I’ll just be on the floor.” Like (.) oops.

Henry: Yes. I was just thinking if I did that to my mum (.) there’d be tears (.) there’d be all sorts. Is that what your mum would be like ((laughter))?]

Violeta: Yes. To be honest (.) I think I would find her on the floor (.) so I think I have to tell her.

Henry: Oh. I tell you what would probably be the thing. You’ll be on the plane (.) and you’ll have no reception (.) and she’ll be calling you all day (.) like (.) “Why aren’t you answering your phone?” ((laughter)) By the time you get there (.) she’s like (.) “I knew you were coming (.) because you weren’t answering your phone.” Yes (.) it will be nice (.) then (.) I suppose (.) won’t it? To surprise them. But then I suppose it’s a matter of finding some time (.) if you have got any in that two weeks (.) to go and do something]

Violeta: [Oh (.) yes (.) I am] going (.) because I booked already (.) so yes.

Henry: Have you? So you’re going to go somewhere else whilst you’re there (.) then?

Violeta: Yes (.) yes. For the weekend (.) yes (.) because I can’t go for longer. I can’t get away from my mum longer ((laughter)).

Henry: No (.) no.

Violeta: Or if I do (.) then she’s going to have to come with me. I can’t leave without her ((laughter)).

Henry: Yes (.) and then there’s your dad to think of.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What about your brother (.) then? Is he at uni at the moment (.) then?
Violeta: No (. ) my brother came=

Henry: =Is he here (. ) as well?

Violeta: Yes (. ) he came here two (. )

Henry: Oh. Yes (. ) because he’s four years younger. Of course he’s not still going to be at uni.

Violeta: He came here (. ) I think (. ) two years ago.

Henry: Right (. ) and is he in Sheffield as well (. ) now?

Violeta: Yes (. ) he’s living with me now.

Henry: Oh (. ) he’s living with you? Oh gosh (. ) sorry. I didn’t know that.

Violeta: He says until he’s finding a new place (. ) but it’s going to take a while for him to find a new place.

Henry: So (. ) a little bit like when you were with your sister. It’s the same sort of (. ) just until you settle in.

Violeta: Yes. Well (. ) that’s what he says (. ) but=

Henry: =Do you think he’ll end up staying (. ) then?

Violeta: Yes (. ) unless I kick him out ((laughter)).

Henry: Is he working at the moment?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: What’s he doing (. ) then?

Violeta: He’s in a factory (. ) but I can’t remember the name of the factory. Somewhere like ((name removed)) (. ) I don’t know the name of it.

Henry: Hopefully it’s warmer than the one you were working in.

Violeta: Yes (. ) yes (. ) because he only goes to work in a T-shirt.

Henry: Does he? Gosh. Mind you (. ) men and women do sometimes feel the heat differently (. ) don’t they? In my experience (. ) the office when I’m there I’m there in a short-sleeved shirt and I’m fine (. ) [and ((laughter))]

Violeta: [jumpers ((laughter))]}

Henry: There must be a body thing. We’re more padded or something. I can’t. So (. ) yes (. ) he’s working in a factory (. ) then (. ) presumably trying to save some money to move out (. ) then?

Violeta: Yes. Well (. ) he’s been saying that for the last two years.

Henry: ((laughter)) My brother’s like that. You know they’re not going to do it.

Violeta: Yes. Now he said to me (. ) because I said (. ) “When do you want to move out?” – “Oh (. ) when I find the right place.” – “So (. ) what do you want to do next?” – “Oh (. ) I’ve seen this new car I want.” – “Oh (. ) okay.” Obviously (. ) whatever he’s got (. ) any savings=

Henry: =He’s not going to live in the car (. ) then.
Violeta: No.

Henry: Because (.) I mean (.) obviously not thinking about moving out.

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: Oh. That just adds even more depth to the situation with your parents at home (.) then (.) because all the kids have moved here (.) in Sheffield. It seems almost like the natural step that they would come (.) as well.

Violeta: Yes. I think my mum (.) that’s what she’s expecting. Well (.) she can come and live with me if she wants. She’s not going to leave my dad behind.


Violeta: Yes. No (.) he’s not coming.

Henry: Oh.

Violeta: I even asked (.) I think it was (.) yes (.) last year (.) for Christmas (.) I asked them to come here (.) because my sister just had a second baby (.) and they’ve never seen my niece yet. So (.) I asked them to come for Christmas. I even offered to buy the tickets (.) but my dad said (.) “No. Buy the tickets if you want to (.) but I’m not coming.” So (.) my dad doesn’t even want to come here to see his granddaughter.

Henry: Gosh (.) and has the recent change with the movement not sort of shifted anything? As of January 2014 (.) you don’t have to get visas or anything like that anymore.

Violeta: No.

Henry: No (.) because you’d think=

Violeta: =Even when they came (.) yes. Before (.) what (.) 2014? It was last year?

Henry: I think it was (.) yes (.) 1st January.

Violeta: Oh (.) yes. There was an advert on TV about Romanians coming here and claiming benefits. I don’t know how many millions (.) and then on 1st January (.) everybody was waiting at the airport and only one came. That was a nice surprise.

Henry: Yes (.) Victor. Yes. I watched it very closely at the time. Is that something that sticks in your mind (.) as quite?

Violeta: Yes (.) because I had (.) well (.) not an argument. But one of the girls at the hospital (.) she was talking with somebody else (.) and I heard them. And I [laughed] (.) because I thought (.) “Well (.) you can talk. Just because I’m Romanian too doesn’t mean you have to change your view.” Then she was saying something about (.) “They’re coming here and claiming benefits.” I was like (.) “Well (.) I presume some of them (.) they do.” Then she said she saw in the newspaper (.) I think it’s the Sun (.) one of them (.) or the Daily (.) I don’t know. One of the newspapers.

Henry: A trustworthy one ((laughter))

Violeta: Yes (.) yes. Where even like for Romania (.) two flights (.) two flights at the same time because there are so many people who wanted to come. Not like (.) not even in a million years. The cost per ticket was somewhere around £1 (.)000. To actually have that amount of money in Romania to pay for a ticket (.) one way (.)
to go somewhere where you don’t know where you’re going (.) no job (.) no place to live (.) anywhere else (.) for £1 (.) 000. That’s not going to happen.

Henry: No.

Violeta: Nobody ever would pay that much. I mean (.) if you want to come over here for a better life (.) you can’t afford (.) first of all (.) to pay that much for a ticket.

Henry: Mm.

Violeta: And then (.) obviously (.) a week later (.) two weeks later (.) there was a newspaper article about the flight. And that flight actually was going to Dubai somewhere. Yes.

Henry: This is the thing (.) isn’t it?

Violeta: Yes.

Henry: It sounds like (.) it’s a very curious thing (.) isn’t it? Whether people that have read these things have thought about (.) like you said (.) the practical side of it. Like if someone could afford that flight (.) that could actually (.) you know (.) they don’t know where they’re going to. It makes it sound totally unattractive as an option (.) as opposed to the side you normally hear about (.) which is welfare (.) benefits.

Violeta: Yes (.) yes.

Henry: What about Nigel Farage? Because I suppose even if you don’t watch television (.) it’s the sort of thing that (.)

Violeta: No (.) I’ve seen him once. I don’t know anything about him (.) to be honest. I know he’s with the immigration (.) and I know he’s said something about (.) “What would you do if you lived next to a Romanian?” Or something like that. So (.) when I moved in the new house (.) I told my next door neighbour that I’m Romanian so she knows (.) before I get any windows smashed ((laughter)). No (.) she’s fine. She’s all right.

Henry: Mm (.) yes. How did that conversation feel? Presumably (.) you felt like you sort of had to tell them.

Violeta: Yes. It just feels like you can’t really live your life. I just feel like I have to tell everyone that (.) “Yes (.) I’m not British. Yes (.) I have been here for eight years.” It does feel a bit weird (.) because you have to explain yourself every time.

Henry: Mm (.) and you can bet that that person you’re telling has never had to do that. That’s the thing (.) isn’t it?

Violeta: You know (.) I could easily just say that I’m Polish. Probably that’s better. But then it’s like (.) why? I’m not Polish. I’m Romanian (.) so.

Henry: Yes. It’s a really powerful point you make (.) really. Like you say (.) you’ve not really heard a lot of Nigel Farage or whatever. Because obviously (.) I’m researching this (.) I’ve had to listen to a lot ((laughter)). But the sense that even though you’ve not seen that much of him (.) and yet those sorts of things that he’s done still have that impact. The thing he said was (.) “I would be worried (.) and you should be too (.) if a gang of Romanian men moved in next door.”

Violeta: Yes.
Henry: It’s a totally warped version of something that might have happened somewhere once. And in the end that’s sort of become the thing hasn’t it that people then become worried about?

Violeta: Before I moved into this house my landlady me and my brother we’d been to a party. No that’s well since he came. My landlady since my brother came when I met her “I’ve been to a party with my brother.” And then you can’t tell that my brother’s Romanian. He doesn’t have our accent. Everybody thinks he’s British. Don’t ask me why.

Henry: Really? Wow.

Violeta: I know and then she was talking to him to my brother thinking that he was my boyfriend. Then she asked him how long we’d been together and he just looked at her like “Well you don’t have to know we are brother and sister. I don’t have to explain my life.” Then she started saying that “She’s Romanian she came over here taking our jobs.” Well if you want to work get off your backside and go and work. She’s not working obviously. So whose job I took I don’t know because she’s never even tried to get a job.

Henry: No. It’s strange isn’t it that someone would be so protective about a job they’ve never applied for?

Violeta: Yes. Obviously after she found out he’s my brother it’s just kind of like “Oops.”

Henry: I wonder how the accent thing how people.

Violeta: Mm.

Henry: You say he’s been here for two years was it?

Violeta: Yes. I don’t know if it’s longer but I think it’s two years.

Henry: Mm. Accents are a funny thing aren’t they? Sometimes it can be really thick for people and never sort of go away. After 30 years they’ve still got the accent. Other people can just sort of pick it up as they go. It’s=

Violeta: =Yes. I’ve been here for eight years and I’ve still got my accent.

Henry: They are very strange things aren’t they? Let’s think. Have I got any more questions? I suppose the last thing I’d like to ask it’s quite a broad thing really about how you feel about obviously with Romania the UK France Germany they’re all part of the EU. What does being European mean to you? Does it have any sort of personal meaning?

Violeta: No.

Henry: You know with the recent Romania being part of the EU now and you can move around. Is it something that has any No=

Violeta: =No because it’s the first time I actually left home.

Henry: Yes.

Violeta: When I did move I came straight here.

Henry: [Yes I understand]and that You’ve answered it really haven’t you?
So to be honest, yes, because I didn’t get the chance to go anywhere else, to see how life is in other countries, so to me, it doesn’t make much difference. Well probably if you think about it, it does, because you needed to apply for a visa before to be able to come here. So yes in a way, it does. It does make a difference.

Mm the sense I suppose that it’s at least easier isn’t it?

Yes.

How long did you have to wait to get the visa to come through then?

No when I came here I didn’t need a visa. I came in 2007.

Of course yes.

When I came because I came here for a holiday and then when I came here it was allowed well you could come without a visa but you needed to apply for a permit.

Mm. Did it take you a long time to get the permit?

I don’t know.

Do you not remember?

No. I think yes about six months.

It took a while to come through?

Yes.

Yes. That’s the same story as I’m hearing across the board. People saying that it’s not hard to apply for it. They just take forever.

Yes ((laughter)).

And that is just the typical thing isn’t it with all this sort of like-? You know when you’re having to send these forms off it feels like forever you’re waiting for them.

Yes six months yes.

God six months. That must have been a day when you got it back. “Finally. About time.” ((laughter)).

Yes.

So I don’t know if there’s anything else you’d like to add anything else that you’d like to tell me about that I’ve not asked. I’ve just asked questions as I’ve gone along mainly but yes I don’t know if there’s anything else.

No unless you’ve got any more questions.

I don’t think so. I think we’ve more or less covered really the things I wanted to ask you. A lot of the things that you were saying I was trying to think of questions as we went because a lot of the things you were saying were sort of before and we were jumping around. But I think you’ve covered it. Really interesting stuff. I really appreciate your time. ((transcript ends))
Transcript 10: Gheorghe

10064 Henry: Put these on then. Right ( .) that's all sorted then. So ( .) we kick off then. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself then? In Sheffield at the moment. How long have you been living here then?

10067 Gheorghe: Right so ( .) I moved in Sheffield in September 2010 just because my wife decided to go to university and we had the choice in between Northampton ( .) Canterbury or Sheffield and we said ( .) "Yes ( .) Sheffield ( .) North England. We don't know anything about it ( .) let's just find out." I still remember ( .) we drove up on a weekend ( .) on a Saturday/Sunday ( .) rainy day and we said ( .) "Yes ( .) we like this city ( .) we move in."

10068 Henry: Right.

10069 Gheorghe: So ( .) next thing we just pack the lorry and we just came up.

10070 Henry: So it was largely shaped by=

10071 Gheorghe: =I mean ( .) largely it was shaped by my wife's decision that she wanted to carry on with her studies and you know ( .) I said ( .) "Yes ( .) you've got my full support ( .) make a loan ( .) we're going to try ( .)" even if it was a bit hard for me because I had to give up my job ( .) you know ( .) and start again around here.

10072 Henry: Yes. Where were you moving from at that point?

10073 Gheorghe: I was working for Morrisons at that point. A HGV driver. Maybe I better mention it ( .) you see ( .) I am a professional driver so I was working for them. I'd been promised ( .) sort of ( .) a transfer up to Wakefield which would have been helpful for me. You know ( .) at the last moment they said ( .) "Sorry ( .) there are no vacancies for you." So I'd be left jobless ( .) you know ( .) with the student loan to cover then=

10074 Henry: =How did you meet that then? Have you found another job doing something else then?

10075 Gheorghe: Yes ( .) I found some agency work ( .) just one day here ( .) one day there. But after- in January actually ( .) I found the job where I am today. I've been in that company five years now ( .) we are very happy. Fingers crossed.

10076 Henry: Yes ( .) so you're still doing the driving now?

10077 Gheorghe: Yes ( .) I am. I don't think I'll give up very soon to be honest ( .) because you don't need a degree for it and it's quite well-paid. ((laughter))

10078 Henry: Yes and I suppose that's the thing ( .) isn't it? Like you said ( .) it ( .) sort of ( .) has to suit your lifestyle as well ( .) doesn't it?

10079 Gheorghe: Not really. It's not really what I wanted to be ( .) to be honest ( .) in my life. It was just a moment decision ( .) when actually the decision ( .) I took it when I was in England ( .) you know ( .) I was in London. Me and my wife ( .) we were just at the beginning of our relation ( .) not married yet ( .) you know. One of my friends ( .) "Oh ( .) your driving is actually good ( .) why don't you become a professional one? You know ( .) you can earn so much money." I said ( .) "Yes ( .) wow ( .) that's a good idea." I just took it on ( .) you know. When I first came to England in 2003 ( .) I had absolutely no skills ( .) nothing. I was just me and a little bag. Now we have a mortgage ( .) a house ( .) a car ( .) a lifestyle ( .) friends.

10080 Henry: Come a long way.
Gheorghe: Yes.

Henry: If you could let me pick that apart-

Gheorghe: Yes (.) maybe I was a bit too quick.

Henry: No (.) it's fine (.) it's a good story (.) because of course we can get lost in some of the details so it's good to have that. It's fine. 2003 then.


£50 a week and that was all the money.

Henry: Yes and so you were living with the family?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) I was live in au pair (.) you know (.) taking care of the kids. Absolutely loved the family in South London in Croydon. Two little boys. Had to take them to school (.) make them tea and it was funny because our English in Romania (.) what we learn in school (.) it's not the British English (.) it's maybe the American one. I had no idea what tea means (.) yes? So boys coming (.) first day of school (.) coming home and they expect tea from me and I make tea. Pots (.) proper tea (.) fruit teas. They are looking at me (.) "We're hungry (.) we want tea." I said (.) "Well (.) if you want tea (.) just drink it." The lady comes home (.) "I don't understand your boys (.) they don't speak English. They asked me to make tea (.) I made tea (.) you know (.) they're disappointed." She started explaining (.) "Oh (.) sorry (.) what we mean by tea is that" you know. "Oh right (.) okay."

Henry: It is one of those silly old words (.) isn't it?=

Gheorghe: The thing is (.) you don't know the habits of the people and I think this is how you learn actually.

Henry: Even in my family (.) my parents would say tea (.) but then they mean dinnertime but then my grandparents say tea and they mean lunchtime.

Henry: There's different ways.

Gheorghe: I'm still confused anyway. It's one thing which I can't pick it up simply.

Henry: No (.) just trying to stay away from the word. So you're an au pair. How long were you doing that for then?

Gheorghe: I've done it for about six months nearly (.) after I decided to move out of the family. I had their full support but I just wanted to help my own life (.) you know.

Henry: I moved out (.) I've been self-employed (.) working everywhere until 2005 when I had to go home (.) unfortunately (.) for a two year break. I'm not very proud of that because I was naughty but that's it.

Henry: I see (.) so it was to do with Visa side of things?

Gheorghe: With the Visa side of things. I mean (.) it was a very stupid decision. I decided to overstay the Visa (.) you know. Obviously (.) being too honest (.) after three weeks I was caught (.) straight away.

Henry: That's sometimes-

Gheorghe: It's a funny story (.) you know. For somebody who has been deported and my wife now is actually an immigration officer and now I'm a British citizen. How life is turning.
Henry: You've sort of seen all the different things there is to know.

Gheorghe: Yes. I still remember the days when the guys came there and said (.) "Wow (.) sorry we have to arrest you now (.) you're such a nice guy and you've done absolutely nothing (.) you're so innocent and so stupid." They told me (.) "Why didn't you move simply? You could have avoided all this." But maybe it was a good thing to helping (.) you know. I've learnt my lesson. I said (.) "Yes (.) the legal way (.) the safe way is the best." Sometimes you have to learn the hard way.

Henry: Yes (.) the mistakes. It's a very sagely wise thing to look back and think-

Gheorghe: As I say (.) it might have been a very good thing because this has helped what's strengthen our relation between me and [(name removed)]. You see (.) I met ((name removed)) only one day before being arrested and deported.

Henry: Really?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) only one evening.

Henry: Wow. What was the situation there then? Was it just in a pub somewhere or sort of (.) out with friends?

Gheorghe: No. ((name removed)) also came in 2005 as an au pair (.) you see. She was only 18 at the time and she just came here also with her little bag and you know (.) full of hopes and dreams and everything. She didn't know anyone. She started emailing people. All the London Romanians au pairs. At that time (.) we had very few Romanians in UK. I was only one to answer and I decided almost certainly (.) "I will rent a car and I'll come and meet you (.)" because she was living somewhere near Luton Airport. I had to drive all the way up here (.) I took her down to London. I show her London for the day. In the morning I was arrested.

Henry: Wow.

Gheorghe: We didn't see each other until next Christmas when she decided to visit Romania.

Henry: If you don't mind me asking (.) was there a connection when you met?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) straight away. The moment I have seen her I knew (.) she's going to be my wife (.) whatever's going to happen.

Henry: Wow (.) well that's fantastic. Also (.) bittersweet.

Gheorghe: I think we are off subject now.

Henry: No. If you don't want to talk about it (.) that's absolutely fine. It's just this sense that I suppose (.) the day before and you're obviously having to go back to Romania. Did you have to wait a certain period?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) I mean I was in the removal centre for about two weeks.

Henry: What was that experience like?

Gheorghe: It wasn't too bad (.) don't worry.

Henry: You hear stories (.) don't you (.) about some of these places=

Gheorghe: =You see this on television. I was there (.) I experienced it myself. You get fed (.) you have a proper warm place to sleep. No problem. They're just waiting for the next flight. That's all. Nobody rude (.) nobody's pushing you (.) calling you nasty things (.) no (.) not at all.
Henry: So it's just a matter of waiting 'til the next flight? Did you have to wait back in Romania until a certain period had expired to reapply for a Visa then?

Gheorghe: Yes. I didn't want to apply for a new Visa because I knew for sure that we join the European Union so that's it it's no problem.

Henry: So you just waited until that period started.

Gheorghe: Yes. I mean in a way back there I said "You know what if I done a mistake at least I will go into study" so I joined university in Romania. But come 2007 oops. Both me and ((name removed)) we're actually students and we just left. Let's go back to England it's a better life there. We both know so.

Henry: Yes so it's interesting because from what you're saying a lot of these experiences you have they seem quite entwined with what ((name removed)) wanted to do. Not in terms of just what she wants but you were very much focused on doing it as a couple.

Gheorghe: Well I mean when I first came going back to 2003 I came very determined to England to make a life for me. I don't know open up my own business or you know full of dreams everything. For sure I wanted a better a life. I made higher aspirations that's all. I just simply really like it. I said "I will give everything to go back to England" which I'm very happy I've done it and I'm really happy now here.

Henry: Yes. I suppose it's that moment when you first arrived though it must have been quite a big thing to take in.

Gheorghe: Oh yes every day you know I was opening my mouth it was a surprise coming out. Everybody's looking to me "Are you crazy? You don't know where you live." I was looking at the houses I was not custom with this British thing. Houses are quite smallish compared to other countries and everything. I was "Oh people must be very nice if they have very little fences and houses are so close to each other" you know? How do you know it's actually short of space and everything? It's all these shocks. As the story with the tea and you know.

Henry: Were you quite keen on sort of chatting to people and getting to know different people=

Gheorghe: =Oh yes. I mean Monday to Friday obviously I had to take care of the house and the kids and the boys. All the weekends I was in central London. All the museums and everything you know? Every week and I had a plan I want to see that I want to see that I want to do that and I want to learn as much as possible about people culture and everything. I discovered all museums and I feel "Oh my god it's an open ticket" you know.

Henry: That must have been quite a good experience to just immerse yourself in-

Gheorghe: Plus you know weekends where we could all au pairs had different addresses from different au pairs. When we could just meet three four of us five of us and go together and visit things. This is how I started to discover the country the people habits customs.

Henry: What about with the two boys you were looking after? Did you find that you were learning quite a lot from them as well then?

Gheorghe: Oh yes.

Henry: That must have been quite
Gheorghe: =It was very nice.

Henry: How old are they?

Gheorghe: I think Toby (.) he's 18 now or something like that. I think he was 3½ and the other boy was 6. He was just starting school.

Henry: Wow (.) so you sort of=

Gheorghe: =They were alright. They were very nice. I mean (.) the older boy is studying at Warwick University. He's studying maths.

Henry: Maths? He's clearly a clever guy then.

Gheorghe: He's a very clever boy (.) yes. The little one (.) I think he's still in college or something like that. He's very into rugby.

Henry: Into rugby. Let me just=

Gheorghe: =(sorry off topic)

Henry: No (.) no (.) it's absolutely fine. Sometimes the questions aren't always nicely married over. What about before you came to the UK? Did you know anything about what the UK was like (.) before you came as an au pair?

Gheorghe: I mean (.) general things mostly (.) you know. Seventh economy in the world (.) ex-colonial power (.) fifth military power in the world. All these general things (.) nothing else. Very general things (.) not something particular about it. The thing about England (.) I always imagine there are old ladies and gentlemen and they are all polite and nice. The moment I saw people shouting (and swearing) I said (.) "Well that's not very English (.) isn't it?"

Henry: That's interesting because (.) I suppose something else like what you were saying what you're taught in schools (.) is different to what you're=

Gheorghe: =For somebody who's never been to England (.) you have a very good image. I mean (.) I had a very good image about England which when I first came in (.) the first two weeks (.) a little bit started to fall apart (.) you know? I said (.) "Oh (.) that's not the real England I read in newspapers and magazines or in history books especially." I'm very passionate about history. I love history absolutely.

Henry: Something we have in common.

Gheorghe: Oh yes. Good.

Henry: That's something I'm trying to do. I've been trying to do in recent times is learn my Romanian history. I'm still trying to put the pieces together because there's quite a lot going on (.) isn't there?

Gheorghe: That's complicated.

Henry: It's definitely an interesting thing when you say about how knowing so much about- you said you knew the basic things about the country.

Gheorghe: Yes (.) basically it's a tough country (.) people are very hardworking and people can endure a lot. Sorry (.) I'm nearly swearing now (.) this is my colleagues from work.

Henry: There's no problem with swearing. It's only me that's going to be transcribing this.
Gheorghe: You mean from second world war and all these sacrifices and all this
determination and (...) "Oh (...) let's fight for something we believe in." That says
something about people. The fabric of these people. You are a tough nation. I'm
really happy I'm part of it now.

Henry: Yes (...) you were saying you're a British citizen. So you've gone through the
ceremony and all the rest of it then?

Gheorghe: Yes.

Henry: What was all that like for you then?

Gheorghe: It was emotional. Obviously (...) it was not the part of history on the questions
because it was very simple (...) very basic. It was more emotional. I really felt (...)
"Yes (...) I am part of something I believe in now." I'm really happy that I'm part of
it. Other people or friends of myself (...) I would not apply for the city transfer
because I feel I'm Romanian but I keep trying (...) "Wait you live here (...) your life is
here after all (...) why don't you want to be part of this? Let's try to make it better for
everybody." Because given or not (...) if you're not British (...) you cannot vote. you
don't have a thing to say about it. As much as you complain that the country's not
run well.

Henry: You still retained your Romanian citizenship as well then (...) so you've got the dual
nationality?

Gheorghe: Yes. Even if I'm thinking to give up the Romanian one because it's absolutely
useless at the moment.

Henry: I suppose then (...) if the UK leaves the EU (...) that's something that=

Gheorghe: =It wouldn't bother me to be honest. I will always be Romanian. I cannot deny
that. I was born there (...) isn't it so?

Henry: Yes. Really interesting. Do you go back to Romania very often?

Gheorghe: We haven't been to Romania for nearly two years now. We are going this year for
two weeks (...) just because we have a wedding (...) a friend of us.

Henry: I see (...) so you'll be going just for that sort of a period.

Gheorghe: Mostly our parents (...) my sister (...) my niece (...) they are travelling quite often.
Nowadays (...) we use Facebook (...) phones (...) internet (...) whatever (...) it's easy to
communicate with (...) you know=

Henry: =So are they in (...) sort of (...) other parts of Europe as well or are they further
afield?

Gheorghe: No (...) my parents (...) they live at home. They are passionals. My niece is actually
coming in September. She's going to study at ((university)).

Henry: Something about Sheffield (...) isn't there?

Gheorghe: Well (...) it was her choice. She wants to study this aeroplanes and physics and I
don't know what. She's a very clever girl. I think it's something very good for this
country (...) if she's coming.

Henry: Definitely. I mean the amount of (...) when it comes to maths.=

Gheorghe: =She had an interview for Cambridge also but she failed it.
Henry: So many people try (.) don't they? I mean (.) I know so many people that tried to apply and it's tough.

Gheorghe: She was invited for an interview which it is something.

Henry: That is a massive achievement in itself.

Gheorghe: I told her (.) "Don't cry (.) be very proud about it (.) you are one of those 1000 or how many there were but you're part of them (.)" you know?

Henry: That's really interesting then (.) because it must be nice for you to be looking forward to- even if you're just visiting for a time to go back and at least see friends?

Gheorghe: All my friends (.) most of them (.) either living in Germany (.) Spain (.) Italy (.) USA (.) Canada (.) they've all left. Even my cousins and everybody. I mean (.) from my family (.) it's only the elderly left. Parents (.) aunts (.) uncles (.) that's all.

Henry: Do you think perhaps the European (.) sort of (.) side of things has just accelerated that?

Gheorghe: I think the fact that the European Union it's simply large so quickly and so massively (.) it was not the very best thing to happen (.) maybe (.) you know? Maybe all these things should have been a bit slower (.) you know? If it had been (.) I wouldn't be here maybe but it was a bit too much for people. It was too a sudden change. The way I see it (.) is one generation left there with their mentalities and the other one (.) us (.) under 40 (.) still making a new life here and being totally detached from what's happening. I don't know what's happening there anymore. I'm not in touch with reality. I mean I go home to Romania (.) me and (name removed) (.) and it's not only me even (.) both of us (.) we feel foreigners.

Henry: I can remember (name removed) talking about that. She can't remember how much (.) to who and when.

Gheorghe: There's all these little things that (.) you know (.) and living here and having all these mentalities and all these people (.) now you are really annoyed. Why do I have to bribe you? Why do I have to pay you £10 or £5 (.) just to let me go? I don't understand. I start driving and it develops. They try to explain (.) "Hey (.) we are on little wages (.) this is how we make money." I said (.) "Well (.) it's not right (.) isn't it?" It's just simply not right.

Henry: Yes.

Gheorghe: So I don't really feel at home in Romania at all. That's why we don't visit so often.

Henry: I mean (.) understandably. It sounds like it's very clear in your mind how the country's divided in terms of people that want to move and make a life for themselves and those that have stayed.

Gheorghe: People are looking knowing that you're coming from UK (.) or from Spain or from Italy (.) you know? You're coming there just to visit for a while. They are looking strangely to you. They say (.) "Ah (.) you're the one from the west with the money and everything (.) you came here just to show off." The reality is not here. We really work hard here to make a living and afford the lifestyle we have (.) after all.
Henry: From what you're saying (. ) you're living the quintessential British life now (. ) aren't you? Being married and with property=

Gheorghe: =Yes (. ) I have a mortgage (. ) I have a second-hand car and what else (. ) a job (. ) that's all. I'm not a millionaire (. ) definitely (. ) as they imagine maybe.

Henry: Yes. That's part of thing. That's something I'd like to ask you about. Do you ever experience then- you said you do I suppose (. ) but how often do you experience this sense of people having stereotypes or having ideas about what you're like?

Gheorghe: I was the same about it. In my first years (. ) when I came here (. ) I thought (. ) "Everybody's rich." I mean (. ) not really (. ) because you get a bit of sense of how is it balanced (. ) but I was expecting people to be richer maybe. Having more money (. ) not more money (. ) more disposable income for little things. Afford a better holiday (. ) better car or larger house. But living here year after year (. ) I realise now (. ) how hard it is after all. It's not really a paradise. Yes (. ) it's a paradise if you make it for yourself (. ) if you work hard for it (. ) but this is what we have to learn about.

Henry: Yes. I suppose that's something- is it the case for you when you're talking to people (. ) that don't necessarily know anything (. ) maybe they've never met who's Romanian (. ) or at least got a history with Romania and then moved here (. ) that you're having to tell them (. ) "No (. ) this is what-"?

Gheorghe: This is the reality (. ) yes. Give them a cold shower (. ) you know (. ) because they think (. ) "Yes (. ) we come here yes (. ) and there will be a job for me waiting (. ) there will be a house fully furnished and rented (. ) we just have to move in." It's not really like that.

Henry: There's some powerful ideas behind some of this (. ) isn't there? I don't know if you watch The Romanians Are Coming?

Gheorghe: Oh (. ) I watched one.

Henry: You've watched a bit of it.

Gheorghe: One little episode. It was simply disgusting to be honest. They just simply showed the wars. No offence to anybody but I can take you on the housing estate and I think the state of the housing is even worse than Romania. If we have a stroll on the Romanian Black Sea on the coast (. ) I think we are going to find more Lamborghinis (. ) Maseratis and luxury cars than ever in Britain. It's a very big divide there (. ) very rich people and the poor people. And those like they showed on the programme (. ) the gypsies (. ) they're actually minority and they're just simply being pushed to the side by the society. Everybody says (. ) "Now you are criminals and you don't deserve anything." They being forced to live in those accommodations and everything.

Henry: It seems like there's a lot missing in some of the programmes and some of the ways that things are being talked about.

Gheorghe: They don't. It was not the essence. They didn't show the middle class Romanian life. I don't know. Maybe my sister for example. She's a teacher at home. She has a very normal life (. ) like me here in Britain. A mortgage (. ) a house (. ) a job (. ) that's all. They didn't show this class which can read the newspaper (. ) they know who Nietzsche was maybe or Peter [Lowry]. I would expect to show a bit more educated people. I mean (. ) not people with graduate students and things like this (. ) but it is the working class or the middle class (. ) or people like me for example.
I meet Romanian drivers everywhere where I go and they speak English all of them (.) or French or Spanish.

Henry: Yes. Something that has been said previously is that there's a motive behind showing the sorts of things they were showing (.) like on that programme (.) because it's sensational. It's (.) sort of (.) so dramatic.

Gheorghe: To be honest (.) I think (.) there is an interest from some people to fuel up this immigration issue. The elections are coming (.) isn't it? It's very sellable (.) isn't it? That's going to count for votes (.) after all.

Henry: Something that was said to me (.) that I felt quite - is (.) I don't know to what extent you identify with this but they'll say (.) "Well look (.) they're not looking at my life (.) but why would they? It's not interesting (.) I'm just normal like everyone else." There's that sense of showing the very worst or the very dramatic or the poverty and all that. All the negative side but without showing anything else. It's just strange isn't it (.) to think that there could be so much that has been missed?

Gheorghe: I think TV companies and everybody (.) they just want to make money and as you say (.) it's sensational (.) yes (.) they will sell. Everybody will watch it. People that have watched it (.) they ask me (.) "Ah (.) you're Romanian." I say (.) "Yes (.) do I look like them or what's the problem?" They couldn't comprehend (.) you know?

Henry: Do you follow the news here or newspapers?

Gheorghe: I watch BBC News every single evening.

Henry: So you are quite engaged with this sort of stuff?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) I read the Guardian (.) the Independent and what else I have? The BBC I have on my tablet.

Henry: You're exposed then to quite a lot of the (.) sort of (.) Nigel Farage type stuff all the time then really?

Gheorghe: Oh yes.

Henry: How do you feel about things like that then? It's almost synonymous (.) isn't it (.) when those things are talked about?

Gheorghe: On one hand (.) he's got some very good ideas and he makes a few points (.) yes (.) which I totally agree (.) even as an immigrant (.) I absolutely agree with him. Yes (.) we have to do something about it. We can't just simply leave all the doors open and let everybody come in (.) you know? It has to be a selection after all. Even in this world (.) there is a natural selection. We have to try to find a balance. I know it's hard. We are talking about people here (.) not animals in the jungle (.) fighting each other and the best survives or the strongest. He makes a point after all. We have to admit it (.) as a country. We are under strain (.) NHS is under strain (.) there is not enough money for everything. We can't just simply nurse everyone. That's true. We have to start looking ourselves (.) first of all.

Henry: Yes (.) it's quite a big thing then really (.) because you're seeing there is perhaps something that you see behind his argument that is more reasonable than=

Gheorghe: =There is a reasonable thing behind it (.) but it's the way he's presenting it maybe (.) is not right. It's there for (.) he knows who for that 15% which (.) he knows they will vote for him. This is what he has to do it. After all his wife is German.

Henry: That's the irony of it (.) yes. I think his heritage is in France.
Farage: yes. Doesn't really sound English.

Henry: No.

Gheorghe: It's more French for me.

Henry: Yes, it's quite funny really. When you think about the sort of things that he says and compared to them what he relies on in his day to day life about his kids speaking German and he doesn't mind that. But then he said something about hearing a different language on a bus and that's a bad thing.

Henry: Can I just ask a question about language?

Gheorghe: Obviously you've picked up a lot of your English you say when you moved because of the accent differences. Do you find that you're still speaking a lot of Romanian here?

Gheorghe: Yes, I speak with ((name removed)) in Romanian. Mainly in the house. Usually when we go out to friends and there is always a foreigner I mean somebody who doesn't speak Romanian we immediately switch to English. So most of our language is in the pub or when we're out it's all English based unless we are all Romanians and it's only our group. But we don't want to feel anyone embarrassed.

Henry: It's just a thing I thought because I suppose the idea you can mix and match. You must be=

Gheorghe: =Yes I have a tendency even at home to talk to ((name removed)) in English sometimes. I know it's annoying for her. She hates it.

Henry: Does she?

Gheorghe: Yes she hates it. I don't know why. Sometimes I find it easier to say nice things to her in English. She's like "Ah no why don't you speak why don't you?" - "Well it sounds better in English."

Henry: Ah. That's interesting because it's something that- I mean I'm not bilingual so I'm purely speaking English and it's a shame for me to say that really in a way because the idea of being able to speak and think in different languages it's just an interesting dynamic that you're describing there. Being able to say different things in different languages. In some things it sounds better=

Gheorghe: =I mean me and ((name removed)) maybe I shouldn't tell you about we are actually from Hungarian heritage. I speak perfect Hungarian. I was seven years old when I learned Romanian.

Henry: Right.

Gheorghe: You see my grandparents they were Hungarians.
Henry: I see.

Gheorghe: ((name removed)) is Hungarian. Actually her name (.) ((name)) (.) that's her maiden name (.) it's purely Hungarian name.

Henry: Right. Okay then. Did she (.) I'm trying to=

Gheorghe: I don't think she mentioned it because she hates when people tell her (.) "Oh no (.) you're actually Hungarian."

Henry: And she'll say (.) "No (.) I'm Romanian."

Gheorghe: She'll say (.) "No (.) no (.) I'm Romanian."

Henry: Yes.

Gheorghe: She's very strong about it (.) she feels very Romanian.

Henry: Are you both from a similar part of Romania?

Gheorghe: Yes. From Moldavia (.) from Eastern Moldavia.

Henry: Moldavia (.) yes. So there would have been some movement across. Transylvania's the bit that borders with Hungary isn't it?

Gheorghe: No (.) it doesn't border with Transylvania. That's something to do with the 18th century actually. You know (.) when it was Austro-Hungarian Empire. Apparently our ancestors (.) they supposed to do border guards and they refused so they had to run away (.) because they refused. They had been punished by death so they crossed the border into Romania. That time it was part of Ottoman Empire probably. (.) they just settled there. If you look along the borders (.) you'll find Hungarian communities like ours which we are Catholics and we speak a very old form of Hungarian actually. It's not Hungarian what we speak (.) it's called Csango. We are about 80 (.)000 left nowadays. We are dying out very quickly. The language. It's not a written language.

Henry: Oh (.) I see. An oral tradition.

Gheorghe: If I go to Budapest and I speak as my grandmother used to speak (.) they wouldn't understand what I'm saying (.) but it sounds Hungarian.

Henry: Wow. Quite sad then really.

Gheorghe: I speak with my mother-in-law and my father-in-law. We speak Csango. ((name removed)) is very annoyed because she can't understand.

Henry: ((laughter)) There's not enough commonality between Romanian and Csango to sort of get-?

Gheorghe: No (.) two different cultures.

Henry: They are just different.

Gheorghe: I mean (.) Romanians (.) they are mainly Orthodox. 99% of them. In Romania (.) if you are Catholic (.) you're either from German descendant (.) Hungarian or anything else (.) but definitely not Romanian.

Henry: It's so interesting isn't it (.) because it sort of sometimes Romanian oversimplifies a lot of more subtle things like what you were saying (.) having that link with Hungary.
Gheorghe: Think about British India. Yes. Colonial times. They were altogether isn't it? Mostly Hindus and Christians and once you it's just divided okay? Let's get them work hard because anyway they will kill each other.

Henry: From what I've been told it's sort of similarly in a sense in Romania because you're the Moldavian region the Transylvanian region then you've got sort of the in the south. Different sorts of regions with different accents and different=

Gheorghe: Well it's like different accents but it's not like here. They will understand very well. Transylvanians they are a bit more different but this has to do with the German heritage. Habsburg Empire and everything. Austrians. That's why they. Maybe that's why they are more developed. They are really harder working people than all the rest.

Henry: It sounds like as well even with the language because Romanian's a romance language isn't it?

Gheorghe: Latin language yes.

Henry: There's a lot of commonality with a lot of other European sort of-

Gheorghe: Yes. French Spanish Italian. If somebody will talk in Italian I will at least 60% I will understand. It's no problem. It's very little. So many I just I will say "bună seara". That's Italian. Bună seara that's Romanian. It's absolutely no different=

Henry: =try very hard.

Gheorghe: It's the way how much you open your mouth probably.

Henry: Do you think that's a lot to do with why a lot of people move there?

Gheorghe: Yes. It's easy to pick up the language first of all. It's liking people you know. They are welcoming. Let's put it like that. They are more welcoming.

Henry: Have you visited anywhere else in Europe or has it just been the UK?

Gheorghe: Oh yes. I lived in Germany for one year. I was an au pair there when I was very young.

Henry: Oh I see.

Gheorghe: When I was 19 actually or 20. I was 20 actually. That was my first au pair experience. That's why actually I decided to be an au pair in England also because I knew what is it. I learned German there. It was very good. It was a nice experience.

Henry: So very much sort of set you up for the sorts of things that you might want to move to in the future then. That's why you chose the UK then.

Gheorghe: I didn't like Germany. I wouldn't go back there.

Henry: Why was that then?

Gheorghe: I wouldn't go to live there. People were very cold. Very cold and very "No you are from outside you don't belong to us that's it."

Henry: Wow.
Gheorghe: They will show you that when I didn't have that feeling with English people. If I went to a pub they said "Yes mate you want a pint? Where are you from? Your accent is different." No straight away that wouldn't happen in a pub in Germany.

Henry: Wow. It's interesting because I mean the impression you get is that Germany is more welcoming.

Gheorghe: No.

Henry: It's in the way it's talked about here that's the impression I get. Interesting=

Gheorghe: I just remember one thing when I mean it might be that I was just running out because there it was again and I just talked to the family and I said "Well what about staying another three months here if I go and ask for an extension of my Visa?" They said "Yes just go to the immigration bureau and see what they say." I went there and I asked the lady "Sorry," in perfect German because I learned German very well and she looked at me and was like you know I was hitting her with hammers. I said "What?" "You ask for an extension to stay more in Germany?" She couldn't understand not the question how I dare to ask that you know?

Henry: That must've been really quite awkward for you.

Gheorghe: That's why when I hear Germany now I say "No thank you." Not a very welcoming place for me.

Henry: I can't imagine how awkward that would feel with someone.

Gheorghe: Awful. We have friends German friends here in Sheffield and they are absolutely different people. It's the young generation maybe. I think it all has to do with certain ages. You see for example my father after the revolution he actually carried his job out at one point he was made redundant because his company shut down. He couldn't understand that he needs to write a CV to go and apply for a job. For 40 years he has been in a secure communist job. He can't have this change. He's too old. He can't accept it. That's his group age he will die as it is. There's no chance to change him. Nothing in the world.

Henry: What was your experience growing up? My maths isn't great.

Gheorghe: Well I was 12 when the revolution happened so I could understand some certain things what happened there.

Henry: Yes so you would have been brought for a lot of your childhood then in that sort of regime then?

Gheorghe: Oh yes. I was. I was in communist camps and everything and I steer clear of remembering them but for me it was a very good experience. It was a sense of organisation. People knew what they expected from them and we knew what's happening. When after the revolution and all this Western culture and all these Western habits just simply came on us and we're not used to them it was a bit strange. People started to pick up all the bad habits from Western drugs prostitution and all these things rather than take the good things.

Henry: It sounds like it had quite a profound effect on people then.

Gheorghe: Oh yes.
Henry: And not necessarily for the best (.) even though (.) you’d think of it as being a good thing.

Gheorghe: This is what (.) as I said before (.) European Union enlarged too quickly for some people. It should have been done in stages. Let people accommodate the idea. You can't just simply change it. The way I remember it (.) when I was maybe 10 years old (.) my father (.) if we're old army we have to go to find the Germans and the British and all the French and everything. They are our enemies. That was in our heads (.) because we are under the Soviet rule (.) let's say. I mean (.) you are the enemies (.) we are the good guys. You knew probably different. You are the good guys (.) we are the enemies. That was Cold War after all. Suddenly you wanted to change (.) you know (.) it's a bit strange.

Henry: It must have been quite (.) at 12 (.) what was it like then with all those things changing? Did you find yourself changing the way you thought about it or did you find it quite (.) just strange and new?

Gheorghe: I was happy (.) I was a child. I was 12 years old anyway. I was happy because people around me (.) they were happy. I remember my grandparents (.) they couldn't believe it today (.) just say (.) "Oh no (.) what's going to happen? What a revolution (.) Ceaușescu's dead?" They couldn't understand.

Henry: It all happened so fast (.) didn't it?

Gheorghe: Everything so fast.

Henry: Within a few days. It was a kangaroo court (.) wasn't it (.) or something like that and he was executed (.) wasn't he?

Gheorghe: Yes. I know people were very cheerful for the first couple of years but after (.) they started to realise that all this change is not really so easy to apply. The mentality's at home in the 90s (.) they were used to the old system. You have a job (.) it's secure. Nobody's going to make you redundant. For example (.) my father (.) he never had to apply for a job or go and ask for a mortgage to buy a house. No (.) it was everything given because that was the system (.) yes? So for him (.) it was very hard. "I need to go to find a job (.) I need to go for an interview first of all. Write a CV."

Henry: Yes (.) so in many ways then (.) it sounds like (.) at least as far as your dad's experience went (.) it was actually bad thing because it meant a lot more uncertainty and a lot more unfamiliar things.

Gheorghe: In communist era (.) you had a secure future. It didn't matter if the economy is good or bad (.) you have a job. It didn't matter if you go to the factory that day and there's nothing to do for you. You get your wages. It's not like production or demand. It's not this Western type of economy which is fuelled by demand after all.

Henry: Definitely yes. That's something that obviously you've moved to. Obviously it had changed when you were in Romania still but (.) I mean (.) it's the UK and hourly based pay and agency work. What was your experience of doing all those things?

Gheorghe: No (.) because even when I was- my grandfather's head of house on a very small plot of land (.) so I was quite used to do work. I wasn't running away from hard work. It was no issue for us.

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Henry: No, but I suppose from the point of view of with agency work you don't necessarily know what hours you're going to get.

Gheorghe: You see, I never worked in the communist hours. I was a child. I never get wages from there. I can't really compare it.

Henry: No, that's fair enough.

Gheorghe: When I was first in employment that was here.

Henry: Yes, I understand. I appreciate what you're saying. I suppose I meant in the sense that just ideas you might have experienced you've seen parents working.

Gheorghe: No. Just what I can remember as a child. Sometimes I think also I try to understand people. I don't judge them because I know what they feel. I mean they have things which I know I have seen them with my eyes. I can't blame the older guys' knowledge they just simply can't understand this world.

Henry: It's a hard thing to do, isn't it? For anyone.

Gheorghe: It is. It's much like maybe us going I don't know I don't want to give a bad example let's go maybe move to Pakistan tomorrow. It's a totally different society. It's going to be hard for us to accept that way of living maybe which for them it's their lifestyle it's something very normal.

Henry: It sounds like you feel like when you were saying at the start you feel like you've made the transition moving here to a different way of doing things really well. You feel part of it.

Gheorghe: I was lucky because I was very very young when all this transition happened. I simply caught up with it slowly slowly.

Henry: How do you feel about the way that at least in a broad sense in the way the newspapers or whatever talk about Romanian migration here then?

Gheorghe: I am a bit disappointed. They all portray these gypsies and all these people maybe coming here just to claim benefits maybe which I don't think it's so real. I never claimed benefits in this country never ever. Even if I was entitled to them, I didn't bother. I prefer to go for interview and wait until the phone is ringing. At first I don't understand the young English boys "Well there are no jobs." When I came here I had no work permit nothing. I found a job straight away. How is that possible you know? I don't understand this. Most of people I look at them I can sense that thing you know looking to me and say "You're here to steal my jobs" and everything. Well you know what I tell them I'm here to be part of this society. I didn't come here to change you guys the way you live or change who you are. I came here to be part of what you are first of all. This is what I'm trying to do. I don't think they get it to be honest. I try to respond "Look I'm British like you guys my accent will be different I cannot change that." Even if I need to be reborn probably you know. That's going to stay with me for the rest of my life. Trust me I'm part of what you are now. I'm not trying to change you from inside or anything like that.

Henry: It sounds like you've had a few instances where despite having British nationality you've had this sort of-
Gheorghe: Oh (.) the best thing at work (.) I'm with this company for five years. I still go to colleagues from the first day they know me (.) they go (.) "Oh ((Gheorghe)) the Polish guy from Romania." That says everything (.) isn't it?

Henry: Polish guy?

Gheorghe: From Romania (.) yes. Well (.) that's a lot to do with geography. This is how they picture me. I was the only foreigner in this company for nearly three years. Now my brother-in-law is also working for the same company (.) so we're two.

Henry: What's your response to that (.) when they say things like that?= I take it as a joke (.) nothing else. I'm really not offended about it.

Henry: You do come across in that way (.) that you're quite easy-going.

Gheorghe: I've got where people ask (.) "When are you going back?" "Oh (.) where was I? Back where (.) to Barnsley (.) Sheffield (.) where?" Where do they want me to go? Usually I answer (.) "Where are you from?" I say (.) "I'm from Japan (.) I'm Japanese."

Henry: What do they say to that? I understand something like a million Eastern European or at least a million Polish workers in the first years (.) well that's a lot isn't it?

Gheorghe: You have too many opinions.

Henry: You have too many opinions.

Gheorghe: Yes (.) I mean even the Polish guys or the Lithuanians or Slavics. They've been here before us (.) that's the thing (.) because obviously from 2004 when they joined (.) straight away they could come and take jobs. A lot of them came. That's why there's all this stigma for Eastern European. Now it doesn't matter if you are only Romanian and Bulgarian (.) you are actually the latest country to join and we are not so many in numbers like the Polish guys with everybody. That's the stigma. It was far too much. I understand something like a million Eastern European or at least a million Polish workers in the first years (.) well that's a lot isn't it?

Henry: Yes (.) I mean it is quite complicated. I think it might even be two million (.) but then some have since moved back (.) so I think it is more like a million that have actually stayed. The counting's not very good from what I can gather. They don't really-

Gheorghe: You have too many opinions.

Henry: Yes (.) definitely. It sort of stands out as a stigma (.) as you say (.) that it's just an idea that's stuck over time and it's still=

Gheorghe: =What I remember (.) when I first came in 2003 (.) the people were not so worried and it's been nearly 12 years now. I mean (.) the way I have the picture of the English guys when I first came (.) no worries (.) every Friday (.) Saturday (.) pubs were absolutely full. I was a barman also in my first year (.) you see (.) so I
remember them coming and spending like £50 (.) £100 even (.) and if I
remember £50 in 2003 (.) that was a bit of money (.) not like nowadays now. They
were not worried (.) because it was enough money. Suddenly (.) economy started
to crash. Started losing jobs and people started to be worried. I think this is a
dynamic again of the economy. When the economy is doing bad (.) you are
worried about everything (.) about immigrants (.) about what's happening (.) but
when you've got the money to pay (.) you don't care. This is exactly what's
happened in my view. People realise they've been made redundant (.) no more
money (.) no more things. Oh (.) let's blame it on immigrants. You always have to
find somebody. It's not your fault (.) it's never your fault. It's already somebody
else's fault. This is human nature after all. We're always told to blame somebody
else for our mistakes.

Henry: Is it something in your view that you think we could ever stop from happening
then (.) if it's our human nature?

Gheorghe: I don't know. I'm not a psychologist (.) but you know (.) it's really hard work for
the whole society.

Henry: If it's part of human nature (.) it's (.) sort of (.) that's just part of us (.) isn't it?

Gheorghe: I was amazed when I came in 2003. It was no recycling at all in this country.
Absolutely everybody was chucking things (.) altogether. We started doing it now
because we realise it's a lot of money we are wasting. It was like as a society (.)
let's waste it (.) it doesn't matter (.) we have money to pay. That was the picture
initially (.) because I was amazed. I asked the grandmother of the children (.) I said
(.) "You don't recycle the bottles (.) the paper and everything." I was just like in
Germany (.) you know (.) to do it separately (.) everything was. She told me (.) I
still remember Granny saying (.) "No (.) no (.) we have money to pay." I think this
country's rich enough to afford to throw the bottles away. Something like that.

Henry: So it's just a matter of (.) like you say (.) time and trying to get everyone to-?

Gheorghe: It's not about the money. It's about the thing. It's about resources first of all. It's the
pollution and everything. We can help all this. But this takes time. This takes
generation to change all these mentalities. It took us like (.) nearly 10 years (.) to
start recycling in Sheffield. I don't know when the scheme started but not very
long ago.

Henry: To be fair (.) we all think now we've got several bins for our recycling and some
people who have even got several for different materials.

Gheorghe: Yes. When I was an au pair in Germany in 1999 (.) we had seven different bins.

Henry: Seven. ((laughter))

Gheorghe: Yes. Green bottles (.) white bottles (.) brown bottles (.) metals only (.) paper (.)
three types of paper (.) and everybody was doing it (.) even the little boys knew
better than me how to do it.

Henry: Wow. I suppose part of that as well-

Gheorghe: I think everything it's in education (.) you know (.) in schools first of all. Think
maybe teachers in this country are so afraid. You know (.) let's not smack kids or
let's not do something because big things will happen. They don't enforce
education (.) tougher education any more.
Henry: Is that something that you think is perhaps something that needs to change then (.) to try and get people to-

Gheorghe: We need to get a bit tougher with ourselves first of all (.) to have a better work ethic. If you start your shift five in the morning (.) be at work five in the morning. Don't get there like ten past five or anything you know. Let's try to be punctual at least. Do our jobs properly. If I know have to fill in this properly (.) do it okay. "No (.) that's alright (.) next guy's going to do it." All these things (.) you know. I mean (.) I look at my job. If I make mistakes (.) people will suffer. I know I cannot afford it.

Henry: It's an interesting thing because it sounds like-

Gheorghe: It's also in school (.) you know. Everything starts there (.) because I have seen those things. You know (.) when I was at school (.) I was in the fifth grade. We had a uniform and everybody to standard. Well after the revolution (.) you say (.) "Well (.) come as you like (.)" and it was a (.) started to build up. I came in a T-shirt (.) my colleagues in a sweater (.) we're starting (.) "Oh (.) mine is better (.)" or it's Nike or whatever.

Henry: I suppose it opened a can of worms (.) really.

Gheorghe: Yes (.) Pandora box. This is how I call it.

Henry: Yes (.) it's an interesting thing when you're talking about discipline.

Gheorghe: I'm a big addict of order.

Henry: It sounds like it's similar to when you first arrived and you had this image of what English people were like.

Gheorghe: They were so relaxed. I was looking and said (.) "How can they be so relaxed? They're not bothered about anything." I said (.) "Well (.) this country must be so rich (.) there's so much money (.) it doesn't matter whatever you do."

Henry: Yes. Strange really (.) isn't it (.) how there can be such a mismatch between how it's portrayed to be abroad and how people are like here? Strange. Let me think. You've answered quite a lot of these. Let me just (.) I'm guessing then what you were saying about Sheffield it being your home (.) this is (.) sort of (.) where you're planning a lot of your future life then?

Gheorghe: Yes. Well (.) I don't think we are going to move from Sheffield from now. I think we're going to live here (.) but you never know what's happening in life after all. Maybe in the next ten years (.) I might be in Canada or maybe even living in another part of UK (.) you never know.

Henry: Can you see yourself doing the same job or do you think you might do something else?

Gheorghe: I don't know. I don't really see myself driving for the next 31 years which I have left until my pension age. In a way (.) I like my job (.) you know (.) it's alright (.) it's well-paid. I enjoy what I'm doing some days. I would like to move up the ladder. I just can't stop here. I have to move up the ladder. Even if it's in the industry itself (.) but I would like maybe to do something like that. Maybe transport planner or moving up the managerial ladder. They have lots of opportunities (.) you just have to get them.

Henry: Will you have to go back to night college or something to get some necessary degrees?
Gheorghe: Not necessarily for all these things. I mean (.) for example (.) when I was at Morrisons ((place removed)) (.) the depot manager himself (.) he was an ex-driver and simply (.) he just (.) up the ladder (.) step by step. He was coming from the industry itself (.) he knew all the things. Yes (.) they have lots of regulation. It doesn't mean you need a degree to be a manager if you want to be.

Henry: So it's just a matter of sticking at it?

Gheorghe: This is a thing I admire about Great Britain you see. In any other country (.) if you don't have that degree for that thing (.) it doesn't matter how good you are. You cannot touch it. While here (.) yes (.) if you want to be that person and you've got the drive and the ambition (.) you can get there. Compare it to Romania (.) if you don't have a university degree (.) you are absolutely nobody.

Henry: That's something definite that is coming across. A lot of people do seem to go to uni as a path there.

Gheorghe: Absolutely annoyed there. Everybody has a university degree (.) even the cleaner has a university degree and I don't understand why. I don't understand. I mean (.) the way I see it (.) the quality of the school or the school system must be very low nowadays (.) because in my time (.) my sister for example (.) she's a teacher (.) she doesn't have a university degree. She's got the old stages where she managed to be a teacher. You cannot compare it.

Henry: I'm wondering now if she was to leave it and then reapply again (.) whether she'd be able to do it.

Gheorghe: ((name removed)) is actually studying here at open university. This is what she (.) She studied in Romania but the time when she learnt her studies in Romania (.) they were really very tough (.) the old communist system of school. The people who managed in this time to access university (.) they were very good. They were the very best. It's not any more in Romania. Everybody can access university (.) it doesn't matter if you're really intelligent or you're stupid. I have people which they just seemed to fail years and years and nowadays they show me (.) "I have a university degree (.)" and you don't have one. How does it make me feel when I know (.) "Oh God (.) he can't even spell his name properly." The society itself has been so damaged (.) so damaged. There's no more values maybe or it's a ladder with values (.) it's just upside down now. You just have to have money and you can have everything=

Henry: =Yes. It does sound like you feel like it's changed for the worst then since things changed. Since the revolution because it's become focused on things that don't matter in the grand scheme of things and then forgot the things that are.

Gheorghe: My sister (.) for being a teacher (.) she was respected. Nobody questioned that she has a BMW or any other car. Nobody. She had her status you know (.) she's a teacher. She was somebody people were greeting on the street. Nowadays (.) doesn't matter. Nowadays (.) that gypsy guy with the BMW who's maybe stealing from cash machines in UK (.) he's going to get greeted because he's got a BMW and he's got the money. The poor teacher is being spit on maybe.

Henry: I suppose in that sense (.) at least then (.) you identify more with being here. You feel like you can work and feel acknowledged for the work you do.

Gheorghe: Yes. I mean here I am respected for what I do (.) you see (.) so I don't think I will get this treatment back like that.
Henry: I suppose then (. ) the questions I was asking you earlier (. ) it's quite clear then why you feel nobody's here [for you]

Gheorghe: [Before] to come to England (. ) I was an insurance broker in Romania. I was in insurance for about 1½ years. I tried to make a career there but they were simply so many sharks around me. Everybody just biting from left and right. I said (. ) "You know what (. ) I give up on everything (. )" and I just go. I just simply can't stand it anymore.

Henry: Like what you were saying (. ) you're too honest.

Gheorghe: Yes (. ) well. No I wasn't too honest. I was trying to live with times (. ) because I was commission-based first of all. I didn't have a salary. As much as I could sell (. ) as much money I was making. From a small guy in insurance (. ) at one point (. ) I had my own team of people and then I was just managing them. I just gave up and said (. ) "No (. ) no more. I can't take it anymore."

Henry: So that was very much around the time when you decided to start doing au pair stuff then?

Gheorghe: Yes. That's why I said (. ) I even remember the manager told me (. ) "Are you crazy? You are leaving this job here which has a future (. )" because the insurance industry just keep telling Romania really (. ) the first guys and maybe I will be somewhere around. "Are you really crazy? You're going for £50 a week there and you can have so much here." And I said (. ) "Yes (. ) I'm doing it (. ) because I can't live in this anymore."

Henry: Wow. It sounds like then (. ) it was quite a formative time then (. ) to sort of make that decision and really go with the uncertainty.

Gheorghe: Oh (. ) well it was a sacrifice. Maybe I could have had a good life back home. I could have inherited flat from my parents. Have the job.

Henry: You wouldn't have had ((name removed)) (. ) would you?


Henry: It sounds like (. ) the way things have happened for you (. ) they've happened at particular times and it's sort of fell into place (. ) hasn't it?

Gheorghe: Yes (. ) she couldn't believe it (. ) poor girl. I was supposed to phone her the next day (. ) you know (. ) and obviously I couldn't. I phoned her after three or four days and I said (. ) "Look (. ) I'm in prison (. )" and she thought I'm joking because I want to get rid of her. She couldn't believe it.

Henry: Oh no.

Gheorghe: Yes. I said (. ) "No (. ) I'm not joking. I will be deported in two weeks actually. That's it (. ) so you have to carry on on your own now."

Henry: Oh (. ) bless her. What was her answer to that then?

Gheorghe: Well (. ) obviously (. ) being 18 and a girl (. ) she started crying everything. She was alright. She came for Christmas that year and we spent the week together. She came back to England and her Visa was just about to expire in August 2006 and in August 2007 (. ) Romania was joining European. She said (. ) "You know what (. ) I give up (. ) I go back for Gheorghe (. )" and she came back for me. After (. ) I said (. ) "Let's go. Both of us."
Henry: I can't imagine what it must have sounded like when someone said "Oh sorry" as far as things go but it must've sounded quite

Gheorghe: I don't know. (laughter)

Henry: It probably sounds worse than what it was. It was quite an innocent mistake really - it was relaxing.

Gheorghe: =Yes it sounds but I tell you I didn't have really such a bad experience. I mean do not imagine me in a jumpsuit or things like this. No it was alright.

Henry: She was obviously very keen though to have come back to Romania with you and wait for things to happen.

Gheorghe: Well she fell in love straight away. I think that was the thing. Me too. I don't admit it.

Henry: It's great really because I suppose as it says all falling into place for you now.

Gheorghe: Yes more or less because in the first years so basically we started a new life together here in 2007 me and (name removed) in the first couple of three years she was quite unhappy. She wanted to go back and she was crying all the time. She said "No we have to give up. We don't have the life we want" and she tried to be an accountant because I found a job initially with Sainsbury's driving lorries. When I decided to go drive lorries straight away I was hired by Sainsbury's. I was working in Kent. I was travelling from London to Maidstone in Kent every day. I said "You know "You know ((name removed)) it's too much for me" because I was doing long hours. "Let's move to Maidstone" and she found a job as an accountant and she absolutely hated it. She just told me the other day "I was hoping I'm going to get pregnant so I can get rid of the job." She was desperate. I said "Well let's try something." At one point she was honest about it then. We could do this thing. I said "What do you want to do? Do you want to study? I'm open to leave everything and start again if you want for you." This is how we decided to move up to Sheffield.

Henry: What she decided to do yes. She studied sociology didn't she?

Gheorghe: Yes. I can see they're happy now. She's really happy now with what she's doing.

Henry: She seemed very happy sort of in a place when we met.

Gheorghe: I think she found the job she always wanted.

Henry: It's amazing isn't it? What she was saying to you about being unhappy. A lot of it was really boiling down to the job then it sounds like. Now that she's in a better job a better place things seem to fit more into place now.

Gheorghe: I think to a certain degree we're lucky but I don't really believe in luck. I think you make the luck in your life yourself for the decisions you do.

Henry: It doesn't sound like things that have happened to you are just luck. You've moved you've done it yourself haven't you?

Gheorghe: Yes. It's hard work after all.

Henry: Yes it doesn't sound like it's just happened to you because you've moved several places and had a go at different things.
Gheorghe: It was really hard in the beginning when we came (.) because once I started working being a lorry driver (.) for the first three years I was working only nights. ((name removed)) had the accounting job (.) Monday to Friday nine to five (.) and I was starting my shifts back then in the evenings. We couldn't really see each other too much. I was working all the weekends and we were just avoiding each other.

Henry: What's the saying? Passing ships in the night or whatever.

Gheorghe: Yes (.) exactly.

Henry: Gosh. That must have been really hard then.

Gheorghe: It took a bit of strain on relation (.) but we managed. We pulled it through so=

Henry: In the evening (.) you were starting at 10 o'clock and what time would you finish? Like six o'clock or something?

Gheorghe: No (.) like ten (.) eleven (.) one o'clock (.) two o'clock in afternoon. Usually I used to go home (.) sleep (.) (for) 5 (.) 5:30 (.) and she was coming home (.) cooking something. I was going back to sleep for another two or three hours.

Henry: Yes (.) so you'd wake up to see her and have a bit of a shower.

Gheorghe: Yes. On weekends she was all the time alone while I was at work.

Henry: Is that why you moved then from Sainsbury's to Morrison's?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) I moved to Morrison's. At Sainsbury's (.) I was self-employed you see. When we first came in 2007 (.) the Romanians didn't have a road permit (.) so you had to be either self-employed (.) have your own business or find a company which will hire you. That's supposed to be on a (.) how is it called? I can't find the proper word. You know like be a doctor or a teacher or anything. Hire scheme or something like that.

Henry: As in like a (.) I think I know what you mean. Professional sort of job.

Gheorghe: Professional sort of job. I had to be self-employed and obviously the company's couldn't hire me directly so that's why I had to work for agencies (.) on my limited company. This is how I managed.

Henry: To get round it.

Gheorghe: Yes and at Morrison's I could be employed by the company because ((name removed)) (.) you know (.) applied for a certain type of Visa. She was my dependent and after I became her dependent (.) it was- we just simply took advantage of the immigration rules.

Henry: It does sound like you=

Gheorghe: =To be honest. I tell them this has to be changed because there is the gap. This is how people are using it. We didn't abuse it. We done the right thing because after all (.) we paid all the taxes and everything. It was our way.

Henry: If that's what you can do (.) that's what you can do. I mean (.) it's no different to what politicians do or what anyone does. People try and use the system the best way they can (.) don't they? When we were talking earlier (.) I didn't quite realise how much thinking was really involved with getting everything= 661
Gheorghe: So from 2007 (.) as a European Union new member Romania (.) you had three rights. Either study (.) be self-sufficient or self-employed. I chose to be self-employed. ([name removed]) was my dependent. The rule is very simple. My dependent had a right to work on her own permit. She had the right to apply for a work permit. We done that because I had a limited company. I was self-employed. After one year (.) I became her dependent because she had already a job and a work permit. I could be her dependent and this is how I get my work permit. This is how we played the system. I say (.) "We play the system (.)" we took advantage of the laws. It was reading (.) nights and nights studying every articles in the law in immigration. See what we can do to have a better life. Simply from that point (.) everything opened up because I could go just to any company and say (.) "Yes (.) that's me (.) I'm Romanian. I have a work permit. I can work for you if you want to."

Henry: That's what they want to see (.) isn't it?

Gheorghe: Yes (.) because when I went this company to work with where I am now (.) this is what- "Do you have a work permit?" I said (.) "Yes (.) I have it (.) it's here." They were just relieved in that moment.

Henry: Because they don't have to worry about any of the legal stuff.

Gheorghe: Yes (.) I found this very strange. Many times (.) I went to interviews and people were scared or the Henry was scared to ask if I have a work permit (.) and I couldn't understand why. "Let's not ask if he has (.) we don't want to offend him." I have noticed this culture in England already. "Oh (.) let's not offend (.) let's not offend." Why are you afraid to ask? If you don't ask (.) you never the right answer. You'll always have the wrong image in your head. This is where you make mistakes. Ask. Be more German. This is what I told them. "Be more German (.) be more pragmatic." Ask him "Do you have a work permit (.) do you have a Visa (.) my friend?" No (.) well (.) you can't be here then (.) isn't it? It's simple. It's now (.) "Oh let's see if" No (.) no.

Henry: That's very interesting.

Gheorghe: This is what I don't like about British people. I try not to be like (.) "Oh (.) let's pretend it's not happened." No (.) let's not pretend. Let's say it. Let's face it.

Henry: It's very interesting.

Gheorghe: I know it's drastic. This is the way your guys work (.) the way I work. Probably my kids will be (.) definitely.

Henry: I think we have moved into that (.) sort of like (.) really sensitive- everyone's really sensitive nowadays (.) aren't they? Don't want to [offend each other] [We're not offending] each other (.) as long as we talk about it.

Henry: It's right not to be offended (.) that's what you often see in the newspapers. "I'm offended to this (.) you can't say that." That's what you always read about.

Gheorghe: If you feel offended (.) say it. Absolutely. Talk about it. Sometimes if I do something and you feel offended (.) maybe I didn't realise I offended you. I will never know that and I will do it again and again and again if you don't tell me.

Henry: That's a really interesting point though (.) because I think it does quite nicely depict the challenges.
Gheorghe: The job I'm doing now (.) I have chosen my own area and I go only in Bradford. Bradford has a large Muslim community. Half of my clients there are from the Muslim community. Initially (.) I was going there (.) I used to make silly jokes about them and they told me (.) "Gheorghe (.) you can't say these things. We understand you make a joke (.) but you don't know us." Now I started to know that (.) absolutely (.) I apologised. We shook hands (.) we are best friends. We see them every day. Absolutely.

Henry: Yes (.) so I suppose it's a matter of just getting that balance right and knowing what-

Gheorghe: Yes (.) exactly.

Henry: Can you think of any other customs that you've noticed being in the UK? Becoming British yourself and becoming part of the country. Funny sorts of customs or things- I know you were saying earlier with tea (.) that was quite a good one (.) wasn't it?

Gheorghe: Oh yes. I know for sure (.) you never mean what you say. That's a very British thing. If you say (.) "Yes (.) no it's absolutely fine (.)" it means (.) no it's not right (.) it's not going in the right direction. That's a British thing.

Henry: It's the other way around.

Gheorghe: Yes (.) it's always the other way round. You're never open about your feelings (.) about how you feel exactly at that point. Even if you're upset (.) you're not going to admit it. This goes back to that thing (.) "Oh (.) because I don't want to offend you (.)" obviously.

Henry: That's very interesting.

Gheorghe: Because I am Romanian (.) I have this Latin blood in me. We are very direct. We tell you (.) "I'm upset on you now" that's it (.) we settled it (.) we shook hands. Off to the pub (.) let's drink. That's it. We put it behind us. I'm not going to wait for the next chance to stab you from the back. No (.) it's not going to happen. I'm going to pay it back later on (.) don't worry. We don't do that.

Henry: It sounds like a healthier way to be really (.) doesn't it? Just to have it out in the open.

Gheorghe: Be happy about it. You keep anger in you and it's no good.

Henry: I'm trying to think now. I don't think there's anything- there's nothing else on here that you've not really talked about. to keep going over (.) because you've been-

Gheorghe: I didn't (.) to be honest.

Henry: I don't know if there's anything else that you might have thought of that you want to talk about at this point? We've been chatting for just over an hour now.

Gheorghe: Oh yes (.) that's good. I thought it's been only ten minutes to be honest.

Henry: No (.) it's been just over an hour so I don't know if there's anything else that you want to talk about.

Gheorghe: I don't know. If you have any more questions (.) I'm happy to answer.

Henry: I don't think so. A lot of these things we've covered (.) I'm quite conscious of making you repeat yourself really. I suppose (.) one I've got (.) we have talked about it a little bit about Europe (.) how you feel about what it means to European
rather than just British? Or even having (.) you know (.) sort of (.) Romanian history?

I think this is the larger family of us (.) after all. We share a lot of common values (.) you know. Let's take religion. We are mostly all Christians. We are Caucasians. We share a common history (.) after all. Yes (.) we've been fighting each other in centuries and all this.

Yes (.) that's history stuff (.) isn't it?

Apart from this (.) if we met somewhere in South America (.) yes well (.) where you are from? From Poland and you're from Germany and England (.) yes definitely going to stick together because we got something in common. I can't really find what is it but yes. We have a sense of belonging. We are Europeans after all. We are part of this bigger family. I think culturally we are connected (.) more or less. Literature first of all (.) music and everything. It's all in Europe mostly.

It's quite nicely depicted (.) from what I've seen myself in Romanian culture (.) has so many European sorts of- you know in the way the food is and the language. It has so many different influences (.) doesn't it?

Yes (.) it's got characteristics in particular things. Yes (.) obviously. Like every minority or every country's got some.

It's just so interesting when you think about how these different things come together. They create something new with something like-

It's our common heritage I think as Europeans. If we go to Moscow and we ask (.) "Do you know who Shakespeare is?" They will know but if you go in London and ask (.) "Do you know who is?" We all know who he is (.) isn't it? Even if we have all the parts (.) not really all the parts (.) but we are still Europe.

It's a nice sort of image (.) to think about it as a family. It's often not really in that way. Normally it's depicted as arguing (.) isn't it? You know (.) countries sort of disagreeing and bickering. That side of family (.) rather than the commonality family.

I think this is what they're trying to do now with this European Union but it's been just a bit rushed. We're living in this world of money which is simply dictating too many things around. It's not always what the people want maybe.

There's definitely a lot in that.

Yes. I've got my own theory that actually banks are running the world and not us.

I'd totally go along with that. From a political point of view (.) it's really worrying how it seems like it's the wealthier rather than nationality (.) it's how wealthy you are really. That's sort of what gives you the opportunities to do what you want to do.

It must be 1% of this population of the entire world which has all the strings (.) unfortunately. There's the difference (.) for example in Romania (.) go back 30 years (.) everybody was identical. Nobody had a better car or fancier dress or a bigger house. Nobody. Everybody was equal. This is what the Western society destroyed. We are all equal. I'm not going to make more than you (.) but in a way (.) that system killed the competitiveness (.) isn't it? Because as a human (.) me (.) I want to be better than you (.) isn't it? I want to have a beautiful wife (.) maybe
beautiful than yours. I want a bigger house. This is why they killed it. My father didn't know how to fight for this. Why shall I have a better car than my neighbour? We all have the same. In his mind he was okay with that. Well I cannot be that. I'm in a competition with my brother-in-law. I want a faster car than him. It's a very simple example. This is human nature after all.

Henry: It's very interesting sort of characterisation. Often when people talk about communism there was a report in Romania what was it? About seven years ago? Trying to think about what communism did.

Gheorghe: It was not a bad thing. It was organised. It was okay. They knew what they doing but it just simply burst.

Henry: But that sense of people feeling equal even if there were points that needed to be improved on people felt equal.

Gheorghe: I mean in a way communism was bad because it was a dictatorship you see with Ceaușescu I'm thinking about Hungary because I have cousins and uncles living in Hungary and we met them after the revolution. We finally got together and we met because we couldn't cross the borders before. We had no right for a passport or free movement. They said "Well it was great in communist times." They had oranges and bananas and everything we didn't have in the shops. They were actually the happy country. Hungary in the Soviet Bloc. They didn't have shortages or anything like we experienced in Romania. That country proved that actually communism can work. Look at China after all. It's modern communism. They have latest iPhones and everything they can want.

Henry: It's a weird version of communism isn't it? It's incredibly happy to have some bits of capitalism.

Gheorghe: It's working. It's not communism actually. Socialism. It's look after each other.

Henry: Someone was telling me about there's a particular place I can't remember what it's called now. A small district in one of the cities and it runs its own affairs. It's sort of quite a weird exception to the rule but they have all the housing everything is provided for by the state. All of the education places there's no money in this place. No money at all.

Gheorghe: Okay.

Henry: Everything's given which was a really strange idea. No money. It's hard to imagine isn't it? A place with no money. They don't need it. Everything's paid for. All the electricity it's all sorted. That's one particular example even in socialist China they've managed to do it. They've managed to get rid of it.

Gheorghe: That's not far from what we had in Romania actually. We had the house provided from the government yes. It was never paid by my father or anything. It was "Yes you've got two kids that's your flat three bedrooms enjoy it. That's your car." He had a job he knew the wages were coming. We had food tickets for everything because everything was rationalised. You could buy two breads one loaf of bread or two. You had access only to one. That's all. There were money. I remember had lots of money just nothing to buy because there were no products available in shops to buy. So it's nearly there.

Henry: Yes not far off really is it?

Gheorghe: Everything it was programmed.
Henry: Can you envisage a time where those sorts of ideas will ever become more popular again or more (.) I don't know=

Gheorghe: =Maybe in 20 years (.) here in Britain.

Henry: Do you think?

Gheorghe: I think they tried it with NHS and all these things. Labour government with all these benefit systems and everything. Well (.) let's try to look after people (.) yes. They tried to implement it but it's not going to work because this is a democratic world and this is how we're being brought out to be. To be competitive with each other (.) first of all. I'm not sure it's going to work. Mentally we are not ready.

Henry: No.

Gheorghe: We'll never accept this.

Henry: So you see it going more towards the private (.) sort of (.) money side of things then?

Gheorghe: Last year we visited New York. We visited my cousin in New York. It was such a shock for me (.) how many homeless people can be on the streets there. What a cruel society (.) it's America actually. I will never live there. They simply don't care about each other. They just step- ((name removed)) was in tears at one point. She was in tears. She said (.) "I can't stand it anymore. They don't see (.) they don't care."=

Henry: =walking past.

Gheorghe: It was really the jungle there (.) you know. Yes (.) that's it. You're dropped out of the line (.) nobody cares.

Henry: I mean their constitution (.) what is it (.) the first thing or whatever (.) that everyone's born free?

Gheorghe: First Amendment (.) yes.

Henry: Everyone's free but when you're on the streets (.) it's still a great life.

Gheorghe: I was joking with someone here (.) you are born to die. Simple as that there.

Henry: Very much a tarnish then. Sort of going to see the city that never sleeps (.) all these images=

Gheorghe: =It's all massive and you can see the money around and everything. You feel the pressure of everyday living. I mean people here (.) smile (.) at least they go out in the pub. They have a beer. We are members of English Heritage for example. We just travel when it's nice. We go to see things. We got time to enjoy our life. Even if from Monday to Friday (.) yes (.) we're connected into the job (.) but after (.) come on (.) let's forget about it. I always switch my work mobile off on Friday evening. I do that. Well (.) if it's an emergency they can reach me. It's not a problem. They know (.) they respect me. I got a private life also.

Henry: It's nice that you say you feel confident in yourself to have that work-life balance.

Gheorghe: I think this is why I decided to stay here (.) because there is a balance in this country. There is a balance in between working hard and making money and do whatever you want (.) but also living a life. It's not like France where they just drink wine and they don't care about anything. (laughter)
Henry: Yes, they have a four hour break at the end of the day, don't they?

Gheorghe: Let me finish my coffee and my croissant and I'm coming back. Or like Germany work, work, work, Arbeit, Arbeit. Come on. Give me a break honestly give me a break because I'm tired.

Henry: I suppose that sense of balance is important rather than having the extremities of New York or as you said France or Germany.

Gheorghe: My cousin I was telling him I got 28 days holiday and all these bank holidays. I don't have to work weekends. They were just "What?" I said "that's normal this is how it should be all the time."

Henry: It's no life is it?

Gheorghe: No there is no life.

Henry: I mean it can't be good for your health more than anything. It's really tough going. You wonder how they cope with that sort of life.

Gheorghe: This is how I compare it to communist Romania also. I keep going back but it's just coming flashbacks you know like why people didn't care. I remember especially the men they were drinking heavily. Most of them they had problems with alcohol. Why? Because it was no competition in between them. They just met in a pub after work. "Ah let's drink." It was nothing else to do for them. To make the week better or to have a hobby.

Henry: I suppose that combination of having to think in all these different new ways=

Gheorghe: Yes, new ideas how to make this how to make that.

Henry: Yes and not being able to live up to that but [not wanting to].

Gheorghe: [You knew any]way well if I do something they will come and take it away anyway so there's no point.

Henry: Sad really isn't it.

Gheorghe: Yes. I don't want to go back to those times to live in the society no.

Henry: Like you say though there's that sense that there are some bits that weren't altogether bad.

Gheorghe: Oh yes. I tried to figure out let's take the good bits from everything and let's mix it. Probably that would be the best system to work.

Henry: I think there's definitely a case for that here isn't there? When you think about how we can let certain aspects of our life just take over and like with the money thing. We just let money drive everything we do and then before you know it people are really unhappy. Like what you're saying maybe it's just too much to focus on trying to get a better job and a better car.
Gheorghe: That's down to ourselves (.). as an individual I think. That is our story (.). Our decision. I mean (.). nobody's pushing you to do that (.). unless you really want it. It's giving you satisfaction after all.

Henry: It's been really interesting chatting to you. Really interesting interview. I don't know if there's anything else you want to=

Gheorghe: =No (.). I'm fine.

Henry: You feel like you've covered everything? I'll turn these off. ((transcript ends))