



The symbolic and practical significance of dual citizenship: Spanish-Colombians and Spanish-Ecuadorians in Madrid and London

Cristina Ramos^{a,*}, Patricia Lauzardo^a, Helen McCarthy^b

^a Department of Sociology, University of Florida, United States

^b Social and Policy Research Centre, Middlesex University, United Kingdom



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Dual citizenship
Spain
Migration
Belonging
Economic crisis
(Im)mobility

ABSTRACT

In times of economic crisis in the destination country, migrants might decide to stay or leave. Having obtained dual citizenship facilitates both options: on the one hand, it allows for a secure stay, without fear of losing residence permits. On the other hand, it allows for either a connected return or new cross-border mobility options, especially in the case of citizenship from the EU. It can also be considered a significant milestone in someone's migratory trajectory, especially among those who started their migration as undocumented. This paper discusses the ways in which dual citizens interpret this status after the 2008 economic crisis in Spain and shows how it provided many with the opportunity to embark on new migrations within the EU. Drawing on 80 interviews with dual citizens born in Colombia and Ecuador who resided in Madrid and London, the authors argue that dual citizenship is understood as a resource that offers a sense of personal security and an enhancement of one's position in the global hierarchy of citizenships. Respondents in this study do not consider formal citizenship as a necessary step for emotional belonging, which they base on their daily interactions and relationships.

1. Introduction

Dual citizenship has increased globally in the last few decades, mainly because of migration flows and the growing acceptance by receiving and sending states (Blatter, 2011; Spiro, 2016). Studies of dual citizenship often focus on the policies that regulate access to it, as well as the reasons why immigrants choose to naturalize, but much less is known about “what it is like to live like a dual citizen in an increasingly globalized world” (Kivisto and Faist, 2007:12). In this paper, we focus on the everyday experiences of dual citizens and how they interpret their dual citizenship. We draw on 80 in-depth interviews with dual citizens, Spanish-Colombians and Spanish-Ecuadorians, conducted in Madrid and London by the first author. Those interviewed in London were onward migrants who had initially settled in Spain and had subsequently migrated again to London, mostly as a result of the 2008 economic crisis. We make two arguments. First, that obtaining dual citizenship is often a risk avoidance strategy through which migrants achieve peace of mind in their settlement in Spain and access to a “visa-free world”. Second, that dual citizenship does not necessarily lead to increased feelings of belonging – which are achieved through daily interactions rather than formal citizenship-, but can serve as a mechanism of exclusion from other co-nationals, exemplified with the case

of Spanish onward migrants' position within London's Latin American community.

We follow recent scholarship that situates formal citizenship in the broader context of global inequality in which not all citizenships are equal, reflecting wealth and opportunity disparities that exist among countries (Milanovic, 2012). Castles (2005) presents the notion of a hierarchical system of nation-states in which citizens of different nations enjoy varying rights and freedoms, which he terms “hierarchical citizenships”. Being a citizen of a Western country (mostly North America and Europe) means access to better opportunities and ease of travel around the world, without the visa constraints imposed on citizens from many non-Western countries, including Colombia and Ecuador. Thus, in a context of an uneven system of nation-states, having a citizenship from a country outside the top of that hierarchy is what Schachar (2009:1) calls being “from ‘the wrong side of the tracks’ of prosperity and security”. According to Harpaz (2015: 2086), citizenship is one of the most significant factors in determining someone's life chances. Harpaz argues that citizens from non-Western countries face “citizenship deficits” related to their origin country of citizenship, such as high unemployment, low wages, corruption, insecurity, etc. Becoming a citizen of a Western country, then, provides individuals with resources to reduce these deficits by being able to access better

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: cristinaramos@ufl.edu (C. Ramos), plauzardo@ufl.edu (P. Lauzardo).

economic and educational opportunities, or overall quality of life. For Colombians and Ecuadorians, naturalizing in Spain offers a way to overcome these disadvantages.

Engaging with questions regarding why and how citizenship matters for immigrants (Bloemraad and Shearles, 2017), we argue that dual citizenship is important for symbolic and practical reasons. Against notions of “instrumentalization” of citizenship (Aguilar, 1999; Ip et al., 1997; Finotelli et al., 2017), we find that naturalizing, rather than being driven by instrumental motivations, is usually part of people’s plans for settlement. Becoming a citizen has practical benefits, such as not having to deal with bureaucratic procedures or gaining access to previously unreachable destinations. It also helps migrants secure their stay in Spain and leave behind any uncertainty linked to permanent residency, providing what respondents in this study often referred to as “tranquilidad”, or peace of mind. Here we show that, even for long-term residents who already enjoy most rights in the host country, becoming a dual citizen of an EU state matters both in practical and symbolic ways because of those global inequalities and because of changing economic contexts.

In this case, obtaining dual citizenship provides enhanced cross-border mobility in three ways. First, it eases travel for leisure (i.e. visa free travel for holidays) that migrants from Colombia and Ecuador had often not encountered before. Second, it provides the opportunity to move, reside and find work within the EU. Third, it secures a permanent future ability to return to Spain, even after potentially long periods in home countries. These last two are crucial in times of economic crisis in the host countries, when migrants might decide to leave. Moreover, for many legal permanent residents, citizenship also provides the symbolic peace of mind that comes with not having to renew their legal documents ever again, with not fearing deportation and with claiming membership in a European country. However, although studies of dual citizenship tend to point at the dimension of belonging linked to being a citizen, for our respondents, acquiring citizenship is not always accompanied by increased feelings of inclusion. In general, feelings of belonging are attached to their social relationships and everyday participation in the communities where they settle rather than to formal citizenship. In addition, we find that “belonging is fragile and contradictory” (Gonzales and Sigona, 2017: 8) in that respondents who fully consider themselves members of Spanish society highlight that, even after becoming citizens, they experience othering by native-born Spaniards because of their migratory background.

2. Citizenship and dual citizenship

Citizenship can be understood as a legal status that provides rights and obligations inside a nation-state. Bloemraad et al. (2008:154) define citizenship as “a form of membership in a political and geographic community” that usually includes four dimensions: legal status, political rights, participation in society and a sense of belonging. Being a citizen implies belonging to a community, with each state defining those who are considered citizens and through what mechanisms foreigners can obtain this status. As Castles and Davidson (2000) explain, in the idealized model, every citizen belongs to a nation-state that, in turn, includes all people living in its territory. For this conceptualization, it is assumed that there is a certain cultural homogeneity, although this has seldom been the case. And, increasingly, international migration has led to the arrival of residents who are not citizens and who bring cultural diversity, challenging traditional concepts of citizenship based on cultural homogeneity and territoriality. An indication that receiving and sending states are adapting to international migration is that increasing numbers of countries allow dual citizenship. This is a way of recognizing the multiple identities of those who emigrate by making it possible for an individual to be a citizen of two states (Kivisto and Faist, 2007). In recent decades, European countries have changed naturalization policies to make it easier for immigrants and their children to become citizens of the countries in which they reside (Joppke

and Morawska, 2003). While dual citizenship was until recent decades disfavored, it is now openly or tacitly accepted by most states and it has become a “desirable status” for many individuals, as it provides new benefits without adding significant new obligations (Spiro, 2016).

Recent debates in citizenship scholarship have focused on the role of nation-states in regulating what citizenship means, who is a citizen, and how foreigners are included into the polity. Scholars have shown how the concept of citizenship has evolved historically and how it has expanded to include individuals who are born with one citizenship and, through international migration, become citizens of other states (Joppke, 2010; Kivisto and Faist, 2007; Spiro, 2008). Going beyond top-down approaches that focus on the role of states, studies have begun to explore migrants’ motivations for naturalization and meanings of dual citizenship. Citizenship scholar Peter Spiro suggests that for migrants, “[t]he real prize is legal residency, not citizenship” (2008:159). We find that, for those whose trajectories in Spain started undocumented, this particular transition – from undocumented to legal resident – is often perceived as the most important because of the rights gained. This is because immigrants, even when they are not citizens, still hold certain rights when they are legal residents of the country of destination as *denizens* – “foreign citizens with a legal and permanent resident status” (Hammar quoted in Castles and Davidson, 2000: 94).

Bloemraad’s (2006) study on the differences in citizenship acquisition rates in the US and Canada shows that immigrants and refugees are more likely to naturalize in Canada than in the US not so much because of personal preferences, but rather, because of governmental policies that are more inclusive in Canada and more *laissez-faire* in the US. Also comparing immigrants’ naturalization in the US and Canada, Apetkar (2016) finds that, while in the US, naturalization is sometimes a defensive option to secure their rights in an anti-immigrant environment, in Canada becoming a citizen was often seen as joining a good country with positive characteristics. While these studies highlight the importance of receiving countries’ context in migrants’ naturalization choices, it is also necessary to consider countries of origin when studying migrants’ understandings of naturalization (Bauböck, 2003). Statistical studies of immigrant naturalization in Europe show that favorable naturalization policies increase naturalization rates in combination with coming from non-EU countries that are unstable or poor (Dronkers and Vink, 2012).

But what do we know about individuals’ understandings of being a dual citizen and the practices that they engage in? As Mateos (2015) argues, dual citizens use the more fluid access across borders gained through multiple citizenship to access educational, business or employment opportunities that are not available to those who only have one citizenship. Thus, dual citizenship can be a desirable status that has important practical consequences. In an unequal world in which there are tight border controls and “hierarchical citizenships” that provide different rights (Castles, 2005), becoming the citizen of a country at the top of the hierarchy has an impact on people’s life chances and opportunities (and those of their children).

In addition, both for settled migrants and for individuals who do not emigrate to other countries but who have the option to acquire a second citizenship in Europe or North America through ancestry, obtaining a second (or “more powerful”) passport can be a protection mechanism, a “safeguard”, an insurance strategy that allows them to leave the home country in difficult times or that increases their geographical mobility options (Gilbertson and Singer, 2003; Harpaz, 2013; Mateos and Durand, 2012; Mavroudi, 2008; Skulte-Ouais, 2013; Szweczyk, 2016). Thus, for those who hold citizenship from countries outside the West, citizenship matters as it offers improved cross-border mobility opportunities and a sense of security. It can be a way to challenge the power geometries (Massey, 1994) that limit the mobility options of those who are globally located outside the countries higher up in the hierarchy of citizenships (Castles, 2005). In this case, being a dual citizen allows migrants to leave Spain in return or onward migrations to find opportunities elsewhere, often temporarily.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7353449>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7353449>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)