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Prestige and Status in the Migration Process: The Case of Social Differentiation in a Romanian 'Community' in Spain

Chris Moreh

This paper explores status relations in a Romanian migrant 'community' in Spain, developing a model of social differentiation within the 'community' based on ethnographic material. On a theoretical level, the paper builds on the distinction between 'class' and 'status', emphasising the latter's significance for migration research. Empirically, it aims to complement the study of status in the localities of origin, with a focus on status in the 'communities' at the destination. The paper suggests the existence of a developmental line in differentiation practices, from the most basic strategies of economic status improvement through the complex mechanisms of 'prestige' status recovery to the first occupational advancements with an associated status relevant in the receiving society, shaped by internal factors and external structural forces. Based on this, the paper proposes the model of social differentiation as a schematic tool that could become helpful in examining other phenomena related to migrant communities, especially their 'adaptation possibilities'.

Keywords: Romanian Migration; Social Differentiation; Status; Spain; Social Mobility

Introduction

Analysing social positions transnationally poses a great deal of difficulty not yet resolved by contemporary social theory. Currently much intellectual effort is being placed on theorising *class* at European or 'world' scale, and empirically estimating the relationship between spatial and social mobility from this perspective (Medrano 2011; Recchi 2009; Weiss 2005). Focusing on *status* as a separate 'structure of relations' (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007, 514) is a fruitful complementary, since many of the social relations in which migrants find themselves involved in are paralleling or intersecting

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the accepted social hierarchies of both the destination and origin societies, ethnic communities and transnational social fields being the sites where 'migrants' original prestige' is safeguarded (Recchi 2009, 96) or, in fact, created (Goldring 1998).

According to the classic immigration paradigm, labour migrants take on the worst paid and least desired jobs on the receiving countries' labour market, regardless of their previous occupational positions (cf. Piore 1979). As a consequence, migrants with different social statuses in the places of origin join an undifferentiated mass of labourers in low-paid and undesirable jobs (Stanek and Veira 2012). However, as Tufiş (2009) points out, Romanian migrants in Madrid[1] show a considerable upwards occupational mobility in the longer term, in line with an 'apparently universal pattern' of migrant economic progress (Chiswick 1979).

The present paper aims to contextualise this mobility by placing it within a model of social differentiation based on social status. By *differentiation* we should understand individual strategies to become dissociated from the status equality established by the shared experience of migration. These strategies are reconstructed based on data from an ethnographic fieldwork in the Romanian 'community' of Alcalá de Henares, Madrid.

In the following sections I will elaborate on the main concepts, beginning with the distinction between *class*, *status* and *prestige*, as it appears in the broader social scientific literature. I will then discuss the different approaches to analysing social status in migration, contrasting the perspective on differentiation with that taken by 'transnationalism' research. At this point a reformulated understanding of the concept of 'community' will also become necessary, following which I will describe the 'community' in case in more detail. Finally, the second half of the paper hopes to substantiate the differentiation argument by expounding on the various practices, strategies, methods and pursuits observed in the field.

Status and Prestige

The classical Weberian distinction between *class* and *status* has of late experienced a revival in the social sciences (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007; Turner 1988). As Chan and Goldthorpe point out, while *class* reflects an individual's position in the market, a *status order* is 'a structure of relations of perceived, and in some degree accepted, social superiority, equality, and inferiority among individuals' (514). While *classes* belong to the economic order, *statuses*—or *Stände*—are to be found 'within the sphere of the distribution of "prestige and honour"', and *parties* are assigned to the field of 'power' (Weber 2010, 148).

What has received less attention, however, is that Weber's original use of 'Stand' instead of 'Status'—which would have been equally available in German (Waters and Waters 2010)—reinforces its historical distinctiveness from 'class', a subtlety lacking in the English language. This has been partly responsible for deepening the later conceptual confusion, along the fact that *occupation*—or more importantly the *lifestyle* it presumes—is widely considered the principal characteristic 'to which status attaches in modern societies' (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007, 515; also Weber 2010, 148).

Chan and Goldthorpe (2004; see also Chan 2010b) are correct in pointing out—and empirically demonstrating—that while *class* has gained prominence in industrialised societies, *status* remains a valid and distinct—if often unacknowledged—ordering principle. Nevertheless, by equating 'Stand' with 'status', they miss out on the importance attributed by Weber to 'power'. Indeed, Weber's essay ends short of discussing the *interrelations* between 'naked property', 'prestige and honour' and political 'power', although this seems to be his direction in the introductory part. He there delineates the various possible causal relationships between 'social honour', 'economic power' and 'power in general', his main concern thereafter being to outline 'the distribution of power within a *Gemeinschaft* community' (2010, 138). It becomes essential pointing out that the commonplace rendering of *Gemeinschaft* as 'community' constitutes another source of confusion, as here Weber specifically refers to 'groups held together by an emotional tie, … Feelings of solidarity related to ethnic identity, real and fictive kinship, professional organizations, neighbourhood associations, fraternities, religious orders, and so forth … a communion between a present that has a shared past, and by implication a shared future' (Waters and Waters 2010, 154). Based on this, it seems like 'status' or 'social status', in their common usage, are better fitted to denote what Weber ambiguously referred to as 'power' rather than 'Stand'. The present paper adopts this 'interrelational' meaning, defining social statuses as positions in a structure of relations of perceived inequalities in terms of prestige, and economic and political power within a '*Gemeinschaft* community'. Thus, the conflation of 'status' and 'prestige' (or '*Stand*') can be avoided, while incorporating economic and political power relations delimited from the market situation shaping social classes. Such an approach seems particularly useful when dealing with migrant 'communities' involved in social relations that transgress national class- and occupational prestige hierarchies.

In describing social differentiation within a migrant 'community', I will also make use of conceptual developments in related disciplines in order to better grasp the functioning of status at different levels of analysis. In this respect, the most general distinction in micro-sociology, social psychology or behavioural sciences has been drawn between *power*—or 'dominance'—and *prestige*, as two routes of acquiring *status* (Anderson and Kilduff 2009; Henrich and Gil-white 2001). These insights will come useful when stating the 'mechanisms' involved in differentiation processes based on economic or political power and social prestige (see Table 1 later), while keeping the latter detached from 'personal qualities' of individuals, in line with current practice in social stratification research (cf. Chan and Goldthorpe 2007, 514). Before that, I will provide a brief overview of how 'status' has been employed in migration research, especially in relation to the concepts of transnationalism and 'community'.

Transnationalism and Community

There are several ways of approaching *status* beyond the nation-state frame. While Chan (2010b) and his colleagues perform their Weberian analyses based on 'patterns

of intimate associations' in the traditional setting of independent nation-states, the resulting *cross-national* view is informative of the similarities and differences between 'status orders' across countries. These 'status orders' prove indeed distinguishable from that measured by 'synthetic socioeconomic status scales', although to differing degrees in each country (Chan 2010a, 46–47). However, 'synthetic scales' have been easier to coalesce into a standardised scale able to advance an *international* approach to 'occupational prestige' (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996; Treiman 1977). The existence of such tools, notwithstanding their imperfections, can be highly useful for migration research. Paula Tufiş (2009), for instance, makes use of Treiman's Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale in examining the occupational trajectories of Romanian migrants in Madrid.

A more qualitative approach has been taken by transnationalism scholars analysing status relations within *transnational* social spaces. From a world-systemic perspective, Erind Pajo (2008) aims to resolve the 'dramatic paradox' of international migration as it appears in the 'willed pursuit of social decline' (11). He studies the case of Albania, from where more than half of the college graduates, and one-third of all teachers have left during the 1990s to become unskilled workers in South-western Europe.[2] While classic migration theory explains the paradox with the higher relative incomes or an expected U-shaped occupational mobility (Chiswick 1979), Pajo advances a 'socio-global' explanation, assuming the existence of a social-psychologically relevant imagined hierarchy of countries in which Western locations are perceived as inherently more prestigious, therefore the mere fact of living in 'the West' would compensate for the status loss. It should not be unfair to remark how this 'socioglobal mobility', while a likely factor, can neither be the exclusive mechanism of 'dissonance reduction' (cf. Festinger 1957), nor can it fully explain long-term processes.

Nieswand (2011) has also emphasised a 'status paradox' in the way migrants 'build up symbolic representations of middle-class status in their countries of origin by doing working-class jobs in the countries of immigration' (125). The resolution of Nieswand's paradox necessarily involves more complex processes of balancing claims and contestations, often attached to performances of conspicuous consumption in the localities of origin. The less-than straightforward nature of status claims is not only evident in the case of 'Burgers' in Ghana (Nieswand 2011, 135), but also for 'norteños' in Mexico (Goldring 1998, 174) or 'the Italians' in Romania (Anghel 2013, 175).[3]

Similar in both 'paradoxes' is the migrants' dependence on the localities of origin as arenas for status-struggle—a 'local and parochial' transnationalism in Smith's (2006, 63) words. Just as 'norteños' are at the same time 'Animeños' or 'Ticuanenses', the 'Italians' are first and foremost 'Borşeni'.[4] It is with reason that Goldring (1998, 172) sees the issue of social status as related to 'the meaning of community among transmigrants'. This 'community' is based on 'a sense of shared history and identity, and mutually intelligible meanings' (1998, 173), and its members speak 'the same language of stratification' (175). While this formulation approximates the meaning used in present paper, some shortcomings need to be addressed. These deficiencies

are derivable from the more general objections repeatedly raised against 'transnationalism' (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004; Waldinger 2010).

First—and this also applies to the Weberian 'Gemeinschaft' defined earlier—while the potential for contestation and disagreements within such 'communities' has been acknowledged (see Goldring 1998, 174), this aspect has not been thoroughly explored. I contend, along with Waldinger (2010, 30), that especially in translocal contexts, 'status-seeking is often the source of friction and faction', and therefore *conflict* should be part of the definition of 'community' rather than seen as epiphenomenal.

A second objection rebukes the lack of attention given to places of destination. Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004, 1191) recommend 'within-group comparisons across different national incorporation systems' and Anghel (2013) provides precisely such an analysis of Romanian migration to Germany and Italy. He observes yet another 'paradox' by which 'migrants receiving fewer rights perceived themselves as winners in terms of status and prestige, whereas those receiving a greater range of rights perceived that they had suffered a loss of prestige' (2013, 177). The paradox, however, confronts very different and circumscribed cases, and the localities of origin emerge again—and even more pervasively—as the dominant arenas determining migrants' status.

In the case of Romanian migrants in Alcalá de Henares, such stringent group specificities cannot be observed, while individual differences exist within the same locality of destination. Under these circumstances the destination context gains importance as a site for status-struggle, and the associated meaning of 'community' is also altered. I therefore find it useful to restrict the notion of 'community' to those who share particular histories, identities, meanings, and speak a 'language of stratification' that distinguishes them from the origin context, that is the migrants themselves. Also enshrined in these shared meanings are relations of conflict, which are distinct from those setting apart migrants and non-migrants in the localities of origin, and potentially instigating faction within the 'community' itself.

In conclusion, defining *status* and *community* as outlined above, will help us reach beyond—or below—socioeconomic advancements in a more formalised status hierarchy (Tufiş 2009), and focus our attention on the localities of destination, a perspective hitherto undervalued by 'transnationalist' presuppositions (Waldinger 2010).

Romanians of Alcalá

Romanian migration to Spain has been a major corridor within the post-1989 'new' Romanian migration system, shaped by the legal framework dominating each temporal phase of systemic development (Sandu 2010). The two watershed events affecting migration were the abolition of Schengen visa requirements in 2002 and EU accession in 2007, each influencing migration preferences and patterns.

Before 2002, Romanian migrants' preferred technique was to overstay their tourist visa. This meant continuing into irregularity, which prevented leaving the country

until obtaining 'papers'. The Romanian community was small and migration chains connected particular locations in Romania with specific destinations in Spain, resulting in a higher degree of trust and social cohesion within the 'community'. As one of my interviewees put it:

> We all knew one another, and we were from the same place. We had been helped when we arrived, and it was our duty to help others. We knew we could trust them, because they had nowhere to go, and our families back home knew their relatives. (Grigore, 49)[5]

Notwithstanding this sense of 'duty', the interdependency between older migrants and newcomers had created the first avenues towards economic differentiation. Visa trafficking was a widespread business in the late 1990s, involving earlier migrants from different European countries, border agents and even consulate officials (Şerban 2006). In many cases, the cost of a visa (let it be German, French, Dutch or Swiss) could reach 2500 USD, the equivalent of 14–20 months' salary, and yet did not represent a guarantee for successful migration (Constantinescu 2003; Paniagua 2007; Şerban and Grigoraş 2000). Achim's (31) migration story is telling of the tribulations of those times. He arrived in Alcalá in 1999, when Romanian migration to Spain was still dominated by Adventist Christians (cf. Paniagua 2007; Şerban and Grigoraş 2000). He himself adhering to the Adventist faith, Achim's migration strategy followed that of many of his co-believers, attempting to obtain a Schengen visa for a short 'study-visit' to the German partner congregation of his hometown parish. His application, however, had been declined three times when he finally decided to buy a counterfeit visa that took him until Germany, but there he was refused entry:

> I was convinced I will never make it to Spain. I applied for a fourth time, and it finally got accepted. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the visa in my passport! A real, genuine visa they cannot pick at. (Achim, 31)

The massification of migration to Spain only began following visa liberalisation. This development resulted in the corrosion of trust, and the emergence of public casual-labour marketplaces and in-group exploitation. By the time of my fieldwork in 2009,[6] the Romanian 'community' of Alcalá had also lost any strong ethnic, religious or socioeconomic group particularity it once may have had. Nevertheless, there still exist certain socio-demographic characteristics distinguishing them from other localities in Madrid, and influencing differentiation processes.

Alcalá de Henares lies 34 km east of Madrid capital, and had a total population of around 204 thousand during 2009, of which around 20 thousand were Romanian nationals. This makes it more representative of Spain as a whole than smaller localities with a much larger share of Romanian migrants. However, it is slightly less representative of Romania, 62% coming from the Central-North-Western regions (Transylvania, Crişana-Maramureş and Banat) comprising merely 42% of the surface area, and 33.7% of the population of the country. These regions further exhibit a per capita GDP 10% higher than the national average. Romanians in Alcalá are also

younger (56%) and have a better command of Spanish than those in other localities in Madrid, while no dominant features can be identified in terms of education and occupation. The majority (61%) have arrived between 2002 and 2007, only 23% having migrated before 2002, and for 78% Alcalá was the initial place of arrival (data from Sandu 2009, 53–57).

While the Romanians of Alcalá, as an aggregate, seem to better reflect the population of a more prosperous region in the sending country, the fieldwork did not identify any strong group ties to specific localities, or any definite rural/urban divide. One aim of the snowballing technique adopted for participant recruitment was precisely to shed light on 'home-town' connections, but extra-familial relationships proved to emerge chiefly on the basis of activities at the destination. This may be one of the reasons why Romanian migrant associations—often considered a 'migration universal' (Waldinger 2010)—are organised around 'loyalties extending considerably beyond the local level, making the national the more likely basis for mobilization and aggregation' (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, 1189).

On the other hand, the size and diversity of Alcalá provide an ideal context for differentiation, as it aims to simultaneously resolve the various status 'paradoxes' inherent in much of contemporary international migration. In the following I will develop the model of internal social differentiation observed in the 'community'.

A Model of Social Differentiation

In Table 1, I distinguish four fields in which Romanian migrants have attempted, or in fact succeeded elevating their statuses and differentiating themselves from other members of the migrant 'community'. They involve various practices, strategies, methods and pursuits of differentiation, some more proactive and purposive than others, though not necessarily more successful. While the opportunities for certain actions and activities have been created *internally* by the 'community', others are based on *external* initiatives from both Spain and Romania. Similarly, I distinguish between activities that aim primarily the 'community' (having an *in-group* orientation), and those with a mixed or an *out-group* profile, the latter being directed most often at the Spanish society.

The model is based on ethnographic evidence, depicting subjective opinions and preferences regarding one's—or someone else's—place in a perceived status structure. As such, it mainly reflects the beliefs of those taking part in some form of status-struggle, as these affect differentiation practices most directly. I have reconstructed these 'subjective theories' based on life-story accounts, references to others, interactions, gossips and similar 'dialogue-hermeneutic' methods (Groeben and Scheele 2000); in this way we find out what it means for the 'reflexive subject' to be an 'intellectual', a clergyman, economically successful, or otherwise accomplished, and whether these views are shared by others. As a trend, differentiation practices with an out-group profile are seen as more desirable, as they involve reaching an equilibrium whereby statuses transcend the 'community', becoming relevant in the

Table 1. A model of social differentiation of Romanians in Alcalá de Henares.

		Profile	Outcome	Mechanism
Economic				
Internal	Low capital: 'flat-chiefship', informal subcontracting, visa trafficking	In-group	Improvement	Dependence status displacement
	High capital: transportation companies, grocery shops	In-group	Improvement	Functionality role modelling dependence
Political				
Internal	Leaders of associations, community leaders	In-group	Improvement	Functionality dependence
	Local Romanian political parties	In-group	Improvement	Functionality
External	Local branches of Romanian parties	In-group	Improvement	Functionality
	Local Spanish political parties	Mixed	Improvement	Functionality
Cultural				
Internal	Voluntary teachers	In-group	Recovery	Prestige functionality
	Artistic activities	In-group	Recovery improvement	Prestige functionality
	Excommunicated priests (failed)	In-group	Recovery	Prestige functionality dependence
External	Canonised 'expatriate' priests	In-group	Retention	Prestige functionality dependence
	Journalists, Romanian media workers	In-group	Recovery improvement	Prestige functionality
	'Romanian Language and Culture' teachers	In-group	Recovery	Prestige functionality
Occupational				
Internal	Small businesses, self-employment	Mixed	Improvement	Role modelling
External	White-collar work at local branches of Romanian companies	Mixed	Recovery	Role modelling
	White-collar work at Spanish or multinational companies	Out-group	Recovery	Role modelling
	White-collar work at state sponsored associations, foundations, non-governmental organizations	In-group	Recovery	Role modelling functionality
	Spanish diploma, professional qualification	Out-group	Improvement	Role modelling

more formal status structure of the destination society, and being rewarded not purely in monetary terms, but through a lifestyle commensurate to that of the Spaniards. For those who have possessed similar statuses in Romania, this represents a status *recovery*, whereas for others it is a clear *improvement*. The appraisal of these 'formal' statuses is very much in line with the 'standard international' occupational prestige hierarchy (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996; Tufiş 2009), the non-manual/manual divide being the generally most manifest (Chan 2010a).

This is not to disparage the status-struggles occasionally taking place in the origin localities, as accurately documented in ethnographic literature, but in recognition that besides these, based largely on economic inequalities, more complex political and prestige claims are being formulated in the destination context, and that migrants may harness the 'community' not only wishing to maintain ties with their country of origin, but also in hope to eventually escape it. Such attitudes are partly due to the conflictive milieu 'back home', as lively depicted in the same ethnographies; in Romania, for instance, migrants to Spain are often colloquially referred to, either in downright contempt or purely ironically and tongue-in-cheek (as in Rostás and Stoica 2006, 171–230), as 'strawberry pickers' (căpşunari).[7]

As for the *mechanisms* of differentiation I mention in the last column of Table 1, their tentative aim is to connect migrants' 'subjective theories' with those advanced in the wider social sciences. I therefore distinguish between routes to social status based on 'power' and 'prestige', seeing, in our case, *dependence* as the strongest form of power, and *functionality* as its weakest manifestation. As an example, we might see *representation*, *cultural reproduction* or *cultural sustenance* as the most widespread *specific forms* of functionality, and as we know, what makes associations a 'migration universal' is their having some or all of these functions (Waldinger 2010). Similarly, I treat *role modelling* as a specific form of *prestige*, while confining the latter to statuses based on internationally accepted occupational prestige (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992). Thus, while a status might generally be accepted as 'prestigious' (e.g. being a teacher) without aspiring to become one, *role modelling* emerges from the migratory experience itself, and although it has different meanings for each person, the psychological mechanism is similar: the wish to achieve something that another in-group member already has.

The model thus designed is not more than a tentative heuristic tool to aid our understanding of a wider array of social phenomena that it might affect (such as post-migration scenarios). In the following sections I will elaborate on the historical development of the specific practices and pursuits of differentiation.

Practices of Economic Differentiation

Although it had a detrimental effect on a general level, the post-2002 massification of migration provided opportunities for the most elementary practices of differentiation. It was during this time that earlier migrants could convert their experience into economic capital. New migrants needed help with accommodation and finding work, and informal intermediaries emerged in response to these needs. Spanish employers did not recruit workers themselves, but passed on this task to 'team leaders' who acted as informal subcontractors in charge of recruiting new workers, negotiating their salaries, organising them into teams, and remunerating them. This 'service' could cost the newcomer a couple months' income. Finding accommodation also required the help of earlier migrants who had regularised their residency, and were thus able to rent flats legally. The early practice of accommodating a newly arrived

acquaintance in one's flat grew larger, and 'flat-chiefs' began renting out several apartments and sub-letting them to newcomers, generating high benefits. Most often, these same people were also involved in informal money lending, and their overall income could thus reach substantial levels.

'Flat-chiefship' and 'informal subcontracting' were the earliest techniques through which migrants could achieve wealth and elevate their in-group statuses by establishing unequal economic relationships. Representing highly contested relations, it is here that 'the naked power of money' conflicts most starkly with 'social honour or reputation'—as Weber (2010, 138) would put it. Besides their coerced acceptance based on a sense of dependence, the only way of socially normalising these relations is via a psychological fallacy classically labelled by Benoit-Smullyan (1944) as 'status displacement', reflecting 'prestige' attribution based on the mere existence of economic or political statuses 'no matter how the wealth or power in question has been acquired' (160). Transferred back to the localities of origin, such 'displaced' statuses can be further supported by mechanisms like 'collaborative silence' (Nieswand 2011, 145).

Most often, 'esteem'[8] was attributed based on other socially accepted qualities, like in the case of Alex (40) when recalling his first 'flat-chief':

> Many people are trashing that woman … They say she took advantage of us. I used to calm them down because many lived on her money until they could find work… But they all forget about that. Of course, she had a profit from their rents, but she also helped a lot; one should take all this into consideration. (Alex, 40)

In other instances 'esteem' originated from avoiding unequal relationships altogether, as in the case of Matei's (34) aunt:

> My aunt, just so you know, when she walks about in the village [in Romania] everyone greets her and she is much respected. She had brought many people to Spain; she helped them immensely, and not for money, like others did (…). She only helped with what she could, but she did that altruistically. (Matei, 34)

This tallies with social-psychological findings showing that 'acting generously towards others' is one way of attaining status within human groups (Anderson and Kilduff 2009, 295).

Other practices of economic differentiation, like setting up a parcel- or passenger transportation company, or a grocery store with Romanian products, yielded more clear-cut statuses, even though they often relied on capital accumulated previously. The majority of Romanian grocery stores and parcel delivery businesses in Alcalá are owned by two families, the first ones to arrive in the early 1990s. In their case, starting a business in 1997 aimed at the small Romanian 'community' has been a clear status upgrade, emerging as the first local entrepreneurs, and retaining their market monopoly until today. The words of Teodor—running one branch of the family business—make it clear that migration has helped improve their economic

status in absolute terms: 'Yes, I am satisfied, because in Romania I would never have achieved what I have achieved here. You can rest assured that I could have spent ten lives working in Romania without such results' (Teodor, 52). In the course of time they met increasing competition from larger Romanian businesses venturing on the territory of the so-called 'migration industry', having to give up their passenger transportation company to a high-capital Romanian firm (now itself pressured by low-cost airlines).

All this can be interpreted as conflicts between 'from above' and 'from below' transnationalism (Kivisto 2003), and their story fits into the wider literature on ethnic entrepreneurship (Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002). Nevertheless, as Wahlbeck (2008, 60) argues, 'immigrant entrepreneurship and its consequences should not be studied from a strictly economic perspective only'. As proven by his empirical study of Turkish immigrants in Finland, even less-successful entrepreneurship provides a higher degree of freedom, positive self-understanding and social status. The mechanisms behind it can be various; while migrants loosely *depend* on these businesses in order to travel and remit goods to their relatives, it is rather their *functionality* that steers feelings of appreciation. Accomplished entrepreneurs are also seen as *role models*, having achieved what they came for. This positive assessment invariably emerged during conversations with their customers, who were also generally unconcerned with the question of initial capital accumulation, the most commonly held view being that 'there are things one must do in order to succeed'.

These statuses already border on occupational differentiation, which I discuss separately. The reason for classifying them as *economic* rather than *occupational* is their strong in-group profile, making them dependent on the migrant 'community' and not easily comparable with 'national' entrepreneurs in either Spain or Romania. What they have instead is a potential, inherent in all capital, to be transmutable, flexible and mobile (Harvey 1989).

Strategies of Political Differentiation

In the political field, the creation of associations has helped improve the statuses of community organisers as political actors. While most associations were established to promote the solution of concrete issues, they had the ability to affect status relations more widely. The oldest Romanian association in Alcalá dates back to 1999, having lived its active heyday in 2003–2004 while its political links with the city council were closest. Its president proudly presents their main achievements: 'establishing a Saturday school', a successful 'folk music troupe', lobbying for 'the validation of Romanian driving licenses', and his personal involvement in the town-twinning between Alcalá de Henares and Alba Iulia, his hometown, while showing photos of himself in the company of the two mayors. Apart from this enterprise, the association —like most other Romanian associations—is less 'home-town' oriented than those registered in the wider literature (Waldinger 2010), and rather serving the 'integration' of migrants in the host society—as indicated in its very name.

The status of community organisers derives from their 'connectedness', on which Spanish and Romanian state actors must rely to reach the migrants. For the 'community', it is the functional aspect that assigns them status; as behavioural research has shown, 'individuals can attain higher status by making themselves appear more valuable to the group even if they are not' (Anderson and Kilduff 2009, 297). At the same time, as their *functionality* crumbles, they risk losing their status. A major function of the local association was to pave the road to cultural differentiation through its many cultural activities that required professionals (e.g. former teachers, accountants, artists or clergymen). Once these opportunities have been taken over by government institutions contesting the authority of migrant associations, the social statuses of community organisers became endangered too. Associations have also built up a negative reputation over the years, being seen as lacking any purpose other than their leaders' political and economic ambitions, limiting their abilities and life-span (Pajares 2007).

Mainstream politics has been another field on which Romanian migrants have ventured following EU accession. EU citizenship involves the right to vote and be elected in local ballots, raising the interest of Spanish politicians in the large Romanian migrant population (of more than 500 thousand in 2007). In parallel, external voting provisions and the intensification of diaspora politics made them targets for Romanian campaigns (Ciornei 2012a). Consequently, Spanish parties recruited Romanians to appear on their lists, while Romanian parties opened local branches in Spanish towns.

It has been argued that 'the Spanish and Italian votes' had decided the outcome of the 2009 Romanian presidential elections (Zidărescu 2009). The passive suffrage as EU citizens also led to the establishment of migrant political parties at the local level (De La Cal 2006). Becoming involved in politics was thus a status improvement strategy that did not require any formal qualification. As a backlash, however, migrant politicians have had to face the same distrust in the political class observable on a wider scale in both Romania and Spain, this becoming obvious following their weak performance during the 2007 and 2011 elections. Furthermore, the conflict between party politicians and association leaders has deepened the disenchantment with self-imposed community organisers and political representatives.

Methods of Cultural Differentiation

As mentioned before, the different activities run by the association provided secondary avenues to status achievement, mainly for those who had suffered significant social demotion during their migration. This is most representative of former teachers, artists, local intellectuals and other tertiary educated professionals who had migrated in order to escape a perceived status inconsistency between their occupational prestige and low income (cf. Pajo 2008). Their voluntary involvement in teaching at the Romanian Saturday school, performing in the folk ensemble, and organising a literary circle, meant exchanging their scarce leisure time for a social

status recognised by the 'community'. This status derived from the rather high occupational prestige universally attributed to 'teaching professionals', 'writers and creative or performing artists' or 'religious professionals' (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996), and was further reinforced by their function in supporting the community's *cultural sustenance* and *reproduction*.

The functional element was probably strongest—verging on *dependence*—for religious leaders, who possess high social status in Romanian society (Voicu 2008). The strength of the Church is enhanced in diasporic settings, where parishes are focal information points, and priests become veritable political actors (Ciornei 2012b). Internally coordinated pursuits of differentiation in the religious field, however, have failed outright. One of the first projects of the local association was the establishment of a Romanian orthodox parish in Alcalá. The association supported a local ex-priest then working in the construction sector after having left church life behind in Romania. Following a long organisational process, the Romanian Orthodox Church put a stop to the civic endeavour since the Church is the only authorised body to create new parishes, and priests must be canonical, directly delegated from Romania to serve abroad. The Church took matters into its own hands, and more than a hundred Orthodox parishes have since been founded throughout Spain. Priests wishing to serve abroad are centrally delegated following a highly competitive selection process.

The ex-priest who had unsuccessfully attempted to recover his status as a clergyman, has later entered politics as a local representative of the then ruling Romanian party. Meanwhile, newly arrived priests are spared the struggle for status recognition, being able to *retain* their original social status. However, the boundaries between these expatriate 'religious professionals' and labour migrants remain blurred. The life story of a priest serving in an Andalusian town speaks volumes: he waited three years, and used some 'contacts' to succeed in the selection competition and reunite with his wife who had been working in Spain for six years.

Not all activities, however, possess an equally strong functionality, and those perceived as less functional, are also more exposed to the contestation of their statuses. Emerging poets and writers are intriguing cases in this respect. 'Being a writer used to be a noble title [in our society]'—according to the late Vintilă Horia (2008, 266), the controversial author and former University of Alcalá de Henares professor, the foremost cultural paragon of local Romanian intellectuals—and literary ambitions should be interpreted as strategies to gain association with this perceived status. Iacob (47) succeeded in publishing his first poetry while still employed as a construction-worker. For him, the literary circle made it possible to gain publicity and improve his in-group status. He was introduced to me as 'our first in-bred poet', a comment reflecting the appraisal of his status by other community members. He also expressed hope in his work becoming available in Spanish, allowing for his status to become accepted within the wider Spanish society. Marcela (15) and Gabriela (14) have come closer to this dream, having won different young talents' contests, and

publishing in both Spanish and Romanian; their stories, once played out, may offer an insight into inter-generational social and cultural mobility.

Nevertheless, labourers-turned-writers are often seen as 'nouveau intellectuals'. Camil (55), a journalist and author who often criticises the Romanian 'community', described them in an editorial as 'presumptuous and uneducated, writing with the sole purpose of having their names published and gain acknowledgment as writers'. He was also demeaning of Iacob's literary style and the fact that he 'seeks literary legitimation' from the Orthodox metropolitan church of his hometown in Romania. Camil, on the other hand, decided to make his first work of factual literature about Romanians in Spain only available on the Spanish literary market, as 'it is a matter that concerns *us*, not those back home'.

Unlike writers, journalists have a stronger claim to functionality by providing valuable information for and about the 'community'. In Mihai's (27) words, they are 'honest people, to be admired, because they work like everyone else, but also use their knowledge to help others access information; and the newspapers are for free'. While this description may not always be accurate, it is a powerful incentive to become a journalist even for those without relevant expertise and less altruistic.

At the time of the fieldwork there were several Romanian language newspapers of different quality, often created by Spanish and Romanian businesses as advertisement outlets, and offering avenues to status *recovery* for former press workers, or status *improvement* for those who had not worked in the media before. Replicating conflicts in other fields and activities, newspaper editors have many professional disagreements about the purpose of minority journalism, and personal animosities often encumber their work. According to Camil, we cannot talk about a 'real' Romanian language press in Spain due to 'the lack of community feeling and cooperation'. A 'normal' or 'real' press, nevertheless, means a professional press modelled on mainstream media, requiring adequate knowledge and offering genuine career prospects, beyond today's amateurism.

The latest developments in the cultural field are promising in this respect. The editors of the two most widely circulated newspapers in the Madrid area had already been working on a full-time basis, although their sponsors' vested interest in the existence of a 'community' makes their positions vulnerable. While they would not shy away from working in the mainstream press, they feel disadvantaged in competing for jobs with Spanish journalists. At the same time, the opening of a Romanian cultural centre in Madrid, followed by a magazine and a publishing house promoting contemporary Spanish-Romanian cultural relations, could offer the first routes towards occupational differentiation for artists, and even beget a 'literature of migration' (Adelson 2005, 23).

Teachers were also granted the opportunity to profess in a more official framework after 2007, when the Romanian government started a funding scheme for *Romanian Language and Culture* courses at selected schools. As the scheme only guarantees a partial and temporary income, Geanina (36) expresses both her concerns and hopes:

> I would like to remain in Spain for couple more years … as it works out. Now I have to look for a summer job, because the academic year ends next week… I don't have many prospects as a teacher; the Spanish state still does not recognise Romanian qualifications. Maybe in the future it will become possible.

Teaching in Spanish mainstream schools will probably be a privilege of the second generation, as bilinguals and graduates of Spanish universities. First-generation teachers will have probably reoriented their careers by then towards other white-collar professions offering clear prospects of occupational differentiation.

Pursuits of Occupational Differentiation

As we could see, all fields border on occupational differentiation, and this latter is a preferred outcome from the perspective of many migrants. It represents having one's status given acceptance more widely outside the 'community'; a successful pursuit of occupational differentiation will thus lift one out from the range of occupations seen by the majority population as a 'typically' migrant field of activity—in the case of Romanians in Spain these being primarily in the construction sector for men, and in domestic work for women, both ranking low in status internationally (Tufiş 2009, 101).

Men and women have had different opportunities for occupational differentiation. Statistically, among migrants to Madrid, women had a lower occupational status before migration than men, and their long-term status improvment in Spain also falls short of that exhibited by men (Tufiş 2009, 113). They lack possibilities of advancement within the niche of domestic work, which nevertheless eases the acquirement of linguistic proficiency, much appreciated in other domains. Men, whose jobs involved less interaction with Spanish speakers, have proved more mobile within the niche of construction work, becoming self-employed (Stanek and Veira 2012). Others started small businesses with a mixed customer profile, like a pub or an Internet-café.

Many of the former teachers and higher education graduates have found their first non-manual employment at commercial companies or the *Hispanic-Romanian Centres* initiated by the local authorities to curtail their reliance on migrant associations. While these positions may still not be in line with their qualifications, they represent the first externally created opportunities for highly educated migrants to recover their lost status.

The private sector, especially banks, has begun employing migrants in order to attract prospective Romanian clients. Magdalena's (30) biography is characteristic of this trajectory. Having arrived in Spain in 2002, she started working as a live-in domestic worker, and after the mass regularisation of undocumented migrants in 2005 she was able to look for legal employment, becoming a cook at a bingo hall. Soon afterwards she obtained a position as a bank clerk, which tallied with her original training as an accountant. She describes her move as a desire to normalise her lifestyle rather than to increase income:

> I did not choose the bank because they paid more. In fact, I earned better while working as a cook. (…) At the casino, I used to work from five in the afternoon until three in the morning, including weekends and holidays, while at the bank I work eight hours a day on weekdays. (…) After I had decided to remain here for longer, my aim was to develop my career and lead a more normal life. (Magdalena, 30)

She was not alone in following this swift occupational advancement. It was a booming period for both Romanian immigration and the banking sector, and the newly hired Romanian-speaking employees were indispensable in the endeavour to make cheap loans available for migrants. Maia (35), a graduate of English philology, was employed by a real-estate firm wishing to expand its business to Romania, and to attract Romanian customers for its Spanish properties. She had initially worked in a pub, teaching English for free in her spare time. As she recalls, 'at least I felt I was doing something important, something that I liked and I was good at' (Maia, 35). She is now managing the company's foreign investment projects, the leading corporate strategy to escape the Spanish real-estate crack.

Opportunities for occupational differentiation are yet limited, but the few success stories can modify the migration aims of the 'community' as a whole. Strikingly, it is those few migrants with 'intellectual occupations' who earn much less than the Spaniards or migrants in other, less 'prestigious' occupations (Tufiş 2009, 112), and this is the next horizon that shall be conquered. Nonetheless, what attaches higher status to these occupational positions, is that they represent models to follow in the advancement towards an ideal 'normal' life, similar to that of the non-migrant population. It is this perceived homogeneous 'lifestyle' attributed to the privileged host population that has been coveted by many migrants, and it becomes apparent in comments similar to those made by Laurenţiu (52), having once driven me to a suburban housing estate to visit one of his acquaintances who 'had made it; she now lives like the Spaniards'.

Conclusion: The Ideal of 'Normality'

We can observe a developmental line in differentiation practices, from the most basic in-group strategies of economic status improvement to the first occupational advancements with an associated status relevant in the receiving society, being shaped by both internal factors and external structural forces. 'Flat-chiefship' is now history. In 2008, 74% of the Romanian migrants in Madrid had signed a written contract for their rented properties, and 13% were living in personally owned flats, although less than 1% had finished paying their mortgage (Grigoraş 2009). This also reflects a 'quest for normalcy'—as denominated by Lopez Rodriguez (2010)—the general desire of a 'normal' life.

The process of social differentiation has opened up alleys to social inclusion, simultaneously loosening in-group ties. Identification and involvement with the 'community' are no longer necessary for advancing one's status claim, allowing for very different 'adaptation possibilities' (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999, 229). In

some cases, the ideal of 'normality' involves not only a new occupation, but also physically distancing oneself from the 'community', replacing the previously valuable 'bonding capital' with 'bridging capital' (Putnam 1995). According to a study, 13% of the Romanians who were planning to change their place of residence within Spain were doing so because 'there are too many Romanians in the towns where they presently live', and only 7% were planning to move to another town because they had friends and relatives there (Sandu 2009, 59).

This, however, should not be seen as an unequivocal sign of assimilation, but the beginning of a rather more complex process of social transformation. As Camil surmised the future of his profession, when 'people will realise they belong here, and that their children are no longer immigrants but Spanish, European and Romanian at once, then there shall be real press and real journalists' (Camil, 55). His words also divulge a full-fledged vision of the post-migration development of the Romanian 'community'.

Currently this future is very much dependent on the evolution of the financial crunch Spain still finds itself trapped in. The crisis, in combination with the rights granted by EU citizenship, can either facilitate further integration or aid return migration and a diversification in mobility preferences. Marcu (2011, 11) observes the emergence of a 'logic of perpetual mobility' resonating with global structural changes and the EU legal framework. In this eventuality the question of whether they become 'successful European Union citizens or disadvantaged labour migrants' remains a valid one (Ciupijus 2011).

In statistical terms, Romanians have proved more reluctant to re-migrate than anticipated by researchers (Stănculescu and Stoiciu 2012).[9] Nevertheless, the general feeling of a 'silent return' was already in the air at the time of my fieldwork (Pajares 2009). Under these circumstances, the 'normality' ideal is reshaped to include the contraction of the community. According to Magdalena (30):

> what happens is that many of the Romanians I know are returning home, moving elsewhere, or the relations just break off. I think that in five, ten years' time only those Romanians will remain here who want to live their lives and integrate. Those who have come only to get rich have already started leaving.

Yet again, integration does not equal assimilation; that would be unconceivable for Magdalena herself, despite being married to a Spaniard: 'I don't want to lose my roots … When I have children, I plan to bring my mother over and ask her to teach them Romanian, so that they will not be *only* Spanish [sic]'.

The future of the 'community' is unknown, and comprehensive research on the second generation is still awaited. From a status perspective, the consolidation of an active 'diaspora' will depend on the degree to which ethnic or transnational social spheres can provide additional sources of 'prestige' (Goldring 1998). The model of social differentiation described here has shown that status-struggles neither necessarily rely on the localities of origin, nor do they relate exclusively to economic gains, as most of the literature reviewed earlier would emphasise. Thus, its aim was to

provide a more systematic overview of how various concomitant, consecutive, and heavily interrelated practices of differentiation emerge and develop. It can also come useful in grounding a theoretical debate on possible post-migration outcomes, and contribute to the growing literature on transnational social mobility. It should therefore be seen not only as a descriptive model, but also a transmutable schematic tool, a heuristic device appropriate for and requiring, further elaboration.

Notes

[1]   In this paper Madrid refers to the Autonomous Community of Madrid.
[2]   While the Albanian case appears exceptional, ethnographic research has documented similar patterns, if not proportions, for Romanian teachers and professionals (Viruela 2006).
[3]   All colloquial and/or pejorative terms used by non-migrant co-ethnics in the respective localities of origin.
[4]   Terms referring to migrants from Las Animas and Ticuani (Mexico) and Borşeni (Romania).
[5]   I am using pseudonyms throughout the paper, followed by the age of the interviewee.
[6]   The paper uses data from a five-month ethnographic fieldwork in Alcalá de Henares, between March and July 2009. Apart from informal talks and observation, the analysis is based on 34 life-story interviews.
[7]   An online search would show how the term is being adopted in irony by migrants themselves; we can encounter the website of a self-proclaimed 'journalist strawberry picker', the 'diary of a strawberry picker intellectual' or a book by a migrant-cum-writer titled 'The Spanish dream—The diary of a strawberry picker'.
[8]   Here I use 'esteem' in contrast to 'prestige', reflecting not a 'structure of inequality', but 'the conduct of an *individual* in a particular position or as the representative of a family, ethnic group, etc.' (Chan 2010b, 12; italics in original).
[9]   This has only recently begun to change; on 1 January 2013 the municipal record (*Padrón Municipal de Habitantes*, INE) has indicated the first ever decrease in the number of Romanian residents.

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