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REFEREED PAPER

## "Europe is for being recognized for more than an ethnic background" - Middle class British, Dutch and German minority citizens' perspectives on EU citizenship and belonging to Europe

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### Abstract

The paper pinpoints some crucial themes of European belonging and transnational identities arising in the narratives of minority key activists with various *hyphenated* national citizenship status, e.g. South Asian-Brits, Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Germans. In the context of the current post-cosmopolitan climate with a political shift to the far-right across Europe, concerns of visible minority citizens struggling with racisms and a lack of inclusion in the European project, are discussed. In this original research 43 key minority activists, academics and professionals, were interviewed between autumn 2009 and summer 2012, predating Brexit in 2016. The 'new' citizens interviewed in this sample live in major and middle sized cities, and their individual feelings of belonging to Europe, perceptions of being European and cosmopolitan are very much shaped by urban metropolitan spaces. The findings of the study underline ambivalent post-cosmopolitan identities and more complex notions of 'race', racism and ethnicity, particularly in Britain and the Netherlands and due to specific post-colonial situations impacting the individual feeling of belonging to Europe.

### Keywords

**EU citizenship, post-cosmopolitanism, racism, transnational European identities**

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## Introduction

The UK referendum on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, and the Tory governments' decision of 2017 to leave the European Union (EU) in March 2019, brings to the fore a lack of 'European belonging and identity' as expressed by a majority of English and Welsh citizens<sup>1</sup>. Hobolt (2016, p. 60) argues that the outcome was no surprise as the 'British public has consistently been the most Eurosceptic electorate in the EU ever since the UK joined in 1973'<sup>2</sup>.

With established far right populist governments in Hungary and Poland and a conservative-far-right coalition in Austria since 2017, we notice a dramatic shift from a discursive claim of a 'cosmopolitan Europe' (Beck and Grande, 2007) to a 'backlash against multiculturalism in Europe' (Alexander, 2013), for some time. This development holds true for different national societies across Europe, and the (re)turn to parochial-national identities affects, in particular, visible *minority* citizens.

Previous research underlines an ambivalent position of visible minorities *vis-à-vis* Europe: as far as processes of identity formation are concerned, Cinnirella and Hamilton (2007), for example, came across a more complex and nuanced position of South Asian Brits with respect to British national, on the one hand, and European belonging, on the other. In their results they found that 'British Asians were more pro-European than (our) white British participants, regardless of whether they were first or second generation' (Cinnirella and Hamilton, 2007, p. 495). The authors conclude that the different emphasis on past (glory & empire) and future (European community) was decisive for the distinguished evaluations of all their interview partners (*ibid*).

A comparative study by Kaya and Kentel (2005) found that Turks living in Germany and France did not perceive themselves as European. Though the authors stress, too, that this finding also is related to class: middle class 'third- or fourth generation youngsters have developed a cosmopolitan identity that underlines difference, diversity and citizenship' (2005, p. 57).

As far as Moroccan-Dutch migrants and 'new' citizens are concerned, the murder of the film maker Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands, in 2008, and the more recent scandalizing of Moroccans by far right politician Geert Wilders (Jones 2014) triggered overall negative feelings towards a symbolic inclusion in the Dutch nation state (Vieten 2016). Though ethnic Dutch 'strongly identify with the nation, despite their lack of clear ideas on what being Dutch means, immigrants, on the other hand, hesitate to identify themselves as Dutch' (Hurenkamp et al. 2011, p. 222).

A special EUROBAROMETER study in April 2017<sup>3</sup> – 2 years ahead of the next European elections – examined the attitudes of citizens of the 28 EU Member states towards the EU. The researchers found a rise in a positive identification with the EU, but also

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<sup>1</sup> In Scotland and Northern Ireland the majority voted to remain in the EU.

<sup>2</sup> The European Union was founded in 1993, but the European Economic Community established in 1957.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/20170426PVL00115/Two-years-until-the-2019-European-Elections>

admitted that the majority of interviewed Europeans regarded ‘inequality between social classes as most significant’. (ibid). The data gathered for EUROBAROMETER differentiated sex (men and women) and occupational groups, but did not take into account intersectional identity angles, such as ethnicity, race or religion<sup>4</sup>. To capture a more nuanced view on the European Union and understand how different groups relate and engage with the idea of a European community, however, more knowledge of minority citizens’ views is needed.

The aim of the paper is to pinpoint some patterns arising in the narratives of a sample of minority key activists, men and women, with *hyphenated* national citizenship and middle class status in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. While bringing in voices of significant visible minorities as ‘new’ European citizens the aim is to shed some light on some of the uneasiness with white Europe due to racisms and contradictory diasporic and transnational configurations of ethno-national communities. The juxtaposition of these three countries clings to the specific positions they have occupied when it comes to the alignment with the European Union project since its founding in 1993.

This paper is part of an ongoing intellectual project (Vieten 2014, 2016a) developing the notion of *new European citizens* as a metaphor for building transnational identities within a framework of de-territorialized Europeanization, also highlighting the importance of specific regional identities, typical of federal states in a transformed space of European societies. This original approach adds to more conventional discourses on migration and citizenship enhancing our understanding of emerging transnational societies.

Here, I apply my analysis of situated cosmopolitanisms, post-2001 (Vieten 2007; 2012) to the empirical study of minority citizens, with so called ‘migration’ inheritance. With this study I concentrate on contemporary social practices of cosmopolitanism as ‘futuristic critical thinking, sceptical of pre-defined group closure and characterized by curiosity towards the unknown’ (Vieten 2007, p. 221). I argue that roots and routes build a nexus directing the outlook on a more inclusive vision of global cosmopolitan bonds (ibid).

This paper investigates, accordingly, to which degree particular roots and routes are relevant to an individual perception of belonging to Europe and to a notion of cosmopolitan practice. Further, I look at the ways my interview partners express a transnational orientation (Bouras 2013) beyond European, or ethno-national identification. By this the paper contributes to debates on processes of ‘European societalisation’ (Walby 2007), on citizenship in Europe (Susen 2010; Isin and Saward 2013) and on studies of vernacular cosmopolitanism (Werbner 2006; Nava 2007) or everyday cosmopolitanism (Onyx et al. 2011).

In this original research, in total 43 key minority activists – 14 in both Britain and the Netherlands, and 15 in Germany – who live or have lived in metropolitan urban spaces were interviewed between autumn 2009 and summer 2012. Apart from a snowball system at a later stage, individuals were approached, who spoke out in the media and public spaces on issues

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2017/2019ee/two\\_years\\_until\\_ee2019\\_sociodemo\\_focus\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2017/2019ee/two_years_until_ee2019_sociodemo_focus_en.pdf)

of national identity; citizenship and human rights. Interviews were conducted in participants' offices, homes or cafés, depending on the space they preferred or was accessible for the scheduled time of the interview. All interviews were transcribed verbatim; they lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. Most interviews had been conducted in English; in Germany 12 out of 15 were conducted in German; in the Netherlands, 4 interviews were bi-lingual – Dutch and English<sup>5</sup>. My interview partners were more likely to be female than male: in Netherlands, 12 out of 14, in Germany 10 out of 15 and in Britain, 11 out of 14.

The argument unfolds within three sections. First, I look at the concepts of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism and discuss the tension between trans-national local identities and European citizenship. Second, I review some of the significant institutional state patterns when talking about 'integration', migration and national citizenship status in the three countries. This provides the structural background to the discussion of minority citizens' views on European belonging and EU citizenship introduced in the third and final part of the paper.

### **(Post-)cosmopolitan Europe, transnational identities and EU citizenship: new citizenship-perplexity arising?**

Since 1993 and with the legally binding effect of the multi-lateral Maastricht Treaty, EU citizenship derives from a national citizenship status (Liebert, 2007, p. 418) in one of the *current* 28 EU Member States. However, the overlap of polity (the territorial space) and the societal (civil and symbolical space) sphere is problematic as it suggests that the core of what European belonging and European citizenship is about overlaps with the policy borders of the European Union. EU citizenship is legally defined, but the European citizenship project and a vision of European belonging and – until recently – a cosmopolitan vision transcends this narrow reading. Beyond a territorial anchoring of policy borders of the EU it is the symbolic, the normative and the civic space that is particularly relevant if we try to draw a picture of the transformation of different nation state societies to a transnational *Europeanized* and, following here Dobson's (2003) concept, a 'post-cosmopolitan' societal space. The transformation of different EU member state societies into a new European society space is embedded in specific localities and connected to contemporary processes of globalization as well as triggered by EU policy (e.g. EU anti-discrimination law; freedom rights of EU citizens) however. 'Becoming European' (Isin and Saward, 2013: 5) addresses a process of 'European societalisation' (Walby, 2007) that might include complex national and transnational discursive, constructivist and cultural elements (Recchi, 2014) and therefore is beyond categories of what a 'European citizen' ought to be, or what a 'cosmopolitan' European citizen looks like. The vision of a cosmopolitan Europe (Beck and Grande, 2007) was linked to these transformation processes and introduced as a cultural glue to connect citizens across Europe. However, as argued elsewhere (Vieten 2007; 2012) this European cosmopolitanism signifies *plural* diversity, but was built along the lines of racialized boundaries. Vertovec's term of 'super-diversity' (2007) captures the complexity of

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<sup>5</sup> All German and Dutch interview sections are translated into English by the author.

(Continental) European, international ethno-cultural and post-colonial differences as they became more noticeable in England, e.g. particularly in London, in the new millennium. It has been less discussed to which degree the sudden exposure to 'super-diversity' is a specific UK and English phenomenon though ethnic diversity is understood and used very differently in Continental Europe. (Vieten 2011)

Only ten years ago academics were optimistic about the potential of cultural cosmopolitanism to deepen the political European Union project, epitomized in intra-European cross-border mobility. Early critique of mainstream cosmopolitanism was put forward across different disciplinary fields, by scholars such as Cheah and Robbins (1998; Cheah 2006) by feminist academics such as Nava (2002, 2006; see also Kofman 2005) and post-colonial voices such as Mignolo (2000, 2002; see also Nwanko, 2005). Cultural theorists such as Clifford (1992, p. 108) stressed the need to avoid 'the excessive localism of particularistic cultural relativism as well as the overly global vision of capitalist or technocratic monoculture'. Not unlike Werbner (1999), who followed the traces and routes of minority working class cosmopolitans, Clifford also put emphasis on the fact that not only bourgeois and privileged people were moving, travelling and becoming cosmopolitans, but less privileged groups such as female servants, domestic workers and migrants (e.g. ethnic diasporas) were part of this emerging cosmopolitan realm (ibid.).

Nedelcu (2012) illustrates how contemporary migrants show a specific form of cosmopolitan capacity while linking different localities through and in their transnational lives. Kaya (2012, p. 161) argues that 'German-Turkish transmigrants' effectively are involved in producing cosmopolitan identities as 'a form of multilocality (...) in both real and symbolic terms, in order to position themselves *vis-à-vis* the risk of being excluded by the majority society.' According to Vertovec (2009) transnational ties link multiple activities of people or institutions across nation- state borders. We could argue that intra-European (EU) mobility is a regional case of developing transnational ties.

In transnational theory (Basch et al. 1994; Vertovec 2001; Smith 2001) immigrant groups and diasporic communities have been identified with transnational orientation and activities. According to Roudometof (2005, p. 127) three different layers and activities should be distinguished. First, transnational social spaces, constructed by recurrent transnational interactions and practices; second, more permanently structured practices that take place in transnational social spaces and involve exercise of power relations, and third, transnational communities, which can be built by diasporic migrant communities as well as by multi-national companies. Importantly, Roudometof stresses that transnational mobility is not essential to the notion of participating in a transnational field (ibid).

This third layer is most relevant to this study, as minority citizens with immigrant community background might live predominantly a local life with layers of interaction in the neighbourhood, within the nation state, but also including communication (virtual and digital) with diasporic communities. Boccagni (2011, p. 12) argues that 'biographic interdependence between migrants and their non-migrant counterparts (...) deserves further discussion'. It is here, where the nexus of roots (e.g. link to ethno-national communities) and routes (e.g.

national state and EU belonging) might give information on how processes of European identification and a belonging to Europe are articulated on the ground.

Taking 'European identity' (Cram, 2009) further it is suggested that as a side effect of EU integration policy processes both, the rights of European citizenship and individual mobility, might create new forms of belonging that include everyday cosmopolitan social practices: individual experiences of mobility (e. g. one of the central EU freedom rights) and, more temporarily, the relatively easy travel across Europe might shape 'banal Europeanism' (Cram 2009). This 'banal Europeanism' might evolve in everyday practices impacting on perceptions of visible minorities of the EU and (Continental) Europe shaping their experiences and feeling of European, distinctively and differently.

In accord with my argument of situated cosmopolitanisms (Vieta 2007) as referring to a scale of different historically rooted cosmopolitanisms in Europe, the distinctive histories of European colonialisms and archives of European racisms have to be understood as encompassing a scale of differentiated routes of European belonging(s.)

Next, I will contextualize the situation of ethno-national minorities in Britain, the Netherlands and Germany with a focus on integration and citizenship regimes.

### **Ethno-national minority citizens in Britain, the Netherlands and Germany: different notions of citizenship, faith communities and 'race'**

The new minority citizens of Britain, the Netherlands and Germany provide interesting country case studies to look into. All three countries saw significant post-war (World War II) immigration and hence, the arrival of more visible migrant communities to their white and predominantly Christian societies. Despite commonalities there are institutional differences when it comes to citizenship regimes, notions of cultural homogeneity, colonialism or race diversity. (Brubaker, 1992; 2003; Joppke, 1999; Vink and Bauböck, 2013; Schuster and Solomos, 2002; Koopmans 2010; Koopmans, 2013)

Britain and the Netherlands have been largely identified with multicultural policy approaches in the 1990s and during the 2000s. This meant also, to a certain degree promoting the institutionalization of ethno-national, race and faith communities and having to reflect more recently on claims of multiculturalism (Abbas 2005; Meer and Modood, 2009; Scholten and Holzacker 2009).

Back et al. (2012) argue that in Britain 'new hierarchies of belonging are sustained through fear and suspicion' (2012, p. 151). The rise of terrorist attacks across Europe and the securitization of minority communities put even more pressure on the situation of Muslims to combat racism and to claim their individual national belonging despite political Islam. (Adamson 2011) Next generations of South Asian Brits, for example, have to find their individual pathways '[a]s they reconstruct their identities in response to what is happening around them' (Haw 2010, p. 360). As Haw further argues 'They have become "more confident to be seen as Muslim"', but are often in a dialogue with their own children and parents, as to what constitutes being Muslim in Britain and in contention with those, who

often through the mass media, seek to homogenise (sic!) Muslims and then label them as terrorists' (ibid).

In the Netherlands, and related to the history and model of pillarization (Ghorashi 2007), religious autonomy and tolerance of religious institutions was more prominent. Ghorashi (2007, p. 128) stresses that 'boundaries and distance played an essential role', and 'tolerance becomes a sign of indifference', arguing that in effect 'this limited form of tolerance has not been able to change the negative approach towards migration and difference' (ibid). Though Dutch citizenship seems to be more defined in social practices and as a 'social affair' (ibid), Hurenkamp et al. (2011) also found that 'immigrants' unlike ethnic Dutch choose a liberal and political notion of citizenship, thereby expressing a positive understanding of citizen's 'rights' (Hurenkamp et al. 2011, p. 223). Arguing through a postcolonial lens, Jones (2014) labels the symbolic hierarchies between white and black Dutch citizens as 'Citizenship Alienism'. Until recently, the dominant Dutch public discourse and policy used the racialized binary ascriptions of 'autochthon and allochthon' when addressing white majorities (born in the Netherlands) and non-white minorities (born elsewhere). In effect, a symbolic hierarchy of belonging and non-belonging was enshrined, and inclusion and even citizen rights are more unstable (Vieten 2016).

Germany kept for a very long time a narrative of cultural homogeneity though for migrants living legally in the country in which the state provided a relatively strong social welfare system. Traditionally, Turkish-Muslim workers were looked after and also monitored by Christian charity organizations (e.g. *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*; Caritas). Social integration was largely managed through participation in the labour market (Joppke, 1999). In 2007, a *National Integration Plan* (NIP) was established regulating in greater detail the settlement of 'new' Germans. However, as Foerster (2015) argues, this NIP is structured by a highly gendered agenda that did not translate fully EU anti-discrimination directives, e.g. anti-racist strategies, into the German Anti-Discrimination Law. Since 2000, German citizenship is less ethnically restrictive, but dual nationality is not granted to Turkish (Kurdish)-Germans. Only since 2012 are citizens of other EU member states allowed to keep their original – native – citizenship when applying for German naturalization, or keep their German nationality when applying for another EU country nationality.

In sum, the situation of minority citizens differs according to the respective three nation states and their regulatory and symbolic regime of integration. In effect, this might impact an individual's feeling of being accepted as European as well as influence practices of EU citizenship. Further, the different geo-political position of the countries might shape social practices of vernacular cross-border mobility and migration.

In the remaining part of the paper, I will present and discuss some of the narratives (Andrews et al., 2008, 2013; Esin 2011) of my interview partners across the three EU countries.

### **European, cosmopolitan or just ‘a Berliner’? The ambivalences of post-cosmopolitan everyday practices.**

The individual positions of visible minorities provide a lens to look more closely at a contested field of trans-national European belonging, and how politically and symbolically charged (imagined) political community containers are shaping more specifically feelings of individual belonging to the hegemonic nation, to Europe and to the European Union. The situation of visible minority citizens still is very much shaped by violent ruptures and ideological barriers to ‘belong’ (Yuval-Davis et al., 2006). Thus, their situation might be characterized by a specific vulnerability, but also exemplify the potential to explore altered European transnational spaces, as argued above. Their ‘[P]ositionality marks the social situatedness of individual subjects within particular sociospatial contexts and relations to others that shape their knowledge, views, subjectivity, identity, imaginary, and conditions of existence’ (Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006, p. 1616).

The discussion of the interviews here concentrates on four angles: first, the spatial proximity of Europe and the European Union; second, whiteness and the racializing gaze of Europe; third, the role of kinship and family relationships in feeling European, and fourth, the local city space as linked to urban identity, citizenship practices and cosmopolitan outlooks. As outlined above, the study was part of an investigation into how visible minorities understand notions of inclusion, of cosmopolitanism and in what ways they feel they belong to Europe.

The first angle is covered by responses to the question: What did academics, lawyers, politicians, journalists and other professional, “new” Germans, Dutch and Brits have to say on their idea of European/ EU citizenship, (trans-)national and European belonging?

A., a female university lecturer, (London) identified Europe with ‘holidays’, for example, and B., a female lawyer, (Leeds) foregrounded the geographical proximity as it only would take ‘2 hours to go from Britain to Europe’. C., a lecturer, also living in Leeds, appreciated going to Europe, but clearly expressed puzzlement when asked whether she felt ‘European’.

Me? Do I feel European? You know when I go out of Europe I feel very European so when I go to America you think oh my god, what have I come to? I wish I was back in Europe, so yes. But also I would have to say; when I go to Europe I am not identified as a European, because of my colour, you see. So in some ways feeling more left out than being in the UK. So if I go to Italy people say to me, “Oh where are you from”?

C. shared with me that she was othered and racialized by Continental Europeans, and in effect these experiences undermine her sense of belonging to ‘white’ Europe. She emphasized, too, that her feeling of belonging and inclusion to the UK is very different though. The symbolic exclusion from Europe does not hinder her understanding of being ‘European’ as connected to a geo-cultural space. This paradox of a white cartography of Europe, and Europe’s unwillingness to embody all differences is an ongoing and contested issue across all EU member states.

Christensen (2011, p. 894) argues that ‘mobility runs parallel to significant and complex forms of territorial anchoredness (spatially, culturally and institutionally) in the lives of transnational migrants’. Space and place of Europe are accessible through individual EU mobility rights (e.g. easy travel), but the symbolic place of Europe is identified with whiteness. Otherness in a post-colonial context means, South Asian-British citizens are put outside of the imagination of a European community. C.’s encounter with (white) Continental Europeans and being racialized was equally described by two other male British interview partners. D., (engineer, Leeds), responded when I asked about his experiences and sense of Europeaness.

I went to Europe last year. I like to travel you know. But when you go to the airport (if you’re brown) they do always check on you. I think, Europe is okay, but I think of security like, walking down, like, you know, in Paris, for example.

E. (teacher, Manchester) highlighted his travel to different European cities.

I do European projects. Before that I was in Prague, in Finland; I’ve been everywhere. The one I found a little uncomfortable was Austria. You could sense, not racism, but less tolerance. At the airport because I had a British passport. My whole party was white, and my passport was the only one stamped. In the EU you don’t get your passport stamped. In Holland I found it quite tolerant.

Individual experiences of othering, of being racialized, were mentioned frequently feeding into a wide held perception of being not regarded as British, and thus not accepted as European. Though racializing dominated the narratives of encounters with Continental Europeans my interview partner differentiated carefully - as in the case of E. - of which European Union country they were speaking of. That means in the case of E. and D. that a country like the Netherlands, and urban spaces such as Amsterdam, Den Haag and Rotterdam conveyed a more welcoming European experience. At large, Europe and societies of the European Union were regarded as a hostile place for black people, and for Muslim men, in particular. The only exception to this view was an academic, who has lived in the Netherlands, and enacted cross-border EU freedom rights in this regard. However, all male interview partners were very much aware of their gendered securitization and the rise of anti-Muslim racism post-9/11 2001.

A dimension of a ‘banal’ *Europeanisation* or ‘Banal Europeanism’ (Cram, 2009) was captured by one of my Moroccan-Dutch interview partners. H., a female professional, living near Amsterdam, talked about the options for her moving to another EU country, and highlighted the societal change, particularly as far as Spain is concerned.

If I go, for example, to Spain for a year, or go to England, then I would be able to speak Spanish or English fluently. I particularly like Spain, and even more so as Spain became part of the EU. Beforehand, it looked more like Morocco in terms of infrastructure; roads and accessibility. It all makes a difference and you can recognize how much more it changed into a European country, which I like.

This willingness to enact EU freedom rights in terms of moving across the border for education or job purposes also was highlighted by I., a male politician in Den Haag. He argued along the lines of a ‘rooted’ cosmopolitan or ‘rooted’ European:

I think the Dutch should embrace Europe given that they are confident about their Dutch identity. And this is what I tell young people: if you are not feeling happy in the Netherlands, you still are European. Go, and chase your luck elsewhere in Europe. Just pack your bags and get on a train, or a car.

In I’s view, European identity and cross-border mobility are connected to his notion of being a Dutch citizen. This positive understanding of European citizenship and EU mobility, following Art. 45 TFEU<sup>6</sup> was mentioned by most of my interview partners across the three countries, though this was not regarded as a ‘right’ that might be fragile, and one of the advantages of the institution, Europe Union, itself. Consequences of this right-based mobility, however, do not coincide with an emotional attachment towards or positive identification with the European Union community.

As we will see next, feelings of being included as *European* were expressed by some of my Turkish-German interview partners, but rather in the context of positively identifying as German. K., a female academic in Bremen, told me.

I myself, yeah, I am a European citizen, of course. I am a German and I am a European.... As somebody being half Turkish, I thought about the idea that Europe was a Christian-based culture.

Apparently, ‘ethno-national’ belonging is relevant here as constructing an inclusion or exclusion to the notion of European. In K.’s case her reference to her German mother (‘European by birth’) sounds puzzling at first, but encapsulates the paradoxical messages that German ethnic citizenship sent to non-German citizens and its immigrant populations for some time, as introduced above. H., a female barrister in Hamburg, articulated this paradox when highlighting that she was invited to speak at a European criminal law conference and initially was irritated to be included as ‘European’. However, a colleague reminded her that she was a German criminal lawyer and therefore, quite clearly included and addressed as European. In different ways ethno-national identities as part of specific roots frame individual perceptions of being included in the EU project of a European community future (routes).

Y, a PhD student, living in Northampton, explained her feeling of Britishness as related to her specific Indian and thus, also, post-colonial British ethnic identity:

I never think of myself as European. I never think of myself as European. I always think of myself as a British citizen and obviously when it comes to classing myself as ethnicity, my ethnicity, I always mark it as Indian but I hate doing that as well because I have never been to India. It’s where my family came from. I’m very, very proud of my historical roots, but I am British. I don’t ever think of myself ... obviously I’m aware that it is part of the European Union but it’s always like ...

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<sup>6</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12008E045:en:HTML>

when somebody says European, it's mainland Europe that I think of. If a British person came up to me and said to me, "Oh, I'm European," I'd be like, "Oh, whereabouts in Europe?" I'd never ever think of a British citizen.

Y. stresses her distinctive roots of Indian identity in Britain. This transnational identity conveys global diasporic identification, but also an English point of view that is, Britain is *in*, but not *of* Europe (Yuval-Davis and Vieten, 2018 forthcoming). This consciousness of being distinctively British also came up in several other of my interviews with British minority citizens. The disconnection to a project of European belonging can be partly explained by European racisms as discussed above. But it is also tied into a broader perception of Europe as identified with Continental ('mainland') Europe.

Another layer of what the European Union means to citizens came to the fore when interview partners explained the difference in their practical encounters with the EU: unlike the nation state, the European Union was regarded as an anonymous and abstract institution, and, in consequence, this meant perceiving oneself as a European citizen was not easy to comprehend. I., a female academic living in Berlin, explained this first hand, while also bringing in explicitly the notion of 'border'.

Honestly, as an individual I don't see myself as a European citizen. I think it's an abstract concept because as you say, your experience through the border, it's a border experience. My experience of citizenship is in the institutions of Germany and the institutions function on a nation state level. So my citizenship is dealing with the health insurance and these kinds of institutions function German in Germany. These kinds of things are on a nation state level so I don't consider myself as a European Union citizen, perhaps the only way is in the borders.

The role of national institutions matters most in the day to day life, and the notion of border also had a different meaning when talking to a young Kurdish-German activist. He did not read himself as an EU citizen, but was very much aware of 'easy' travel when going to other European places. In addition, as a political activist he was involved and had experiences of petitioning and communicating with EU politicians.

Well...me being an EU citizen? I guess rather not. I regard myself as international. I travel a lot. And yes, if I go to another EU country and Europe at large, it is almost as if I would travel to Hamburg. There is nothing special about it going to Switzerland, Austria, France or the UK. Well, accordingly, I feel a bit European but not that much. Of course, there are differences as I am also part of the society and the EURO, for example, eases travel and makes things more convenient. But the European Union, in general, does not appeal to me politically. Having said, due to my political activities we had meetings and assemblies at the European Parliament, or we collected signatures and posted them to the EP. In addition, we held talks with EU politicians.

J. differentiated between his sense of European belonging, on the one side, and his critical stand towards the European Union and its policy project, on the other. He demonstrated in his speech, too, that the link between *roots* and *routes* relies on the situated

embeddedness in present-day activity and orientations. In his case, it is his political engagement with the Kurdish diaspora in a place that is loaded with German history (Vieten 2016a) and practicing mundane mobility in an everyday vernacular way. Another male interview partner, K., living in the city of Kassel, Hesse, shed a different light on the linkages between acting local, feeling cosmopolitan and international while being embedded in the grid of multi-layered notions of citizenship.

Well, I am part of this society, because I speak German; and at the same time I am a European, because I live on the European continent. Also, I am a human being and live on this globe, thus *Weltbürger*, citizens of the world might be an adequate label. I prefer saying my homeland is the earth, my nation is humanity. If we go back to this shared beginnings and try to move society for the better from this angle you achieve a different level. And as long people, other fellow humans, are excluded from democratic societies and democratic rights, democracy has to be interrogated and deepened.

Mandel (2008) explored more in depth the complicated and past-ridden ethno-relationship of Germany, e.g. majority ethnic Germans with minority ethnic Turks. Whereas a post-modern cosmopolitan image of Berlin prevailed in the media, she came across a discourse of racialized stereotyping as far as the Turkish community is concerned. However, she also met 'in-between' feelings of belonging expressed by her interview partners as being torn apart between their Turkish and German nationality requests and rather opting for a hybrid identity model. Kiliç and Menjivar (2013) describe this 'in-between feeling' as 'fluid adaptation' and highlight that 'Berlin Turks mostly referred to themselves as Europeans (a supranational or postnational identity) or as Berliners (city/ local identification)', for example, and 'choose to define their belonging as fluid' (2013, p. 213).

In my study, too, German minority city dwellers were happy to identify as Berliner or *Kölnerin*; or relate to the region ('Hesse'). Though K.'s identification as a citizen of the world, and a European captures nicely a more hybrid understanding, his view still was an exception in my interviews. Most of my interview partners in Germany, and similarly in Britain, were very reluctant to regard themselves as European. The focus on the local and city space came to the fore when speaking to L.:

Well, I define myself more in smaller terms; I am a *Duisburgerin*. Yes, Duisburg is my home; I've lived here forever. Yes, in any case, I am *Duisburgerin*. And nationality, I am German of Turkish descend, because my parents emigrated from Turkey. But Turkey, and that's what I always tell people, only is a place where I go for holidays. Actually, I only know Turkey from my occasional holiday stays. And I haven't been there for more than five years. Though I still can speak Turkish it does not mean more to me; Duisburg is my home and where I belong. And the European Union; that is just much too far away.

Similar to most of my interview partners, L., regarded her city and the local space of daily life as the central place to identify, and where she felt she belonged. Either way, the 'national' as well as the European political community container was rejected as the primary carrier of identity and belonging by a significant number of minority interview partners. On

the positive side, some were able to see the potential to expand their friendship and professional contacts into and across Europe. Foremost, this European perspective (routes) was acclaimed by a majority of the ‘new’ Dutch citizens I spoke to. An outstanding example was Q., a male Tunisian-Dutch<sup>7</sup> entrepreneur, who lives in Amsterdam.

So I think that’s a starting point for me. I think it’s very personal sort of. I think that is where it starts. You get to know people you can – For instance on Friday there is this Czech thing they do weekly in the, in the theatre, in the theatre in Amsterdam, and then they send me an email like we want to Skype with you. And also on a more personal note I like about, what I like about being European, is here in the Netherlands you are pretty, not always, but there’s this danger of being like an *ethnic minority*, which is sometimes bad and good, I mean it’s not something which is always bad. But *on the European level this is less an issue*. It’s more, when you discuss European issues or European developments and then, then things become more, I don’t know.

Encountering different EU citizens in different countries had become as normal to Q. as encountering fellow Dutch citizens. Remarkably, Q.’s notion of ‘ethnicity’ as a racialized identity marker was distinct from what most of my South-Asian-British interview partners were describing. South Asian Brits were reflecting on skin colour racism or anti-Muslim-racism. The European domain conveyed white ethnicity. Q’ set apart his encounter in Europe and with Europeans while highlighting that he rather feels marked as *ethnic* in Dutch society. Q., and here not that different from most of the other Dutch citizens I spoke to, stressed that he felt excluded and othered in the Netherlands, and more accepted on the European level. This has repercussions with what was said above, that due to a form of alienation (see Jones 2014) by the hegemonic Dutch discourse of differentiating white majority ethnicities (‘autochthon’) opposed to minority ethnic citizens (‘allochthon’) ‘new’ citizens feel excluded, and turn to the European level for a more positive identification (Hurenkamp et al. 2011).

Even before the UK June 2016 EU referendum, EU skepticism was the dominant feeling I came across when talking to my interview partners in Britain, the Netherlands and in Germany. Vernacular experiences of travelling Europe did not significantly change this perception of feeling distant from the project of European community belonging.

### **Concluding remarks**

The findings of the research illustrate how visible minorities<sup>8</sup> perceive the European Union as an abstract and anonymous institution, but also express a scale of more differentiated feelings of belonging and non-belonging to Europe influenced by structural racism, and further by nationally specific discourses of inclusion, ethnicity and notions of citizenship. EU citizenship and European belonging are intertwined, but the notion of feeling European is anchored in everyday experiences of exercising EU mobility and citizenship rights as well as patterns of European racisms. Continental European Union countries, such as the Netherlands

<sup>7</sup> 13 interview partner were Moroccan-Dutch.

<sup>8</sup> For example Pakistani-British; Indian-British; Moroccan-Dutch; Turkish-German; Kurdish-German.

and Germany, share land borders that provide relatively easy and frequent cross-border mobility experiences for most of the interview partners. This side of vernacular cosmopolitanism and EU mobility is cherished, but it does not translate into a feeling of belonging to Europe, automatically. Though this everyday mobility experience with Europe is different for minority British citizen, traveling through Europe is also part and parcel of experiencing the European Union.

What was striking was the different meaning of ‘ethnicity’ that was put forward by different minorities: most of my British interview partners named the experiences of racism and not being accepted as British citizens as main indicator of feeling non-belonging to Europe. Europe constructs the EU and being European as white. In effect, it signals to black British citizens that they are Others, and that they are not included in the European community building project.

Dutch interview partners, who felt a lack of belonging to the hegemonic Christian and white Dutch society related positively to Europe and the European Union. Accordingly, the most striking findings in this study relate to the frequent positive European identity as spelled out by Dutch minority citizens. This seemed to be based on diasporic spaces of belonging to a transnational European and post-colonial community of Moroccans living not only in the Netherlands, but also in other EU member states such as France and Spain, for example. Here, the post-(French)colonial understanding of diaspora across Europe positioned them as trans-national Europeans. As one of my interview partners said: ‘With my family in Spain and France, I think we are really European.’

My German interview partners viewed the European Union and a privileged EU citizenship as civic gain, but without the emotional attachment and luggage of European identities. Depending on a positive identification with the German nation and citizenship, being European was collapsed with being German. Even those who did not regard themselves as European citizens admitted to enjoying treating Europe as their ‘oyster’.

Coming back to my initial definition of cosmopolitan habits (Vieta 2007), the variety of individual views makes clear that people adopt specific everyday *routines* between *roots* and *routes*. These routines enable a different degree of cosmopolitan outlooks and a transnational European identification. Despite different national roots affecting the route to Europe, we come across a vernacular face of post-cosmopolitan urban spaces and local social practices: The majority of interview partners stressed the belonging to the place where they live predominantly; they regarded themselves as ‘*Amsterdammer*’; ‘*Duisburgerin*’, Berliner’ or ‘Londoner’. The “new” Europeans interviewed in the study illustrate trans-national though local – what I call ‘post-cosmopolitan’ – self perceptions of what it means, for example, to be Dutch as well as European, or a Londoner and a global citizen.

More research is needed to understand what makes the difference to feeling European for different minority citizens to make the European project stronger also against a tide of far-right populist and anti-EU sentiments. With the next European parliament election coming up next year, in 2019, and also coinciding with the official EU departure of the UK, there might

be not enough time to counter overall EU skeptical developments. The findings of the studies underline a need to take seriously the concerns of visible minorities not being included in a predominantly white Europe. Having said that some of the post-colonial minorities, e.g. Moroccans, show very strong European identities and are already shaping alternative transnational European communities and spaces.

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