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This paper was originally submitted as a dissertation in completion of the requirements for the degree Masters in Global Migration. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UCL's Migration Research Unit.

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## UCL Migration Research Unit Working Papers

No. 2012/10

### E.U. Border Securitization, Migration and Free Movement

The case of Galati (Romania): a 'frontier within a frontier'.

Cristina Pecheanu



Migration Research Unit



**E.U. Border Securitization,  
Migration and Free Movement**

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Cristina Pecheanu

This research dissertation is submitted for the  
MSc in Global Migration at University College London

2012

Supervisor: JoAnn McGregor

## Abstract

Against the backdrop of a progressively securitized world, migration struggles to carve out a place for itself within the “citizenship of borders” (Kesby 2007) that is the European Union (E.U.). This dissertation seeks to investigate the migration-security nexus via the lens of the Romanian border city of Galati, a ‘frontier within a frontier’ at the E.U. Eastern gate. At the base of my analysis thus rests a double bordering framework, with the aim of unpacking the impact of securitization on free movement at both state and individual levels.

This paper draws from three conceptual areas: securitization theory, E.U. border politics, and migration dynamics in Romania, with emphasis on the Moldovan border. Qualitative data, notably interviews, formed the core of my research methodology, although this was balanced quantitatively by a content analysis mapping out migration framings in local Galati media. Additional focus was also gained through personal observation, informal discussions and field research carried out in Galati, notably at the Galati Border Police and the Galati Asylum Centre.

Migration and security find themselves in a tenuous relationship at the E.U. Eastern border. Local and national media framings underscored the contradictions therein, confirming a general lack of salience of asylum and migration in the Romanian press. Border securitization does not appear to have a significant impact on the progression of asylum flows into Romania yet its effects on illegal migration, filtered through a ‘technocratic factor’, are more discernible. This paper unearths the figure of the migrant at the crossroads between the ‘politics of migration management’ and the ‘politics of asylum’. Moldovan immigration serves as a suitable illustration of the ways in which this tension is resolved, often with mixed results. The Romanian-Moldovan migration patterns are discussed through the prism of a contentious inter-state dynamic that at times results in a perceived “export of insecurity” into the E.U (Monitorul Oficial 2011). The emerging ‘politics of asylum’ allow for migrant agency to negotiate a space for itself at the Eastern border. In this manner, Galati is constructed as a microcosm of the migration-security nexus.

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. JoAnn McGregor for her continued advice, guidance and support throughout every stage of this process. I owe a great deal of gratitude to all my interviewees whose helpful contributions made this work possible. Spatial and privacy constraints prevent me from individually thanking all those who helped me with my research, but I am indebted to each and every one of them for their contributions.

In Galati, special thanks are due in particular to my contacts at the Border Police and at the Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum-Seekers for enabling my fieldwork to be challenging and immensely rewarding. To all the migrants who shared their stories with me, I am grateful and remain forever in awe of their ability to never lose hope in the face of adversity. Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who introduced me to the field of migration a long time ago, and I have never looked back since.

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## Introduction

Borders and security have all but taken over current literature on the E.U, with migration rising to the fore of the European agenda and concepts such as ‘migration management’ and ‘border spectacle’ illustrative of the stalwart politicization of this phenomenon. Yet it is also the case that in the European context, migration has become a subject of increased debate relatively recently, with the expansion of the E.U. prompting a re-evaluation of the significance of the politics of mobility in Europe. The increased linkage between migration and security and its ensuing repercussions are nowhere made clearer than at the edges of Europe, and it is there that some of the most contentious migration constellations come into being.

This dissertation seeks to investigate the impact of E.U. border securitization on the free movement of people, taking Romania, and more specifically the border city of Galati, as its area of focus. It will do so through three main avenues of investigation: the E.U. Eastern border with Moldova, the Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum-Seekers<sup>1</sup> in Galati, and the medium of local migration press coverage. More specifically, my research will address the following core questions:

- 1. How are migration and security ‘managed’ at the E.U. Eastern border with Moldova?*
- 2. What role does migrant agency play in the ‘politics of asylum’ in Galati?*
- 3. Has the free movement of people been ‘securitized’ in local and national media?*

The theoretical framework of this dissertation will be covered in the first section, with special emphasis placed on such core concepts as ‘securitization’, ‘migration management’, ‘border regime’ and ‘Fortress Europe’. This will be undertaken using three broad conceptual areas as pillars of my research, centred on the themes of securitization, E.U. border politics and the case of Romania as an Eastern ‘borderland’. The first section puts forward the research design and methodology, placing special emphasis on interviews and fieldwork undertaken in Galati, Romania. The paper will then focus on two

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to simply as ‘Asylum Centre’.



empirical chapters, outlining a comprehensive evaluation of my research findings and tying them into the wider literature.

Chapter One of my analysis endeavours to map out the ways in which the migration-security nexus is constantly enacted at the border, taking the Romanian-Moldovan frontier as its object of study. Chapter Two delves into the ‘politics of asylum’ at the E.U. Eastern border, seeking to locate migrant agency at the edges of the E.U. “citizenship of borders” (Kesby 2007). Media framings of asylum and migration in the local press are interwoven throughout the two chapters, with the aim of determining why Romania remains relatively off radar in European narratives despite being one of the states at the forefront of E.U. migration. Finally, it is hoped that unearthing the distinct migration framework in this region will result in a deeper understanding of border and security dynamics in Galati and Romania.

## Literature Review

This chapter will review key concepts in the securitization literature, setting out to paint a comprehensive picture of the processes involved in securitizing migration, as well as reiterating the purpose which this politicized perspective serves. It will then shed light on the mechanics of the E.U. border regime, with a special emphasis on the migration-security nexus within ‘Fortress Europe’. The impact of said approaches on migrant rights and agency will be touched upon with a view to establish the role played by migrants in this scenario. Finally, the case of Romania as an E.U. Eastern ‘borderland’, and more specifically that of Galati as a ‘frontier within a frontier’, will be covered in the concluding section of this chapter.

### *Securitizing Migration*

Migration has been constructed as a security concern relatively recently within the context of increased post-9/11 global insecurity, with the “governmentality of unease” (Bigo 2002) transforming “global anxieties about migration into a mode of ruling” (Nyers 2010: 413). The conflation of migration, security and adjoining restrictive measures has been registered both within law and public consciousness, and subsequently, states have reverted to narrower notions of security in their understanding and treatment of immigration (Dobrowolsky 2007). Against this backdrop, immigration has been seen to represent a “new focus for insecurity” in Europe (Waever et al. 1993). The securitization of migration in particular has been the focus of a growing body of literature in recent years, and in the following section I will consider both the more traditional, state-centric approaches connected to securitization theory and the more critical, agency-driven accounts.

The work of the Copenhagen School rests at the core of traditional conceptualizations of securitization theory and will inform in part our theoretical discussion of the interlinking of migration and security. The main premise behind the process of securitization is the acceptance of an issue as a threat, irrespective of whether the threat is real or not; in this vein, once a concept such as migration has broad currency as a security issue, asserting that the threat in question is not real has little effect (Buzan et al. 1998). The securitization of migration functions on the basis of threat construction and the fabrication of distrust between insiders and outsiders, resulting in a “security spectacle” (Huysmans 2006: 60) that turns immigrants and asylum-seekers into indexes of fear and vehicles for “inscribing fear

as a political currency and an organising principle in social and political relations” (Ibid: 61). Securitization and politicization are closely connected, to the point where the former can be regarded as “a more extreme version of politicization” (Buzan et al. 1998: 4). The constitutive role of discourse cannot be downplayed, with ‘speech acts’ effectively serving the function of politically “talking into existence” (Huysmans 2006) certain security questions through the lens of a “security-survival logic” (Emmers 2007: 110). The securitization process makes use of such performative functions to place issues on the security agenda, injecting urgency into them, as well as resulting in a mobilization of resources to tackle these concerns.

Considering migration more specifically, this can be integrated within a wider, ‘global policy discourse’ on international migration, serving a performative function in the manner of describing reality as well as shaping the way migration is perceived by the actors in charge of managing it (Geiger and Pécoud 2010). The focus can therefore be placed on the rhetorical construction of migration within public debate, with attention also paid to the policy outcomes therein. Drawing on Foucaultian theory, such discourses on migration have the ability to produce a so-called ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’ that serve to build up migration management as a ‘political rationality’ that employs a particular discourse of power to create a “spectacularized public discourse mentality” (Foucault in Zartaloudis 2011) that succeeds in reconceptualising the figure of the illegal immigrant as a securitized threat. Additionally, in their ongoing search for new opportunities to expand their practices of control and thus to enhance their ‘governmentality’ (Foucault 2003), states apply such technologies to migration management in an attempt to increase their power (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2006). Further to the point, ‘securitarian’ approaches to immigration employed by governments increasingly materialize in the normalization of restrictive approaches to migration control “as part of the repertoire of justifiable practice” (Boswell and Geddes 2011).

Within the context of the general security turn underpinning migration debates in Europe, it can moreover be claimed that the illegal is located fully at the heart of the security paradigm (Walters 2010). This serves to reiterate the common thread running through securitizing accounts of migration, which portrays illegal immigrants as a risk group and a security threat. Ultimately, the securitization of migration has substantial consequences not only at a policy or state level, but also in terms of the effects on migrants themselves and their agency. This dual perspective is made apparent in the more recent, critical body of work on the securitization of migration.

In its quest to move beyond traditional approaches, this strand of literature sets out to depict migration as not just a mere security concern, emphasizing the need for a more rights-based and agency-driven migration narrative (Agustin 2003, Aradau 2008, Huysmans 2006). From a basic security standpoint, the distinction between human and state security and their respective objects of interest has some relevance here, although limiting our analysis to this distinction would prove inadvertently simplistic. Nonetheless, the human/state security juxtaposition can be invoked in consideration of the alleged competition between human rights and security discourse in contemporary accounts of immigration. The security of the individual takes precedence over the state, the migrant over the process of migration.

Posited against the heavily state-centric, traditional securitization approach previously discussed, the more rights-based perspective centred on international refugee law and the human rights regime insists on a more balanced view that recognizes the effects of the securitization of migration on migrants themselves. The risk of violence, whether in lesser or more extreme forms, acts as strong criticism of the securitization approach (Huysmans 1995); this opposition can take other forms, in the manner of adherence to an “ethics of solidarity” (Bauman 1991) or the multicultural society model (Blommaert and Verschueren 1992). The dangers of securitizing societal issues such as migration, and in the process turning migrants into actors in a security drama, can arguably be mitigated through the process of ‘desecuritization’ and the re-conceptualisation of migration outside the sphere of “emergency mode” (Buzan et al. 1998: 4).

To an extent, asylum and immigration can be seen as a conundrum for modern identity politics, with migrants situated simultaneously inside and outside of political communities (Bauman 1991). Migrant agency is especially significant in this sense, stressing the need to move beyond the marginal identities of vulnerable ‘subjects’ corresponding to the widely held view of victimization as the “growing modus operandi of people speaking on behalf of migrants” (Agustín 2003: 35). The role played by migrant agency in this scenario is crucial; with it comes the acknowledgment that migrants and asylum-seekers are not simply isolated individuals who react to market stimuli and bureaucratic rules. Instead, they are social beings who seek to achieve better outcomes for themselves, as well as for their families or communities, through actively shaping the migratory process. Following this logic, migratory movements, once started, can become “self-sustaining social processes” (Castles 2007: 37). Approaching migration in utility terms (as a resource requiring effective management) can be counter-

productive, carrying with it the risk of spilling over into political struggles over the nature of a political community (including regulation of membership and articulation of its values) as well as omitting fundamental rights-based precepts (Huysmans 2006).

### *The E.U. Border Regime*

The concept of the ‘border’ has featured heavily in recent migration literature (Albrecht 2002; Klepp 2010; Walters 2010) to the point where it is difficult to discuss migration and security without mention of the central role played by borders. Geddes (2005: 789) makes note of different types of borders aside from the traditional ‘territorial’ sense; in his view, borders can also be ‘organizational’ (access to the labour market) or ‘conceptual’ (delimitations of identity and belonging). In their most basic sense, borders represent adept social constructions that illustrate the power play between controllers and controlled (Sack 1986); they can thus be said to play a part in the ‘othering’ processes that occur at the edge of states, reinforcing the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ distinction.

These forms of ‘border categorizations’ further politicize migration, and at the same time, give it added visibility as a “distinct social process” (Zolberg 1989). In this manner, the social differentiation of migrants forms part of a “pronouncedly spatialized politics of identitarian difference” (De Genova 2010: 55), sometimes referred to as “the politics of nativity” (Ibid). This results in transforming the interior of a territorial space of ‘national’ community into an “unrelenting regulatory sphere for migrants; a ‘border’ that is implosive, infinitely elastic, and in effect, truly everywhere within the space of the nation-state” (Balibar 2002: 84).

Following this line of thought, migration law has been referred to as a “border construction site” (Dauvergne 2008), which is less concerned with the actual exercise of physical control over cross-border movements and much more with the “symbolic assertion of the ability and will to exercise control” (Spencer 2000, cited in Marfleet 2006). To add to that, Dauvergne (2008) elaborates on the way in which migration laws serve as ideal borders for a nation due to their ability to maintain a fixed exterior while also being infinitely malleable, providing both the appearance of a boundary and the convenient absence of fixity. More concernedly, these spaces of frontier policing, through which border laws are enforced and preserved, represent the various “thresholds” (Agamben 1998) or “mezzanine spaces”

(Nyers 2010) across which the regulation of human mobility supplies some of the crucial foundations of state power (De Genova 2010: 50).

Borders exist to protect against the threat of illegal migration, which is believed to strike at the heart of sovereignty, wherein we can also talk of the existence of a so-called “micropolitics of illegality” (Walters 2010: 88), with illegality functioning as a site of power relations constructing the legal-illegal binary as a “normative distinction embedded in a particular political project” (Ibid). Consequently, it is not the existence of borders themselves, but their function as a “limit institution” (Kesby 2007: 112) which most hinders the free movement of people. In this respect, the border is reinforced as an instrument of differentiation, becoming either an obstacle or a formality (Ibid: 114) depending on whether one belongs to the “abject class” of global migration (S. Bell, cited in Nyers 2010: 413), which includes asylum-seekers, refugees, overstayers and other ‘illegals’. The resulting “imagined spatiality and sociality” of illegal immigration helps to construct what Walters (2010) refers to as an “imagined migration world” of the E.U. within which illegal immigration is likened to a “phantom that haunts the space of migration and security policy” (Ibid: 83).

At the European level, we can talk of an occurring shift from a politics of migration in Europe to a European politics of migration, with the E.U. as a source of pressure for increased convergence. The migration narrative in Europe has revolved around the interplay between the two discursive elements of “threat and criminalization” and “number games” (Vollmer 2011: 338). This combination generates the need for states to demonstrate ‘efficient governance’ exemplified through restrictionist legislation and symbolic demonstrative enforcement tools in their migration management policies.

Immigration has been not only politicized and securitized, but also criminalized, with border politics occupying a prominent role in the hierarchy of European-wide migration narratives. Successive E.U. accessions and the subsequent expansions of the external frontiers, coupled with the climate of generalized insecurity in the wake of 9/11, led to a growing conflation of immigration and (increasingly restrictive) security concerns. The politics of mobility within ‘Fortress Europe’ are strongly reliant on soft borders; the kind of fences that are raised with carefully crafted speeches rather than stones. ‘Fortress Europe’ is a social construct, and its frontiers are rooted not in geographical lines but in the “act of political imagination which constitutes Europe as a bounded, self-contained entity” (Walters 2010: 91).

Following this line of thought, we can conclude that Europe does not represent a traditional fortress but one possessing a certain duality; consisting of both internal/soft controls and a certain amount of hardware to detect intruders at the gates (Albrecht 2002). Accordingly, the E.U. has been constructed as a ‘gated community’ (both practically and metaphorically) whose foundations rest on a reinforcement of the “politicisation of protection” (Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007: 291). In the current political climate, where greater border controls inadvertently imply greater security, it is interesting to observe the “paradox of Europe’s borders” (Boswell and Geddes 2011). This follows a multi-level framework according to which the E.U. and its Member States are simultaneously removing some borders, relocating others and building new ones.

The tension between Europe as a ‘gated community’ as opposed to a Europe progressively opening up informs much of the migration-security debate at E.U. level. Consequently, it should be acknowledged that the E.U. is not “hermetically sealed” (Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007: 291), nor should it be regarded as such, although its policies of selective entry and its ‘cherry-picking’ approach cast serious doubt on the image of a European migration project based on equitable and humanitarian grounds. The eternal tension between a desirable economic (legal) migration posited against the darker side of the phenomenon, inhabited by ‘illegals’,<sup>2</sup> results in a hypocritical attitude towards immigration that rests at the core of the E.U. approach.

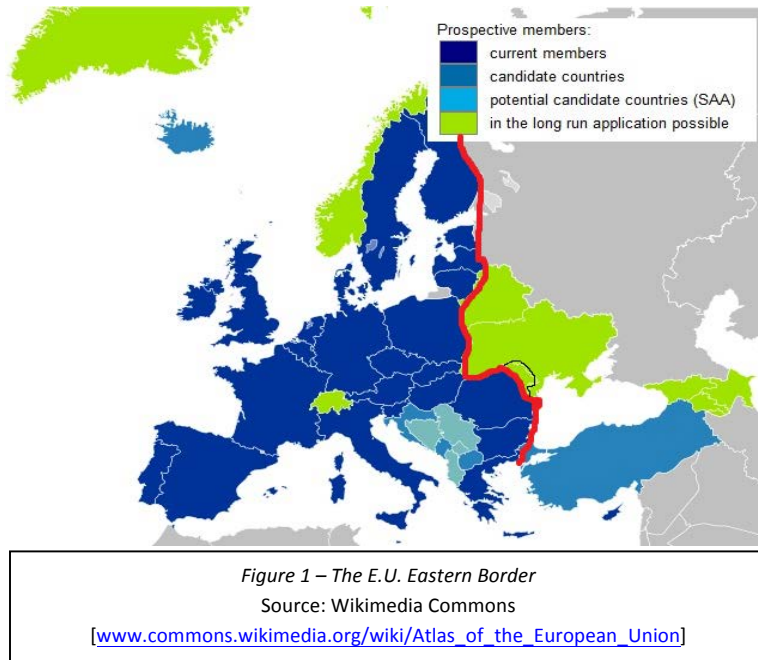
Ultimately, it needs to be acknowledged that this contention rests on the challenge that immigration poses to the collective consciousness of the E.U., reiterating the fact that a polity’s identity is defined by who is in it and who it keeps out (Seglow 2005). A more well-rounded interpretation of this state of affairs would consider the E.U. framework as a “kind of never-neverland” (Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007: 306), which is progressively “writing a new landscape of walls” (Ibid) in an attempt to come to terms with its own contradictions. It can then be ascertained that the spectre of ‘Fortress Europe’ is only ‘partially accurate’. Accordingly, while the quest for expansion and control over desirable migration means that the walls are malleable, it is nevertheless the case that “control over malleability is solely in the hands of the state” (Dauvergne 2008: 154). A relevant remark to be made in closing relates to the need for a reconceptualization of the border; one that brings it closer to the concept of a ‘bridge’ rather than an “imagined construct” (Verlinden 2010: 68), and in so doing, recognizes that enclosure is no longer in keeping with the reality of the times.

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<sup>2</sup> Used here as an umbrella term to depict migrants deemed ‘unwanted’ within the territory of a state.

### *Romania as Eastern 'Borderland'*

The securitization of migration is at its most problematic at the edges of Europe, with border states bearing the brunt of the influx of people into the E.U. and often resorting to drastic measures to stem that flow. It is likewise the case in E.U. narratives that illegal migration is portrayed as a chain or a one-way street, with the line always running in one direction, from destination states through the weakly-policed borders of transit countries and into the heart of European territory (Walters 2010: 89). With that in mind, this chapter will now turn to the particular case of Romania as one of the states at the forefront of the European migration-security nexus (see Figure 1 below). The Eastern border with Moldova (and Galati as 'border city') will constitute the central point of our analysis, with special emphasis on Moldovan migration in its quality of core migration dynamic in the region.



The choice of Romania might seem baffling at first, as it is admittedly not usually the first border state that comes to mind in such discussions; an assertion that formed the basis of my decision to shed light on a less publicized European frontier. At first glance, Romania appears to be defined by its status as an E.U. frontier state, and even so it is not deemed as traditional a choice of study as Greece or Italy. Despite being one of the hubs of immigration into Europe, Romania has been relatively off radar in terms of the securitization of the politics of mobility within the E.U.



Previous to its accession, Romania was prompted to reform its migration system so as to align it with E.U. standards, and this requirement was applicable also in relation to entry and removal directives. Placing this into broader context, this has aptly illustrated the European ‘carrot and stick’ approach at work in the application of membership conditionality, delineating the E.U.’s considerable “ideational power as promoter of certain normative notions of appropriate state behaviour” (Bechev 2006: 28), in this case applied to migration policy. It can further be argued that the E.U. factor was an additional force that influenced the discursive framing of migration in Romania, with authorities forced to demonstrate efficient governance in this field not only to their citizens but also to the E.U. (Vollmer 2011). In addition, while the fight against illegal immigration has been a central component of E.U. migration policy, this focus has had particular resonance in the relatively new countries of immigration, such as the A2 countries of Romania and Bulgaria. Similarly, it can also be stated that the A2 countries were among the most clearly shaped by the E.U. context on account of joining the E.U. in an era characterized by increased anxiety and unease about asylum, immigration and internal security more generally (Boswell and Geddes 2011).

The existing migration literature on Romania is woefully limited, with comparatively little existing research on this topic, most of it consisting of reports and publications by NGOs and E.U. organizations (e.g. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2011; Statewatch 2012). Consequently, most of the focus (and press) has been attracted by Romania’s status as a migrant-sending country, placing emphasis on the emigration of Romanians into other European states rather than immigration patterns within Romania (Colipca et al. 2010). Nevertheless, the scarcity of existing research can also be considered a positive aspect, as my work has the potential to fill a gap within the literature.

Existing reports highlighted the pitfalls of the Romanian detention and deportation regime, which often proved sadly in line with the securitization and criminalization trend previously touched upon, with ongoing accounts of unacceptable conditions and inhumane treatment in immigration detention facilities pointing to a migration landscape that continues to fall short of European standards. The persistence of this sub-standard state of affairs raises questions when taking into consideration the fact that Romania was found in breach of Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) on inhuman and degrading treatment of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in January 2010 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2011: 7). Coupled with a comparative lack of

available information and reporting on Romanian immigration detention centres and transit facilities, this constitutes a problematic state of affairs that can be interpreted as having been “tacitly legitimated by the E.U. for the purpose of border management at its external border” (Statewatch 2012).

In the field of asylum policy, the first observation that can be made is that there is less pressure on the Romanian asylum reception system due to smaller volumes of what is termed ‘humanitarian migration’ into the country, with less numbers of asylum applications than other E.U. states such as Germany, Italy or Sweden (UNHCR 2012) and reduced coverage and controversy in that sense. The Romanian case revolves more around immigration from Moldova and Ukraine, bringing to the fore the status of Romania as a ‘borderland’ and a transit country within the E.U. migration infrastructure, as well as its role of “membership gatekeeper” (Dauvergne 2008), governing access to both national and E.U. citizenship.

Following Romania’s 2007 accession and its subsequent role of E.U. Eastern border, we can talk of a dual bordering framework in this case, with Galati effectively acting as a ‘frontier within a frontier,’ bordering not just Romania but also the E.U. As the biggest city on the Eastern border, Galati is strategically placed so that it shares a border with Moldova as well as with parts of Ukraine; it is also crisscrossed by the Danube (see Figure 2 below). Galati thus constitutes a particularly useful case study, finding itself at the crossroads of several migration pathways and promising to have an interesting migration constellation.

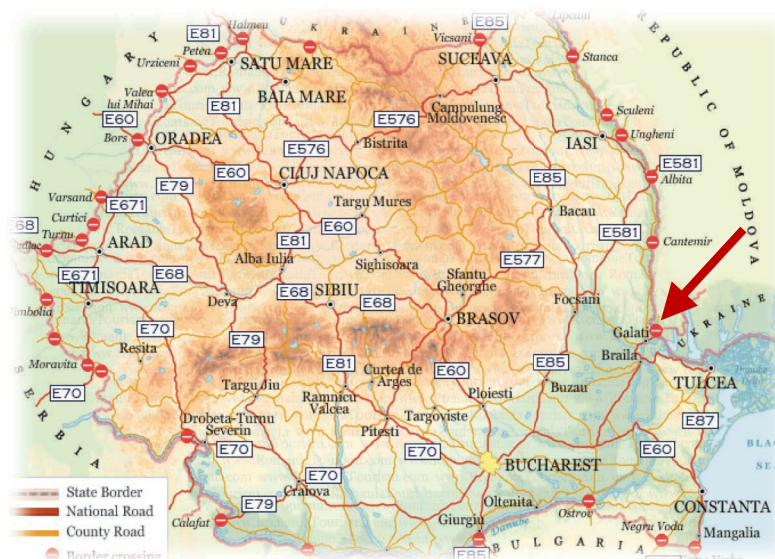


Figure 2 – The strategic location of Galati

Source: Romanian National Tourist Office

[[www.romaniatourism.com/roadmap.html](http://www.romaniatourism.com/roadmap.html)]

Post-2007, a new meaning can be said to have been attached to the Romanian-Moldovan border in that it now “divides and unifies at the same time” (Marcu 2011). The malleability of the E.U. border is felt here as well, in the guise of what Mezzadra (2011) calls the progressive ‘flexibilization’ of the border through migration. The strategic importance of this frontier was highlighted even before 2007, with E.U. officials considering the Romanian border with Moldova one of the biggest challenges to be tackled in advance of accession, particularly with regard to illegal migration and human trafficking networks operating across the border (Toader 2005).

The rich historical background between Romania and Moldova is a topic far too extensive to be discussed here in its entirety, but I will draw attention to a few landmark events. In particular, I refer to the 1990s and the landmark year of 2009, both periods characterized by significant levels of Moldovan asylum applications on political grounds (most commonly citing persecution on the basis of different political beliefs) based on the longstanding clash between pro-Russian and pro-Romanian factions within Moldova (Branza 2007). This feud manifested itself most visibly in the wake of the 2009 protests in Moldova when the Moldovan authorities accused Romania of “orchestrating the revolution” (Chiriac 2012), recalling the Moldovan ambassador in Romania as an added gesture of offense.

The complex relationship between Romania and Moldova underscores E.U. Eastern border politics, with the visa regime between the two countries proving especially contentious. Much of the controversy stems from the so-called ‘Ancestral Citizenship Law’, which stipulates that Moldovans are entitled to regain Romanian citizenship if they can demonstrate that “either they, their parents, or their grandparents are of Romanian origin or lived in territories which were part of Romania before the end of World War II” (Chiriac 2012). This is intimately tied to the very conception of citizenship in Romania, which is defined “on the basis of nationality rather than residence” (Ibid). Briefly blocked in 2002, the procedure of granting citizenship has seen a rise in popularity after 2007, illustrated in headlines such as “Moldovan Fever for Romanian Citizenship” (2007) or “Romanian Passport: The Golden Ticket” (2009) – to name a few. A 2012 study by the SOROS Foundation concluded that approximately a quarter million Moldovans gained Romanian citizenship in the past twenty years, disputing European-wide rhetoric claiming that the Romanian state was “constructing” Romanian citizens overnight, thus bringing millions of newcomers to the E.U. labour market “by the back door” each year (Chiriac 2012).

The ‘lure’ of access to the E.U. and its labour market would indicate at first glance that most Moldovans opt to regain their Romanian citizenship in order to leave Romania in search of better

opportunities. However, statistics made available a year after the accession revealed that Moldovans amounted to the highest number of foreigners legally residing in Romania; this was also the case when considering top percentages for foreigners residing in Romania for education purposes. The same source indicated that Moldova also ranked first in terms of the highest number of immigrants with temporary residence in Romania (IDIS 2008). It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the situation might have changed throughout the years, but the aforementioned numbers point to a significant Moldovan presence *within* Romania, reinforcing its quality as both a transit and a receiving country in relation to Moldova.

This chapter has pushed forward the argument that the Romanian E.U. accession prompted concerns about the increase of the movement of people across the Eastern border, framing this discussion within the greater debate on the securitization of E.U. borders. The impact these measures may have on the free movement of people is often difficult to gauge, yet its study can yield profoundly interesting results that can help us gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved both at local and European level.

## Methodology

For the purposes of this paper, I placed emphasis on qualitative methods of research, undertaking primary data collection in Romania, principally in the city of Galati. Accordingly, I conducted twenty-five semi-structured interviews over a timeframe of a month and a half in June and July 2012. Informal conversations, participant observation at the border with Moldova and a research diary completed the process. Gathering, collating and translating the interview data took place in Romania, with the analysis and write-up following in London. On this latter point, disseminating the results of my findings by means of discourse analysis was given particular attention, recalling its importance as “the step that connects your results back to the field, to audiences and readers in general” (Flick 2007: 67). My project also encompassed a more quantitative-based approach, employing content analysis to map out media framings of migration in the city of Galati. This triangulation of methods provided me with the necessary tools to effectively combine theory with practice, and in the process, to develop a critical understanding of the issues under consideration.

Most of my interviews were carried out in person, but a few phone and online interviews were also undertaken. This was the case due to scheduling conflicts but also in order to respect the preferences of some of my interviewees, especially those based in Bucharest. I was lucky to be able to interview a diverse range of people from many different fields. The snowballing technique came into play, with some of my interviewees and acquaintances in Galati acted as gatekeepers (Valentine 2005), opening up new avenues of research for me by putting me in contact with representatives of some organisations previously unfamiliar to me.

As the “half-way house between the rigid formality of a structured interview and the flexibility and responsiveness of a depth interview” (Moore 2000: 121), semi-structured interviews were the natural method of choice for my research endeavours, allowing enough scope to adapt and learn as I progressed. Another pillar of my work was the observation method, which, through “watching, recording and analysing events of interest” (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2006: 178), manages to allow researchers to “understand much more about what goes on in complex real-world situations than they can ever discover simply by asking questions of those who experience them” (Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003: 117).

The two focal points of my primary research were the Asylum Centre in Galati and the Galati Border Police. Both cases provided the opportunity to combine observation with interviews, resulting at times in a variant of “contextual inquiry” (Beyer and Holtzblatt 1998), which places emphasis on the role of the researcher within the respondent’s environment, thus exploring and gaining a better understanding of the context at hand.

At the Asylum Centre, I interviewed eight asylum-seekers and carried out informal conversations with several others. According to my research diary log, I spoke to approximately fourteen migrants within the camp; this included asylum-seekers as well as beneficiaries of a form of protection. Some of the richest, most thought-provoking information resulted from these discussions. Though immensely rewarding, it was sometimes a challenging process, involving individual and group interviews in several languages. While some of them spoke to me in English or Romanian, most of the asylum-seekers I spoke to favoured French as the language for our interviews. This can be linked to the prevalence of asylum-seekers from Francophone countries, such as the Maghreb region, in the Galati centre.<sup>3</sup> During my visits to the Asylum Centre, I also spoke at length to two members of staff and an integrated NGO staff member, their accounts complementing (and often contradicting) the asylum-seekers’ viewpoints. This balanced perspective on the realities of the asylum process in Romania proved uniquely constructive in terms of painting a holistic picture for my study.

The quest for balance was ever present in my research, seeking to combine the views of officials with the perspectives of asylum-seekers, whose voices often remain unheard despite finding themselves at the centre of the migration process. In this vein, Sayer and Morgan (1985, cited in Winchester and Rofe 2010) put forward the view that the same research technique, such as interviews, can be used differently by each researcher depending on his individual theoretical stance, whether to “give voice to silenced minorities” (Ibid: 22) or to gather information from authorities.

Official discourse was a core issue I had to contend with, as an inevitable part of interviewing officials, whether police officers or NGO workers. Often, the mere use of official discourse within a certain context had something engaging to reveal about the topic or the interviewee’s perception of it. Similarly, sometimes not providing an answer to a certain question

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<sup>3</sup> Research Diary entry 2, 6/06/12.

could be considered an answer in itself. Paying attention to the subtleties involved in the interviewing process had the potential to unravel additional meanings that could have otherwise been overlooked.

On a similar note, the key concept of *positionality* impacted on the process of data collection, as well as on my research experience. My status as a woman, a Romanian national and an immigrant studying in London all contributed to the way I was received in the midst of my interviewees, and this was especially notable when conducting group interviews with asylum-seekers. Being a young woman, their initial perception would always be that I was working for an NGO and was “there on some official business”.<sup>4</sup> On a few occasions, some migrants would only talk to me after one of their friends would explain that I was a student working on a project for my university.

While allowing my respondents the freedom and space to express their views unhindered, it is worth noting the dangers inherent in participatory observation, in that it can raise “issues of power relations and control” (Winchester and Rofe 2010: 22) and “does not necessarily allow the voices of the researched to speak” on account of their being “mediated through the researcher’s experience and values” (Ibid). Taking that into consideration, Winchester and Rofe (2010) also acknowledge the fact that “the key issue of the outsider gazing, perhaps voyeuristically, at those defined as Other” does not have a solution, although it needs to be recognized nonetheless. Coming to terms with the fact that “one’s positionality can bias one’s epistemology” (Takacs 2003: 28) was thus accepted as an inevitable part of the research process.

My experience with the Border Police in Galati was equally gratifying. Throughout the course of several days, I interviewed three Border Police officers and had informal conversations with two more. Although the interviews yielded considerable amounts of new information, I found that some of the most interesting viewpoints were expressed during these informal exchanges, providing a more casual spin on the official institutional perspective. Participant observation was undertaken both at the Border Police Headquarters in Galati, as well as at the Galati Border Crossing Point for Vehicles, which presented me with a practical outlook on what had thus far been a purely theoretical framework of borders and security. I should also note here

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<sup>4</sup> Research Diary entry 8, 17/6/12.

that I encountered some difficulties with regards to access, which resulted in a minor setback of my schedule, but in the end these logistics issues were settled satisfactorily.

Most of my respondents opted to stay anonymous, which was unexpected to a certain degree. While in the case of asylum-seekers and Border Police officials, anonymity was a prerequisite in order to gain access for my interviews, most of my other respondents made this preference clear as well. This tendency could be interpreted as a cultural conundrum in post-1989 Romania, characterized by a certain reluctance to publicly voice opinions that could be traced back to the source. This remains of course largely speculative but it was a research aspect that nevertheless intrigued me. Pseudonyms were given to all my informants in the end so as to preserve objectivity.

Keeping a research diary was particularly useful with regards to achieving critical reflexivity, which added direction to my research project and enriched my observations. It is necessary at this point to recall Dowling's distinction between a fieldwork diary, which comprises the qualitative data gathered throughout the investigation, and a research diary, i.e., "a place for recording reflexive observations" (Dowling 2010: 31) about the research process. For accessibility purposes, my diary ended up being a combination of the two, although throughout the dissertation the term 'research diary' is preferred.

Mention needs to be made as well of the use of content analysis in the sections dedicated to media representations of migration in Galati. As an "accepted method of textual investigation" (Silverman 2001: 123) used by researchers to analyse "how texts represent reality" (Ibid: 122), content analysis was utilized to map the distribution of migration-related articles in 'Viata Libera', the main newspaper in Galati, Romania. To this end, I analysed the content of all editions of 'Viata Libera' during the timeframe of January 2007 up to August 2012.<sup>5</sup> This was achieved across the span of roughly three months and involved surveying both physical and online copies. I should note that only physical archives were available for the editions published in 2007 and 2008, and while in Galati I was given permission to personally consult these archives at the headquarters of 'Viata Libera'. Online editions were surveyed for the years 2009-2012. While

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<sup>5</sup> This sample was chosen so as to coincide with Romania's entry into the E.U., with the aim of outlining any significant changes in media coverage and treatment of the topic of asylum and migration in Galati after the 2007 accession. Due to time constraints the analysis could not be carried out beyond August 2012.



thorough and time-consuming, this method helped me analyse and critically assess the breadth of my gathered data with more precision and accuracy, adding weight to my investigation.

The complexity of the research process, while at times overwhelming, was respected and maintained throughout the development of this project, with the aim of preserving what Flick (2007) terms “the quality in qualitative research”.

## Findings: Chapter One

### *'Managing' migration and security at the E.U. Eastern Border*

Employing a 'Foucaultian lens' (Huysmans 2006), I begin by mapping the degree of securitization that Romania, and in particular its Eastern border, has undergone after the 2007 E.U. accession, placing asylum and immigration into both a localized and a European context. This chapter will then go on to explore the ways in which the 'technocratic factor' informs the 'politics of migration management' (Geiger and Pécoud 2010) at the Romanian-Moldovan border. Media framings of migration and security will complement this discussion, with the aim to gauge representations of securitization in the local press. Much of the cross-border dynamics at the E.U. Eastern border have been contextualized from a Moldovan angle, highlighting the tenuous relationship between security and freedom of movement; a relationship which is consistently being reconceptualised at the edges of Europe. What emerges is the view of Galati as a microcosm of the migration-security nexus.

In the following section, I attempt to sketch an outline of the "geography of migration" (Colipca et al. 2010) at the E.U. Eastern border, with the city of Galati as focal point. Although Romania has been customarily described as a sending, transit and receiving country, most of the attention has been drawn to the first two migration patterns.<sup>6</sup> Out-migration flows were identified as the most representative according to a member of the Galati academic community, who also maintained that the two trends having most influenced the life of the local community in Galati were labour force emigration and the immigration of foreign entrepreneurs.<sup>7</sup>

Romania's status as a transit country dominated much of the discussion surrounding its role within the E.U. migration structure, with most asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants merely 'passing through' Romania on their journey to Western Europe. This seemed to overwhelmingly be the case in Galati, with Asylum Centre staff citing figures as high as ninety per cent<sup>8</sup> to indicate migrants who decided to leave the Centre, irrespective of whether they gained refugee status or not. In most instances, this also implied leaving Romania, although in the absence of a working tracking system or database, this proved difficult to ascertain.

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<sup>6</sup> Research diary entry 1, 5/6/12.

<sup>7</sup> Interview Cornelia, 20/7/12.

<sup>8</sup> Research Diary entry 9, 20/6/12.

A Romanian NGO worker made an interesting distinction between economic migrants, who usually decide to bypass Romania in search of more economically developed countries, and refugees, who choose to leave “only if they have family members or friends from their country of origin in other countries”.<sup>9</sup> This could point to a prevalence of refugees to settle in Romania, as opposed to economic migrants, although no statistical evidence that could support this assertion currently exists. I often felt that some migrants found themselves in the Centre purely out of economic considerations. One of my respondents told me that the only reason he had come to Romania was “*because I understood it is easier, quicker to get papers than France for example*”.<sup>10</sup> The politics of migration in Galati often yielded equally contentious findings.

According to official sources of the Galati Border Police, Moldovans, Georgians, citizens from the former Soviet Union and Afro-Asian citizens (particularly Bangladeshi) constitute the core migrant groups crossing the Romanian Eastern border.<sup>11</sup> When it comes to asylum, the main countries of origin were cited as currently being Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Algeria and Tunisia, with mention that the majority of migrants hosted in the Galati Asylum Centre at the time of my research came from the Maghreb countries.<sup>12</sup> Moldova was included in the list of main countries of origin for asylum both in 2010 and 2011, but did not feature in 2012, although the latter set of statistics only included the first six months within the year.<sup>13</sup> As a side note, Bangladeshi migrants coming through Moldova have been recently signalled as a notable percentage of illegal border crossings both by Galati media and officials,<sup>14</sup> being considered an issue of particular concern at the Eastern border. One particularity of this migration movement was that Bangladeshi migrants enrol at university in Moldova legally, and afterwards they “*prepare the ground for crossing the border illegally*”,<sup>15</sup> first to Romania and often onwards towards richer Western European countries. I interviewed two asylum-seekers from Bangladesh who not only confirmed this trend with regard to themselves but also to several other Bangladeshi students going to university in Moldova, in the city of Cahul.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Research Diary entry 13, 28/6/12.

<sup>10</sup> Interview Yusuf, 18/6/12.

<sup>11</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

<sup>12</sup> Interview Tiberiu, 20/6/12.

<sup>13</sup> Interview Maria, 20/06/12.

<sup>14</sup> Research Diary entry 16, 4/7/12.

<sup>15</sup> Interview Marius, 21/6/12.

<sup>16</sup> Interview Kabir and Maruf, 22/6/12.

Galati has a unique status as border city within the Romanian (and European) migration constellation, and this has been confirmed throughout my research. One Border Police officer went so far as to describe it as “*the most important [city] in terms of migration on the Eastern border*”.<sup>17</sup> There is certainly a case to be made in this respect when considering that Galati covers a significant portion of the E.U.’s external Eastern frontier. The border with Moldova, spanning 681 kilometres, not only happens to be one of the E.U.’s longest frontiers (House of Lords 2009), but is also Romania’s most extensive border, with the Ukrainian frontier coming in second (Monitorul Oficial 2011). This reinforces the geostrategic significance of Galati in the E.U.’s ‘politics of migration management’. Romania’s ‘frontier within a frontier’ distinguished itself within the national media framework as well. According to audience studies cited by a local journalist, “*Galati is fortunate to have the most read local daily newspaper in Romania*”.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, attention was also drawn to the remarkable status of the ‘Viata Libera’ local newspaper within Romania as the “*daily newspaper with the best index of local news*”.<sup>19</sup>

The Galati Border Crossing Point for Vehicles that I visited during my field research is one of the largest of its kind on the Romanian-Moldovan frontier, registering up to 2000 crossings a day,<sup>20</sup> all of them falling under legal migration, usually on a short-term basis. Migration and security go hand in hand here, and it was without doubt a striking experience to observe first-hand what Feldman (2012) aptly terms “the migration apparatus”. The increased security measures and equipment put in place at border crossing points such as the one I visited made it practically impossible for any illegal crossing attempts to succeed, and in effect, most of the border traffic consisted of migration for economic purposes, especially small border traffic between Moldovans and Romanians. It was the ‘legal’ aspect of migration that I witnessed, the ‘presentable’ side, if one may venture to call it thus. That being said, forced migration was not absent from the crossing point. Asylum applications were sometimes submitted at Border Crossing Points; in 2011, for instance, two asylum-seekers applied at the crossing point in Giurgiulesti.<sup>21</sup> This, however, remained a rare occurrence.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview Vlad, 8/7/12.

<sup>18</sup> Interview Stefan, 11/7/12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Research Diary entry 23, 17/7/12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Despite the fact that there were obvious obstacles to the unrestricted movement of people, incidents involving the smuggling of merchandise such as cigarettes, alcohol or drugs are registered with frequency at Border Crossing Points.<sup>22</sup> It is useful here to recall that security “amounts to the management of indefinite series of mobile elements” (Foucault in Feldman 2012: 85), whether migrants, diseases or illegal merchandise. Smuggling and illegal migration were considered top areas of concern in the field of migration by the Border Police.<sup>23</sup> This prioritization also took place in the local media, with Galati journalists identifying smuggling and illegal migration as the types of migration most covered by the local media.<sup>24</sup> This seemed to be the general opinion across the spectrum of my interviewees.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, illegal migration of African-Asian citizens to countries of Western Europe, the “seemingly legal”<sup>26</sup> entrance of migrants into Romania on unfounded grounds<sup>27</sup> and marriages of convenience between asylum-seekers and Romanian women were identified as the most frequent problems Galati is currently facing in the field of migrant trafficking.<sup>28</sup>

To further qualify the general structure of the Galati bordering framework, it should be mentioned that the border area in Galati consists of Border Crossing Points, where the ‘legal’<sup>29</sup> crossings usually take place, and the physical, or ‘green’ border, as the Border Police refer to it. The ‘green’ border, including the river Prut separating Romania from Moldova, has seen the bulk of the illegal crossings. Approximately 80 per cent of these illegal migrants are of Afro-Asian origin (from India, Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan) and the remaining 20 per cent are Moldovans.<sup>30</sup> According to the Border Police officers I interviewed, what sets Galati apart within the Romanian bordering framework is its amplitude in terms of the variety of border crossing points, namely separate crossing points for vehicles, trains, ships, a free zone, as well as the green border. This structural complexity makes the situation at the frontier between Romania and Moldova unique for the Border Police; the Galati border being considered “*much more important than in other*

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<sup>22</sup> Interview Eugen, 18/7/12.

<sup>23</sup> Research Diary entry 5, 11/6/12.

<sup>24</sup> Research Diary entry 20, 12/7/12

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Interview Florin, 3/7/12.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, invitations made by Romanian citizens in exchange for money or the pretext (used by migrants) of studying at various private universities in Romania.

<sup>28</sup> Interview Florin, 3/7/12.

<sup>29</sup> If anything, because it would be a near impossible task to manage crossing illegally.

<sup>30</sup> Research Diary entry 4, 10/6/12.

*parts because the risk of committing border crimes is much higher as they can be committed at the border crossing points for vehicles, for trains or for ships.”*<sup>31</sup>

Moldovan immigration featured prominently in my research, illustrating the ways in which migration and security are ‘managed’ at the E.U. Eastern Border. Accordingly, most of the traffic at the Galati Border Crossing Point consisted of ‘Moldo-Romanians’, i.e., Moldovan migrants with double citizenship, in particular those living close to the border and in possession of a permit for small border traffic.<sup>32</sup> As a side-note, these small border traffic permits, released by the Romanian Consulate in Moldova, form part of an extensive network of protocols between the two states, illustrative of the special relationship therein. Within this framework, the two states signed a series of agreements with the aim of establishing a number of facilities for Moldovan citizens that have significantly impacted on their freedom of movement, providing them with easier access than other migrants.

The greatest facilitator of Moldovan freedom of movement is arguably the ‘Ancestral Citizenship Law’, which opened up not only benefits in terms of their freedom of movement and access to the E.U., but also additional benefits in Romania, such as the right to buy property and land there.<sup>33</sup> Another example brought to my attention during my field research related to the integration of Moldovan citizens in local educational structures, as is the case at ‘Dunarea de Jos’, the main university in Galati, which grants a number of scholarships to Moldovan students on an annual basis.<sup>34</sup> While for Romanians this state of affairs can be justified on account of the rich historical background shared with Moldovans, for outsiders, especially other migrants who are not privy to the same extended rights, this could be seen as preferential treatment given to Moldovans. The Romanian-Moldovan dynamic aptly demonstrates the ways in which the rules of migration undergo constant negotiation at the E.U. border.

The simplification of legal requirements needed to obtain Romanian citizenship, as well as the 2007 E.U. accession, were both invoked as reasons for the “massive increase”<sup>35</sup> in illegal crossings from Moldova in 2007-2009. This could be accounted for principally by citing the discrepancy between living standards in the two countries, with low Moldovan wages and living

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<sup>31</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

<sup>32</sup> Research Diary entry 22, 21/7/12.

<sup>33</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

<sup>34</sup> Interview Cornelia, 20/7/12.

<sup>35</sup> Interview Vlad, 8/7/12.

conditions exacerbating Moldovan migration to Romania and to the significantly richer Schengen countries.

Subsequently, Moldovan immigration emerged as the core migration dynamic at the Eastern border, with some controversial aspects linked to the issue of Romanian citizenship. In this vein, one can talk of the existence of a ‘double citizenship phenomenon’ in that most of the migrants in question are ‘Moldo-Romanians’. All the interviewees who commented on this issue agreed that regaining Romanian citizenship was important to Moldovans principally in terms of easier access to the E.U.<sup>36</sup> The question that begs to be asked here is this: what salience does Romanian citizenship even have any more since it appears to be heavily used to gain free movement rights within the E.U.?

To make matters more difficult, the issue of Moldovan asylum-seekers posed additional concerns. According to the Galati Border Police, most Moldovan illegal immigrants were aware of Romanian asylum legislation and would apply for asylum if apprehended during their attempts to illegally enter Romania. This gave them the opportunity to more easily run from Asylum Centres and re-attempt to cross the border illegally in their quest to reach Western E.U. countries.<sup>37</sup> A case could be made in support of the claim that many Moldovan migrants disingenuously used asylum as an instrument in their quest of reaching other parts of the E.U.

It needs to be reiterated at this point that migration and politics have always found themselves interlinked in the case of Romania and Moldova. It has been customary for Romanian politicians to use the promise of citizenship as leverage in their electoral campaigns, sending the message that migration rules will be more lax if they gain the Moldovan vote. The consequences of this ‘carrot and stick’ strategy and the resulting flexibility concerning the ‘Ancestral Citizenship Law’ did not escape European notice. The ultra-liberal Romanian policy was criticized as contributing to the ‘flooding’ of Western Europe with Moldovans eager to enter the “European economic paradise” (Cenusa 2010). This raised E.U. concerns in terms of Romania’s migration policy, with the Romanian-Moldovan relationship regarded as a potential “export of insecurity” (Monitorul Oficial 2010) at the level of E.U. migration management. My research

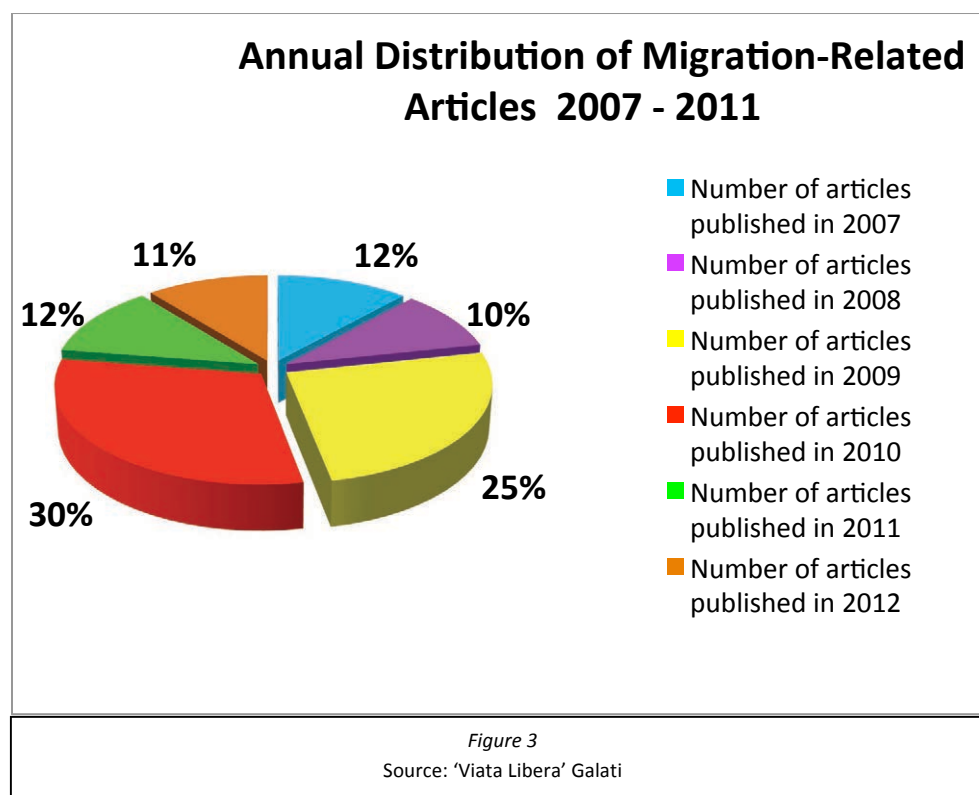
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<sup>36</sup> Research Diary entry 19, 9/7/12.

<sup>37</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

confirmed a considerable rise in Moldovan migration levels after the 2007 accession.<sup>38</sup> Tying this in with European security narratives, the E.U. was accused of being too ‘lazy’ in the face of this development, failing to take measures in order to stop the “covert enlargement to the East” (Cenusa 2010) that Romania’s actions were creating. The Romanian-Moldovan relationship and its impact on cross-border dynamics can be said to complicate the ‘politics of migration management’ at the E.U. Eastern border.

I find it useful here to draw a parallel with migration framings in the Galati press. Attached below, Figure 3 illustrates the yearly distribution of migration-related articles in local newspaper ‘Viata Libera’ during the timeframe of 2007-2012.



The main observation that I wanted to make here directly relates to the sudden rise in the percentage of migration-related articles published in 2009 and 2010. This can be justified against the backdrop of the 2009 protests in Moldova and the subsequent influx of asylum applications and illegal crossings into Romania. I hypothesise that increased cross-border activity, as well as political instability in a neighbouring state, are likely to have resulted in additional press coverage.

<sup>38</sup> Research Diary entry 6, 14/6/12.



Taking all this into account, can it be argued that Romania's borders are more secure following the 2007 E.U. accession? The answer was resoundingly positive when interviewing Border Police officers in Galati. Citing factors such as overall efficiency in the monitoring and control of the state border, acquisition of latest surveillance technology at the border crossing points and increased professionalization of Border Police personnel, they tied this to a substantial decrease in cross-border crimes.<sup>39</sup> E.U. -funded equipment of ultra-modern standards was a recurring element in Border Police statements, being hailed as the greatest perceived mitigator of insecurity at the frontier. The 'Foucaultian lens' can be applied here, highlighting the use of technocratic procedures or instruments (such as border surveillance equipment) in the embedding of discourse in "technologies of government that are practically realising European security modalities of governing free movement" (Huysmans 2006: 93). In this way, security is intimately connected to the 'politics of migration management', which are enacted every day at the border. The everyday manifestation of the migration-security nexus in Galati was brought to my attention through the personal account of a local activist:

*"This increase in securitization has also been noted throughout my trips across the county, in towns situated close to the border (such as Oancea) and through conversations with some of my acquaintances... I have often seen mobile patrols in fixed checkpoints supplied with very modern cars and also supplied with infra-red and night vision equipment."*<sup>40</sup>

In this way, border securitization has become an everyday phenomenon, noticeable by the general population. Hence, securitization is normalized; a mundane part of life in a border city, reinforcing the picture of Galati as a microcosm of the migration-security nexus.

I should note at this point that some of my respondents cast doubt on the success of border securitization at the Eastern frontier. A more pragmatic perspective was espoused by a representative from the National Agency against Human Trafficking in Galati, who pointed out that "[the Eastern borders] are not as secure as we are led to believe",<sup>41</sup> though she accounted for this state of affairs by citing staff and funding shortages at the Border Police.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview Vlad, 8/7/12.

<sup>40</sup> Interview Marcus, 17/7/12.

<sup>41</sup> Interview Andreea, 13/7/12.

Ultimately, a key finding was that people will keep attempting to illegally cross the border irrespective of the degree of securitization. This was acknowledged by several of my interviewees,<sup>42</sup> who also equated the securitization of migration with border securitization, in keeping with some of the theoretical approaches previously touched upon, especially Albrecht (2002) and Walters (2010). One of the local activists I interviewed offered an interesting outlook on the specific impact of border securitization on the free movement of people at the Eastern border, stating that “*there has been a significant rise in the number of attempts to cross, but not that of actual border crossings*”.<sup>43</sup> In keeping with the Border Police perspective, his take on this discrepancy between attempts and actual crossings was owed to the capabilities of the ultra-modern, high-tech equipment that the Border Police was equipped with. Once more, the “technocratic ring” (Crisp 2003: 13) of migration management was invoked, serving to depoliticize migration by framing it as a largely technical problem to be addressed by various management strategies (Channac, cited in Kalm 2010).

On a related point, the greatest change to Romania’s role in the E.U. security structure was experienced at the level of differences in control undergone at the border, with the most powerful distinction made between E.U. and non-E.U. citizens. One issue raised by Border Police officers concerning minimal control undergone by E.U. citizens entering Romania from Moldova or Ukraine was directly related to the threat of smuggling. It seemed to be the case that many third country citizens (especially from Moldova or Ukraine) made concerted efforts to obtain the protection given by Romanian citizenship so that they would be subjected to minimal controls at the border, often trying to introduce prohibited items or goods into the country.<sup>44</sup> This notion of citizenship as *protection*, as *political instrument*, was one of the main themes surrounding Romanian-Moldovan migration.

As a “distinctly problematic mediator of the relationship between mobility and politics” (Huysmans and Squire 2009: 15), security often came to the crux of discussions surrounding illegal migration in the wake of the 2007 accession. While acknowledging that during the first years following the accession, illegal migration constituted an “alarmingly high phenomenon”,<sup>45</sup> the officers I interviewed contended that it had considerably decreased during 2010-2011 and

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<sup>42</sup> Research Diary entry 18, 7/7/12.

<sup>43</sup> Interview Marcus, 17/7/12.

<sup>44</sup> Research Diary entry 14, 1/7/12.

<sup>45</sup> InterviewVlad, 8/7/12.

continued to do so in 2012. This was principally justified by means of the ‘Foucaultian lens,’ recalling the aforementioned heavy investments in Border Police equipment, which resulted in the detection of most illegal attempts to enter Romania. It was also held that there were “very few cases”<sup>46</sup> of illegal crossings currently happening at the frontier with Moldova. The progressive decrease of illegal migration with each passing year prompted one Border Police officer to claim that as a result “*we cannot talk about a threat to border security*”.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps most surprisingly, the same interviewee claimed that he “*does not think that there is an illegal migration phenomenon*”<sup>48</sup> to speak of. These statements underlined the notable role played by official discourse in my interviews with Border Police staff. Accordingly, there was no mention of any illegal crossings that were ‘successful’ and therefore escaped the notice of the Border Police.

Still, this should not be taken to mean that the information obtained was inaccurate. Considering the amount of E.U. investment targeted at bolstering the security of its new Eastern border, a strong case can be made for the role of the ‘technocratic factor’ in the successful increase of border securitization. One police officer at the Galati Border Crossing Point for Vehicles told me that compared to 1989, “*security is about one hundred times better*”,<sup>49</sup> despite the fact that before 1989 the Romanian border had a reputation for “*being very securitized [...]* *but it is nothing compared to now.*”<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, official statistics highlighted the growing number of illegal migrants apprehended at the border, with a 62 per cent increase in the number of apprehensions in 2011 (Craciun 2012). Higher apprehension rates could point to a decrease in ‘successful’ illegal border crossings, yet at the same time the number of attempts could have increased overall; what remains certain is that there is no definitive way to measure the accuracy of such statistics.

If border securitization as ‘status quo’ was firmly established in Galati, the same cannot be said for the securitization of migration and asylum in the written press. Within the following section, I venture to diverge from border politics and to bring media framings of asylum and migration to the fore of the discussion. Understanding how migration and security are

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<sup>46</sup> Interview Eugen, 17/7/12.

<sup>47</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Interview Eugen, 18/7/12.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

discursively framed in the press can offer a different perspective on how such issues are ‘managed’, and potentially securitized, in the media.

Keeping that in mind, one of the first findings that can be drawn from my research is that asylum and migration are covered differently in the Romanian media than in other European countries.<sup>51</sup> This notable discrepancy was one of the aspects which most intrigued me throughout my research. It can be argued that asylum and migration are covered less frequently, through the lens of a less sensationalist tone than in other European states. Compared to countries such as France or the UK, asylum and migration received a more understated treatment in the Romanian press.<sup>52</sup>

What interested me most was why this was the case, particularly in the aftermath of the 2007 E.U. accession. To add to the conundrum, this ‘low profile’ of migration is all the more baffling when considering Romania’s status as an E.U. frontier. Additional contrast is provided by other European border states such as Greece and Italy where asylum and migration are hot topics both on a political and media level. As to the reasons behind this discrepancy, one can only speculate at this stage. The local journalists I interviewed suggested that this state of affairs was due to the fact that *“the Schengen states are more affected by migration than Romania”*,<sup>53</sup> resulting in increased debate surrounding this issue. What is more, the editor-in-chief of ‘Viata Libera’ espoused the following perspective:

*“I think at the European level, migration is an issue treated more seriously. The explanation: Romania is just a transit country for migrants. The real problems occur in the developed countries where migrants end up.”*<sup>54</sup>

Other viewpoints encountered throughout my research hinted at a generalized lack of interest in the issue of asylum and migration, at least at a local level:

*“They [Romanian people] are not interested in it – they would rather read about someone who got robbed or stolen from, etc. Even if they read about it in the paper, they don’t dwell on it.”*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Research Diary entry 20, 12/7/12

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Interview Valentin, 12/7/12.

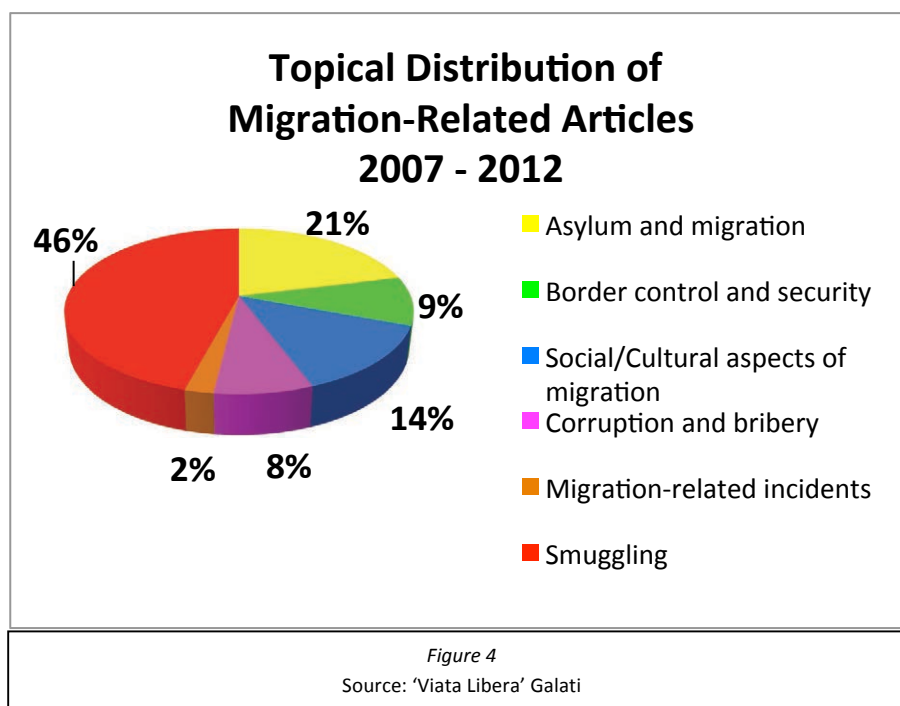
<sup>54</sup> Interview Stefan, 11/7/12.

<sup>55</sup> Interview Marcus, 17/7/12.

Related to this issue is what I call the ‘border city effect’, i.e., a concept which implies a correlation between proximity to the frontier and the impact of cross-border issues on daily life. This would suggest that people living close to the border are not as affected by such issues as those living further away since these types of occurrences are commonplace in border cities. One of the local activists I interviewed qualified this further:

*“Border cities, and generally places that are close to the border, find these news items to be common, natural; they aren’t fazed by them.”*<sup>56</sup>

This could partly account for the limited focus on migration and asylum issues in the border city of Galati, although it is likely that this is a national, rather than simply local, trend. Another explanation relates to the existence of different priorities in Romania, which are exploited by the media and local government to a far greater extent than migration. Economic concerns and poor living standards impact on Romanians’ lives the most, with migration only taking on a more prevalent role in the media *“whenever the Schengen accession debate comes into play again. Then it becomes a real issue.”*<sup>57</sup> Through this prism, the link between politics and migration surfaces as firmly established in Romania.



<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Interview Otilia, 6/6/12.

Figure 4 illustrates the prevalence of smuggling and asylum and migration (including illegal migration) in the overall distribution of related articles published between 2007 and 2012. Interestingly, the topic of ‘border control and security’ was relegated to third position, perhaps indicating a limited degree of securitization in the written press.

A secondary avenue of research related to the salience of the E.U. Eastern border as a topic in the local written press. The journalists I interviewed agreed that the Eastern border does not constitute a central issue in Romania, and further, that it does not attract the attention of the readership, basing this statement on audience studies and online article monitoring.<sup>58</sup> In European migration narratives, however, the Romanian-Moldovan frontier is perceived as “*very important, given the recent wave [of immigration] from Asia*”,<sup>59</sup> notably illegal migration from Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

Additionally, the local journalists posited that no increased criminalization of migrants occurred in Romania after 2007, and that the E.U. accession did not in fact have any impact on press coverage of asylum and immigration.<sup>60</sup> Discrepant views were common in my interviews with the two journalists. While the editor-in-chief opined that the currency of migration as a news topic increased after 2007, he and his colleague agreed that no rise had in fact occurred in the number of migration-related stories in the local press.<sup>61</sup> Most surprisingly, my two respondents disagreed on whether migration was an important media topic at local and national level.<sup>62</sup>

In the light of such contradictory findings, the impact of securitization on the media framings of migration proves difficult to assess. However, applying the ‘Foucaultian lens’ could help explain how migration and security are ‘managed’ at the E.U. Eastern border. It would appear that much of the border securitization that occurred in the wake of the 2007 accession was owed to the ‘technocratic factor,’ which intensified the ‘politics of migration management’. Moreover, Moldovan immigration emerged as the most significant cross-border dynamic, with illegal migration and smuggling as primary concerns at the frontier. The complexities of Romanian-Moldovan migration patterns demand consideration of the historical background

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<sup>58</sup> Interview Valentin, 12/7/12.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Research diary entry 19, 11/7/12.

<sup>61</sup> Research diary entry 20, 12/7/12.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

shared by the two states and how this impacts on Moldovans' freedom of movement. Galati, as a 'frontier within a frontier', can thus serve as an apt illustrator of the everyday manifestation of the tenuous relationship between security and migration at the borders of Europe.

## Findings: Chapter Two

### *The Politics of Asylum in a 'frontier within a frontier'*

If the previous chapter looked at the border city of Galati as a microcosm of the migration-security nexus, I will presently focus my analysis on the Galati Asylum Centre as a site of constant negotiation between security and freedom of movement. At first glance, migrant agency and border securitization appear incompatible yet I argue that there is room for asylum-seekers and other migrants to reaffirm their place within a highly securitized environment. In this manner, they shape the migratory experience, turning it into a “self-sustaining social process” (Castles 2007: 37). This chapter will attempt to unpack the often turbulent relationship between asylum and security, and the ways in which it is made manifest at the Romanian-Moldovan border. It will also briefly touch upon media narratives of asylum and migration at a national level. By adopting a human security perspective, I place the ‘politics of asylum’ in juxtaposition with the ‘politics of migration management’ informed by the more traditional state-centric view espoused in my first findings chapter.

The Romanian asylum framework proves to be an interesting object of study, startling at times in its complexity. To place things into context, I note that the Romanian asylum system features two detention centres at Arad and Otopeni, which are ‘closed centres’ tasked with taking people into public custody, for instance illegal immigrants or asylum-seekers who have exhausted their legal avenues for appeal. The aforementioned public custody can last up to six months with the possibility of being once renewed, with detainees having the status of ‘tolerated on Romanian territory’ until their circumstances are clarified.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, there are six Asylum Centres in Romania, two of which serve a double function: the Centres in Timisoara and Galati also act as Emergency Transit Centre and Relocation Centre, respectively. Although most migrants housed in the Centres are asylum-seekers, there are also a number of refugees (including relocated refugees in Galati) and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, who can elect to continue staying there after gaining status. For these reasons, I will use the term ‘migrants’ to encompass the different groups of people staying in the Centres.

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<sup>63</sup> Interview Tiberiu, 20/6/12.



Perhaps the most striking feature of the Romanian Asylum Centres is that they are in effect ‘open centres’; asylum-seekers and refugees are free to leave the Centre without supervision every day between 6 AM and 10 PM and can go anywhere in the city, whether it is to walk, buy food or meet friends.<sup>64</sup> Further to the point, it is not compulsory for asylum-seekers to stay in the Centre; if they would rather live somewhere else in the city, they are free to do so as long as they provide relevant documentation, i.e., a signed lease. I spoke to one asylum-seeker who lived in a friend’s flat in the city centre, although he did point out that he was required to check into the Asylum Centre every three days for security reasons.<sup>65</sup>

It is worth noting that asylum-seekers are also free to travel to other cities in Romania as long as they present an authorised slip of paper signed by a member of staff. Many of them used excuses such as going to Timisoara<sup>66</sup> to visit a friend, and were never seen or heard from again. Asylum Centre staff alleged that most asylum-seekers did so in order to legally travel to the Western Romanian border and then attempt to illegally cross into Hungary.<sup>67</sup> One of the officers working for the Asylum Centre in Galati stated that *“if this didn’t happen, the Centre would not be able to house everyone who needed shelter.”*<sup>68</sup> This state of affairs was linked to structural problems, such as insufficient room and funds, potentially leading to the impossibility of providing assistance to all those in need of it. Ultimately, if asylum-seekers choose to leave the Centres and either go to another Romanian city or attempt to cross the border into another E.U. state, it is in their power to do so. The Romanian Asylum Centres do not restrict their freedom of movement.

In this fashion, security and freedom of movement undergo an intricate process of negotiation in the ‘politics of asylum’ at the Galati Centre. It can be claimed, however, that open centres pose security threats, as the freedom and lack of supervision translates into an inability to track the migrants or to determine whether they come to any harm. This point was raised by the Galati Border Police as well; one officer claimed that since most migrants were acquainted with Romanian asylum and immigration law, they applied for asylum if caught in order to be sent to the Asylum Centres from which *“they could more easily try to escape [...] in order to reach the*

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<sup>64</sup> Research Diary entry 9, 20/6/12.

<sup>65</sup> Interview Yusuf, 18/6/12.

<sup>66</sup> Major Romanian city on the Western border with Hungary.

<sup>67</sup> Interview Maria, 20/6/12.

<sup>68</sup> Interview Tiberiu, 20/6/12.

*Schengen countries.*”<sup>69</sup> At the same time, the strong inter-institutional system of collaboration in Galati entailed immediate notification to the Border Police whenever migrants disappeared from the Centre. Taking into account logistical issues previously raised concerning the Centre’s limited space availability, this latter point should be taken with a grain of salt. The reverse was also true, however. During one of my visits at the Centre, I happened to be present when a Border Police officer arrived to notify the Asylum Centre staff that six asylum-seekers from Nepal had been apprehended at the Moldovan border.<sup>70</sup> By all accounts, collaboration between the two institutions appeared to run smoothly.

In my quest to gauge the impact of securitization on the ‘politics of asylum’ in Galati, I also drew from my personal experience visiting the Asylum Centre in 2004, the year it was founded. Equally informative was the personal account of a local activist who carried out an intercultural project with the Centre in the same year. What transpired from both reports was that previous to the 2007 accession, there were little impediments to access and interaction with asylum-seekers. The security dynamics at the Asylum Centre in 2004 were described as “relaxed”,<sup>71</sup> with “no restrictions at all”<sup>72</sup> apart from relevant bureaucracy needed to gain approval from national authorities for the purposes of the visits. Once in the Centre, though, the members of staff were especially cooperative and permitted the project group members to interview and spend time with the asylum-seekers. A lesson that can be drawn is that the 2007 E.U. accession did not significantly impact on mobility rights. With regards to their freedom, asylum-seekers were allowed to leave the Centre unaccompanied whenever they wanted, which has remained the case in 2012. It can be concluded that the E.U. accession and the adjacent border securitization did not appear to have an effect on freedom of movement in the Asylum Centre; the institution maintained its ‘open centre’ status after 2007, and there are currently no reasons to assume that this will change in the near future.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, 2007 was a landmark year for the ‘politics of asylum’ at the Galati Centre. One notable difference between pre- and post-accession migration dynamics related to sheer migrant numbers within the Centre. If in 2004, at the time of my visit, there were approximately

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<sup>69</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

<sup>70</sup> Research Diary entry 15, 2/7/12.

<sup>71</sup> Interview Otilia, 6/6/12.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Research Diary entry 11, 22/06/12.

five asylum-seekers in the Centre,<sup>74</sup> in 2012 the sheer volume of applications had overcome expectations, prompting worrying predictions about the future unless additional funds were made available to increase capacity. Through putting pressure on the Romanian asylum system, this latter development is directly linked to the effects of the E.U. accession. With E.U. membership and the new status of E.U. Eastern border, Romania has become one of the first ports of call for migrants entering the E.U. from the East. In practical terms, for the Galati Asylum Centre this has meant additional responsibility and pressure since all the asylum applications made at the Eastern border are processed in this particular Centre.<sup>75</sup>

It was particularly worrying that at the time of my research more than half of the total number of spaces available in the Galati Centre had been filled. Coupled with the notion that starting from September and October the volume of asylum applications usually grows,<sup>76</sup> this constitutes a worrying state of affairs indeed. To paint a clearer picture, the Asylum Centre had received around 350 applications during the January-June quarter, with at least 350 additional ones predicted until the end of the year.<sup>77</sup> Considering that the Centre in Galati, although one of the largest in Romania,<sup>78</sup> only features 250 available places, there is room for concern. While these numbers may not seem significant at E.U. level, especially for a European border state, it needs to be taken into account that the Galati Centre has only existed for eight years. Moreover, the Centre has contended with significant changes in the scale of the migration phenomenon in Galati, having to adapt from “*not really having asylum-seekers in the first years*”<sup>79</sup> to being overwhelmed with applications. To contextualize this, a legal adviser in Galati noted that of all the cases he had worked on, the percentage of successful asylum applications was only five per cent.<sup>80</sup> Averaging this at national level, the rate of acceptance went up to ten per cent,<sup>81</sup> which, while not a high figure, is still an improvement over situations in other border states such as Greece or Italy.

The distinctive dynamic of Galati as a hub of immigration shone through at the Asylum Centre as well. As far as local community integration is concerned, Galati appeared to be a step

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<sup>74</sup> Research Diary entry 8, 17/6/12.

<sup>75</sup> Research Diary entry 9, 20/6/12.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Interview Tiberiu, 20/6/12.

<sup>78</sup> Second only to the Asylum Centre in Bucharest.

<sup>79</sup> Interview Marius, 21/6/12.

<sup>80</sup> Interview Leonard, 29/6/12.

<sup>81</sup> Interview Radu, 13/6/12.

ahead of other Romanian cities. In this sense, Galati is the only city in Romania where the local public library has agreed to allow asylum-seekers and refugees to spend an hour every day reading or accessing the Internet.<sup>82</sup> This situation has not been replicated in any other Romanian city. While it can be argued that this development makes a minuscule difference in the asylum framework, the benefits in terms of migrants' daily life in Galati are indisputable. This unique example could be used to reinforce the perception of Galati as a generally open, welcoming community for migrants.

In line with Galati's status as a 'frontier within a frontier,' a similar pattern came to light during my research, this time with regard to the Asylum Centre. It followed that a 'double transiting phenomenon' was at play in the Galati Centre; most of the asylum-seekers opted to leave the Centre, and eventually leave Romania; in this vein, the Asylum Centre also acted as a transit zone for the migrants it hosted, in keeping with Romania's status as a transit country. The Asylum Centre thusly became integrated into a microcosm of the migration-security nexus; the Centre, Galati, and Romania itself formed part of the migrant journey only fleetingly, recalling Walters (2010)'s metaphor of the migrant process as a one-way street, running from sending states through transit countries and into the heart of Europe. Within this circuit, Romania assumes the role of sending or transit (and rarely that of a destination) state.

Further, Romania's 'undesirable' status as a destination country came to the foreground throughout my research. Accordingly, five of the asylum-seekers I interviewed made their intention to leave clear, citing poor financial conditions and the scarcity of well-paid jobs, or more generally, the "lack of opportunities",<sup>83</sup> as the main reasons for choosing to leave Romania. It was interesting to note that some of the asylum-seekers travelled to Romania specifically because they expected to find better conditions, as was the case of Kabir and Maruf who had illegally crossed the border from Moldova to that end. Once in Romania, they decided that they had to move on to a richer E.U. country that could offer them more in terms of economic opportunities.<sup>84</sup>

Another motivator for asylum-seekers wishing to continue their journey onwards was the absence of established migrant communities in Romania. This was deemed an incentive to settle

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<sup>82</sup> However, asylum-seekers cannot take books out.

<sup>83</sup> Research Diary entry 12, 25/6/12.

<sup>84</sup> Interview Kabir and Maruf, 22/6/12.

in a certain place since many migrants used these social networks to find jobs, accommodation and eventually become integrated into society more easily. It could also explain why the most refugees decided to go to other countries with more established migrant groups sharing their religion or nationality. Likewise, migrants choosing to stay in Romania often moved to Bucharest where there were bigger Arab, Turkish or Muslim communities.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, it was also the case that some refugees who had left Romania in search of better opportunities ended up returning to the country because they preferred it socially or culturally.<sup>86</sup> This can be linked to a recurring comment made by all the asylum-seekers I interviewed, praising Romanian people as “*warm, friendly, hospitable, always smiling*”,<sup>87</sup> in contrast to the more inhospitable financial conditions currently characterizing Romania. It can be said therefore that there is a dichotomy between the human factor and the financial factor, with most asylum-seekers claiming that had there been better economic opportunities in Romania, they would have chosen to stay.<sup>88</sup> One asylum-seeker summed it up thusly:

*“I like the people; it’s the lack of jobs that is the problem.”<sup>89</sup>*

The financial aspect was cited as a principal area of concern both by asylum-seekers and by Asylum Centre staff. Rashid from Algeria denounced the financial assistance received by asylum-seekers as “*shameful*”,<sup>90</sup> stating that without the economic support of his family back home, he wouldn’t be able to cope. Asylum-seekers receive an allowance of 3.60 RON per day,<sup>91</sup> which even by Romanian standards is considered very little, approximately the price of three loaves of bread. This raises serious concerns about those asylum-seekers who do not receive additional support from their families or friends. When considering that the Asylum Centre does not provide migrants with food or clothes, this appears even more problematic, although NGOs and churches have been known to sometimes offer assistance.<sup>92</sup>

On a similar note, an almost universal view held by my interview respondents regarded Romania as an open, tolerant and welcoming country, with no reported racial incidents towards

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<sup>85</sup> Interview Maria, 20/6/12.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Research Diary entry 10, 21/6/12.

<sup>88</sup> Research Diary entry 12, 25/6/12.

<sup>89</sup> Interview Iregi, 21/6/12.

<sup>90</sup> Interview Rashid, 21/6/12.

<sup>91</sup> The equivalent of less than one US dollar.

<sup>92</sup> Research Diary entry 6, 22/6/12.

asylum-seekers or other migrants.<sup>93</sup> It is worthwhile to note that while this generally benevolent attitude towards asylum-seekers holds true even when considering media coverage, intra-state issues with the Roma community and the Hungarian minority are nonetheless significant and serve to paint a more holistic picture of the geography of social tensions within Romania. In discrepancy with this positive view, however, one of the journalists I interviewed described the general attitude of Romanian people towards asylum and immigration as negative,<sup>94</sup> although one should keep in mind the subtle difference between the process of migration and the migrants themselves, and the attitudes raised by each in turn.

At this point, I would also like to draw attention to what I thought was one of the most interesting findings that my research yielded throughout my interviews with asylum-seekers in the Galati Centre. Accordingly, all the asylum-seekers whom I spoke to referred to the Asylum Centre as a ‘camp’ and would correct me when I referred to it as a ‘centre’, i.e., “*you mean this camp?*”<sup>95</sup> This subtlety in terms of language could imply an apperceived difference with regard to migrants’ experience in the Centre and the manner in which they came to terms with their own situation. In this way, they positioned themselves decidedly outside the sphere of what could be seen as ‘normal’ or ‘commonplace’, using the telling imagery of a ‘camp’ to distance themselves from the local population as well as from the Centre staff. The camp, as an “exclusionary space of the state of exception” (Nyers 2006: 125), along with the detention centre and the prison, is intimately connected to the “corresponding marginal identities of the victim, the fraud, the diseased body, the animal, the armed threat” (Ibid), further adding to the confusion often experienced by migrants regarding their identity and their place in a foreign, often unwelcoming society.

Still, throughout my research depictions of the Centre as an unwelcoming space were rare; the perspectives of the local community members I interviewed, including the Centre staff, were in stark contrast to migrants’ views. However, locals and their interactions with migrants elicited universally positive feedback,<sup>96</sup> which served to balance the view of the Asylum Centre as a ‘camp’, and, by extension, that of migrants belonging to the “species of alterity” (Nyers 2006: 124).

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<sup>93</sup> Research Diary entry 12, 25/6/12.

<sup>94</sup> Interview Stefan, 11/7/12.

<sup>95</sup> Research Diary entry 10, 21/6/12.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

I found one comment made by Rashid, an Algerian asylum-seeker, to be especially striking; he referred to his experience as an asylum-seeker in the Galati Centre as being “*encased in a sort of bubble*”,<sup>97</sup> which prevented him from meeting Romanian people and getting a grasp on their mentality. The difference in mentality was a recurring theme in my conversation with him; he expressed his intense dislike for “*escaping that Arab-Muslim mentality back home only to be thrown into a similar Arab-Muslim mentality in the Centre*”.<sup>98</sup> According to him, most of the migrants in the Centre came from Arabic-speaking countries or were Muslim, which corroborated statements made by Asylum Centre staff. Ultimately, Rashid believed that asylum-seekers in the Galati Centre were not well integrated into Romanian society. It needs to be acknowledged that his viewpoint could have been influenced by his individual circumstances wherein he usually spent every day going to Internet cafes, spending most of his time “in a virtual world”.<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, I spoke to asylum-seekers who considered themselves perfectly well integrated in local society; for instance, Kabir and Maruf from Bangladesh had made many Romanian friends in Galati and would often go out to meet and spend time with them. Moreover, they had a significant online social network, keeping in touch through Facebook or email with many friends from their time spent at university in Moldova.<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, the Asylum Centre staff’s outlook on migrant integration was predictably positive, factoring in the fact that few of those granted status did decide to remain in the country.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, Rashid’s experiences were not singular; despite the attempts of the Centre staff to provide asylum-seekers with the freedom and means to interact with the local population, language barriers were felt to be the top impediment in this sense,<sup>102</sup> with cultural or mentality differences appearing less frequently in their accounts. Dalmar from Somalia was especially gifted with languages; he spoke six despite being unable to read or write. His principal complaint was that the Romanian teacher who used to come to the Centre to give them language lessons no longer did so. This was particularly upsetting for him as he was genuinely interested in learning

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<sup>97</sup> Interview Rashid, 21/6/12.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Interview Kabir and Maruf, 22/6/12.

<sup>101</sup> Research Diary entry 8, 17/6/12.

<sup>102</sup> Research Diary entry 13, 28/6/12.

Romanian but was not provided with the means to do so while waiting for his decision.<sup>103</sup> He also drew attention to the fact that only refugees were allowed to take Romanian language lessons outside the Asylum Centre at local schools. He found that to be unfair to asylum-seekers such as himself who were genuinely interested in learning Romanian but were not provided with the means to do so while waiting for their decision.<sup>104</sup> His was a telling example of the obstacles migrants face in their navigation of the ‘politics of asylum’.

The status of migrant agency within the ‘politics of asylum’ at the Romanian Eastern border was riddled with complexity. My conversations with the asylum-seekers often contradicted the accounts of the Centre staff, and my time at the Centre was too limited to allow me to draw a holistic conclusion based on personal observation. This difficulty in ascertaining the role played by migrants and the agency they possess could be interpreted as an answer in itself. Keeping that in mind, my interviews unearthed instances of migrant agency at the Asylum Centre. An NGO staff member who was present at all times in the Centre made me aware of the existence of a space for migrants to make their voice heard; this space was created for them to express their opinions, make complaints or make suggestions for improvement. To that end, a mail box was placed at the entrance to the Centre where migrants could put anonymous slips of paper with their feedback or requests. Not only did the staff read the migrants’ input but there also used to be meetings where the Centre staff discussed these issues, although the practice had recently stopped.<sup>105</sup> Communication between migrants and officials did not appear to encounter any problems at the Galati Centre; this was a finding I had no trouble corroborating with the rest of my interviewees.<sup>106</sup> Subsequently, migrants often went and asked to speak directly to one of the directors of the Centre, and would often share their concerns in this manner.<sup>107</sup>

These instances of enacted migrant agency within a securitized environment pinpoint “how mobility can serve as a mode of ‘becoming political’” (Jordan and Duvell 2002), using whatever means are within reach, be they mail boxes, demonstrations or online forums. Recalling the success of integration-oriented policies by NGOs or governmental organisations, one of my interviewees opined that “*migrants have managed, over the years, to make their voices heard*

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<sup>103</sup> Interview Dalmar, 22/6/12.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Interview Maria, 20/6/12.

<sup>106</sup> Research Diary entry 11, 22/06/12.

<sup>107</sup> Interview Maria, 20/6/12.



*and to play a more or less active part in the life of the host society*".<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, another respondent felt that while there is space for migrants to develop a voice and a role for themselves in the securitised E.U. framework, it was *"up to them to come together and to ask for help"* and set up their organisations.<sup>109</sup> In contradistinction to Moldovan migrants, who had several organisations dedicated to support them, asylum-seekers lacked the same infrastructure in Galati, prompting a local academic to stress the need for them to set up an association or foundation, as *"it would be easier for them to voice their needs and make themselves heard"*.<sup>110</sup>

Within the 'politics of asylum', migrant agency, rather than having a space allotted to it, works hard to create a niche for migrants themselves, and in this process, highlights the number of individual migrants who succeed in evolving "transnational ways of living that show creative adaptation and strength: looking for ways out of bad situations, trying to maintain something of the past while opening to the future" (Agustin 2003: 36). One of the questions I asked all the migrants in the Asylum Centre referred to the way in which they envisioned their future. The imagery invoked by them was coloured with hope – despite their experiences laden with hardships and uncertainty, they used terms such as 'positive,' 'expectant', 'optimistic'. They remained hopeful "because we managed to leave!"<sup>111</sup>

In the following section, I diverge from the daily manifestations of the 'politics of asylum' at the Galati Asylum Centre to bring in the media factor back to the discussion. If the previous chapter focused on local press coverage, I now draw a parallel with national framings in the attempt to determine whether migration and asylum have been 'securitized' in Romanian media.

Data on the national coverage of migration in Romania following the E.U. accession was encountered in the 'Ge.M.IC.'<sup>112</sup> project, which featured textual analysis among its methods, covering two Romanian national newspapers throughout the timeframe of 2007-2009. One of its conclusions underscored a clear media and public emphasis on emigration rather than immigration, with Romanian emigrants to Spain and Italy at the foreground of press coverage (Colipca 2010). It followed that negative press was attracted by the journey and experience of Romanians in other countries rather than that of migrants within Romania. Consequently, the two

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<sup>108</sup> Interview Cornelia, 20/7/12.

<sup>109</sup> Interview Otilia, 6/6/12.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Interview Mohammed, 24/6/12.

<sup>112</sup> 'Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions in the Mediterranean and South-East Europe'. See [www.gemic.eu](http://www.gemic.eu)

national newspapers focused primarily on the causes and effects of Romanian emigration for the home and host societies, and rarely on the relations between immigrants and Romanian society. One of my interviewees drew special attention to the impact of the 2007 accession on decreasing “illegal migration motivated by the job factor”.<sup>113</sup> In this sense, more and more Romanians gained access to E.U. study programmes and to the support offered by the newly created National Employment Agency, which provided Romanian migrant workers with up-to-date records of job offers from different E.U. employers and other relevant information.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, the aforementioned emphasis on emigration, and particularly Roma emigration, was deemed “moderate”<sup>115</sup> to non-existent in the Galati written press.

Herewith a memorable distinction was also made in connection to the emigration of Romanians and that of the Roma community. On that account, divergent ideas of citizenship appeared to be employed in the Romanian press and the foreign press; if foreign newspapers equated Romanians with Roma in their stories, using nationality as the umbrella term, the Romanian media was adamant about stressing the distinction therein, applying ethnicity as the differentiating factor (Colipca 2010). The findings of the ‘Ge.M.IC.’ project also highlighted the process of “migrant othering” (Ibid) in the Romanian written press, specifically highlighting the criminalization of migrants as a constant in journalistic discourse. This association of migration with criminality and delinquency paved the way for the limitation of dominant discourse regarding migration and human trafficking to aspects of security and organised crime (Kambouri and Zavos 2011), drawing in the securitization aspect.

The strategic location of Galati was acknowledged at national level, with attention drawn to the necessity of doubling efforts to monitor migration and human trafficking both inside and outside national frontiers on account of the region’s double bordering framework.<sup>116</sup> An emphasis on emigration and “migrant othering” dominated national framings of asylum and migration, although the limitations of the project sample must also be acknowledged. Based on the information available, the securitization of migration in the national written press does appear to have taken place. This finding stands in stark contrast to the complex, often contradictory picture of local press coverage of migration. However, the ‘border city effect’ can be said to impact on

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<sup>113</sup> Interview Cornelia, 20/7/12.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Research diary entry 17, 5/7/12.

<sup>116</sup> Research diary entry 20, 12/7/12.

local press narratives. Suffice to say, migration in Galati and Romanian press was not securitized to such an extent so as to warrant a comparison to border securitization.

Asylum and security appeared to have a complex relationship in the border city of Galati. All the Asylum Centre staff I interviewed, as well as the CNRR<sup>117</sup> representative working within the Galati Centre, shared the view that the number of asylum applications or asylum-related crossings was more dependent on outside events (such as wars, conflicts and other exceptional situations prompting people to flee their homes) rather than border securitization.<sup>118</sup> This would suggest that border securitization did not in fact have a great impact on the progression of asylum flows into Romania although at the same time threats to individual security were indelibly connected to the flight of asylum-seekers.

Migrant agency surfaced as a constant enabler of negotiation between migration and security at the Galati Asylum Centre. The relationship between the ‘politics of asylum’ and the ‘politics of migration management’ is often intensely problematic, doubly so at the frontier. In this framework, security can work as a *“distinctly problematic mediator of the relationship between mobility and politics”* (Huysmans and Squire 2009: 15). One of my interviewees provided the perfect summation:

*“It seems that the migration policies of many E.U. member states still remain paradoxically stuck in a dilemma: how to find a balance between inclusion and exclusion, between the aspirations to fruitful intercultural dialogue and integration of migrants in the host societies and the tendency to perceive migration as a security issue, a threat”.*<sup>119</sup>

Acknowledging this dilemma is easy; solving it is another matter entirely.

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<sup>117</sup> Romanian National Council for Refugees.

<sup>118</sup> Research Diary entry 18, 7/7/12.

<sup>119</sup> Interview Cornelia, 20/7/12.

## Conclusion:

Adapting a double bordering framework, this paper has aimed to shed light on the effects of securitization on migration and freedom of movement at the E.U.'s Eastern gate. Galati, as a 'frontier within a frontier', has served as the backdrop of my investigation into the politics of mobility in an ever enclosing Europe. The tensions inherent in the E.U. Eastern border landscape have surfaced, caught between the 'politics of migration management' and the 'politics of asylum'.

Chapter One employed a 'Foucaultian lens' to investigate the intricacies of the migration-security nexus at the Eastern border. One of my core findings related to the role played by the 'technocratic factor' in intensified border securitization occurring in the wake of Romania's accession to the E.U. In this vein, the 'politics of migration management' placed emphasis on traditional security narratives, with human security arguably being relegated to secondary status. Moldovan immigration came to the forefront of my analysis, with the Romanian-Moldovan case proving to be an especially apt illustration of the ways in which security and migration are 'managed' at the edge of Europe.

In contradistinction to this more managerial view of security, Chapter Two placed emphasis on the central figure of the asylum-seeker as a key player in the narrative of his own migratory process. I maintain that migrants can carve out a place for themselves irrespective of their incongruent status within a highly securitized environment. Encapsulated in the context of the 'politics of asylum', migrant agency illustrates the complex relationship between security and freedom of movement. Significantly, my research indicated that border securitization bears a limited impact on the progression of asylum flows into Romania. Factors such as state insecurity appear to affect the external dimension of the politics of asylum to a larger extent.

The impact of securitization on free movement was perhaps most difficult to unpack in the medium of migration press coverage. A national emphasis on emigration patterns emerged in juxtaposition with a local focus on illegal immigration and smuggling. I posit that the 'border city effect' has an impact on the everyday perception of the phenomenon of migration in Galati. This could explain a lack of local media focus on migration while falling short in accounting for a similar national trend. Whilst the reasons behind Romania's understated position within

European migration narratives remain subject for debate, this dissertation has illuminated some key aspects of the media's importance in the ambiguous, often sensitive and always relevant issue of borders and migration.

Through the lens of a 'frontier within a frontier', this dissertation has hopefully succeeded in shedding light on a less publicized European 'borderland'. The impact of border securitization on migration is perhaps less contentious at the Eastern edge of Europe, yet its complexity carries strong implications for future research and parallel studies in other regions. Such studies are relevant to the understanding of European migration today, further underlining the importance of the individual in the process of transcending borders. Ultimately, it is hoped that this dissertation has resulted in a deeper understanding of border and security dynamics in Galati and Romania.

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## Initial Research Proposal – 27.02.2011

### *Assessing the impact of the securitization of the E.U. Eastern border on the free movement of people - The case of Galați: a 'frontier within a frontier'.*

#### **Background and context**

Situated at the Eastern extremity of Romania, the city of Galați borders Moldova, and in this sense, acts as the Eastern 'border city' of Romania. Following 2007 and the Romanian accession to the E.U., Galați has also taken on the role of the eastern border of the E.U., thus in effect becoming a 'frontier within a frontier'. Its strategic importance was highlighted even before 2007, with E.U. officials considering the Romanian border with Moldova one of the biggest challenges to be tackled in advance of accession, particularly with regard to illegal migration and human trafficking networks operating across the border. The complex relationship between Romania and Moldova underscores much of this debate, with the visa regime between the two countries especially contentious. The Romanian E.U. accession has prompted concerns that the movement of people across the Eastern border has increased, and this discussion is framed within the greater debate on the securitization of E.U. borders. The impact these measures may have on the free movement of people is often difficult to gauge, yet its study can yield profoundly interesting results that can help us gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved both at local and European level.

#### **Aims, Objectives and Research Questions**

This dissertation sets out to principally determine whether there is a significant impact of the securitization of European borders on the free movement of people in my chosen region of research, framing the analysis in the larger debate on borders and security. In so doing, this work will cover the following areas in an effort to:

1. Paint a comprehensive picture of the current state of the movement of people across the Romanian-Moldovan border and contextualize the role of the 2007 E.U. accession in the management of said border.

*1.1. Has the 2007 E.U. accession triggered a significant increase in the numbers of people crossing the border from Moldova into Romania? If this is the case, how do we explain this increase on the backdrop of tougher border controls following the accession?*

*1.2. Does illegal migration and human trafficking from Moldova still constitute a priority concern for the border police in Galați post-2007? Has the situation improved or not?*

2. Assess the impact of the securitization of borders on the movement of people from a Romanian perspective couched within an E.U. framework.

*2.1. Has the free movement of people across the Eastern border of Romania been influenced by the securitization discourse across the E.U.? Does this have an impact on the Romanian immigration policy? If so, how significant is this impact?*

*2.2. Is there a significant amount of asylum applications received at this border? Can it be claimed that stricter border controls impact negatively on the accessibility and ease to lodge an asylum application at this border point?*

3. Analyze the framing of the borders and immigration debate in the local media.

*To what extent does this issue represent a media concern and in what terms is the debate surrounding the porosity of the Romanian Eastern border framed?*

### **Relevant Literature**

I intend to make use of the extensive literature on borders and security and on the porosity of borders within the E.U. context. I will also draw on securitization theory and the existing work on the securitization of immigration policies in recent years. Immigration will be discussed as an intermestic issue and will be addressed within the framework of the E.U. expansion and, more specifically, in the context of Romanian accession. Relevant studies on the migration relationship between Romania and

Moldova will highlight the background and significance of the movement of Moldovans across the Eastern border. To contextualize the issue, the E.U. and Romanian cases will be highlighted, with special emphasis on the city of Galați and its strategic significance as both a ‘borderland’ and a frontier within a frontier.

### **Methodology and Data Analysis**

This project will involve both primary and secondary research methods. The primary data collection will rely on evidence gathered from a month of fieldwork undertaken in Romania, principally in the ‘border city’ of Galați. In this sense, I plan to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with border police officers and staff, including the Head of the Border Police in Galați, as well as with staff working at the Reception Centre for Asylum-Seekers in Galați. Establishing contact with refugees now living in Galați will also be attempted. These interviews will be coupled with participatory observation at the border, completed by a research diary. At the same time, secondary research will be conducted through textual analysis of selected newspapers, journals and other relevant field documentation, which will supplement the primary data and will help us gain a wider understanding of the issues under consideration.

### **Outcomes, rationale and value of research**

My reasons for having chosen to focus on this topic for my dissertation are twofold: firstly, it is my belief that it represents a relatively understudied region of strategic importance within the E.U. context; secondly, I believe in the contribution that in-depth research into this topic can bring to the fore. Most debates on E.U. borders and security have so far been focused on Southern borders and the Mediterranean region, notably Spain, Italy and Greece. Insufficient attention has arguably been paid to the Eastern border of the E.U., an area that has different yet nonetheless significant dynamics within the E.U. framework. The link between the securitization of the Romanian-Moldovan border following the 2007 accession and the subsequent impact on the free movement of people proves to be a challenging and rewarding object of research, one that I hope to do justice to.

<b>PROPOSED TIMETABLE</b>	
April-May	Background reading; setting the groundwork for my research trip to Romania
May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Presentation
May-June	Literature review; Methodology chapter
June-July	Primary data collection; fieldwork in Romania; transcription of interviews; organizing the evidence
July/August/early September	Findings chapter; editing previous chapters; tying the dissertation together
September 10 <sup>th</sup>	Submission

**Preferred supervisor:** JoAnn McGregor.



### Auto-Critique:

I believe that this dissertation has succeeded in its principal role: that of shedding light on the migration profile of one of the least well-known European frontiers. As with any study, however, limitations exist, and there were several areas which in hindsight may have warranted more focus.

My paper relied heavily on primary research, especially interviews, and this process resulted in a wealth of rich information that enabled me to gain critical insight into the topic under investigation. Through the course of my fieldwork, however, consistent re-evaluation of the process of analysis was necessary: for example, interviews had to be pushed forward due to issues with access and conflicting schedules. As such, additional time for primary data collection may have proven beneficial.

My initial proposal was built upon significantly throughout the research process. This was most evident in regards to the theoretical framework, which was largely absent from my proposal. A critical, agency-driven perspective rose to prominence in the latter stages of research, with emphasis on the role of the individual in an increasingly securitized environment. Another considerable departure from my proposal materialized into a dichotomy between the ‘politics of migration management’ and the ‘politics of asylum’, which informed the direction of my two empirical chapters. Initially, my paper comprised a separate chapter on media framings of asylum and migration, but this was eventually incorporated into sections in my first two chapters. Admittedly, this was a decision my supervisor and I discussed in the preliminary stages, and consequently media coverage was given a background role in the overall structure of my dissertation. This latter point ties in with a more general observation regarding the difficulty in selecting material and quotes from the extensive resources pooled from my interview data. Often a difficult decision to make, this process nevertheless helped focus my analysis to a greater extent.

On a final note regarding future research into this field, I would recommend the allotment of additional time for fieldwork without the restrictions of limited travel time. A timeframe of two or three months may prove more suitable. At times, the lack of existing literature on the specific region of interest was perceived as a hurdle, necessitating additional time and research efforts, although it is undoubtedly also true that this can be interpreted as a positive element. Considering the shortage of research on Romania, and in particular its Eastern border, this study has hopefully made a small contribution towards filling a gap in the relevant literature.

## Appendices:

1. Tables of all interview respondents
2. Sample interview schedule
3. Interview transcript extract
4. Research diary extract
5. Sample content analysis data

## Tables of all respondents

For the purposes of this dissertation, all names listed below are pseudonyms.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Tiberiu	Officer	Galati Asylum Centre
Marius	Deputy Director	Galati Asylum Centre
Radu	Police Officer	Galati Border Police
Eugen	Police Officer	Galati Border Police
Vlad	Police Officer	Galati Border Police
Florin	Specialist Police Officer	General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police - Galati Directorate for Countering Organized Crime (BCCO)
Andreea	Specialized Inspector	National Agency against Human Trafficking (ANITP) Galati
Leonard	Legal Advisor	Romanian General Inspectorate for Immigration
Carmen	Youth Counsellor/Psychologist	'Save the Children' Galati
Denisa	Officer	UNHCR Romania
Maria	Legal Advisor	Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR)
Laura	Customs Inspector	Galati Customs Office
Valentin	Coordinating Editor	'Viata Libera' Galati
Stefan	Editor-in-chief	'Viata Libera' Galati
Cornelia	Local Academic	'Dunarea de Jos' University of Galati
Marcus	Local Activist	n/a
Otilia	Local Activist	n/a

<u>Name of asylum-seeker</u>	<u>Country of origin</u>	<u>Time in Galati Asylum Centre</u>
Arif	Bangladesh	2 months
Dalmar	Somalia	5 months
Iregi	Kenya	3 months
Kabir	Bangladesh	4 months
Maruf	Bangladesh	4 months
Mohammed	Syria	6 months
Rashid	Algeria	10 months
Yusuf	Saudi Arabia	2 months

## Sample Interview schedule: Border Police officers

### **Background:**

- Could you please tell me about your position? (What does your position entail?)
- How long have you been doing this job?
- What are some of your favourite/least favourite aspects of your job?
- Has the 2007 accession brought about any significant changes in terms of your job? (Which? Are they an improvement to the pre-accession era?)

### **Border activity:**

- Galati border (How is it different from other border points? Place in border regime? More/less important compared to other Eastern border points?)
- Main migration issues? Current priority concern for Galati border police? (illegal migration, forced migration, smuggling, human trafficking, etc.)
- Why more than other forms of migration? (Have priorities changed after 2007? Why/Why not?)
- Main migrant groups crossing border? (Moldovans, Roma, other nationalities?)
- Asylum-seekers (estimate of number? Countries of origin? Comparison with other border points)

### **Moldova:**

- Has the 2007 accession triggered a significant increase in border crossings from Moldova? (Why? Increase in illegal migration?)
- Media focus on illegal migration & human trafficking from Moldova - experience supports claim?
- Has migration management at the border with Moldova changed for the worse?
- Moldovans claiming Romanian citizenship (numbers? Situation changed post-2007? To what degree?)

- ‘Ancestral Citizenship Clause’ (significance?)
- Special relationship Romania-Moldova (impact on freedom of movement? Preferential regime as opposed to non-Moldovan migrants?)
- Moldovan asylum-seekers?

### **Migrant rights:**

- Are they respected at the border? (How? What does border police do to ensure that?)
- Asylum process (What happens when they enter Romanian territory at this border? Taken where? What is the first thing you do? What organisations do they see? How easy to lodge an asylum application?)

### **Collaboration:**

- Local media (for their stories? Smooth collaboration? How big a contribution? Do they also speak to the migrants/asylum-seekers? OR a logistics/access issue?)
- Reception Centre for Asylum-Seekers (Smooth collaboration? How big a contribution? How much access?)
- Other organisations/local interest groups/NGO’s/churches/voluntary associations? (Why not? Smooth collaboration? How big a contribution? How much access?)

### **Security:**

- How important in your job?
- Key security concerns (why above others? What actions taken to tackle them?)
- Asylum & immigration approached as security problems? (E.U./Romania/Galati level? impact on freedom of movement at border? Increased link migration-security?)
- What role for Romania in E.U. security structure? (Is that felt at border? How?)

**E.U.:**

- Accession (Increased pressure to level up border control? Situation changed? Eastern border more secure after 2007? Why/why not? How does this impact directly on your work?)
- Do you feel like you're policing a Romanian or E.U. border? (Why?)
- E.U. involvement (How much? Before/after 2007? Significant difference in level of involvement?)
- E.U. support (how much/what to help handle border activity? Close partnership or left to own devices? Why? Perceived need for assistance/other reasons?)
- Pre-accession requirements (new training/programmes? What kind? To handle asylum-seekers? Made any difference? Funding? New security concerns?)

**Conclusion:**

- E.U. accession brought about stricter border controls?
- Increased criminalization of migrants? Link migration-security?
- Any final thoughts? (Anything we haven't covered?)

## Interview transcript extract

**C: When did you first get involved with the issue of asylum and migration and what led to your involvement in this area?**

I: I got involved in the study of migration-related issues in 2007 when I started preparing a first draft of the Romanian contribution to an FP7 project proposal. The proposal, issued by an international consortium coordinated by Greece, in which Romania was a beneficiary, was appreciated by the European Commission and granted financial support for the period February 1, 2008 – January 31, 2011, within the framework of the FP7 programme. I decided to participate in this project mostly because it offered me the possibility of pursuing my interest in the metamorphoses and shifting representations of Romanianness in the aftermath of the major economic, social and political changes that the 1989 Revolution entailed. It was obvious that migration to and especially from Romania had become a major, multifaceted social phenomenon with significant consequences at all levels of life, with a tremendous impact on the Romanians' sense of identity and self-representation as well as on their image in the eyes of the 'others' with whom migration as a form of mobility across national and cultural borders brought them in contact.

**C: In your opinion, are asylum and migration significant issues in Galati/Romania? Do you think migration and asylum constitute a national priority?**

I: Yes, asylum and migration are significant issues in Romania, as an EU outpost after its accession in 2007, and especially in Galati, as a crossing point at the Romanian *and* EU border. To refer to the special status of Galati in the frame of Romanian migration-related policies, firstly, I think that Galati is one of the Romanian towns most affected by the massive exodus of labour force to various West European destinations (mainly Italy and Spain, but also the UK and France). Secondly, the privatisation of the major industrial sites of Galati (e.g. the shipyard and the steel mill) has favoured the migration for economic purposes of Dutch and Indian entrepreneurs. Thirdly, Galati is also one of the destinations most 'at hand' for immigrants from the Republic of Moldova. Last but not least, Galati as a border town (with its Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum-Seekers) has often been taken as a temporary destination by asylum-seekers and refugees from India, Afghanistan, Somalia, Morocco, etc., before they could continue their journey to the West European states of the European Union. In brief, for many reasons related to economic, social, political and cultural dynamics, migration and asylum must be considered local and national priorities.



**C: Has the issue of asylum and immigration in Romania been made more public, perhaps more popular, after the 2007 accession?**

I: I think that, with regard to the public ‘visibility’ of immigration and asylum, things have not changed much after the 2007 accession. More often than not, the Romanian media take interest in the contribution that foreign investors could make to the development of the Romanian economy, which, implicitly, presupposes temporary residence of foreign citizens in Romania. In addition, given the shortage of labour force in certain economic sectors (as a side-effect of massive migration from Romania), certain media reports tackle the issue of potentially increasing flows of foreign workers’ migration to Romania. Otherwise, I think that migration from, rather than to, Romania continues to be a major concern for the Romanian public opinion.

**C: What types of migration are more common in Galati and Romania?**

I: Romania can be described as a sending, transit and receiving country at the same time. However, out-migration flows have been by far the most representative (as statistically proven). All three migration trends could be identified for the Galati area as well, but I think that the emigration of labour force from Galati and the immigration to Galati of foreign entrepreneurs have mostly influenced the life of the local community.

**C: What campaigns around immigration or issues dealing with asylum, if any, exist in Galati to your knowledge? Are there local interest groups or local activists who get involved in asylum/immigration projects (for example at the Reception Centre for Asylum-Seekers)?**

I: To be honest, I don’t know much either about campaigns organised in Galati in relation to immigration or asylum issues or about local NGOs (otherwise relatively few) interested in them. Though I have not collaborated with the regional reception centre for asylum-seekers in Galati, I think that an important component of the cultural and social integration programme organised there by the authorities is Romanian language teaching and one of my department colleagues has been directly involved in it (as far as I remember).

**C: Could it be said that the attitude of Romanian people towards immigration and asylum, and also asylum-seekers and migrants, is generally positive or more positive than in other E.U. member states?**

I: I think that Romanian people do have a more positive attitude towards immigrants and asylum-seekers. That could be partly accounted for by the fact the number of immigrants/asylum-seekers coming to Romania has not increased so significantly to the point that they could be perceived as a threat by the

Romanian majority, especially in the competition for jobs on the labour market. In addition, as I have already mentioned, certain economy sectors have been negatively affected by emigration-caused labour shortage, so new labour force is definitely needed there. As for the foreign investors, they are actually seen as most welcome and the local population usually has high hopes for the economic development that they might encourage in the area. Finally, with regard to the asylum-seekers, it seems that, more often than not, they decide to stay in Romania only temporarily so they have relatively little interaction with the local community and rarely get integrated. And, anyway, I suppose that living in a society that is essentially characterised by multiculturalism, Romanians have learnt to be more tolerant and to cope better with the challenges that sharing the same geographical space with different cultural groups may imply.

**C: Is there a space for migrant agency – space for migrants to develop a voice and a role for themselves in this securitised E.U. framework?**

I: It seems that the migration policies of many EU member states still remain paradoxically stuck in a dilemma: how to find a balance between inclusion and exclusion, between the aspirations to fruitful intercultural dialogue and integration of the migrants in the host societies and the tendency to perceive migration as a security issue, a threat? In my opinion, these trends in migration policies actually connect with patterns of thinking and behaviour that function at the societal level concerning the self – other relationships. More specifically, these policies reflect two kinds of attitudes towards the foreign other: a positive, tolerant assessment of cultural differences sustained by the willingness to perceive the foreign other as possible to be assimilated and to engage in intercultural dialogue on equal footing (i.e., *philia*) and a negative stereotyping-oriented approach to the migrants' otherness that may be accounted for by ethnocentric mentalities and that may degenerate into discrimination and racism (i.e., *phobia*). As a result of the successful implementation of integration-oriented policies by governmental and/or non-governmental organisations in various European spaces, the migrants have managed, over the years, to make their voices heard and to play a more or less active part in the life of the host societies. But there are still steps to be taken to radically change the perspective on and attitudes to migration, to leave behind its negative understanding as a threat in favour of its positive perception as a process leading to the construction of a new European identity. That is what many activists/ NGOs Europe-wide and international projects like Ge.M.IC. have militated for.

**C: In your opinion, is Romania and/or Galati a welcoming community for asylum-seekers and migrants?**

I: I think that Romania, in general, and Galati, in particular, may be looked upon as providing a welcoming environment to several categories of immigrants. Even prior to 1989, students coming

especially from Middle-East and African countries migrated to Romania to study and at least part of them chose then to look for jobs and settle in Romania. After 1989, the gradual decline of Romanian economy and the loss of significant labour force through massive emigration made the contribution of foreign entrepreneurs (especially from Western economically-developed states, e.g. the USA, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, etc.), on the one hand, and of both highly specialised and semi-skilled workers, on the other, desirable, if not necessary. There have been, of course, conflicts between the Romanian employers and the foreign workers or between the foreign employers and the Romanian employees (see, for example, the case of the Galati steel mill), but they seem to have been mostly motivated by economic, payment-related reasons and never degenerated, as far as I know, into extreme manifestations of racism; apart from that, I assume that such cases, which have been occasionally presented by the Romanian – national and/or local – mass-media, have not damaged the relationships between the Romanian hosts and the foreign immigrants to the point of engendering highly xenophobic feelings and reactions in the Romanian society in general. Also, reference should be made to the special case of immigrants from the Republic of Moldova who have enjoyed a special status among immigrants to Romania, being granted scholarships for study (see the case of “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati) and facilities to obtain Romanian citizenship, as the 1991 Romanian Citizenship Law practically defined the migration of Moldovan citizens as a form of repatriation. Finally, though I am not very familiar with the actual asylum-related practices, I know that the harmonisation of the Romanian system with EU and international standards in this field has led, at least in theory, to the implementation of improved programmes to facilitate the social and cultural integration of the refugees/asylum-seekers. Therefore, I presume that one possible explanation for the fact that many asylum-seekers still consider Romania mainly as a transit area and not their final destination is that social integration necessarily implies professional integration and, since the jobs they may have access to are not very well paid or at least not as well paid as in other EU member states, asylum-seekers opt for only temporary residence in Romania.

**C: What about the 2007 E.U. accession – do you think it has brought about improvements in terms of asylum and migration?**

I: Again, distinction must be made between emigration from Romania and immigration to Romania, asylum included.

In the case of emigration from Romania, it is obvious that the 2007 EU accession has brought about significant improvement especially with regard to labour and study migration. The access of Romanian students to various study programmes organised by universities in other EU member states has been definitely facilitated by Romania’s becoming an EU member state. As for labour migration, the creation of a National Employment Agency which joined the EURES (European Employment Services) network has

provided Romanian migrant workers with up-to-date records of job offers from different EU employers and of the restrictions for employment in different EU countries which may influence their access to legal employment; in addition, this institution has constantly been a source of further information, guidance and assistance with regard to social security policies for the legally employed Romanian migrant workers. Consequently, over the years that passed after Romania's accession to the EU, the illegal migration outflows motivated by interest in better paid jobs have definitely decreased.

In the case of immigration to Romania, I think that the most important developments in the implementation of improved policies for immigration and asylum were embarked upon especially before Romania's 2007 accession to the EU, as part of the harmonisation of the Romanian legislation with the EU Acquis. The Romanian Border Police, the Authority for Aliens and the National Refugee Office had to constantly adjust their policies to prove Romania's ability to assume the obligations of membership as stipulated in Chapter 24 of the EU Acquis (Justice and Home Affairs), a process which was concluded in April 2005. My general impression is that the years to follow have mainly brought about the continuation of the initially implemented programmes. But I suggest your taking these statements rather with a grain of salt since I have not carried out an in-depth study of issues of immigration and asylum in Romania and I cannot say that I have very thorough knowledge in the field.

## Research diary extract, entry 12

25/6/2012

### *Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum-Seekers - Galati, Romania*

We sit on a bench in the courtyard. It is one of the hottest days this summer (so far!) but under the shade of the trees, it's more pleasant. More bearable. The two men from Bangladesh complain about the weather, I heartily agree. I call them men but I am unsure of their age. One of them, Maruf, seems very young and wary; his eyes dart back and forth from his friend to me, but as the conversation goes on, he relaxes. They are all of age, as Marius told me that minors are housed in another building and they are, of course, governed by different rules. Regardless, age never comes up in my conversations with them except in passing. Kabir, the more talkative one, asks me how old I am. Twenty-five, I say. "You don't look it! No, no you are not twenty-five." I smile and don't pursue the argument.

It is the first conversation I have with them so the mood is informal, relaxed. I ask them about their interests, their hobbies. Can they pursue such activities here in the Centre? Football is the most popular sport. "See, over there? We play there every day after lunch." They point to the barren field just opposite us. The vegetation is a bit overgrown in places, and the sun looks like it would beat down mercilessly on the players. For all intents and purposes, though, it is a wide, open space for them to practice sports. I politely refuse their invitation to play football later. Maruf gushes about how good Kabir is at football. "Better at cricket, though, he's the team captain!" Kabir brushes the compliments away, but admits that he prefers cricket.

A few men pass us by on their way to the kitchens. Maruf shouts out their names, pointing to me which one of them is good at cricket, what positions they play. One of the men comes over to us. His name is Omair. He speaks to me but I can't understand what he's saying. My instinct tells me it's Arabic but every now and then he uses an English word. The two men speak to him, smiling back at me. I assume they are explaining who I am and what I'm doing there. Omair smiles widely at me and I answer his smile. That is the only way we can communicate directly. Kabir explains that Omair is happy to see me there because they don't have many visitors and he loves Romanian people. I ask him to thank Omair, who nods energetically. Not for the first time, I wonder at the benefits of having a translator. It would have given me the chance to be able to more readily communicate with Omair, but it is difficult to find translators for 'rare languages' in Galati, as Marius told me. I notice that Omair is trying to put something in my hand. It is a small business card for a mosque in Bucharest, inviting young people to join. I nod my head in thanks

and smile at Omair, whose face brightens at my gratitude. The gesture is touching, giving me the feeling that we managed to somehow communicate without words. I place the card in my purse for safe keeping.

Omair hangs around a while longer. This distraction has turned our conversation to the subject of Romanian people and society. “All so very friendly, smiling, open,” Maruf and Kabir are not short on compliments about the Romanians they met so far. I ask them about their interaction with the local community, whether they feel like they are made welcome in Galati, whether they like Galati. Maruf is quiet, but Kabir has much to say on the subject. He talks about his many Romanian friends, how often he goes out to meet them and spend time with them. “I’m going to the cinema with Alex later today,” he mentions. Maruf weighs in as well, repeating how nice people here in Galati are. He complains about language barriers, says his English is “not so good as Kabir’s,” but he makes an effort. I ask them if they feel that Galati is a welcoming environment. “Oh yes!” Maruf exclaims. They go on at length about the kind-hearted people, the friendly atmosphere, the openness. “But the jobs... no jobs. No prospects.” I ask them if they tried to find a job. No, they say, but there are no jobs regardless. They base this on accounts and experience of other asylum-seekers, who ‘can’ work, i.e., who are legally entitled to do so. I gather from this that Maruf and Kabir must have been in the Centre for less than a year. It is only then that asylum-seekers can work in Romania. They complain about this for a long time, questioning what other migrants do if they have no family or friends to send them extra money. “You can starve,” Kabir says, “maybe not starve, but you eat bread, it’s all you eat, it is not enough for meat or rice or- Maybe rice you can buy but it is not enough, not enough. I don’t know how they do it.” I ask them, if they get money sent regularly. “Otherwise you can’t survive,” Maruf gestures empathically. I wonder what it must be like, having to depend on 3,60 lei daily. It is not a pleasant thought, and I tell them. “You understand. Some of these- these organisations, they come and we tell them, others tell them, but nothing changes.” I ask if they come often. Maruf shakes his head. Kabir qualifies that more pragmatically, “but we haven’t been here that long, not like some of the others”.

I notice Rashid standing closeby. I wonder briefly if he remembers me, it’s been three days since my interview with him. I ask him how he is and he responds warmly. We exchange a few pleasantries and I apologise to Maruf and Kabir for speaking in French. They don’t understand it but they like how it sounds. I ask Rashid if he is going to go to the Internet café today. “Of course. Every day,” he smiles. I wish him a good day and he thanks me. I watch him go and can’t help but feel a strange sense of emotions. The notion that he prefers to spend his time in a virtual world rather than face a disappointing reality is sad, but it is how he copes. Rashid is strong, that much our interview has revealed. He is a survivor. They all are. Despite it all, he still has hope for the future. I ask Maruf and Kabir about how they see their future. Both optimistic, yet Kabir’s response also betrays a sense of pragmatism – “generally positive”, he commented

on his future. “We have to carry on, what else can we do?” He asks me if I agree. I tell him that is a good attitude to have.

A group of young men exit the building (where the sleeping quarters and kitchens are), chattering loudly. Time for football, it seems. I check the time and realise a few hours have gone by without my noticing at all. I have an interview to conduct in the other side of town but Kabir asks me to stay a little longer. “You can watch at least if you can’t play.” It’s hard to resist his enthusiasm but Maria comes by and tells me she has some materials for me in her office. I excuse myself from the young men and arrange to meet them again the next day. As I follow Maria into the building, the migrants’ shouts and cheers follow me up the stairs.

## Sample Content Analysis Data – ‘Viata Libera’ Galati

### *Migration-related articles in 2011*

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Author</u>
1.	‘Anchetă internă la Poliția de Frontieră’	12/7/11	Elena Parapiru
2.	‘Două autocare, blocate în vama Reni’	18/7/11	Maria Stanciu
3.	‘Contrabandă organizată ceas’	20/7/11	Ștefan Dimitriu
4.	‘500 de neveste moldovence’	25/7/11	Stefan Dimitriu
5.	‘Prada moldoveneasca de 132.500 de lei	26/7/11	Elena Parapiru
6.	‘Mertan alimentat cu tigari’	29/7/11	Elena Parapiru
7.	‘Cum sa furi un BMW spaniol, prin Londra’	6/8/11	Elena Parapiru
8.	‘Contrabanda cu tigari moare, dar nu se preda’	11/8/11	Elena Parapiru
9.	‘Asta-seara, spectacol de folclor din Ucraina, la Tecuci’	11/8/11	Angela Ribinciuc
10.	‘Primiti cu tigarile moldovenesti?’	17/8/11	Elena Parapiru
11.	‘Vreti cantare sau tigari de contrabanda?’	17/8/11	Toader Istode
12.	‘Mama moldoveanca escrocata de compatrioti’	24/8/11	Elena Parapiru
13.	‘Trei basarabeni “con tutto”’	24/8/11	Elena Parapiru
14.	‘Contrabandistul a venit direct in bratele noastre’	26/8/11	Toader Istode
15.	‘Pescar moldovean ratacit printre salcii romanesti’	27/8/11	Elena Parapiru
16.	‘Contrabanda si focuri de arma’	21/9/11	Elena Parapiru
17.	‘Un politist de frontiera retinut pentru contrabanda’	22/9/11	Stefan Dimitriu
18.	‘Doi arestati si 56.000 pachete de tigari confiscate’	28/9/11	Teodora Miron
19.	‘Exodul rromilor catre Chisinau’	6/10/11	Elena Parapiru
20.	‘Prefectul Paul Florea, in vizita la Chisinau’	14/10/11	Maria Mandita
21.	‘Trei masini si peste 1000 de pachete de tigari confiscate la frontiera’	17/10/11	Teodora Miron
22.	‘1300 de pachete de tigari de contrabanda si o masina au fost confiscate la Vama’	20/10/11	Tudor Neacsu
23.	‘Trei masini confiscate si amenzi de 15.000 de lei pentru contrabanda cu tigari’	24/10/11	Tudor Neacsu
24.	‘Peste 20.000 de pachete de tigari de contrabanda, ascunse in vagoane cu minereu’	31/10/11	Elena Parapiru
25.	‘Captura de tigari la frontiera cu Republica’	3/11/11	Tudor Neacsu



	Moldova'		
26.	'O noua captura de tigari de contrabanda'	4/11/11	Tudor Neacsu
27.	'Numire la varf la Politia de Frontiera Galati'	4/11/11	Stefan Dimitriu
28.	'Contrabanda pe Dunare/Tigari de aproape 90.000 de euro ascunse in peretii unei barje'	6/11/11	Tudor Neacsu
29.	'Exclusivitate : Afacerea "Tigareta de Galati"'	6/11/11	Ion Trif Plesa, Gabriel Kolbay
30.	'Se ingroasa gluma : 420.000 de pachete de tigari in afacerea "Tigareta de Galati!"'	7/11/11	Tudor Neacsu
31.	'Update – "Tigareta de Galati", tunul anului'	8/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay Ovidiu Amalinei Marius Tuca
32.	'Ancheta la Politia de Frontiera dupa scandalul "Tigareta de Galati"'	8/11/11	Tudor Neacsu
33.	'Politia de Frontiera si OZN-urile'	8/11/11	Marius Tuca
34.	'Galatiul contrabandistilor'	9/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay Ovidiu Amalinei Marius Tuca
35.	'Micul trafic de tigari e tot in floare'	10/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay
36.	'O tigara din sase este de contrabanda !'	11/11/11	Ovidiu Amalinei
37.	'Primele concluzii ale anchetei interne de la Politia de Frontiera in scandalul "Tigareta de Galati"'	15/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay
38.	'Seful de tura de la Oancea cauta explicatii in scandalul "Tigareta de Galati"'	15/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay Ovidiu Amalinei Marius Tuca
39.	'"Tigareta de Galati" – Seful de tura de la Oancea a fost consul la Chisinau'	17/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay
40.	'Retea de contrabandisti – destructurata'	18/11/11	Tudor Neacsu
41.	'Traficati? Traficam, Maria-ta!'	21/11/11	Teodora Miron
42.	'La romani contrabanda, la basarabeni "export"'	22/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay
43.	'Politist de frontiera cercetat pentru trafic cu tigari de contrabanda !'	23/11/11	Tudor Neacsu
44.	'Patru perchezitii in Galati privind contrabanda de telefoane mobile'	24/11/11	Marius Chiriliuc
45.	'Dezbaterile VL/ Contrabanda cu tigari "pe picior mare"'	28/11/11	Gabriel Kolbay Ovidiu Amalinei Marius Tuca

46.	‘Inspectoratul de Politie de Frontiera Galati va fi desfiintat!’	29/11/11	Marius Chiriliuc
47.	‘Chilipiruri de contrabanda/ Salon auto cu masini din confiscari’	2/12/11	Ovidiu Amalinei
48.	‘Tigari la frontiere – Contrabanda, vamesi si ascunzatori pe roti’	6/12/11	Ovidiu Amalinei
49.	‘Peste 7.000 de pachete de tigari confiscate in weekend’	12/12/11	Teodora Miron
50.	‘Politia de Frontiera, reorganizata in cinci inspectorate teritoriale si Garda de Coasta’	16/12/11	Marius Chiriliuc
51.	‘Din Moldova in Belgia, via Romania’	22/12/11	Teodora Miron
52.	‘Dosar penal pentru noua cartuse’	28/12/11	Teodora Miron