Brexit and the Classed Politics of Bordering: The British in France and European Belongings

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Abstract
This article considers what Brexit means for British citizens living in France. Drawing on empirical research I examine the emotional and material impacts that uncertainties about their futures have had on their lives. The article documents the measures they take (or anticipate) in their bids to secure their future rights to stay put in France. However, not everyone is well placed to secure their own future. Foregrounding Brexit as bordering – the social and political process through which judgements are made about who is 'deserving' and 'undeserving' of the privilege of (European) belonging – I question who among these Britons is newly bordered through Brexit and with what impacts? As I argue, Brexit is unevenly experienced, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and generating new fault lines of belonging among the British in France as they are repositioned in relation to hierarchies of European belonging.

Keywords
Brexit, British in France, bordering, hierarchies of belonging, European Citizenship, intra-EU migration

Introduction

This article focuses on the lesser known story of Brexit and its implications for British citizens living in Europe. Drawing on empirical research with British citizens living in France conducted for *BrExpats: Freedom of Movement, citizenship and Brexit in the lives of British citizens resident in the EU27*,[1] it shows how the privileges previously held by these Britons have been variously refracted over the course of the Brexit negotiations. I outline how this has happened in anticipation of the removal of their European citizenship and, in

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particular, their efforts to secure their futures against the background of pervasive uncertainty brought on by Brexit. I focus in particular on two courses of action that they take to this end: applications for dual citizenship and residence permits, administrative processes through which they present themselves for bordering. While bordering is a familiar and everyday experience for People of Colour living within Europe's borders and seeking entry into 'Fortress Europe', it is a new experience for many British citizens who, until the referendum, were rarely scrutinised or questioned about their right to live in France. The outcome of these actions is far from even, exacerbating existing social inequalities and making others newly vulnerable. As such, their experiences signal the politics of exclusion that shape Freedom of Movement (FOM) legislation and French citizenship.

The conceptual framing of the article foregrounds an understanding of Brexit as bordering. This takes inspiration from theorisations of bordering and belonging that centre on intersectional and situational understandings (see, for example, Yuval-Davis et al., 2018, 2019) and research in critical citizenship studies that identifies the moral, social and political boundaries of belonging. As such scholarship emphasises (see, for example, Anderson, 2013; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018, 2019), borders are not only the territorial boundaries of a sovereign space, they are political and socio-cultural projects, caught up in boundary-making to produce what Back, Sinha and Bryan (2012) describe as hierarchies of belonging that reflect the moral values of the political community. At its core, bordering names the processes through which judgements are made about who is deserving and undeserving of the rights awarded to members of the political community, and who has the privilege of belonging (see, for example, Anderson, 2013). Conceptualising Brexit as bordering permits questions about who is bordered through Brexit, where and with what impacts?

Research to date has highlighted how Brexit shifts the borders and boundaries of belonging in Britain for European citizens and third country nationals (see, for example, Erel and Ryan, 2019; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019), processes which are undoubtedly racialised. Turning attention to the case of British citizens living in France shifts the focus to Europe, offering insights into how Brexit destabilises and reconfigures European belongings. My focus in this article lies in making visible the disparities of experience, the circumstances that come together to make people ill placed to respond to the challenges of Brexit. This displaces a focus on the structural privileges attending British citizenship – both as EU citizenship and also in consequence of Britain's geopolitical position in the world – highlighting how these are unevenly embodied, differentiated along axes of social division that include gender, disability, race and class, among others (Benson and O'Reilly, 2016; Leonard and Walsh, 2018). Brexit reveals and manifests fault lines within this British population in unprecedented ways.

The article starts by laying out the context for understanding what Brexit means for British citizens living in France. It then presents the conceptual framework for understanding Brexit as bordering, locating this within existing knowledge about the bordering of European citizens to highlight the chequered experiences of intra-EU migrants that have been overshadowed by the celebration of borderless movement made possible by FOM. Turning to the empirical base for the article, the methodology provides an introduction to the research. In what remains, I consider in detail how Brexit has been encountered and experienced by British citizens living in France, its emotional and

material impacts. Examining the actions and practices that these migrants perform in the hope of securing their futures, I open up questions about who among these Britons is bordered through Brexit and with what impacts on their lives?

Brexit and the British in France

The relaxation of borders between European Union countries has meant that a broad cross-section of British citizens have migrated elsewhere in the EU. The most recent statistics released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2018) estimate that 784,900 British citizens live in the EU-26.[2] Freedom of Movement (FOM) directives are particularly significant within this. These directives outline the conditional rights upon which the Free Movement of EU citizens rests, its lawful exercise subject to the demonstration that they are not a burden on the nation-state. Those meeting such conditional requirements are permitted access to the same social protections, entitlements and working conditions as nationals of the state of residence. While the legislation on this is weighted towards those who are economically active, additional provisions permit the migration of the economically inactive – e.g. students and retirees – subject to their access to sufficient resources and sickness insurance.

Brexit and the removal of the rights previously permitted by their EU citizenship means that the legal terms of Free Movement will no longer apply to British citizens. In this respect, it disrupts and undermines previously taken-for-granted European citizenship rights. While the Withdrawal Agreement – if and when it passes into law – offers new legislation to support the continued residence of those Britons who have lawfully exercised their treaty rights as EU citizens, it remains to be seen how individual member states will implement the terms of this deal for British citizens living within their borders (Benton et al., 2018).

In the interim, member states have encouraged British citizens to formalise their status as lawfully resident EU citizens. Since late 2018, campaign groups, local government officers and British consular officials in France have been encouraging British residents to apply for the residence permits available to EU citizens – the *carte de séjour* (CdS), for those with less than five years' residence, and Permanent Residence (PR) for those with more than five years' residence[3] – as a way to secure their right to remain post-Brexit.

The documented benign indifference of the French state towards non-French EU citizens (Arrighi, 2018), meant that until Britain's EU referendum (23 June 2016), very few Britons living in France had residence permits. Simply, residence permits were not compulsory; access to other services – for example, health care, employment, housing – were not contingent upon these. France therefore faces a significant administrative challenge and burden in dealing with the future rights of British citizens because of its known lack of scrutiny of whether EU citizens settling in France are lawfully resident as per the terms of FOM directives; notably, this challenge is less profound in most other EU countries which have various systems to ensure the registration of EU citizens. Over the course of the negotiations between the EU and the UK government in light of Brexit, the reluctance of local municipal officers in France to process the residence of British citizens has continued; as British citizens living across France taking part in the research reported, even until late 2018, local bureaucrats were dissuading British citizens from applying for these permits, uncertain about whether, as soon-to-be non-EU citizens,

these Britons were even eligible for these. In these respects, France is a unique site in which to explore the impacts of Brexit on the lives of British citizens living in the EU-26.

This context makes clear that as they seek routes to secure their future lives in France in the wake of Brexit, many Britons living in France are now faced with scrutiny about whether they meet the terms of lawful residence for the first time, even after living in the country for many years. Importantly, this enforcement of existing legislation has been brought about in anticipation of Brexit; they are judged for their right to reside as European citizens.

As I discuss in more detail below, Brexit triggered some Britons in France to apply for French citizenship, understood either as a way of making good on longstanding ambitions or as the only way to fully secure their future rights to remain in France as Europeans. Through such actions they unilaterally bypass residence, applying instead for dual citizenship as a way of securing their futures. Importantly, these processes of applying for residence and citizenship place people in different systems of classification as they are judged for their worth as European and French respectively.

While it is clear that there will be many within the British populations living in France who will have little trouble demonstrating how they meet existing (and future) terms of residence or the requirements for citizenship acquisition, there are those who might struggle to meet these terms and cover the associated costs. As I outline below, understanding Brexit as bordering opens up the possibility of revealing and making sense of the circumstances that come together to make some British citizens living in France ill placed to respond to the challenges of Brexit. In this way, it makes highly visible the classed politics of bordering latent within Europe's intra-European migration regime.

Bordering European Citizens

Bordering, as a process of classification, works to single out the 'undeserving poor' – made undesirable and abject – as unworthy of the rights of 'good citizen' irrespective of their legal status as citizen or migrant (Anderson, 2013; Tyler, 2013). As Yuval-Davis et al. (2018, 2019) emphasise, borders are enforced through technologies ranging from political discourse to practices of governance and are fundamentally tied to questions of who is entitled to access the rights of citizens. Such processes result in both the non-citizen and the 'failed citizen' being found lacking in ways that reveal the contours of the 'good citizen' (Anderson, 2013).

Brexit – a significant socio-political transformation that re-positions both EU citizens and third country nationals in relation to privilege and subordination (Erel and Ryan, 2019) and racialised Others within Britain and Europe's borders – shifts borders and boundaries of belonging in Britain and Europe. As bordering, Brexit has the potential both to transform and reinforce existing hierarchies of belonging (Back, Sinha and Bryan, 2012; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019), in its wake reproducing existing inequalities and generating new vulnerabilities.

This is particularly well documented in the case of critical analyses documenting how Brexit has shored up and provided legitimacy to racist and xenophobic British nationalisms, the reassertion of Britain reclaiming its borders through Brexit built upon anti-immigration rhetoric focused on Black and Brown migrant 'Others' seeking to cross

Europe's borders (see, for example, Bhambra, 2017; Valluvan and Kalra, 2019; Virdee and McGeever, 2018). While rising racial violence and abuse following the referendum make the racism inherent to Brexit increasingly visible (Burnett, 2017), it is important to recognise that Brexit is the culmination of longer histories of racism in Britain. Racial (b) ordering is written into and reproduced through policy and legislation, through citizenship and border regimes (El-Enany, 2020), and People of Colour are disproportionately questioned for their right to enter Britain and challenged in their everyday lives for their right to residence and belonging. Research with British People of Colour living across the EU-27 in a time of Brexit concludes that contours of racialised belonging embedded in understandings of who is European similarly shape their experiences of crossing Europe's internal borders, and as they find themselves questioned for their right to entry and presence in their spaces of work (Benson and Lewis, 2019). What this shows is that bordering reinforces racialised boundaries of belonging in both Britain and Europe.

The legal transformation of citizens' rights means that Brexit is a moment where the bordering of European citizens is gaining attention. And yet, it is clear that given the inequalities within the population of intra-EU migrants (see also Antonucci and Varriale, 2019; Lafleur and Mescoli, 2018), such bordering will be unevenly experienced. Bearing witness to these shifts and their social, political and legal consequences for individuals and communities is an urgent project to which this article contributes. Significantly, Brexit takes place within the context of both everyday bordering regimes in the lives of some intra-EU migrants and FOM as a conditional right. What becomes clear is that Europe's boundaries of belonging, activated through legal mechanisms and enforcement, are underscored by a politics of bordering that sorts 'deserving Europeans' from 'undeserving Europeans'. Making sense of this politics and, in particular, the direct and immediate material consequences of Brexit for intra-EU migrants, requires an analysis that can attend to 'the particular, nuanced and contested meanings of particular social locations in particular historical moments and within particular social, economic, and political contexts, in which some social divisions have more saliency and effect than others' (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019: 26–27).

Wemyss and Cassidy (2017) present the bordering of the Roma as an illustration of the extension of everyday bordering into lives of European citizens. The processes through which they are made 'undeserving Europeans' include the curtailment of their Free Movement rights, their deportation, discrimination in access to employment, housing and welfare, and everyday Romaphobia. While the case of the Roma is unparalleled, everyday bordering is also revealed in the racialisation and racism experienced by some intra-EU migrants, with research documenting the experiences of Hungarian, Romanian and Polish migrants in the UK (see, for example, Fox et al., 2012, 2015; Ryan, 2010). And beyond the consideration of how Brexit is experienced by different European national groups living in the UK, Antonucci and Varriale (2019: 11, emphasis added) highlight the need to foreground an understanding of the impacts of Brexit for intra-EU migrants as 'linked to ethnonational divisions *that intersect with class, race and gender, producing under-researched configurations of inequality and privilege*'. From the amplification of racism directed towards Eastern Europeans since Brexit (see Lulle et al., 2018; Lumsden et al., 2019; McGhee and Pietka-Nykaza, 2016; Rzepnikowska, 2019), to the difficulties Roma populations have faced in navigating the EU settlement scheme (Godin and Bica, 2019), Brexit deepens the impact of bordering on the lives of EU migrants including, as I reveal in more detail below, British citizens living in the EU-27.

Freedom of Movement, Class and the '(Un)Deserving European'

The classed logics that underpin ideas of the 'deserving European' are exposed in the recognition and enforcement of FOM as a conditional right. The emergence of a transnational social structure through European integration signals a stratified Europe, its flag bearers the burgeoning European middle class who eschew national identities for European belonging (Andreotti et al., 2014; Favell, 2008; Favell and Recchi, 2011; Recchi, 2015). It is important to attend to how the borderless intra-EU mobility that is at the core of this process of integration is out of reach for some, while for others still, unlawful mobility places them in a grey zone where they find themselves without, or with only partial, access to the rights and entitlements of European citizens (see, for example, Ackers and Dwyer, 2002; O'Reilly, 2007).

Indeed, as Lafleur and Mescoli (2018) have recently emphasised, FOM has always restricted the 'mobility of the poor'; as their study of Italians living in Belgium makes clear, encounters with the state as they apply for social assistance and unemployment benefit are sites where they are made 'undeserving'. Paired with the non-deportability of EU citizens (in law), this results in their precarious positioning as unlawfully resident, denied access to the rights and entitlements of mobile EU citizens.

In the case of British citizens living in the EU, research focused on Spain has produced important analyses that highlight the socio-structural marginality that shapes the lives of some within this population. As O'Reilly (2007) highlights, this extends beyond accounts of how declining health produces vulnerabilities for ageing Britons resident in Spain (see, for example, Hall and Hardill, 2016; Oliver, 2008) to document the profound social, economic, political and cultural exclusion of some Britons from Spanish society, their lack of resources and assets restricting their access to the rights and entitlements of EU citizenship and their ability to perpetuate transnational ties with friends and family in the UK.

What this body of work makes clear is that the map of European migration includes those socially positioned as working class, precariously positioned – whether through insecure housing, employment or finances – before and after migration (Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010). For example, Bott's (2004) research with young British men and women working in timeshare sales and lap dancing in Tenerife reveals intra-EU migration and insecure employment as the site for the reproduction of gendered and classed subjectivities. Leivestad (2018) highlights how Britons living on a Spanish caravan site, their assets sunk into these (immobile) homes on wheels, live in the grey zone of economic and residential insecurity, with no option to return.

As Miller's (2018) research with British citizens living in Spain has highlighted, Brexit will likely exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. However, as I argue, Brexit has complex and uneven outcomes for British citizens living in the EU (and EU citizens living in the UK) that are contingent and situational (see also Benson and Lewis, 2019). Foregrounding an understanding of Brexit as bordering, in what follows I document how Brexit interplays with existing inequalities and vulnerabilities of some Britons living in France, while also destabilising the taken-for-granted claims to belonging of others.

Researching What Brexit Means to Britons in France

Commencing in June 2017, *BrExpats: Freedom of Movement, citizenship and Brexit in the lives of Britons resident in the European Union* set out to examine whether and in what ways the Brexit negotiations were experienced by Britons resident in Europe, across a range of national and local settings. It included case studies in France, Spain and Ireland; an Internet-mediated Citizens' Panel ($N = 194$), where Britons living in the EU-27 member states could respond to a set of tasks aimed at keeping a finger on the pulse of people's experiences of Brexit as it unfolded.

In this article, I focus in particular on research conducted for the project with British citizens living in France, which hosts the second largest population (after Spain), with approximately 150,000 British residents (ONS, 2018). It offers a unique site for understanding Brexit as bordering for British citizens living in the EU, precisely because its lack of registration of EU citizens and relatively low uptake of residence permits, mean that British citizens have, until now, had very little need or experience of negotiating their rights to residence, or their access to health care and employment.

The article draws on ethnographic research in south-west France across two sites – the Lot and Toulouse – alongside contributions to our citizens' panel from Britons living elsewhere in France. The Lot, a rural, inland department, was the site of my previous fieldwork with British citizens in France (Benson, 2011); this offered the possibility of longitudinal research with some of those who took part in the original study. However, the agriculture, gastronomy and tourism focus of the local economy in the Lot means that for the most part, those taking part in the research were either retired or self-employed. To recruit people who were employed in French or international labour markets, as well as to bring younger participants into the research, I extended the fieldwork in France to Toulouse. The closest city to the Lot, Toulouse is France's fourth-largest and fastest growing metropolitan area, its world-leading aerospace and defence industry – notably Airbus and its subsidiaries – and wide-ranging university sector attracting skilled professionals from across the world, including the British (Clabé-Bundy, 2012).

Since June 2017, I have conducted four months of fieldwork including 65 semi-structured interviews (with 105 individuals, couples and families), two focus groups and extensive participant observation. The interviews focused on how people understood Brexit in the context of their lives and migrations; they were designed to collect life and migrant histories, and included questions about citizenship, identity and belonging. Through the citizens' panel we recruited a further 40 individuals living in a range of locations in France. They contributed to the research over the duration of the project by responding to directives exploring similar themes to those included in the interviews, but which also asked for responses to current Brexit-related events. This included their thoughts and feelings on the EU referendum, citizens' rights negotiations, debates about the Withdrawal Agreement in UK parliament and the outcomes of the European Parliamentary elections in 2018.

British citizens in France taking part in the research included an almost equal number of men and women, between the ages of 22 and 80, in a range of occupations, employed and self-employed, as well as retirees and some who were unemployed. While many British couples participated in the research, there were also people who were in

relationships with French or third country nationals. For the majority of those taking part, sentiments about Brexit were shaped by their support for Britain remaining in the European Union, although there were a small number who supported Britain leaving and others who expressed ambivalence. The analysis presented below draws selectively from the data in order to narrate how bordering practices are variously and unevenly experienced by these British citizens.

From Free Movement to the Right to Stay Put

Early research on Brexit with British citizens living in Europe has highlighted their affective responses to the outcome of the referendum (Benson, 2017; Higgins, 2018; Miller, 2018; O'Reilly, 2017) alongside their civic and political actions in consequence of Brexit (Ferbrache, 2019a, 2019b; MacClancy, 2019). Through the empirical material presented below I focus on how British citizens living in France navigate the uncertainties brought about by Brexit through the close examination of their actions aimed at securing their future rights to remain in France.

Over the course of the project, it has been particularly notable that the uncertainty and insecurities expressed by Britons living across the EU because of Brexit have ebbed and flowed throughout in response to political declarations and agreements, the prospect of a No Deal Brexit and personal circumstances. Such uncertainty is caught up in concerns about how their French neighbours will treat them and whether they will still be welcome in France, as much as in the rewriting of their rights through Brexit.

In the absence of (as yet) assured routes to maintain their right to remain in France, the research presented below reveals how these Britons have been taking matters into their own hands. These actions are best understood as attempts to displace the uncertainties Brexit has introduced into their lives and to mitigate against the potential impacts of Brexit on their ability to stay put. However, as I make visible, while these routes offer ways to claim lawful status in France, they are not uniformly accessible, but are contingent on individual circumstances. Brexit exacerbates existing vulnerabilities for these intra-EU migrants and produces new fault lines, as individuals find themselves judged as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of the privilege of staying put.

Becoming French . . . to Stay Put

During my previous research (conducted in 2003–2005; see Benson, 2011), when asked directly whether they would consider applying for French citizenship, none of my interlocutors showed any ambition to do so. Returning to the Lot for the *BrExpats* research in June 2017, I was surprised that a common response to the outcome of the EU referendum was to apply for naturalisation, a route that would grant dual nationality. Indeed, this accords with the broader observation about the marked increase in applications for dual nationality from Britons across the Schengen area since 2016 (Breteau, 2018).

Sharing the news that she had received her French citizenship after an 18-month process, Jane, who had retired to France in 2012, stressed 'we can now cope with Brexit', signalling how this action emotionally equipped her and her husband to navigate Brexit.

However, such actions additionally revealed how applications for citizenship offered legitimacy to claims to European and local belonging that had been challenged by Brexit.

Ann and David's account of their decision to apply for naturalisation offers some insights into this. They had retired and moved to a small hamlet in the Lot in 2006, in their late 50s, the house and garden their big retirement project. They described being worried that their neighbours might not be welcoming following the referendum, in this way presenting Brexit as a challenge to the highly localised sense of belonging common among British citizens living in the Lot that I have described elsewhere (Benson, 2011, 2016). To a certain degree, these concerns were allayed by a neighbour's response: 'You will just become naturalised won't you?'

When I interviewed them in 2017, they had started their application. As they explained, this was in part spurred by their need to have access to health care in France for chronic conditions; while this is currently supported by their S1 entitlement, which makes the British government responsible for paying their health care, it is currently unclear whether this would continue in the case of Britain leaving the EU with No Deal. Additionally, this was their route to being 'able to stay here in our little ideal life'. In this way, they draw out the complex motivations behind applying for naturalisation, and their hope that a positive outcome will stem the uncertainties about their future lives brought on by Brexit.

Over the two-and-a-half years of the research, I was regularly updated on the progress of people's applications for citizenship. Indeed, these successes point to how some people are able to overcome the uncertainties of Brexit by elevating their legal status, transforming the 'citizen-like' status they held as European citizens into a more secure legal status as full citizens. However, as demonstrated below, the moral and symbolic construction of French citizenship means that this is not necessarily accompanied by a sense of being part of the wider political community.

In contrast, Katara – who was Black British, in her 30s and married to a French national – described her decision to apply for citizenship as a way to safeguard against possible challenges she might face at the borders as she entered and left France. But she stressed that she would never be French, in consequence of her cultural roots in Britain, observing that 'you don't ever feel French if you're a French Person of Colour, you don't ever feel part of the French identity'. Her account reaffirms scholarly accounts that document the racialised Republican ideals that exclude People of Colour from the political project of belonging in France (Fassin, 2006; Giraud, 2005; Lorcerie, 2007) to offer an important counterpoint to otherwise celebratory accounts of citizenship acquisition.

One final example highlights further the values embedded in the French citizenship regime. Kim, who had been living in France with his partner for nearly 30 years, wrote to tell me that his application had been turned down. As he explained via email: 'I got involved in some litigation 10 years ago where the culprit turned the blame onto me with a police complaint, and although I was exonerated . . . part of the complaint stayed on the statute books.' He was appealing this decision, but this was (currently) out of his hands. However, he also explained that he has PR, which he had successfully applied for before starting his application for naturalisation. This status, which testifies to his lawful residence in France as an EU citizen, will secure his post-Brexit right to remain in France even in the case of No Deal.

Among the British in France there are those who had no intention of applying for French citizenship. For others, this is out of reach because of the associated costs, and an inability to fulfil the income requirements and language capability which stand as proxies for 'integration'. As this highlights, economic and cultural capital are significant in navigating the process of becoming a citizen to stay put.

Insecure Belongings

As Kim's experience testifies, the ability to secure their futures is in the hands of others, including local bureaucrats and potential employers. And as the examples presented here demonstrate, in others' hands there is room for interpretation of what Brexit means with untold (and unknown) consequences for the lives of these Britons.

I first met Alice and Keith in 2004. Alice has a neurological disorder that had meant that she was wheelchair-bound in her early 40s. Their migration to the Lot in 2002 had involved careful consideration of access to health care and treatment for her condition. Arriving at that time, they had found that they needed a CdS in order to get access to the health care system. By the time they went to renew it a few years later, these had ceased to be compulsory, and they were sent away without one. Interviewing them again in 2017, Alice was no longer in a wheelchair; she recalled her brain surgery and the medication that she is on that means she is able to walk. Nevertheless, anything that threatened her access to health care in France would directly result in a significant deterioration of her condition. As far as they were concerned, Brexit threatened exactly this.

Within weeks of the referendum, before Article 50 was triggered, Alice and Keith had put together the paperwork to apply for PR, permitting indefinite residence and issued as a card with a 10-year validity. There was no time to lose. As Alice explained,

> I had all the paperwork to prove that we previously had [a CdS], I was going to photocopy my old one and I had all the five years' worth of electric bills, I had everything . . . But she said, 'Oh no I don't need to see that.' And then when she got us the card it was only five years.

The speed with which Alice and Keith had put together their application is testament to their heightened awareness of the legal requirements that supported their residence in France and their concerns that Brexit had high stakes because of the challenges it might present to maintaining Alice's access to health care and life-prolonging treatment. All this should have placed them in good stead to secure PR, but it is clear that this was taken out of their hands.

I raise this here because as events have unfolded it has become clear that whether Britain exits the EU with or without a deal those holding PR are best protected from further scrutiny of their right to reside in France. The decision not to grant Alice and Keith PR places them in a grey zone that makes them prone to bordering practices in the future, as they will be required to make new applications for residence. While they currently make a small income running a *Chambre d'Hôtes*, and Alice's condition is well managed, they were aware that this could change at any moment with impacts on their ability to demonstrate that they meet the legal conditions of residence.

It is also clear that the uncertainty about the (current) status of British citizens living in the EU has resulted in situations where some among them have found themselves judged as already outside the political community of Europe. Grace, who ran a consultancy company, described how seemingly overnight her British expertise was discounted as no longer relevant by her European partners. Getting close to retirement age, she was at a stage where she was prepared to close the company down, but knew that would bring her income below the minimum income threshold – which is often, although not always, used as a proxy in determining whether people have 'sufficient resources' – required for French citizenship. Emily, a 30-year-old postdoctoral researcher, explained how she had hoped to stay in Toulouse after the end of her three-year fixed term contract but was worried that her (future) non-citizen status might pose a significant disadvantage to her planned transition to the private sector. Tamsin, a young woman in her late 20s who had been educated in France to BAC+5 (equivalent to an MA degree) but was currently unemployed stressed that she had been 'forced' to apply for French citizenship because of Brexit so that she could compete for jobs on the same terms as her French peers. She was just keeping her fingers crossed that she would have a job by the time of the interview.

The stories of Grace, Emily and Tamsin all illustrate how Brexit has resulted in the repositioning of British citizens within the European and French labour market. It is also clear that they are not ignorant of the privileges they had as EU citizens (before Brexit). But where their testimonies differ from those reported in the previous section is in the ways that their abilities to re-secure their right to stay put are contingent on external factors that they know are out of their hands.

For others, the judgement that signals this repositioning of British citizens as non-citizens is already being made. Hannah, who had moved to France with her partner and two young children in 2018, wrote to us in March 2019:

> I have a job interview in May but have been told if I don't have my residence card by then (which in France they have suspended applications for in my area) . . . there is no point me going for the interview . . . I went to our local mayor's office to ask what I would need to do the PACS [Civil Partnership] with my [Irish] partner . . . She replied, '*D'accord, un européen et une étrangère.*' One European, and one foreigner, and proceeded to give me a three-page list of the documents we would need.

As her account testifies, in the eyes of a potential employer and the local municipal officers she finds herself judged as a foreigner and refused the privileged rights that, in law, her EU citizenship still permits.

The examples presented above show that ability to re-secure the future is tied up with bordering practices that distinguish between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving', judged along the lines of who counts as European in this changing political landscape. This signals how even before Britain's formal exit from the EU, the citizen-like status that many British citizens living in France had previously enjoyed was moving beyond their reach. In this respect, the examples document how people aim to best prepare themselves for the as yet unknowable outcomes of Brexit for their lives, while recalling the limits placed on these efforts by external factors and individual circumstances. In other words, their efforts are contingent, a coincidence of circumstances, which in time – six months or a year in one direction or another – might have been resolved, shaping their ability to secure their futures in France.

Undeserving Europeans

In this final empirical section, I want to reflect on how bordering in consequence of Brexit might articulate with known existing vulnerabilities. I turn first to Leigh, resident in Brittany and a participant in the project's citizens' panel. Writing to the project team in January 2019, she discussed the unsuccessful outcome of her application for a CdS, which she was currently fighting in court with the support of a pro-bono lawyer:

> I've owned my *maison* [house] since 2004. I been here full time living and working, paying into society since 2012 . . . I had cancer in 2014 so had a low income as a *micro-entrepreneur* [small-scale entrepreneur] for several years in my recovery stage. I've been refused a CdS twice . . .

Applying for a CdS had brought her to the attention of the French authorities and she was found not to meet the requirements for lawful residence in France as a European Citizen. A similar case of a recently widowed British woman refused a CdS reported how this refusal had been accompanied by an *Obligation de quitter la territoire Française*, the administrative measure ordering people to leave France (Rowland, 2018).

Voluntary repatriation is one response to this; indeed, the woman in question had returned to the UK. However, as Lafleur and Mescoli's (2018) work reminds us, it is also possible for bureaucratic encounters to create a population of undocumented or irregular EU migrants. To be clear, it is in placing herself under scrutiny to secure her future that Leigh finds herself judged as an 'undeserving European', ineligible for the rights and entitlements pertaining to FOM. Indeed, this serves as a reminder that the structural privileges permitted by British citizenship are not evenly experienced or embodied by these migrants. As existing legal requirements governing residence are further enforced, it is likely that this stratification of the British population in France will become more visible, with Leigh just one of the first to fall between the gaps.

I stress here that it is very rare for the most vulnerable among the British population living in France to find their way into scholarly analyses. It is a field of research which has focused predominantly on migration to rural areas (see, for example, Barou and Prado, 1995; Benson, 2011; Buller and Hoggart, 1994), where the British populations are dispersed, and where those with the least resources live most remotely, surviving because of the low costs of basic subsistence. These factors combine with others to make them hard to reach. And while they may escape the purview of the authorities, keeping their heads below the parapet, the whispers and rumours that circulate through British community networks attest to their presence. Indeed, this was how I found Pam.

At the end of an unsurfaced and potholed road in the Lot, the home in which she had been living in since 2000 was off the beaten track. A widow, aged 70 and with only a meagre UK state pension, she still works to make ends meet and has no capital to fall back on. Looking around it is clear that her claims to being financially insecure hold up; the house is run down to the stage where she explains that it is uncomfortable having people to stay. She cannot afford to go back to Britain to visit her son and her sister and questions what quality of life she would have in Britain if she were forced to return. Her concerns about Brexit are shaped by her financial constraints; she is worried that it might throw what little support she can rely on from the British state into jeopardy. And when

we came to the discussion of what she might do, it became clear that she did not have the luxury of dwelling on the possible routes that she might take to secure her future. She was focused on living from one day to the next.

Already marginalised, what does the future hold for British citizens in France like Pam? The actions that such individuals do or do not take, the diligence of local authorities in implementing citizens' rights, and whether and in what ways the initial bordering practices reported by some of those taking part in the research reach into the lives of these vulnerable citizens, translate into uncertain futures in the present.

Conclusion

The article has offered a conceptual and empirical intervention in the burgeoning field of social science focused on the human face of Brexit. Its primary contribution lies in offering the first account of how Brexit, as it unfolds, has been (variously) experienced by British citizens living in France. The relative lack of governance of the movement and settlement of EU citizens to France before Brexit makes this an unparalleled site within Europe to explore the bordering of British citizens in this time of political transformation. As I reveal, the precautionary measures they take to secure their futures emerge as new sites for bordering, sorting 'deserving' from 'undeserving (EU) citizens'. Their highly differentiated life circumstances and experiences position them unevenly to secure their futures. And while, for some, privilege is reconstituted – even elevated – as they have the resources and capabilities to navigate the uncertainties brought on by Brexit, for others, the ground they previously occupied as EU citizens is not regained so easily. Indeed, this article has shown how Brexit refracts privilege, sharpening the impact of inequalities on the lives of these Britons as they are found undeserving of the privilege to stay put. It brings into sharp relief the latent classed politics of bordering at the heart of the European Freedom of Movement regime as people find themselves judged for their right to remain in France as European citizens.

However, the examples also reveal unexpected outcomes; those who might be well positioned because of their cultural capital are concerned that because of the timing they find themselves unexpectedly falling short of requirements. This demonstrates the potential for people to fall between the gaps as new provisions are rolled out because of a coincidence of circumstances when a time difference of six months or a year in one direction or another might position them differently.

Beyond this significant empirical contribution, the article breaks new ground through its conceptual innovations. Underpinned by an understanding of Brexit as a process – rather than an event or moment – it reveals the social and material impacts of the changing relationship between Britain and Europe on those whose rights and lives fall within the scope of the Withdrawal Agreement. Its focus on the new bordering processes experienced by British citizens in France, shifts the geographies of Brexit beyond Britain to Europe, to show how this is caught up in dynamic hierarchies of European belonging. While bordering in contemporary Europe is an all too familiar experience of racialisation for People of Colour originating within Europe's borders and beyond, this case points to how Brexit further deepens and extends the reach of bordering. In particular, this article has made visible how the classed politics of European belonging are brought to bear for

those newly experiencing bordering in the wake of Brexit. Only time will tell who falls between the gaps when existing legislation is enforced and new legislation brought in. What is clear is that in the process some British citizens living in France will be recast as 'deserving citizens', deemed of value to the states in which they live, while others will be cast aside.

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Notes

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2. While the project has also examined what Brexit means for British citizens resident in Ireland, as their post-Brexit rights rely on a separate free movement arrangement – the Common Travel Area – between Ireland and the United Kingdom their futures do not fall directly within the scope of the negotiations or the Withdrawal Agreement. Hence, I focus here on France, and the case of British citizens resident there, as exceptional within the broader context of the transformation of rights in the EU-26.
3. This is the right under EU law for those who have been legally resident in another EU country for five years continuously to have a status which confirms their right to live in that state permanently and without any conditions.

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