



## BREXIT BRITS ABROAD

### **Brexit Brits Abroad Podcast Episode 37: A year in the life of researching what Brexit means to Britons living in Europe**

First broadcast Friday 4th January 2019.

#### ***About the episode***

In our first episode of 2019, the project reflect back on the lessons learned from working on the project over the last year. Take a listen to us as we get a few things off our chest (and as Michaela gets on her soapbox about the pervasive stereotypes of British people living in Europe). From talking history and Britain's relationship with Europe, to the mistrust of experts and how to do research on Brexit, listen to us talk about our year in the life researching Brexit and what it means to Britons living in Europe.

You can download this episode of the podcast at <http://brexitbritsabroad.libsyn.com/ep037-a-year-in-the-life-of-researching-what-brexit-means-to-britons-living-in-europe>

#### **Transcript**

**MB** Welcome back to the Brexit Brits Abroad podcast. I'm Dr Michaela Benson, a reader in sociology at Goldsmith's University of London and the research lead for a UK in a Changing Europe funded project that's all about what Brexit means for British citizens living in the EU 27. Over the coming weeks and months you'll be hearing me in conversation with the rest of the team, with Karen O'Reilly, Catherine Collins and Chantelle Lewis. I'm joined by my lovely lovely team Karen O'Reilly, Katie Collins and Chantelle Lewis. We thought we would record an episode where I ask the team to talk about some of the things that have surprised them or maybe stood out to them from the project over the last year, as you know we've been really really busy and it's quite difficult, for me at least, to identify one moment but I'm hoping that they have done a better job. So, Katie, perhaps we'll start with you. Sorry that was not intended to be an unpleasant surprise!

Katie You did that last time.

**MB** **It's just because you're ...**

Katie Well I've got, as you asked us to think of two things and I've got two things but not so much surprises or perhaps one of them is a surprise, but

something that, both the things that have stood out for me when I thought back in response to your question. So the first one is to do with history because I have been reading up about biography which we're going to do in another podcast, and one of the things it said, or one of the things my reading said about biography was the way in which it is associated with documenting the processes and experiences of social change and I think that that's something that's really stood out for me in this project and a lot of the individual stories that we've collected in our various trips and things that we've done have been about individual responses to very current events and quite upsetting events for people but also they can quite easily be slotted into a framework that looks at them in the context of history of Europe and the history of the empire and decolonisation and how those, the different countries that other people have stayed in and moved to have been affected, the countries themselves, and I'm thinking specifically of Cyprus and Ireland where I've been, how influential history is in those relationships between British people who live there and the country that they're in and what that means for them about how they interpret Britishness, so that's one thing, history.

**MB Maybe that's why we're so tired because I'm not sure that in the previous work I did with British people who lived in France before Brexit was a twinkle in anyone's eye, that that history of Europe, that that history of Britain's relationships with those different countries, actually came to the fore as readily as it has done in our conversations now. I don't know what you think Karen about that, having been in Spain as well as ...**

Karen I'm probably going to go off on a complete tangent here but I'm nodding away at Katie because I've just come back from Tenerife and it was so fascinating because I just kept saying over and over again, it's like being in the Costa del Sol twenty years ago, and that's because of the stage they're at in their embracing of tourism and the development, it was so fascinating, it really brought it home that everything that's gone before and where people are at is really really relevant, so it's not such a long-term view as you're talking about, I realise that, but obviously because Tenerife is close to Africa, because Tenerife is geographically very different to mainland Spain, this obviously had a massive impact because you're really talking little tiny tourist areas along the coast and then the inland is very very different. But where I was, and I'm not sure it's the same all over the island, but where I was they had only started to embrace what the Spanish tend to call residential tourism, so encouraging people to buy property and live and settle, twenty years ago and even tourism up to about twenty years ago, so it really made me think about sort of time and place and stage of progress.

**MB And I think at this point in time where a lot of people are just approaching Brexit as a moment, that it would be really easy to forget that history, so I think that's a really really useful reminder that there are much longer histories to how people respond to**

**Brexit and how they experience it within the context of their lives but also those kind of historical, the historical production of Europe, the historical production of the British Empire as you said, it all quite tightly tied up with those things. What was your second one?**

Katie My second one says, the second one is like a squeal of brakes and a complete change in focus and it was, I started thinking about how we had an ambition at the beginning of the project, not just to have the views of remainers, of people who were opposed to Brexit and who thought it was a bad idea, and who were worried, but that we wanted to represent all of the different possible views out there, and how difficult it's been to find people who want to engage with the project in the same way that, I would say, I mean certainly for me anyway, with some exceptions most of the people I've spoken to have thought Brexit wasn't a good idea for various reasons. But then I started thinking about the whole discourse of we're fed up with experts, that was around at the time of the referendum, and it made me think how, how interesting it is that, quite obviously a lot of people who do think that Brexit is a good idea and who want to have their voices heard but aren't eager to engage with us, so I'm curious about that as a phenomenon and why that might be and do they not trust us to think that we might twist their words or misrepresent them or they just don't want to engage in that kind of a way with researchers, they prefer different ways of having their voices heard, I don't know, so that's my second thing.

**MB That's definitely an interesting conundrum. I definitely have some, I do have some thoughts on that.**

Katie Because you did speak to some leavers in France didn't you.

**MB I had spoken to a small, a very very small number of leavers, and I suppose actually probably the other group of people who we very rarely talk about, and I know that we've mentioned this before is people who are ambivalent, really really ambivalent about Brexit but I think that there is something about the way that the referendum was organised around the kind of anti-expert rhetoric, and what that then means but it hadn't quite clicked in my head that that might explain why we're not getting lots of leavers taking part in the research so something has just kind of clicked in my head.**

Karen As you know I've probably spoken to more leavers than any of you, and last week in Tenerife I met quite a few. What I have found with those who either voted leave or would, might even say they didn't vote and several people obviously didn't vote because they couldn't but there are people who didn't vote because they weren't interested, weren't bothered or didn't know which way to go and couldn't make up their mind. I have had some recorded interviews with some leavers, but more often they've told me off the record, so these are people who don't necessarily want to be recorded and that's not necessarily that they don't want to be recorded about wanting to leave but they don't feel comfortable being recorded anyway about their

lives. So that's tangled up with an awful lot of other things that haven't quite worked out yet. But one thing I do think that's happening is that ourselves, we're not finding a voice for those people in our project, though they are there, because they will also tell you they're not really affected by Brexit. The project is overtly how is Brexit affecting people and if they tell you well it's not really, I'm fine, and I find that leave voters don't really want to talk about how it's affecting them or tell me it's not affecting them or that they will be fine. So it is in some ways an empty space when it comes to having a conversation that goes any further than I didn't vote or I voted to leave. Things like it'll be fine, it will all be fine, and so we're not having a conversation about how Brexit affects them.

**MB That's really interesting because I think I've had kind of the, I've always thought that a no effect is as much an effect as an effect (laugh) sounds ...**

Karen But you can't talk about it.

**MB Well one of the ways into that that I've found is to ask people those questions about how they identify, and that has become the space within which to talk through the issues that concern us on the project which are to do with citizenship, identity and belonging, and to think about those first and foremost rather than necessarily to think about, you know, whether somebody voted to leave or to remain, but I do appreciate that I suspect the explicit framing of the project, just like the explicit framing of the project around Britishness, puts some people who might, who we might otherwise want to take part, puts them off from actually coming forward so ...**

Chantelle I can't think of an example off the top of my head but maybe you guys might. It reminds me a little bit the way that we haven't been able to get leavers to talk to us, and you mentioning them saying oh I want to be off the record, that sort of thing, like how over time through various political moments people don't want to put their name to a possibly unpopular opinion or like something that could be taken out of, like obviously there's lots of things like xenophobia and racism that are not the only things that are bound up in Brexit, and I feel like there's been other moments throughout history where that's happened, where people don't want to necessarily, they want to enact that choice or that decision but they don't necessarily wanna talk about it, I don't know, does that make sense?

Karen And that really does, there may be something going on inasmuch as when people speak to me I don't say whether, which side I'm on or what I voted or whatever, but I will never lie about it so maybe they start with an assumption that I'm a remainer and that assumption is going to be confirmed as we talk because I'm not going to say anything otherwise, so I'm not going to be able to empathise in a way that's going to maybe help them to open up so that really does probably raise some really profound methodological issues around how to get people to talk about things that are shameful or embarrassing or considered shameful even when maybe they're not.

**MB Or the fear of being judged in the research example yes, which is of course a kind of a long-standing conversation about how we do research with people who we don't agree with and I think that this is a moment where we need to reflect on that, again as social scientists more generally.**

Katie There certainly is an assumption that we are going to agree with remain, I've had the same when I've spoken to people, they assume that's my point of view and you will remember Michaela someone recently commented on our Facebook page on something that we'd written saying well this is obviously biased and it's confirmed, you know, its agenda confirming as you say, and in fact it was me replying as the project saying no actually we do want your story, please contribute, and I don't know whether that person has actually wanted to do that, so it's really tricky to, I don't know whether people believe us when we say we don't want to confirm our political agenda.

Karen We're wanting somebody's story and being able to empathise with that story, I have to say I have interviewed a couple of people who were absolutely fascinating, who were leave voters, who could speak a long time and explain why they were leave voters, and I was nodding away when they're talking because a lot of what they said about Europe that they didn't like about Europe made an awful lot of sense, so you know there are those who really can articulate that position.

**MB I think the important thing about that as well is that there's an assumption of homogeneity within all of these positions and so quite a lot of the things that those leave voters say about Europe, remain voters have also been saying about Europe, so there are more convergences and divergences than are assumed, I mean if there's one thing that stood out to me as a kind of a lesson to be learned is actually their diversity of views in relation to what people think about Britain, in relation to what people think about Europe, in relation to what they think Brexit is going to mean for them. I think you can only get that with the type of in-depth research that we've been doing, kind of really trying to listen, trying to listen for those things and trying to put aside, obviously our own, our own political biases which are, it's a big part of how you do qualitative research.**

Karen Good one Katie.

**MB Two very good ones. Chantelle, what about for you?**

Chantelle Okay so my first one is more about what it's like for me coming into a project as someone who hasn't done a lot of research on British in Europe and migration as well, so how, I want to use the word shocking because it is shocking, how shocking it's been for me, be on the project whether it's analysing debates in Parliament, talking to people within the academy, talking to people within my life about this sort of research and their reaction to that research, and that being that people are so misinformed about who these populations are and just being so overwhelmed at how fixed an

identity it is that, who these British people living in Europe are, so Karen and Michaela are nodding because obviously this has been your careers is built on this stuff and it must be so frustrating that these assumptions about people being older retirees is just embedded in everywhere you go, in Parliament with law makers, public discourse, media, television, everywhere, it was even in the university, people that are supposed to be critical, everyone just assumes ...

Karen We're nodding vigorously here.

Chantelle Yes, that's been a big one for me.

**MB As you know Chantelle I called you late last week after giving a paper to explain to you a situation that had happened which was basically, even though the paper that I gave was not about who the British in Europe are, I'd had to start with this, let's have a look and I want to work against the stereotype so I did like a one-minute part of the presentation where I took those infographics that we produced, and I put them on a slide and I said I'm not going to talk about this very much, these are the three takeaway points. Contrary to popular belief British people who live in the EU, 79% of them are working age and below, they are ethnically diverse and that's both in terms of their origins within the UK but also in terms of the fact that just as there are British people of colour living in the UK there are British people of colour who live in the EU, and I can't remember what the third one was, oh it was about the numbers, how we don't really have a good grasp for official statistics of the numbers of British people who actually live in the EU and more importantly the number of British people who rely on being in the EU and I specifically don't say live here because I think there are people who are highly mobile as well who will not be captured by any official statistics because the harmonisation of statistics across the European Union relies on a place of usual residence. Surprise surprise, one of the first questions about my paper afterwards was like well surely when you say that British people who live in the EU, 79% of them are working age and below, but you know there're places like Spain for example where the majority must be retired and pensioners, and I said well actually it's only about 35%, I looked it up afterwards, depends which statistics you use, it's either 35 or 40%, but she kept on, she kept going, and the paper was actually not about, was not about that. The paper was about thinking about the meaning that people place on applying for citizenship in another country, whether that's because they choose not to do it or whether it's because they choose to do it. So it was really really bizarre, as you say, it's not the first time this has happened to me. It seems to be the thing that all academics, whenever we've presented, myself for the last fifteen years, you for twenty-five years, just gets so hung up on oh because that is how deeply held that belief about British people is who live abroad, that**

**they're all old age pensioners. And I've had enough of it, so as I said to Chantelle, not doing any more Brexit events, well actually I probably shouldn't say that.**

Karen You probably will. And on that note Chantelle you really have hit a raw nerve there, only last week, I'm not going to say who it was but somebody who works with British people abroad and is very, let's say, highly positioned and influential, however the conversation kept coming back, it's the older ones we need to worry about. It's mainly older people we need to be concerned with, but, I'm saying, but won't Brexit affect people who are working across borders? Well probably no they'll be alright. There are quite a lot of younger people also living in Europe, British, yeah but they'll be okay. It's really just (laughing).

Chantelle You see that Parliament as well, in Parliamentary debates, it's always back to that.

Karen Just comes back to it all the time, yes.

**MB And I don't really know what the solution is because as I said I've been trying to change that conversation for fifteen years.**

Karen We can't keep banging our heads on a wall.

**MB So anyone listening, please remember that the British population who live abroad, they're demographically diverse and that ...**

Karen And they're migrants.

**MB And they're migrants okay yes.**

Karen Deserve as much respect and attention as any other migrant around the world and we can learn a lot from that kind of migration, just as we can from any migration, no need to judge or prejudge some against others.

Katie This is the Brexit Brits Abroad soapbox podcast.

Karen We will now get off our soapbox.

**Well I was just about to turn to you Karen.**

Karen Did you not have another one Chantelle?

Chantelle I've got one more.

**MB Oh sorry Chantelle.**

Chantelle So I have also been interviewing British people of colour, living within the EU 27, and I went into those interviews looking to talk to people about how Brexit would affect them and Michaela and myself have just written a paper about it actually, about how racism and experiencing racism within their day to day just was a massive part of the majority of the interviews that I did and that wasn't even through me saying what's the racism like in

your country, like it's just something that just came out and through just asking them about how Brexit's going to affect them.

**MB Was it kind of questions about what their lives were like in the places that they live?**

Chantelle Yes, it's questions about what their lives are like, how they came to be in the country they live in, what their job is, their family and that sort of thing, and just racism always came up and what was also really interesting about this is that the racism was not as a result of Brexit so this is just stuff that they've experienced prior to Brexit so definitely something that I wasn't expecting.

**MB I think that's really interesting because if you'll remember when we did the from mobile citizens to migrants events, Omar Khan talked about how when he had spoken with, I think he said, were they British Caribbean populations, that when he'd suggested to them this idea of moving abroad they just laughed and basically said well you know in these places racism's really pronounced. And I've been thinking more and more about that comment from Omar and I understand that there will be people who would never contemplate moving to another European country, but I think it's also worth reflecting on the fact that people don't always move to places because they universally like everything about that place. There are various motivations that people have for going somewhere and there are always going to be, and I say this knowing that I spent my entire life talking about how people migrate to improve their quality of life, but I think that there is something important there about saying that people aren't sitting there and having on one hand you know all the wonderful things about the places I'm going to, mapped against all the terrible things about the place I'm in, actually migration decision-making is far more complicated than that. Does that make sense?**

Karen Yes because you've also written a lot about how a lot of effort has to go in after migration, into making it work, so your focus has not always been on I go here for a better quality of life but also this is what I want and this is the work I have to put in to negotiating with the conditions that I find when I go somewhere, which again all migrants have to do, all migrants have some things that they find easier and some things they find difficult and take themselves with them, don't leave themselves behind.

Chantelle And also it's worth noting that, just on Omar's point Michaela, there are a couple of people that spoke to me about how their families didn't understand why they wanted to live in these countries, they're like well why don't you just come home, why d'you want to live there, so there is, there was definitely like, I don't think it's necessarily wrong what Omar said but it's sort of incomplete so there will be people that understand but there'll be some that have people within their family who maybe don't get why they want to live in Spain.

**MB** Definitely and I think that part of that is, we find that across the project actually. I remember last time we were sitting in this room we were talking about some correspondence we'd had with one of the members of the citizens panel, who just kept going back to this point that her family are still asking her, well when are you going to come home, because I think that what that reflects is not always a perception of the place that the person's in, but a kind of a real strongly held belief that you only have one home, you belong here, and that's, it's important to remember that much as migration scholars we don't necessarily hold onto that as an understanding, among the people that we work with quite often there is that understanding. But I think that one of the issues as well that a lot of this highlights is that people, I think predominantly think about migration as something people have a choice over and I think that that means that in people's head, because migration is something that people have a choice over, it's also something they can choose not to do, which I think is probably what gets to the heart of some of that kind of commentary around ...

Karen Prejudice.

**MB** Well if you don't like it ...

Katie Well that's undoing it isn't it, that's if you can choose to do it you can choose to go back and make ...

Karen Yes that's a good point yes.

Katie Once you've moved somewhere else and set up a life there and not ...

Karen Yes, it's not that straightforward to ...

Katie ... job and potentially got qualifications it's not simple, it's just going back, you know, rewinding and starting again.

**MB** And I think that's really important to remember because we also know through the project that lots of people are basically being told, there is a rhetoric around ...

Karen Well you can always go home, you can always go back ...

**MB** You can always go back and people have got lives and quite often families and quite often it's not as, it's not really as straightforward as making a choice.

Karen This goes straight on to my issue.

**MB** Does it, that's good.

Karen Shall I move on? So I've got two. One, I was going to do this second but I'm going to do it first now. Is that I'm really thinking about integration in a different way over this project.

**MB Oh my hated word.**

Karen Well because it's so problematic but we still find we have to use it as well, so I've used it today, I talked about people in Tenerife who were integrated, and we tend to take integration to mean able to speak the local language. No local people, maybe working locally, maybe politically integrated, maybe paying your taxes and resident and things like that.

**MB Friends?**

Karen Yeah and having a social life and having, yeah but I'm shifting now and thinking, d'you know I've met people that I would call integrated, who you know, most of my research has been in Spain, who maybe have not managed to speak much Spanish and I'm not ever going to say they don't try because every single person I have met has tried. But they give up after a while because people find people they feel comfortable with over time and they settle down, but I've met people who still might not be speaking much Spanish but they've got a life somewhere exactly as you were saying Katie, you can't just disrupt that life you've got now, they've got routines, they've got friends, they've got things I always do on a Monday, things I always do on a Friday, my local club, my place I go for a walk, where I go and get my shopping, who I call when I need some help, the person that I go and visit regularly because she's in need, that's integration. They'd settled, they've got routines, they've got practices, they've got belonging, you can't just disrupt all that, and you can't just say that's all about learning the local language or even being absolutely embedded in the local culture, it's really made me think differently, in fact only last week one couple were saying to me we're not really integrated and I said I've been talking to you for, it actually turned out three hours but I said you know in my opinion you're integrated, this is your home.

**MB So what you're referring to is how people settle in places and how they ...**

Karen Finding a home and settling, yeah, but integration can mean that. You said it's your hated word, it's because we tend to take it to mean, you've got to become part of the melting pot or something, it goes back to those awful assumptions that what integration, and this if for all migrants.

Chantelle And different people use it as a way to weaponise politics.

Karen Yeah, and judge. So that's one thing. The other thing is, you said friends there at one point and it's been really profound for me that because this project has been over a long period of time, how long have we been doing it now Michaela?

**MB Well it feels like we've been forever but sixteen months yes.**

Karen Because we've kept in touch with people and that's been really profound for me because I've made what I would call some real friends, I think the project has made some real friends. We've got relationships and friendships and some are, okay there are some people, I email them back regularly and they don't reply and that's fine, they've obviously decided that's, they're

going to finish now, they've done their bit. There are others who reply straightaway but it's only about the project and so when the project ends I'll lose them, but there are others, they're going to stay in touch with me. A couple of weeks ago I got sent a photograph of somebody's baby. She'd had a baby. I've been asked to go to a funeral so somebody lost somebody close to them and said d'you want to come to the funeral, so this has really changed, it's been interesting, I think the project has made, not just me myself but I think the project has made friendships and built relationships, it's made me think about the nature of sociological research when you sometimes just go do one interview and walk away and never speak to the person ever again.

**MB Yeah, I'm thinking through that, because you, I mean you and I we've been doing ethnography with populations in France and Spain.**

Karen Yeah so our relationship with our research build has always been somewhat different than interview-based research.

**MB Yes, and I think for me, I mean I remember the other week when what had happened, what had Theresa May done, I can't remember what it was, one of those things, she'd done something, and my immediate ...**

Karen Cancelled the vote?

**MB Oh no it was before that, it was, can anyone remember what it was?**

Karen The news rule agreement that we didn't know what it was.

Chantelle Dominic Grieve resigned.

**MB There's too many things. Something happened some time in November and the fact that we can't remember what it was is neither here nor there actually because my immediate thought was that the amount of turbulence that had been generated over the period of about a week, oh it was the week of the European Parliament vote, but the amount of turbulence that had been generated over the course of the week made me actually, I had to stop and check myself but my concern was, what is happening to those people that we've been talking to for the last year and a half, how do they feel and what can we do to show them that we're actually thinking about them first and foremost, and that was an important point for me because all the way through this project we have been concerned about the people that we've been working with, and that does translate as you say into, you know we're not just walking away from people.**

Karen Well with friendships and relationships comes some sense of responsibility, especially since we instigated a lot of these friendships and relationships.

Chantelle I was going to say to you Michaela, I was looking over, you'd forwarded me some emails for interviewing in Dublin in January and I was

looking at some of the threads and people had sort of asked your advice on how to manage the situation and that came about almost immediately as I joined the project, I was interviewing people and they were like d'you think I should get dual citizenship? I'm like I don't know.

**MB I can't tell you what to do.**

Chantelle I can't tell you what to do, and like the amount of times you've either had that ...

Karen What's your advice.

Chantelle What's your advice, like how do you manage that as sociologists?

**MB I don't want to over-romanticise this, I think there could be a tendency when talking about the people that we've worked with as people that we're engaged in ongoing relationships with, to kind of romanticise that and of course within the research, within research that comes with, it comes with responsibilities as you say and it can sometimes be quite tricky to negotiate as well because at some stage the project's going to end.**

Karen Yes maybe.

**MB Maybe. Can we just, you know have a pause or something. And I think that you're right though, I think those relationships will outlive the project but partly because research never ends when it's supposed to end in terms of when your funding runs out, but I think that's given us a further reason, I mean nobody ever wants to do research on such a major transformation in terms of, I don't think that we're driven by this because Brexit's a really interesting time to be working with British people in Europe, I think there's something else going on there underpinning the project, and I think that's what you're reflecting on as well when you say we have a responsibility to the people that we've been working with, and we do continue our correspondence with them and bearing in mind how many people are involved in the project that is no small undertaking actually.**

Karen Good job we're a good team.

**MB It is a good job that we're a good team. Katie I noticed that you were writing a few things down and I just wondered if there was anything that you wanted to chip in with at this stage.**

Katie Well okay, so I've made three bullet points listeners, as Michaela observed me doing. One was about integration and wanting to think more about what we actually mean when we use that word.

Karen There's a whole book to be written about that Katie.

Katie Yeah I'm sure there is. You two have written about it as well haven't you.

Karen Not enough though, not really clarified it. I find I have to clarify every paper I write I have to say this is what I mean by it at this moment.

Katie But I was thinking about in Cyprus it's quite a specific context because many many local people speak really good English so if you don't want to learn Greek ...

Karen What's the local language.

Katie You know that you'll be able to communicate with most people anyway in English, but there definitely was a group of people who had learnt, who had been in Cyprus for a long time and who spoke fluent Greek, they would speak it at home, they would speak it with their children, their children were bilingual and they seemed to me from hanging out with them in Cyprus to be closer I suppose to what the life of a Cypriot person, a Greek Cypriot person is in terms of chats at the school gates for example, and chats in coffee shops in Greek, jokes, humour, you know that kind of thing came up. But there were also people who, as you say had started to learn Greek had taken lessons but they just hadn't been very successful, and they had friendships, you know they knew local people in the village but they would always speak to them in English and they seemed to me, and there are lots of other factors going on too, one of those factors being that those, the people in the second group tended to be older as well but they had very much, there's an English, there's a British community in inverted commas, and they were very much integrated with that, but not so much into the wider hurly-burly variety and all sorts of different types of life that you could have as a Cypriot person working and socialising so that was the first thing I wrote down. And then I made some really random notes about being lost in the Casir and photos which I'll save for tomorrow.

**MB Well we'll be looking forward to that, I think that's really, I'm looking forward to hearing much much more about Cyprus and I think the description that you've just given as these, you know these people who are differently positioned in relation to their ability, well because of their ability or not to communicate in the language of the place that they live, they're really important reflections, there's always a diversity within that from, you know, the people who can, as you say, communicate at the school gates and what that does for them as well because it isn't just that because they can do that, there are all sorts of local contingencies, biographical moments that allow particular things to happen and other things not to happen, and one of the things I noticed in France for example was people who'd gone over with children, when their children left school they actually lost some of their connection to the local French community because their children were the lynchpin of that, which I think is quite common, even in research on parenting in the UK you find that too, and I think it's really important that we remember that some of the things that we observe in relation to British migrants or any migrant community, might actually have nothing to do with their migration status, and I think that's really important.**

Karen And also that what we observe about British migrants can also absolutely have parallels with migrants elsewhere, and if we can understand integration as not necessarily being able to have a chat at the school gates but you can still have a sense of belonging and home and roots and feel settled, then that might help us understand other migrant groups and not be so judgemental perhaps.

**MB So you're arguing for a critical reclaiming of the concept of integration Karen.**

Karen I am yes. One that questions the role of language.

**MB I think that that's a wonderful point to end on, but I just want to throw one more thing in, I just want to say that one of the great things to me about working on this project has been working with other people and I think it's been really really useful, the podcasts have been really valuable to me.**

Karen Does she mean us d'you think?

Katie Possibly. I don't see any other people.

**MB Has been, especially when we've recorded altogether has been a really good moment to challenge my assumptions, so thank you very much to my lovely team, Karen, Katie and Chantelle.**

All Thank you Michaela.

**MB You've been listening to the Brexit Brits Abroad podcast, hosted by me, Dr Michaela Benson, and produced by Emma Houlton at art of podcast. The series is part of a UK in a Changing Europe funded research project, Brexit Brits Abroad, that's all about what Brexit means for UK citizens living in the EU 27. We're really keen to hear from you about the issues and concerns we address in the programme, so please do get in touch with any thoughts, queries and questions. You can find our contact details on our web page [brexitbritsabroad](#), or get in touch via social media, we're on Twitter @brexpatseu and we have a Facebook page Brexitbritsabroad. Finally, in case you're not already subscribed to the podcast, you can do so on both iTunes and Google podcasts. Thank you for listening, and I'll be back in a couple of weeks with the next episode.**