

## **Publications**

### **Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Moving Professionals and the Promise of European Integration by Adrian Favell**

The free movement of capital, services, goods and persons lies at the heart of the European integration process, and the increased mobility of European nationals has long been thought of as the surest route to the Europeanization of the continent. In an idealized, economist's United States of Europe, the movement of skilled and educated workers across borders would lead to a positive intermixing of cultures, a transcendence of the old capital-driven national conflicts of the past, and a maximization of talent within a more dynamic economy. Some such logic underpins much EU policy – notably in prominent DGs such as those dealing with education, science, social policy, citizenship – dedicated to breaking down barriers to free movement. Yet, unlike in North America, where the professional, long distance mobility of middle class, educated people is a commonplace fact of life, Europeans seem remarkably reluctant to move; remarkably attached, it seems, to their very specific local regions and cities, their national cultures and habits of origin. Within an integrating Europe, West Europeans are becoming more mobile – one immediately thinks of Erasmus students, retirement migrants in Spain, cross-border commuting or shopping – but when it comes to migration and long term re-settlement, the numbers remain low. For these prototypical European citizens, the formal legal and political barriers might be down, but other cultural and practical constraints seem to discourage wholesale relocation.

A second ideal typical European model here seems to reassert itself. This posits a Europe of nations, divided into national, regional and local cultures, in which low mobility and high identification with place mark out the continent's distinctive way of life. Within this model, some Europeans might move – as they have done in numbers since the industrial revolution (Moch 2003) – but those that do, move according to established and stable 'nationalized' trajectories, from regions and peripheries to urban centers, on a social/spatial mobility 'escalator' from lower to higher class ranks (Fielding 1995). Those few that transcend the national in this system, move on up into the virtual ranks of the global, international elite; a hyper-mobile cadre shuttling between global cities, wholly distinct from the domesticated, deeply rooted middle class bourgeoisie. It is this latter group which continues to determine electoral outcomes, and hence retain a grip on the balance of tax breaks and welfare benefits in West European states; and they are the dominant presence in the affluent, mid-sized cities at the heartland of the continent, in which European prosperity and stability is said by many to ultimately reside (Le Galès 2002).

There is much at stake in establishing which of these two models of European development – the economic or the cultural – we might forecast to guide the continent's future. It is ultimately a question about the trajectory of European modernity (as defined by Therborn 1995), and how it may be diverging or converging with US-centered versions of the economy and society under conditions of globalization. Europeans' attachment to 'where they come from' has been seen as a fundamental cause of the much debated sclerosis of the European economic model, and the weakness of European cities in a globalized economy (Castells 1993); but, equally, it might be projected as the underlying secret of the European way of life, and the quality and wealth of its urban environments.

In a forthcoming book, *Eurostars and Eurocities*, I offer the first systematic sociological study in English of free movement in the European Union. I home in on the free moving West Europeans, the Eurostars, seen to be the prototypes of European integration from below. I paint a portrait of the lives and experiences of various individuals and families in three classic Eurocities: Amsterdam, London and Brussels. One would have thought that here, if not elsewhere, we would find numerous mobile European foreigners capitalizing on the extraordinary free movement opportunities offered by the EU, in cities historically renowned for their openness, diversity and cosmopolitan nature. Indeed, yes. In tracing the mobility choices, everyday lives, social networks, and settlement strategies of the many young (and not so young) Irish, British, German, Dutch, French, Italian and Spanish residents – working in multinational corporations, finance, IT, law, lobbying, journalism, social work and science research – we hear the voice of a new Europe that is transcending the old national divisions and barriers of the past. And yet, no. In documenting the array of informal barriers and struggles they encounter in forging ordinary middle class lives in a foreign environment – in terms of housing, child care and education, political participation, medical and welfare benefits, and long term financial planning – we uncover an older Europe. Underneath ‘global city’ affectations, we find sedimented regional and national cultures that sustain domestic middle class privileges in intensely competitive urban environments, as well as the deep variation of opportunities and experiences to be found across these three ostensibly similar international hubs (see also Favell 2003).

### **The cities**

These three famous northwestern cities between them share a long heritage of diversity, toleration, and (in the case of Brussels) multinational composition, long predating post-war immigration. They are also among the very wealthiest urban regions in Europe, and have very large foreign populations. The ordering of the three cities is historical – in terms of referring back to the order in which each had their ‘golden’ age of expansion and international development – but it also helps us appreciate why each in its own way is an ideal-type version of the Eurocity.

### **Amsterdam**

In global city ratings that measure the degree of network centrality indicated by the location of multinational corporations, London, Brussels, and Amsterdam in fact rank as first, second and third division cities in that order (Taylor, Walker and Beaverstock 2000). Amsterdam, however, when seen as the core of the Randstad metropolis, might be better viewed as the leading metropole of the country routinely ranked as the most economically open and globalized in the world, with the employment opportunities that go with this. Moreover, it outscores any city in Europe in terms of its liberal appeal. Building on a historical tradition of religious tolerance and asylum, this hub of European international trade is a non-English speaking city where even the bus drivers, small shop owners (and junkies!) speak excellent English; and its famously liberal attitudes make it a magnet for all seeking a refuge from conservatism. Moreover, unlike the sprawling suburban metropolis of London, and the classically industrial/post-industrial trajectory of Brussels, it is also a classic medieval European city, with a true ‘bourgeois’ centre, a concentric structure, and the poorest neighborhoods of housing projects (de Biljmer, for example) out on the periphery, along with new corporate edge city developments. I take Amsterdam to represent the

cultural Eurocity. Amsterdam has attracted large numbers of MNCs, in IT, finance, pharmaceuticals and law, as well as being an important media center. It has extremely well developed services for its large expat population, and an unequaled open cultural environment. And yet the central puzzle remains: foreign Europeans, even those closest to the Dutch culturally and linguistically, find it an extremely difficult place in which to settle down. Amsterdam, in this sense, may prove to be closer to the archetype of the classic European city, that was at the heart of Europe's modern development and its localistic tendencies (Kaelble 1990).

### **London**

London, of course, is the global city par excellence, seen by all observers as the most international city in Europe – possibly the world – and a gateway for all Europeans to global English language business, media, and cultural worlds. Its long history of immigration and asylum is second to none, something only deepened by the post-colonial multiculturalism that has developed in the post-war period. Moreover, in the liberal 90s, it has developed an extraordinarily open labor market for foreigners with a remarkable degree of mostly undocumented immigration. It has become a mecca for the young of Europe everywhere, who have moved in droves to learn the global language, and be part of the swinging, libertarian de facto capital of Europe. This last fact alone embeds it profoundly in Europe and European social structures, despite the grating euroscepticism of the nation around it. For me, London represents the economic Eurocity. What is remarkable is just how little London knows about the large numbers of Europeans in its midst. Ever present, yet invisible, they are a crucial part of the city's dynamo, yet unregistered by policy makers and city government officials. Although impossible to get a complete view of this population in such a huge and diverse city, I centered my inquiries on both the younger service sector population, and on the IT, media and finance sectors which draw on some of Europe's most talented individuals.

### **Brussels**

Brussels, the self-styled official capital of Europe, is the political hub of the European Union and NATO, and increasingly the place where the world does European political business. It is thus, of course, the political Eurocity in my study, though it is worth noting that this somewhat accidental honor was only realized in large part because of Brussels' extraordinary location as a historical crossroads of Europe (its francophone, Dutch, germanophone, and now anglophone cultural dimensions). Recent years have seen major non-European immigration to add to its older Italian and Spanish populations. It is the only state capital that is simultaneously a bi-lingual capital of two distinct national communities, who make up distinct sections of the population; it is also a dramatically federalized city, with one of the most multicultural city governments. Brussels is, in other words, multicultural, multinational and multi-leveled. Its location and strategic importance have attracted a wide range of MNCs and other employment, alongside the legal, administrative and political work connected with international institutions. And, despite Belgium's shabby image, it is in fact a wealthier country than the Netherlands, with Brussels sitting atop regional wealth tables along with London and Hamburg. This is combined with an extremely high quality of life (ratio of cost of living to income) for its inhabitants. In many ways, the settlement of Europeans in Brussels is far more advanced than in London or Amsterdam. It is possible to

identify gentrifying neighborhoods dominated by the new Europeans, and it is much easier to get a broadly accurate view of the foreign population in the city. This, however, does not boil down – as is often thought – to nothing but overpaid eurocrats and expats. In fact, what is most fascinating is the numerous examples of other educated Europeans who have found work and begun to settle in Brussels. These new Europeans are now an integral part of the multicultural patchwork of the city.

### **The stories**

Within these three cities live distinct European populations: real people with real lives, who must fulfill in some way the macro trends theorized by scholars. The core of my work is dedicated to bringing alive the phenomenological worlds of these individuals and families. Eurostars and Eurocities thus sets out more than sixty intimate snapshots to capture a dimension of Europeanization that has never been documented. To convey the material, I here focus briefly on three French women in London and their stories. Their themes and observations embody both the generalizable reality of European mobility as experienced by growing numbers of young, middle class movers living in the three cities, as well as their own personalized cases and perspectives.

### **Moving**

London today is said to be the fourth biggest French city, although the consulate only keeps track of about a quarter of the estimated 200,000 or so French citizens in the city. Those missing from the official stats are archetypally young, recent graduates eager to improve their English, but who also see London as a privileged gateway to the wider world and bigger, better careers. Service sector employers, such as the sandwich chain Prêt-à-Manger, have capitalized on this talented and highly available workforce, by actually targeting young Europeans as they arrive (Prêt-à-Manger's recruitment office is in fact found on platform one at Victoria Station, the historical gateway to Europe). The bottom line for these mobile young French, shared equally by the Italians and Spanish I met in all three cities, was that they moved because of work frustration at home. Like the French entrepreneurs exiles, led by Olivier Cadic of France Libre d'Entreprendre – self-styled exiles who have clustered in and around the Eurostar train terminal in Ashford, Kent to benefit from Britain's low tax business environment – these vocal, frustrated, mostly provincial French, did indeed 'get on their bikes' as euro-economists would hope. Nicole, a 28-year-old IT programmer on a modest income, summarizes this attitude:

“There was a big sense of frustration about the personal development thing. The latin countries are absolutely not flexible on the work market, I can do anything I want there but it's not going to change my situation. You are just young, so your opinion doesn't count, they say you don't have any experience (even though you have!), and I was working crazy hours, and being paid peanuts, no rewards. And still you live in Paris and it is very expensive, at the end of the day I didn't study five or six years for that. I wanted to go abroad. Even if my experience in Paris had been nice, I think I already had it in mind going abroad.”

This prototypical migrant reasoning works both generally – in terms of the extraordinary openness of the London labor market – and specifically in terms of sectors for which London is the true European capital: particularly in finance, IT and media. Laure, a high earning media manager in her early 40s, who

had been in London since joining CNN during its halcyon days in the early 1990s, stressed her mixed feelings about her own very rational choices. Commenting on her experiences as a student at Sciences Pô, Paris:

“It was awful... I had a very bad time there because I’m a bit of a non-conformist [laughs]. Basically, you get out of your own country as a young professional when you think the opportunities are greater elsewhere, when you think the flexibility is going to be better. I’m sure everybody thinks the same, in my case, the opportunities were very specific at that time, the [cable TV] industry was young and new here [in London], because of the link with America. All the multichannel TV industry in Europe is born and bred from the States, or is very immature, so you just feel this pool of expertise is going to come first to England, and then later to the continent, which in fact is what happened. I hate to think of that – the American influence – [laughs] but that’s why I came.”

### **Settlement**

The experiences of movers begins quite rapidly to diverge with the counterfactual life (and career) as it would have been back home, as they match their expectations with carving out a new life in a new city. Valerie, a former broker in her early 30s, who is now unemployed and looking for work again in the City after a few months vacation travel, recounted in detail the peculiar life of the new Londoners, huddling together in the cheapest hostels in Bayswater and Chelsea, long established as a first port of call for expats in the city. What is extraordinary are the compromises that accumulate over time, compromises relative to a specific peer group back home who, a few years on, now have high paying jobs, own houses, and live bourgeois lives. This compares to the many late 20 or 30 something French, Spanish and Greek graduates, still living after several years in provisional, shared accommodation (which costs over 100 pounds each per week), before establishing residential independence in the ferociously expensive London rental market. A sense of wistful no-going back realism pervades her reflections on this:

“In France, I don’t really have links with people, all my friends who I knew are all married now, all settled [installés], whilst here we are all single (even if you have a boyfriend) so there’s none of that sentiment of ‘OK, I’m married now, so I’m not going out anymore’ – which is not necessarily a good thing, by the way. But maybe that’s why I don’t want to settled down, because I don’t have any examples around me, I don’t know! Ill maybe finish by becoming English.”

Such interpersonal comparativism pervades their talk, embodying a sharp cross-national Europeanism – shared by all Eurostars – who are acutely aware of qualitative differences between cities and national cities. Nicole and Laure laugh and recount nightmare stories of the British National Health Service, as readily as they give credit to its open attitudes on bureaucracy, and its accomplished multiracial, cosmopolitan environment. But settlement, and the competitive struggle for access to and control over scarce ‘quality of life’ resources in the city – the very thing that most motivates domestic middle classes (Butler and Savage 1995) – takes its most tangible shape, in London as elsewhere, on the housing market and over questions of childcare and education for children. Laure, married with two children, laughs at her lack of adventure which led her to stay in and then buy a flat in Golders Green, that has subsequently given her access to a friendly cosmopolitan neighborhood life, and English state schools, in

which her French children actually feel at home amongst other immigrant families. However, like everyone else in London, she rails about the extortionate price of child care, and the professional compromises it imposes on families who would have it much easier in Brussels (where child care is good) or in Amsterdam (where international school options are better).

## **Integration**

It is almost an unquestioned assumption of the global cities theorists, particularly those that home in on the cosmopolitan, nature of the 'glocal' in these places (Hannerz, 1996), that these former national capitals now embody in time and space the wide open 'scapes' of a truly mobile, global culture. Yet what is striking from the Eurostars' stories in London, is just how coercive and assimilatory to national norms of behavior life in the city is: in terms of the everyday rhythms, patterns of sociability, and choices and compromises people make between quality of life and career. Yet it is remarkable too how they see this and accept the ways it has changed them. Valerie, fresh back from her holiday in continental Europe reflects:

"You see there the life is less stressed, you see people are more calm. Take Milan, people move [bouge] there, but there is an atmosphere there, which you don't find here. But in France, I couldn't believe it, to buy something, I just wanted to shout "bouge! c'est pas possible!". I could do three tours of the supermarket while I'm waiting to pay at the checkout [laughs], but anyway, when I came back, relaxed etc, I appreciated that [their speed of life]. Whether I would like that long term...[shrugs] You need things to move a bit, but its good people were not running, they appreciated things, there isn't the same competition, like here. I'm always amused here at 11, when the bell rings [in the pub], people always take 3 or 4 pints of beer, as if they don't really appreciate what they are doing. In France and Italy, you taste life, you are not just there to waste your energies. But I'm just as crazy [folle], except that I don't drink. I'm from the south of France, it annoyed me a lot when I worked – my job was intense, 8am-5pm – and you just don't eat, you just work. Its true that for me also today when I went to this interview at Canary Wharf, there were all these sandwich shops and all that, and I say to myself [in English] "ah, I don't want that", I can't do fast food while I'm walking, that stressed me [angoissée] because I'd forgotten that. At the moment I have the time, if I go back into the system, in finance especially, I will have to eat lunch in front of my computer. That's what I call the non qualité de vie, where you can't take pleasure in eating, when you don't take more than two minutes."

Quantitatively, economically, the impact of the new European populations on these cities has been considerable. In many ways, these Europeans have become a conduit for the progressive Europeanization of some of London's worst eating and going out habits, with the new vogue for restaurants, street cafes and Euro-chic. A good example is the transformation of Islington, a Europeanized neighborhood, highly popular with Eurostars who can afford it. This kind of impact is even more dramatic in Brussels, in neighborhoods such as Ixelles (esp. near Place Châtelain) and Sint Katelijne in the center. What is noticeable, however, across all the cities, is how this involvement almost never translates into political participation. The EU studies literature on European citizenship indeed is way off beam in its hopes that this might be an effective route towards integration and a more democratic Europe. Nicole, when asked about this, shrugged in a way typical of nearly all interviewees – who would

be classified among some of the most politically and culturally aware members of the European population, as well as those most likely to care about European citizenship.

“I don’t have the energy. I didn’t ever vote [as a European citizen]. I didn’t know anything about it. I didn’t receive any information, and I didn’t look for it. I was expecting information but I was lazy. I read the papers, follow the news and everything, but I’m much more interested in French politics, and I have voted in France. I think if I had a family here, I would. But I know that I’m not going to stay here for 20 years.”

### **Anomie**

Nicole’s crisp statement here summarizes the sojourner mentality, a way of life made possible by the European free movement provisions, and the new forms of mobility that it encourages. For the younger movers, provisionality is the key to this freedom, and it is this that Eurocities most usefully enable:

“Deciding to stay for two years was a bit scary. Its stupid, I know, when you’ve been staying each time ‘just another year’. This is its just two years, but it was a big step for me. It’s funny. I think it’s maybe because I like the idea of knowing that it’s OK if I change my mind tomorrow. I can just go, give up everything in one month. It’s a kind of freedom, but now I have to be a bit more responsible.”

Valerie, defines her own notion of this trans-European freedom, by comparing life in cosmopolitan London with Paris:

“In Paris, its perhaps just as good for all that, but you don’t feel that denationalized aspect of life [côté depaïsé]. I’m a foreigner here, that’s what I like, that gives me the right to be different, because I’m not from here. When we go out with colleagues, I’m the one who doesn’t take beer, who doesn’t get drunk, because it s not in my culture. I’m different here, but also I’m different now in France, because I’m not like everyone now, and I like this way of not belonging to anyone, of making myself distinct [me distinguer].”

But Valerie is slightly older than Nicole, and has passed a certain threshold where she in fact now feels there is no real going back.

“Yes, that’s the only thing that makes me afraid, the more it goes, the less I’ll be able to go back to France, even if you take a taste for that, being elsewhere”.

A few further years later down the road, married with children, ostensibly settled and successful in London, Laure is even more doubtful of the longer-term commitments she is making:

“I think although I don’t like talking about middle class problems – at the end of the day we so much more privileged than people who have to move – but I would still like to know why it is there are more and more people who make that choice where to go live, to places where they can project themselves... What we are all doing is forgetting that the most important thing is involvement in where we live, not where we could live... and I put myself in the same basket because I ate my breakfast today looking at a map of France [laughs].”

Her words express the anomie that comes with the European freedoms; an anomie that harks back towards the specific frustrations of life as a foreigner in a foreign city, but also points further to a sense of how unsettling a truly de-nationalized life in the European context might be.

### **New frontiers in EU research**

Hearing voices such as these in the midst of standard debates about European integration is only strange because the scholarship on the subject has been so dominated by top down, macro-focused, IR, political science, history and law. European studies has long been calling out for more micro-level anthropology and sociology on actual social processes of Europeanization from below; and in many ways it is only the geographers who have been equipped enough – with their distinctive sense of spatial scales, flows, place and time – to begin to capture the fundamental changes afoot on the European continent (see Rodriguez-Pose 2002). As this lack suggests, we need a way of mediating between the necessarily abstract, macro-theoretical perspective on the social and spatial dynamics of contemporary Europe, and the equally necessary call for phenomenological insight into the lives and experiences of individuals who are the face of these global and regional trends.

Unfortunately, however, the most well know geographical literature of relevance here – the economic geography literature on global cities and transnational flows – has on the whole proceeded apace with scant attention to the human dimension of these phenomena. Flows and networks between locations are measured by counting the number of offices corporations have in different cities, measuring foreign direct investment and information exchange, or by quantitatively charting shifts in business activities from production to service industries (Taylor, Walker and Beaverstock 2000; Sassen 2000). But rarely is any kind of human face given to these macro-level transactions and data sets. The ever-growing mobility and migration of professionals is always assumed to be an integral part of these flows (Sassen 2001), but more often than not the mobility of individuals alongside capital, services and goods is simply deduced from the macro-level data. It is rarely asked whether real individuals, with everyday family lives and human relationships, could actually live out the lives predicted for them. Global Marxists give this their own spin, identifying a transnational capitalist class running business corporations, flying around the globe, and manipulating international organizations like the EU to their own ends (Sklair 2001). Worst of all, perhaps, purely theoretical writers on globalization have been guilty of a terrible excess here (Giddens 1990; Urry 2000). Increased world migration and mobility (a dubious assumption to begin with) has, for these theorists, completely dissolved the stable structures of the nation-state-society. The world according to them is now a compressed ‘postmodern’ time-space continuum of virtual flows and networks that link up cities and cultures across the globe, creating new global identities and politics.

Eurostars and Eurocities hopes to direct attention away from the stylized übermensch predicated by these theorists. We know what these people and their worlds are supposed to look like. They are, of course, the airbrushed mannequins and designer interiors that fill glossy global yuppie magazines like Wallpaper. But we know precious little about the ordinary lives of the new, internationalizing middle classes behind such clichés of niche marketing. What are the human costs and consequences of this life beyond the nation-state-society? What has changed in the everyday shape of so-called professional ‘elites’? The Europe of free movement may offer a more realistic version of possible transnational

opportunities, more realistic possibilities of resettlement and integration. Yet clearly there are costs as well as benefits to stepping out from regular patterns of social mobility and professional advancement; to leaving behind regular forms of family life rooted in locality and national culture; or opting out from the cradle of national welfare states, dedicated increasingly to protecting only their own citizens from the effects of the global economy. The one instance of a study that focuses on the human consequences of the new economy in a similar way is Richard Sennett's (1998) extraordinary study of the impact of the post-industrial era on the lives of professional Americans, *The Corrosion of Character*. But are these rootless European lives as difficult to fulfill as his work might suggest? My study offers answers to these questions.

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