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CHAPTER 3

Social Mobility and Spatial Mobility

Adrian Favell and Ettore Recchi

Key concepts: social mobility, spatial mobility, stratification, operationalization, methodological nationalism, quantitative and qualitative strategies, social structure, process, rational action, occupational status, social spiralism, locals and cosmopolitans, norms, variation, bell curve, structural functionalism, path dependency, ideal types, habitus, field, scale

Key references: Erikson and Goldthorpe, Treiman, Breen, Lamont, Merton, Gouldner, Abbott, Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, Borjas, Parsons, Durkheim, Weber, Bertaux, Bourdieu

There is no subject more central to sociology than *social mobility*.[1] The degree to which modern industrialized societies enable talented, ambitious or lucky individuals to move up in status, or conversely the extent to which they reproduce inherited inequalities or social hierarchies from one generation to the next, are questions that still dominate much of the empirical mainstream of the discipline under the general rubric of *stratification*. Some of the most longstanding and detailed debates in the mainstream have centred on attempts to measure and distinguish the patterns of social mobility of European societies in comparison with others (Ganzeboom *et al*. 1989; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000; Breen 2004). In particular, Europe is generally

[1] This chapter was conceived jointly by the two authors. Ettore Recchi was the principle author of 'Operationalization 1' section and Adrian Favell the principle author of 'Operationalization 2'. All other sections were written equally together.

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taken to be less fluid than America: the stereotype of the old world of ingrained privilege, tradition, and slow moving social change, set against the new world of opportunity, achievement and flux. Yet the emergence of a European society built largely on legal and institutional structures that facilitate free movement – that is, the *spatial mobility* of capital, goods, services and people – poses an interesting question for a sociology of the European Union. Has the spatial mobility enabled by the breaking down of barriers to movement and the notion of European citizenship – the establishment of a borderless labour market, sustained by the norm of non-discrimination to foreign nationals – also done something to the likelihood of social mobility within the European population? To put this in other terms: can people now move *out* of their own country in order to move *up* socially in relation to where they come from, and if so, who is moving and where are they moving to? It is not hard to see that operationalizing this question might be one of the most direct and fruitful ways of conceiving of an empirical sociology of the European Union. Such a sociology might bring new facts and phenomena to EU studies, but also engage in debate with the mainstream of the sociology discipline, which has hitherto largely ignored the European Union as a subject of interest.

In this chapter, we offer a guide to *how* the question of social and spatial mobility can be posed as part of a new sociology of the European Union. Doing empirical sociology is all about issues of operationalization. One of the interesting aspects of studying social and spatial mobility in the EU lies in the necessary complementarity of *quantitative* and *qualitative* strategies of research. Designing a study that can genuinely work across national borders in Europe also highlights some of the great methodological problems in avoiding the pervasive *methodological nationalism* of cross-national comparative work. In our chapter, after a brief review of the relevant literature and theoretical concerns, we thus present first a quantitative then a qualitative take on the subject, both based on original empirical research. A constructed survey on social and spatial mobility in the EU reveals both that Europeans do not move much spatially, and that there is not much social mobility associated with the building of a borderless Europe. Quantitative evidence in fact underlines the *structural* marginality of mobility in Europe today despite its visibility and apparent ubiquity. On the other hand, qualitative strategies, that home in on ideal-type cases of mobility in Europe, reveal a different picture of Europe: of European Union as a *process*, in which hidden populations and crucial pathways to social mobility can be revealed, and in which marginal or improbable behaviour (in statistical terms) can have a much larger *symbolic* impact on the continent as a whole than its structural size would suggest. Both structure and process, and structure and symbolism, are a necessary part of the empirical sociology we propose.

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Social and spatial mobility in Europe

Mobility and immobility in Western societies

Europe is not famous for its social mobility. Unlike the US, which is widely seen as a society that enables anyone to become an American, make money, and claw their way up the social ladder, European societies have traditionally been preoccupied by subtle and not so subtle struggles over the *reproduction* of class privileges and distinctions: how one generation manages to transmit to its children (or grandchildren) status and class assets, and the social identities that go with these. On the structural side, ample evidence shows that Europeans, predominantly, are more fixed than Americans into their parents' status ranks and class positions, with Sweden being the only significant exception. Such a finding is corroborated by research carried out with different theoretical and methodological approaches (see Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000, or Breen and Luijkx 2004a, 49–50, for a guide to this). The story of upper-class children attaining upper-class lives and working-class children getting working-class jobs is still very common. Maybe even more relevant is the transatlantic difference in cultural terms – that is, in the solidity and capacity of class cultures to reproduce themselves across generations. This capacity has been explored in comparative cultural sociology by Michèle Lamont who shows how class (in the US and France, in her studies) is cemented by distinct sets of values, morality and sense of community among different classes and social groups in each country (Lamont 1992, 2000; see also Willis 1981).

Likewise, spatial mobility. The US is seen as a country where working, middle and upper classes routinely move around the country from job to job, often changing states and major cities of residence several times over a lifetime. Rates of cross-state mobility are historically set at around 3 per cent of all Americans per year (Theodos 2006); moreover, the dynamism of mobile talent, especially among the more educated, is seen as a crucial historical engine of the American economy. In Europe, if we may take it for a moment as a 'United States of Europe', rates of such mobility (across states, in this case nation-states) are dramatically lower – at 0.3 per cent of the population per year (Herm 2008), and Europeans move less *even* from region to region inside nation-states (at 1 per cent per year) than Americans across states (Ester and Krieger 2008: 2).

These at least are the conclusions one would draw from standardized definitions of class, occupational and residential mobility in the two continents. Social mobility in Europe has occurred but at rates typically lower than in the US or other settler countries. Some of the most recent studies on this have added that in so far as mobility is growing in Europe, it is likely to be due to its

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immigrant populations (Breen and Luijkx 2004b, 401–2). This is an as yet untested, but intriguing, thought for linking social and spatial mobility in Europe. Human geographers meanwhile have, since the more marked social flux of the 1950s and 60s, observed very interesting couplings between internal migration and social occupational mobility (Fielding 1995). Typically, the move of younger citizens from the rural or provincial location they grew up in to the metropolitan city is accompanied by an *escalator* effect: it is a spatial move linked to a social mobility outcome, like stepping on a moving escalator that sweeps you along and upwards faster than your peers. Talented and ambitious individuals have historically always moved out of the local worlds they live in, in order to move up: this was a key dynamic of industrialization and the formation of the nation-state in the modern world (Weber 1976; Moch 2003), and it continues today – although arguably less now than in the more meritocratic and egalitarian era of *les trente glorieuses*, that is, the post-war boom years of continental European economies.

Reflection on this subject links back to classic distinctions in the structural functionalist literature – associated with Robert K. Merton (1957: 387–420) and Alvin Gouldner (1957) – between 'locals' and 'cosmopolitans'. According to this model, one of the key dynamics of modernizing societies is *social spiralism* (Watson 1964) as a way of moving up in society. Talented or educated people from provincial places and social locations might feel blocked in their career aspirations if they stay local to where they come from: the social mobility ladder may be fixed, or only reproduce existing status hierarchies. To get on, then, they may choose to move out, spiralling up through society by taking a detour away from their place of origin. Residents in cities used as destinations for spiralist ambitions thus often display a tension between the ambitions of 'insider' *locals* – to move up through existing work structures that reward incumbency and patience – and those of 'outsider' *cosmopolitans* ready always to exit and move elsewhere if their efforts are not rewarded. This tension is a familiar feature of all kinds of locations under conditions of globalization or regionalization where (local) natives compete with (cosmopolitan) newcomers. In an apparently ever more mobile world, ingrained structures are often being swept away by the forces of change represented by those who moved. On the other hand, there is also a tension between the obviously visible examples furnished by qualitative studies that focus on movers, migrants, transnationals, cosmopolitans, and so on, and the change they bring, and aggregate structural studies that often arrive at sceptical conclusions on the overall impact of the mobile minority on the broader established social order. Sadly, preferences in the debate and the conclusions that are drawn are often tied dogmatically to the methodological option that is chosen to study it, but it may be possible that both observations are truthful – in the manner of Schroedinger's famous cat in Quantum physics

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– if one approach is viewed as a snapshot of an emergent process, and the other a depiction of temporal background stability.

Analyzing social mobility data

The mainstream sociology of social mobility tends to be carried out on a grand cross-national comparative scale. Variations in rates of mobility are thus studied across different national societal units, each assumed to be a more or less bounded, single systems coterminous with individual nations. This approach is driven by the available statistics and modes of generating data internationally which are typically linked to national state techniques of counting, measuring and classifying resident populations (in terms of income, occupation, education level, etc.). As a simple example, Table 3.1 presents the basic information on intergenerational class mobility in the five largest national societies of the EU15 (EU member states up to 2004). These tables are based on the European Social Survey, one of the largest-scale independent representative surveys of the European population.

When examining a social mobility table, diagonal cells are the first to be inspected as they include those individuals who stay put in their parents' class. Overall, this corresponds to about one third of respondents in every country. The totals on the rows and the columns represent the overall class structure of each society, before and after generational change respectively. We can thus quickly note how, across the board, in each country there are now higher percentages in upper and middle class categories, and lower percentage in the working class. This change has been found to be principally driven by the structural transformation of the occupational structure of Western societies over the past decades, which has enlarged the size of middle and upper classes and reduced that of the bottom of the pyramid. Because of these structural changes, upwardly mobile people are in larger numbers than people moving the other way around. As a matter of fact, in all countries there are higher proportions of working class kids who make it to the bourgeoisie than offspring of the upper class in working class occupations. This is especially the case in Southern Europe, where the transformation of the occupational structure has been more marked in the late twentieth century. In Spain, for instance, 25.6 per cent of the bourgeoisie is made up of the offspring of the working class, while only 2.8 per cent of the non-qualified working class stems from upper-class families. In other words, sons and daughters of the working class are 'more than sufficient', so to speak, to fill in the ranks of manual occupations in post-industrial societies. This leaves out the question of immigrants, who are, symptomatically, not included in these tables – an issue to which we will turn in a moment.

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Table 3.1 Intergenerational social mobility in the five largest countries of EU15 (inflows, column %)

Germany	*Class of destination*					
	I–II	III	IV	V–VI	VII	*Total*
Class of origin						
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	29.3	13.6	20.2	9.3	11.4	*17.3*
Routine non-manual (III)	28.2	31.0	22.7	25.1	19.4	*26.3*
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	11.6	12.5	28.6	8.3	11.8	*12.8*
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	16.5	21.8	15.3	28.8	25.5	*21.7*
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	14.4	21.2	13.3	28.6	31.9	*22.0*
Total	*27.6*	*27.3*	*8.6*	*17.0*	*19.5*	
N=2350						

France	*Class of destination*					
	I–II	III	IV	V–VI	VII	*Total*
Class of origin						
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	31.8	9.9	12.9	11.0	7.0	*16.2*
Routine non-manual (III)	18.0	17.4	11.2	13.6	9.8	*14.9*
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	20.2	19.5	41.4	10.7	20.5	*20.0*
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	10.8	20.1	6.0	19.5	11.6	*14.5*
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	19.3	33.1	28.4	45.2	51.2	*34.4*
Total	*28.8*	*23.3*	*9.2*	*21.6*	*17.1*	
N=1258						

UK	*Class of destination*					
	I–II	III	IV	V–VI	VII	*Total*
Class of origin						
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	30.7	20.6	21.9	10.6	11.9	*20.7*
Routine non-manual (III)	18.7	20.0	15.6	15.9	10.3	*16.5*
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	15.5	11.6	24.4	11.2	12.8	*14,2*
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	16.8	20.6	18.1	27.1	22.1	*20.2*
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	18.3	27.1	20.1	35.3	42.9	*28.3*
Total	*30.1*	*27.7*	*8.9*	*9.4*	*23.8*	
N=1799						

Table 3.1 continued overleaf

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Table 3.1 *continued*

Italy	*Class of destination*					
	I–II	III	IV	V–VI	VII	*Total*
Class of origin						
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	20.5	9.3	7.2	7.0	0.9	*8.5*
Routine non-manual (III)	26.3	20.9	11.1	14.1	10.2	*16.1*
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	27.6	34.6	47.3	33.8	32.6	*35.9*
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	10.3	10.4	6.3	9.9	10.7	*9.4*
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	15.4	24.7	28.0	35.2	45.6	*30.1*
Total	*18.8*	*21.9*	*24.9*	*8.5*	*25.9*	
N=831						

Spain	*Class of destination*					
	I–II	III	IV	V–VI	VII	*Total*
Class of origin						
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	22.8	7.9	4.9	2.5	2.8	*7.8*
Routine non-manual (III)	17.3	14.3	4.4	3.1	4.7	*8.2*
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	23.2	24.3	51.7	33.1	22.7	*29.2*
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	11.0	12.9	6.3	14.4	9.9	*10.4*
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	25.6	40.7	32.7	46.9	60.0	*44.4*
Total	*20.7*	*11.4*	*16.7*	*13.1*	*38.1*	
N=1226						

Source: European Social Survey (2004) *ESS Round 2: European Social Survey Round 2 Data*. Data file edition 3.1. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

The highest rate of social immobility is found among low/non-skilled workers: in France and Spain, where more than half of them (51.2 and 60 per cent respectively) perpetuate the social class position of their family of origin. That about one third of Europeans are intergenerationally immobile is also shown in a larger-scale comparative study on social mobility in Europe (Breen and Luijkx 2004a). This study also reveals that the percentage of upwardly and downwardly mobile individuals has remained substantially the same in the last three decades of the twentieth century, with the exceptions of Ireland and Poland, where it increased substantially, and Hungary, where in fact it declined. Overall, however, there are two widespread long-term tendencies in the social mobility regimes of European national societies, that counter to some degree

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the perception that there is limited social mobility in Europe: first, towards higher levels of social fluidity – that is, a reduced association between parents' and children's social class (Breen and Lujikx 2004a: 73); second, to a 'high degree of similarity among countries […] in all the measures of mobility' (ibid.: 49). Such a convergence in patterns of social mobility is rather unique to Europe, making national boundaries less significant both substantially and analytically. Nevertheless, on all these measures, it can be shown that there is substantially more mobility overall in the US than Europe (ibid.).

One of the problems with such analyses is, fairly obviously, that they assume closed social systems of mobility and class structure, congruent with the idea of a bounded nation-state-society. Immigrants' mobility can only be measured *within* the system – by comparing, say, the first with second and third generation. This says nothing about how the family is doing relative to the country where they came from – which might be a far more salient issue for them, particularly subjectively. It is now routine in other research areas to question the bounded form of the nation-state-society as a given closed social order. Globalization is all the rage in social theory, and transnationalism beyond the nation-state a dominant focus of attention, in most European sociology at least. Furthermore, we would never dream of arguing that economies and the multiple transactions that sustain them end at national borders – even if it is true that nearly all international measurements of aggregate societal outputs – of the kind, for example, produced by organizations such as the OECD – are still measured in stylized, bounded nation-by-nation GDP terms. But what of cross-border mobility, hence mobility compared *across* societies and *across* categories of individuals moving in and out of stable national boxes? Nation-by-nation data itself reproduces the fiction of there being bounded national societal systems; only what lies within the national box makes sense, the rest is noise; people who move across borders by definition mess these units up (Joppke 1998).

The problem of methodological nationalism

This problem lies under the general heading of the pervasive *methodological nationalism* found in the social sciences, in particular in empirical studies that rely on state-derived technologies of counting populations necessarily bounded by conventional politically defined territories. Some leading scholars such as the anthropologists Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller (2002), or the social theorist Ulrich Beck (2000), have recognized this problem and proposed programmatic solutions. However, the question of social mobility is not one they pose. Meanwhile, the discussion on this point in sociology has been mostly theoretical, reducing it to a conceptual issue and neglecting concerns on how to deal with it empirically (exceptions being Breen and Rottman 1998; Berger and

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Weiß 2008). The anthropologists' case studies and the social theorists' metaphors and problematizations are not enough. What is really needed are some empirical analyses that work through ideas of how to operationalize a genuinely transnational approach to social and spatial mobility.

Spatially mobile Europeans form a clear test to the usual cross-national comparative findings on social mobility in Europe. There are two reasons. One is the structural possibility that spatial mobility will alter the relatively stable patterns of social mobility and social reproduction in the Europe of national societies. The second has to do with the transformation of the categories with which units of society (that is, classes) are recognized and rendered comparable. Formal comparative work often misses this aspect of temporal and categorical change, a point that has been emphatically developed in the work of Chicago sociologist Andrew Abbott (2001). In moving across societies, spatially mobile Europeans might also be rendering ambiguous the clear units of migrants, natives, residents, workers and classes by which other comparative assessments are made: mobility may lead to categories changing, emerging or disappearing. So, if we could somehow compare a subset of European 'movers' (EU citizens who have chosen to live and work abroad in another EU member state) with the majority of 'stayers' (the average national population sampled by conventional social surveys), we might be able to ask new questions about flux and mobility in Europe, both structurally *and* conceptually. There is good reason to think that mobile Europeans are having a substantial impact on the continent, even when statistics suggest they may number as little as one in fifty of the population. In fact, official figures on intra-European migration suggest that only 2 per cent of European nationals live in another EU member state, and only about 4 per cent have had experience of living abroad (Vandenbrande *et al*. 2006: 14). As Table 3.2 shows, numbers of EU citizens in different countries range from highs of almost 10 per cent in Ireland, 6.4 per cent in Belgium or 4 per cent in Austria or Sweden, to barely 1 per cent in Italy, Netherlands or Denmark, and less than 1 per cent in Greece, Hungary and Poland (for an elaboration, see Zaiceva and Zimmermann 2008). Moreover, EU-born foreign residents (intra-EU migrants) invariably number between about a third and a quarter of the total of non-EU born residents (traditionally perceived as immigrants).

Yet the small minority of international mobile Europeans lies at the heart of conceptualizations and idealizations of European citizenship. They are highly symbolic of some of the ideas of a unified Europe conceived by the founding fathers of European integration. More concretely, economic theories of European integration – particularly policy-driven analyses of how a more fluid and dynamic European economy can be built in the wake of the EU's 2000 Lisbon Agenda (Sapir *et al*. 2004) – suggest that more mobility is likely to be a good thing for Europe as a whole, both in (re)deploying workforces where and

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Table 3.2 Proportion of foreign-born residents in EU member states (% of total population, end of 2006)

	Born in the EU	Born outside the EU	Total
EU15			
Austria	3.8	7.5	11.3
Belgium	6.4	6.3	12.7
Denmark	1.5	3.7	5.2
Finland	1.1	1.7	2.8
France	2.7	6.8	10.3
Germany*	2.1	4.5	6.6
Greece	0.7	4.4	5.1
Ireland	9.6	0.7	10.3
Italy*	1.1	3.1	4.2
Luxembourg	23.8	4.3	28.1
Netherlands	1.7	6.3	8.0
Portugal	1.0	3.5	4.5
Spain	1.0	4.5	5.5
Sweden	4.3	7.9	12.2
UK	2.7	6.3	9.0
EU12			
Bulgaria	0.1	0.2	0.3
Cyprus	4.9	8.6	13.5
Czech Republic	1.4	0.6	2.0
Estonia	0.6	11.0	11.6
Hungary	0.3	1.1	1.4
Latvia	1.1	11.0	12.1
Lithuania	0.3	3.8	4.1
Malta	–	–	–
Poland	0.4	0.8	1.2
Romania	0.0	0.0	0.1
Slovakia	0.7	0.1	0.8
Slovenia	0.6	6.0	6.6

* Proportion of foreign citizens

Source: Office for National Statistics (2006) *Labour Force Survey: Employment Status by Occupation and Sex, April–June 2006*. Reproduced under Crown Copyright.

when they are needed within a single market, and in politically helping people identify more with the idea of Europe. Thought of as rational actors, people who chose to make the big move abroad might well be expected to be selected for their frustration at home, hence be talented individuals looking for more opportunities, and more willing to take risks. This *positive selection* is often postulated

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under pure economic conditions of the kind that the removal of barriers to free movement in Europe was supposed to ensure: the basic economic models for this selection process under 'free' labour market conditions, as theorized particularly by the Harvard economist George Borjas (Borjas 1989). If they are the folkloric 'brightest and best', they are more likely to be a population that would kickstart again social mobility effects in Europe or at least be a potential vector for economic growth (see Borjas 1999 for an application of his theory to an integrating Europe).

Hypotheses about social and spatial mobility in Europe

From these kinds of considerations, we can now move to formulating empirical hypotheses that could assess the impact of EU free movement opportunities on spatial and social mobility within Europe. In particular, we elaborate on the *class position* and the *patterns of social mobility* of movers in a context of free movement opportunities.

Firstly, we might expect spatial mobility to be class insensitive (Hypothesis 1). That is, the likelihood of moving from one country to another within Europe should not be influenced by individuals' social class. This is because open and universal EU freedom of movement laws (for EU citizens) should have levelled the playing field, evening out the kind of bias of mobility towards elites supposed to be a feature of more general global mobility – in effect *democratizing* intra-EU migrant opportunities. It would therefore be creating the kind of ideal conditions under which the social spiralists – talented and dynamic movers who self-select as the 'brightest and best' – might be able to use spatial mobility as a social mobility strategy regardless of class background.

Secondly, EU movers are expected to experience no discrimination in their occupational opportunities (Hypothesis 2). They are not like traditional immigrants who face discrimination or glass ceilings according to their 'ethnic' non-European origins. Rather they enjoy European citizen status, on a legal par with natives in the labour market; moreover, they are ethnically and culturally proximate, and often relatively invisible as migrants. Downward career mobility – which is in fact frequent among immigrants from less developed countries – should be quite exceptional among EU movers taking jobs abroad in the Union. Given the converging levels of salaries in Western Europe, moreover, possible downward class movements at migration are not justified, on average, by significantly higher monetary returns in the host country. At the very least, EU movers should be able to preserve their pre-existing class positions, if not do better – otherwise there would be no economic or symbolic rationale to their mobility.

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The analyses that follow will control to what extent these *ex ante* suppositions, predicated on a rational choice view of spatial movements driven by the maximization of socioeconomic benefits in an open, pan-European free labour market, describe the real trajectories of class mobility of intra-EU migrants. The dataset used in this chapter merges two similar sources: the European Internal Migrants Social Survey, an original survey (EIMSS) for movers, and the well-known European Social Survey (ESS) for stayers, with data for Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Spain (see Recchi and Favell 2009, in particular appendix A, on this methodological strategy and the data sources used). However, as the focus of this chapter is on social mobility achieved through occupations in a foreign country, EU movers without any job experience in the host country, such as students, non-working spouses and pensioners, are not included in the analysis.

Operationalization 1: a quantitative approach

How might we control these hypotheses? An obvious move would be to construct data that can be directly related to the kinds of data sets being crunched on social mobility in cross-national comparative terms. The required data have to describe the class and/or occupational status of movers before and after their international move(s).

To answer these questions, an original survey was needed. Survey data always has to be found or generated. In this case, nation-by-nation statistics and studies were not much use. Studies on foreign and migrant populations are often not comparable across nations, due to the very different way of classifying, counting and observing foreigners, immigrants and minorities in different countries. A classic example is the difference between the data produced on these populations in Britain and France. In Britain, many immigrants are classified according to racial and ethnic self-classifications; in France such a process has always been a taboo, and migrants disappear into the statistical mass as soon as they are citizens or reach majority (see Favell 2001). Even if the issue is limited to foreign residents clearly distinguishable by nationality of origin, a second problem arises with foreign European nationals, in that as populations they are generally far too small to generate adequate sample sizes from the largest-scale national surveys that are made. Even national Labour Force Surveys – the widest existing surveys in the continent – have sample sizes that are too small to fill the cells with enough foreign European residents from even the largest neighbouring countries. Generally a minimal number of cases – a good rule of thumb would be 1000 – would be needed for reliable samples. If EU movers are 2 per cent of the population we would need a random sample

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of 500,000 residents to find 1,000 of them. These kinds of sample sizes are far beyond the capacity of even the biggest national survey operations. Some surveys at this point give up on the criterion of representativeness and start generating cases by non-random means, such as snowballing or hunting down foreigners through networks or localities with known concentrations (see for example the methods used in Tribalat *et al*. 1996 or Modood *et al*. 1997, two of the most widely discussed immigrant surveys on France and Britain respectively). Others content themselves with generalizations about immigrant groups from very small numbers.

The PIONEUR project (Recchi and Favell 2009) adopted a different and original strategy, generating an original survey called the European Internal Movers Social Survey (EIMSS). EIMSS turned out to be one of the largest ever original comparative surveys made on immigrants. How was this data collection achieved? The PIONEUR project in fact developed an innovative procedure based on the probability of finding foreign national residents in the host country through their first and family names. It thus collected information on the rankings of the most popular first and family names from each country – for example, in Spain, Pedro, Carlos, Ramon, Lopez, Hernandez, Garcia, and so on – discarding names also likely to be found amongst nationals of the other nations in the study. It then sampled these 'most likely' names in publicly available telephone directories, to find the requisite number of Spanish in the UK, Germans in France, and so on, generating lists of telephone numbers for the survey operators. Despite some obvious problems, such as the heterogeneity of immigrant origins in countries such as France (where there are many Italian names among French citizens), or problematic frequencies in border regions (where cross-national mixed backgrounds are common), the method in fact worked in terms of the high proportion of telephone answers made by people who were indeed foreigners of the nationality targeted. A total of 5,000 30-minutes telephone interviews across the five countries – Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Spain – were thus completed using a battery of questions about class background, migration motivations, cultural adaptation, identification with Europe, political behaviour, media consumption, and so on. At the core of the interviews lay the spatial/social mobility question as perhaps the key sociological issue tied to the process of European integration. Data from EIMSS provides some structural answers to the hypotheses posed above (see p. 60).

The short answer to the two hypotheses posed is that neither of them – sound as they may seem in rational choice or economic theory terms – are borne out by the systematic evidence, with only the second being partially fulfilled. In relation to Hypothesis 1, in terms of class positions before leaving their country of origin, upper-class individuals are over-represented and members of the working class are under-represented among EU movers (Table 3.3). Across the

Table 3.3 Class position of EU stayers and movers (before their movement) by country of residence and nationality (column %)

	Nationality									
	German					British				
COR	*DE*	GB	FR	IT	ES	*GB*	DE	FR	IT	ES
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	*27.6*	57.7	41.9	44.4	30.9	*30.1*	38.3	53.1	46.1	33.5
Routine non-manual (III)	*27.3*	28.8	32.4	35.9	38.8	*27.7*	30.2	24.5	36.8	27.1
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	*8.6*	2.5	5.4	8.6	9.7	*8.9*	3.2	7.5	4.8	6.8
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	*17.0*	8.0	14.9	6.1	14.5	*9.4*	19.8	9.5	6.1	16.3
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	*19.5*	3.1	5.4	5.1	6.1	*23.8*	8.6	5.4	6.1	16.3
	French					Italian				
COR	*FR*	GB	DE	IT	ES	*IT*	GB	FR	DE	ES
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	*28.8*	37.2	34.3	45.4	41.1	*18.8*	29.7	35.9	2.9	25.0
Routine non-manual (III)	*23.3*	42.4	39.5	35.1	29.2	*21.9*	31.2	18.2	14.5	25.0
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	*9.2*	2.3	4.7	3.9	9.4	*24.9*	6.9	6.1	5.8	15.8
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	*21.6*	7.6	13.4	5.9	13.5	*8.5*	7.9	16.7	21.0	16.8
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	*17.1*	10.5	8.1	9.8	6.8	*25.9*	24.3	23.2	23.2	17.3
	Spanish									
COR	*ES*	GB	FR	IT	DE					
Bourgeoisie (I–II)	*20.7*	28.6	39.9	31.1	19.5					
Routine non-manual (III)	*11.4*	31.3	20.8	34.4	18.3					
Petty bourgeoisie (IV)	*16.7*	1.8	6.6	4.6	3.0					
High-skilled manual (V–VI)	*13.1*	9.8	12.6	10.6	16.5					
Low/non-skilled manual (VII)	*38.1*	28.6	20.2	19.2	42.7					

Notes: 'Stayers' data in italics; (COR = Country of residence)
Source: European Social Survey (2004) *ESS Round 2: European Social Survey Round 2 Data*. Data file edition 3.1. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

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board, the figures for residents in social class category I–II (bourgeoisie) are higher for resident migrants than natives of the country (the left hand figure in italics). Upper- and upper middle-class movers reach their highest number in Italy: around 45 per cent of British, French and Germans in Italy are drawn from class I–II. Only Italians and Spanish in Germany (about 45 and 60 per cent respectively from class V–VII) are exceptions to this rule, fitting in larger numbers with the traditional immigrant profile as low-skilled or manual workers. High-skilled workers leaving their home country are particularly unusual, although there are cases: Italians (in France, Germany and Spain), Spanish (in Germany), and British (in Germany, where some go as posted workers, and Spain, where they rather move as retirees). Overall, though, the free movement regime appears to widen the opportunities of social reproduction of the higher social strata rather than creating a comparable avenue of social mobility for all. Intra-EU migration is thus not notably democratized by the removal of borders or the economic convergence of Western Europe.

Regarding Hypothesis 2, looking at patterns of career mobility when changing country of settlement – here considering only respondents who had a job before and after moving – a similarly cautious set of conclusions emerges. Overall, with little variation by nationality and country of residence, more than two-thirds of EU movers (71.3 per cent) did not change social class when taking up their first job after migration (Table 3.4). Moreover, four out of five (80.7 per cent) held the same class position in the transition between first and current job in the host country. Contrary to our hypothesis, though, the work-with-migration transition (Transition 1 in Table 3.4) is in fact associated with some risk of downward mobility. This is the case for 14.3 per cent of respondents, while 8.5 per cent are upwardly mobile. However, in line with the

Table 3.4 Patterns of intragenerational class mobility of EU movers (%)

		Transition 2 (from first to current job in host country)				
		Immobile	Non-vertically mobile	Upwardly mobile	Downwardly mobile	Total
Transition 1 (from last job in home country to first job in host country)	Immobile	62.1	1.8	5.8	1.7	*71.3*
	NV mobile	4.2	0.9	0.6	0.1	*5.8*
	UP mobile	6.7	0.5	0.2	1.1	*8.5*
	DOWN mobile	7.7	0.4	6.1	0.1	*14.3*
	Total	*80.7*	*3.6*	*12.8*	*3.0*	*100.0*

Note: Reference to social classes and forms of class mobility as defined in Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992).
Source: European Internal Movers Social Survey, N=2180.

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hypothesis, the subsequent career in the host country is much more likely to be on the upside (12.8 per cent) than on the downside (3 per cent). Apart from this, the overwhelming majority of occupational shifts for intra-EU migrants occur within the classes to which they belong, qualifying these shifts as either progress within an already class-tracked career or fine-grained changes that hardly alter the overall class structure in which they occur.

Interestingly, though, elsewhere in our analysis an escalator effect does emerge for one national destination for younger migrants, the UK, which, given the disproportionate importance of the capital in terms of migrant destination in this country, corroborates what is frequently claimed about London as a 'Eurocity' enabling a new kind of mobility for ambitious young European movers (Favell 2004). This is an aggregate finding that would be worth further exploring with qualitative case study data – a classic methodological rationale for the quantitative-then-qualitative strategy being presented here.

Overall, then, the picture we get from the quantitative survey is one of little change. European Union appears not to be having significant mobility effects, with one or two unsurprising exceptions. Indeed, it appears to be having a reverse effect to the one that might be hoped for by the builders of the EU: enabling *more* not less elite social reproduction in the continent. Advocates of migration and mobility here might find the results rather gloomy. We cannot presuppose the dynamizing of the European economy, or the beneficial selection effects of migration if in fact the integration of the continent is only benefitting the most privileged (on this, see Haller 2008). If we stop here with the study, we might well conclude that the well known social theoretical claims about globalization and mobility – that the ability to be globally mobile increasingly indexes social inequality (Bauman 1998) – is in fact unproblematically true. This would be an empirically substantiated finding that would go well beyond the speculative rhetoric that has mostly sustained this particular critique of the globalizing and regionalizing world.

Operationalization 2: a qualitative approach

A quantitative approach can tell us a lot about the structural background and aggregate effects of Europe in change. It allows us to question appearances and determine what is and what is not statistically meaningful in a range of behaviour or values that may or may not be changing with European integration. As we can see with the example above, it invariably takes a sceptical line towards hypotheses that might otherwise be hastily reached as conclusions through untested theorizing. This, at least, gives us a reason as to why an empirical sociology of the European Union is likely to look quite different to the outpouring

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of social theory of Europe and European integration that has become quite visible in EU studies in recent years. Empirical methods and operationalization here can make all the difference.

Aggregate structural analysis also typically reveals *norms*: that is, statistical averages which indicate the most probable and hence most stable forms of social behaviour or values in a given society. Variation from norms is measured from the statistical mid-point, and typically lessens the further one moves in any given distribution from the norm. Societies whose vital statistics are pictured this way have fat 'bell curve' shaped structures that point to how society reproduces itself through attracting behaviour or inculcating values that conform to the 'fat' average part of the distribution (that is, what the mainstream does or thinks), rather than the much more scarcely populated extremes. Visualizing society, as conventional statistics does, in terms of a 'bell curve' distribution – something which technically is inevitably produced when variation is enumerated, as it is conventionally done, in terms of non-scalar degrees of variation from the statistical norm – thus links norms to an explanation of how societies work. A certain bell-shaped distribution of values, behaviour, or social positions, locking in upper limits (variation) on mobility can, as the next step, then be seen as the *cause* of the stable functioning of the society in question. One might describe such a society as 'well integrated': this kind of pattern becomes a definition of societal integration. Wild or disruptive deviations from these norms, which are normally only statistically marginal behaviours, threaten disintegration or revolution. Mostly, then, societies by this account function well when everything is 'in its right place'. The most significant instance is the division of labour, leading to class division and stratification, as an invariable functional necessity of a modern industrialized society. Building a theory on top of the aggregate of statistical norms and probabilities as the core *modus operandi* of empirical sociology thus led, in classic sociological theory, to the doctrine of 'structural functionalism', associated above all with Talcott Parsons, but present already in the sociology of Emile Durkheim. As well as being an inherently conservative vision of society, there is also clearly a blind spot in this form of theory about radical possibility of change to the system – the possible impact of populations that are located at the margins or tail end of the bell curve distributions.

Structural functionalism, which had a massive impact on the social sciences during their most confident modernist, developmentalist phase in the 1950s and 60s, is thought to be a largely redundant theoretical doctrine nowadays. Its logic, though, is inescapable in any structural analysis that posits some kind of stable reproduction of social structure through aggregates such as 'culture', 'institutions', 'norms' or 'ideology', and it has thus crept back into much recent social and political science under the heading of 'new institutionalism', particularly

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the fashion for explanations using the term 'path dependency'. Path dependent analyses that stay close to the concepts origins in institutional economics (North 1981; Pierson 2004) are not necessarily functionalist in their logic. The lock-in effect of social reproduction in the accounts of these pioneering authors is specified, in actor-centred terms, in the discrepancy between long- and short-term pay-offs to actors thinking about changing course. Yet as the term has been used more and more metaphorically by others, referring to 'self-reproducing' forces such as norms, ideologies or discourses that cannot think and act, it often takes on a functionalist character (see Barry 1971 or Coleman 1990: ch. 1, for classic critiques of 'sociological' logic in these terms). In EU studies today, popular institutionalist and constructivist arguments claiming to be 'sociological' thus often use implicitly functionalist logics.

There are obvious problems here. An analysis based on norms and statistical significance is clearly important in an account of stable structures and reproduction, but it is not well equipped to detect change, process or flux. In looking only at the aggregate distributions of mobility or occupations in intra-EU movement, we may, in short, be missing a lot of the most interesting stories. Critiques of mainstream bell-curve statistics often point to the disproportionate impact in reality of marginal actors or events – the 'black swans' that cannot be predicted by aggregate statistical methods (Taleb 2008). This can be related to the analysis of marginal international movement in Europe *vis-à-vis* the dominant patterns of staying put in national locations of origin. Actors stepping away from dominant norms – particularly those associated with stable nationalized patterns of, say, educational and career attainment, or family life – may embody the process of a different Europe in the making, and be pointing towards a ferment of change not detectable in the aggregate analysis. Plus, as in many studies dependent on problematic statistical information, there is a great 'hidden population' problem associated with spatial and social mobility across borders. In part this is a category problem (Abbott 2001) of the target population moving in and out of the groupings – the usual stable, nation-by-nation categories – with which statistical comparisons might be made. Yet, look on the streets of major European cities, and we seem to be able to see in abundant numbers the people we think embody the new European social and spatial mobility. Official numbers and surveys of foreign populations, particularly relatively invisible ones such as mobile Europeans, who are ethnically and culturally proximate, and able to come and go as they please, might thus be missing in some if not most of the data. Another possibility is that it is precisely the marginality of the movers in the 'long tail' (Anderson 2008) of the European population distribution that has given them unique social powers to succeed in a Europe in flux. As pioneers they may find rich and unique pay-offs precisely in being and doing differently to the mainstream norms, although as their

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numbers rise, there will be a threshold effect and hence diminishing returns relative to the mainstream.

As suggested by our Hypothesis 2 above, EU free movers are interesting as a case of international migration which *prima facie* has nearly all the inbuilt disadvantages of typical migration processes taken out. With political and legal barriers down, and cultural or ethnic disadvantage and exclusion at a minimum, they should in theory be avatars of a Europeanized economic selection process that is undistorted by these other (typical) factors in the workings of the international labour market – a perfect market, so to speak. That we do not necessarily find this in the quantitative analysis might be a question of their marginal numbers, rather than a problem with the theory as such. Their quantitative marginality suggests rather a qualitative 'ideal type'-based approach. What if we were to empirically go out and look one by one for *prototypes* of the ideal European mobility proposed in theory, and then assess these different exceptional cases in relation to the mainstream European norms (of dominant national values, immobility, stable class positions, etc.)? The ideal type approach to empirical work has its own venerable tradition in Weberian sociology. The theoretical construction of such cases can also be used profitably with the logic of counterfactual analysis – that is, searching precisely for what might be the outcomes under theoretical conditions explicitly different to the actual dominant situation as established by empirical statistical analysis (Hawthorn 1991).

This was precisely the methodological logic put to use in the ethnographic and documentary research for the book *Eurostars and Eurocities* (2008) by Adrian Favell, a study that ran in parallel to the PIONEUR project. We know that free movers in Europe are numerically scarce, yet their theoretical and symbolic valence in thinking about the sociological impact of European Union is undeniable. Moreover, go to any of the major cosmopolitan centres of Europe, and we find them in quite large concentrations – a whole new generation of mostly young, mobile, ambitious or adventurous Europeans using their free movement rights to live and work abroad, regardless of whether they are showing up in official statistics or surveys. *Eurostars and Eurocities* thus eschewed a conventional quantitative approach and sought rather to construct its empirical sample by actively seeking out the most likely individuals who might embody the propositions about spatial and social mobility in Europe, and its social spiralism and transformative effects on a possible new European society. It went looking, in other words, for the most likely 'highly Europeanized' Europeans in the most likely 'highly Europeanized' places, eventually settling on the foreign EU populations in three of the major hubs of internal European migration in Western Europe: Amsterdam, London, and Brussels. Each of these cities can lay claim to being a capital' of Europe: in cultural, economic,

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and political terms, respectively. *Eurostars and Eurocities* sought to put flesh and blood on the theoretical construct of an ideal type European 'free mover', among a population that ranged from the young, freely mobile, individual movers in their twenties, through to older people in their thirties and forties who might now be settling into cosmopolitan single or family lives in the three cities.

The study used a variety of snowball and networks-based sampling techniques to find this population, varying interviews by age, gender, nationality, marital and professional status. Given the fact that so many of these foreign residents are missed in the official possible 'sampling frames', such as national survey statistics or foreign consulate registries, it also sought to juxtapose the cases found with studies of populations made by commercial organizations interested in selling products or services to this target population of foreigners: for example, magazines or websites for expatriates. Through this variety of statistical sources on the population, a broader picture of the overall moving Europeans emerged, from which particular under-represented categories of individuals in each city was then sought in a second wave of interviews. This method, for example, allows the correction of stereotypes of the European foreign population in any given city, a case in point being the conception that all the foreign European residents in Brussels are EU employed 'eurocrats' or corporate 'expats'. The technique follows a distinctly francophone current in social research that emphasizes 'constructing the object of research' as a key empirical step, and never taking the empirical object as 'given' or immediately 'readable' from given preconceptions (Bourdieu *et al*. 1968; Lenoir *et al*. 1996). It is nevertheless an eminently empirical, rather than purely social theoretical strategy.

By thus constructing the object of research, a total of sixty primary interviews was completed in the three cities, alongside over five of years of intermittent participant observation, numerous secondary interviews and extensive documentary research about the foreign EU population in the three cities. The small *n* of interview cases could, by the constructivist methodology by which the sample was made, claim a certain kind of representativeness of this elusive population. Moreover, the long interviews were conducted using a narrative life history approach – asking questions in the manner of an oral history – which has been promoted by maverick social stratification scholars such as Daniel Bertaux (Bertaux and Thompson 1997), precisely as a way of capturing process and flux in social mobility structures that are missed by the dominant quantitative approaches. *Eurostars and Eurocities* also foregrounds a 'phenomenological' or 'grounded' technique of research, that is, allowing actors to speak for themselves in order to inductively reveal their everyday *habitus*, the kinds of everyday social practices and habits they embody as Europeans today (Glaser

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and Strauss 1967). Indeed the book simply reproduces many of the *in situ* interviews, to offer a direct window into the lives and experiences of these prototypical free movers.

The study thus discovers phenomena that remain largely undetected in the quantitative survey. It also puts flesh and blood on those exceptional currents in spatial/social mobility that were found in the broader aggregate data. The prototypical rational, individualistic, social spiralist EU movers emerge qualitatively as young, ambitious, career minded, highly educated career women from the south of Europe, who have deliberately moved to the North-west of the continent as part of a planned international career mobility. They sought to differentiate themselves from their peer group back home, opting out of more reliable, mainstream, but heavily gendered national career and marriage paths, that would lead to professional and family stability much more quickly had they stayed. In describing her reasons for moving, Nicole, a mid-twenties IT programmer, who moved to London from the north of France, speaks for many of these women:

> 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.

Following the perfect logic of an economist's theory of European integration, where the brightest and best of young EU citizens would just 'get on their bike' to go and look for work and a better life across national borders, Nicole also speaks for the droves of young French people, in particular, who abandoned an economically depressed France during the mid to late 1990s to go to the global Eurocity of choice, London, in search of fame and fortune. London's role as an escalator region is thus also corroborated in the qualitative findings, which are able to personify structural trends that showed up in the quantitative analysis.

Beyond this data, though, we begin to find things not in the quantitative survey. Social spiralism *is* found to be a feature of many of these younger movers to the three cities. Many have come from relatively obscure provincial regional origins, choosing a path out of their own country as an alternative to the well trodden elite national path through their own national capitals. Frustration at home can be the motivation for a chancy move abroad, that gives new impetus and, eventually, mobility through the liberating effect of what can thus be called

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a *de-nationalizing* experience. European free movement has effectively created a new kind of regional freedom in the world, uniquely available in terms of European citizenship status rather than elite privilege. European movers discover themselves as individuals, learn to free themselves from norms they learned as nationals, to play around and instrumentalize their identities, try out new social pathways. This perhaps accounts for why among the most unique movers there is an important selection effect that accentuates talented people able to think differently or take risks, as the economic theory of European integration predicts. Franz from Germany, now a highly successful banker in London, with experience also working in France and Spain, pinpoints how this works:

> Why are people moving? My first move was from Frankfurt to Paris. I was looking for a job in Paris, because it would mean I am not number 15,907 of Germans in Frankfurt looking for a job as a banker … I think I was quite unique there, to say, listen, I quit my job now, I take my little car, I go away and see what I can do.

Their difference is valued in the new location, as long as they are relatively scarce. Moreover, with all these moves an important element is that they are moves between relatively close and easily accessible locations. Many of the Eurostars also emphasize that a key to their European move is the ability to go home at weekends – perhaps to catch up with a doctor or dentist's appointment, if not sometimes to take some washing back to mum. Cross-national commuting and split households also become a possibility. This points to a new, Europeanized mode of social and family organization, enabled by ease of mobility on a regional scale, particularly through new high-speed train links and abundant low cost intra-European airlines.

A further self-selection operates with people using mobility to opt out of the standardized mainstream values that impose themselves on lives lived only on a local scale. Family life is changed irrevocably by mobility and distance. For some, the choice of a third international city becomes the way that couples of different nationalities reconcile their difficult to balance private and professional lives across borders. Their children will necessarily grow up as cosmopolitans outside of familiar national structures, with new forms of social capital, but also perhaps disadvantages relative to traditional nationalized elites. For others, mobility is associated with an individual move out of conventional family norms. Hence the high prevalence in my sample of childless couples, gay people and singles, particularly women. Amsterdam, London and Brussels all have lively gay sub-cultures that provide a home for mobile individualists adrift from family and social norms – and pressures – that would have

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been felt that much stronger if they were still living in their home countries. Amsterdam, not an easy place for foreigners to settle in many ways, has functioned as a comfortable capital in this sense, precisely because it is easier to identify with the city and Dutch culture as a progressive identity if you are gay. The internationally mobile, career-minded attitude becomes a justification for the choices single women have made to live their lives away from typical family norms. Helen, a very successful logistics manager, who has constructed a happy life in Brussels and then Amsterdam away from her native Northern Ireland, puts it this way:

> I'm a very lucky person in life, I've just been a cat landing on its feet … I don't need anybody around me that much. On the one hand you do want to move on, it's what you like doing. On the other hand, it's a big emotional upheaval. You are not married, so you are in it by yourself … But I wouldn't have it any other way. This is what I want.

These Eurostars are, in short, pioneers. Not statistically significant enough maybe to alter aggregate social mobility charts, but symbolically the very emblem of the new, de-nationalized Europe that the European Union has enabled. They embody the process, flux and change that the European Union has released, albeit around the edges of European society. On both counts, they are statistical 'black swans' whose impact extends well beyond their structural location in the margins. Moreover, their unusual lives and experience cast sharp light on the background norms and patterns that continue to hold much of Europe in place. Indeed, many of them could never have succeeded in their lives if those norms were not there, and they were not rather unique statistical exceptions. Their category-crossing experience – which is neither conventional migration, nor conventional social mobility – also points to elements of flux and change in Europe linked to urban–periphery distinctions, growing individualism, and new forms of spatial-temporal organization across borders. All of this would have been undetectable 'noise' in the conventional quantitative approach. Social theorists have been quick to point to the transformative effects of highly 'mobile' (John Urry), 'liquid' (Zygmunt Bauman) or 'reflexive' societies (Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck). The new Europe might be what they have in mind. But they have not investigated these claims empirically. When all we have otherwise to assert these transformative social currents is speculative social theory, the ethnographic/documentary approach detailed here is revealed as an essential empirical complement to the quantitative mainstream approach, a vital part of the apparatus needed for a true sociology of the European Union.

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Conclusion: A European field of mobility

When Caterina moved to Brussels from Northern Italy to work as a medical administrator she was already in her 30s. A wholly individual choice, it was a rather speculative move, given she had no specific interest in or connection to Brussels, and had never previously visited. She just thought it was a good 'somewhere' to find work, and give the international life a try, to 'see how it was' and 'look for something else'. 'I wanted to challenge myself in a different environment, discover things and enrich my life', she says – a prototypical Eurostar reasoning. Although a relatively adventurous move compared to her peers back home, the fact that the *scale* was European made all the difference. European citizenship meant formal barriers were down, yet it was still close enough to home in Italy. She would not have moved otherwise. Now nearly 40, she left behind a cosy and stable life in her native Italy, to which she still dreams of returning – maybe to 'go in a hole', she laughs, someday when she gets old.

This is the pioneer attitude, typical of so many EU movers: the EU as a new European *field* of mobility on a regional scale, picking up on the conceptualization of structure and action proposed in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. This is not a defined metric of rational choices with a clear, easy to assess pay-off, but an open, undefined, protean horizon beyond the nation, a place for self-discovery and adventure as much as possible opportunity and advancement, that works because of its relatively bounded scope. As the PIONEUR project also finds quantitatively, it is often not rational economic motives that caused people to move, so much as ideas about adventure, quality of life, or – a big factor in the post-Erasmus student Europe – romance with a European of another nationality. These factors perhaps account for why the strictly rationalist models on which economic theories and structural hypotheses about mobility and European integration are built do not work so well in practice. They do not measure the qualitative dimension of mobility and change, let alone the symbolic and cultural energies unleashed. The de-nationalized European freedoms enabled by the freedom of movement are, in many ways, not yet a recognized currency. This may be the EU's most precious invention: a new sense of regionalized freedom – since it is wrapped up in very European virtues of security, welfare, quality of life, and lived out on a European scale – but freedom nonetheless. And indeed 'the freedom to travel, work and study anywhere in the EU' is what the majority of Europeans constantly cite as the most important benefit of EU membership, according to Eurobarometer data. Free movement *is* the EU in Europeans' minds. Much of this freedom is experienced by those that try it as a shot in the dark: there is no clear feedback to others who might want to try, the rational calculation is unclear if not obscure, and there are clearly diminishing returns if too many free thinking, de-nationalizing

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individuals start moving. A shift in too many people upsetting national norms and patterns might undermine much upon which European social structure – ultimately its distinctive balance of economy and society – is built. The one in fifty who move are likely to remain a marginal niche, statistical exceptions, albeit individuals who point to how Europe has changed the most.

Some of the effects of this movement may be inherently temporary. The mid- to long-term evaluation of the European move of the Eurostars is often not so encouraging. Long-term settlement, in even the most cosmopolitan of cities such as London and Amsterdam, often proves elusive. Home countries of origin and foreign countries of residence alike have their way of re-asserting their norms, value systems and social hierarchies over the lives of these pioneers. They see their experiences and opportunities being *re*-nationalized by the weight of mainstream lives lived in national structures; they are often caught out on a limb in their life choice, out of time and place in terms of both the peers they left back home, and the natives living and working around them. Structures outside the standard nationalized society for things like child care, education, welfare, and pensions – issues that increasingly form the terrain of struggle for middle classes seeking better quality of life in urban settings (Butler and Robson 2003) – are often very vulnerable. But the few that do dare to move are perhaps a symbol of a better, brighter Europe as was hoped for by the founders of the European Union.

The marginal mobility of the Eurostars points to how social mobility opportunities have been extended to a far wider range of European citizens than clichéd images of European elites allow. When enumerated one by one, mobile Europeans are often provincial, upwardly mobile, middle- and lower middle-class individuals with high education. The aggregate structural evidence about European mobility, though, continues to suggest that spatial mobility opportunities are still dominantly monopolized by upper and upper middle classes in Europe. The symbolic and structural potential of the EU thus co-exist: European Union enhances both social fluidity and social reproduction.

However, the relation may shift once the question is extended to the economic integration and social changes associated with the new East-West movers, now able to enjoy free movement rights in the EU after the twin accessions of new East European members to the EU in 2004 and 2007. While these forms of migration cannot be directly assimilated to the free movement of West Europeans prior to 2004 – despite theoretical arguments about the integration of the European labour market which suggest this may one day be the case – there is strong evidence for the Poles, Lithuanians, Romanians and others moving Westwards of distinct social mobility, income improvement, and return development effects relative to their countries of origin, even when in status terms the move West is a move down the occupational hierarchy. In a few short

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years, a marked effect of EU enlargement and integration on new member states has been visible via the new intra-EU mobility it has enabled. Studies of Western Europe may not conclusively provide a sociological base for claims about European integration and spatial or social mobility. But to put a face on the very visible and striking social structural impact of European Union on the continent, we may need only to think of these new highly mobile East-West workers – a very real spatial and social mobility that may prove the most significant demographic change in the continent since the end of the Second World War.