Chapter 14

The New European Migration Laboratory: East Europeans in West European Cities

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The IMAGINATION project and its varied outputs represent the fruition of a research agenda that ought to be substantially shifting the mainstream paradigm of research on international migration (for the developing agenda see: Wallace and Stola 2001; Favell and Hansen 2002; Favell 2008a; Black et al. 2010; Crul 2016; Lafleur and Stanek 2016). The new European migrations heralded by European economic integration, in particular the Eastern enlargements of 2004 and 2007, represent a challenge to assumptions about immigration and citizenship, framed as they are by a legal-institutional transformation of the notion of international migration within and across the European regional territory. East European (CEE) populations, hitherto a peripheral part of the continent, had historically been a source of immigrant labour to their richer West European neighbours (Olsson 1996). For many years, then, movement Westwards was restricted by the barriers of the Cold War. In the post 1989 period, they still faced substantial restrictions on mobility. With the accession of eight new members in 2004, followed by Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013, these populations all became putative EU citizens and post-national members (Soysal 1994, 2012). On paper they would be equal with all West Europeans before international law, and free to choose to move as individuals, to travel, study, live and work in all other member states of the European Union. In other words, they would be free of the restrictions of immigration legislation and categories—as have been West Europeans for many years. As international migrants they would thus become co-citizens and “free movers”, in theory at least. Once transitional barriers were also down, older assumptions about one-way migration systems from poorer to richer countries – via lower-end incorporation in (typically) exploitative or exclusionary labour markets, followed by settlement, integration, and eventually change of nationality (citizenship) – would be called into question (for classic discussions see Massey et al. 1998; Castles and Miller 2003;

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see Penninx in this volume for a comparison of the old and new migration systems in Europe). For the regional integration of the continent and its open borders, would create also, in theory, a new space of mobility. In this space, temporary and pendular movements, and long term life and work as a foreigner based on European membership rights, without the need for settlement or change of citizenship, would all become more likely, along with a healthy transnational flow of capital and populations back and forth between receiving and sending countries (Garapich 2008). The emergence of new South-North flows alongside the East-West system after the financial crisis of 2008 has further complexified this new European map of migration (King 2002; King et al. 2016)

My own work on free movement was initially about West European movers in West European cities: the young, highly mobile, mostly professional pioneers taking their opportunities as EU citizens in the post Maastricht era in the classic European hubs of Amsterdam, Brussels and London (Favell 2008b). With the PIONEUR project, this ethnographic work was complemented with an extensive quantitative survey which revealed a broader typology of free movers, including ongoing lower-end labour migrants and retirees (Recchi and Favell 2009). It also included a qualitative study which suggested the experiences of Polish and Romanian movers were different, and a lot more negative than the ideal theory might suggest (Favell and Nebe 2009). In subsequent work, which engaged with a large project (KNOWMIG) Christina Boswell was conducting at the Hamburg Institute for International Economics, I extended the framework of my work on Eurostars to the “new face” of CEE movers now able to move, live and work as EU citizens across the EU (Favell 2008a; Favell 2009). The 2008 and 2009 articles – which are taken as a starting point for the IMAGINATION project – posed the issue as a hypothesis driven by the normative-legal logic of European free movement accords. “Textbook narratives, in terms of standard accounts of immigration, integration and citizenship based on models of postcolonial, guestworker and asylum migration, will need to be rethought,” I wrote (Favell, 2008a: 701). Free movement for East Europeans offered the potential of a transformation of lowly classified “immigrants” into newly equalized “free moving” European co-citizens, and the realisation of a kind of “post-national” space of mobility at a European regional scale. The transformation here would be more than just the end of the East/West division of the continent; it was also potentially a fundamental challenge to the very order of a nation-state centred Western world, divided into self-contained bordered territories built on a distinction between citizens and foreigners, and ordered by a hierarchy of privilege between rich and dominant receiving states, and poor, subordinate sending states—with an always ready abundance of willing migrant workers on hand to serve their colonial masters. The integration of the European Union – at least in the principle of “non-discrimination” by nationality it instituted between citizens of all member states – offered not only the image of a unified Europe beyond the Cold War, but the glimpse of a viable, de-colonialised world of borderless free movement—albeit on a European scale, and heavily reliant on other borderings and hierarchies at, and beyond, its outer edge.

That at least was the theory. Sociologically speaking, the work on the “new face” of EU migration took seriously that it was an empirical question *how much* this legal-normative ideal for the new European citizens would be realised. In a more extended version of the article published recently, I laid out four hypothetical scenarios, stated in political economy terms, in which the exploitation and/or exclusion of, i.e., Polish and Romanian movers in distinct West European locations, could be measured to determine the precise degree of citizenship status achieved within the European regional integration proposed by the Eastern enlargements (Favell 2015: 176–178). In the first, “neo-liberal” Europe, the migration is demand driven, leading to a successful top end selection of highly employable movers and their settlement and inclusion as immigrants in their new countries, but with a substantial brain drain and growing inequalities across Europe. In the second, “exclusionary” Europe, the East European migrants encounter substantial racialisation, and fall into negative competition with existing migrant-origin ethnic and racial groups in receiving countries as unwanted newcomers. In the third, “EU” Europe, there is a Panglossian outcome of migrants moving successfully West according to temporary and pendular patterns, leading to rising investment in the East, economic equilibrium and decreasing economic imbalances between West and East. In the fourth, “exploitative” Europe, East Europeans move and find work, but encounter significant downward evaluation by the market, as they are exploited and marginalised as a new flexible labour force.

As clearly underlined in this volume, the answer to what in fact happened has in large part been negative, and mostly in line with the fourth scenario; although there are elements of all four when the experiences of different nationalities with different education levels, gender, and cultural backgrounds in different national locations are compared. Yet the overall picture is rather clear. CEE movers were indeed “cadet” Eurostars, but cultural distinctions and (even) racialised subordinations have been commonplace among the experiences of CEE movers, even among the more highly educated (Csedő 2008; Morosanu and Fox 2013). Moreover, as this volume also stresses, the idea of all migrations from the East to the West embodying a new logic of temporary, pendular and “free” free movement, has certainly been confounded by the many types and distinctions found among intra-EU migrants in this study. The idealised economists’ labour market, driven entirely by supply and demand moving West, and matched by a balancing flow of capital investment East, gives way to a complex, differentiated patchwork of migrants and movers on a continuum from knowledge workers and students, through informal employees, to sex workers, beggars and the homeless. And across the six West European regions studied (I leave aside the Turkey case, driven by rather different sources and patterns), we find national and local governments reacting quite differently to the rather varied mixes of migrants attracted to these cities.

The present volume offers an invaluable documentation of these new migrants and the strategies of governance engaged by receiving regional governments. In this, and the accompanying published policy formulations (Fermin et al. 2016), it seeks to aid the recovery of a missing degree of multi-levelled governance, which ought to be hooking up EU and local level responses, over and beyond the pervasive

national level government of “classic” immigration politics. Thus, the volume contributes not only to a more nuanced sociology of intra-EU migration – a “next generation” on from the initial work of the 2000s – but also offers rich material for political scientists looking to grapple with the multi-levelled political economy and policy terrain of immigration and diversity politics (Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero 2014; Barker 2015). A welcome dimension of this is that it is focused on less heavily studied mid-sized nations – and their component metropolitan regions – which often have mixed, patchwork approaches to migrant diversity, rather than coherent national “philosophies” (Favell 1998). It is a complement, for example, to Barbulescu’s (2018) study of migration governance in Italy and Spain, which itself added new perspectives at national and local level to the classic cases of the UK, France, Germany or Switzerland (Ireland 1994; Garbaye 2005).

Godfried Engbersen’s notion of “liquid migration” captures the fluid sense of new migration types, patterns and social/political formations signalled by the new East European migrations in West European urban contexts. Its association with Zygmunt Bauman’s metaphor of “liquid modernity” may be misleading, however, in that the veteran social theorist’s terminology in fact signalled his rather despairing take on the old Marxist adage that “all that is solid melts into air” (Berman 1992). It was an anti-empiricist stance; that the old apparatus and tools of classic sociological theory and measurements of social structures, social class, social institutions and social groups (etc.) – were now blunt and unable to adapt to the new, fluid, postmodern environment. All that remained to grasp this change faster and more complex than any science could capture, were the literary metaphors that could still be invented by a suitably soundbite-driven “mobile” social theory (Urry 2000). This exaggerated epistemological position is not Engbersen’s, who is clearly engaged still in the empirical business of typologising, classifying and hypothesising the new migrations against the evidence found, albeit against a quite different potential range of migration systems. As Engbersen confirms in his chapter here, though, 5 million new CEE migrants in Western Europe between 2004 and 2010 does constitute a seismic population shift in the continent—and we are right to focus on how that ought to shift our standard migration theories and paradigms. In 2008, I argued that the new intra-EU migrations could be conceptualised with the help of models and theories from North America that had evolved around Latin and Central American migration to the US—itsself a particular kind of fluid, transnational system born of a regional integration, open bordered in more informal and ambiguous ways than the European legal regime (Massey et al. 2002). My optimism at a shift in international migration scholarship was, perhaps, unwarranted. Although it would provide perfect material for rethinking the methodological nationalism of standard immigration studies, East-West migration and EU free movement does not feature in some of the most sophisticated reflections rethinking immigration research in the context of US sociology (Wimmer 2013; Waldinger 2015). And, among those North American scholars interested in applying comparatively US models and theory on immigration in Europe, there is a lack of awareness of the distinctiveness of intra-EU migration to “classic” non-European immigration and settlement patterns—even if in many situations, EU migration is more numerous and more

dramatic in its consequences (for example, Alba and Foner 2015; see Favell 2016). As yet, there is little or no sign of such classic models of nation-centred immigration and citizenship, and the methodological nationalism on which it is built, being shifted in transatlantic comparative work.

This is an area indeed where the present volume's focus could be profitably extended. While intra-EU movements "between mobility and migration" is noted as a challenge to standard conceptions of immigration and settlement across national borders, there is not much attempt to compare the intra-EU migrants to other non-European migrants or other ethnic and racial minorities, who may well take up similarly marginalised social, economic and cultural positions in the receiving cities. Many of the "integration" and "incorporation" reflexes of local governance indeed are caused by the fact that local policy makers and stakeholders have simply applied the same tried and testing policy thinking and methods to these new migrants as to older immigrants—however ill-suited or inappropriate. This may apply to anti-discrimination efforts, coercive functional or normative integration expectations and obligations, or (even) minority cultural provisions. It should come as no surprise that there is no one size fits all "integration" policy likely to work for, at once, a single, skilled, pendular Polish entrepreneur in his 30s, and the stay-at-home young teenage spouse of a South Asian Muslim shop worker. Issues to do with race discrimination meanwhile are heavily complicated by the distinctly "white" status – and sometimes attitudes – of CEE movers finding themselves in the multi-racial super-diversity of many West European cities (Crul et al. 2013). The ambivalence of CEE migrants often lies in their tangential position in the usual post-colonial hierarchies. They are new migrants and so may face disadvantages as newcomers in comparison to established racial and ethnic minorities with a longer standing place in the diversity of the host nation (Fox et al. 2012); but at the same time they are white Europeans, who can find themselves more easily in an advantaged "invisible" position in the host country, contributing in some cases to the ongoing racialising discriminations of others (Datta 2009; Fox 2012).

The recent experiences of a case not much mentioned in the book – yet crucial to its message given the sheer size of the CEE population – i.e., the UK – could here be of great significance. These have been sharpened by the "Brexit" vote in June 2016 to leave the European Union, a vote driven in substantial part by reactions amongst British citizens against the new European resident population in the UK (Clarke et al. 2016). The UK and the EU is now faced with retrenchment in European citizenship rights, in which European citizenship will be stripped from the over 3 million foreign EU residents in the UK, as well as the British population as a whole. This again constitutes an extraordinary natural laboratory of potential social science research into the social effects as well legal-political accommodations of this situation. What has been clear for some time in the parts of the UK (mainly England), which have voted heavily UKIP and then for Brexit, is that this is fuelled considerably by anti-EU migrant sentiment, including sometimes among British Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic populations (BAME), and notably also among many working class Labour supporters. This explosive mix can be seen in some particular provincial areas of the UK where there is a substantial presence of ethnic minority

British alongside CEE workers, such as some of the post-industrial towns of the North and the West Midlands, many of which voted heavily for Brexit. To these can be joined agricultural towns in the East of England—where there are substantial numbers of casual CEE workers; and many poor, mainly white coastal towns in the South East—again, where CEE families have often settled. London, and other major cities, on the other hand, as well as smaller university towns, voted to stay in the EU. This observation suggests that the real place to be studying the dynamics of migrant and immigrant relations and “exclusion”/“integration” may be provincial locations, rather than the big cities featured in this study. It is a question about the urban versus non-urban conditions of cosmopolitanism.

As a collected project, IMAGINATION, offers a comprehensive synthesis of the best research on intra-EU migration of the last decade, as well as a handbook of policy responses. It is clearly also “impact” related current affairs research of the most intense interest, having established extensive relations and cooperation with many of the cities and migrant groups involved. The signs are, pessimistically, that policy responses to the innovation and progressive promise are being swallowed back into standard, national, security- and restriction- driven responses, that will rip from the idea of European citizenship the non-discrimination of all European citizens that lay at its (post-national) heart (Hansen 2015). East European EU citizens are facing differentiation and relegation to a subordinate status within a more “controlled” Europe; and, increasingly, the hitherto “invisible” new movers from the South of Europe to the North West are also being cast as unwanted “immigrants”. If this signals the end of non-discrimination by nationality within the EU, then the legal-political experiment that was tried in the laboratory of European migrations with the East European accessions, will leave a bitter taste of failure for those who believed in a unified European future. Yet it may still point the way forward to progressive alternatives to the question of international and regional inequality between populations which surely will be demanded again someday.

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