Does parochial cosmopolitanism among European hyper-mobile elites challenge Europe's nation states?

Abstract:

The European Union provides a unique experiment in transnational movement and identity, with 500 million EU citizens having the right to live, work, study and retire in any of the 28 Member States. However, only 2% of EU citizens exercise this right, even though it is regularly quoted as one of the most salient components of the European Union, especially among young people[1]. The theoretical and practical lessons from this mobile group are under-researched from an academic perspective.

This paper will examine this "Euro-elite" in terms of its cosmopolitanism, the implications for consideration of national and regional identity and its impact on notions of the nation state. It will suggest that these hyper-mobile elites, who simultaneously belong everywhere and nowhere, and are comfortable in multiple cultures, are interesting subjects of study, but not to be taken as representative of the European population. The paper hypothesises that this group is over-represented in European institutions. Therefore their interests are guiding European policy in a cosmopolitan direction, when this is arguably not a primary concern of the wider EU population. This supposed phenomenon could be paradoxically described as parochial cosmopolitanism, and may be a factor in explaining the growing discontent between European decision-makers and their electorates.

This paper will examine the new challenges for nation states posed by global migration patterns, through the prism of the free movement of persons that is one of the four fundamental freedoms of the European Union (EU). It will examine how the EU's unique experiment in regional integration (Recchi & Favell, 2009) embodies new thinking about migration models, rejecting the traditional models of the past (Papastergidis, 2010). It will examine this multi-polar, multi-faceted experience of migration: *multi-polar* insofar as those that take advantage of free movement tend not to move from one place to another to settle or integrate, but will experience several mobility episodes in their lives; *multi-faceted* in the forms it takes, from long-term physical mobility, such as studying, working or retiring, to short-term forms such as tourism; and also virtual mobility through proximity to 'EU

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[1] See Eurobarometer 80: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_publ_en.pdf. Retrieved on 14 May 2014

movers', social networks and cross-border transactions. The paper will discuss how the core

of these 'EU movers' are *de facto* denationalised, feeling at home nowhere and everywhere,

a hypothesis borne out by the results of a questionnaire carried out for the paper, in which

around a third of respondents indicated a loosening of a single stated national identity. It

will examine the challenges this group potentially poses to classic nation-states, based as

they are on territory and national identity (Papastergiadis, 2000). It will examine the

relationship of 'EU movers' to the nation-state through the prism of cosmopolitanism and

complexity theory. It will conclude that although currently the 'EU movers' do not constitute

a large enough group (around 2% of the total EU population) to pose an existential threat

to the nation-state in and of themselves, their over-representation in EU decision-making

bodies exaggerates their influence and creates a new set of challenges due to their potential

to develop European policy that prioritises the needs of such 'EU movers', arguably

exacerbating the division between "elites who relish a supranational Europe without

boundaries and 'ordinary people' keen to protect local and national identities" (Auer, 2010,

p 1168). I term this "parochial cosmopolitanism", to reflect how this wide-ranging mindset

can nonetheless lead to narrow interests.

The notion that citizens of one EU country are free to live in others has, in a limited way,

been part of the idea of a European Community since its inception with the 1957 Treaty of

Rome. In the early years, the right to move within the European Economic Community (as

it was then) was granted solely to workers, but a combination of jurisprudence of the

European Court of Justice and new Treaties successively opened up this definition, until the

concept of EU citizenship was introduced with the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht (Recchi and

Favell, 2009). Since that Treaty, a national of any of the 28 EU Member States has the right

to vote and stand in local and European Parliament elections in his country of residence, and appeal for consular assistance to the authorities of any EU Member State. But perhaps the most important of these elements of "EU citizenship" is the right to live, study, work or retire in any of the other EU Member States, underpinned by case law confirming the principle of non-discrimination in access to work and certain elements of the social security system.

This creation of a space in which people are free to circulate breaks down the traditional view of migration as people moving from place A to place B. Within this free movement, a person from country A may spend time studying in country B, undertake an internship in country C, take a first job in country D and then build a career operating over countries A, B and C. As Papastergiadis highlights (2010) neither of the traditional models of mobility apply. The macro-structuralist model sees migration as responding to supply and demand, and co-relates to the economic rationale for free movement within the EU described by Favell (2008) in which labour moves around to go where the work is, thus ensuring the EU Single Market works optimally. At first glance, the liberal neo-classical model of micro-agency (Papastergiadis, 2010), in which individuals are driven to move to improve themselves, seems more compelling, but neither model explains satisfactorily either the multi-polar nature of EU movement, with most movers having experience of at least three countries (Favell, 2008) nor the indications that family/love is the most-quoted motivation for moving elsewhere in the EU, and quality of life is cited as much as work opportunities (Pioneur Research Group, 2006). The 'EU mover' is more likely to be a highly-educated single female (Favell, 2008) than the out-of-work blue-collar *pater familias* of tabloid rhetoric. In fact, the mobility of this group goes much more towards theories of

cosmopolitanism (Beck, 1999, Urry, 2003) or post-nationalism (Habermas, 2001): this group constitutes a prime example of the rejection of Kleinschmidt's 'residentialism' (Papastergiadis, 2010) - they see mobility as their right, and they will exercise it when it suits them. Further, these 'EU movers' have denationalised themselves - in his fascinating ethnography of what he calls the 'Eurostars', Favell (2008) describes how 'EU movers' tend to maintain certain ties to their country of origin, perhaps their dentist, doctor or hairdresser, but for the most part reject a return to their country of origin. Many of those he interviewed are in their third or fourth country, and a significant number are in a relationship with someone from a country other than either their country of origin or residence. While they find difficulties living quite as a national would in their countries of residence, they tend not to seek out or end up in their original national groupings, but rather find other denationalised 'Eurostars' like themselves (Favell, 2008).

These findings tally with a questionnaire carried out by the author, which sought to delve into the self-identification of 'EU movers'. The questions related to the 5 fundamental features of national identity as posited by Anthony D. Smith (1991): an historic territory or homeland; common myths and historical memories; common mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; and common economy with territorial mobility for members. For Smith, in the Western or 'civic' model, the nation is a spatial or territorial concept (1991). He sees the nation-state as the institutional expression of a national identity, set up to defend the interests of the nation, and reflecting its will and identity. Thus, to understand the nation-state, it is crucial to understand national identity.

The hypothesis that the questionnaire was designed to test was that 'EU movers' would no longer have a strong single national identity (if they ever had had one) as a result of their mobility experience. It sought to explore for each participant "that part of his self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, cited in Herrmann & Brewer, 2004). The questionnaire assessed understanding of Smith's "common mass public culture" through access to media and support for national sporting teams. It assessed "legal rights and duties" through civic participation, i.e. voting. This element is particularly important as the right to vote in local and European Parliament elections granted in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht is often quoted by the EU institutions as a major component of a nascent EU citizenship (e.g. Reding, 2014). It also asked with which country the movers felt the closest affinity. Almost 22% replied that they either felt equally close to their country of origin and country of residence or nowhere in particular. In terms of support at sporting events, 39% supported their country of origin, with 30% indicating that they would sometimes support their country of origin, sometimes their country of residence. Around one third of people supporting another national team speaks strongly to denationalisation, especially if one agrees with Smith and Porter that "people's national sporting affiliations are among the most public statements that they make about their identity" (2004). 36.5% exercised their civic responsibilities in terms of voting in both their country of origin (for national elections) and their country of residence (for local/ European elections). And when asked about access to media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and news), the top category was in all cases a balance of both country of origin and country of residence. Additional qualitative answers also indicated a tendency to look to media from third countries as well (particularly the BBC). This ability to be 'present' in

several national spaces at once has of course been accentuated by the development of information and communication technologies, opening the horizon of social relationships and allowing greater freedom for their construction across space and time (McQuire, 2008).

While the questionnaire cannot be considered scientific, due to biases within the sample, it tallies broadly with the findings of other similar studies (Pioneur Research Group, 2006, Salamonska, Grifone Baglioni & Recchi, 2013). These show that 'EU movers' do not fit the stereotype of either the highly-paid executive expatriate, living a life separate from his host country, nor the migrant worker who has moved away from his country of birth to start a new and better life. Neither do they tally with Hunter and Yates' image of "parochial cosmopolitans" (2002), moving from one place to another but remaining in a "bubble" shielding them 'from any serious contact with the indigenous cultures on which they impinge' (Berger, 2002). They are something else and the nature of that 'something else' potentially poses challenges to the traditional notion of the nation-state as a territorial and political entity, based as it is on the undivided loyalty of its subjects, sovereignty over its territory and a singular identity of community (Papastergiadis, 2000). It is therefore useful to examine the nature of those challenges from a theoretical perspective of complexity theory and its ensuing cosmopolitanism.

The 'EU movers' can be seen as the embodiment of complexity theory. While *denationalised*, the 'EU movers' are not deterritorialised, but neither do they truly belong where they are. A better metaphor is perhaps that they are moored: though not in Urry's sense of moored as the opposite of mobile (2003). Rather they are moored in the sense that they are present in

time and space for now, but in a state where it takes only a few actions to depart for another mooring elsewhere; present and participating, but always with the knowledge that they "could be gone tomorrow" (Simmel, 1950). They form their own society within this evolving complex (Urry, 2003), with 'EU movers' from countries as far apart as Portugal and Finland having as much, or even more, in common with each other as they do with 'stayers' from their own respective nation-states or the nationals of the country where they find themselves.

This idea of complexity has been used by Urry to describe a "global cosmopolitan fluid" (2003, p133). Urry picks up on Hardt and Negri's idea of Empire to describe a "new global form of sovereignty" which is "deterritorialized and decentralised…[with] no centre of power and no fixed boundaries or barriers" (Urry, 2003, p128)[2]. Urry's notion is of societies leaving behind the nation-state and becoming more like empires. He identifies a number of features of such empires - exceptional centres, icons of power, porosity of borders, huge 'imperial' economic and social inequalities (Urry, 2003). While he uses the example of the USA to make his case, these features are also present within the EU: exceptional centres such as London and Brussels; icons of power such as the Eiffel Tower or the Shard; porosity of borders through the Single Market and the Schengen Agreement ("The Schengen area and co-operation", 2014); considerable variations of economic and social factors such as unemployment across the EU (Eurostat, 2014). Again looking to Urry (2003), he identifies 4 characteristics of the 'cosmopolitan fluid', all of which can be applied to the 'EU movers': extensive mobility; curiosity about places, peoples and cultures

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[2] In considering this idea of 'empire', one can compare EU movers with their historical predecessors in ancient Rome, where "high levels of human mobility were both a direct function of empire-building and a defining feature of Roman identity" (Scheidel, 2004). Like ancient Rome, the EU tries to encourage mobility as a way to create and develop a sense of European identity (Favell, 2008).

(evidenced through their interest in moving, their multilingualism and their tendency to have studied outside their country of nationality for some period of time (Favell, 2008)); a willingness to take risks (moving has inherent risks, for example to family unity, job security, future pension stability); and adherence to global standards (mutual recognition of qualifications and comparability of educational achievements has become a *sine qua non* of free movement within the EU). Looking at Urry's concept of relationality (2003), it can be understood that the 'EU movers' consider as temporary and mobile elements of life - home, work, family - which the nation-state-society prefers to be long-term and immobile.

If the hypothesis is that the 'EU movers' are examples of Beck's "freedom's children", and so "the first to live in a post-national cosmopolitan world order" (1999, p13) how will this affect the nation-state-society (Favell, 2008)? Or as Beck puts it "what are the risks if the cosmopolitan mission succeeds?" (1999, p13).

'EU movers' undermine Ong's assertion that "the nation-state continues to define, discipline, control and regulate all kinds of populations, whether in movement or in residence" (1999, p15). This may be true in many parts of the world, but is decreasingly so within the EU. Many areas of decision-making relating to the EU population - such as recognition of qualifications, access to certain aspects of social security or health, right to non-discrimination on grounds of gender, nationality, race, religion, age and sexual orientation - are now dealt with at the supra-national level, where the nation-states are just one part of a larger institutional decision-making apparatus. The right to move freely requires this apparatus, and the creation of a space of freedom requires rules to make it work. Thus

decision-making about what takes place on its territory - the raison d'être of the nation-state - is removed from it in order for the path to be cleared for the 'EU movers'.

'EU movers' are also exemplars of a reconfiguration of the activities of global capital and a recontextualisation of a number of industrial and corporate decisions. Sassen highlights what she calls the "incipient denationalization of certain institutional arenas" (2002, p25); how the availability of an educated workforce comfortable with moving across national entities affects decisions by major firms, freeing them from the need to be embedded in national systems. A key example, used by Sassen, is the financial sector, which has seen French financial services companies setting up their global operations in London. While Sassen attributes a strengthening of this process of denationalisation to state policy enabling privatisation and foreign acquisition (2002), for EU countries it is the EU that has been the driver of these processes, through various sectoral market liberalisations and rules on mergers & acquisitions and state aid that have prevented the protection of 'national champions' and have opened companies up to investment and acquisition from outside national borders (European Commission, 2014).

The challenge of free movement to the nation-state is not just evident in the behaviours of those that move, but also in its impact on those that stay. Each individual 'EU mover' will impact on the 'stayers' he leaves behind in the country of origin, but also those that are staying in the country of residence. The EU has fostered a "mundane cosmopolitanism" (Urry, 2003): almost 3 in 4 European tourists spend their holidays elsewhere in the EU (Salamonska et al, 2013). 'Stayers', not just those in the large cities, but increasingly those in smaller, more rural centres, will be brought into daily contact with

the nationals, and so by definition the habits, customs and cultures, of other EU countries. For example, in 2011, Poles comprised the biggest or second-biggest foreign-born population in eight regions of the United Kingdom (UK) (Rogers, 2011).

Today's 'EU movers' are the inheritors of a long European tradition of movement and subverted notions of belonging, from ancient Athens via medieval universities, to today's hyper-connectedness. Like Simmel's Stranger (1950), they mediate the experience of 'stayers' both from their place of origin and their new location by bringing a perspective that combines both "near" and "far" (Papastergiadis, 2013). These days mobility is not just physical, whether long- or short-term, but also virtual (Salamonska et al, 2013). This virtual mobility can be personal, either through social networks or through family and friends elsewhere in the EU. Or it can be impersonal such as cross-border online shopping.

Perhaps at its simplest, the challenge of 'EU movers' to the nation state is that they provide a narrative of freedom that opposes and even negates the nation-state's most basic role: that is, providing security to its defined population. Baumann situates identity discourse in the context of the pursuit of the two values of freedom and security (2008). For most of its existence, the nation-state has seen one of its core functions as providing for the security of its citizens - there are almost no countries without a defence force of some kind. Therefore in order for the nation-state to exist, there needs to be a source of fear for its people, against whom they can be protected. Up until 1989, this role was played by the Soviet Union for the countries of the EU. Since then, the fear of Soviet invasion has been replaced by the fear of the outsider (2008). At the other end of the spectrum comes the 'EU mover', displaying her "new 'unfixedness of the self" (Baumann, 2008, p32). Whereas the nation-

state is about defining borders and controlling who crosses them, when and how, the EU is about removing borders and allowing free access in an uncontrolled, undocumented way. Consider, for instance, how difficult it is to identify the number of free movers within the EU today (Favell, 2008). The 'EU movers' do not want a state to protect and define them, but rather to "[enable] its citizens to discuss freely the models of life they prefer and to practise them" (Baumann, 2008).

Even if all of these arguments are taken as valid, there is one strong rejoinder to the notion that the 'EU movers' - taken to mean those that are physically mobile for long periods of time - represent a challenge to the nation-state and that is their low numbers. Although exact numbers are hard to quantify, a factor of true *freedom* of movement, it is estimated that no more than 2% of the EU population are living in a country not their own at any one time, and that only 4% have ever done so (Favell, 2008). This number has remained fairly constant over time, therefore undermining any arguments that the 'EU movers' of 10-15 years ago constituted a vanguard. However, there is one way in which the impact of the 'EU movers' outweighs their limited numbers and that is their influence as part of the policy-making apparatus of the European Union, and in particular, its executive, the European Commission. In order to be recruited to a position with the EU institutions, whether temporary or permanent, a candidate needs to display linguistic capability in at least two official EU languages (European Personnel Selection Office 2013). In order for a permanent official to build a career, a third EU language is needed. These (understandable) language requirements highly favour candidates either from dual national backgrounds or because of student mobility. (Georgakakis, 2008, Ban, 2008). Once a part of the EU institutions, the 'EU movers' are then in a position to promote policies that tackle the needs of others like

them, but are less focused on the needs of the 'stayers'. As Calhoun puts it, "cosmopolitan elites in Europe tend to overlook social problems in their societies because they have developed the 'class consciousness of frequent travellers'" (2002, cited in Auer, 2010). Although it is perhaps too soon to say, this sense that the EU policy-makers are running ahead of their populations could explain the rise of eurosceptic and nationalist parties in the recent elections to the European Parliament (Euroactiv, 2014). Such analysis would bear out Auer's assertion that "populism and ethnocentric nationalism have emerged in Europe not *despite* the cosmopolitan agendas of its elites, but, to a large extent, in response to them" (2010, p1169).   In this way, the 'EU movers' constitute a 'parochial cosmopolitanism', the interests of which are given undue salience in the policies of the institutions in which they operate.

Though small in numbers, the 'EU movers' are changing the understanding of national identity across all 28 countries of the EU. Not only the 'EU movers' but also the 'stayers' are experiencing life beyond their nation-state-society on a quasi-daily basis, through their relationships with the 'EU movers' and through the existence of policies that support them. By being available to undertake jobs in any country, the 'EU movers' have made possible growing economic liberalisation, and investment across the Single Market. At a more theoretical level, the existence of a highly mobile elite challenges the very notion of borders and national identity, by creating a sub-society that feels it has the right to move wherever it wants across the EU with the same ease as if moving within a single nation-state. The importance of this elite to EU decision-making, in spite of its relatively small numbers, has arguably hastened the legal and regulatory framework to support 'EU movers' and thus taken certain decisions, such as recognition of qualifications or access to work-based social

security benefits, away from the direct control of the nation-state. While it would be over-stating the impact of these 'EU movers' to typify the current state of affairs as a 'post-national constellation', as Habermas would put it (2001), they do highlight the possibilities and also pitfalls of a future where global, not just EU, movement is freer.

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