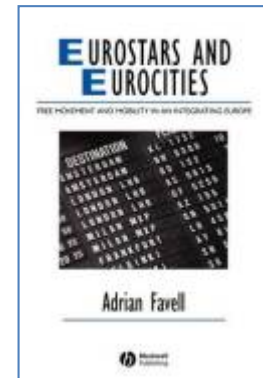


## **Favell, Adrian, *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe***

Wiley-Blackwell, an imprint of John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2008. ISBN-10: 1405134054, ISBN-13: 978-1405134057

**Reviewed by Dr. George Simons at [diversophy.com](http://diversophy.com)**

In the author's words, this book is largely about "getting on your bike' internationally to look for work in a free moving Europe." While it briefly discusses research into mobility within corporate and organizational settings, the real *Eurostars* are those people who leave their home country to seek work and life elsewhere. They are in the main, though not exclusively, in their 20's and 30's, starting or pursuing a mobile career, often impelled by the lack of similar opportunity or frustration and boredom in their place of origin.



The "elsewhere" in Favell's treatment is what he describes as the *Eurocities*: London, Amsterdam, Brussels which, besides being the most fertile terrain for his research, have taken on a kind of special status as European capitals hubs of free movement. Of course there is career movement to many urban centers elsewhere, but the author chose these as offering a kind of opportunity and attraction and the book seems almost a paean to these three highly multicultural and porous destinations.

Favell's research is set in the discussion of European identity and its emergence in the EU15 states which experience freedom of mobility not just in the legal sense but where the free choice of much of the population is less constrained by limiting economic or social factors. While many aspects of European mobility are dealt with, the question behind it all is: *Are these Euromovers harbingers of a shift from predominantly national self-identification to a kind of pan-European identity both for themselves and for the contexts in which they move?* The answer to this question is left to the reader to decide, enlightened by Favell's data, stories and perspectives.

Why this uncertainty? For one reason, the public, (as did this reader upon picking up the book), tends toward the impression, especially if one visits the so-called Eurocities, that this internal migration is massive and represents a significant social shift. The actual numbers of such movers, in fact, does not at all support this supposition nor does it obey the expectations that many had for free movement within the EU. So the question is whether the Eurostars represent the future, or a surface phenomenon, given that most of their fellow Europeans act out their careers and pursue their lives "close to home," without much thought about, or even somewhat resistant to having a European identity.

Our fascination with the identity question is provoked by the numerous first-person accounts extracted from the interviews that Favell conducted. His interviewees are in the main professionals who have sought to exercise their career abroad often in multiple moves. We are not concerned here with the migration of foreign labor over the past fifty years. Some of which have become fully integrated, while others remain ghettoized and betimes resented along with contemporary immigrants and asylum seekers. Nor are we concerned with the

popular fear of an invasion of “Polish plumbers” and the like, which many expected to occur with the enlargement of the EU in recent years, but which in fact has failed to materialize.

The author addresses the question of whether the behavior of the Eurostars is in fact a new form mobility or corresponds to the liberty of the somewhat well off to move by choice rather than by necessity, in other words a class phenomenon. The majority of the interviewees were not “elites” but modestly middle class. The role of employers of these movers is also changing to the supply side. Fewer people are being selected to go abroad, while recruitment efforts for installations and responsibilities abroad are often focusing on those who already have self-selected to be there.

In the shared interview material, one discerns that Eurostars not only had some impatience with the potential work offerings and career tracks available to them in their place of origin, but there is a clear underlying and sometime expressed need to escape a stifling context, whether social, occupational, or familial. One senses a hidden pain that can be best assuaged by leaving the conditions of one’s upbringing. Sometime the consciousness of this need emerges from new perspectives gained by Erasmus/Socrates or other educational experiences abroad, or by being “third culture kids,” members of mixed nationality or already well traveled families. This all too often surfacing *mal du pays* deserves further study.

Favell also explores how the Eurostars actually fit in to their new context. Much of this has to do with the receptivity of the local population, particularly in smaller urban settings. The need to fit in may be satisfied in the key cities by the urban tribalism shared with others like themselves.

It is quite clear in most of the interviews that Euromobility results more in enlarging on one’s core identity rather than abandoning it for another. This results in a propensity to declare themselves as “Europeans” rather than “migrants,” perhaps because to some “migrant” suggests a more permanent landing in a place, whereas many Eurostars remain ready to move again. Despite this, the looming question remains as to when and where they will tire of the costs of urban anomie really “settle down” or decide “we are here to stay,” and whether at this point previously ignored culture shock may have a far greater impact than expected on the road to real inclusion. There is some extended discussion of the challenges and opportunities of settling in the Eurocities focused on in the research.

The plot thickens—and, to paraphrase Longfellow, “*research* is long and time is fleeting.” Which is to say that despite the contemporary nature of Favell’s research, it was conducted and completed just on the edge of the economic crisis and we are not sure what effect this development will bring to bear on the phenomenon of Eurostars. We are not sure whether the tight financial situation will impel more to move beyond national borders or less. At the moment we are witnessing austerity measures in the financially challenged European nations such as Greece that suggest a major exodus of talent.

The book is well written and holds ones attention in the analysis as well as the firsthand accounts. There is an appendix that summarizes the identities of the interviewees by destination city, under pseudonyms, adding perspective to the reading as a whole. A second appendix describes the oral history and ethnographic methodology which guided the research and clarifies its relationship to the far more extensive statistical PIONEUR mobility study whose data are used as background reference.