

# **After Enlargement**

## **Europe's new migration system and its hidden political economy of immigration**

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### **Abstract**

Because of an overriding focus on policy and political talk, rather than the underlying social and economic phenomena, scholars typically underestimate the importance of underlying demographics and labour market dynamics on immigration politics in Europe. Despite rhetoric about “fortress Europe” and fears of “floods” to richer nations, flows have generally been demand driven, and have therefore been drawn by European nations with the most open and informal labour markets – such as Britain, Ireland, Italy and Spain – rather than more highly regulated welfare states such as Denmark. They are also more likely to be circular and temporary than one way immigration. I discuss the desirability of the apparently inevitable trend in Europe towards a more US style international political economy that strongly parallels the migration system between the US and Mexico. This effectively has seen the emergence of a dual level governance system of immigration, in which “smoke and mirrors” style politics talks about controlled policing of borders and migration management, whereas the underlying trends are much less controlled and much more porous. I consider four possible scenarios for this “new migration system”, before concluding with evidence that suggests that the dominant trend in Europe is towards the emergence of a more regionalised system, in which West European societies come to rely on East European movers to fill secondary labour market needs in the service economy – in an exploitative fashion – as well as encouraging a more effective racial or ethnically-based exclusion of migrants from the south or further afield.

### **Keywords**

European Union, regional integration, labour migration, Eastern Europe, migration systems, migration theory.

THE ENLARGEMENTS of the EU eastwards in May 2004 and January 2007 completed a geo-political shift in post-1989 Europe, that – in terms of the migration and mobility of populations – poses the biggest demographic change in Europe since the devastation and flux at the end of the Second World War. The Cold War was finally over, and Europe united again—with new East European citizens able to access now, or in the near future, the same free movement rights that have been enjoyed for years by West European citizens of the EU. Freedom of movement of persons from the new Member States remains a contentious issue, and some borders remain in place: not all temporary accession limitations to free movement are yet down. West European states have shown themselves to be far less keen on the movement of people westwards than they are on the gold rush of western capital East. Yet one by one, formal restrictions on the free movement of East Europeans are being given up, in many cases enabling legal regularisation of migration and mobility that has long been occurring in practice. Borders are coming down, and a new East-West migration system is being established in the continent.<sup>1</sup>

These dramatic changes represent a new frontier in European migration research. Most of the studies completed before the enlargements focused on large scale demographic trends or their political framing (Wallace and Stola 2001; Favell and Hansen 2002). Less has been done on the micro-, ethnographic level: on the lives, experiences, networks and social forms that this new migration in Europe has taken. Fresh research is called for on the “human face” of this migration (Smith and Favell 2006), and this is being answered in large part by a new generation of East European researchers, themselves often academic migrants pursuing education and careers in the West. Favell and Elrick (2008) showcases the work of a number of these scholars, based on a conference organised as part of the KNOWMIG project (‘Expanding the knowledge base of European labour migration

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<sup>1</sup> A version of the is paper has been published as Adrian Favell (2008) ‘The new face of East West-Migration in Europe’, the introduction to a special edition of *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34(5) ‘The New Face of East-West Migration in Europe’, edited by Adrian Favell and Tim Elrick. See also the DIIS working paper (2006), ‘After enlargement: Europe’s new migration system’. [http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Briefs2006/afa\\_after\\_enlargement.pdf](http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Briefs2006/afa_after_enlargement.pdf)

policies’), now based at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> In this introduction to the subject, I offer a framework and overview for understanding the importance of this new research, emphasising two key points. The first is that our tried and tested narrative and models of post-war immigration in Europe – the standard discussions of immigration, integration and citizenship, based on post-colonial, guest worker and asylum models, and historical distinctions between pre- and post-1973 trends – is finished. The second is that the new East-West migration finally provides scholars with a European context comparable to the Mexican-US scenario that has inspired the largest and most sophisticated body of migration theory and research available in the social sciences. East-West migration can be read through these theories, providing a rich empirical material that will enable the development of better, more comparative views on the driving forces of international migration, as well as the role of free movement and migration in regional integration processes taking place around the globe today.

Systematising what we can learn from this body of theory and research, I evaluate four different hypotheses that might best account for the new East-West migration system in Europe. The dominant trend in Europe appears to be towards the emergence of a more regionalised system, in which West European societies come to rely on East European movers to fill secondary labour market needs in the service economy – in an exploitative fashion – as well as encouraging a more effective racial or ethnically-based exclusion of migrants from the south or further afield.

### **Political and policy context**

Nearly all the policy advocacy on East-West migration, as well as all the credible demographic and economic scholarship, nowadays suggests that the West has little to fear from post-enlargement migration. Early scholarship in the days after the Berlin Wall came down – usually by German or Austrian scholars – did suggest that there was a huge pent

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<sup>2</sup> See their website: <http://www.migration-networks.org>

up demand for East-West migration that might provoke a flood to the West (Hönekopp 1992; Fassmann and Hintermann 1997; Bauer and Zimmerman 1999). Much of this research was based on surveys of migration intentions among a population recently freed to dream about being part of the West. Later scholars rightly pointed out the unreliability of this work. A much better guide to future enlargements were the past enlargements of southern and Mediterranean states (Kupiszewski 2002; Wallace 2002). The accession of Spain, Portugal and Greece did not lead to floods of new migrants, but manageable flows, positive development trends in the new southern Member States, and high levels of return migration. The integration of these nations into the European fold in fact stands as an unqualified success in the history of the EU—as well as clear inspiration to later enlargements.

The consensus today – reflected above all the most influential policy advocacy in Brussels (ECAS 2005, 2006; ACA 2006) – is that Europe as a whole is only likely to benefit from a greater degree of manageable East-West movement. Not only is Western Europe going to receive a new influx of highly educated, talented or (in any case) ambitious East Europeans, driven by the very positive selection mechanisms working in the European context (Borjas 1999). These migration trends are also quite different from the post-colonial, guest worker and asylum immigration that has proven such a long term political issue of contention in Europe. East European migrants are in fact regional ‘free movers’ *not* immigrants; and with the borders open, they are much more likely to engage in temporary circular and transnational mobility, governed by the ebb and flow of economic demand, than by long term permanent immigration and asylum seeking (Okolski 2001; Morawska 2002). Many East Europeans in any case were able to move and work in the West before 2004; the enlargement would simply regularise a situation well established in *de facto* practice on the ground.

For all the good arguments to encourage open borders and free movement, the political calculation on these issues seems to point to a different rationality. There is in fact great electoral reward to be had by populist politicians using the ‘threat’ of open doors Eastwards as a tool for berating the impact of the EU, in particular the liberalisation of

West European labour markets or employment legislation. The ugly French debate about the ‘Polish plumber’ during the EU constitutional vote of spring 2005 was but the most visible example of this phenomenon. Little matter that the handful of Polish plumbers in France have been outnumbered vastly by their Polish counterparts who chose Britain instead, and who now dominate this sector in London or Manchester—or apparently that the British economy in the last few years has done much better than the French on the back of this informal workforce. It was the failed Bolkestein directive on freedom of movement of services that opened the spectre of European nation states no longer being able to control employment legislation on their own territory. France balked at the possibility of the rights of workers or the rules of the working week, in certain sectors now coming under the jurisdiction of say, Polish or British law, both of which are more lax. Critics call this competitive imbalance in the system ‘social dumping’, and ‘a race to the bottom’. In reality, though, what is not harmonised (and thereby regulated) by the EU with planned legislation, may instead simply get accomplished by the free market, which is now able now to freely post workers *within* Europe wherever and whenever in the absence of meaningful border controls.

As regards the members that joined in 2004, West European nations have one by one accepted the inevitable and brought down transitional barriers to freedom of movement for new Member States. As things stand, the trend seems to be clear after much lobbying from the European Commission. Initially only three countries opened their borders: Ireland, Sweden, and Britain. All reaped economic benefits from the inflows that followed, that have proven higher than expected in the Irish and British case. By February 2007, Netherlands had become the ninth country to drop restrictions to the EU10 Member States, joining Finland, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Denmark have in the meantime reduced barriers. Only Austria and Germany – where hostility post 1989 has always been greatest – have confirmed they will maintain restrictions until at least 2011. Numbers of such workers are, however, high in both these countries, whether legal or not. Recently, on the other hand, Britain led the way in announcing that doors were to remain officially shut to Bulgarians and Romanians when these two countries joined in January 2007. Spain and then others quickly followed

suit, even though in both cases it will simply mean that large numbers of workers already there in the two countries will not be able to regularise their status—or begin to pay taxes.

The slow political acceptance of open East-West borders confirms the underlying fact that Europe in future has an almost desperate *structural* need, in both demographic and labour force terms, for increased intra-European population movements. For the next 20-30 years, regardless of what happens to birth rates, this demand will persist; and if more countries come to resemble the Italian or Spanish rates of birth, the situation will get worse. These demands notably have not been satisfied by the intra-EU movement of West Europeans, with regional disparities between the North and South evening out through development, structural funds and welfare provision. Intra-EU migration among West European countries has only risen slightly over a thirty period since the migration stop of the 1970s, despite the extension of freedom of movement rights through successive EU treaties (Recchi 2005; Favell 2008). Labour markets instead have looked East. European economies – with some variation according to how much they continue to preserve nationally specific welfare state provisions and employment legislation – are increasingly coming to resemble the USA, in which immigrants fill a vast range of low end service sector, manufacturing and agricultural work that nationals no longer accept. Who better to fill these 3D (‘dirty, dangerous and dull’) jobs, than fresh faced European neighbours from the East, who are likely to be temporary rather than permanent, and are ethnically ‘similar’ and/or culturally ‘proximate’? There is a strong suspicion here that West European economies might be quite happy to reduce their reliance on non-white, non-European immigrants by the development of a more internal and regional European labour market. This new migration system in fact might well extend beyond the nominal frontiers of the official Member States, to include candidate countries and other near neighbors. The European Neighbourhood Policy, although noted normally only for its security aspects, is also creating regulated cross-border markets along these lines, in some cases to enable new Member States (such as Poland) who are losing their own workforce, to replace them with migrant workers from their immediate East (such as Ukrainians). The EU thus must be seen as a concentric, territorial project in regional integration, that

has used its external partner agreements to set up new mechanisms of managing regional migration flows, while closing doors to others (Rogers 2000; Favell 2005).

Idealist pro-EU federalists see the economic migration of East European as a win-win-win scenario. West European economies benefit from dynamic labour market effects, East European movers cash in on the premium of working in the higher paid West, and East European economies develop through the two way circulation of talent and capital. The EU, they think, can successfully govern and manage this scenario if political action is pooled at the supra-national level. These rosy scenarios have been celebrated especially in the European Year of Mobility of Workers (2006), organised by the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in Brussels, which has lobbied hard for the breaking down of transitional barriers.<sup>3</sup> Neo-liberal economists share their optimism, but are much happier to let the whole scenario play out in terms of the inter-national ‘competition for the brightest and the best’, where the more powerful western economies may indeed benefit disproportionately from the ‘brain drain’ of the most employable talent and skills from the East (Borjas 1999). The political rationality in the meantime hangs in the balance: national politicians are tempted by populist rhetoric towards hostility, while all the economic, demographic, and geo-political arguments point in the opposite direction.

### **European research and North American theory**

A whole new generation of researchers from East and Central Europe are now completing fascinating PhDs in sociology, anthropology and human geography on the new East-West migration—many at prestigious West European academic institutions. Their careers are themselves the fruit of the EU’s forward looking inclusion of candidate Member States in European wide education mobility schemes well in advance of full membership. These young scholars, who themselves have lived through the momentous

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<sup>3</sup> see their website: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/workersmobility\\_2006/index.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/workersmobility_2006/index.cfm)

changes they are studying, are now documenting the migration systems of Poles, Hungarians, Romanians or Bulgarians in Britain, Ireland, Germany, Spain or Italy. Their efforts make the case once again for grounded ethnographic and interviews based research as an essential part of the repertoire of international migration studies (see the collection put together by Favell and Elrick 2008).

Above all, what they document, as it is happening, is the emergence of a new European migration system. It is perhaps ironic that Douglas Massey and colleagues completed their round-up of the post-war European system in a global context at the moment when everything was changing again (Massey et al 1999). The standard text book story of post-war colonial and guest worker immigration driven by industrial growth, followed by post-industrial closure and the contested emergence of multi-ethnic nation-states, multiculturalism and new conceptions of citizenship (i.e., Castles and Miller 2003; Hollifield 1992) now has to be rewritten (on this, see especially King 2002). The paradigm of immigration and integration, in particular, becomes redundant in the face of the emergent, regional scale, European territorial space. Within this, European citizens – old and new – can move freely against a wider, transnational horizon that encourages temporary and circular migration trends, and demands no long term settlement or naturalisation in the country of work. Post-colonial theories of race, ethnicity and multiculturalism – that clutter the shelves of bookstores and the pages of syllabi in the Anglo-American dominated field of ‘ethnic and racial studies’ – are also ineffective and largely irrelevant in relation to these new movements in Europe.

Rather, to theorise and interpret the new East-West migration in comparative context, researchers have turned to the most substantial existing body of theory and research in international migration studies, work largely developed in relation to studies of Latin American, especially Mexican migration to the US. This is no coincidence: the question of East-West integration, and the movement and mobility it encourages, is directly parallel to the regional integration processes in North America, that have led Mexican migration to the US to be the single largest international migration flow in the Western world, and the biggest migration-related component of the US economy, itself the

world's biggest. Like Europe, the US wrestles continually with the political pressure for more effective closure of its southern borders, while – again, like Europe – being dependent on the undepletable reservoir of cheaper skilled and unskilled labour it provides. It is relation above all characterised by the profound cross-border, territorial, regional embeddedness of the US south-west with Mexico, at every level of the economy and demography.

The Mexican Migration Project, for example, headed by Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey, is the single most ambitious empirical project ever developed on a major international migration system.<sup>4</sup> With roots in an ethno-survey methodology, reflected in the early anthropological style work on sending communities (Massey, Alarcón et al 1987), MMP has since 1982 developed and elaborated a huge, publically accessible quantitative database, centred on surveys of potential migrant populations in key Mexican cities and their patterns of movement to the US. As well as providing the biggest source of data about Mexican migration to the US, it has also been the basis for Massey's concerted attempt to summarise, frame and extend migration theory into a more comprehensive networks-based migration system approach, that illustrates the exponential dynamics and social structures beyond simple push-pull explanations (Massey et al 1993). On the back of this research, these core migration theories were pushed to encompass the whole globe (Massey et al 1999).

A second body of work, hailing from economic sociology has focused rather on the direct impact of these migration flows on the US economy and its internal labour market dynamics (Waldinger 2001; Portes 1995). The free flowing, massively informal labour market of California for domestic work, agriculture, household and construction work – the dynamo that powers this, the largest corner of the US economy – are proving a model for the rest of the post-industrial world, as it shifts increasingly into a highly informalised and structurally unequal dual labour market model (see Piore 1979). While this is a boon for capitalist exploitation of cheap mobile labour, it can also be read as leading to a

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<sup>4</sup> see their website: <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu>

potential globalisation from below, as pointed out in literature on ethnic economies (Portes 1998). Domestic work, and the feminization of migration it underlines, is a key sector in which these processes play out (Hodagneu-Sotelo 2001). These theories also link in with attempts to show how the emergence of networks and territorial based ethnic economic niches are often the primary channel of incorporation of migrant labour into the post-industrial economy (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Light and Gold 2000), pointing the way forward to future limitations of US urban change in even the most global of cities (Light 2006), and to emerging new labour market conflicts with the Latino workforce (Milkman 2006).

Rather different in style, but no less influential, has been the body of work grouped together under the rubric of 'transnationalism'. Again, the extraordinary cross-border flows, social forms, economic and political structures that have developed among Mexicans in the US, particularly in California, have provided the material for a thorough rethinking of the nation-state centered immigration/assimilation paradigm, that sees the phenomenon only through the receiving country's eyes (Levitt 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Glick Schiller et al 1995). This work has gone on to detail the interpenetration of Mexican and US political, economic and cultural dynamics (Smith 2006; Bakker and Smith 2003), and changing patterns of Mexican migrant settlement in the US as they penetrate ever further the receiving society (Zuniga and Hernández-Léon 2005).

A fourth relevant literature is the work of labour market economics inspired by the Mexico-US scenario, notably the distinctive contributions of Chiswick and Borjas. These focus on the question of selection mechanisms, and the conditions under which receiving societies best capitalise on the potential human capital of immigrants, or even are able to select for the 'unobserved skill' that is carried by the most motivated and dynamic of immigrant (Chiswick 2007; Borjas 1989). Borjas notably argues that the US's ability to select for the 'brightest and the best' is declining, as policies have increasingly favoured family reunification and migrant networks over demand-driven criteria; he does however see great potential for positivity in the European scenario (Borjas 1999). The European context in fact has seen the emergence of a much 'purer' open borders system, in which

the conditions of an ideal cross-border labour market are better achieved. Here, the dilemma is likely to be the threat of ‘brain drain’, and its negative effects on sending countries. On the other hand, developments with the American system as regards other migrants who have a preferential access to the American economy and American jobs, shows that classic brain drain is just as likely under global conditions to lead to positive development dynamics (Stark 2004). Free moving entrepreneurs can use their sojourn working in the US to develop ideas, networks and sources of capital that will allow successful entrepreneurship to be established back in their home country—as has been graphically the case with recent Chinese and Indian migrants (Saxenian 2006)

## **Hypotheses**

We can systematise the existing literature on East-West migration, as well as what can be derived from the North American migration and immigration literature, by distinguishing a number of distinct hypotheses. Migrants to Western Europe from East and Central Europe can come from countries that are either, post-accession, full members of the EU (subject to transitional barriers on free movement in some countries); or from actual and potential candidate countries (who have different external association agreements with the EU). They might either be easily and well received, with positive personal experiences and observations of life and work in Western Europe, or not. And their movement to the West might follow economists’ and geographers’ predictions – leading to the emergence of an efficient Europe-wide labour market, and new intra-EU mobility regime – or it might have political and economic consequences that reflect or produce lead to a rather different exclusionary or exploitative ‘political economy’ of migration in Europe.

### **HYPOTHESIS ONE – NEO LIBERAL EUROPE**

In his classic – albeit contentious – economic theory of immigration, George Borjas (1989) identifies mechanisms why post-communist immigration to the US was far more

beneficial economically, both to the US and the immigrants themselves, than more recent low income immigration from Central America. Both the analogy with communism and with Mexico can be drawn for East and Central European migrants, but in Borjas's terms, it is the former situation that ought to prevail. These migrants are relatively well educated and/or skilled, but they are moving from countries that have not valued or prized this human capital to the degree it will be in the West. Mobility can thus lead to dramatic economic payoffs for themselves and their hosts, and they pose few cultural problems of adjustment, having accepted the host country's (capitalist) ideology. In this hypothesis, then, East and Central Migrants should be well received, happy and successful, and achieve successful mobility. From the receiving side, they are migrants preferable to non-Europeans because of their 'cultural' closeness, their education levels (the costs of which were borne in the sending countries), and other political/ideological links – they should not, therefore experience negative discrimination or hostility. Being spatially close to home, they are unlikely to want to stay or pose long term burdens on the welfare state; they are a largely costless migration, with significant benefits for both sides. We should expect no big difference between their experiences and the internal movers, or between migrants from different status sending countries (this being a 'market' governed process); and most migrants should offer a strongly positive evaluation of the experience.

## HYPOTHESIS TWO – EXCLUSIONARY EUROPE

A rather different reading of this situation suggests an analogy closer to the Mexican or Central American one. It also suggests that the regional, cross-border closeness of these migrants from the East could in fact pose a serious problem for West European states, whose dealings with immigration in the post-war period have generally been based on postcolonial models of integrating more distant migrants, who have some close cultural and political socialization to the receiving country from global historical and cultural links. In this hypothesis, the experiences of the East and Central Europeans will be stratified according to perceptions of how willing they are to adapt culturally and ethnically to the receiving countries. They will be negative in so far as these migrants are seen as a 'parasitical' movers – taking the benefits of economic opportunities in the West,

but not interested in participating or integrating in the host country, let alone any kind of cultural assimilation. The situation might vary according to what extent the receiving country's immigration paradigm is based on a post-colonial model. Eastern movers may even be seen as an economic threat to indigenous working classes and existing ethnic minorities in working class positions (an extension of Castles and Kosack 1973). The 'new migration' they represent (Koser and Lutz 1998), is seen as a chaotic threat to the post-European migration system, which prior to 1989 was relatively settled and politically manageable (Favell 1998). The migrants' experiences will be largely negative, and highly conscious of these reactions among natives. It reflects a systemic response mostly governed by national political conceptions of citizenship.

### HYPOTHESIS THREE – EU EUROPE

A third hypothesis elicits evidence on the degree to which the new East-West patterns are in fact fulfilling the theories and observations of economists and demographers. As well as generating kind of win/win scenario envisaged in hypothesis one, the new freedom of movement from East to West presages a new European migration system in which East Europeans fill European labour market needs, while engaging in temporary and circular forms of mobility (Wallace 2002; Williams and Balacz 2002). These will have significant development payoffs to the East, and the well governed new system rapidly settles down – as EU policy makers expect – into an enlightened and integrated European free movement regime (a 'political economy') in which all sides are happy. As the model – which is very popular amongst EU free movement advocates (see ECAS 2005) – is premised on effective political regulation of the market, in this hypothesis we would expect to see big differences in the ease of mobility between citizens of countries that have acceded and those that have not, as well as between migrants going to countries without transitional barriers and those where they are still up. Migrants' happiness with the movements, as well as their support for the European Union, may well reflect these legal and political constraints.

### HYPOTHESIS FOUR – EXPLOITATIVE EUROPE

The final hypothesis puts a critical spin on the idealised economic scenario, by positing that, yes, market integration is occurring, but that it is occurring anyways regardless of the EU efforts of governing East-West labour migration through coordinated free movement policies. This scenario is suggested as the actual one closest to the reality in Mexican-US migration (in the work of Massey et al, 2002), and has been picked up recently in work by Favell/Hansen (2002), and Samers (2004). This questions the existence of a well controlled 'fortress Europe', either before or after enlargement, and points towards the exploitative dimensions of the rampant market-led system governing migration in Europe. In this hypothesis, political talk of controlling free movement is largely a game of electoral 'smoke and mirrors', to disguise the degree to which economic interests in Europe are now actively exploiting easy East-West migration possibilities, in advance of accession and transition barriers coming down. There are few *de facto* political or legal barriers in fact to moving. Migrants from the East find easy ways of entering The West, taking up '3D' jobs, in low end service, agriculture and sweat shop manufacturing, replacing racially less desirable non-European migrants, but being exploited in advance of their rising to meet labour standards and wages of the East (see classic studies of how it works in the US, such as Piore 1979; Waldinger 1989). In this scenario, we would expect ease of mobility, but seriously negative experiences across the board, a strong sense of exploitation and vulnerability, and a sense that 'official' EU enlargement is not likely to make the situation much better. This downward migration would apply to all East and Central European migrants, regardless of educational status or which country they come from.

### **The new European migration system**

East-West migration is a fruitful context for testing the hypotheses that may be derived from current theory and research on international migration and immigration. The enlarged Europe in fact offers a rival model of regional integration to the North American one. As an institutional construct, the EU can boast of a much more developed corpus of

policy and legislation seeking to politically govern the underlying economic processes that are rapidly constructing an interpenetrated, regional and international labour market – along with its social and cultural consequences – in both parts of the world. European Union migration trends, because of this, might be expected to attain a more manageable and a rationally organised form than the largely informal and desperately unequal relations that characterise the Mexico-US border. As yet little work has been done with this broad comparative view of the European migration system. Favell and Hansen (2002) make this point, arguing for the primacy of market led forces over political efforts at control, and Michael Samers (2003, 2004) has developed a broad political economy analysis of Europe's tacit reliance on undocumented and irregular migration. Franck Düvell and Bill Jordan in recent work have both explored the necessary emergence of migration networks to facilitate and structure an East-West migration taking place largely 'beyond control' (Jordan and Düvell 2002; Düvell 2005).

New collections such as Favell and Elrick (2008) also offer answers to the hypotheses laid out above. With such a wealth of new research on the table, it is to be hoped that international migration researchers can begin to look to East-West migration in Europe as a potential source for controlling and modifying theories that have hitherto been built exclusively on US centred scenarios. Because of EU enlargement, the European migration system is probably the most dramatically evolving and changing context of migration in the developed world. It offers reason to question the automatic assumption that the US is the automatic paradigm of immigration for the rest of the world, while also posing the issue of whether Europe is in fact sliding ever closer to the US-Mexico migration model.

So in sum, what do these studies add up to? What is the big picture here? Taken together, along with other more systematic surveys underway, such as PIONEUR – a major three year EU funded network, whose results are now available online – and MIGSYS – a cross-Atlantic project funded by the International Metropolis – a much less happy

scenario than those promoted by advocates of EU integration is suggested.<sup>5</sup> Here I will close by synthesising the view of the European migration system that might emerge from a broader reading of these various studies. Which of the four hypotheses is most substantiated?

Both higher and lower end migrants from the East are attracted by the West, and certainly see their movements as temporary, opportunistic and circular. In fact there is little evidence that formal borders or barriers have made a lot of difference between, say, Poles and Romanians, although the latter are more likely to find themselves in precarious situations for want of official papers. But where their experiences are strikingly similar is in their strong sense of exclusion and exploitation. Many of these migrants accept sharp downward mobility in terms of status and qualifications in order to fill some low end niche in the labour market, that is grimly justified in terms of its payoff for family back home. The jobs they take are the ones that West citizens no longer want – those 3D jobs that have become a familiar range of employment ‘opportunities’ in the post-industrial service economy. Where there is conflict with the ‘natives’ over jobs and resources, the reaction gets expressed in populist and xenophobic terms. Where there is not, they slip into the background as an invisible but functional ‘secondary’ part of the economy. In Britain today, for example, it is almost impossible to be served dinner or drinks in a rural pub or get your bathroom fixed in a big city, without encountering an East European worker. Many accept jobs they would have not dreamt of while studying at school back home. The attractions of London may offer short term benefits in terms of experience and wisdom. But these ambitious ‘new Europeans’ are in danger of becoming a new Victorian servant class for a West European aristocracy of creative class professionals and university educated working mums.

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<sup>5</sup> I have been a research network partner in both projects. PIONEUR (2003-6) ‘Pioneers of European Integration ‘From Below’: Mobility and the Emergence of European Identity Among National and Foreign Citizens in the EU’, EU Framework V project, directed by Ettore Recchi, Università di Firenze. See the website: <http://www.obets.ua.es/pioneer/>; MIGSYS (2006-7) ‘Immigrants, policies and migration systems: an ethnographic comparative approach’, International Metropolis funded project directed by Anna Triandafyllidou, ELIAMEP, Athens. See the website: [http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/content/home/research/research\\_projects/migsys/en/](http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/content/home/research/research_projects/migsys/en/)

Professional and college level East Europeans, meanwhile, attracted West for educational opportunities also find themselves blocked in their careers. For them, too, the emergent structure is of a discriminatory labour market, that keeps them provisional and precarious, in order the better to extract cheaper labour. The payoffs if any are in terms of their status in relation to their peer group back home. That might be enough to dampen the feeling that they are treated as if they do not belong in the West, or that their hopeful European mobility might lead to serious long term consequences in terms of social isolation. The sentiment many still express is that West European societies may put on an increasingly open economic face, but the reality is that they still believe the USA one day will offer far more recognition and reward for their talents and entrepreneurship—if they can get there.

For both lower and higher end migrants, then, the hypothetical scenario that best applies to the outcome for East-West migration in Europe is hypothesis four – exploitative Europe – even if in their own minds it should resemble more the neo-liberal Europe of hypothesis one. The American dream – and its soiled reality – thus, does indeed still lie behind so many of the ideas driving the opening of the European economy, for all the emphasis placed in Europe on governance and the rational political management of the economy. Europeans may well ask whether this is the kind of society they want to see built in the name of economic growth and competitiveness—the mantra of the Lisbon Agenda (2000), that puts mobility and the liberalisation of labour markets at the heart of its strategy. In most major cities in the USA today, the faces likely to be flipping burgers, cleaning cars, tending gardens, or working as *au pairs* for young children are Latino; in Europe today, these same figures speak with Balkan or Slavic accents. There is perhaps one more irony built into to this apparently inevitable asymmetry between East and West, and the structural inequalities it reinforces. These new migrants may sometimes face hostility, but from the point of view of populist politicians, they are much more desirable than other, more visible, actual and potential immigrant populations. It might be speculated that, in the long run, West European publics are likely to be more comfortable with the scenario of getting used to Balkan and Slavic accents, rather than seeing black and brown faces in the same jobs, or (especially) hearing them speak the language of

Allah. There is indeed a racial and ethnic logic inherent in the EU enlargement process: borders to the East will be opened as they are increasingly rammed shut to those from the South. Perhaps the East can for now provide the population resources to tide Europe over in a time of big demographic change. Demography, though, has a sting in the tail. East Europeans may well be willing to move on a regional scale well beyond the reluctant numbers of West Europeans so tempted. But their birth rates, both under communism and after, are a not little different to some of the lowest ones in the West. East-West migration is thus unlikely to be a long term solution to the West's coming demographic crisis.

In an environment in which there are electoral gains to be had from talking tough on immigration, it is no surprise that most research on migration focuses on policies of immigration control or security. But, just as in the USA, much of this discussion is in fact a game of political 'smoke and mirrors' (Massey et al 2002), to mask just how little control governments or the EU have over migration and mobility trends, let alone the globalising international labour market. The underlying political economy of Europe, rather, is one that is not closing but *opening* borders to the East. Debates on immigration policy would therefore benefit from paying more attention to the demographic trends and labour market dynamics that underwrite the policies that politicians defend. As a first stop, they would do well to consider the ethnographic evidence amassed by those researchers closest to the ground where it is happening.

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