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The Lure of London: A Comparative Study of Recent Graduate Migration from Germany, Italy and Latvia

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right-wing press that tens or even hundreds of thousands would arrive when the transitional restrictions on the free movement of citizens from these two 2007 accession countries ended on 1 January 2014.

The debate over new arrivals provides a part of the context behind the study presented in this paper, which looks comparatively at the migration motivations and experiences of three highly educated young-adult groups within the London area. Other contextual framings include the increasing tendency for educated young adults to be geographically mobile within Europe for a variety of reasons; the attraction of the UK, and especially the London and South-East regions, in this evolving mobility dynamic; and the way in which these intra-EU migrations are driven both by political events such as EU enlargement, and by economic trends such as boom and crisis. We pay particular attention to the way in which the post-2008 economic crisis has led to enhanced migratory movements

surrounds. Based on interview narratives collected from 125 participants between the end of 2008 and August 2013, we compare how the German, Italian and Latvian interviewees articulate their motivations and experiences differently between these three national groups, one from another part of the

device for this comparative study, we find different articulations of this notion between the three groups under investigation. The Germans simply do not use this term when describing their migration to and experiences in the UK. For the Italians, it is less about the recent economic crisis and more to do with a profound structural crisis of graduate unemployment in Italy and the challenges of accessing a hierarchical

contributed the majority of A8 entrants, but Latvians and Lithuanians have also been important when controlled for population size of the home country. However, more recently, ONS data show that net migration from the EU to the UK doubled between the year ending in September 2012 (65,000) and that ending in September 2013 (131,000). This time the increase was driven by growth in work-
especially those on the southern periphery Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece where job opportunities, especially for new graduates, have shrunk and unemployment has risen. Whilst from a neoclassical economic perspective such international labour flows might be seen as a contribution to aggregate welfare and to the equilibration of spatially uneven work opportunities, some flows became extremely unbalanced. In its 2012 report on European population and migration, *The Guardian* found that, whilst there were around 550,000 Poles living in the UK, there were just 764 Britons in Poland.[1] And concerns were expressed at the scale of emigration of Bulgarian doctors, running at 500-600 per year, equivalent to almost the entire annual graduation of doctors from Bulgarian medical schools (Petkova 2014).

> Europeans have worked in
> hostility.[2]

> A new generation is on the move in Europe, migrating from the fringes of the continent in search of work. The Polish plumber ventured out when his country joined the European Union in 2004, followed a few years later by the Romanian fruit picker. Now it is the Irish graduate, the Spanish engineer and the Italian architect who are packing their bags. For the people of Eastern Europe, migration is a way of catching up with western incomes; for those from the crisis-hit southern and Celtic periphery, it is a means of escaping mass unemployment.[3]

It seems to be almost a matter of luck whether these new migrants get jobs commensurate with their qualifications and aspirations. Much depends on their English language fluency and the extent to which their qualifications university degrees and other professional accreditation are recognised and in demand in the UK. Certainly, as our interview evidence presented later in the paper shows, some came with jobs in hand, or quickly found them, in prestige sectors of the economy such as finance, marketing or academia. Others, and especially the more desperate recent arrivals whose job prospects back home are particularly bleak, are less lucky. They are constrained to take low-status jobs, notably in the hospitality and catering industry, which they either get stuck in, or use as a step towards something more stable, satisfying and remunerative.

Recent migration as an expression of core-periphery dynamics

Europe as being most severely
emigration of highly qualified younger workers. This leads us resurrect the core-periphery model of spatially uneven development as a structuring device to help to explain how these flows come about. -
the Latin American dependency school of the late 1960s which emerged as a counter-thesis to the modernisation or stages-of-growth theory which dominated much of the thinking about the development process in the early postwar decades. Whereas the Rostowian stages-of-growth thesis assumed or predicted that the less-developed countries of the world would or should move along the same development path as that mapped out by the more-developed countries (modernisation via industrialisation etc.), the dependency school argued that underdevelopment was a more-or-

orld. André Gunder

-West Europe etc.) feeding off
the resources (including migrant labour) drawn from the periphery, maintaining the latter in a state of dependency (Frank 1969; cf. Rostow 1960).

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[2] , *The Economist*, 16 November 2013.

[3] *The Economist*, 21 September 2013.

workers); the recession also impacts the evolution of newer flows from the A8 and A2 countries.[4]

ows, we envisage a hierarchy of centres/cores and peripheries, layered as follows:

a centre made up of the North-West European core countries of strong economic power

migration, and the work and other experiences of living in the core region of the UK. The samples drawn on for this paper are not particularly evenly matched in terms of numbers (39 Germans, 68 Italians and 18 Latvians) but we believe that they are sufficient to generate useful, if not conclusive, comparative data based on the thematic analysis of the narratives.[5] There is an approximate gender balance across all three groups, with a slight majority of females for the German and Latvian samples, and a slight majority of males for the Italians. Further methodological details and the conceptual framings relevant to each study will be introduced as necessary under each of the three case-studies, starting with the German one.

Germans in London: crisis what crisis?

The German case-study is the only one where the thesis from which it is drawn (Mueller 2013) was focused wholly on the subject-

nevertheless their experiences are highly relevant given their ubiquity in major European and global cities and their contribution to the urban economy and labour market. Whilst this is a relatively accurate portrayal of German young-adult graduates in London, there are two other

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usually multilingual, interculturally competent (at least within Europe) and highly mobile between key metropolitan locales such as London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Milan etc. The

British retired settler in rural France (Benson 2011; Hoggart and Buller 1995) or Tuscany (King and Patterson 1998). For Germans in London, the attraction is not the peaceful and beautiful landscape of the rural idyll, nor indeed the palm-fringed resorts of the Spanish islands and *costas* (, but the multicultural vibe of London with its cultural

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European migrations have shown (see for example Ryan and Mulholland 2014 on the French in London, or Scott 2006 on the British in Paris), migration is increasingly recognised as taking place for multiple, co-existing reasons the search for a more fulfilling life experience, work-life balance, environmental attractions, family and friendship considerations, and economic considerations too (since these are rarely completely irrelevant) may all (or some -making calculus.

Some of this complexity is reflected in the three migratory types that we observe amongst young Germans in London, based on their original migration motives, length of stay,

tively short distance and the availability of budget airlines make both home visits, and visits by friends from Germany, a frequent possibility. Indeed, in the eyes of many young Germans, a move to England, or intra-EU migration in general, is seen almost as internal migration, endorsing the once-in-a-lifetime migration; rather, it likely to be temporally limited. Even if the return, or the onward migration to somewhere else, does not actually happen, the mindset of a short-term move influences the mode of their migration, with them seemingly taking BT/F2 59

you if you are

o- I go

(Kirsten).

usually not planned as a career move. Indeed, for some of the migrants, their career p

which was below their qualifications yet readily available this was especially characteristic of the female interviewees. More important than direct career advancement (though this could occur upon return to Germany on the basis of greatly improved English) was the more general preference for gaining experience and adventure. The many participants who fell into this category want to be in London for a while yet are happy for a somewhat conditional existence, as a way of being in the new place that is not gag6(l)18(a)40 1 72.024 622.03 Tm[(o4A)

Other participants, on the other hand, were able to integrate business travel with visits [illegible] - internationally oriented careers. Typical of this group was Lasse, one of the older German participants (he was mid-30s at the time of the interview), who had been mobile as a student, studying far from his home town in Germany and taking a study-abroad semester, as well as spending short periods (a few weeks to a couple of months) in the US as part of his job working in London for an American company. He was back in Germany two or three times a month, for both private and business visits, often mixing the two, for instance staying the weekend with family or friends following a business trip on Thursday or Friday. When asked if he would mind cutting back, he said yes, he certainly would mind.

For the majority of German interviewees, then, connections with family and friends in Germany remained very important. This counter-balanced, to some extent, the general wish [illegible] [7] And yet, ideas about return, even for the bi-locals whose original intention and ongoing behaviour reflected a firm orientation to return, were often quite ambivalent. As Conradson and Latham (2005b) found in their study of New Zealanders in London, decisions to return are often postponed and hence made continuously more difficult and ambiguous: on the one hand the wish to carry out the original idea of return and the pull of expectations to do so from family and friends in Germany; on the other the gradual embedding within the new life, and the development of personal relationships, in London and the consequent disembeddedness from home, *Heimat*. Typical of the former circumstance was the case of Maria:

> anything holding me here. I have a job here, but it [illegible] k [illegible] stuck here.

Actually, *Heimat* [illegible] a word with multiple, and multi-scale, meanings (Blunt 2005; Blunt and Dowling 2006). [illegible] *zu Hause*, none saw it as their *Heimat*.[8] This latter term denoted the area or region in Germany where they had grown [illegible] *Heimat?* For me [illegible] place [illegible]

interview she said she actually did not spend much time there, as it got very boring for her. Similarly, when Kirsten was asked if she could see herself living back in Germany, she

l, and all my friends

similar feelings were expressed by Lasse:

Heimat

t quite right

i tively quickly

me.

the UK for the longer term (generally those with non-German partners and/or those who have become embedded in UK-based car

that, in Italy across the five years spanning the recession (2007-08 to 2012-13), both total unemployment and youth unemployment more or less doubled, youth unemployment reaching 38 per cent by 2012-13. In some regions in the South of Italy, such as Campania and Calabria, youth unemployment rates have reached 50 per cent and more.

The return of emigration from Italy and other countries of the Southern EU periphery reflects our earlier discussion of the structuring role of migration in European core-periphery dynamics, and in particular the way that this new wave of highly qualified emigrants is but the latest stage in a coherent historical model of Southern European migrations (King 2000). This model has passed through several phases: mass emigration in the late nineteenth century, early twentieth century, and the early postwar years; return migration in the 1970s and 1980s; followed by mass immigration from developing countries and, after 1990, from Eastern Europe. The renewed vulnerability of the Southern Eurozone countries has become dramatically apparent since the 2008 financial crisis: across Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Cyprus, growth has stagnated and unemployment, especially youth unemployment, has soared.[9] This has provoked serious debate in all these countries about economic strategies to move out of the crisis and about the seeming inevitability of the brain drain northwards. Here we make a few references to the unfolding of these debates in Italy.

First, there is an academic literature dating back at least until the early 2000s (Associazione Dottori di Ricerca Italiani 2001; Avveduto and Brandi 2004; Becker et al. 2004; Cucchiarato 2010; Di Pietro 2005; Morano-Foadi 2006; Nava 2009). What is perhaps most interesting from these studies is the realisation that an increasing trend towards the emigration of Italian graduates is not a recent phenomenon but dates back to the early 1990s, if not before. A variety of data sources deployed by the studies cited above demonstrates both an absolute and a relative growth in the emigration of young, highly qualified Italians for the past two decades.[10] Becker et al. (2004: 1) find a quadrupling of the share of graduates amongst total Italian emigrants during the decade of the 1990s. Italy was found to be unique

his time). Further evidence for a true brain drain effect comes from the simple statistic that there are eight times more recent Italian graduates living abroad than there are foreign graduates living in Italy (Becker et al. 2004: 25). Meanwhile, with regard to internal variations within Italy, Di Pietro (2005) used provincial-level data (there are 103 provinces in Italy) to demonstrate the effect of location: lower employment opportunities locally, or higher unemployment, do indeed encourage young graduates to migrate *but only if they are jobless* (the effect of local unemployment on those who have a job is neutral across the provinces).[11]

[9] Latest figures for early-mid 2014 show that the Italian economy has shrunk by 9 per cent over the past six years, i.e. since just before the economic crisis; youth unemployment has risen to 41.6 per cent overall, and to a staggering 68 per cent in Calabria. See reports in *The Observer*, 23 February 2014, *The Guardian*, 24 February 2014.

[10] Amongst the large datasets mined for these analyses were ISTAT (National Statistics Institute) data on the whereabouts of Italian graduates three years after graduation, the AIRE (Register of Italians Abroad) database maintained by the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as EUROSTAT data.

[11] *internal* migration, however.

Another key finding from these statistical and survey-based studies is that there is migration selectivity *within* the graduate population. Migration propensity is higher amongst those with top-class degrees, with postgraduate qualifications, and from the

Faris, too many economic resources are geared toward looking after older Italians, maintaining some of the highest pensions in Europe, while the country spends relatively little on housing, unemployment and childcare expenditures the young depend on to launch and develop their careers.

Unsurprisingly, these issues featured prominently in the two sets of interviews that were carried out by Conti (2012) and Scotto (2012). Arianna, aged in her mid-20s, gives a typical account:

> Because there is a socio-
> old society folded in on itself

Raccomandazione and mentalità

Two Italian words which recurred time and again throughout the Italian interviews were *raccomandazione* and *mentalità*

, do not succeed in conveying the true depth of meaning of the Italian words, which we explore with some further interview quotes below. Together these two keywords sum up the diagnosis of despair that young Italian graduates hold about their home country and particularly their life-chances there not just getting a decent graduate-level job, but also a whole host of related issues which combine to make what most people regard and aspire to when thinking about a full transition to adulthood and financial and family independence. These profound disenchantments with the way Italian society and the job market are

disaffection with the home country, which constitutes for many interviewees the main reason to migrate, has no parallel with the German case just considered. There are some similarities with the Latvian evidence, as we shall see, but also differences.

In one of the quotes given above, Veronica lamented that you needed a favours business licence, building permit, or almost anything of financial or symbolic value) is pervasive in Italy, especially, it is often claimed, in the South where such resources (above all, jobs) are scarcer than in the richer North. Although most jobs, business tenders, public works contracts etc. are required to be advertised by law, in practice everyone knows who will get the job or the contract the

make the decisions or who have the power to influence decisions. Hence, *raccomandazione* is

rightfully deserve. Rita summed up the situation perfectly:

> If you stay in Italy, the only way to get a job is through *raccomandazione*. When you go for a job, everyone tells you that you need a *raccomandazione.* If you stay in Italy and try to get work without a *raccomandazione* then you are a fool because you either make it your lif
> your parents until you are 50.

raccomandazione approaches the phenomenon from two angles. The

disagreed with the local values, with the

being situated in the north-eastern or Baltic periphery, and geopolitically, in that Latvia is a post-socialist as well as a post-

Underlying these emigration trends has been a reshaping (or rather, distortion) of Latvian society as one marked by increasing inequality between the aforementioned super-rich class benefiting from the marketisation of the post-socialist economy, and a kind of

been the driving forces behind the economic migration of Latvians from all parts of the country who now work in low-status jobs in the UK and Ireland, young graduate migrants are mainly drawn from the more wealthy families.

Low ceilings for high-flyers

Within the overall narrative arc of economic and personal crisis, there was constant reference to Latvia being a small peripheral country

and the other cultural. The economic arguments about smallness are well-known: economies of scale in production and marketing are limited, a
insufficiently specialised to absorb all the skills and specialism ations for rewarding jobs. The cultural arguments are perhaps less researched but equally relevant as framing motives for migration: the country is seen by its own inhabitants as small, provincial, conservative, culturally closed and prone to racism and homophobia. London is seen on the one hand as a financial, educational and employment powerhouse where jobs, incomes and educational opportunities are all way above what are available in Latvia; and on the other hand as an open, sophisticated, tolerant and culturally diverse metropolis. Yet this contrast is counter-balanced by another one drawn by some of the interviewees: between London as a huge city of dense population, noise and traffic; and Latvia which is quiet and relaxing and where, from Riga, a short drive takes you to the countryside or the seaside. Latvia is thus seen as a kind of base-place, a mooring to which one can periodically return to recharge batteries but not, for the foreseeable future, settle back for good; whereas London is seen either as the new, possibly permanent destination, or as a stepping-stone to other global centres like New York or Singapore, or perhaps, as mentioned by some participants, a move to Sweden or another Nordic country seen as closer of London and the peripherality of Latvia are well articulated in this following quote from Alex:

> I was working in [names bank, which went bust in the crisis], the salary was good and is the
>
> knew that in order to develop contacts I had to study at the London Business you have a
> network of your course-
> central place globally. My parents live in [names town, in the most remote Latvian

2007, then fell by a quarter during 2007-09, recovering by 18 per cent by the start of 2013. Unemployment mirrored these trends moving from 14 per cent in 2000 to 6 per cent by 2007, then 20 per cent in 2010, falling back to 11.4 per cent in mid-2013 (Blanchard et al. 2013: 1-2). Whilst the success of the recovery can be debated (see the argument over this between Latvian prime minister Valdis Dombrovskis and economist Paul Krugman quoted by Blanchard et al. 2013: 1), one of the accompaniments of the recovery (some would say, rather, an indicator of the failure of the recovery strategy) was large-scale emigration.

> between us we speak 12 or 13 languages. Language knowledge is so important here: you are appreciated if you speak

> There were many new things to get used to here, for example sharing flats. I had never done this before in Latvia, but here it is normal that professionals also share flats. There are many Latvian professionals in London and I share a flat with one of

The section of the interview where he stresses the prospects for self-improvement offered by being in London and working in an open professional environment runs as follows:

> I am trying to educate myself to prepare for further studies. For example, I attend free
>
> learn as much as possible. In Latvia I never had time for this, I was too busy with
>
> workplace I am currently at because I can learn a lot; I want to learn the maximum I
>
> grammar, you really have to be here.

In the final section we quote from, Reinis tells about keeping in frequent touch with Latvia through his transnational business trips, his prospects for return, and his other plans for the future.

> I am going often to Latvia; I try to combine when tickets are paid for by the company so I can go home for free.
> international; probably three or four days per week outside of Latvia, or at least several times a month. The worldview is so different here [in London], much wider.

the Latvian graduates in London do not send remittances. As we have noted, most of them come from wealthy backgrounds and some of them will have recei
supported by their parents whilst studying or setting themselves up in a career in England. Hence their support to Latvia is not via remittances but more through philanthropic contributions.

Again as we have noted above, part of the problem of the economic development of Latvia relates to the small scale of the country and its business environment. But, according to some interviewees, there are other problems, linked to culture (see the final remarks from Reinis, above), and the inability or uncertainty of the Latvian authorities on how to formulate a policy for maximising the potential of migrants to contribute to economic growth. For example, Armins, who worked in a London business consultancy, was critical of the Latvian state

> I think that Latvia does not use the potential it has [with its emigrants]. There are many, very smart, very talented and determined Latvians in London. They have studied in very good schools and are making millions for local and international companies. And many of them truly love Latvia, they would like to help as much as they can. But the state does not know, first, what to do with them, and, second, these people are usually very busy. But if Latvian state representatives would approach them individually, I think people would find some time to devote to Latvia, for common interests to develop Latvia. For example, we could help to draft an economic
> ere is the feeling that this is not
> needed in Latvia.

Other participants, who were mainly females, were more orientated to charity-led

privileged background, had first gone to England to see a friend who was studying at university in a town in Southern England. This visit prompted her to follow suit, so she studied intensively

educated, see themselves as distinct from Russians in Russia and able to integrate, at least at a pragmatic level, many aspects of Latvianness, without, however, fully embracing Latvian ure (2013: 308-309). One refuge from this cultural and identificatory dilemma is to resort to a wider regional, European or global identity, part of , nationalistic Latvia from progressive, open, m

th

of qualifications, including language barriers, from a higher-status job in the home country to a lower-status (but better-paid) job in the host country. These do not exhaust the list of possible transitions. Some German interviewees revealed instances a
to be able to find a job quickly and in the perspective of only staying one or two years in London. Another trajectory is a stepwise one, where the migrant initially accepts low-grade work whilst waiting for a better job to materialise, perhaps after language improvement and the acquisition of skills and experience. Latvian interviewee Ieva had to work for several months in a restaurant before getting her desired job working for an NGO in the humanitarian field. Whilst migrants are not the only graduates to suffer from the syndrome of brain waste or skills mismatch

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