



Globalising European Urban Bourgeoisies?

Rooted middle classes and partial exit
in Paris, Lyon, Madrid and Milan

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Abstract:

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Globalising European Urban Bourgeoisies?

Rooted middle classes and partial exit in Paris, Lyon, Madrid and Milan¹

European societies were and have remained mainly national societies, characterised among other things by strong territorialisation and the existence of networks of middle sized cities. How are European societies and cities evolving at a time of increasing globalisation?

Urban bourgeoisies are a long standing feature of European cities and societies. Their behaviour has traditionally had a strong impact on the urban fabric (think for example on gentrification or secession processes). As opportunities for mobility have become more widely available, the potential distortion of national hierarchies and the emergence of new cleavages and social differentiation processes have growingly attracted the attention of social scientists.

This book aims at empirically testing the role of urban upper middle classes in the transformations experienced by contemporary European societies, linking our analysis to the debate on the emergence of a transnational bourgeoisie. In this book we argue (and try to provide empirical evidence to prove) that these groups are becoming at the same time more cosmopolitan AND more locally rooted. European urban upper middle classes have to be analysed in relation to their strategies to gain resources from the international world, and to escape the constraints of national society, while remaining part of it (we call this “partial exit”).

MEANWHILE, they are also part of urban societies, remain deeply rooted at the local level, and develop strategies to mix with other social and ethnic groups in some domains, while staying away and increasing distance in some others. Beyond simple analysis of secession or gentrification, this book makes sense of this “partial exit” logic both from the national and from the urban point of view.

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We argue that European urban middle classes are becoming more mobile, partially “exiting” from the national society, and we bring evidence of this (friends, networks, children, jobs, holidays, values). They also invest resources in the cities and neighbourhoods where they live, they only look for secession or gated communities strategies in certain contexts, but remain in control of the social and spatial distance they want to keep in relation to diverse social and ethnic groups.

- Is a new European managerial service class in the making in European metropolis in relation to European/global processes?
- Is there some pattern of social differentiation emerging, is this segment of the population adopting “exit” or “partial exit” strategies in respect to the nation state?
- Is this segment of the population adopting “exit” or “partial exit” strategies emerging from urban practices and attempts to “exit” from the urban fabric?

For more than an hundred years now European societies and cities have been strongly national-centred, and were increasingly integrated within a national state and society. Following Weber, Bartolini suggests that the making of national societies relied on two main mechanisms: the closure of borders, and the making of interdependences within each society. The first mechanism aimed at preventing external influence to play a role in the making of the national social and political order: national elites tried to prevent transnational forces like religious organizations (Catholics in France for instance), international socialist movements or international capitalists, to play a structuring role in the national society. The second mechanism aimed at creating interdependence between the different social groups (classes and status groups), since this greater degree of social cohesion reinforced the feelings of belonging into the nation. Using the famous Hirshman’s framework of “exit, voice and loyalty” Bartolini continues to argue that making different social groups more interdependent was a way to raise voice and loyalty in each national society, at the expense of exit. Within this framework, cities were progressively integrated within the national political order.

At present times, national societies and nation states continue to play a crucial role, but as many social scientists have argued, increasing mobility and changing scales have strongly eroded those two mechanisms. Transnational influences are increasingly salient in many societies, and groups and individuals have more opportunities to be mobile at different scales. This means that social groups and individuals within the nation state are less interdependent, and they can more easily decide to choose the exit strategy, instead of that of voice or loyalty. To what extent this increased mobility and horizontal interactions are destabilizing existing national European societies? Who are the leading groups in those processes, how do they operate, which are the mechanisms of change? Do we perceive the emergence of global or European elites guiding this process?

European cities are interesting case studies to explore these issues because of their long term history, and the relative lack of mobility of their populations. Indeed, year after year, the European Commission faces a major disappointment. Despite all its efforts to promote the free movement of EU citizens as part of the single market for capital, goods, services and persons, the statistics keep showing that Europeans do not move that much: only 1.5 to 2% of Europeans move each year to another country, a

proportion quite stable on time. Mobility conceived this way seems to be a marginal feature of the European society in the making. Europeans do not seem to be born to run.

But perhaps this is only one way of looking at “mobility”. Some social theorists, notably John Urry (2000), have proposed – not without controversy – the need to reconceptualise sociology away from the traditional approaches of *spatial mobility* and *social mobility*, but in terms of a much broader range of mobilities that would characterise late modern societies under increasingly globalised conditions. Urry suggests that the old idea of the nation-state-society is dead, and sociology should, in this account, start focusing on movement, mobilities, contingency, flux in particular. He aims at reinventing “sociology beyond societies”, the title of his book, to escape from the national territory bias of sociology in favour of an emphasis on circulations, flux, and mobilities. Other global theorists emphasise that flows, transactions, and the strategies of individuals and collective actors are being reshaped directly on a global scale, not necessarily a European one. Anthony Giddens and Arjun Appadurai, for instance, suggest the making of a global society without any reference to a distinctive Europe. These authors have moved their thinking beyond both the old nation-state-society unit, and the European Union. Cultural practices, images and representations, social movements (especially global movements such as environmental and human rights movements), and of course capitalism itself (or at least the vanguard forces of these processes) are said to become more and more disembedded from the nation state. To these authors, the global scale becomes a new level for structuring major cultural and social conflicts of interest.

It is possible that these multiple mobilities and the global scale might indeed be a growing feature of the everyday lives of European citizens without them needing to physically move residence, or live and work in another country. These ideas are interesting avenues for empirical research. However, instead of focusing solely on mobility, we argue that in order to assess social change related to mobility, it may be necessary to study both the dynamics of mobility *and* those of rootedness. This means looking both at the mobility experiences of individuals, and at the fixity at the place of residence (states, cities and neighbourhoods). In our work we strongly argue that it is important to look at fixity and rootedness, both at the national and at the urban level, in order to understand social change in contemporary European societies.

Moreover, the rise of various types of mobility is not affecting *all* individuals or social groups within nation states with the same intensity. Empirical studies stress that the ones experiencing mobility, and taking advantage of it, are mainly the upper social strata of the population, an élite of managers and professionals with economic, educational and social capital, quite often described by the magazines as a hypermobile elite spending its time shuttling between global cities and airport v.i.p. lounges (only for very frequent flyers). As it already was the case during the rise of the nation state and the initial stages of capitalist development, a new elite made of urban social groups within upper or upper middle classes may mobilise and take advantage from these mobilities to challenge existing national elites, to push for different modernisation projects, and to promote their own ambitions and interests. A new process of social differentiation would be in the way. Jacques Lagroye (1997: 100) suggests that the making of nation states goes hand in hand with “the appearance of social groups with new resources, tending (...) to organize and to promote their own interests in order to assert their ambitions in relation to the traditional (national) power-

holding élites, and thus able to act as support and stimulant for “modernizing” activity”. To some authors, this new highly mobile elite of managers and professionals is forming a new transnational capitalist class playing a similar political role to that pointed out by Lagroye (see Robertson, 2000 for a review). Leslie Sklair, starting from a Marxist perspective, and analysing the impact of global capitalism, has explored the globalization of what he calls the *transnational capitalist class*. He suggests that the globalization of the economy has led to the emergence of a new social class, a highly mobile global elite, which can move countries, organise itself across and around borders, and thus avoid the constraints of life and work in national societies. He defines it as “an international bourgeoisie: a socially comprehensive category, encompassing the entrepreneurial elite, managers of firms, senior state functionaries, leading politicians, members of the learned professions ... plus the [leaders of] media, culture, consumption” (1995: 62; 2001). This new global elite speaks English, and has mastered the codes that operate within Anglo-American firms, universities, and consultancies. It is developing a common global culture and particular consumption practices. Their global society is apparently organised less on the basis of major conflicts, and more on the basis of professional networks, with norms and models of excellence driven from within the professions (by consultants, legal specialists, managers, university academics, doctors, accountants, bankers, and advertising executives). Within this framework, the international bodies (from professional associations to the World Bank) would give their “good practice” seal of approval, or else shoot barbed remarks at those who do not play according to the new rules. Their discourse on globalization and its benefits appears to be central to the legitimating of these processes, and to their global domination as a social group. To put it more accurately, Sklair argues that the discourse on globalization establishes the “hegemony” of this new social class, which is principally a transatlantic bourgeoisie, linking Europe and North America.

And yet, despite all the important transformations linked to globalisation, this global society is, as yet, still more potential, more virtual, than real, more a stage in which these actors interact, than a clearly defined system. Moreover, in terms of empirical research this hypothesis to apprehend social change in contemporary advanced societies has been much more theorised than investigated.

An alternative hypothesis may state that a regional European society might be more advanced than the global one when looked at in the same terms. European societies, which share some common and distinctive features, might be more Europeanised than globalised in terms of the social organisation and behaviours of their elites and middle classes. Is a new global bourgeoisie emerging? Or is it a European elite or middle class in the course of forming, which could gain influence in cities and to some extent reinforce the discontinuity between territories, perhaps giving birth to a new Europe of cities? The reason for this to be the case would be Europe’s distinctiveness as a region. In his historical social theory of Europe, Göran Therborn (1985), stresses the distinctive European trajectory towards modernity based upon industrialisation, a strong working class, and the welfare state. Moreover, the territorialisation of European societies differs globally for two main reasons: the tradition of stable peasants on their land (Mendras 1997), and the long history of medium size cities, two elements that have been historically important in the understanding of the particularities of European society within wider global processes (Bagnasco and Le Galès 2000). The distinctiveness of European cities has thus been central to the history of the continent since the middle ages (Kaelble 1990). Max Weber’s famous analysis of the occidental city already highlighted this point quite well, and it has been used by numerous historians to demonstrate the long term

stability of European urban structure, interconnecting cities across the continent through trade and interaction. They underline the importance of its numerous middle size cities, particularly those running through the north-to-south heartland of the continent from the Low Countries to Northern Italy, a structure still important today (see Dunford et al. 2002, Le Galès 2002, Kazepov, 2005). The order of modern Europe has thus largely emerged out of the developing relationship of this longer standing structure of cities with the later emergent nation-state territorial units, a process famously studied by Charles Tilly (1990). In this history, cities have always retained a certain independence from nation states, a historical feature of Europe that might be returning in a world where nation states are, at least partly, eroding.

The other distinctive European element is the role of longstanding urbanised *bourgeoisies*, and their heavy influence in these same cities. Historically, upper and middle class dynamics have proved quite essential to understand European societies: the rise of cities was also the story of the rise of the bourgeoisie in European cities. Against the feudal order, *burghers* (merchants, bankers, artisans, shopkeepers and lawyers) were the new actors of modern European urban expansion and of cities' autonomy from the old order. This bourgeoisie of early mercantile capitalism gradually invented itself as a social class and status group with its own interests, but also with its own ways of life, consumption behaviours, values, ideas, and organizations. It put in place distinctive ideas of law, used strategic marriages, and saw the formation of clans and rivalries between great families trying to monopolize power, prestige and wealth. Social hierarchies were established through reversals of fortune, alliances with overlords, or the acquisition of positions of power within the guild or the commune (Weber 1981: 315). Is something similar going on today in Europe and beyond Europe?

Empirical research questions can be framed as follows :

- The rise of transnational mobilities and/or transactions may produce *social differentiation processes* and play a role in re-structuring the social order and the social hierarchies within national societies. Can we find a strata of upper or middle classes in European cities that take particular advantage from these mobilities putting into practice strategies of “exit” or “partial exit”?
- If so, is there a distinctive European (as opposed to global) *scale* to these “exit options”? Could a new European elite across European cities be in the making linked to European integration processes?

The hypothesis of the book: the “exit” and “partial exit” strategies.

One way in which some upper and middle classes may be promoting their interests and challenging the existing elite could be by putting into practice “exit” or “partial exit” strategies, both at the national and at the urban level. This conceptualisation, as we have already mentioned, goes back to Hirschman's framework. One way individuals can choose to “exit” from their nation state is to physically migrate, but this remains a relatively rare and extreme option, involving many costs (even in a Europe with all the barriers to free movement down) as Favell has shown in his study on the “Eurostars” (2008). Alternatively they can choose to “partially exit” in a variety of ways: in terms of consumption, friendships, job strategies, housing, children's socialisation and education, or financial investment. Thus, individuals belonging to these social groups may for instance choose to send their children to an international school or university (an “exit” option), or to avoid national public services (ie: health services), but to use some other

services or to participate in national political associations. Clearly, the aggregation of these personal choices has very important effects at the collective level, affecting the way public services function. The opportunity for “partial exit” allows these individuals to (re)-negotiate their own position within the national social structure, for example, to concurrently protest against or escape high level of taxation, locate property or income outside the nation state, and actively campaign for a reform of the educational or health systems. Individuals can also choose to “exit” from one dimension and not from another, creating a complex mix of choices which has to be analysed at different *scales*: local/urban, national, European, or transnational/global. Individuals can, for example, “exit” from national public health systems but engaging (voice) in the local *place*, being it the city or the neighbourhood. As it is well known from the urban literature, urban elites partly define who they are by *place* (the street, the neighbourhood, the district, the city, or the urban region) they choose to live in. One way to “exit” from the local level is to choose to live in segregated places (ie: gated communities).

Conceptualised in this way, some social groups (upper middle classes and middle classes) within cities have a certain capacity for “exit”, which can be exercised either against the city or against the national society of which it is an integral part. In contrast, other groups have neither the resources, nor the potential, to escape their city or their district. Education, mobility, travel, occupational networks, and various social bonds give the former the possibility of “partial” (or temporary) “exit” from the social constraints associated with public life in a city. In order to understand the dynamics of change (mobility and fixity), we thus cross-reference the possible “exit” strategies from national society with urban “exit” strategies.

In the following diagram we refer to “exit” strategies from national society as the transnational dimension, and to “exit” strategies from the urban fabric as the urban dimension. “Exit” strategies are defined here on the basis of the empirical material collected during the interviews conducted in this research and in relation to: social networks, mobility, residential choices, job career, every day consumption practices, values and attitudes.

	Transnational dimension	
Urban dimension	Transnational	Not transnational
“Exit”	1. Nomads/ Barbarians	2. Exit from the urban fabric, not rooted in transnational networks (Immobiles)
“Voice”	3. Rooted both in the urban fabric and in transnational networks	4. Rooted in the urban fabric and not in transnational networks

This simple diagram gives rise to four potential social profiles. In one extreme we can find the “*Nomads/Barbarians*” who are very mobile, interact at the transnational level, do not invest on the urban fabric and adopt exit strategies also at the national level. This profile recalls the “New Barbarians” described by R. Angel (2000) referring to young and aspiring middle class high tech independent workers who would take advantage of collective goods and services wherever they are, but avoid investing in any long term resources, and go private and temporary for as many services as they can. At the other extreme of the diagram we find the “*Immobiles*” who are anchored on their local context, do not have “exit” strategies, and do not play on different scales. This diagram will be extensively used to define the profiles of individuals we interviewed.

What we strongly stress in our work is that it is essential to bring together the dynamics of “partial exit” within the urban fabric on the one hand (i.e., the internal dimension) and those of “partial exit” from the national society (external dimension) in order to understand the dynamics of social change. Within this framework, we consider the question of whether these “exit” options are particularly European in cause or effect, or rather only a local manifestation of a new *global* ordering of elites, the rise of a *transnational capitalist class* that is leading and benefiting most from the expansive direction *globalisation* took during the last decade.

Between rootedness in urban life and international mobility: the dynamics of contemporary middle class formation.

Some sociologists and human geographers have traditionally addressed these issues in terms of the dynamics of urban upper and middle classes. Thus, historically, the upper and middle classes in Europe have been considered to have a strong capacity to choose where they live. More than a century ago, for example, English middle classes left urban industrial centres to live in residential suburbs. Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot’s work on France (1989, 2000) (which conceptualise the notion of “elites” more narrowly than us) identified the “spatial stamp” of the bourgeoisie: a way of building and organizing “good districts” in cities, especially the largest ones. The mutual reinforcement in spatial terms enables this particular social class to deploy effective inheritance and reproduction strategies. As this authors point out: “Spatial segregation, pushed to the extreme, is in fact an aggregation, the choice of a social group, of a class, through which it is expressing its awareness of the group’s deep community of interests” (2000: 54). This point is also stressed in Savage and Butler’s research on the British middle classes (2003), particularly in relation to schooling and educational choices for children (see also Zunz et al 2002, Bagnasco, 2008).

Again, European cities differ significantly from other world regions (particularly the US) on this respect. Historically, because of the special role of the city centre in European cities, the most privileged social strata (that is, the cultural, political, and economic elites) remained living in city centres in most countries, with the clear exception of the UK which, historically, has the most pronounced *suburbanisation* (or “exurban”) processes. These groups maintained and reproduced their presence, and accumulated economic, social, cultural, and political capital using this spatial centrality. European elites and middle classes have thus not systematically deserted the centres of old European cities (as they did historically in

the US), and their urban presence has indeed become more pronounced again since the 1980s, as is shown in the booming literature on gentrification (i.e., Butler, 2005).

New groups of managers and professionals (i.e., upper middle classes) have generally followed the same logic, but they have settled less systematically in the centre, also moving to residential suburbs. In most European cities it is easy to distinguish those suburban local communities where there are concentrations of well-off households, including the richest. In Northern cities (for example, Scandinavian countries) or Southern cities (i.e., in Italy) the phenomenon was initially limited, but it has gained momentum in recent years. It is more common in Germany and France. Areas of suburban houses or peri-urban developments and small, ethnically and socially homogeneous residential towns, largely of owner-occupiers, have developed on the periphery of cities everywhere. These benefit from the two movements of urban growth and sprawl. Horizontal dispersal has gradually affected European cities, but has not generally led to the decline of city centres. Good districts and residential suburbs are also visible in the biggest cities because there are more socially powerful households there (particularly in capital cities, close to government the media, and the institutions that represent national culture) but most European cities continue to display this trait (Pinol, 2002)

In the European context, then, we now see parallel developments in cities: continuous *embourgeoisement*, that is the renewed investment by upper and upper middle classes in historical bourgeois neighbourhoods close to city centres, in connection with new financial and corporate districts; *gentrification*, as middle classes push the working class out in central neighbourhoods; and (to some degree) *suburbanisation*, the making of more or less segregated upper and middle class communities, including even “gated communities” of the kind now common in the US. Making sense of those different dynamics, identifying what David Lockwood used to call “the urban seeking” versus the “urban fleeing” middle classes (1995), seems to us a particularly fruitful way of understand shifting inequalities and processes of social differentiation.

The distinctive contribution we aim at making in this book is to bring an urban and spatial dimension into mainstream sociology’s understanding of social class. On reflection, this ought to be essential considering how territorialised European societies in fact are. In various works the English sociologist Mike Savage, following earlier work by urban sociologists Ray Pahl or Herbert Gans, identified what he called the “missing spatial dimension” of class analysis in the UK, in particular in the social stratification literature described by Favell and Recchi (2009). Within urban sociology, numerous studies on gentrification and suburbanisation (in the UK, USA, and Australia in particular) identified socio-spatial dynamics of social mobility, exclusion or inequalities in these terms (Atkinson, Bridge, 2005). In France, the dynamics of middle and lower middle classes working in the public sector were also shown to be deeply rooted within particular types of regions and cities (OCS, 1987). The local analysis of class is also relatively well rooted in the Italian tradition (Bagnasco, Negri, 1994, Bagnasco 2008).

In somehow different research projects Savage, Butler and their colleagues have emphasised this spatial dimension of class, in particular for middle classes. Coming back on Savage latest work, Butler (2005) synthesises the argument as follows:

« In constructing their argument about 'elective belonging', Savage and his colleagues note (following a long tradition in Sociology, e.g. Goldthorpe, Lockwood et al. 1969) that as societies become more complex and mobile, individuals become more privatised and that globalisation is leading to greater social differentiation. Within the differentiated social fields (work, leisure, residence, friendship) that their respondents operate across, they claim that 'residential space is a key arena in which respondents define their social position' (p. 207) – noting that it is the greatest fixity in relation to other fields in terms of defining one's sense of 'social location' that allows access to other fields (work, culture and crucially education). (...) Savage suggests that it is this sense of 'elective belonging' by which people 'manage' the link between the forces of a global economy and the need for individual belonging at a time when the cultural associations of occupational class have all but disappeared for most of the population ».

We are not following Savage's hard line (2005) which tends to suggest, at times, that residence choices are the uppermost mark of class distinction, and occupation is becoming irrelevant. Rather, we seek to combine occupation and residency in the analysis of class, taking on board the lessons of urban sociology. For upper middle classes groups, their status often results from both their occupation (either defined by a type of employment or more broadly by a professional community) and a residential choice or trajectory. We are following Savage in the hypothesis that the differentiation of spaces for interaction opens the field of the possible for individuals, in terms of belonging and of negotiating their involvement in a given space. Individuals are to some extent able to choose or negotiate their belonging to one political or social space or another, and their degree of investment and interaction. Mobility and individualization open the way to logics of choice. Reframing this issue within our argument, this means that the higher degree of freedom in choosing where to leave, to shop, or to send children at school, in playing life at different scale levels, makes "exit" or "partial exit" strategies easier.

These "exit" or "partial exit" strategies in the different dimensions of leisure, work, sociability or education for children cross-reference to residential space choices. Savage et al. rightly claim that residence has the greatest fixity in relation to the other dimensions in terms of defining one's sense of "social location". Indeed, it is this fixity that often allows access to other dimensions that might be mobile. This insight is particularly important in allowing us to go beyond the classic opposition between rooted "locals" and mobile "cosmopolitans", re-elaborating these categories according to our framework (Merton 1957).

Mobile but yet rooted in cities, the upper middle classes as part of a virtual global society.

Our empirical findings suggest that respondents belonging to upper middle classes in Paris, Lyon, Madrid and Milan feel part of a virtual global society, but the organisation of their life is strongly territorialized within their neighbourhoods. Most of them had some experience of mobility, and the great majority of them is very mobile; they travel a lot (although not that much) and they have extensive networks of friends and families close to home. Those who have some long term mobility living in a foreign country are happy with the experience, yet happy to come back where they were before this. Those who are ready to move tend to favour a limited international experience before coming back, and there is still a good deal of managers and engineers with no mobility experience at all. For these reasons, they cannot be considered “nomads” and even less so “barbarians”, as they keep a strong attachment to their residence place where their families and friends live. The first cell of our diagram remains actually quite empty.

Our results suggest that the idea of “partial exit” makes some sense though. A good deal of our respondents spend some time and resources in foreign countries, they keep friends there, and have strong views on the making of a virtual global society (although this applies more to their children than it does actually to them). By contrast, they remain profoundly rooted in their country and their city, while simultaneously feeling strongly European. These results confirm the analysis that Europe is still comprised of profoundly territorialised societies.

The internationalisation of the groups we studied has a distinctive Western-centric bias, mostly European, but also directed towards the U.S. The density of interactions within specifically European networks of friends, or mobility between European cities, is rather strong. As it is well known, those groups see themselves with strong European glasses. However, from the point of view of languages, education, and media, their belonging to a European society is somehow limited.

Finally, our analysis unsurprisingly shows strong differences between groups in different cities and countries. National social structures, of course, still matter. But there is a blurring effect introduced by Europe. For example, the engineers and managers we interviewed in Paris display a distinctively more international pattern, which is likely to spread to other European cities. Across all cases, elements of a European upper middle class in the making are appearing, in particular among younger generations, and especially in the strategies developed regarding their children. Down the road, it may be this aspect of the new strategies of mobility used by upper middle classes in European cities that could have the deepest impact.

Operationalisation: a comparison of upper middle classes in European cities.

This research focuses on the upper middle classes as the key group at the core of the social/spatial class dynamic identified above. Within this category, different social groups coexist in terms of economic, financial, human and social capital, and thus in terms of status and prestige. This variety is to be found both within countries and across them. Classic sociological research centred on the work of John Goldthorpe has identified some of these groups as those which rose massively in Western societies from the 1960's

onwards: professionals, managers, engineers, and so on, with the debate focusing on whether they can be grouped together as a so-called *service class* or not (i.e., Goldthorpe, 1982; Esping Andersen, 1993; see also Butler and Savage (1995) or Martin (1998) for an excellent discussion of this in terms of the British middle class).

When undertaking comparative research, certain compromises have to be made in order to identify comparable populations, even when the sample is not statistically representative as in this case. Two steps were thus followed in our research: 1) identifying a social and statistical category which referred to the same position within the labour market structure in the three countries chosen as case studies (France, Italy and Spain); 2) within these national categories, identifying some further, more strictly defined criteria.

In the French context, the upper middle class mainly comprises the social (and statistical) category of "*cadres supérieurs*". A well-known literature exists in France about *cadres* (i.e., Boltanski 1982; Groux 1982; Bouffartigues 2001), though much less on *cadres supérieurs*. From a sociological point of view *cadres* are not defined only by their education or job, but rather by a status: they have a separate trade union that negotiates their wages and labour conditions, and their pensions are managed by specific organisations distinct from other workers. From the statistical point of view, INSEE (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques*) classifies *cadres supérieurs* in the "*professions intellectuelles supérieures*", which includes both *cadres* and professionals (i.e., consultants, lawyers, doctors, etc.). In the Italian and Spanish contexts, the profile of *cadres supérieurs* or *service class* as referred to, respectively, in France or Britain does not have the same social meaning. In Italy, the concept is closer to the social and statistical category of "*dirigenti*" (Ricciardi, 2004), as they have their own association, trade union organization and pension funds, exactly as in France. In Spain, the word *cadres* was brought in under the pressure of multinational companies (*cuadros and ejecutivos*) during the last two decades, but there is no exact equivalent statistical category.

Given the lack of homogeneity of the social and statistical categories, we narrowed our research to two subgroups identified as particularly meaningful comparatively: managers and engineers working as employees.

The second step consisted in identifying some stricter, common criteria for these two chosen subgroups. Three criteria were thus retained: 1) level of education, selecting individuals with at least a university degree, most often at master's level; 2) autonomy at work, meaning the capacity to manage time, and the contents of work; 3) responsibility at work, for example, coordinating a team or deciding upon the careers and salaries of other workers. All interviews carried out in this research were with individuals who fulfilled these criteria.

Selection of cities and local contexts.

In order to explore the question of multiple mobilities, and the articulation of lifestyle strategies at different territorial levels in Europe, dynamic metropolitan urban regions were the most appropriate locations for the research. In line with the literature on globalisation and global cities, Paris and London seemed obvious, indeed unavoidable, choices as European global cities. Given the existing studies, discussed above, of Tim Butler and colleagues in London, we could focus the attention of new work on Paris, drawing on their published London material to contrast our results (2003). Meanwhile our selection of Lyon, Madrid and Milan represent dynamic, relatively large and international European cities, although they do not display quite the same global features of Paris and London. Our selection thus contributes to understanding whether there is any difference between the largest urban regions such as London and Paris and other European cities, something which have been emphasized by the globalisation literature.

Within each city, research was planned in four neighbourhoods, with thirty interviews to be conducted in each neighbourhood. The choice of neighbourhoods was based on two criteria: location and social structure. One basic puzzle of our research is the extent to which respondents prefer to live within or outside the city, that is, the extent to which we can identify the “urban seeking” versus “urban fleeing” profiles. The classic centre-suburbs dichotomy discussed in the literature raises the question of whether there exist differences or similarities in respondents’ strategies vis-à-vis their adoption of exit or partial exit strategies in the two cases. For this reason, two neighbourhoods within the limits of the city and two outside the city in the residential suburbs were selected. The other variable orienting the selection of the neighbourhoods was social structure, as traditionally discussed in the urban sociology literature. In each metropolitan context, we thus identified two neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of managers and engineers, and two neighbourhoods with a more mixed social composition, one each in the city centre and in suburbs, respectively².

For each metropolitan city, then, we have a table with four cases: one highly homogenous neighbourhood in the city centre and one highly homogeneous in the suburbs; one neighbourhood with mixed population in the city centre and one with mixed population in the suburbs.

Construction of the questionnaire.

² The selection of neighbourhoods in Paris, for example, was based on the remarkably precise analysis and classification carried out by Edmond Preteceille (2006) on the social composition of the small statistical units comprising neighbourhoods. In the Milan case, the selection was based on the ecological analysis of Jonathan Pratschke (2007).

The hypotheses and related questions elaborated in our research could not be examined through existing data-sets because they do not include indicators of exit or voice and, have thus not identified information about potential European social classes in formation. Those data-sets do not provide information about the motivations, strategies and interactions of individuals in specific situations and places either. One distinctive feature of this research is precisely the importance attributed to the concept of *place*, represented here by the urban dimension in each urban location. Our study adopts a micro-level perspective, looking at the individual experiences, strategies, motivations, values and narratives of managers and engineers living in the four cities included in our comparison.

A total of 120 semi-structured in depth interviews were carried out in each city, so we therefore work with a data base of 480 interviews. The interviews were based on a long semi-structured questionnaire which included both closed multiple choice questions, and open questions, allowing interviewees to express their ideas on specific issues. Even in multiple choice questions, interviewees had the possibility to elaborate on their answers or on the reasons of their choice. This means that interviews were quite long for questionnaire standards, lasting an average one hour and a half. The general approach is thus predominantly qualitative, and the sample of interviewed managers and engineers is not intended to be statically representative of their specific group of reference at large. And yet, the figures provided by the data are quite large so we are able to make quantitative measurements which give us an idea of the importance of the phenomena examined.

This methodology is actually comparable to that employed in the studies of Butler and Robson in London (2003), and by Savage and his colleagues in Manchester (2005). In our research the interview grid is a bit more rigid, with the issues already pre-defined, although questions are inspired by the aforementioned studies. Our questionnaire was structured around five themes: 1) working career; 2) residential trajectory; 3) formal and informal social relations; 4) daily practices (i.e., use of city and neighbourhood services and neighbourhood, cultural consumption practices, frequency of going out, where and with whom, etc.); 5) representations (attitudes and values using the classical survey questions of the European Social Survey and Eurobarometer).

It is worth briefly detailing how questions were constructed for these five themes. Concerning respondents' *working career*, the information collected was rather limited — this was not the core of the research. Attention though was focused on three elements: the structural characteristics of the company the managers belonged to (i.e., public or private; national, foreign or multinational; sector; size); the working conditions of the managers (e.g. working hours; the concrete functions carried out during a working day; the foreigner partners or clients they dealt with; the possession of a company car); and finally the most important steps in the respondents' working career with a special focus on experiences abroad. Despite the common economic criteria used to select interviewees, heterogeneity in working experiences and conditions is still relatively high within our sample—not only among different European cities, but even within the same city. Much depends on the size of the company and its ownership. Managers working for large multinational companies are more likely to have similar paths with experiences abroad, even though of different lengths. This relative homogeneity is particularly obvious for the younger generation (under 35), which shares comparable foreign experiences either as students or as managers—most often both.

To investigate *residential trajectory*, attention was focused on the following issues: the reasons for the choice of the neighbourhood where interviewees lived, where they used to live before, feelings about their neighbourhood and about the metropolitan area they live in. The information collected provides indicators to understand and test the hypothesis of exit or partial exit.

Examining *networks* of friends and families, and where these are located, is crucial to understanding the dynamics of internationalisation – and Europeanization in particular – considering both the extent to which these networks remain national and local, and the extent to which they are transnational. This information clearly brings material to test our two main hypotheses. The more the interviewees have interconnected European social networks and homogeneous relations in terms of economic, education and social characteristics, the stronger may be the evidence of the formation of a European class—or at least a class in itself to use Marxian terminology. Furthermore, the more the interviewees have a European and international social network, the more they are likely to organise their life on different scales and can put into practice exit, or partial exit, strategies. To investigate relational networks, four elements were considered in the questionnaire: friendship; neighbourhood relations; the hierarchical positions in the respondents' network; and relations and exchanges within families. The collected information does not allow for a full profile of the respondents' social networks, but it does provide an idea of the sociability of the respondents and their degree of embeddedness or disembeddedness from the local context (Savage et al., 2005), bringing further elements to the partial exit hypothesis. The networks based questions also take into consideration effective participation in local, national, European or transnational associations and political parties, initiatives and public services. The answers to these questions further contribute to the understanding of the strategies of exit or partial exit. For instance, a disinvestment in national policy and from political parties or associations can bring some elements towards the exit strategy hypothesis.

The analysis of *daily practices* adds other important pieces of information. Special attention was paid to the European or international dimension of media exposure (e.g., watching foreign TV channels, listening to foreign radio, reading foreign newspapers) and travel practices (e.g., how many times they fly per month, where and for how long; how many journeys abroad in the last year for professional and non professional reasons, where and for how long, etc). Within this section, attention was also paid to the strategies for their children's education, for example: the choice of private or public school; national or international schooling and why, where the school is located; foreign languages studied; other foreign study experiences. Through this information, it was possible to understand how much the interviewees still trust public institutions at the national level, or prefer to find their own educational solutions. This, clearly, is an important indicator of exit strategies, where interviewees can explain their choices, and possibly their exit or non exit options, taking into account the local, national and international levels—which might depend on the quality of the national educational system, and the local quality of schools in particular neighbourhoods.

Finally, we had a series of questions on the representation of society, Europe, globalisation, political values and attitudes which we mainly replicated from European surveys.

Different sources and mechanisms were used to identify and contact with potential respondents, according to the local context examined: we drew upon alumni associations, lists of former students from universities or *grandes écoles*, public lists of engineers, and associations of managers and engineers, as well as basic door to door sampling technique, or visiting schools where respondents might have children.

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