

Acknowledgements

When we are older and talk to our grandchildren, how will we describe the age in which we lived? Perhaps we shall say that we saw the collapse of the Berlin wall and the almost simultaneous – and perhaps not unrelated – disappearance of century-old borders dividing nation states in Europe. EU citizenship and EU enlargements – offering the inherent possibility of unrestricted geographical mobility within an expanding Union – have transformed Europe forever. The notion of a frontierless continent would have been a utopia only a generation before us. Still, we have had the good fortune to experience it. The free movement of EU citizens is the immediate and most visible sociological consequence of this political and peaceful (r)evolution – arguably the noblest, bravest and most popular achievement of the process of European integration so far. The human dimension of this phenomenon is the focus of this book and the project it presents.

We started thinking and talking about the book in the gloomy Christmas of 2001, over a telephone line between Madrid (Ettore) and Los Angeles (Adrian). Ettore was about to submit a comparative research proposal to the European Commission to carry out a quantitative-oriented study of moving Europeans, while Adrian was in the middle of his own ethnographic investigation of the same groups of people in Amsterdam, London and Brussels. We became aware of each other's converging interests through Damian Tambini, another former classmate of ours from a place that was the seedbed of this common focus – the Department of Social and Political Sciences of the European University Institute, Florence – in the early 1990s. Eventually, the proposal was generously funded by the European Commission within the scope of its Fifth Framework Programme of research, and became the PIONEUR project: *Pioneers of European Integration 'From Below': Mobility and the Emergence of European Identity Among National and Foreign Citizens in the EU* (contract HPSE-CT-2002-00128). Ettore served as coordinator of the project at the Centro Interuniversitario di Sociologia Politica (CIUSPO, University of Florence); Antonio Alaminos (OBETS, Universidad de Alicante), Michael Braun (ZUMA, Mannheim), Anne Muxel (CEVIPOF, Paris) and Damian Tambini (CSLS, Oxford University) directed the four other partner institutions. In one way or another, all contributors to this volume were intensively involved in the different stages of the project. The

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Ettore Recchi and Adrian Favell
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